

Supporting Your Child/Dependant At Post 16

Parents can make a *huge* difference for post-16 students (college, sixth form, apprenticeships) by shifting from “manager” to “supportive coach.” Here are practical, home-based ways to help, without hovering!

1. Support independence (without disappearing)

- Encourage them to manage deadlines, transport, and communication—but be there if things wobble.
- Let them solve problems first; step in as a sounding board, not a fixer.
- Normalise mistakes as part of learning (post-16 is full of trial and error).

2. Create the right home environment

- Provide a **quiet, predictable study space** (or flexible options if they work better elsewhere).
- Respect their need for downtime—post-16 workloads can be mentally intense.
- Keep routines around meals and sleep; structure helps more than lectures.

3. Talk *with* them, not *at* them

- Ask open questions like:
 - “What’s feeling hardest right now?”
 - “What’s one thing that went well this week?”
- Listen more than you advise. Often they just need to process out loud.
- Avoid constant grade-checking; focus on effort, progress, and wellbeing.

4. Support mental health and emotional wellbeing

- Watch for changes in mood, sleep, or motivation—burnout and anxiety are common.
- Encourage healthy habits: sleep, movement, decent food, social time.
- Help them access support (tutors, college wellbeing teams, GP) if needed—early is best.

5. Be practical (but not controlling)

- Help with planning big deadlines, exam periods, or UCAS/apprenticeship timelines.
- Offer help with CVs, applications, or interview practice *if they want it*.
- Talk realistically about finances, budgeting, and part-time work.

6. Encourage future thinking, gently

- Keep options open: university, apprenticeships, employment, gap years.
- Reassure them that paths aren’t fixed and changing direction is normal.
- Share your own missteps and career twists—it lowers the pressure.

7. Stay connected to their world

- Show interest in their subjects, friends, and goals (even if you don’t fully get them).
- Know key dates and expectations, but let *them* be the main point of contact with the institution.

8. Believe in them (and say it)

- Confidence dips are common at this stage.
- Simple messages like *"I trust you to figure this out"* or *"I'm proud of how hard you're trying"* really land.

9. Understand the *big shift* after GCSEs

Post-16 education in the UK expects students to:

- Manage **independent study time** (often 10–20+ hours/week outside lessons)
- Communicate directly with tutors and teachers at Gateway.
- Track deadlines via online systems (Teams, Moodle, Cedar).

How parents can help

- Ask how independent study is supposed to work for their course.
- Help them build a weekly routine that includes study, rest, and travel time.
- Accept that teachers won't contact parents as much — this is normal, not neglect.

10. Support study without micromanaging

- Help them break down **A-level coursework**, BTEC units, or T Level projects into chunks.
- Encourage them to use study periods properly (many don't at first).
- Avoid daily grade-checking — instead ask:
 - *"Do you feel on top of your work this week?"*

Tip: Many students struggle in the first term because GCSE-style revision no longer works. This is common and fixable.

11. Be attendance-aware (but calm)

- In the UK, attendance post-16 still matters a lot:
- Colleges and sixth forms can restrict courses, exam entries, or bursaries for poor attendance.
- An attendance figure of lower than 95% (in context) is not strong for Post 16 study.

What helps

- Take tiredness or avoidance seriously — it often signals stress, not laziness.
- If attendance slips, encourage *early* contact with tutors or student services.
- Support them to speak for themselves, but sit with them while they draft the email if needed.

12. Know the support systems available;

At Gateway Sixth Form College we offer:

- **Pastoral tutors** – Who are the first port of call for pastoral matters.
- **Learning support** (for SEND, dyslexia, ADHD, autism)
- **Mental health & wellbeing teams.**
- **Careers advisers.**
- **16–19 bursary** or travel support.

Parent role

- Help them figure out *who* to contact — many students don't know.
- Reassure them that using support is normal, not a failure.
- If they're under 18, you can usually still raise concerns (even if staff can't share everything).

13. Mental health: a big UK post-16 issue

- This age group sees high levels of:
 - Anxiety and perfectionism (especially A-levels)
 - Burnout
 - Loss of confidence after strong GCSE results

At home

- Keep routines around sleep, meals, and downtime.
- Watch for withdrawal, constant exhaustion, or panic around deadlines.
- Encourage GP support or college wellbeing services early — waiting lists can be long.

14. Applications & next steps (UK pathways)

Students may be juggling:

- **UCAS** (deadlines, personal statements, predicted grades)
- **Apprenticeship applications** (often rolling deadlines)
- **T Level placements**
- **Resits** in English/maths if required

Helpful parent support

- Help them map deadlines on a calendar.
- Offer feedback on applications *only if invited*.
- Remind them that:
 - Not going to uni straight away is valid
 - Changing direction is common
 - One set of results does not define them

Last by perhaps most important - Relationship shift: from parent → ally

This stage works best when parents:

- Treat students as emerging adults
- Stay interested without interrogating
- Say things like:
 - “I'm here if you want help.”
 - “You don't have to have it all figured out.”

Feeling trusted is often what helps them step up.