

Beth Wilby

on applying and going to sixth form

How does sixth form compare with school?

I've found college completely different from school, but in a good way. I like the feel of the college I attend and also the different facilities such as the coffee shops and dining area. One surprise has been the amount of work I need to complete on my Level 3 BTEC. I knew there was going to be a change from school to college but didn't realise how bigger a change with the workload. There is a lot more independence at college and I'm required to have to do a lot of studying and writing course work in my own time.

What are the positives?

The positives for me are that there is lot more independence in college compared to school. I've created a new circle of friends who have similar interests as me and one of the big positives have been the placements I've been on for work experience as part of my course.

What are the negatives?

The negative is that the college is a bit of distance from where I live but I really wanted to go to that college. More challenging works as the course I'm doing is a Level 3 programme and finally meeting all of my deadlines means I sometimes have to sacrifice my social life to complete tasks.

What was the application process like?

I found the college application process very straight forward. In my school we used UCAS Progress which allowed me to change and amend my application before I sent it to the relevant college. I also didn't need to have to write several applications as the same application could be sent to different colleges. It was also useful using Get-into to track the status of my application with regular updates from the college.

What happened at the interview?

I found the interview process for college different depending on the college I applied to. The college I chose consisted of information on how I was getting on in school, what my predicted grades were for my GCSEs and what my long term career plans were. The main reason I chose the college I did was that the staff made me feel at ease and explained about the course I would be doing and what the programme consisted of. Also I had to attend a taster day over the summer to work with other people who would be starting on the course to get some ideas of what to expect. These taster days were very useful in my opinion.

What advice would you give to a Year 11 student applying to sixth form or college?

My advice would be don't follow friends to colleges that they are going unless you really want to attend a course at that college. I've made so many new friends at the college I chose and still keep in contact with friends I was at school with who have chosen different colleges to me. Think about the distance you have to travel to get to college as this can be why people drop out. Do your research when applying for courses. Go to different college open evenings and speak with tutors and apply nice and early so you are not panicking later in the year because you don't have a college place.