



**NEON HE in Schools Project
Report prepared for Woodchurch High School**

1. Background:

The “HE in Schools” project was funded by Shaping Futures to enable a selected number of schools to gain a greater understanding of the attitudes and culture of their school towards higher education (HE), and to enable them to produce their own strategic document around progression to HE based upon their own individual circumstances. The first stage of the project was to conduct research in the school amongst staff and pupils. This report will now form the basis of the school’s Higher Education Plan highlighting areas that may need to be developed over the coming years.

2. Research:

Number of completed questionnaires

Group	Number of questionnaires received
Governors	4
SMT	1
Teachers	21
Pupils	224

3. Results:

3.1 Governors’ questionnaires:

Governors cited careers talks and activities as the main activities that encouraged higher education (HE) progression within the school saying it gave pupils the chance to gain knowledge about the options available to them. Out of the four responses two said higher education progression was discussed at governors’ meetings and two said it was not.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
I think my school has an aspirational culture towards higher education	100%	0%	0%	0.00%	0%
The proportion of our pupils going to higher education has increased over the past 5 years	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%

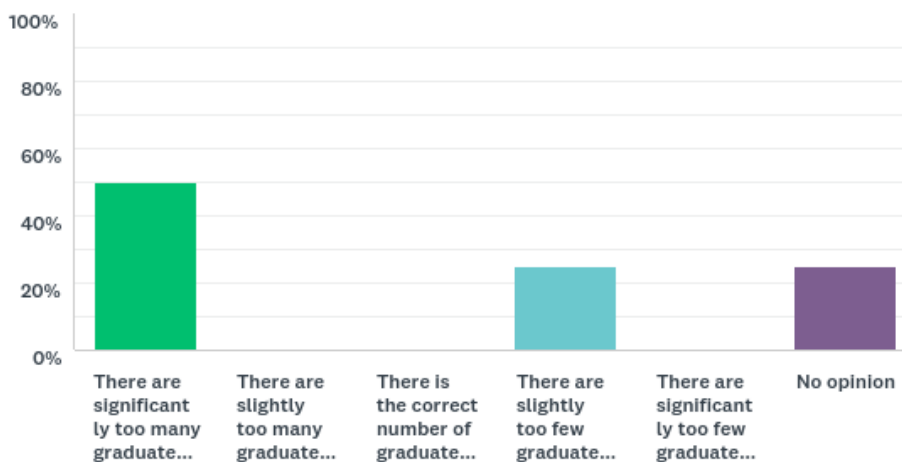
	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Higher education will help young people enter a fulfilling career	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Higher education leads to a better paid career	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%
The higher level of tuition fees has dissuaded pupils from applying to higher education	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%
Increasing the numbers of students in higher education would have a positive impact on the United Kingdom's economic prosperity	0%	25%	50%	25%	0%

The majority of governors appear to have a positive attitude towards higher education, although feel that the higher level of tuition fees has dissuaded pupils from applying.

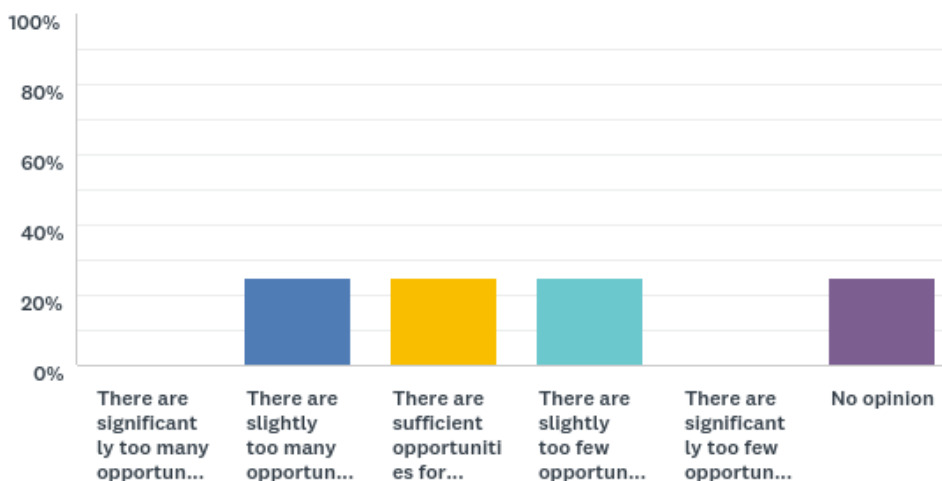
	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
The Senior Management Team should emphasise to staff the importance of delivering higher education activities	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Staff should be aware of the opportunities for their pupils that are available in higher education	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Staff should make active efforts to relate their lessons to progression to higher education	0%	50%	25%	25%	0%
Staff should have been involved in some form of higher education activity with their students this year	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%
The Senior Management Team should support targeting higher education progression support activities at pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Encouraging progression to higher education should be an increasingly important objective for staff in the school	25%	25%	25%	25%	0%
Progression to higher education should be talked about in staff meetings	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%
Staff should discuss progression to higher education at parents' evenings as a priority	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
The school should regularly work with parents/carers around higher education options and progression	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%
There should be regular staff development opportunities for staff to update their knowledge about higher education	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%

Number of graduates in the UK jobs market



Number of opportunities for young people to progress to higher education



	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
The school has a clear strategy for	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
careers guidance					
The school has strong links with employers	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The school has strong links with universities	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The school provides a wide range of information, advice and guidance to students on post-16 options	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The school provides information to pupils on vocational routes, including apprenticeships and alternative pathways to higher education	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Pupils are offered face-to-face advice and guidance opportunities	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
As a school, we work to prevent all forms of stereotyping in the advice and guidance we provide	75%	0%	25%	0%	0%
As a school, we work to ensure that pupils from all backgrounds and demographic groups consider the widest possible range of options	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Teachers are the main vehicle for IAG on higher education within our school	50%	25%	0%	0%	0%
The school facilitates pupils' access to independent IAG around higher education	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Pupils have the opportunity to visit higher education institutions with this school	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Pupils take part in a range of higher education activities during their time at our school	75%	0%	25%	0%	0%

3.1 SMT questionnaires:

Only one questionnaire was completed which makes it hard to draw any valid conclusions. The respondent expressed positive views about HE, only stating a reservation about the impact of fees on pupils' likelihood to apply. They did not feel that staff made active efforts to relate their lessons to HE but felt that encouraging progression to HE is an increasingly important objective for staff in the school.

3.3 Teacher questionnaires:

a. Attitudes towards HE

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think my school has an aspirational culture towards higher education	33%	48%	10%	10%	0%
The proportion of my pupils progressing to higher education has increased over the past five years.	5%	10%	86%	0%	0%
Higher education will help young people enter a fulfilling career.	48%	43%	10%	0%	0%
Higher education leads to a better paid career.	48%	43%	10%	0%	0%
The higher level of tuition fees has dissuaded pupils from applying to higher education.	29%	48%	24%	0%	0%
Increasing the numbers of students in higher education would have a positive impact on the United Kingdom's economic prosperity	30%	35%	35%	0%	0%

Overall the majority of teachers within the school have a positive attitude towards HE and appreciate the benefits it can bring to their pupils. The biggest concern about HE appears to be 'the' cost of HE and the impact this has on the pupils' likelihood to apply. There are also doubts that increasing the numbers of students in higher education will have a positive impact on the UK's economic prosperity with 35% of teachers being unsure.

b. Teachers views of their practice and the school culture

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Senior Management Team emphasise to staff the importance of delivering higher education activities.	28.5%	47.5%	14.5%	9.5%	0.00%
I am aware of the opportunities for my students that are available in higher education.	28.5%	47.5%	14.5%	9.5%	0.00%
I make active efforts to relate my lessons to progression to higher education.	9.5%	62%	4.5%	19%	4%
I have been involved in some form of higher education activity with my students this year.	19%	28.5%	9.5%	28.5%	14.5%
I support targeting higher education progression activities at pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.	47.5%	38%	9.5%	5%	0.00%
Encouraging progression to higher education is an increasingly important objective for me.	19%	33%	43%	5%	0.00%
Progression to higher education is talked about in staff meetings.	14.5 %	24%	28.5%	33%	0.00%
I discuss progression to higher education at parents' evenings as a priority.	4.5%	52.5%	5%	38%	0.00%
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

I regularly work with parents/carers around higher education options and progression.	4.5%	19%	19%	53%	4.5%
There are regular staff development opportunities for me to update my knowledge about higher education.	0%	19%	28.5%	43%	9.5%

There are obviously many positives to take from teachers' own practice and their view of the school culture. 43% are unsure if progression to higher education is an increasingly important objective for them and 5% disagree that it is. Areas that could possibly be developed are around SMT stressing the importance of HE activities, maybe through staff meetings, staff engagement in HE activities with pupils, conversations with parents and staff having development opportunities to update their knowledge about HE.

Teachers were asked to select the statement that best represented their views and the results are shown in the table below.

	Responses
There are significantly too many graduates in the UK jobs market.	10%
There are slightly too many graduates in the UK jobs market.	19%
There is the correct number of graduates in the UK jobs market.	10%
There are slightly too few graduates in the UK jobs market.	24%
There are significantly too few graduates in the UK jobs market.	10%
I don't have an opinion on this matter	29%

A significant percentage (34%) feel there are either significantly, or slightly, too many graduates in the UK jobs market. This is contrary to the policies of successive governments who argue that the economy needs a higher skilled workforce to remain economically competitive.

Teachers were then asked about the number of opportunities young people had to progress to HE:

Answer Choices	Responses
There are significantly too many opportunities for young people to progress to higher education.	0%
There are slightly too many opportunities for young people to progress to higher education.	19%
There are sufficient opportunities for young people to progress to higher education	33%
There are slightly too few opportunities for young people to progress to higher education.	24%
There are significantly too few opportunities for young people to progress to higher education.	14%
I don't have an opinion on this matter	10%

38% of respondents felt there were either slightly, or significantly, too few opportunities for young people to progress to HE, whilst 33% felt the opportunities were sufficient. Only 19% felt there were too many opportunities.

c. Information, Advice and Guidance

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All my pupils have received independent careers guidance	30%	45%	25%	0%	0%
The school has strong links with employers	25%	70%	0%	5%	0%
The school has strong links with universities	25%	70%	5%	0%	0%
The school provides a wide range of information, advice & guidance to students on post-16 options.	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
The school provides information to pupils on vocational routes, including apprenticeships and alternative pathways	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
Pupils are offered face-to-face advice and guidance opportunities.	55%	45%	0%	0%	0%
I work to prevent all forms of stereotyping in the advice and guidance I provide to my pupils.	35%	45%	15%	5%	0%
I work to ensure that my pupils from all backgrounds and demographic groups consider the widest possible range of opt	30%	65%	5%	0%	0%
Teachers are the main vehicle for IAG on higher education within our school	10%	25%	55%	10%	0%
I facilitate pupils' access to independent IAG around higher education	10%	15%	55%	15%	5%
Pupils have the opportunity to visit higher education institutions with this school.	35%	55%	10%	0%	0%
Pupils take part in a range of higher education activities during their time at our school.	26%	63%	11%	0%	0%

The majority of teachers felt the school has strong links with employers and universities. 35% of staff see themselves as the main vehicle for IAG around HE (55% were unsure). Teachers (both consciously and unconsciously) are a key source of IAG for young people. Fuller, McCrum and Macfayden (2014) point out that the disbanding of a national careers service, combined with national policies that argue schools are best placed to give careers advice, mean that there is an increasing need for teachers to be involved in the delivery and, as a result, need to improve their knowledge about the careers landscape. Many studies have cited teachers as having the second biggest influence over young people in terms of their educational ambitions however Moogan (2011) argues that teachers are even more important than parents for young people from lower socio-economic groups.

3.4 Pupil questionnaires:

Pupil Breakdown

Year 8 = 96

Year 11 = 128

Total = 224

a) Gender

	Year 8	Year 11	Grand Total
Female	49%	41%	45%
Male	47%	55%	51%
Gender variant/non-conforming	0%	1%	0%
Prefer not to say	4%	2%	3%
Unclear	0%	1%	0%

b) Ethnicity of pupils: 94% of students described themselves as white. No other ethnic category included sufficient numbers to draw any conclusions based on ethnic differences.

c) Free School Meals: 20% of pupils reported that they received free school meals.

d) Proportion of respondents in year 8 and 11 who identified as knowing someone who went to university.

	Responses
Parents/carers	28%
Brother/Sister	18%
Friends	8%
Other relatives	33%
Nobody	10%
Don't Know	31%
Prefer not to say	1%

Only 10% reported that they did not know anyone who had been to HE, although 31% did not know.

e) Information, advice and guidance:

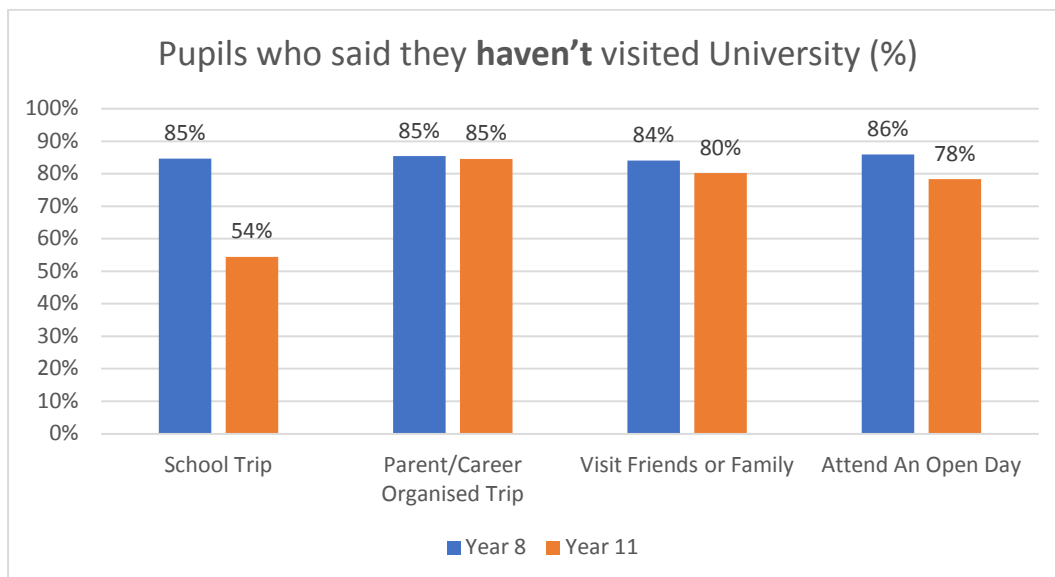
The table on page 9 shows pupils' experiences of information, advice and guidance within the school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The school provides me with information about opportunities that are available at university	13%	47%	27%	10%	3%
Teachers talk about university in their lessons	2%	19%	21%	42%	16%
I receive guidance about careers (including going to university) at school	16%	41%	27%	11%	5%
Employers visit our school to tell us about different careers	31%	37%	19%	10%	2%
School teaches me about the different options available when I leave	27%	50%	16%	5%	2%
We have the chance to visit universities with our school	13%	30%	35%	14%	9%
People from universities come in to school to talk to us	17%	33%	26%	15%	8%
I talk about university with my friends	10%	18%	19%	25%	27%

64% of Year 11 males either agreed or strongly agreed that the school provided them with information about the options available at university. This compared to 79% of females.

Year 11s were more likely to report they had the chance to go to university with their school (52% (11) vs 31% (8)) and that people from universities visited the school to talk to them (60% (11)vs 39% (8)).

f) Visits to universities



The most likely way for pupils to visit a university was by means of a school trip. By the time pupils had reached year 11, 48% had experienced a university visit. Males respondents were

slightly more likely to have visited than female respondents (this could be as a result of policy prioritisation by HE of white working class males).

g) Going to university

The table below shows pupil attitudes towards wanting to go to university.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I want to go to University	33%	23%	29%	8%	7%
I expect I will go to University	16%	23%	41%	12%	9%
If I go to University, I know what I want to study	20%	26%	33%	13%	8%
I believe that my parents/carers want me to go to university	29%	27%	35%	6%	2%
I believe that my teachers want me to go to university	15%	32%	47%	2%	4%

Interestingly there were no major differences to the results when split by year group or gender. Only 15% of students say they do not want to go to HE. It is worth noting that the percentage of pupils believing that their teachers want them to go to university is lower than the number who believe their parents/carers want them to go to university.

4. Areas for development

There are many positive elements for the school to take away from this report. SMT and the majority of teachers have a positive attitude towards higher education, and this reflects in their answers.

There are some areas that the school may wish to focus upon as they move forward.

- 1) **Student Finance:** Teachers expressed concerns about the “costs” of higher education. This is something that the media reinforces through its use of the terms “loans” and “debt”. Higher education can be seen as an investment in your own future and, as we all know, the majority of students will never end up fully repaying their student loans. Repayments are linked to salaries and are only made when your income passes the minimum threshold. If income drops below that threshold payments are suspended. Also, it is hard to predict how higher education will be funded in the future. Whilst it might be unlikely we would return to a “free” HE system the cost may well reduce and there may be a move away from fees and loans to a graduate tax. Ensuring both staff and pupils understand the benefits of HE and the precise way student finance works could help dispel some of the concerns that are held.

- 2) **Staff development:** Despite 75% of staff seeing themselves as the main vehicle for information, advice and guidance around HE, 81% were either unsure, or stated there were not opportunities for them to develop their own knowledge in the area. This echoes previous findings in other schools. Consideration could be given to devoting some inset time to HE specific sessions to allow this knowledge to be developed.
- 3) **Embedding HE within the curriculum:** Despite teachers reporting that they tried to relate lesson content to HE 58% of pupils disagreed and a further 21% were not sure. Consideration could be given to how this can be achieved across all subjects.
- 4) **University visits:** The results suggest that pupils are most likely to visit a university with the school. Year 11s were much more likely to have visited than year 8s. Consideration may be given to considering how younger age groups could take part in a programme of visits.
- 5) **Teachers wanting pupils to go to university:** 47% of pupils were unsure whether or not their teachers wanted them to go to university. Teachers undoubtedly do want the best for their pupils, however there maybe ways of helping pupils realise this through parents' evenings and talking about higher education within their lessons.
- 6) **Parental engagement:** 23.5% of teachers reported that they regularly worked with parents/carers around higher education options and progression. Considering how the school could further engage parents around higher education could be beneficial and help to improve future HE progression rates.