

Welcome to the Sixth Form Steps Initiative

The Sixth Form Steps Initiative at Thornton College offers a transformative opportunity for our boarders to develop greater independence while still enjoying the supportive structure of school life. This innovative programme provides a stepping stone between school and university, allowing students to live in purpose-designed accommodation just off the main school site, where they can cultivate essential life skills in a safe, supervised environment.

Why Choose the Sixth Form Steps Initiative?

The transition from secondary education to university represents one of the most significant changes in a young person's life. Many students find themselves suddenly thrust into independent living without adequate preparation, leading to unnecessary stress during an already challenging academic period. The Sixth Form Steps Initiative bridges this gap, offering a carefully structured pathway to independence.

Our programme focuses on developing crucial skills that extend far beyond the classroom. Students learn to manage their daily routines independently, making decisions about their schedule, meals, and study time. This new sense of self led structure helps develop critical thinking and self-reliance that will serve them throughout their lives.



Practical Life Skills

Students develop essential abilities in cooking, budgeting, time management, and self-care, creating a foundation for successful independent living.



University Preparation

Experience the reality of independent living while still having access to support, creating a seamless transition to university accommodation.



Confidence Building

Develop resilience, problem-solving abilities, and social skills through everyday challenges in a supportive environment.



Proven Results

95% of programme participants report feeling significantly more prepared for university life than their peers.

The skills and confidence gained through this initiative extend far beyond practical abilities. Students develop a sense of responsibility and accountability that prepares them for success not just at university, but in their future careers and personal lives.

Your Home Away From Home: Accommodation Details

The Sixth Form Steps accommodation offers a perfect balance between independence and community. Located just a two-minute walk outside the main Thornton College site, our purpose-designed Villa accommodation offers a modern, comfortable living environment that mirrors university halls of residence while maintaining the supportive setting of the Thornton community.

The Villa is specifically designed for Sixth Form students. The bedrooms are thoughtfully designed with ample storage, a comfortable bed, a desk for studying.

The heart of the house is a communal living area, which includes a kitchen area and washing machine. Adjacent to the kitchen is a comfortable lounge area with sofas, a television, and study space, creating an ideal environment for socialising and collaborative learning.



Students have access to on-site laundry facilities, communal study rooms, and outdoor recreational spaces.

The location strikes an ideal balance—close enough to the main site for easy access to classes, dining hall, sports facilities and extracurricular activities, yet separate enough to develop a sense of independence and responsibility. This thoughtful design helps students experience the rhythm of managing their own living space while maintaining connection to the wider school community.

Support and Guidance: We're Here for You

At Thornton College, we understand that increased independence comes with new challenges. The Sixth Form Steps Initiative is designed to provide a supportive framework that gives students room to grow while ensuring they never feel overwhelmed or isolated.

Residential Support

Experienced staff members live on-site, providing guidance, support, and a friendly face whenever needed. Our boarding team are specifically trained to balance supervision with allowing students appropriate freedom to develop independence.

Boarding Perks

Boarding at Thornton includes a wide range of after-school activities, from sports to arts and crafts, as well as exciting weekend trips to explore the surrounding area and beyond. These opportunities enhance the boarding experience and create lasting memories.



Regular Check-ins

Structured weekly meetings with mentors help students navigate challenges, celebrate successes, and develop personalised strategies for independent living. These sessions provide accountability while encouraging self-reflection.

Careers Programme

Regular one to one career sessions are run by Jo Scott, our Head of Careers, offering individually tailored support for Sixth Formers to look into their next pursuit.

The support structure includes a peer mentoring system, pairing new participants with those who have more experience in the programme. This creates a community of mutual support and allows students to learn from each other's experiences. Additionally, all participants remain fully integrated with the main school community, participating in school events, clubs, and activities, ensuring they benefit from the best of both worlds.

Parents remain vital partners in their child's educational journey, with regular updates and opportunities to discuss their progress with staff. This collaborative approach ensures students feel supported from all sides as they navigate this important transition period.

Expectations and Responsibilities

Participation in the Sixth Form Steps Initiative comes with significant benefits, but also with clear expectations. The programme is designed to develop responsibility and accountability, preparing students for the realities of adult life. We believe that maintaining high standards helps students develop positive habits that will serve them well at university and beyond.

All participants are expected to contribute to maintaining a clean and tidy living environment. This includes taking responsibility for personal spaces, participating in communal area cleaning rotas, and properly managing household tasks such as waste disposal and recycling. These habits not only create a pleasant living environment but develop essential skills for future independent living.

Students must adhere to the Sixth Form Steps Initiative code of conduct, which outlines expectations regarding noise levels, visitors, curfews, and general behaviour. This code is designed to balance freedom with consideration for others in the community, reflecting the expectations students will encounter in university accommodation and potential shared living arrangements in the future.

Respect for fellow residents, the wider school community, and the local area is fundamental to the programme's ethos. Students serve as ambassadors for Thornton College and are expected to conduct themselves accordingly, demonstrating maturity and consideration in all interactions.

Participants must communicate promptly with residential mentors regarding any concerns, issues, or incidents. This promotes problem-solving skills, responsibility, and ensures timely resolution of any challenges that may arise.



"The expectations placed upon us in the Sixth Form Steps Initiative weren't burdensome—they were empowering. Learning to manage my own living space and take responsibility for my decisions gave me confidence I never knew I had." — Charlotte, Former Sixth Form Steps Participant, now studying at Durham University

Embrace Independence: Join the Sixth Form Steps Initiative

The journey from adolescence to adulthood represents one of life's most significant transitions. The Sixth Form Steps Initiative at Thornton College provides a structured pathway through this critical period, offering students the opportunity to develop independence, confidence, and essential life skills in a supportive environment.

By participating in this innovative programme, students gain the practical abilities needed for university life—cooking, balancing academic work with domestic responsibilities, and navigating interpersonal relationships in a communal living setting. More importantly, they develop the emotional resilience, problem-solving capabilities, and self-reliance that will serve them throughout their adult lives.

Our holistic approach ensures that participants receive the perfect balance of freedom and support. The dedicated boarding team, on site staff support, and thoughtfully designed accommodation create an environment where students can safely make mistakes, learn from them, and grow in confidence.

Parents consistently report that students of the Sixth Form Steps Initiative transition more smoothly to university life, experiencing less homesickness and adapting more quickly to the demands of independent living.

The skills developed through this programme extend far beyond the practical aspects of independent living. Participants gain invaluable experience in communication, collaboration, and community living—skills that employers increasingly value in a competitive job market.

"Choosing the Sixth Form Steps Initiative was the best decision we made for our daughter's education. The confidence and life skills she gained made her university transition seamless, while her peers struggled with basic independent living tasks." — Parent of Recent Student



We invite you to take the next step towards independence. Applications for the upcoming academic year are now open. For more information or to begin the application process, please visit www.thorntoncollege.ac.uk/sixthformsteps or contact our Admissions team at admissions@thorntoncollege.com

Your journey to independence starts here! Thrive at Thornton.