

Pupils 'less likely to see university as important'

By Alison Kershaw
PA Education Correspondent

newsdesk@nne.co.uk

YOUNG people are increasingly less likely to believe that getting a degree is important, according to a poll.

It indicates that the proportion of secondary school pupils who think they need to go to university to do well in life has fallen steadily in the last six years.

Despite this, the vast majority say they are likely to go into higher education when they are old enough.

The findings, published by the Sutton Trust, come as sixth-formers across England, Wales and Northern Ireland receive their A-level results and learn if they have gained a university place.

The poll, which questioned around 2,300 children aged 11-16 in England and Wales, found that three-quarters (75%) think it is important to go to university, down from 78% last year and a high of 86% in 2013.

More than three in four (77%) of those surveyed this year said they are likely to go into higher education.

Poorer pupils – those eligible for free school meals – are less likely to say they are planning to go to university than their richer classmates (67% compared with 79%), the Sutton Trust said.

Girls are more likely to say they expect to study for a degree than boys (81% compared with 73%), the poll found.

Figures published by Ucas in July showed that young people in England are more likely to apply to go to uni-

versity than ever.

More than a third (38.1%) of 18-year-olds across the country have applied this year, up 0.2 percentage points on last year.

Of the young people who said they they are unlikely to go into higher education, the most common reason was that they do not like the idea or do not enjoy learning and studying (58%), followed by finance (44%).

More than a third (35%) said they feel they are not clever enough, while the same proportion said it was not needed for their job plans.

Sir Peter Lampl, founder of the Sutton Trust and chair-

man of the Education Endowment Foundation, said: "It's no surprise that there has been a fall in the proportion of young people who think it's important to go into higher education.

"Young people face a dilemma. If they go on to university they incur debts of over £50,000 and will be paying back their loans well into middle age. And in a number of cases they end up with degrees that don't get them into graduate jobs.

"On the other hand, degree-level apprenticeships are almost non-existent with less than 10,000 available each year compared with over 300,000 university places. There is effectively no viable alternative to university."

The Ipsos Mori poll questioned 2,381 schoolchildren aged 11-16 in schools in England and Wales between February 5 and May 25.

A Department for Education spokesman said "university isn't for everyone"

and the Government does not want one route to a career "to be considered better than any other".

"That is why we are transforming technical education in this country to put it on a par with our amazing academic system," he said.



TESTING TIMES: Students taking an exam. Young people are increasingly less likely to believe that getting a degree is important, according to a poll