

My daughter decided this year that she wanted some GCSE's. She is 13. She started with a distance learning course for English Language, and then sat the IGCSE at a local private 6th form college which cost £160. It was slightly more expensive than it could have been because it was a late entry. I looked for possible exam centres two months before I entered her for the exam. But it was straightforward and I found plenty to choose from when you accept that you have to pay for it and possibly travel to get to the centre.

I did approach the LA for help, and was constantly told that there is no funding. The LA advisor even seemed a bit frustrated by the situation herself, and I think would like to have been more help, but didn't know where to go, to find that magical pot of money that seems to be available.

My daughter is doing drama GCSE through a home education group, which will only cost £55. She's also doing GCSE Music through a private conservatoire which costs £400 per term for three terms. Music GCSE is not available to private candidates because 60% of the marks are controlled assessments in performance and composition. The cost covers 3 hours tuition every Saturday, and the exam is included.

Next year should be much cheaper, because the rest of the iGCSE's she wants to do are all exam based with no controlled assessment. She plans to sit three more IGCSE's and we'll probably continue to use the private 6th form college. They will accommodate any board, and can arrange practicals and are only a 30 drive away. The whole procedure is expensive, with courses, books and exam fees. But it's still a lot cheaper than paying private school fees.

I don't know if my daughter will need GCSE's to access further education at 16. But the motivation for her to get 6 GCSE's is to try and apply for a prestigious local 6th form that she visited. All in all, it's been very straightforward and easy, once you accept that each IGCSE will cost £150.