

SCHOOLING in ENGLAND

A TOOLKIT FOR MIGRANT PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS

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The Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC), Middlesex University - www.sprc.info

As an interdisciplinary research centre with an international reputation, SPRC was established in 1990 and has been the focal point of social policy and social science research for over two decades. A dynamic centre with a proven track record of delivering projects on time and on budget, the SPRC draws together a range of staff with expertise in social policy, migration, education, health, care, welfare and service provision, social cohesion, social capital and third-sector organisations. We use innovative methodologies to undertake research on new and emerging topics within the social sciences, in particular with neglected and marginalised communities, at a local, national and international level. The Centre actively promotes interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research. We have received large research grants from bodies such as the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Big Lottery Fund. The SPRC has also been commissioned to undertake research by several local authorities, including Enfield Borough Council, Barnet Borough Council, Ealing Borough Council and Islington Borough Council. The Centre has undertaken numerous projects on education particularly focusing on children from migrant backgrounds – including Polish, Afghan, Somali, Chinese and Turkish/Kurdish. Staff at the SPRC are currently working on a large, five year project, funded by the European Commission, on young people at risk of becoming early school leavers - <http://sprc.info/reducing-early-school-leaving-in-europe>

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INTRODUCTION – WHY THIS TOOLKIT AND WHO IS IT FOR?

This toolkit was written primarily for **newly arrived migrant parents** but it may also be useful for the following audiences:

- Teachers working with migrants
- Local Authorities
- Organisations working with migrant families and
- Other practitioners who assist migrant children or migrant families

The school system in the UK differs in many ways from that in other countries. In the UK schooling starts earlier than in many countries, generally before the child's fifth birthday. Many parents and children, especially if they have only just arrived in Britain, are unprepared for this. Choosing a school and getting your child enrolled can be complicated, especially if you are unfamiliar with the system. The aim of this booklet is to provide information and guidance to help you negotiate the school system and to suggest ways in which you can support your child settle into school and in progressing through primary school and the transition to secondary school.

This is a new, revised version of our guide written for Polish parents in 2010. Various policies and practices within the UK education have changed since then and, since the guide proved to be popular among parents and practitioners, there was a need to update the information and improve the visual aspect of the booklet.

We soon realised that other migrant parents would benefit from such a source of information and modified our guide to meet the needs of all newly arrived migrants. Additionally, we included more information about secondary and further education, following feedback from our readers. Many of the issues and suggestions, which we discuss here, are based on the findings of our research on Polish children in English schools¹. We also consulted a range of official sources, particularly government websites. A list of these, and other useful sources, is included in the appendix.

A particularly important change has been an increase in the different types of school and consequently, different internal regulations, admission criteria and general structure of learning and curriculum within those schools. Today children have to stay in education until 18, not 16, as it had been the case until 2013. Assessment criteria and style have changed considerably since 2010. Also, the structure of schooling varies considerably between local authorities and you will need to check information with your local schools and local authority (the elected body responsible for education at local level, e.g. borough, district or county council). All these changes convinced us that the toolkit needed updating in order to continue to be a reliable source of information for newly arrived migrant parents.

¹ https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/6326/1/%5DPolish_pupils_in_London_schools.pdf

There are differences between the education system in England and that in other parts of the UK (Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) in particular in the role of school inspections and testing. Many of the issues covered here are the same but this toolkit focuses specifically on the situation in England. For details of regulations in other parts of the UK see the websites listed in the Appendix.

All the information in this toolkit is correct as of December 2015.

However, it is important to bear in mind that education policy is changing rapidly and some information in this guide may become out of date.

If in doubt check the latest information at <https://www.gov.uk/browse/education>

There are differences between the education system in England and in other parts of the UK (Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) and this toolkit focuses specifically on the situation in England.

We would be interested in your comments on this resource and would be pleased to hear whether you have found it useful and of any issues which you think could be included.

Please contact us through the **Toolkit web-page:**
<https://mdxmigration.wordpress.com/migrantschools/>

The webpage also includes a link to download an electronic version of the Toolkit

KEY FEATURES OF ENGLISH SCHOOLING

- Schooling starts earlier than in many countries. All children in England aged between 5 and 18 **must** be in education (from 16 until 18 it may be work or training based). Children often start at the age of 4 and this varies depending on the local authority.
- Although this toolkit focuses on England, we point out that in Scotland and Wales education is compulsory for pupils aged 5–16 and in Northern Ireland for those aged 4–16.
- Children are placed in classes according to their age, not their level of attainment. They move up to the next class at the end of each year, whether or not they have reached the expected level in their school work.
- There are many different types of school in the state system, including community schools, religious (or 'faith') schools, academies and free schools. Schools which are called 'public schools' are actually private (fee-paying) schools.
- Different types of school in the state system have different admission requirements (e.g. based on ability, religious observance, distance from school).
- Finding and getting your child into a school can be complex and difficult – and your child may not get a place in the school which is your first choice.
- Some types of schools in the state system follow the National Curriculum but within that framework the schools and individual teachers have some choice about what to teach and how to organise learning. All state schools are required to provide 'a broad and balanced curriculum'.
- The school provides most textbooks and exercise books - these are kept at school and children only bring home the books they need for homework.
- Children who need it may receive extra help in learning English (English as an Additional language – EAL) in school.
- Most children with Special Educational Needs (physical impairments or learning difficulties) attend mainstream schools. They may receive extra support in school.
- Schooling and lessons are more informal than in many countries – children may sit at tables, not desks, and may sometimes be encouraged to work together.
- Physical punishment is forbidden in schools.
- Most schools have a uniform which children must wear to school.
- Pupils are frequently placed in ability sets according to their progress and skills but may move from one set to another depending on their progress.

THE STRUCTURE OF SCHOOLING IN ENGLAND

From 2015 all young people will have to remain in education until the age of 18 but this does not necessarily mean staying in school.

Young people have a choice about how they continue in education or training post-16. This could be through:

- full-time study in a school, college or with a training provider;
- full-time work or volunteering (20 hours or more per week) combined with part-time education or training; or
- an apprenticeship or traineeship (more information available at www.apprenticeships.org.uk).

Starting school

- Children **must** attend school from the beginning of the term following their **fifth birthday**.
- Since **September 2011**, local authorities have had to accept children into primary school in the September following the child's fourth birthday but parents are not obliged to send their children to school until they turn five.
- The child is not required to attend school until the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday and can stay in a nursery, or be looked after at home up to then. This is usually negotiable with the school which the child will attend.

Leaving school

- The 'school leaving age' was raised to 18 in 2015.
- Education (apart from university) is free up to the age of 19.

Home schooling

As a parent, you must ensure your child receives a full-time education from the age of five. Most parents send their child to school, but you do have the right to educate your child at home. The education provided must be 'appropriate' to their age and aptitude. You do not need to gain permission from the local authority, but they may ask you to provide evidence that the education is appropriate. Home education involves considerable commitment from parents. You can find out more about your rights and duties on:

- <http://www.home-education.org.uk>
- <http://www.educationotherwise.net>

Education in England is divided into the following phases

Age on August 31st	Year	Curriculum stage	Type of educational institution		Is it compulsory?	Is it free?
3 – 4	Nursery	Foundation Stage	Nursery school		No	Part-time only
4 - 5	Reception		Primary school	Infant school	Yes	Yes
5 - 6	Year 1	Key Stage 1				
6 – 7	Year 2					
7 – 8	Year 3	Key Stage 2				
8 – 9	Year 4					
9 – 10	Year 5					
10 – 11	Year 6					
11 – 12	Year 7	Key Stage 3		Secondary school		
12 – 13	Year 8					
13 – 14	Year 9					
14 – 15	Year 10	Key Stage 4 / GCSE				
15 – 16	Year 11					
16 – 17	Year 12	Sixth form / A level	Further education (Sixth form or College)		Yes	Yes - up to the age of 19
17 – 18	Year 13					
18+		Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degrees	Higher Education (University or College)		No	No - Different rates for UK and 'overseas' students

PRE-SCHOOL / NURSERY

Every child is entitled to a free nursery place for **three hours per day** from the age of three. This may be in a school nursery class or an independent nursery. In the school nursery class, the sessions are either in the morning or afternoon. The date on which you can apply will depend on when your child's birthday is.

Some 2-year-olds in England can also get **free early education and childcare**. In order to qualify you need be receiving certain social security benefits or tax credits. Talk to your local authority to find out if you qualify.

This is an area of policy that is currently changing and there are plans to phase out and restrict tax credits for EU migrants; to find out what the current situation is refer to:

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/tax-credits>

Many parents need their child to be looked after for longer than this and also need childcare before the child is 3 years old. There are different options, including:

- **Private nurseries** which may take children from 0-5 years and generally operate flexible hours between around 8.00 am and 6.00 pm. A fee is charged and admission is dependent on ability to pay – there may be a waiting list.
- **Local authority nurseries** which may take children from 0-5 years and generally operate flexible hours between around 8.00 am and 6.00 pm. Admission usually depends on social circumstances and whether and how much you pay depends on your income.
- **Childminders** who normally look after children in their own home. You can get a list of registered child minders from your local authority.
All childminders who care for children under 8 years old for payment must:
 - *agree to meet certain quality standards*
 - *be registered with their local authority which checks to make sure they are suitable to look after children and inspects them regularly*
- **Playgroups** there are a wide variety of services which provide opportunities for children to play with others and take part in activities. These generally involve parents/carers staying with their children.

You may be able to get financial help with the costs of extra childcare - **Childcare Tax Credit** - if you (and your partner if you have one) work at least 16 hours per week and are on a low income.

This is an area of policy that is currently changing and there are plans to phase out and restrict tax credits for EU migrants; to find out what the current situation is refer to:

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/tax-credits>

You need to use a registered child minder or approved childcare provider for this to apply.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Age:	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11
Year:	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6

- Children may start at the age of 4 but **compulsory attendance begins at age 5**.
- Formal schooling is from **Years 1 - 6**.
- In some schools, there is a separate Infant School (Reception – Year 2) and Junior School (Years 3 – 6).
- Children are in classes, generally of around **30 pupils**.
- They have one class teacher who teaches them for most of their time in school.
- There is often a teaching assistant who works with individual children or groups.
- Children choose their secondary school in Year 6 and transfer to secondary school at the end of that year.

Reception Class. This is the first year of compulsory schooling and provides a transition to formal school with a focus on learning through play. In England, most children will start school at the beginning of the term during which they become five but the child does not have to attend school until the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. A child born between 1 April and 31 August need not start school until the September following their fifth birthday and a parent can ask for the child to be admitted to reception instead of Year 1. You may also request that your child attends school part-time until compulsory school age.

In some schools, where there are separate Infant and **Junior Schools**, you may have to apply for a place in Junior School, as it is not guaranteed automatically. It may be that your child will not be granted a place in Junior School.

SECONDARY SCHOOL

Age:	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18
Year:	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13
	Secondary School					Sixth Form/College	
	KS3 teacher assessment			Some children take GCSEs	GCSEs	Some students take AS – level exams	A/AS – level exams

- Children start secondary education at the age of 11 and continue to age 16 when they take a final examination, **GCSE** (General Certificate of Secondary Education).
- Most secondary schools are comprehensive with a varied **non-selective intake**. In a few areas children can still enter selective, grammar schools where entrance is based on exams.
- Secondary schools are usually bigger than primary schools – they may have 1,000 or more pupils.
- Many state-funded schools are **faith schools**, the majority Church of England or Roman Catholic but there are also Jewish, Muslim schools, as well as other faiths.
- Most secondary schools, and an increasing proportion of primary schools, are now academies, including **Free Schools**, which are not under the control of the local authority
- Nearly 90% of state-funded secondary schools are **specialist schools** and receive extra funding to develop one or more subjects in which the school specializes.
- Pupils are in classes of around 30, and there may be several classes in each year group.
- Each class has a tutor who generally starts and ends the school day with their class.
- Most subjects are taught by **specialist teachers**.
- Results in GCSE may determine what form of further education a student is able to progress to and the subjects which may be taken.

SIXTH FORM/FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE

The last two years at school - years 12 and 13 are also known as the **'sixth form'**. Students who wish to stay on in more academic, school-based education can progress to the next stage either at the same secondary school, if it has a **'sixth form'**, or at a college offering Further Education.

Remember that even if your child progresses to the sixth form in the school which s/he attends, you still need to apply for a place and it may be that your child will not be accepted.

They may take Advanced Level (**A level**) examinations, usually in 2 to 4 subjects, which are the normal entry requirement for university. Children tend to specialise in either 'arts' or 'science' subjects. Alternatively, following their secondary school pupils take qualifications such as **Diplomas**, the **International Baccalaureate** or the new **Cambridge Pre-U**. Others, who want more work-based training, can opt for apprenticeship (which offer training in technical or skilled trades)

or Foundation learning (a mode developed for lower achieving 14-19 year olds to help raise their participation, attainment and progress).

UNIVERSITY

Young people can continue with their studies at University. If they pass (graduate) they will be awarded a '**degree**'. Students studying for their first degree are known as **undergraduates**.

Types of degrees

Level of study	Type of degree	Usual length of study
Undergraduate	Bachelor of Arts (BA)/ Bachelor of Science (BSc)	3 years full time
Postgraduate	Master of Arts (MA)/ Master of Science (MSc)	1 year full time/ 2 years part-time
	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	3 years full time/ 5 years part time

In Scotland, first degrees are four years long and lead to Master of Arts (MA) but these are generally seen as the equivalent of a Bachelor degree.

THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM (PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS)

The National Curriculum sets out the core subjects your child will be taught during their time at school and the levels that they are expected to reach at each stage.

- All children aged 5 to 18 in 'maintained' or state schools (except for Academies,) must be taught the National Curriculum.
- Academies do not have to follow the National Curriculum but are expected to teach a 'broad and balanced curriculum' and are likely to use the National Curriculum as a guide
- Children with special needs may be exempted ('disapplied') from all or part of the National Curriculum.
- Key Stages 1 and 2 culminate with **SAT (Standard Assessment Tests)**. Stage 4 culminates in public examinations, the **GCSE**.

The **new curriculum** (applied from September 2015) aims at providing the essential knowledge and skills every child should have. It allows more flexibility for teachers to shape the curriculum. For example, they can choose different periods of history to cover and from a range of books in English literature. The new curriculum covers primary school pupils, aged five to 11, and secondary school pupils up to the age of 14. New KS1 and KS2 tests will come into force in the school year 2016/2017 for the Year 2 and Year 6 pupils.

Your child's school will send you a **report** telling you what National Curriculum standards your child has reached in any formal assessment. This gives you an idea of how your child's progress compares to government targets for their age group but it is important to remember that children develop at different rates and these test only a particular set of skills and abilities.

National Curriculum subjects

Age	5 - 7	7 -11	11 – 14	14 -16
Year	Year 1 – 2	Year 3 – 6	Year 7 – 9	Year 10 – 11
Curriculum stage	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4 / GCSE
Compulsory Subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English - Maths - Science - Design and Technology - Information and Communication Technology (ICT) - History - Geography - Modern Foreign Languages <i>(key stage 2 only)</i> - Art and Design - Music - Physical education (PE) - Religious education <i>(parents have the right to withdraw their child)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English - Maths - Science - Design and Technology - Information and Communication Technology (ICT) - History - Geography - Modern Foreign Languages - Art and Design - Music - Physical education (PE) - Religious education <i>(parents have the right to withdraw their child)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English - Maths - Science - Information and Communication Technology (ICT) - Physical education (PE) - Citizenship - Careers education - Work-related learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English - Maths - Science - Information and Communication Technology (ICT) - Physical education (PE) - Citizenship - Careers education - Work-related learning
Other subjects	<p><i>(taught across the curriculum)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) - Citizenship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Careers Guidance - Sex and Relationship Education (parents can withdraw from non-statutory elements) - Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Careers Guidance - Sex and Relationship Education (parents can withdraw from non-statutory elements) - Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) 	<p>Optional Areas <i>(Schools must offer at least one subject from each area):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arts (e.g. Art, Drama) - Design and Technology - Humanities (history, geography, social sciences, religious education) - Modern Foreign Languages - Sex and Relationship Education - Religious education

PRIMARY SCHOOL

GETTING YOUR CHILD INTO A PRIMARY SCHOOL

The process of getting your child enrolled in a school is complex and can be difficult, especially for people who have recently arrived in the UK. You may want to seek advice and support from friends or community organisations who speak your own language.

We describe below the process of applying for a school place. It is important to note that **if you arrive in the middle of the school year**, you will not be able to go through this process and many schools will already be full. You should remember that:

- Your child should be in full time school from the age of 5.
- If your child is 5 or over when you arrive in the country s/he is entitled to be admitted immediately but there may be a delay in securing a school place.
- You may not be able to get your first choice of school if it is already full.
- The local education authority is legally required to ensure that all children of school age resident in their area have a school place.
- Your child can change school later providing another school is willing to offer a place.

Finding out about local schools

You should start finding out about primary schools well **before your child reaches her/his fourth birthday**.

You can find the names and contact details of all schools in your area at <http://schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk/> and then typing in your postcode.

You can also contact your Local Authority (LA) which will provide you with a list of schools in your area.

In deciding which school might suit your child you might want to consider:

- How **close** is the school to your home? Most children, particularly in cities, will go to a primary school within walking distance of their home. This allows children to get to know others living in their area and parents to develop social networks around the school.
- Which school does your **child prefer**? Did s/he feel comfortable when visiting the school? Which school do her/his friends attend?
- Are there other children attending the school who speak the same language as you do?
- Does your child have **special needs**? If your child is very bright, shows particular patterns of behaviour or has learning difficulties it is important to find a school that will be able to give them the necessary support. Certain schools have specialist units for specific special educational needs, for example – speech impairments.
- What access does the school offer to **after-school childcare**?

- Does it use a lot of **digital technology** as a means of learning? Some schools place a lot of emphasis on modern, technology-based learning, while others rely on more traditional methods.
- What **type** of school do you want your child to attend? There are several different types of school in the state system (see box on page 19) as well as private (fee-paying) schools.

You need to find out as much information as you can about the schools in your area. For example, you might like to:

- visit the schools
- ask friends and neighbours who have children at local schools
- read the schools' most recent reports from Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education)
- read the local authority and schools' prospectuses or schools' websites

Visiting the school

The best way to find out about a school is to go and see it and you should try to visit at least once with your child. It is best to visit during the school day if possible. This will give you an opportunity to find out more about children's experience in the school and you may be able to see lessons in progress.

Most schools have **open days or evenings** when parents and children will be shown round and you will have an opportunity to meet staff and ask questions. In some schools you may be able to arrange to visit at a different time. Ring or visit the school and ask for an appointment. You may want to bring a friend with you, especially if you do not feel confident in your knowledge of English.

While you are at the school, these are some of the things you might look out for or ask about:

- How welcoming does the school feel? Is parental involvement encouraged through informal contacts and organisations such as a Parents Teachers Association?
- Are you impressed by the children's work that you see? How much feedback is given by the teacher on the exercise books?
- If you see lessons in progress, how engaged do the children seem to be?
- Are there notices in different languages around the school?
- What kind of support is given to children whose first language is not English to learn the language and access the curriculum? How well do they do in the school?
- What kind of support is given for children with Special Educational Needs?
- What is the school's policy on issues like homework?
- Are children placed in 'streams' according to ability, and how is children's progress monitored?
- What arrangements are there for communicating with parents about their children's progress? Some schools, especially secondary, but not all, currently use email or online platforms to communicate with parents about their children progress.

- Is the school well-equipped? Find out where pupils do sport, and what computer facilities are available.
- What extra activities are available? e.g. is there any music, does the school organise educational trips and outings to museums, concerts etc.?
- How will your child get to school? Think about safe routes, transport and the length of the journey.

School Prospectuses

Since 2012 all schools have been required to publish on their websites information about their values and ethos, admissions, curriculum, tests results, results of school inspections, behavior policy, SEN provisions and how certain funds are allocated (for example towards physical education or how much is spent on each individual pupil). You may get this information online from the school's website using the link <http://schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk/>

Reports by Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)

Ofsted is the official body with responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the education taking place in schools and other education establishments in England. Schools are inspected at least every three years and the results of their assessments are available in publicly available reports.

Ofsted's judgments are made on a four-point scale:

- one – outstanding
- two – good
- three – requires improvement
- four - inadequate

To find out how a school is performing go to:

- <http://www.bbc.com/news/education-30210311> or
- <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/index.html>

A poor OFSTED report does not necessarily mean that your child will not do well at the school. The methods used in Ofsted inspections and some of their evaluations have been controversial.

School performance tables

National tables are available listing the results of school-administered tests (SATs) for primary schools and national examination for all secondary schools in England. They are published annually. You can use this information to see how each school near you compares with the average for: your local authority area; across the country.

For primary schools the tables show the percentage of pupils achieving the government-defined expected level of attainment (Level 4) in three subjects: English, Mathematics and Science at the end of Year 6². New, more comprehensive primary school tables list:

- pupils' progress from age 4 to 11
- what proportion of pupils reach the demanding new standard at age 11
- how well pupils do on average at age 11
- what proportion of their pupils are rated 'high achieving'

Spending data are published alongside the performance data and you, as a parent, are able to look at how much individual schools spent per pupil last year on areas such as teaching staff, energy and catering. Performance tables also include attendance data as well as results from Ofsted inspections.

Contextual value added (CVA) scores

These scores show the progress the pupils have made from the end of one Key Stage to another. They aim to measure the school's contribution to the children's learning. CVA scores complement published test and examination results and give an additional guide to the performance of a school. For primary schools, the CVA scores use 100 as a bench mark. Scores of more than 100 represent schools where pupils made more progress than similar pupils nationally. Scores of less than 100 represent schools where pupils made less progress. For secondary schools, the CVA scores use 1000 as the bench mark instead of 100.

League tables can be helpful when your family is deciding which schools to apply to but they don't give you the full picture. Other resources to look at include the school's website and Ofsted reports which, like league tables, can be found online. It is important however that you visit the school and find out as much as you can about what goes on there

² **Levels are being withdrawn** as a measure of progress and schools are meant to set their own assessment measures.

The different types of primary schools

State Schools

Most children attend state schools maintained through public funds which are free to all pupils. All state schools are inspected regularly by Ofsted.

There is a variety of primary schools within the state system in England:

Community Schools

These schools are managed by the Local Authority (LA) through a Governing Body composed of 'stakeholders' (parents, staff, people appointed by the local authority, people co-opted for their specific skills and experience). These schools have their own budget determined by the number of pupils and other factors such as levels of social deprivation, numbers of children with English as an Additional Language (EAL). These schools are non-denominational and all children of the relevant age may apply. Schools must, however, hold a daily act of 'mainly Christian' worship. Admission to community schools is managed through the LA and places are allocated on the basis of residence, whether a sibling is already at the school and in some cases special educational or social needs.

Voluntary-aided (or voluntary controlled) schools

Most of these are religious or 'Faith' schools but some are linked to charitable foundations. Most faith schools are Church of England or Catholic, but there are a smaller number of Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh schools within the state system. For faith schools, except for Church of England (C of E) schools, members of other faiths are only admitted if there are spare places. C of E primary schools have generally been open to everyone and in rural areas may be the only local school available. Popular C of E schools are increasingly selecting on the basis of religious observance. Selecting pupils on the basis of religious observance is very common in Catholic schools and parents are likely to need a letter of support from their local Catholic priest.

90% of capital costs and all the running costs come from the local authority but the faith group or charitable foundation controls the governing body and sets the admissions requirements. For faith schools, you will need to provide evidence of religious observance. These schools follow the National Curriculum but faith status may be reflected in their religious education curriculum and acts of worship as well as admissions criteria and staffing policies.

Special schools

Special schools cater for children with specific special educational needs (physical disabilities or learning difficulties). These may be community schools or voluntary aided. Many of these schools take children aged 5-19. Some mainstream schools have special units for specific learning difficulties and many children with learning difficulties or

disabilities attend mainstream schools.

Maintained boarding schools

These are for children with particular social or educational needs and the child lives at the school during the term. They offer free tuition, but charge fees for board and lodging.

Academies

Since 2010, many primary schools have been turned into Academies and the government has ruled that all newly opening schools must be academies. Academies have a sponsor from business, faith or voluntary groups who contributes part of the costs but the remainder, and the running costs, are provided directly by the government. Academy Schools are independent of the local authority and the sponsor appoints the majority of the governing body. All are expected to follow a broad and balanced curriculum. Free schools can set their own pay and conditions for staff, change the length of school terms and the school day. They are monitored directly by the Department for Education.

Free schools

Free schools are Academies which can be established by diverse groups (such as businesses, faith groups, parents, charities or universities) and can have academic character or more practical orientation. They are 'all-ability' schools, so cannot be academically selective like grammar schools.

Independent (or private) schools

There are around 2,500 independent schools in the UK (primary and secondary), which educate 7 per cent of all British children and 18 per cent of pupils over the age of 16. These schools set their own curriculum and admissions policies. Entry is based on ability to pay, but particularly for the more prestigious schools, this may include an aptitude test.

For information see the Guide to Independent Schools:

<http://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/>

Some independent schools offer subsidized places to children who do well in their entrance exams but whose parents might be unable to pay the fees.

See: www.feeassistancelondonschools.org.uk

Applying for a place

In applying for a school place, you can express a preference but places will be allocated according to criteria which vary according to the type of school. **You are not guaranteed that your child will get a place in the school of your choice.**

Application Process (Primary School)

Applications open on different days in each local council area - you need to find out from your local council when applications open in your area. There is a deadline for submitting applications:

15 January

When you fill in the form (online or on paper), you will be asked to list the schools you are applying for in order of preference. You must apply for **at least 3 schools**, usually up to 6. To get a paper copy of the application form, contact your local council.

May
Local Authorities (LA) publish information about admission arrangements for the following year
September
Information and application packs for primary and secondary schools are available from LAs
Autumn term
Choose schools to apply for (at least 3)
By 15 January
Gather all the necessary documents. Submit an application online or by post
After closing date
Admission authorities must consider all applications equally against the published criteria
16 April
You will be offered a place. This may not be one of the schools you chose. If you are not happy with the decision you can appeal

Remember:

- Apply in the **autumn term in the year before your child is due to start school** (your child may be 3 years old at that time – see section on Structure of Schooling).
- Following the receipt of applications (15th January), each local authority begins the process of allocating places. If you apply after the deadline, your application must be considered straightaway but you are less likely to be offered a place at your preferred school.
- If you move house (or you are relocated by the council) to another local authority, you are likely to need to change your child's school. **You will need to go through the admission process again in the new LA.** Contact your new local authority for more information well in advance of your move - some schools in your new area may already be full.

Admissions Criteria

Before submitting your application read the school's admission criteria - these will give you a realistic idea of your child's chances of getting a place there.

Schools must accept all children who apply if there are enough places. Popular schools may get more applicants than available places. In that case they must allocate places according to their **oversubscription criteria**.

Community schools allocate places primarily according to:

- the distance of your home from the school. Local authorities designate a 'catchment areas' for schools in their area and people who live within that area have a higher chance of being accepted into the school.
- whether a child already has a brother or sister in the school.
- in some cases particular educational or social needs.

For popular schools the catchment area may be quite narrow and you need to check whether you live within this area.

Faith schools generally require proof of religious observance, for example a letter from a priest or imam, a certificate of baptism.

Where to apply

Local authorities coordinate the admissions process for all types of state school. To apply for a school place you need to complete the local authority's common application form, online or on paper.

What you need when applying for a school place

When you apply for school you do not need any additional documents. A supplementary form might be needed for voluntary aided faith schools. At a later stage, you might be asked for proof of address (e.g. electricity bill or a Child Benefit letter).

Appealing against a decision on a school place

- If your child does not get a place at your preferred school, **you have a legal right to appeal to an independent appeal panel.**
- Appeals are only possible on the grounds of administrative mistakes (e.g. that the LA did not take account of a relevant document). **You cannot appeal merely because you do not like a school.**
- You will find details of how to make an appeal in the local authority's admission letter outlining your offer and the **deadline that you must meet** if you want to appeal.
- If your child has not been allocated a school place you will need to contact the admissions team at your LA. They can let you know which schools have places available.

When you have accepted a place

When you have been offered, and accepted, a place, you will normally be invited to the school for an induction interview with your child. This is a very important meeting. It is an opportunity for you to find out more about the school and for you to give important information about your child which will help him/her settle into the school. You may for example want to discuss:

- Your child's English language skills and any help s/he may need
- Your child's mother tongue and opportunities to use it
- Any special needs (for example physical disability, learning difficulty or behavioural problem) your child has
- Any other issues which may affect his/her progress
- The school uniform and whether there is any flexibility in what they must wear
- School meals and whether, e.g., vegetarian or Halal food is offered.

You may want to take a friend or an interpreter to this meeting. The school may be able to help with interpretation if, for example, there are staff available who speak your language.

STARTING PRIMARY SCHOOL

Term dates and school holidays

From September 2015, local education authorities in England no longer determine the term and school holiday dates but schools have the power to set their own. You can find out your school's term dates using the following website: <https://termdates.co.uk>

The School Year

There are generally three terms in the school year, with holidays between them, and each term has a week of 'half term' holiday. The number of weeks in each half term and the length of holidays can vary. The school year begins in early September and finishes in late July.

A typical school year in a state school

Term 1 Autumn Term September – December			Christmas Holiday	Term 2 Spring Term January - March/April			Easter Holiday	Term 3 Summer Term March/April – July			Summer Holiday
6-7 weeks	Half term 1 week	6-7 weeks		6-7 weeks	Half term 1 week	6-7 weeks		6-7 weeks	Half term 1 week	6-7 weeks	

There may be extra days (called **INSET** days) when children do not attend school because of staff training. Your child's school will notify you in advance.

During the holiday period, your local authority may arrange play schemes – ask your school or LA about this.

What your child will need

School uniform

In most schools in the UK children wear a school uniform. These can be quite simple (such as requiring white shirts and black trousers or skirts) or involve more specific clothes. The governing body of each school decides on the uniform policy or dress code, generally in consultation with parents and staff. As well as a uniform, the dress code could include other rules, for example, not wearing jewellery. School uniforms are also required to accommodate religious observance, e.g. allowing Sikhs to wear turbans. School uniform often includes clothing required for PE lessons, usually a t-shirt, shorts and plimsolls.

- Schools are generally strict about uniform and as a parent you need to ensure that your child is dressed correctly.
- Most schools allow some flexibility for religious reasons, e.g. girls may be able to wear loose trousers instead of a skirt.
- Some local authorities provide grants to help with buying school uniforms. For many schools you will be able to buy uniform in high street shops.

Other equipment

School materials such as text books, exercise books, pencils, art materials, photocopies, design and technology materials are usually provided by the school. Children may bring in their own pencil cases and pens, rulers etc. Children do not bring textbooks and exercise books home unless they are being used for homework.

Getting to School

- Most children in cities will be able to attend a primary school in easy walking distance of their home. In other cases you may need to use public transport or special transport provided by the LA.
- In London, for example, all public transport is free for children until the age of 11.
- All those under 16 can travel free on buses and at children's rate on the Tube, DLR and London Overground, if they have an Oyster photocard (required from the age of 11).
- In other areas they will be entitled to free transport if they need to attend a school which is further away than the 'statutory walking distance' (two miles for pupils aged under eight and three miles for those aged eight and over). For those on lower incomes and receiving certain benefits slightly different rules might apply.
- In rural areas they may need to take a special school bus.

Young Londoners aged 16-18 may also be eligible for free bus and tram travel. Check <https://tfl.gov.uk> for more information.

The first day at school – overcoming fears

Starting school can be an exciting time for a child but it can also be a difficult, and sometimes traumatic, experience as children may be leaving their family perhaps for the first time to spend time with strangers. This may be particularly difficult for children who recently arrived in the country and who may not speak much English.

Some children starting school in the UK may have been to school in their country and therefore have some experience of what it is like to be at school, although it may be very different from school in Britain. It may take some time before they begin to speak English. This is quite normal, but you could speak to the teacher if you are really concerned.

There are plenty of practical things that you can do to prepare children for their first day at school. Obviously these will vary depending on the age of your child and the length of time you have been in the UK.

For all children – wherever they were born and whatever their level of English language – the following can help children to settle in quickly at school:

- visit the school with your child so they become familiar with the building and the local area
- involve your child in choosing things needed for school such as school bags or uniform (though bear in mind that there may be peer pressure dictating what type of clothes/bags etc. are seen as 'acceptable')
- try to get to know other children who attend the school and their parents
- explain where they will be going, what they will be doing, and for how long and emphasise the things they may enjoy doing
- make sure your child is able to do simple tasks such as putting on shoes, buttoning coats
- get them used to using pencils and other equipment
- play games that involve taking turns or speaking in front of a group; and activities, such as drawing, which involve sitting down quietly for short periods of time
- let the school know of any particular difficulties/worries your child might have and of any special needs

If they do not speak much English you may need to do some extra things, for example:

- teach your child some important words/expressions in English such as 'I am hungry/thirsty'; 'I need the toilet'
- get them used to hearing English through for example listening to children's television, radio programmes, speaking English yourself
- play games, sing songs in English
- if you are not confident in your own English, learn English together with your child

Older children who have already been to school in their home country need to know how schools are different from the schools they are used to. Explain to them, for example:

- how the length of the school day and the pattern of activities differ
- about the diversity and multiculturalism they will encounter in many British schools
- about the kind of behaviour that will be expected of them and the other children (for example that fighting is strictly forbidden; that discipline in schools may seem more relaxed than in their countries but it is important to behave appropriately)

What your child will be doing at school

The school day

The organisation of the school day varies between schools but it might look something like the one described in the box below. This is only an example and you will need to check the exact arrangements, especially for arrival and going home, with the school. For example, arrival time may vary and be anything between 8:50 and 9:15am.

8.50	Arrival - children gather into class groups in playground and move into classroom in lines
9.00	Register - teacher makes a note of those attending
9.10	Assembly (School or year group)
9.30	Lessons
10.15	Playtime – children will play in playground unless it is raining. Free fruit is provided in KS1.
10.30	Lessons
12.00	Lunch
12.45	Lessons
2.00	Playtime
2.15	Lessons
3.30	End of school day

Some schools give parents (or display outside the classroom) a weekly timetable which indicates what children will be doing during that week. Ask your child's class teacher if you want to know your child's weekly schedule.

Arrival

It is important that your child arrives on time so that they are ready to start the school day at the right time.

Lessons

- Your child will be placed in a class of about 30 other children.
- There will be one class teacher who will be with them for most of the day, working with them on a range of subjects and activities, possibly including PE and music.
- There may be some additional support to help with, for example, children with special needs and those who need support in learning English.

- As well as a teacher, there may also be a classroom assistant in reception class and also possibly in older classes too.
- In the early years, children's learning is less formal than in many countries and children may spend some time sitting on the carpet (e.g. for stories) or in other activities.
- Children normally sit around tables to work rather than at desks.
- Children are not given timetables but you as a parent may request one from your child's teacher.
- Older children may have fewer breaks and more formal sessions for each subject.

Lunch

A hot meal is served daily in the school hall/dining room.

All children in reception, year 1 and year 2 in a state school in England receive free school meals automatically.

From Year 3 upwards a charge is made but your child may be entitled to free school meals if you claim certain benefits. Check with your local council to see if your child qualifies and find out how to apply.

Children can also bring in their own lunch and they will eat this in a designated space in the school. If you provide a packed lunch this should be healthy and avoid things like sugary drinks.

There are certain food standards that apply to all maintained schools. They must provide: high-quality meat, poultry or oily fish, fruit and vegetables, bread, other cereals and potatoes. Drinks with added sugar, crisps, chocolate or sweets are not allowed as part of school meals and schools cannot serve more than 2 portions of deep-fried, battered or breaded food a week.

To see what today's school lunches are like, visit:

<https://www.pinterest.com/foodfoundation/a-golden-age-for-school-food/>

Playtime

Children are usually **split into infants and juniors** during playtime which means that younger children are with older ones only for short periods. There are always **members of staff (teachers and assistants) present** in the playground during breaks to ensure the safety of children. Free milk or a portion of fruit are provided at this time.

End of the school day

Younger children will not be allowed to go home unless a parent or carer has come to collect them. Children in Years 5 and 6 can travel independently if the school has received a letter allowing this signed by a parent.

You need to ensure that you (or some other person you have arranged to do this) are at the school to collect your child. The time waiting to collect your child is a good opportunity to get to know other parents and to discuss issues concerning the school.

Extra help for your child

Learning English

If your child does not speak much English, s/he may receive **support to help learn the language** and to be able to understand the lessons. There may be teachers or teaching assistants in the school who speak your language and who can help him/her to settle in.

Special needs

Schools offer special help for a range of particular needs. This may include a physical disability, learning difficulty or behaviour problem. It can involve support in class or in separate groups for part of the day.

You should discuss your child's needs with the teacher if you are aware of any issues or concerned about the development of your child. For more information, see the section on **special education needs (SEN)** on page 53

Homework

- Schools set their own homework policy and the amount varies across schools.
- Not all primary schools set homework, particularly in the early years.
- A typical amount of homework for primary schools is twice a week, once in maths and once in English. They may also be expected to read aloud to their parents/carers for about 20 minutes a day and each week to learn to spell a list of words which they will be tested on.
- Children may get different homework depending on their age, abilities and the levels they have achieved. If you feel your child is getting homework which is too easy or too difficult, you can talk to the teacher.
- Many schools set up after school homework clubs where children can do their homework with assistance from a teacher.

Reading Schemes

In Britain children learn to read mainly through 'reading schemes'; they are given books of different levels (sometimes colour coded) to take home and are meant to practise reading either with their parents (for younger children) or on their own (for older children). As soon as they finish a book, the teacher will replace it with another.

Monitoring the progress of your child

Your child's teacher will carry out regular checks on her/his progress in each subject as a normal part of their teaching. At the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 children will have tests called SATs which will indicate their level of knowledge in a particular subject.

You will receive **reports** on your child's progress each term and have the opportunity to discuss this with teachers at a **parents evening** at least once a year.

SECONDARY SCHOOL

TRANSFER TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

- Choosing a place at secondary school is more complex than for primary schools
- There are more types of school, including schools specialising in particular subjects
- Some secondary schools are mixed sex and some boys or girls only
- Competition for places in some schools may be intense
- You should start thinking about your preferred school when your child is in Year 5

As with primary school, if you arrive in the middle of the school year, you will not be able to go through the process of applying for a school place which we describe below and many schools will already be full. You should remember that:

- Your child should be in full time education between the ages of 5 and 18 and is entitled to free education until the age of 19. From the age of 16 it does not need to be school based.
- The local authority (LA) is legally required to ensure that all children of school age resident in their area have a school place.
- You may not be able to get your first choice of school if it is already full.
- Your child can change school later providing another school is willing to offer a place.

As with choosing a primary school, you should use as many different sources of information as you can in deciding on a school.

Consider the following points:

- The school that will be best for your child may not be the one with best examination results (usually GCSEs or English Baccalaureate) or best Ofsted report and it is important to find out about what actually happens in the school.
- Do you want your child to attend a coeducational (mixed) or single sex school? Do you want a school which specialises in a particular subject(s)? Is there an entrance test and what are the arrangements for this?
- Try to visit all the schools you think you may be interested in. There may be a tight timetable for open evenings, so make a calendar in advance and include all the schools which you think are possible to get a place in

Visiting the School

Bear in mind the questions we suggested in relation to primary schools (page 16) but in addition you may want to find out about:

- How flexible is the school in relation to the subject choices or combination of choices?
- Does it have specialist places (for example art or sports)?
- Sports and music facilities
- Does the school have a sixth form?
- Extra activities (for example foreign trips, work experiences)
- Foreign languages taught. (Can your own language be taken as an examination subject?)
- Class sizes
- Discipline and behaviour in the school

The Different Types of Secondary School

Community Schools

Comprehensive Schools do not select according to ability and are expected to have pupils with a range of ability reflecting the local area. These represent the majority of community secondary schools. They may be single sex (boys or girls only) or mixed.

Grammar Schools select their intake on the basis of a test taken at the age of 11. A minority of local authorities have a fully or partially selective system and around 20% of children in these areas gain places in grammar schools. There are also some grammar schools in areas where the system as a whole is not selective.

Secondary Modern these schools take the children who do not receive grammar school places in areas where there is selection. They may also be called 'comprehensive' or 'community' but their intake will be skewed by the existence of the grammar school.

Voluntary Aided Schools

These are run on similar lines to Voluntary Aided primary schools. They may be of various types, including comprehensives or grammar schools. The majority are faith schools.

Special schools

Special schools cater for children with specific special educational needs (physical disabilities or learning difficulties). These may be community schools or voluntary aided. Many of these schools take children from aged 5-19.

Some mainstream schools have special units for specific learning difficulties and many children with learning difficulties or disabilities attend mainstream schools.

Maintained boarding schools are for children with particular social or educational needs. The children live at the school during the week. They offer free tuition, but charge fees for board and lodging.

Other types of State school

Academies

Since 2010, many schools have been turned into Academies and the government has ruled that all newly opening schools must be academies. Academies have a sponsor from business, faith or voluntary groups who contributes part of the costs but the remainder, and the running costs, are provided directly by the government. Academy Schools are independent of the local authority and the sponsor appoints the majority of the governing body. All are expected to follow a broad and balanced curriculum. Free schools can set their own pay and conditions for staff, change the length of school terms and the school day. They are monitored directly by the Department for Education.

Free schools

Free schools are Academies which can be established by diverse groups (such as businesses, faith groups, parents, charities or universities) and can have academic character or more practical orientation. They are 'all-ability' schools, so cannot be academically selective like grammar schools.

Foundation and Trust schools are publicly funded but their governing body has chosen to 'opt out' of local authority control. The governing body is responsible for setting their own admissions criteria and they may select on academic grounds.

Specialist Schools, generally community schools, specialise in one or more of the ten national curriculum subjects. They must also have a sponsor who will provide at least £50,000. Specialist schools get additional funding per pupil. They can select 10% of their pupils by aptitude in the chosen subject.

City Technology Colleges are independently managed schools in urban areas which focus on science, technology and vocational subjects. Like Academies, they have a sponsor who appoints the majority of the governors and they organise their admissions. They do not select on the grounds of ability.

Independent (or private) schools

Independent, or private, schools set their own curriculum and admissions policies. Confusingly, some of the most well-known private secondary schools are called 'public schools' for historical reasons. Entry is based on ability to pay, but particularly for the more prestigious schools, this generally includes an examination. For information see the Guide to Independent Schools: <http://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/>. Some independent schools offer subsidized places to children who do well in their entrance exams but whose parents might be unable to pay the fees. See: www.feeassistancelondonschools.org.uk

From 2015 all young people must stay in education until the age of 18.

This could be through:

- full-time study in a school, college or with a training provider;
- full-time work or volunteering (20 hours or more per week) combined with part-time education or training; or
- an apprenticeship or traineeship (more information available at www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

Applying for a place at Secondary School

You will start the process of applying for a place when your child is at the beginning of year 6. As with primary schools, admissions for state schools are managed by the local authority. Applications open on different days in each local council area - you need to find out from your local council when applications open for secondary schools.

The deadline for applying for secondary schools is **31 October**.
Offers are made on 1 March.

You can apply for **up to six** secondary schools, listing them in order of preference. The easiest way to apply is **online** but if you prefer to do it on paper, contact your local council to get a paper copy of the application form.

Many secondary schools, particularly faith schools, will also have a **Supplementary Application Form** which can be downloaded from the school website and needs to be completed and returned directly to the school. This form is in addition to the Common Application Form available through the local authority.

The Application Process (secondary school)

May
Local Authorities (LA) publish information about admission arrangements for the following year
September
Information and application packs for primary and secondary schools are available from LAs
Autumn term
Visit schools and choose schools to apply to
After closing date
Admission authorities must consider all applications equally against the published oversubscription criteria
By 31 October
Gather all the necessary documents. Submit an application online or by post
1 March
You will be offered a place. This may not be one of the schools you choose. It is possible to appeal if you feel your application has not been properly processed. You can also apply to go on the waiting list of your chosen schools in case a place later becomes available.

Admissions Criteria

Different types of school have their own admissions systems:

- Places at most **comprehensive** schools are allocated on the same basis as primary schools (**place of residence, having a sibling in the school, social reasons**).
- Some local authorities use strategies to ensure that there is a balance of different abilities – e.g. a lottery system; a **'banding'** where children are placed into different ability 'bands' (high, medium and low) on the basis of test results.
- In areas where the state system is based on selection, all children have to sit an examination, known as the **'11 plus'**, which determines whether they are 'selected' to go to a **grammar school** or whether they go to a comprehensive or secondary modern school.
- For other grammar schools the school sets its own examination.

STARTING SECONDARY SCHOOL

Children will find secondary school very different from primary school. Secondary schools are generally much bigger and more complex but, as with primary school, being familiar with the place, having friends and knowing how the school works all help in settling down.

Helping your child to settle into secondary school

- Visit the school with your child so they become familiar with the building and the local area.
- Attend the induction meeting with your child and discuss any issues or concerns with the teacher.
- If your child does not speak much English, discuss their needs with the school (ensure you get an interpreter for the meeting if necessary).
- Discuss the route to the school and if possible try to ensure your child has friends who will travel to school together.
- Involve your child in choosing things needed for school such as school bags or uniform (though peer pressure dictating what type of clothes/bags are seen as acceptable is likely to be more intense than at primary school).
- Try to get to know other children who attend/will be starting the school and their parents.
- Discuss the differences between primary and secondary school with your child
- Make sure that they know what clothing and equipment they need.
- Let the school know of any particular difficulties/worries your child might have and of any special needs
- Discuss the kind of behaviour that will be expected of them and the other children (for example that fighting is strictly forbidden)

Some key differences between primary and secondary schools

Primary	Secondary
most of the time is spent with the same class and with the same teacher	subjects are taught by specialist teachers – there may be as many as eight in a single day – and often with different groups of children.
children stay in one room for most of the day	children move around the school between lessons and have to find their classrooms.
A limited number of subjects are taught	More subjects are taught – there may be 15 per week – including new subjects such as business studies or philosophy
Children do not have fixed timetables	Children are given timetables which they have to keep with them
Homework is generally given twice a week, though some schools do not give homework	Children will be expected to do more homework – generally every day
Children normally travel to school with parents or other adults – at least in the early years	Children usually travel on their own or with friends
Reports given to parents once a year	Reports given to parents every term (or half term)

School staff

There will be a much larger number of staff, with a variety of roles, than at primary school. The following staff may be in a typical school, though they may have different titles and there may be other roles according to the school's needs. Many staff will have more than one role, e.g. class tutors are usually also subject teachers.

Staff normally present in all schools:

- **Headteacher** – responsible for the leadership and management of the school
- **Deputy Headteacher(s)** – responsible for managing the school in the absence of the headteacher and for specific areas of the school's work
- **Heads of Department** – responsible for the leadership and management of a particular subject (e.g. languages)
- **Subject teachers** – teach lessons in a particular subject under the management of head of department.
- **Heads of Year** – responsible for the pastoral aspects of the children in a year group (i.e. issues other than the curriculum, including attendance, behaviour, contact with parents)
- **Class tutor** – responsible for the pastoral aspects of a tutor group(class); takes a daily register
- **Special Needs Coordinator (SENCO)** – responsible for coordinating the provision of support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)

- **Supply teachers** – temporary teachers, employed when teachers are absent due to sickness, training or other reasons
- **Support teachers/teaching assistants** – provide support to class teachers
- **Coordinator for Highly Able Pupils Education** - responsible for coordinating provision for highly able children.
- **Laboratory technicians** – school staff responsible for providing the equipment needed for lessons

You may also find:

- **School counsellor** – responsible for providing pastoral/psychological support to students
- **Cover supervisor (floating teacher)** – covering lessons for absent teachers
- **Behaviour support assistant** – assistant responsible for maintaining good behaviour in class
- **EAL (English as an Additional Language) coordinator** – responsible for coordinating support for children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and other children at risk of underachieving
- **Inclusion Officers** – responsible for supporting pupils at risk of exclusion
- **Learning Mentors** – work with children who require assistance in overcoming barriers to learning
- **Careers Guidance Counsellor** – responsible for coordinating and providing careers advice to pupils
- **School-Home Liaison Worker** – works with parents to support children facing difficulties at home
- **Extended School Worker** – responsible for the ‘extended schools program’ involving extracurricular activities
- **School police liaison officer** – in some schools there may be a dedicated officer who works regularly with the school offering advice and support

The School Day – an example* of a timetable

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.30 - 8.50	Assembly	Class Time	Class Time	Assembly	Class Time
8.50 - 9.50	Design & Technology	Science	Religious Education	Music	PE (Indoors)
9.50 - 10.50	Design & Technology	English	Science	English	French
10.50 - 11.10	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
11.10 - 12.10	English	Art	ICT	History	English
12.10 - 12.55	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
13.00 - 14.00	Maths	PE (Outdoors)	Geography	Maths	Science
14.00 - 15.00	History	French	Maths	Science	Geography

** Note: This is just an example, the format and content may vary significantly across schools*

Homework

The amount of homework will increase and homework will be in a larger number of subjects than at primary school.

Schools normally provide **homework diaries** to help students organise their learning – parents may be asked to sign these weekly to confirm that they have seen what is required.

- The load, and subjects, will be different on different days.
- Schools have different homework policies and give different amounts of work.
- If you have concerns about the amount of homework, talk to the child's tutor.

Some schools run **homework clubs** which allow pupils to work on their homework in a supportive environment either at lunch time or after school. If your school does not have a club, the local authority may offer them, generally in a local library. Homework club venues and facilities differ and you should contact your local authority or visit their website for information on what is available.

Formal feedback on your child's progress

You will get increased formal feedback on your child's progress and it is important that you provide a good example to your child by reading these and responding where appropriate:

- your child will receive school reports more frequently - every half term or every term
- reports have to be signed by a parent/carer to confirm that you have seen it
- homework diaries may need to be signed weekly and you can also write comments to the teachers in these

Example* of Y11 Progress Report (received after the autumn term)

Attendance since September: 96.7%

Subject	Target Minimum Grade	Target Predicted Grade	Effort	Concern
English Language	A-	B	SC	BEH
English Literature	A-	C+	SC	ORG
Chemistry	A*	A*	G	N/A
Biology	A*	A*	G	N/A
Physics	A*	A*	G	N/A
Design Technology	A*	A	C	HMW
Mathematics	A*	A*	G	N/A
ECS	A*	B+	G	ORG
History	A*	A	G	HMW
Psychology	A*	B	E	ORG
Philosophy	A*	B	G	ORG

+2 sub grades above target	+1 sub grade above target	On target	-1 sub grade below target	-2 sub grade below target
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Effort:

E – Excellent
G – good
C – concern
SC – serious concern

Concerns:

ORG – organisation
HMW – homework
BEH – behaviour

** Note: This is just an example, format and targets may vary significantly across schools*

Explanation of progress indicators:

- The target minimum grade /level is the minimum grade that the pupil must achieve by the end of the key stage
- The current predicted grade indicates what a student will achieve at the end of key stage 4, if they continue to make the same amount of progress
- These levels/grades may rise throughout the key stage, based upon prior attainment and teacher assessment

Making subject choices

During Year 9 your child will choose which subjects to study at Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11) and take in their GCSE examinations.

Even at this stage it is important to get advice, including from a careers guidance counsellor, as often choices of subjects will impact on the child's future career and educational opportunities.

- It is important that parents find out about the options so that they can participate in decision making about those choices.
- Apart from compulsory subjects, children should choose subjects they enjoy and can do well in, but should also try to get a balance of subjects. This will give them more options when deciding on courses and jobs in the future.

Examinations

Changes to GCSE - In 2010 the government introduced a new performance indicator called the English Baccalaureate, which measures the percentage of students in a school who achieve at least 5 A*-C grades in core academic subjects: English, mathematics, two sciences, a foreign language and history or geography at GCSE level.

Subjects

Compulsory new GCSEs in **English Language**, **English Literature** and **Maths** were introduced in September 2015. New GCSEs in the **Sciences**, **History and Geography**, as well as **languages**, are scheduled to be introduced in September 2016.

For more information about current changes to GCSEs see:

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/141803-guide-to-the-gcse-changes.pdf>

Some schools offer two or more languages usually French, Spanish or German but in some schools other foreign languages can be taught – e.g. Polish, Turkish, Bengali, Chinese, Japanese. If your mother tongue is not taught at the school, your child may still be able to take an examination in the language, providing s/he receives tuition.

Children who wish to study science, or a course such as medicine or engineering, at university should take more than one science subject.

Optional subjects

Optional subjects vary from school to school. But your child must be offered at least one course in each of four groups of subjects, called '**entitlement areas**'. These are:

- Arts (including art and design, music, dance, drama and media arts)
- Design and Technology
- Humanities (history and geography)
- Modern Foreign Languages

Your child does not have to choose one subject from each area, but remember that studying a range of subjects at this stage is useful so that pupils have a wider base of options for later study and career choices.

General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)

This is the main examination taken at the age of 16. Students generally take between 5 and 10 subjects. Exams usually take place in May/June and the results are published in August. Before the actual examinations pupils normally take so called Mock Exams. These are trial examinations and do not count towards the final grade but are often used as predictors of actual grades by the sixth form colleges to which pupils may apply.

These examinations are very important for your child:

- Some jobs may depend on GCSE passes in certain subjects
- If your child wants to continue with his/her studies, the results will determine which subjects s/he may take and which type of courses (e.g. A Level or vocational courses)
- They are used by universities in deciding whether to accept an application (together with expected A Level results and other evidence)

Assessment

- GCSEs are assessed mainly on written exams, although in some subjects there are also elements of coursework.
- Some subjects, like art and design, have more coursework and fewer exams.
- For some subjects you have a choice of two tiers: 'higher' or 'foundation' leading to a different range of grades (A* - D/higher; or C – G/foundation)
- The subject teacher normally decides which tier is best for your child.

GCSE Results

The current grading system is as follows:

- The exams are graded from A* to G, but generally only A* - C are viewed as good passes
- In most cases, pupils need at least five GCSEs at grades A* - C in order to progress to Advanced Level
- School league tables are based on the proportion of pupils entered who receive 5 passes at grades A*-C.
- A grade of B or above at GCSE may be needed in a particular subject in order to take it at AS or A level
- Some sixth form schools and colleges require GCSE grade C or above in English and maths

A new **grading scale that uses the numbers 1–9** to identify levels of performance (with 9 being the top level) will be applied in the assessments of the new GCSEs. Where performance is below the minimum required to pass a GCSE, students will get a U.

Failing exams

If your child fails an examination, s/he can resit, generally six months later. This will also be changing in the next few years and you will need to enquire about the details at your child's school.

If on the day of the exam something happens which affects your child's performance, s/he may be eligible for special consideration. S/he should speak to their teachers as soon as possible. If your GCSE is made up of units, s/he can choose to re-sit individual units. The awarding body will count the higher mark from the different attempts.

AS and A level

Advanced level examinations are the main qualification for those seeking to go to university. Most students take 3 or 4 subjects, often specialising in arts/humanities/languages or in science/mathematics, though it is possible to take some of each type of subject. There are about 80 AS and A level subjects available.

- AS (Advanced Subsidiary) and A (Advanced) level qualifications focus on traditional academic skills
- AS examinations are normally taken after one year (end of Year 12) and A Level after two years (end of year 13).
- Students may take an extra subject for AS in order to retain more options for A Level.

A Level Results

- The exams are graded from A* to E (pass) with F as unclassified.
- In most cases, you need at least two, and often three, good passes to obtain a university place
- Some university courses require you to pass specific subjects
- For some subjects (e.g. medicine) you will need at least 2 grade As and one other good pass

Other examinations/qualifications

There are a variety of other courses which children can take at school or college. These include vocational such as BTECs, City & Guilds and OCR Nationals which can be taken in a variety of subjects including art and design, business, health and social care and information technology (for further details see <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/>)

OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES IN RELATION TO SCHOOLING

Assembly

- Assemblies are usually held daily (sometimes less often) in all schools and may involve the whole school or a particular year(s) group.
- They vary between schools, and on different days.
- They are led by senior staff but may include participation by children and visitors.
- All state schools are required to provide a 'broadly Christian' daily act of worship and this is generally combined with the assembly.
- In community schools this may focus on ethics, community and society rather than a specific religious dimension.
- In faith schools this will be in accordance with their particular observance (e.g. Roman Catholic, Jewish).
- Parents may withdraw their child from assembly if they object on religious grounds.

Attendance

School attendance is strictly monitored in UK schools. If your child is sick and not well enough to attend you should notify the school (usually by phone) at the beginning of the school day.

The overall minimum attendance target for each child is usually set at 95% which equals to 9 absent days. It is monitored by the school and other education bodies (for instance welfare officers or social workers) who will contact you if your child regularly misses school. As a last resort they may decide to give you penalty notices of £60 to £120. If a parent does not pay a penalty notice, s/he will be prosecuted and fined up to £2,500, may get a jail sentence of up to three months or a community sentence.

Attendance will appear in the child's reports and in future references. Remember that:

- If they are absent without good reason ('unauthorised absence') this will be noted and will appear on the child's record.
- 'Authorised absences' include sickness, religious holidays and family emergency (e.g. bereavement). Other absences will generally count as unauthorised.
- If your child is not well enough to attend, you should notify the school at the beginning of the school day.
- Children have the right to days off for religious holidays (e.g. Eid, Yom Kipur). You need to discuss this with the school in advance.

Extra-curricular activities

Many schools offer a variety of clubs and activities which students may participate in. These include, for example, sports, drama, music and games such as chess. These are voluntary (i.e. outside the compulsory curriculum) but it is important for your child that they become involved in such activities:

- They can help them develop important skills, including social skills, building self-confidence, working with others and taking responsibility.
- They allow them to develop wider interests and to participate in new experiences, such as being involved in a school play or musical production.
- Participation in such activities is important for when your child applies for employment or to university. The school's report and the child's own 'personal statement' in the application will use this as evidence of their skills and interests.

Out of school activities

Many schools provide activities before or after school or during the holidays. These can include:

- **breakfast club** - 8-9 am, usually a healthy breakfast is provided and various activities take place
- **after school clubs** - normally 3.30-6.00 pm and activities may include sport, music or language classes
- **holidays play schemes** – usually during half terms and summer holidays
- **after school childcare** – this would normally take place outside school premises
- Some schools, particularly secondary schools, organise **school trips**. These may include a visit abroad for children studying a language

Fees for clubs provided by schools or Ofsted-registered institutions **can be partly refunded** through Child Tax Credit, depending on your income.

This is an area of policy that is currently changing and there are plans to phase out and restrict tax credits for EU migrants; to find out what the current situation is refer to:

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/tax-credits>

Behaviour

The behaviour of children in British schools, and the teachers' behaviour towards the children, may seem less formal than in the schools that you are used to. Some differences may be:

- Children are often encouraged to say what they think.
- Except in single sex schools, boys and girls are taught together
- In all schools they will be taught by both men and women teachers.
- Teachers will normally call children by their first name, and pupils call teachers Ms/Mrs/Mr and their surname.
- Physical punishment is banned in schools (and is against the law generally) but schools have a range of punishments to deal with bad behaviour (see Discipline).
- Children are encouraged to talk to their teacher if they are worried about something – including things happening at home.

This can be confusing for children at first. If they are used to a more rigid system, they may believe that children in UK schools do not respect their teachers and this can lead them to behave badly.

Good behaviour from children is vital to their learning and schools take it very seriously. You could help your child adapt by explaining that:

- They should respect their teacher and other staff, whoever they are
- They should always try to obey the instructions of teachers
- They should not talk to their friends during class unless the teacher says that they can (e.g. if they are told to work together in groups)
- Children should put up their hand if they want to ask the teacher something in class
- Fighting with other children (or pushing, pulling hair etc.) is forbidden and may be punished

Racist bullying and discrimination

Racist bullying is a particular form of bullying where the bully targets an individual or group on the basis of their ethnic grouping for example their skin colour, the way they talk or religious or cultural practices. According to the Anti Bullying Network, racist violence, harassment and abuse are sometimes difficult to distinguish from other forms of bullying. Racist bullying in schools can range from negative remarks, which are not intended to be hurtful, to deliberate physical attacks causing serious injury.

All forms of racism are illegal in British schools and schools and local authorities have a legal duty to prevent it happening. Many schools, particularly those in areas where there are large ethnic minority populations, have well-developed policies on multi-cultural and anti-racist education. Nevertheless incidents do occur. There are also schools where there are few or no children from ethnic minorities and where little has been done to address racism.

If your child is experiencing this form of bullying you may want to talk to his/her class teacher or Headteacher. If the situation persists you may also want to seek advice from local community organisations and/or from specialist organisations.

Diversity

- Many schools, particularly in large cities, have pupils with very different backgrounds – this includes national origin, religion, language and ethnic group, nationality of their pupils.
- It is against the law to discriminate on grounds of race or ethnicity in schools (as in public and private services generally).
- Schools have a legal obligation to promote equality and ‘social cohesion’ (good relations between different groups).
- Schools may celebrate diversity by, for example, teaching about different religious festivals, learning about different types of food or providing multilingual resources. Some schools help children maintain religious traditions by, for example, providing food such as Halal meat and allowing children to take time off for religious holidays.
- In spite of these policies, children from minority groups may still experience negative stereotyping. If you think this is happening to your child, it is important to discuss this issue with the school and if necessary seek advice from community organisations.
- Some newly arrived children and parents may be unaccustomed to diversity and this can lead to misunderstandings.

Information about your child’s progress

There are many different ways in which you can find out about your child’s progress. As well as formal reports and meetings you can communicate with staff at the school in the following ways:

- You can make an appointment to see the teacher to discuss your child’s progress if you have any particular concerns – but bear in mind teachers are busy.
- For primary school children, you may be able to speak to the teacher informally, for example when you collect your child from school - misunderstandings may be resolved through an informal chat.
- Some schools, particularly secondary, communicate with parents via online platforms where parents can also see their children’s grades and progress indicators and you can use them to communicate with teachers.
- At secondary school, the homework diary provides day-to-day information about what your child is doing and you can use it to communicate with teachers by writing a short comment.
- The teachers or other school staff may contact you by letter, telephone, email or texts if they are concerned about your child. You need to take this seriously and respond as soon as possible.

School Reports

You will receive a report on your child’s progress every year in primary school and every term in secondary school. It will contain information on your child's progress, *levels of attainment* (in a form of progress indicators or grades) in the subjects they are studying, details of their attendance, behaviour and - where appropriate - special needs.

Your child will be given the report to bring home – it is important to make sure that they give it to you. The reports should be signed by a parent.

Parents' evenings

These are held at least once a year in primary school and generally once a term in secondary schools. You will have individual meetings with your child's teachers (usually 10 minutes) to discuss how the child is doing in class and in school.

How are parents' evenings organised?

- Schools have different styles of parents' meetings – some are held in classrooms, some in the school hall; they may be held in the afternoons or evenings.
- Parents and teachers should be able to hold their discussions without being overheard.
- There is normally an appointments system in order to avoid queues.
- Your child's latest report may help you to think of issues which you want to discuss.
- If your English is limited, bring a friend or ask for an interpreter. **It is not a good idea to use your children as interpreter.**
- Many schools hold a display of children's work and parents are invited to look at this.

Parental involvement

As well as supporting your own child, English schools offer many opportunities for you to get involved in the life of the school more generally.

Parent – Teacher Association (PTA) or Parents’ Associations

- **Parent-teacher associations (PTAs)** are groups made up of parents, teachers and sometimes others within the school community.
- They provide a range of **opportunities for you to get involved in school life**, many of which do not take up too much of your time.
- They may organise **fundraising and social events** which allow parents to get to know each other and meetings to inform parents about **issues concerning education**.
- The meetings and activities will general be advertised within the school and you should receive a letter from the school inviting you to attend.
- Ask your child's teacher or other parents about getting involved in your local PTA.

Governing Body

All state schools in England have a governing body working with the headteacher and senior management team. The headteacher is responsible for day-to-day management of the school. The role of the Governing Body is to provide strategic management and to act as a "critical friend" supporting the work of the headteacher and other staff. Governors at community schools include some members directly elected by parents at the school. Your parent governors may hold meetings to inform parents of important issues. You may wish to consider becoming a governor yourself. Parent governors are generally chosen through an election in which all parents can vote.

Community links

Many schools work with parents and with community organisations to provide better support for children and to provide opportunities for parents. Examples might include:

- English classes for parents
- ‘Mother tongue’ classes for children
- Celebrations of festivals
- Parents reading stories to children in class
- Multicultural evenings with e.g. cooking, music and dance
- Advice and support for parents about other services

Find out whether any of these activities are available in your school – or contact your school and/or community group if you would like to help develop these activities.

Religious education

- The curriculum for religious education is developed by individual schools or representatives from nearby schools, teachers and faith groups.
- In most community schools the curriculum involves studying more than one religious faith.
- Children can take Religious Education as an examination subject at GCSE and A Level.
- **You have the right to withdraw your child from all or part of the religious education curriculum.**

Sex and Relationship Education (SRE)

- Children receive SRE in both primary and secondary schools.
- SRE involves teaching about sex and sexual health, as well as the importance of stable and loving relationships. It doesn't promote early sexual activity or any particular sexual orientation.
- Schools develop their own SRE programmes but they are encouraged to consult parents.
- A copy of the school's SRE policy must be available for you to inspect.
- If you have any concerns about it, talk them over with a member of staff.
- **You can withdraw your child from part of the SRE programme but not from statutory elements which form part of the National Curriculum for science.**

Support for children with particular needs

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Children who come to school with little or no knowledge of English will need help with learning the language.

- The amount and kind of support given varies and when choosing school it is worth finding out what is provided
- Children may be taken out of classes for some part of the day to work in small groups
- They may have extra support during lessons from teaching assistants and various resources (e.g. bi-lingual books)
- This type of provision may be coordinated within schools by an English as an Additional Language (EAL) coordinator

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The Government defines children with SEN as having 'learning difficulties or disabilities which make it harder for them to learn or access education than most other children of the same age.'

Children with SEN may need extra help because of a range of needs, e.g.:

- problems with thinking and understanding
- physical or sensory difficulties
- emotional and behavioural difficulties
- difficulties with speech and language
- problems in how they relate to and behave with other people

The **SEN Coordinator (SENCO)** will, with the class teacher, seek to identify children in need of special support. You know your child best and may have concerns which the school has not picked up - discuss these with the class teacher and the SENCO. Many children have special needs at a certain stage which may be resolved through extra help. If your child needs continuing support then s/he might have a formal assessment which may result in a Statement of Special Needs which sets out the help which s/he is entitled to (<http://www.specialneedsuk.org>)

How do schools identify children with SEN?

- Children who are working at a level significantly below other children of the same age will be identified as having SEN.
- Children may be given specific tests to identify particular conditions.
- Specialist professionals may be involved in this process.
- It may be more difficult and lengthy to identify SEN in children with limited or no English

If you think your child has learning difficulties but the school disagrees, contact the SEN section of your Local Education Authority and ask for your child to be assessed

Highly Able Pupils

‘Highly Able’ children are able to develop to a level significantly ahead of their year group. Schools have a responsibility to meet the educational needs of all their pupils including those who have higher abilities than others in particular subjects. This includes providing greater challenges in lessons and opportunities for pupils to develop potential gifts and talents. Schools and local authorities may also provide additional activities beyond the everyday timetable (a recent programme for highly able children is called *Aspire*).

If you think your child is highly able, you should first discuss their abilities and needs with your child's teacher or headteacher. All schools should have a Leading Teacher for Highly Able Pupils Education (or share one in the case of some primary schools) whom you could speak to as well.

APPENDIX - ORGANISATIONS AND ONLINE RESOURCES

OFFICIAL WEBSITES AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Note: The government's policy on schooling is changing continuously. Some of the content on these websites may not reflect current policy.

European Toolkit for Schools - Promoting inclusive education and tackling early school leaving.

A database of information and resources from across Europe:

<http://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/toolkitsforschools.htm>

GOV.UK – UK government website with general information and advice about schooling:

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/education>

Department for Education, the government department responsible for education, its website contains information about current policy and education news: <http://www.education.gov.uk/>

Education Departments for other parts of the UK:

- **Wales** - <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills>
- **Scotland** - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education>
- **Northern Ireland** - <https://www.deni.gov.uk>

National Curriculum : www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum

School Finder - To find information about a particular school: <http://schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk/>

School search (independent schools) - To find information about independent (private) schools in the UK: <http://www.schoolsearch.co.uk/>

Office for Standard in Education (Ofsted) responsible for carrying out inspections on schools.

Results of the reports can be access on: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/>

League tables – Information from the BBC website: www.bbc.com/news/education-11950098

Help paying for childcare – From Gov.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/overview>

Under 18 Travel (London) - Information on Transport for London website:

<https://tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/travel-for-under-18s>

ADVICE SERVICES

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) an independent advice centre for parents, offering information about state education in England and Wales. Free telephone advice on topics including exclusion from school, bullying, special educational needs and school admission appeals. Tel. 0808 800 5793 - www.ace-ed.org.uk

Child Line: a free 24-hour helpline for children and young people in the UK, to help in relation to any problems. Tel. 0800 1111 - www.childline.org.uk/Pages/Home.aspx

Parentline Plus provides a wide range of information, advice and support for parents. It has a freephone 24 hour helpline and a wide range of useful information on their website. Helpline: 0808 800 2222 - www.parentlineplus.org.uk

HOME EDUCATION

Home Education UK: <http://www.home-education.org.uk>

Education Otherwise: <http://www.educationotherwise.net>

UNIVERSITY

UCAS is the organisation operating the application processes to UK universities. The website includes information on how to apply to university: www.ucas.com

The Complete University Guide – Provide comparative information and league tables about UK Universities: www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/

BULLYING

Bullying Online offers help and advice for young people and parents/carers: www.bullying.co.uk

SPECIAL NEEDS

Special Needs UK: information on special educational needs (SEN): www.specialneedsuk.org

EQUALITY ISSUES

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC): gives advice and information about the laws and rights in the UK about age, disability, gender, race, religion and sexual orientation.

Tel. 0845 604 6610 - <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com>

ADVICE FOR MIGRANTS, ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

The Refugee Council is the largest organisation in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/

The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) is a charity campaigning for justice in immigration law. It offers legal advice and strategic casework: www.jcwi.org.uk

