

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ENGLAND

Education in England is overseen by the Government's Department for Children Schools and Families.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

Education is compulsory for children between the ages of 4-18.

Children start their compulsory education at primary level then at the age of 11 they move into secondary education.

All children must stay in some form of education or training until their 18th birthday if they were born on or after 1 September 1997.

Their options are:

- full-time education - eg at a school or college
- an apprenticeship or traineeship
- part-time education or training - as well as being employed, self-employed or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week

The structure of education and schooling is categorized by key stages:

Age on 31 Aug	Year	Curriculum stage	Schools	
3	Nursery	Foundation Stage	Nursery school	
4	Reception		Primary school	Infant school
5	Year 1	Key Stage 1		
6	Year 2			
7	Year 3	Key Stage 2		Junior school
8	Year 4			
9	Year 5			
10	Year 6			
11	Year 7	Key Stage 3	Secondary school	Secondary school with sixth form
12	Year 8			
13	Year 9			
14	Year 10	Key Stage 4	College/Sixth Form	
15	Year 11			
16	Year 12 (Lower Sixth)	Sixth form	College/Sixth Form	
17	Year 13 (Upper Sixth)			

Types of Schools

There are different types of secondary schools in the UK; Maintained, Academies, Grammar and Independent Schools.

Maintained and Foundation Schools

Maintained schools are non-selective, state funded schools and the intake of students is drawn from the school catchment area. These schools work under the direction of their local authority (their Council). Foundation schools

provide the Governing Body with a little more freedom to change the way the school is run than other maintained schools.

The categories of maintained school are:

- **Community schools**
These schools work under the direction of their local authority (their Council).
- **Foundation Schools**
Foundation schools provide the Governing Body with a little more freedom to change the way the school is run than other maintained schools.
- **Voluntary Aided/Controlled Schools and Faith Schools**
A VC school is state-funded but they are associated to a [foundation](#) or [trust](#) (usually a religious group) which has some formal influence in the running of the school. A VA school is state-funded but the foundation or trust they are associated with owns the school buildings, contributes to building costs and has a substantial influence in the running of the school. Nowadays VC and VA schools are faith schools. Faith schools are schools designated with a religious character and they are run like other maintained/foundation schools. They must follow the National Curriculum except for Religious Education where they are free to only teach about their own religion.
- **Pupil Referral Units**
They provide temporary education for students who are not able to attend mainstream or special schools for a period of time. This may be because of illness, exclusion, bullying/being bullied, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Academies

Academies were introduced in 2000 and are publicly-funded independent schools; they are free from local government control. Academies don't have to follow the [national curriculum](#) and can set pay and conditions for staff and determine their own term times. They still have to follow the same rules on [admissions](#), [special educational needs](#) and [exclusions](#) as other state schools.

Academies get money direct from the government, not the local council. They're run by an academy trust which employs the staff.

Some academies have sponsors such as businesses, universities, other schools, faith or voluntary groups. Sponsors are responsible for improving the performance of their schools.

University Technical Colleges

University Technical Colleges specialise in subjects like engineering and construction - and teach these subjects along with business skills and using IT.

Pupils study academic subjects as well as practical subjects leading to technical qualifications. The curriculum is designed by the academy and employers who also provide work experience for students.

University Technical Colleges are sponsored by:

- universities
- employers
- further education colleges

City Technology Colleges

City technology colleges are independent schools in urban areas that are free to go to. They're owned and funded by companies as well as central government (not the local council).

They have a particular emphasis on technological and practical skills.

Free Schools

There is no set format for a free school, every free school is different. However, they are united by the fact that they are set up due to a local demand for more school places or a greater variety of schools.

Free schools are run on a not-for-profit basis, and can be set up by groups like: charities, universities, independent schools, community and faith groups, teachers, parents and businesses

Like Academies, Free schools are funded by the government but aren't run by the local council; they can set their own pay and conditions for staff; change the length of school terms and the school day; and they do not have to follow the national curriculum. They are 'all-ability' schools, so can't use academic selection processes like a grammar school.

Grammar Schools

Grammar Schools are funded by the Government and run by the local authority, a foundation body or a trust. They are different from other maintained schools because they are selective of their intake on the basis of a student's academic ability. Any student wishing to attend a grammar school must sit an examination called the 'Eleven Plus'. It is generally the top 25% of students who secure a place.

'Private' or 'Independent' Schools are privately run and generate their own funding, generally in the form of tuition fees or charitable financial gifts instead of government funding. Pupils don't have to follow the [national curriculum](#). Some Independent Schools offer a boarding facility for students.

All private schools must be registered with the government and are inspected regularly.

Students with Special Educational Needs

Students who attend special schools have usually been assessed and given a statement of special educational needs. These needs may include learning disabilities, physical disabilities or behavioural problems. Special schools are specifically designed and resourced to cater for the additional needs of its students. Schools are staffed with fully trained, specialist teachers.

Special schools can be community, foundation, voluntary aided, voluntary controlled or even independent schools.

The Academic Year

The academic year in England starts in September and concludes in July. It is broken down into terms. Most schools still work to three terms although a small number of schools break their academic years down in to six.

Autumn Term: September – December

Spring Term: January – March

Summer Term: April – July

A school will close for holidays for one week at half term (October, February & May), for two weeks at the end of the Autumn and Spring terms (December & March) and for six weeks at the end of the academic year in July.

Examinations and Assessment

The progress of students is monitored throughout their education. Assessment can come in many forms but the most formal of these assessments is generally done at the end of the key stages.

At the end of key stage 2 level a student's educational assessment is measured by SATs (Standard Attainment Tests). These assessments are made up of test-based assessment.

At key stage 4 students work towards GCSE examinations (General Certificate of Secondary Education) in all of the academic subjects they study. GCSEs are taken at the end of Year 11 in the form of examinations. For students studying vocational subjects they work towards BTEC Certificates (Business & Technology Education Council).

At key stage 5 students reduce the number of subjects they study (generally to three or four) and for academic subjects they work towards A levels (Advanced Level General Certificate of Education). A levels are the standard entry level qualifications to University. For students studying vocational subjects they work towards BTEC National Awards.

The National Curriculum

The National Curriculum is made up of subjects and standards. Its purpose is to standardise what children learn across all local authority maintained schools.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum>

The National Curriculum is not the required programmes of study for other types of schools such as academies and independent schools but they are still required to offer a broad and balanced curriculum.