

SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION IN ENGLAND - YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

1. At what age do children start and leave school in England?

All 3 and 4-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours of free early education each week for 38 weeks of the year. Some 2-year-olds are also entitled. This free early education can take place at:

- nursery schools
- nurseries on school sites
- nursery classes in schools and academies
- children's centres
- day nurseries
- some playgroups and pre-schools
- childminders



In England, your child must start school the term after their fifth birthday. However nearly all children join a Reception class in the September of the academic year they turn five.

Your child must stay in some form of education or training until the end of the academic year when they turn 18. This doesn't mean only staying at school, it can include:

- full-time education, e.g. at a school or college
- an apprenticeship
- full-time employment (over 20 hours a week) combined with part-time education or training

2. Is education free?

Education in state (maintained) schools is free. This includes academies and free schools as well as other schools 'maintained' by the local authority for example, community schools.

There are also schools in England which charge fees for the education they provide. These might be called private, public or independent schools.

At maintained schools, you will not need to pay for your child's education but you will need to pay for:

- School lunch (unless your children are entitled to a free school meal), or you can provide a packed lunch
- School uniform

You may also be asked to pay for:

- Some educational visits outside school
- Some events or activities after the end of the school day or at weekends
- Individual musical instrument tuition



3. How do I get a school place?

The local authority where you live will have a central system for residents to get a school place for their children, even if they are applying for a school outside their local authority.

If you have moved from overseas to live in England with your children, you can apply for them to attend a maintained school under the normal admission arrangements, regardless of your immigration status.

Some schools have specific admission arrangements, but your local authority will be able to tell you how to apply for any school.



4. What are the schools for different ages called?

Type of school	Age	Year	School stage (or phase)	National tests and assessments
Nursery and some infant or primary schools	3 - 4	FS1 or Nursery	Foundation Stage	Foundation Stage Profile
Infant or primary school	4 - 5	FS2 or Reception		
		5 - 6 6 - 7	Year 1 Year 2	Key Stage 1
Junior or primary school	7 - 8 8 - 9 9 - 10 10 - 11	Year 3 Year 4 Year 5 Year 6	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 2 SATs
Secondary or High school	11 - 12 12 - 13 13 - 14	Year 7 Year 8 Year 9	Key Stage 3	
Secondary school or University Technical College	14 - 15 15 - 16	Year 10 Year 11	Key Stage 4	GCSEs or other similar examinations
Secondary school or Further Education College	16 - 17 17 - 18	Year 12 Year 13	Key Stage 5 (Sixth form)	AS levels and A levels. These exams form the basis of admission to Colleges and Universities

In England, children move up to the next year group each September regardless of how well they do in tests.

5. A typical school day?

Schools are open Monday to Friday. Schools decide their own opening and closing times, but most start at about 8.45 and end at about 3.30 each afternoon. Most have a range of after-school clubs for pupils and these usually finish at about 4.30.



A typical primary school day:

8.55	School starts. Pupil registration
9.05	English
10.05 - 10.30	Break
10.30 - 11.30	Mathematics
11.30 - 12.15	Physical Education (PE)
12.15 - 1.05	Lunch
1.05 - 1.35	Phonics/Guided Reading
1.35 - 3.30	Topic/Science/History/Geography/Art
3.35	School ends.

School holidays are usually agreed with the local authority. Schools are usually closed for around 2 weeks at Christmas and at Easter. Schools also usually close for about 6 weeks from mid July to the end of August. There are also 3 one-week breaks each academic year known as 'half term' holidays. Each school should have its opening times and holiday dates on its website.

6. What about school lunches?

Your child can eat a mid-day meal at school which costs about £2.00 each day. Your school will help you to apply for free school meals if you receive any of these benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The 'Guarantee' element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit, provided you are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income that does not exceed £16,190

From September 2014, all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 will be entitled to a free school meal.

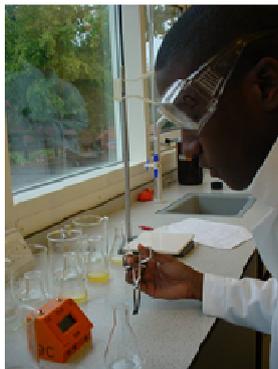
If your child does not eat pork, beef, meat or anything else, tell the school.

You can give your child a packed lunch to eat instead of a school lunch. Schools often ask parents not to include sweets or chocolate.

7. What equipment do children need for school?

Schools generally provide the equipment needed in lessons. However, schools often expect children to have:

- A writing pen
- A writing pencil and some coloured pencils
- A ruler, with measure in centimetres
- An eraser (often called a rubber)



Some secondary schools expect students to have a scientific calculator, protractor and a pair of compasses.

Your child will need PE kit which may include:

- Clothes and shoes for outdoor games and athletics
- Clothes and shoes for indoor gymnastics activities
- A swimming costume and towel



Many schools prefer pupils to wear PE kit in particular colours. Your school will have more details in the school brochure which you can find on the school website.

8. How do children get to school?

Children can walk, cycle, take a train or a bus to school. Some parents drive their children to school. There is no law saying when children can get to school on their own but you need to be sure that your child is safe getting to and from school. Most children of secondary school age make the journey to school by themselves, often with friends.

Your children may be able to get free transport to school, depending on how far away from the school you live, and any needs your children have. All children aged between 5 and 16 qualify for free school transport if they go to their nearest suitable school and live at least:

- 2 miles from the school if they're under 8
- 3 miles from the school if they're 8 or older

You can find out more from your local authority.

9. What about missing school?

It is important that you always inform the school office if your child is not going to attend school, even for one day.

If your child is ill, they won't be able to attend school. You may also ask for your child to be absent for an important religious festival. If you have to make a medical appointment (doctor, dentist, etc) try to

make it out of school time so that your child will not miss anything that has been planned for their learning.

You may want to make an extended visit overseas to see family and friends. You will need to ask the school if this is acceptable. Most schools strongly recommend that families make every effort to arrange these trips during the school holidays. Headteachers may refuse to grant a request for holidays during term time, which could mean a large fine for parents.

10. What subjects do children study at school?

Pupils aged 5-16 in local authority maintained schools must follow the national curriculum. This is organised into 4 key stages and 12 subjects. Each national curriculum subject has a programme of study which identifies the 'matters, skills and processes' to be taught at each key stage.

Schools are free to choose how they organise their school day, as long as all pupils are taught the content of the national curriculum programmes of study. Pupils in Key Stage 4 choose their own 'options' to study for GCSE or other examinations.

	Key stage 1	Key stage 2	Key stage 3	Key stage 4
Age	5-7	7-11	11-14	14-16
Year groups	1-2	3-6	7-9	10-11
CORE SUBJECTS				
English	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mathematics	✓	✓	✓	✓
Science	✓	✓	✓	✓
FOUNDATION SUBJECTS				
Art and design	✓	✓	✓	
Citizenship			✓	✓
Computing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Design and technology	✓	✓	✓	
Languages		✓	✓	
Geography	✓	✓	✓	
History	✓	✓	✓	
Music	✓	✓	✓	
Physical education (PE)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Religious education (RE)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sex and Relationship Education (SRE)			✓	✓

You can ask the school not to include your child in Religious Education lessons nor in collective worship.

Academies and free schools do not have to teach the National Curriculum. However, they must teach a broad and balanced curriculum including English, mathematics, science and religious education.

11. How can I help my child learn English?

Children learn English more quickly and do better at school if they have a strong first or home language and feel that they are adding English to this rather than replacing their home language with English.

Good first language skills act as a support for learning another language. The development of the first language teaches children how to speak and understand that language. It also teaches them how languages work.



Give babies and toddlers a good start by using your first language in the home. Once children start learning English at school, it is important for them to continue to use and develop their first language. Encourage your child to read and write in their first language as well as to speak it. Reading dual language books with your child will help them to make links between your first language and English and will help them with their reading and writing in English.

12. How can I help my child with their schoolwork?

You should encourage your child to develop their first language. If they keep their first language active while they are learning English, and use their first language in their learning, they can continue their intellectual development without a break. Knowing more than one language can increase the flexibility of your child's thinking. There are also lots of job opportunities for people who speak more than one language.

Ask your child's teachers to tell you what texts will be read in class. You could read and discuss these texts with your child in your first language before they are read in class.

If you know the topics that your child will learn about, you can discuss these with your child in your first language before, during and after the study of the topic in school. This will help to reinforce their understanding and also help them to develop academic English.

You could ask your child's teachers to give you some key words related to the topics they will study. You can discuss the meaning of these words in your first language with your child. You could help your child to find these words in a dual language dictionary or use Google translate to find out what they mean. You could help your child to keep a vocabulary book with key words for topics/ subjects. They could write the words in English together with translations of the words in the first language and maybe an explanation or a picture.

Nearly all schools give children homework. Most schools provide a diary or planner where this is recorded. Finding out from your child what homework they have been set and checking that they have done it will be really useful.

13. How will I know how my child is getting on?

Primary school teachers may talk to you informally. All schools have parent/teacher meetings for you to come and meet the teachers and to discuss your child's progress in all school subjects. Your school may contact you by letter, although some use their websites. You should check the school's website from time to time to stay in touch with what is going on.

If you want to ask the school for a meeting it is best to phone the school to make an appointment as it is often difficult for teachers to talk to parents during the school day.

You will also get information from school reports and the results of tests your child takes. Progress in the National Curriculum is measured in Levels.

End of Key Stage	Age of children	Expected level
Key Stage 1	7 years	Level 2
Key Stage 2	11 years	Level 4
Key Stage 3	14 years	Level 5/6
Key Stage 4	16 years	5 GCSEs at A* - C including English and maths

You need to remember that some children are ahead of national expectations and some take longer to reach them.

14. How can I get more involved with my child's school?

- Join the Parent Teachers Association (PTA), which are groups of parents who run fund raising activities to help buy extra resources for the school.
- Volunteer and, with the Headteacher's agreement, come into school to help support children with reading or offsite visits or other activities.
- Offer to become a School Governor. Parent governors can be elected or sometimes appointed. As a governor you can make a real difference in helping your school provide the best possible education for all of its pupils.

Some schools also have Parent Councils which help the Governors find out and respond to parents' views. You could offer to join this.

You can also get involved in school life by attending the parent/teacher meetings, which are held regularly, and by attending the many school events that take place throughout the year.

