

## Education in England

**Education in England** is overseen by the United Kingdom's Department for Education. Local government authorities are responsible for implementing policy for public education and state-funded schools at a local level.

England also has a tradition of independent schools (some of which are called "public schools") and home schooling alongside state schools; legally, parents may choose to educate their children by any suitable means. State-funded schools can be categorised as grammar schools, which are selective, or comprehensive schools, which are not. These can be further subdivided into free schools, other academies and state-run schools. More freedom is given to free schools, including most religious schools, and other academies in terms of curriculum, but all are subject to assessment and inspection by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, or Ofsted.

The state-funded education system is divided into stages based upon age: *Early Years Foundation Stage* (ages 3–5); *primary education* (ages 5 to 11): subdivided into Key Stage 1 (KS1) Infants (ages 5 to 7) and Key Stage 2 (KS2) Juniors (ages 7 to 11); *secondary education* (ages 11 to 16): subdivided into Key Stage 3 (KS3; ages 11 to 14) and Key Stage 4 (KS4; ages 14 to 16); Key Stage 5 is post-16 education (ages 16 to 18); and *tertiary education* (for ages 18+).

At age 16 the students typically take exams for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) or other Level 1/2 qualifications. While *education* is compulsory until 18, *schooling* is only compulsory to 16, thus post-16 education can take a number of forms, and may be academic or vocational. This can involve continued schooling, known as "sixth form" or "college", leading (typically after two years of further study) to A-level qualifications (similar to a high school diploma in some other countries), or a number of alternative Level 3 qualifications such as Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), the International Baccalaureate (IB) or the Cambridge Pre-U. It can also include work-based apprenticeships or traineeships, or volunteering.

Higher education often begins with a three-year bachelor's degree. Postgraduate degrees include master's degrees, either taught or by research, and doctoral level research degrees that usually take at least three years. Tuition fees for first degrees are up to £9,000 per academic year for English, Welsh and European Union students, although these are set to rise to £9,250 for students starting from 2017.

### **Legally compulsory education**

Full-time education is compulsory for all children aged 5 to 18, either at school or otherwise, with a child beginning primary education during the school year they turn 5. Children between the ages of 3 and 5 are entitled to 600 hours per year of optional, state-funded, pre-school education. This can be provided in "playgroups", nurseries, community childcare centres or nursery classes in schools.

The age at which a student may choose to stop education is commonly known as the "leaving age" for compulsory education. This age was raised to 18 by the Education and Skills Act

2008; the change took effect in 2013 for 16-year-olds and 2015 for 17-year-olds. From this time, the school leaving age (which remains 16) and the education leaving age (which is now 18) have been separated. State-provided schooling and sixth-form education are paid for by taxes.

All children in England must currently therefore receive an effective education (at school or otherwise) from the first "prescribed day", which falls on or after their fifth birthday until their 18th birthday, and must remain in school until the last Friday in June of the school year in which they turn 16. The education leaving age was raised in 2013 to the year in which they turn 17 and in 2015 to their 18th birthday for those born on or after 1 September 1997. The prescribed days are 31 August 31 December and 31 March. The school year begins on 1 September (or 1 August if a term starts in August).

The Compulsory stages of education are broken into a Foundation Stage (actually covering the last part of optional and first part of compulsory education), 4 Key Stages, and post-16 education (sometimes unofficially termed Key Stage Five, which takes a variety of forms including 6th Form (covering the last 2 years of Secondary Education in schools).

### **State-funded schools**

Some 93% of children between the ages of 3 and 18 are in education in state-funded schools without charge (other than for activities such as swimming, theatre visits and field trips for which a voluntary payment can be requested, and limited charges at state-funded boarding schools). Since 1998, there have been six main types of maintained (state-funded) school in England:

-Academy schools, established by the 1997-2010 Labour Government to replace poorly-performing community schools in areas of high social and economic deprivation. Their start-up costs are typically funded by private means, such as entrepreneurs or NGOs, with running costs met by Central Government and, like Foundation schools, are administratively free from direct local authority control.

-Community schools (formerly county schools), in which the local authority employs the schools' staff, owns the schools' lands and buildings, and has primary responsibility for admissions.

-Free schools, introduced by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition following the 2010 general election, are newly established schools in England set up by parents, teachers, charities or businesses, where there is a perceived local need for more schools. They are funded by taxpayers, are academically non-selective and free to attend, and like Foundation schools and Academies, are not controlled by a local authority.

-Foundation schools, in which the governing body employs the staff and has primary responsibility for admissions. School land and buildings are owned by the governing body or by a charitable foundation. The Foundation appoints a minority of governors. Many of these schools were formerly grant maintained schools.

-Voluntary Aided schools, linked to a variety of organisations. They can be faith schools (about two thirds Church of England-affiliated; just under one third Roman Catholic Church,

and a few another faith), or non-denominational schools, such as those linked to London Livery Companies. The charitable foundation contributes towards the capital costs of the school (typically 10%), and appoints a majority of the school governors. The governing body employs the staff and has primary responsibility for admissions.

-Voluntary Controlled schools, which are almost always faith schools, with the lands and buildings often owned by a charitable foundation. However, the local authority employs the schools' staff and has primary responsibility for admissions.

### **Independent schools**

Approximately 7% of school children in England attend privately run, fee-paying independent schools. Some independent schools for 13–18-year-olds are known for historical reasons as 'public schools' and for 8–13-year-olds as 'prep schools'. Some schools offer scholarships for those with particular skills or aptitudes, or bursaries to allow students from less financially well-off families to attend. Independent schools do not have to follow the National Curriculum, and their teachers are not required or regulated by law to have official teaching qualifications."

### **Education by means other than schooling**

The 1944 Education Act (Section 36) stated that parents are responsible for the education of their children, "by regular attendance at school or otherwise", which allows children to be educated at home. The legislation places no requirement for parents who choose not to send their children to school to follow the National Curriculum, or to give formal lessons, or to follow school hours and terms, and parents do not need to be qualified teachers. Small but increasing numbers of parents do choose to educate their children outside the conventional school systems. Officially referred to as "Elective Home Education", teaching ranges from structured homeschooling (using a school-style curriculum) to less-structured unschooling. Education Otherwise has supported parents who wished to educate their children outside school since the 1970s. The state provides no financial support to parents who choose to educate their children outside of school.

### **Post-16 education**

Students at both state schools and independent schools typically take GCSE examinations, which mark the end of compulsory education in school. Above school-leaving age, the independent and state sectors are similarly structured.

In the 16–18 age group, sixth form education is not compulsory, but mandatory education or training until the age of 18 was phased in under the Education and Skills Act 2008, with 16-year-olds in 2013 and for 17-year-olds in September 2015. While students may still leave school on the last Friday in June, they must remain in education of some form until their 18th birthday.

### ***Sixth form colleges / further education colleges***

Students over 16 typically study in the sixth form of a school, in a separate sixth form college, or in a Further Education (FE) College. Courses at FE colleges, referred to as further education courses, can also be studied by adults over 18. Students typically study Level 3

qualifications such as A-levels, BTEC National awards and level 3 NVQs. Some 16–18 students will be encouraged to study Key Skills in Communication, Application of Number, and Information Technology at this time.

### **Higher education**

Higher education in England is provided by Higher Education (HE) colleges, university colleges, universities and private colleges. Students normally enter higher education as undergraduates from age 18 onwards, and can study for a wide variety of vocational and academic qualifications, including certificates of higher education and higher national certificates at level 4, diplomas of higher education, higher national diplomas and foundation degrees at level 5, bachelor's degrees (normally with honours) at level 6, and integrated master's degrees and degrees in medicine, dentistry, and veterinary science at level 7.

The typical first degree offered at English universities is the bachelor's degree with honours, which usually lasts for three years, although more vocational foundation degrees, typically lasting two years (or full-time equivalent) are also available in some institutions. Many institutions now offer an integrated master's degree, particularly in STEM subjects, as a first degree, which typically lasts for four years, the first three years running parallel to the bachelor's course. During a first degree students are known as undergraduates. The difference in fees between integrated and traditional postgraduate master's degrees (and that fees are capped at the first degree level for the former) makes taking an integrated master's degree as a first degree a more attractive option. Integrated master's degrees are often the standard route to chartered status for STEM professionals in England.

### **Postgraduate education**

Students who have completed a first degree can apply for postgraduate and graduate courses. These include:

- Graduate certificates, graduate diplomas, professional graduate certificate in education – level 6 courses aimed at those who have already completed a bachelor's degree, often as conversion courses
- Postgraduate certificates, postgraduate diplomas, postgraduate certificate in education – level 7 courses shorter than a full master's degree
- Master's degrees (typically taken in one year, though research-based master's degrees may last for two) – taught or research degrees at level 7
- Doctorates (typically taken in three years) – research degrees at level 8, the top level of the qualifications frameworks, often requiring a master's degree for entry. These may be purely research based (PhD/DPhil) or research and practice (professional doctorates). "New Route" PhDs, introduced in 2001, take at least 4 years and incorporate teaching at master's level.

Postgraduate education is not automatically financed by the state.