

QUESTION TIME

English Education System

Note that the information here refers to England. The education system in other parts of the UK (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland) is broadly similar but with significant differences.

Basically split into four sections, determined by the age of the individual or the level of education involved:

Primary education	4 – 11 year olds
Secondary education	11 – 18 year olds
Higher education (sometimes called Tertiary education)	18 and above - university level
Further education (sometimes called Continuing education or Adult education)	18 and above - below university level

Currently all children are expected to attend school from the age of 5 to 16 years old, primary and secondary education..

In the UK, the academic year starts in September for all levels of education.

Primary education - Ages 4 to 11 (Foundation Year and Years 1 to 6)

- Children start attending state school in the academic year in which they are 5 (rising 5s); so the children will usually still be 4 when they start school. They have their 5th birthday during their first school year.
- The government is committed to providing a free school place for all such children. This will usually be at the nearest school to where the family live.
- The child may start by going for part of the day only, but after a short time (usually a few weeks at the most), will be expected to attend full-time. This will typically be 9.00am to 3.00pm.
- Primary education is divided into two; **infant schools** (ages 5 – 7) and **junior schools** (ages 7 – 11). In many cases, the infant school and junior school are different parts of the same building and come under the same head teacher, but in other cases, they may be separate buildings with separate head teachers.
- Children take national tests in English and Maths at aged 7 (Key Stage 1) and in English, Maths and Science (Key Stage 2) at aged 11.
- Primary schools may have typically up to 300 pupils in the school, though in rural areas they may be much smaller. A child will spend the majority of their school time in a given year with one particular teacher who will teach most subjects to that class. The typical class size will be around 30.

Secondary education - Ages 11 to 18 (Years 7 to 13)

- Each Secondary school will generally deal with a larger number of pupils (from 600 up to 1400) than a primary school. Students will be taught by a number of teachers, each teacher having their own specialism (English, Maths, Science, Geography, PE, etc.).
- The government is committed to providing a free school place for all children. This will usually be at the nearest school to where the family live, though there may be more parental choice than at primary school. Children take national tests in English, Maths and Science at aged 14 (Key Stage 3).
- A school day will be slightly longer than for a primary school e.g. 8.45am to 3.15pm.
- Most pupils will take GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) exams at aged 16 in a range of subjects including English, Maths and Science.

- There will be some element of choice for pupils about which subjects they study at ages 14 – 16.
- It is currently not mandatory for young people to continue education beyond the age of 16 (Year 11) but there is considerable pressure to continue to at least aged 18. Many secondary schools cover the age range 11 – 18 but some only go up to 16.
- At 17 and 18 (Years 12 and 13), young people go into the Sixth Form. In the first year in the Sixth Form, they will study up to five subjects at AS level with AS level exams at the end of the year; they will then go on to study A2 levels in 3 or 4 subjects in the next year, taking the appropriate A2 exams at the end of the year.
- Early in Year 13, many students will apply for university places through UCAS (University and Colleges Admission Service) They will be able to put down their choice of five university courses, and will be offered a place at one of those, subject to getting satisfactory results in their AS and A level exams (see below).
- In some areas where secondary schools only deal with pupils up to GCSE level, students will move on to a sixth-form college. Such colleges are only for 17 and 18 year olds.

Schools which are provided by the government are called **state schools**. Parents do not have to pay for their children to go to these schools.

Parents can choose to send their children to a school where they pay for their child's education. There is often an entry exam for such schools which the child needs to pass. Such schools are called **independent schools**. Very well-known independent schools are sometimes called **public schools**.

The government does not give any financial help if parents choose to send their child to an independent school.

The vast majority of schools are **day schools** where the pupil goes to the school each day and returns home to sleep and eat. **Boarding schools** are those where the pupils live at the school during the week (Monday to Friday) and return home for the weekend.

Higher Education - Aged 18 and over

- Universities will offer places to 18 year olds and above, on the basis of their results at AS and A level.

UCAS Tariff

<i>Exam grade</i>	A level	AS level
Grade A	120	60
Grade B	100	50
Grade C	80	40
Grade D	60	30
Grade E	40	20

- Each university will decide on the entry requirements for its courses; the requirements will vary from subject to subject.
- The more popular a course, the higher are likely to be the entry requirements.
- Entry to any course is likely to require a minimum of 200 points and will often be a lot higher.
- Students can apply to any university, whether near their parents' home or a long way away.
- Most undergraduate courses last for three or four years.
- Students from the UK may have to pay up to £9000 tuition fees. They will in addition need to pay their living expenses.
- The government will help students financially by providing loans at very favourable rates to enable them to pay their tuition fees and living expenses. These loans are repaid when the students have completed their studies and are working.