Pupils aged 5 to 16 in state schools in England and Wales must be taught the National Curriculum.

**Starting school**

In England and Wales the age of a child is taken from 1 September - 31 August for the intake starting that September. Applications for primary school places need to be made before the child is five – many schools admit children at four years.

Applications for secondary education are usually made the Christmas before the year the child is due to start. Parents have to apply for places at each of the schools their child will attend – even if the nursery, primary or junior school are linked parents must make an application to move them on to the next stage. If a school is popular there is no guarantee that the child will get a place.

**Types of School**

There are now four categories of state schools, Community Schools, Foundation schools, Voluntary Aided schools and Voluntary Controlled schools, each of which will have different admissions policies. In addition to these there are also Academies which are state funded independent schools.

Welsh is a compulsory subject for all students in mainstream state schools in Wales. Pupils study Welsh either as a first or second language depending on where they live in Wales.

When considering schools parents should find out what their admissions policy is and check with the Local Authority for information of education provision at all levels, application procedures and transport policies.

**School Year**

What the term dates and holidays are will depend on the type of school the child attends. Community and voluntary controlled schools are set by the local authority but for other types of publicly funded schools, the dates are set by their governing body.

For most schools the academic year is divided into three terms. However, some Local Authorities have introduced a year with six terms, each of similar length.

**Obtaining a school place**

Parents have the right to state a preference for which school they want their child to go to, whether the school is inside or outside the area lived in, however their child does not have an automatic right to a place at that school.

If parents choose a school that is further away from their home than another one that has spare places they will be responsible for providing transport to and from the school.

Every school has a published admissions number (PAN) for each year group and when the school reaches this number it is deemed to be full in that particular year group.

Schools operate selection criteria if they are oversubscribed; these are published by the Local Authority and can be found on their web site.

If parents find that the local school is full and unable to offer a place, they will need to consider the distance their child will have to travel each day to and from the nearest school with places available. In some circumstances, the Local Authority may be able to provide assistance with home to school travel. Parents will need to check
If they are not happy with any of the schools that have places available they have the right to appeal for a place at the school of your choice. To do this they should notify the school and an Independent Appeals Panel will be established to hear their case. The panel will decide whether it is more detrimental for the school to have one more pupil or whether it is worse for the pupil not to be given a place at the school.

If the panel find in the parent’s favour, the school must make a place available for their child even though the number exceeds the PAN. However, at Key Stage 1 the government has made it unlawful for class sizes to go over 30 (except in certain circumstances) and the reasons for appealing are different.

**Performance**

Every year the Department for Education publishes performance tables for primary and secondary schools.

The primary school tables give:
- Key facts about each school.
- How well its pupils have done in the 11 year old tests, which mark the end of Key Stage 2 of the national curriculum.
- What percentage of the school’s 11 year olds have reached the national expected level of achievement, level 4.

The secondary school tables give:
- Key facts about each school
- Information about GCSEs, GNVQs and other exam results
- The pupils’ absence record

**Age Ranges of Schools**

Whilst the age range 5-16 is consistent across England for the statutory provision of education to children and young people, the different age ranges for schools both between and within English Local Authorities presents a complex and confusing picture. The options, which may be available, in specific areas are set out below. Please note that some Local Authorities offer two or more age range systems for schools within their boundaries.

- First/infant school – ages 4+ to 7 (excluding any pre-school provision)
- Junior mixed infant/primary school – ages 4+ to 11 (excluding any pre-school provision)
- Junior school – ages 7 to 11
- Middle school – ages 8/9 to 11/12/13 (N.B. If a middle school is ‘deemed primary’, it offers a primary school curriculum throughout its age range; if it is ‘deemed secondary’, it provides a transition, throughout its age range, from a primary to a secondary curriculum)
- Secondary/high schools– ages 11/12/13 to 16/18
- Sixth form colleges – 16 to 18
Secondary schools

In England the secondary phase of education offers an array of different types of school, not all of which are available everywhere. These types of school include:

Comprehensive schools
Such schools admit and provide for children of all abilities except those who have Statements of Special Educational Need indicating that the children concerned require provision only available in Special Schools offering provision exclusively for children with Statements. The majority of State-maintained secondary schools are comprehensive in nature.

Specialist Schools
These are comprehensive schools, which are allowed to admit up to 10% of their intake each year on the basis of the applicants’ aptitude in the specialist subject(s) offered by the school. Such specialism may include sport, the visual and performing arts and modern foreign languages. There are also a small number of junior/primary schools which have been awarded specialist status.

Selective (Grammar) Schools
These schools are able to admit only those pupils who demonstrate, through tests taken prior to places being offered (e.g. the 11+), that they have the required ability to cope with the school’s academic demands. Selective Schools are not available in all local authorities and, nationally, they are comparatively few in number, consequently, such schools are almost always heavily over-subscribed.

City Technology Colleges (CTC)
The 1988 Education Act enabled some secondary schools to establish themselves as CTCs. 14 were established between 1988 and 1993. CTCs operate outside of local authority management arrangements and are funded direct by the Department of Education and partnership with sponsorship, which they had to secure before their CTC status was granted. CTCs are comprehensive schools with a specific focus on science and technology. The Department for Education is encouraging all CTCs to become Academies.

Academies
These schools are ‘independent’ comprehensive state schools. They are set up by independent sponsors but with the backing of their local authorities. They all have specialist school status in one or more subjects.

Special Schools
Only two groups of children may be placed in special schools: those with completed Statements of Special Educational Needs for who such placements are deemed appropriate and those without Statements whose needs have become so severe and complex that they are placed in such schools for the purposes of assessment. Additionally, an increasing number of special schools are applying for and being awarded ‘specialist status’. This status confirms a specialism/specialisms in a range of subjects and special needs areas. Age ranges of special schools vary considerably; some offer 3-19 provision on the same site albeit with clear structural separation within the organisation of the school. Others are solely primary or secondary special schools. Each local authority offers a different pattern of provision.

As you can see, even this is not straightforward! If parents are not sure about the arrangements in the area relevant to them, they should always contact your local authority available through the Department for Education website.
Early Years

All three and four year olds in England are entitled to 15 hours of free nursery education for 38 weeks of the year. In Wales they are entitled to 10 hours a week, although many areas offer 12.5 hours.

This applies until they reach compulsory school age (the term following their fifth birthday). Free early education places are available at a range of early years settings including nursery schools and classes, children’s centres, day nurseries, play groups and pre-schools and childminders.

Children will follow The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum.

The table below shows when a child will become eligible for their free early learning place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If your child is born between:</th>
<th>They are eligible for a free place from:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 April and 31 August</td>
<td>1 September following their third birthday or the beginning of the autumn* school term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 September and 31 December</td>
<td>1 January following their third birthday or the beginning of the spring* school term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 January and 31 March</td>
<td>1 April following their third birthday or the beginning of the summer* school term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on a three-term school year