

Different types of schools

Education in the UK is organised locally – there is only a very limited national plan. By law children must receive education between the ages of 5 and 16 – although there is nothing in law to say that this education has to be in school.

Schools are organised by local education authorities, schools financed directly by the state, and private schools (including the “public schools” such as Eton, Harrow, Oakham, Oundle etc). Because of this lack of unity, the way education works in one part of the country is often very different from the way in which it works elsewhere.

- Academies. All ability schools in areas of deprivation with additional income from local sponsors, working with the wider community.
- Beacon schools. Local authority and state schools which are deemed to be centres of excellence and which get additional funding. The Beacon schools scheme is gradually coming to an end.
- DfES. Department for Education and Skills. Government body that runs education in England. Education in the rest of the UK is run by offices in each country.
- Education Action Zones. Centred in disadvantaged areas, aiming to raise school standards for all local schools. Each zone is a partnership of 2/3 secondary schools plus feeder primary schools, the LEA and local businesses.
- First schools. Similar to infant schools, but sometimes taking children to age 9.
- Infant schools. Primary schools which take children from age of 5 to 8.
- Infant-junior combined schools. Most primary schools take children from the age of 5 to 11, and are known technically as infant-junior combined schools.
- Junior schools. Primary schools which take children from 8 to 11.
- Key Stages. The National Curriculum is divided into four key stages – KS1 relates to 5-8 year olds, KS2 is for 8 to 11 year olds, KS3 covers 11 to 14 year olds, KS4 covers 14 to 16 year olds.
- Leadership Incentive Grants. Schools deemed to be facing challenges can apply for additional funding for 3 years as a grant to help overcome these challenges. Some of these schools are also eligible for an additional grant known as a Targeted Improvement Grant.
- Leading Edge Schools. Schools working in partnership with others to drive change forward.
- Local Education Authorities. Council divisions that run education within the local area. Most LEAs cover the area of a county or a metropolitan borough.
- Middle schools. Schools taking children from the age 8 to 12, or 9 to 13. For ease of administration we also call the small number of schools that run from 11 to 14 “middle schools” – although technically they are junior high schools. Private middle schools are often called “Prep schools”. Some mailing houses have taken the middle schools which cater for children aged 9 to 13 and included them in their secondary school list – thus enhancing their secondary school totals.

- Nursery schools. Schools catering for children up to the age of 5.
- Nursery units. Nursery schools which are attached to primary schools.
- Pre-prep schools. Private schools that cater for children up to the age of 9.
- Primary schools. Schools catering for children between the ages of 5 and 11 – or a part of that age group. The general term “primary schools” includes “infant schools”, “junior schools”, “infant-junior combined schools”, and first schools. Many primary schools have infant units attached.
- Secondary schools. Schools that cater for children aged 11 to 16, 11 to 18 or 13 to 18.
- Scottish schools. Schooling in Scotland is broadly similar to that in England except that the exams taken at 16 and thereafter are different. The tradition in Scotland is for the 6th form to last one year, but for the subsequent degree in university to last for four years.
- Sixth form schools. A sub-set of “secondary schools” – these are the schools that have pupils aged beyond 16 – mostly those going on to 18 and taking A levels.
- Sixth form colleges. Schools that take children from the age of 16 to 18.
- Special schools. Schools for children with special problems or concerns – such as with their sight, behaviour, hearing, mental abilities etc. There has been a move over recent years for as many children as possible with special needs to be catered for in mainstream schools.
- Specialist schools. Secondary schools in England which follow the National Curriculum but which in addition have extra courses and resources in one specialist area. They often rename themselves “colleges” as opposed to schools. Specialist schools cannot select by intellect but can select by aptitude for their specialism. They receive additional funding from the DfES and from local businesses.
- Training schools. Schools excelling in initial teacher training and continuing training of all teachers which work with other schools in the region. Gain extra government funding through the Standards Fund.