

England

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Introduction

Overview of Education System

England's school system is directed centrally by the Department for Education (DfE). In 2023, there were 9.01 million students in 24,442 schools, 163 further education colleges, and 47 sixth form colleges.^{1,2} Full-time education is compulsory from ages 5 to 16, after which young people are required to continue in full-time education, an apprenticeship or traineeship, or part-time education or training alongside paid or volunteer work through age 18.^{3,4}

Most students move from primary to secondary school at age 11. State-funded schools include local authority-maintained schools, voluntary aided schools, academies, and free schools. All schools, state-funded or independent, are required to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, and there are statutory requirements for particular subjects.

Exhibit 1 details the structure of education in England.

Exhibit 1: Structure of School Education in England

Phase	Key Stage	Ages	School/College Structure	
Early Years	Early Years Foundation Stage	0–5	nursery schools, nursery classes in primary schools, children’s centers, and registered child minders	
Primary	Key Stage 1 (Years 1–2)	5–7	infant school	commonly combined in a single primary school
	Key Stage 2 (Years 3–6)	7–11	junior school	
Secondary	Key Stage 3 (lower secondary Years 7–9)	11–14	secondary school (ages 11–18)	
	Key Stage 4 (upper secondary Years 10–11)	14–16		
		Post-Sixteen (Years 12–13)	16–18	sixth form college (ages 16–18)