

TRC Guide To UK Schooling

If you have children, it is important to begin addressing the issue of schooling prior to your departure, to ensure you and your family settles well at your destination. The chosen house and neighbourhood will be most likely determined by the location of the school(s) selected. Starting your planning early can help you to make well-informed choices and give you the best chance of securing place(s) at your selected school(s).

The UK is notoriously complex in its education, because of the variety of types of organisation that can be involved. The fee-paying sector is significant and may be perceived as providing a better education, though this is not necessarily the case.

Age At Joining / Leaving School

- Full-time education is compulsory for all children aged between 5 and 16 (inclusive), and further education up to the age of 18, across the UK. This can be provided by (free) state schools, fee-paying schools, or homeschooling. The huge majority of pupils receive free education from public funds, while around 7% attend independent fee paying schools or are schooled at home.

Age At Time Of Joining And Leaving				State School			Fee-Paying School			
Age on 1 Sept		Age on 31 Aug	Year	School Classifications May Differ			Girls and Mixed	Boys	Entrance requirements	American Grade
3 mths	to	4	kindergarten	nursery	kindergarten					
4	to	5	reception	infant	primary	lower	pre prep	pre prep	may have assessments	
5	to	6	1	infant	primary	lower	pre prep	pre prep		
6	to	7	2	infant	primary	lower	pre prep	pre prep		1
7	to	8	3	junior	primary	lower	pre prep	pre prep		2
8	to	9	4	junior	primary	middle	prep	prep		3
9	to	10	5	junior	primary	middle	prep	prep		4
10	to	11	6	junior	primary	middle	prep	prep	11+ or Common Entrance	5
11	to	12	7	high	secondary	middle	senior	prep		6
12	to	13	8	high	secondary	upper	senior	prep	13+ or Common Entrance	7
13	to	14	9	high	secondary	upper	senior	senior		8
14	to	15	10	high	secondary	upper	senior	senior		9
15	to	16	11	high	secondary	upper	senior	senior		10
16	to	17	12	high	secondary	upper	senior	senior		11
17	to	18	13	high	secondary	upper	senior	senior		12

- In England and Wales, local authorities must accept children into primary school in the September following the child's fourth birthday. However, parents may request that their child does not start school until later in the year or until reaching compulsory school age in which case the child does not have to attend school until the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. A parent will also be able to request that a child attends school part-time until compulsory school age.
- In Northern Ireland, a child who is four years old on or before 1 July in any year must start primary school on 1 September that year
- British children are currently required to attend school until they are 16 years old, when they take their GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) examinations. In Scotland, the equivalent of the GCSE is the Standard Grade.
- From summer 2013, young people were required to continue in education or training to the end of the academic year in which they turned 17, and from summer 2015 they were required to stay until their 18th birthday.
- Study of GCSE subjects begins at the start of Year 10 (age 14-15), and final examinations are then taken at the end of Year 11 (age 15-16). In state schools English, Mathematics, Science, Religious Education and Physical Education must be studied during Key Stage 4 (the GCSE years of school); in England, some form of ICT and citizenship must be studied and, in Wales, Welsh must be studied. Other subjects, chosen by the individual pupil, are also studied.
- After completing the GCSE, some young people start an apprenticeship or go onto college, whilst others continue at secondary school for two more years and take a further set of standardised exams, known as 'A levels', in three or four subjects. These exams determine whether a student is eligible for University. There are also vocational courses available at colleges that, if completed to a high enough standard, allow students entrance to university.
- In England, a child's school leaving age depends when they are born. They can leave school on the last Friday in June as long as they will be 16 by the end of that year's summer holidays. However, they must stay in some form of education or training until they are 18. Their options would be:-
 - full-time education - eg at a school or college
 - an apprenticeship or traineeship
 - a part-time education or training - as well as being employed, self-employed or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week

The School Year

- The school year runs from September to July, and is 39 weeks long. For many areas the year is divided into six terms (Some counties in England still follow the traditional three terms a year.):
 - September to October
 - October to December
 - January to February
 - February to March
 - April to May
 - June to July
- The dates for school terms and holidays are decided by the local authority or the governing body of a school, or by the school itself for independent schools.
- The main school holidays are Christmas (2 weeks), Spring (usually over Easter for 2 weeks) and Summer (usually 6-7 weeks). There are also one week holidays at the end of October, in mid-February and at the end of May.

For Children Of Pre-School Age:

- Children can benefit greatly from a good pre-school education. Through creative and physical play, they'll gradually learn new skills and experience, plus learn how to interact socially with their peers.
- Various different types of pre-school education are available for under 5s in the UK, each with their own benefits. All three and four year olds are entitled to 15 hours of free early education for 38 weeks of the year. This will be delivered flexibly over a minimum of three days and applies until they reach compulsory school age. Some 3 to 4-year-olds are eligible for 30 hours free childcare a week.
- Most local authorities have a policy of accepting children into school at the beginning of the school year during which the child becomes five. *However, the child does not have to attend school until the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday.*
- The main pre-school education and early learning providers are:
 - Pre-school playgroups
 - Reception classes at schools that take pre-school children
 - Day nurseries
 - Nursery schools

Other Childcare Options

- **Babysitters** - A babysitter is someone who will occasionally look after your children - perhaps an afternoon here and there, or in the evening, so that you can have a night out. Babysitters usually set their own hourly rates, from around £5-10 per hour.
- **Child-minders** - Usually look after children under 12 in the child-minder's own home and often collect school-aged children from a nearby school. Registered child-minder rates in the UK are around £4 - £6.50 per hour.
- **Nannies** - Provide childcare in your own home and can look after children of any age. Average costs vary from Nanny to Nanny and even from area to area. This will also be dependent on the experience of the nanny and how much they have been paid from a previous employer. Salaries will vary per week dependent on hours, number and age of children, experience and qualifications. If you use an agency to secure a nanny, costs can increase considerably.
- **Au pair /Mother's Help** - These are not professional nannies and should not be left in sole charge of children. Duties generally include light housework, bathing and feeding the children, doing the school run, helping with homework, and preparing light meals. Salaries are around £70-100 per week for 35 hours assistance, plus 2 nights babysitting duties. They would typically have 2 full days off duty per week.
- **Crèches** - Provide occasional care for children under eight. Some companies provide crèche services as a perk for their staff.
- **Toddler groups** - Informal groups of parents and carers that meet locally with their children on a regular basis, usually for under-fives. Generally run by parents on a rota basis, and as non-profit-making concerns.

For Children Of School Age:

A. State Schools

- All children resident in the UK aged 5-16 are obliged to attend school and are entitled to a free place at a state school. State schools tend to be co-educational (i.e. they admit girls and boys).
- Children start in Reception class, at 4 or 5 years (dependent on their date of birth), at primary school, and leave at the age of 11, moving on to secondary school.
- Secondary schools (age 11-16 or 18) are either 'grammar' or 'comprehensives'.
 - A grammar school is a (non fee-paying) state senior school that is attended by pupils aged 11 to 18, to which entry is controlled by means of an academically

selective process, generally requiring a written assessment (the Eleven Plus examination for example). There are currently 164 state-run grammar schools in the UK.

- A comprehensive secondary school is a school that does not select its intake on the basis of academic achievement or aptitude, but generally by proximity of the child's home to the school. It corresponds broadly to the German Gesamtschule and to the high school in the USA and Canada. About 90% of British pupils attend comprehensive schools.
- All state schools receive funding from their local authorities (an administrative unit of local government), they all follow the National Curriculum, and, they are regularly inspected by Ofsted.
- By law schools must make sure that children aged between 5 and 7 aren't taught in classes of more than 30 pupils. There's no legal limit for pupils aged 8 or over.
- The **National Curriculum** is a framework used by all government funded schools to ensure that teaching and learning is balanced and consistent. It sets out the subjects taught, the knowledge/skills/understanding required in each subject, standards or attainment targets in each subject, and how your child's progress is assessed and reported.
- **Ofsted** inspects each state school in England every three years. After the inspection Ofsted publishes a report which is available to the public. The report includes an overall assessment of the school's performance, along with specific judgments on achievement and standards, pupils' personal development and well-being, the quality of teaching and learning, how the curriculum is taught, the care, guidance and support provided by the school, and the leadership and management of the school. The judgments are made on a four point scale (one – outstanding, two – good, three –requires improvement, four – inadequate). The report also suggests what the school should do to improve (the school is expected to use Ofsted's recommendations as a basis for making improvements as quickly as possible).

Types Of State School:

- **Community schools** - run by the local authority, which employs the staff, owns the land and buildings, and decides which 'admissions criteria' to use. They tend to develop strong links with the local community (e.g. providing services like adult learning classes).
- **Foundation schools** - run by their own governing body, which employs the staff, owns the land and buildings, and decides which 'admissions criteria' to use.
(A Trust school is a type of foundation school which forms a charitable trust with an outside partner, such as a business or educational charity.)
- **Voluntary-aided schools** - mainly religious or 'faith' schools. Run by their own governing body, which employs the staff, and decides which 'admissions criteria' to use, though

buildings and land are normally owned by a charitable foundation (often a religious organisation), for which the governing body contributes to building and maintenance costs.

- **Voluntary-controlled schools** - similar to voluntary aided schools, but run by the local authority. The local authority employs the school's staff and determines the admissions criteria. Land and buildings are normally owned by a charity, often a religious organisation, which also appoints some of the members of the governing body.
- **Grammar schools** - run by the local authority, a foundation body or a trust - they select all or most of their pupils based on academic ability and there is often an exam to get in
- **Academies** - run by a governing body, independent from the local council - they can follow a different curriculum
- **Free schools** - 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.

Securing A Place:

- With State Schools you have to have a UK address before you can apply for a place. Most good state schools are extremely oversubscribed, so you cannot always rely on a place being available at your preferred schools, particularly if you are coming to the UK at short notice, or for a shorter assignment. *Places are offered based on a set admissions criteria, one of the main elements of which being who lives closest to the school, or within a catchment area.* Other criteria can also include siblings already at the school, religion, if the child went to a feeder school and if the child is in care or "looked after".
- Local authorities have a legal obligation to offer all children in their districts a school place. Therefore, if your preferred schools are oversubscribed, they will offer your child / children a place at the school nearest to where you live that has spaces. You can keep your child's name on a waiting list at your preferred school(s), in case a place becomes available in the future.
- If you require your child to start school at any time outside the normal admissions rounds (i.e the year prior to reception, year 2 and year 6) or you miss the application deadline, you will need to complete an **"in year"** application form, which will more than likely be coordinated by the Local Authority.
- On the whole local authorities coordinate the admissions process for all children starting school in reception and year 7. You can apply for a place at state schools online or by using the local authority's common application form. Applications normally open in October for entry in the following September, with places being allotted in the spring.

- Church schools have their own admittance criteria, – i.e. 'practicing a religion' may be a requirement, or at least improve your chances of obtaining a place.
- Foundation, voluntary aided, academies and free schools also control their own admissions.

Checklist For Deciding On A State School:

- Find out what schools in your area have places.
- Read relevant school prospectuses and/or websites.
- Compare achievement and attainment data and the latest school reports from Ofsted.
- Find out the catchment areas for the school(s) you are interested – these are usually made up of a list of roads.
- Find out the specific admission procedure – this can vary from school to school.
- Find out what extended services they offer outside of normal working hours (e.g. breakfast clubs, after school activities) and what they cost.
- Visit the school to make sure that it really does suit your child's needs (and take along a pen and paper to make notes). A school visit can be invaluable in giving you (and your child) a proper feel for the school – how welcoming they are, what the facilities are like, what the teaching style is like and so on. It is also an opportunity to find out detailed information on admissions, work out possible travel routes and find out about any parent associations you may like to get involved in.
- Meet all stated deadlines for submission of paperwork, or you will have little (or no) chance of securing a place.

B. Fee-Paying Schools

- There are two types of fee-paying schools in the UK – independent schools and international schools.
- Independent schools offer a huge range of options for families coming to the UK. They may be the only viable option, regardless of what schooling is available in the home country. A family could arrive at any time of the year, with children of any ages, and should be able to find a place at a good school.
- International schools are also fee-paying schools, but they use the education system of a different country (e.g. America). They can offer consistency, but can be expensive and may mean that the family misses out on a fuller experience of the UK. They tend to be based in and around London. (For the purposes of this document, we will consequently focus specifically on independent schools.)

- There are around 2,300 independent schools in England and they are attended by 7% of the population. The percentage of university places taken by this 7% is just under 30%.

Definition Of 'Independent Schools'

- All *fee paying* schools, private or public, that follow the British Education system.
- They can be single-sex or co-educational, start at any age between 4 and 18 years, can be day or boarding schools, large or small.
- They are *independent* in their finances and governance. They are funded by a combination of tuition charges, gifts and investments and are generally governed by a board of directors. All schools are registered and monitored by inspectorates approved by the Secretary of State and Ofsted.
- 'Private' and 'public' schools
 - Private schools are senior or junior schools (sometimes called 'prep schools'). They may specialize in the arts, sport, or be good quality all-round education providers. If they are a prep school, they might prepare children for a particular senior school. They can take pupils from 4 to 18 years.
 - Public schools are all senior schools, and are some of the oldest in the UK. Traditionally they were boys-only and boarding. This is now changing, with excellent girls and co-educational schools being called public schools. The schools are often in beautiful buildings, within spectacular grounds and facilities. They consistently perform well in national exams and the majority of pupils go to good universities. Entrance is by rigorous interview and exams (Scholarship or the Common Entrance), with children being prepared by their 'prep' schools for many months, if not for the entire year, before. In addition, great importance is placed on extra-curricular activities such as sport, music, art and drama.
- Stages for independent schools
 - Kindergarten = 3 months - 4 or 5 years
 - Pre-prep = 4-7, normally with uniform
 - Preparatory = 7-11 for all-girl schools and some London boys schools. Or 7-13 for mixed or all-boy schools, often known as 'public schools'
 - Senior = (11 or) 13-18

Entrance Criteria

- Importantly, **entrance is not restricted by where you live**, unlike state schools.
- Usually an interview is held, but if coming from abroad, this may be offered on line.

- There may be an academic assessment, particularly to those schools which perform particularly well at GCSE or A level. For entrance to senior schools there is usually an assessment, but this can simply be for 'streaming' purposes.
- Some schools look for high attainment in a particular area, such as sport, music, drama and/or art, while others simply want you to feel comfortable, and like the feel of the school.

What Decisions Will Be Based On:

- If there are places available and where you want to live.
- Whether you can afford the fees. Costs vary dramatically from school to school and will increase as the child moves through the school.
 - E.g.
 - All will require a deposit, from £400 - £1000, returnable when the child leaves the school
 - Fees for prep or junior schools (day pupils) - from £2200-£6000 per term
 - Fees for senior schools (day pupils) – from £3500-£10000 per term
 - Boarding school fees can be considerably higher than the day fees (by more than 30%)
 - School fees are typically lower in the North and for prep schools.
- The environment you would like for your child(ren) e.g. single sex or co-educational, religious affiliation, large or small school.
- What the facilities are like for sports, music, drama, etc., and what the educational standard is.
- What are the age ranges for the school? (i.e. a school that goes from 4-18 could be an excellent option to prevent having to move a child again during an assignment)
- What is the family background / culture of pupils? (e.g. are there many expatriates / any children from the same country as you?)
- What is the level of parental involvement? (e.g. is there a Parent/Teacher association to support the school)
- What is your instinct about the school? How well did you get on with the staff? Etc.

Making An Application:

- Find out the specific admission procedure, as this can vary dramatically from school to school. Look at the websites and contact the school registrars directly by telephone - they are remarkable people who are always happy to give you an insight into the school.

- A visit to the school is invaluable to make sure that it suits your child's needs. They vary enormously and each has its own personality. A visit will give you (and your child) a proper feel for the school – how welcoming they are, what the facilities are like, what the teaching style is like and so on.
- Meet all stated deadlines for submission of paperwork. Ensure the timeliness, completeness and accuracy of your admission document(s), or you may jeopardize your chance of securing a place.
- Be prepared to compromise - the best private schools become very oversubscribed and can be difficult to get into. Independent schools offer a very good education, with the vast majority of pupils getting excellent examination results.

Further Support

The Relocation Consultancy offer a 'School Search and Selection' service to help take the stress out of finding suitable schooling for your child(ren). The Education Consultant works closely with the relocatee, fully explaining the complex and varied UK systems, prior to establishing the needs of the children and assessing the most suitable school. Accompanied visits and assessments can be arranged, along with help getting children into the chosen school.

International and Private School Search

The service includes:

- Advice on schooling, syllabuses, examinations, entry procedures, registration and fees
- Schools search and selection of short-list, with advice as to the merits of each school
- Providing website addresses and information of local schools prior to visit; prospectuses sent to relocatee (if time)
- Organising registration for chosen schools, particularly if there are waiting lists
- Arranging a programme of appointments and visits as required – accompanied for up to 8 hours
- Confirming places with schools, organisation of assessments/examinations
- Services such as arranging payments of fees, organising uniform appointments, moving-up days, etc.

State School Search

The service includes:

- Advice on UK schooling, syllabuses, entry procedures, registration and availability
 - Schools search and selection of short-list, with advice as to the merits of each school
 - Confirmation on availability of places
 - Providing website addresses, league tables, Ofsted Reports, and information about local schools prior to visit; prospectuses sent to relocatee (if time)
 - Organising registration for chosen schools, particularly if there are waiting lists
 - Arranging a programme of appointments and visits as required - accompanied for up to 8 hours
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- **If you would like more information about the 'School Search And Selection' service, please contact your TRC Consultant on +44 (0)118 947 0029.**