

Your life in

THE EAST MIDLANDS



Education in the UK

Table of contents

1	Layout
2	Key stages
2.....	School types
3	Curriculum
3.....	National curriculum
4	National curriculum
5	Key stage 1
6	Key stage 2
7	Key stage 3
8	Key stage 4
9	GCSEs
9.....	GCSE options
10	GCSE options
11	GCSE subjects
12	Mock GCSEs
12.....	GCSE results
13	GCSE results

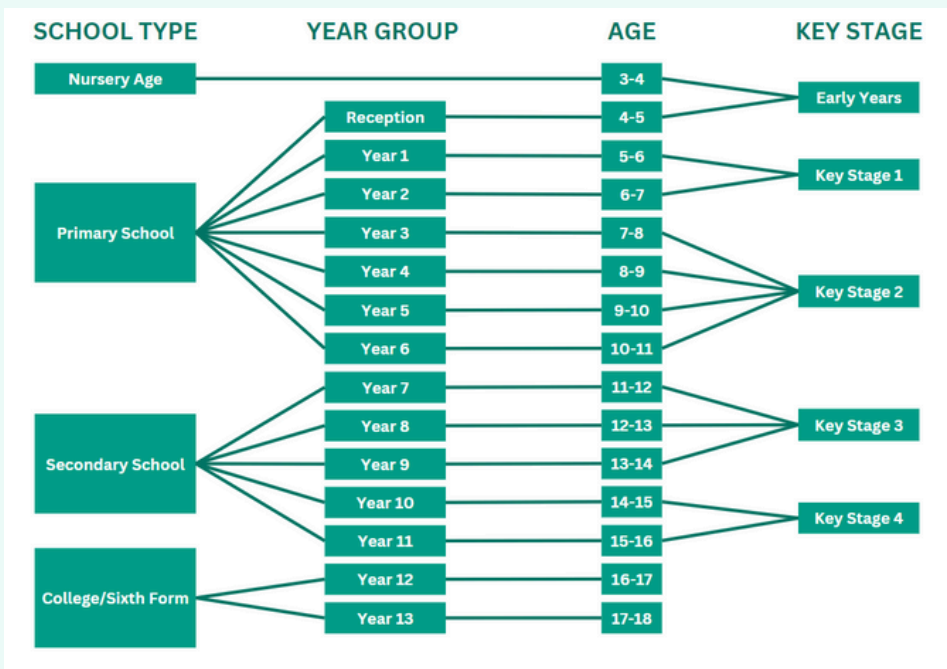
Your life in **THE EAST MIDLANDS**



Education in the UK

Layout

Understanding the layout and format of education in the UK is a great place to start when you're first learning about schooling. Schools are split into year groups, and those year groups will learn a different level of curriculum based on the key stage that particular school year is in. You can see what year and age correlates to what key stage in our graphic below.



Key stages

Key stages refer to the groups established to oversee standardised exams during a child's education in England and Wales. This process helps maintain consistent learning standards across all educational institutions. Before transitioning from one key stage to the next, students take exams to determine if they have achieved the expected goals outlined in the National Curriculum. These assessments not only ensure that schools are meeting their overall targets but also help track your child's progress, enabling timely support if needed. Monitoring this throughout their education can create a smoother experience for students, particularly for those with additional learning needs.

You can find out more about what your child will learn in each key stage within our curriculum section on Page 4.

School types

The most common split of school years and establishments is:

- ▶ **Primary school:** *ages 4 - 11, reception to year 6.*
- ▶ **Secondary school:** *ages 11 - 16, year 7 to year 11.*
- ▶ **Further education:** *ages 16 - 18, year 12 to year 13.*

Which is how it is shown in our graphic above.

However, this does not mean it is always done this way. Some schools split their year groups up much further than this, which can mean applying for more schools throughout their education experience. You can see below how far some institutions choose to split up their year groups:

- ▶ **Infant school:** *ages 4 - 7, reception to year 2.*
- ▶ **Primary/junior school:** *ages 7 - 11, year 2 to year 6.*
- ▶ **Secondary school, lower:** *ages 11 - 14, year 7 to year 9.*
- ▶ **Secondary school, upper:** *ages 14 - 16, year 9 to year 11.*

There are benefits and negatives to both. Benefits to more detached schools include that the children are surrounded by peers who are at similar developmental stages, and the staff and environment are tailored specifically for those age groups. On the downside, this might mean parents have to go through the application process more often throughout their child's education, with no assurance that their friends will attend the same schools. Additionally, after finishing year 2, for example, a child might only have access to a primary school that serves from reception to year 6. This could lead to situations where, when they join in year 3, they encounter classmates who have already formed strong friendships. Whilst children at that age can adapt well, facing a similar scenario in year 9 could make it more difficult for your child to integrate into existing social groups.

Curriculum

Curriculum means the subjects and prepared learning that will be covered during your child's time in education.

The school curriculum in the UK generally consists of both the 'national curriculum', as well as relationships, sex and health education, and religious education. Some school types, such as academies and private schools don't have to follow the 'national curriculum'.

National Curriculum

All schools that are maintained by a local authority have to follow the 'national curriculum' set out by the Department for Education. It sets out the programmes of study and attainment targets for all subjects, at each key stage.

It works in conjunction with the Key Stages affiliated with your child's school year. In the below table, you can find out what subjects are compulsory under the national curriculum, and when and how they will appear throughout your child's education.

- English: *All stages*
- Maths: *All stages*
- Science: *All stages*
- Design and Technology: *KS1 - KS3 minimum*
- History: *KS1 - KS3 minimum*
- Geography: *KS1 - KS3 minimum*
- Art and Design: *KS1 - KS3 minimum*
- Music: *KS1 - KS3 minimum*
- Physical education: *All stages, including swimming in KS1 & KS2*
- Computing: *KS1 - KS3 minimum*
- Modern foreign languages: *KS2 - KS3 minimum, school dependent*
- Relationships and Health: *All stages*
- Religious education: *KS1 - KS3 minimum, school dependent*
- Citizenship: *KS3 minimum*
- Sexual health: *KS3 and KS4*

As you can see, only some subjects are compulsory all the way through KS1 to KS4. Others are only compulsory up to KS3, as for Year 10 and 11 (KS4) students can choose to only learn subjects relevant to their chosen field of further education. As we all know, a base understanding of Maths, English and Science is required regardless of your choice of further education, hence why they are compulsory in all Key Stages. More information on choosing subjects for GCSE's and why that means some studies are *not* taught in KS4, can be found on Page 9. First, let's find out more about exams, assessments and other milestones in each Key Stage

Key Stage 1

(Please note, the years beside each month are examples for easier interpretation)

September '2023'

Child starts
Year 1

June '2024'

Year 1 phonics
screening
check

In the June of their first year in Key Stage 1, children will undertake a 'Year 1 Phonics screening check'. In this, your child will be asked to read out loud 40 words. This assessment allows the school to find out if any extra support is needed with reading as early as possible. Parents are automatically sent these results too, meaning they can offer help at home as well. If a child does not pass, they will have to repeat this test in Year 2.

September '2024'

Child starts
Year 2

May '2025'

KS1 tests/KS1
SAT's

In the May of Year 2, children will undergo national tests (also known as SAT's), which will test their skills in English - reading, grammar, punctuation and spelling, and Mathematics. The child's actual test results can be accessed by parents, but you will need to request them. However, the results of your child's teacher assessments will be sent to parents automatically.

Key Stage 2

September '2025'

Child starts
Year 3

September '2026'

Child starts
Year 4

June '2027'

MTC's

September '2027'

Child starts
Year 5

September '2028'

Child starts
Year 6

May '2029'

KS2 SAT's

During a 3-week period of June in Year 4, schools are required to choose a day for those students to sit their Multiplication Tables Check. It will be completed on a computer or tablet, and they have to answer multiplication questions against a clock. It lasts no longer than 5 minutes, and results will be sent to parents. Students are unlikely to be told their individual scores by the school, and can't pass or fail this test. It is more so an assessment for teachers to identify any necessary support.

In the May of Year 6, your child will take national tests (SAT's) in English reading, grammar, punctuation and spelling and Mathematics. These tests will last less than 4 hours in total, and you will be sent their results and teachers assessments in the July. The tests are used to assess both the school's *and* the children's achievements, and are compared to their Year 2 SAT's to ensure they are progressing as expected. Most secondary schools will use your child's results to place them into 'sets' for Year 7, to allow them to work in class groups who are of the same level of learning as them.

Key Stage 3

September '2029'

Child starts
Year 7

Year 7 CATs



September '2030'

Child starts
Year 8

September '2031'

Child starts
Year 9

May - July '2032'

Options choices



Some secondary schools evaluate class groups after Year 7 begins, instead of using SATs results. If this is the case for your child, they may take 'CATs' upon entering secondary school. These assessments focus on thinking and learning styles rather than subject knowledge, helping to gauge potential. CATs assess verbal, non-verbal, quantitative reasoning, and spatial ability, aiding in class placement and identifying gifted students or those needing extra support. To learn more about your chosen school's approach, contact them directly.

Generally speaking, in the final months of Year 9 students will have to choose their options for GCSE's. Some schools may do it earlier in the year, some may even do it in Year 8, but it is most common to do it at the end of Year 9.

Although there is no compulsory testing from Years 7 to 9 under the national curriculum, teachers will still put your child through subject testing to assess their progress and attainment, and to prepare them for the processes that will take place later in their GCSE's.

Key Stage 4

September '2032'

Child starts
Year 10

GCSE prep
begins

GCSE preparation includes the students finding out their learning objectives for each subject, what they will be tested on and how the course is split. Some courses may be based 100% on the final exam, whereas some other course results may be impacted by coursework. If this is the case, some pieces of coursework may have to be completed throughout Year 10.

May - July '2033'

Mock GCSE's

Students will take 'mock GCSE' exams, which are very important. Most schools will take these around this time of year, but it can vary at each institution, so contact yours to find out and be sure your child is prepared. More information on these is on Page 12.

September '2033'

Child begins
Year 11

May - June '2034'

GCSE exams

Students will undergo their exam based GCSE tests during this time. Results are used for entry conditions onto their chosen further education path. More information on this can be found on Pages 12 and 13.

August '2034'

GCSE results
day

GCSE results day is usually in the August following the exams. Generally speaking, students will go to their secondary school to pick them up, and can then accept/decline college offers based on their results

There are certain subjects that parents can withdraw their child from if they feel necessary. Currently, parents *can* withdraw their child from:

- Sex education
- Religious Education - partly or wholly.

Sometimes, sex education is taught within the Relationships and Health classes. It is important to note that although you can withdraw your child from sex education, you do *not* have the right to withdraw them from relationships and health subjects.

GCSE's

GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education, and is the qualification taken by 15 and 16 year olds to assess and mark their exit from the Key Stage 4 phase of education. Your child will be tested on core and foundation subjects, and then subjects of their choosing as well. The exam results are used not only to meet entry requirements for the students chosen path of further education, but are looked at on job applications and educational courses your child want to make to take later in life. Most of the time, students will take their GCSE's in the May and June of Year 11, however sometimes if they are excelling or taking extra subjects, they may be offered the chance to complete some of their exams in Year 10. If this is an option, you can discuss it with your child's school to find out more about their processes.

GCSE options

As mentioned above, some subjects are compulsory at GCSE, and others are chosen by the student and predominantly referred to as 'options'. In most cases, students choose their options during Year 9, but some schools may do it slightly earlier.

Schools will hold an ‘options evening’, where you attend the school with your child and, much like a college/university fair, can explore the optional classes that school has on offer and discover what careers and further education pathways they can help to support.

Generally speaking, your child is likely to study between 7 and 9 GCSE’s throughout Years 10 and 11, but they may do more, or even be offered a Level 2 course such as Health and Social care. Below you can see what courses are compulsory, and what additional options your school *may* offer:

Optional GCSE subjects:

- *Modern foreign languages (French, German, Spanish etc)*
- *Triple science**
- *Music*
- *Drama*
- *Art and Design*
- *Media studies*
- *Design and Technology*
- *Food technology*
- *Computer science*
- *Physical education*
- *Dance*
- *History*
- *Geography*
- *Religious studies*
- *Classical civilisation*
- *Citizenship*

Compulsory GCSE subjects:

- *English Language*
- *English Literature*
- *Maths*
- *Combined/Double science**

There are a few important things to remember about these:

- *This is not an exhaustive list* - Depending on multiple factors (teacher qualifications, exam boards) your child's school may refer to subject options slightly differently or offer different versions of the seemingly same subject (music GCSE vs music BTEC, ICT vs Computer science).
- *Not all of these options are offered by every institute* - Some schools offer more, some schools offer less. Each one will be different.
- *Some of these may be compulsory* - Depending on your child's school, they may require one or more of these options to be a compulsory GCSE subject. For example, the school may require students to take a modern foreign language or religious studies alongside their normal compulsory subjects.

For these reasons alone, it is really important for students to attend options evenings and speak to their teachers about their preferences to find out what it best for them.

You will see an asterisk next to the combined/double science and triple science options because these two subjects function differently from other GCSEs. Science is a core subject, requiring all students to complete at least the combined/double science GCSE. In this course, students will take exams in all 3 sciences, ultimately earning two GCSEs based on their overall performance in these areas. However, it's worth mentioning that it only covers around two-thirds of what is taught in Triple Science. Triple Science is an optional route for students who want to go further. In this track, students study more in-depth content of each subject, and will receive individual grades for Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. Furthermore, choosing Triple Science will substitute the otherwise mandatory combined/double science requirement. This is a great option for those who need specific grades in one particular science.

Mock GCSE exams

Mock GCSEs play a crucial role in paving the way for further education opportunities. These assessments occur in Year 10, and the results are instrumental in helping to provide predicted grades for their actual GCSE exams. As students consider their next steps and make choices about their further education, these predicted grades will be significant for their applications. To ensure they have the best chance at securing a place in their desired programs, it's essential for your child to aim for top results in these exams. Simply put, better predicted grades open up more options for them to choose from.

Additionally, mock exams allow students to familiarise themselves with the format and procedures of the GCSEs. They'll revise just as they would for the real exams, sit in a proper exam atmosphere (often the same room as their GCSEs), practice punctuality and ensuring they have the correct equipment, and adhering to seating arrangements similar to what they'll encounter during the actual tests. Practicing in this manner a year in advance, without the stress of a final grade, is an excellent way to get ready, and students should approach these mocks with just as much seriousness as they will with the real exams.

GCSE results

How do results work in contention with further education? Well, as is mentioned above, your child will be given predicted grades based on their mock exam results, as well as teacher assessments and other things like coursework. Next, usually early in their final year of secondary school, they will begin applying for further education using those predicted grades. If a college is interested, they may present a student with either a conditional or an unconditional offer. An unconditional offer is exactly what it

sounds like; no further requirements need to be met to join the course. A conditional offer - which is much more common - means that providing they meet the outlined requirements (usually a specific final GCSE grade) they are able to join the course.

Once final GCSE results are given to the students, they will also be passed to their college/other further education institutes. They will then eventually update the student's application status in accordance with whether they have met the requirements. If they have, then congratulations, they are in! If they haven't, then as a parent it is really important to reassure your child that there are other options available.

If they have not met their expected grade, your child should first speak to their teachers (providing they have opened their results at school). Teachers deal with this every year and often have great advice to comfort your child, as well as straightforward information on their next steps. This could be to speak to their desired further education pathway to see if they will still accept them, ask for a grade review or retake - especially if they are on the border - or offer suggestions on different options or courses that may accept them.

As Maths and English are imperative for all career paths, if your child fails (grade 3 or below) these subjects, it is a requirement that they resit this exam regardless of their chosen further education pathway. These will usually take place in the November after their exams, giving them a chance to revise and study areas they struggled with. Your child's first step if they have not met a grade 4 or above in Maths and English should always be to speak to their secondary school *and* their further education institute to discuss their options.

Sources

<https://www.gov.uk/national-curriculum>

<https://www.sspeterandpaulprimaryeye.co.uk/page/?title=What+are+Key+Stages%3F&pid=83>

<https://www.yearsix.co.uk/year-6-sats-guide-for-parents/#:~:text=Many%20secondary%20schools%20also%20use,tests%20to%20help%20assess%20children.>

<https://www.theschoolrun.com/parents-guide-secondary-school-assessment-explained>

[https://www.theschoolrun.com/year-4-multiplication-tables-check-mtc-explained#:~:text=Which%20children%20will%20sit%20the,day%20to%20administer%20the%20check\).](https://www.theschoolrun.com/year-4-multiplication-tables-check-mtc-explained#:~:text=Which%20children%20will%20sit%20the,day%20to%20administer%20the%20check).)

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/10/24/rshe-relationships-health-sex-education-review-curriculum-to-protect-children/>

<https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/results/gcse/how-gcse-combined-science-grades-work-a-quick-guide>

<https://www.ucas.com/applying/after-you-apply/types-undergraduate-offers#:~:text=Decisions%20universities%20and%20colleges%20can%20make,-Either%20a%20conditional&text=A%20conditional%20offer%20means%20you,but%20you%20could%20add%20more.>

<https://www.ucas.com/applying/after-you-apply/clearing-and-results-day/after-results-day/after-you-get-your-exam-results>

<https://www.careerpilot.org.uk/information/your-choices-at-16/what-to-do-on-gcse-results-day>

All information is correct as of November 2024.

