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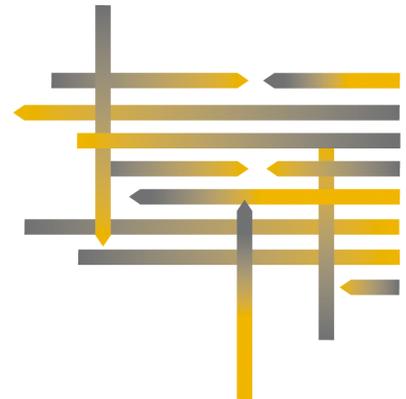
## A GUIDE TO SCHOOLING IN ENGLAND

### FOR BME AND NEWLY ARRIVED MIGRANT PARENTS

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Commissioned by Action for Social Integration

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## **Schooling in London: A guide for BME and migrant parents**

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*Commissioned by* Action for Social Integration

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### **Action for Social Integration**

Action for Social Integration (AFSI) is a registered charity that aims to relieve poverty and prevent social exclusion and to advance social and cultural integration, social justice, inclusion, equality & diversity and to eliminate prejudice, stereotype and discrimination in relation to asylum seekers, refugees and minority ethnic communities from all ethnic backgrounds. AFSI provides advice, guidance and information to children and young people from disadvantaged families and lone parents, mainly black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. The charity works with families and schools to fight against child poverty, and to raise education attainment of school children from BME communities. Website: [www.afsi.org.uk](http://www.afsi.org.uk)

### **The Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC), Middlesex University**

The social policy research centre (SPRC) was established in 1990 to provide a focus for research in the social sciences at Middlesex University and supports high quality research of national and international standing. Members of staff are involved in a wide range of projects funded by research councils, the EU, government departments and the major charities. The Centre supports postgraduate research students, including students funded by research councils, and a number of well-established masters programmes. The Centre runs events, including conferences, seminars and short courses. Main areas of interest include: migration, refugees and citizenship; welfare restructuring, governance and risk; urban policy, regeneration and communities; drug and alcohol policy, human security and human rights; tourism policy. For further information and to view reports from our recent research projects visit our webpage: [www.mdx.ac.uk/sprc](http://www.mdx.ac.uk/sprc)

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## **INTRODUCTION - HOW WILL THIS GUIDE HELP YOU?**

In 2010 the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at Middlesex University was commissioned by Action for Social Integration to produce this Guide to the British Educational system, especially for Black and Ethnic Minority parents including newly arrived migrants and refugees.

The aim of the guide is to help you understand the school system in Britain. We hope it will help you to make the most of the opportunities which the education system here provides.

We believe that the information in the booklet will be useful to all parents of children attending British schools but particularly if you have recently arrived in Britain since you will probably find the education system very different from the one in the country which you have left. We have highlighted some of the major differences you are likely to find on page 4 and these are discussed more fully later in the booklet.

The booklet is based on research with parents, teachers and others involved in education. The research identified the key things which parents need to know about the system here.

The main focus of the guide is on compulsory schooling – primary and secondary school - which children must attend between the ages of 5 and 16. It takes you through the whole process of schooling from finding a place in primary school to the examinations your child will take before leaving. The final section gives information about some important issues which you need to be aware of, including for example expectations of children's behaviour, which may be very different from what you and your children are used to.

Schools can be very important not only for children but for their parents and can help people new to Britain in the process of settling down. They provide a way to meet other people living in the area you live and schools often provide a range of support to children and parents as well as help with learning the language. Many schools, especially in cities, work closely with community organisations to support children from particular groups. Some of the sources of information and support are listed in the appendix.

There are some differences between the education system in England and that in other parts of the UK (Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland). Many issues covered here are the same but this booklet focuses specifically on the situation in England. The organisation of schooling also varies between different local areas and you will need to check information with your school and local authority (LA - the body responsible for education at local level, e.g. borough, district or council).

Schooling in the UK has changed a great deal over the last ten years and is likely to change further and faster in the next few years. As far as possible, the information was correct at the time of publication, but the appendix lists some sources where you can confirm the situation in your local area and seek further information and advice.

## Some Key Features of British Schooling

- Schooling starts earlier than in many countries. All children aged between 5 and 16 **must** be in school. Children often start at the age of 4 and this varies depending on the local authority.
- Children are placed in classes according to their age, not their level of achievement. They move up to the next class at the end of each year, whether or not they have reached the expected level in their school work.
- There are many different types of school in the state system, including religious (or 'faith') schools. 'Public' schools are private (fee-paying) schools.
- Schools in the state system have different admission requirements.
- Finding and getting your child into a school can be complex and difficult – your child may not get a place in the school which is your first choice.
- Schools in the state system follow a National Curriculum but within that framework the schools and individual teachers have some choice about what to teach and how to organise learning.
- The school provides most textbooks and exercise books - these are kept at school and children only bring home the books they need for homework.
- Children who need it may receive extra help in learning English (English as an Additional language – EAL) in school.
- Most children with Special Educational Needs (physical or mental impairments) attend mainstream schools. They may receive extra support in school.
- Schooling and lessons are more informal than in many countries – children may sit at tables, not desks, and may sometimes be encouraged to work together.
- Physical punishment is forbidden in schools.
- Most schools have a uniform which children must wear to school.

# THE STRUCTURE OF SCHOOLING IN ENGLAND

Schooling is **compulsory** for children between the ages of 5 and 16 (inclusive).

## Starting school

- Children **must** attend school from the beginning of the term following their **fifth birthday**.
- Most local authorities accept children into school earlier, at the **beginning** of the year, or term, during which the child becomes five.
- Some schools/LAs accept children in January as well September, so children born later in the year might start school in January.
- **The starting age needs to be checked with the local authority (LA).**
- From **September 2011**, local authorities **must** accept children into primary school in the September following the child's fourth birthday. Parents may request that their child does not start school until later.

## Leaving school

- Pupils can leave school on the last Friday in June of the school year if they reach the **age of 16** before the first day of the following term.
- Students may, if they wish to, continue their studies after the age of 16.
- Education (apart from university) is free up to the age of 19.
- The school leaving age will be raised to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015.

## Education is divided into the following five phases

Age on August 31st	Year	Curriculum stage	Type of educational institution		Is it compulsory?	Is it free?
3 – 4	Nursery	Foundation Stage	Nursery school		No	Part-time only
4 -5	Reception		Primary school	Infant school	Yes	Yes
5 – 6	Year 1	Key Stage 1		Junior school		
6 – 7	Year 2					
7 – 8	Year 3	Key Stage 2				
8 – 9	Year 4					
9 – 10	Year 5					
10 – 11	Year 6					
11 – 12	Year 7	Key Stage 3	Secondary school		Yes	Yes
12 – 13	Year 8					
13 – 14	Year 9					
14 – 15	Year 10	Key Stage 4 / GCSE	Further education (Sixth form or College)		No	Yes - up to the age of 19
15 – 16	Year 11					
16 – 17	Year 12	Sixth form / A level	Higher Education (University or College)		No	No - Different rates for UK and 'overseas' students
17 – 18	Year 13					
18+		Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degrees				

Each phase of schooling includes several Years. Children are placed into Years on the basis of their age rather than their knowledge and skills. **They do not repeat the year if they have failed to reach the expected level of attainment.** Those who have fallen behind or who have particular needs may receive extra help.

## The School Year

There are generally three terms in the school year, with holidays between them, and each term has a week of 'half term' holiday. The number of weeks in each half term and the length of holidays can vary. The school year begins in early September and finishes in late July.

### A typical school year in a state school

Term 1 Autumn Term September – December			Christmas Holiday	Term 2 Spring Term January - March/April			Easter Holiday	Term 3 Summer Term March/April – July			Summer Holiday
6-7 weeks	Half term 1 week	6-7 weeks		6-7 weeks	Half term 1 week	6-7 weeks		6-7 weeks	Half term 1 week	6-7 weeks	

There may be extra days when children do not attend school because of staff training. Your child's school will notify you in advance.

During the holiday period, your local authority may arrange play schemes – ask your school or LA about this.

## THE DIFFERENT PHASES OF SCHOOLING

### Pre-School

Every child is entitled to a free nursery place for **three hours per day** from the age of three. This may be in a school nursery class or an independent nursery. In the school nursery class, the sessions are either in the morning or afternoon.

Many parents need their child to be looked after for longer than this and also need childcare before the child is 3 years old. There are different options, including:

- **private nurseries** which may take children from 0-5 years and generally operate flexible hours between around 8.00 am and 6.00 pm. A fee is charged and admission is dependent on ability to pay – there may be a waiting list.
- **local authority nurseries** which may take children from 0-5 years and generally operate flexible hours between around 8.00 am and 6.00 pm. Admission depends on social circumstances and whether and how much you pay depends on your income.
- **Childminders** who normally look after children in their own home. You can get a list of registered child minders from your local authority.

All childminders who care for children under 8 years old for payment must:

- ✓ *agree to meet certain quality standards*
- ✓ *be registered with their local authority which checks to make sure they are suitable to look after children and inspects them regularly*

- You may be able to get financial help with the costs of extra childcare - **Childcare Tax Credit** - if you (and your partner if you have one) work at least 16 hours per week and are on a low income.
- You need to use a **registered child minder** or approved childcare provider for this to apply.

## Playgroups

In addition there are a wide variety of services which provide opportunities for children to play with others and take part in activities. These generally involve parents/carers staying with their children.

Contact your LA to find what childcare is available in your borough.

## Primary School

Age:	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11
Year:	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6

- Children may start at the age of 4 but **compulsory attendance begins at age 5**.
- In the **Reception Class** the focus is on learning through play.
- Formal schooling is from **Years 1 – 6**.
- In some schools, there is a separate Infant School (Reception – Year 2) and Junior School (Years 3 – 6).
- Children are in classes, generally of around **30 pupils**.
- They have one class teacher who teaches them for most of their time in school.
- Children chose their secondary school in Year 6 and transfer to secondary school at the end of that year.

## Secondary School

Age:	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18
Year:	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13
	Secondary School					Sixth Form/College	

- Children start secondary education at the age of 11 and continue to age 16 when they take a final examination, **GCSE** (General Certificate of Secondary Education).
- Secondary schools are usually bigger than primary schools – they may have 1,000 or more pupils.
- They are in classes of around 30 and there may be several classes in each year group.
- Each class has a tutor who generally starts and ends the school day with their class.
- Most subjects are taught by **specialist teachers**.
- Results in GCSE may determine what form of further education a student is able to progress to and the subjects which may be taken.

## Sixth Form/Further Education College (post-compulsory education)

Students who wish to stay on in education can progress to the next stage either at the same school, if it has a 'sixth form', or at a college offering Further Education (the last two years at school used to be called the sixth form but are now known as Years 12 and 13).

They may take Advanced Level (A level) examinations, usually in 2 to 4 subjects, which are the normal entry requirement for university or a variety of vocational courses and examinations.

Further education represents a transition between school and university. Students take more responsibility for managing their own work and are usually only required to attend when they have lessons.

## University

Young people can continue with their studies at University. If they pass (graduate) they will be awarded a '**degree**'. Students studying for their first degree are known as **undergraduates**.

### Types of degrees

Level of study	Type of degree	Usual length of study
Undergraduate	Bachelor of Arts (BA)/ Bachelor of Science (BSc)	3 years full time
Postgraduate	Master of Arts (MA)/ Master of Science (MSc)	1 year full time/ 2 years part-time
	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	3 years full time/ 5 years part time

In Scotland, first degrees are four years long and lead to Master of Arts (MA) but these are generally seen as the equivalent of a Bachelors degree.

### Admission requirements

- Acceptance onto a university course is usually on the basis of a report from the secondary school, results in GCSE and most importantly A Level results/expected results (students are generally given a 'conditional offer' initially which requires them to meet certain grades in their A Level subjects).
- Students who wish to study at university should start investigating courses and visiting universities during Year 12 or earlier. The application process begins early in Year 13.
- Applications are processed through a central system (UCAS) and the deadline is in January for admission in the September of the following year (though earlier for some courses).
- Some universities may hold interviews for applicants and in certain subjects, such as medicine, the interview is an important part of the admissions process.

It is important to find out as early as possible what subjects and grades you are likely to need for the type of higher education course you want to do (some universities require specific subjects at GCSE as well as A level).

Universities also accept applications from people over 21 'mature students' who may not have formal qualifications.

### **Fees**

- All universities now charge fees and these are different rates according to the student's status (Home/EU/ International Student)
- You may be eligible for a student loan to cover your university fees and expenses.
- Fees are likely to rise significantly over the next few years, and to be different depending on the course and the university.

## **THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

All children within the state system aged between five and 16 follow a National Curriculum which sets out:

- The core subjects they will be taught during their time at school
- 'Key Stages' through which they will progress
- The levels of attainment (attainment targets) they are expected to reach

Within this framework, schools and teachers have some flexibility to choose what they teach and how they teach it. For example, they can choose different periods of history to cover and can choose from a range of books in English literature.

**Key Stages 1 and 2** culminate with **SAT (Standard Assessment Tests)**. Stage 4 culminates in public examinations, the **GCSE**.

The National Curriculum sets out detailed **attainment targets**, indicating the type of knowledge and understanding children are expected to have achieved at each Key Stage. These go from Level 1 – 8 and each level is further subdivided (e.g. 1a, 1b, 1c). All children are expected to reach level 5 by the end of Key Stage 3.

Your child's school will send you a **report** telling you what National Curriculum levels your child has reached in any formal assessment. These give you an idea of how your child's progress compares to government target levels for their age group but it is important to remember that children develop at different rates and these test only a particular set of skills and abilities.

Special Schools and some people with special needs within mainstream schools may be exempted.

## Key Stages and expected levels of attainment according to Year

Age	Year	Curriculum stage	Expected level of attainment
3 - 4	Nursery	Foundation Stage	
4 - 5	Reception		
5 - 6	Year 1	Key Stage 1	1a / 2c
6 - 7	Year 2		2b
7 - 8	Year 3	Key Stage 2	2a / 3c
8 - 9	Year 4		3b
9 - 10	Year 5		3a/4c
10 - 11	Year 6		4b
11 - 12	Year 7	Key Stage 3	4b/5c
12 - 13	Year 8		5c/5b
13 - 14	Year 9		5
14 - 15	Year 10	Key Stage 4 / GCSE	Expected levels vary
15 - 16	Year 11		

## National Curriculum subjects

Age	5 - 7	7 -11	11 – 14	14 -16
Year	Year 1 – 2	Year 3 – 6	Year 7 – 9	Year 10 – 11
Curriculum stage	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4 / GCSE
Compulsory Subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ English</li> <li>▪ Maths</li> <li>▪ Science</li> <li>▪ Design and Technology</li> <li>▪ Information and Communication Technology</li> <li>▪ History</li> <li>▪ Geography</li> <li>▪ Modern Foreign Languages</li> <li>▪ Art and Design</li> <li>▪ Music</li> <li>▪ Physical education (PE)</li> <li>▪ Religious education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ English</li> <li>▪ Maths</li> <li>▪ Science</li> <li>▪ Design and Technology</li> <li>▪ Information and Communication Technology</li> <li>▪ History</li> <li>▪ Geography</li> <li>▪ Modern Foreign Languages</li> <li>▪ Art and Design</li> <li>▪ Music</li> <li>▪ Physical education (PE)</li> <li>▪ Religious education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ English</li> <li>▪ Maths</li> <li>▪ Science</li> <li>▪ Design and Technology</li> <li>▪ Information and Communication Technology</li> <li>▪ History</li> <li>▪ Geography</li> <li>▪ Modern Foreign Languages</li> <li>▪ Art and Design</li> <li>▪ Music</li> <li>▪ Physical education (PE)</li> <li>▪ Religious education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ English</li> <li>▪ Maths</li> <li>▪ Science</li> <li>▪ Information and Communication Technology</li> <li>▪ Physical education (PE)</li> <li>▪ Citizenship</li> <li>▪ Careers education</li> <li>▪ Work-related learning</li> </ul>
Other subjects	<p><i>(taught across the curriculum)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)</li> <li>▪ Citizenship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Careers Guidance</li> <li>▪ Sex and Relationship Education (parents can withdraw from non-statutory elements)</li> <li>▪ Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Careers Guidance</li> <li>▪ Sex and Relationship Education (parents can withdraw from non-statutory elements)</li> <li>▪ Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Optional Areas</b> <i>(Schools must offer at least one subject from each group)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Arts (e.g. Art, Drama)</li> <li>▪ Design and Technology</li> <li>▪ Humanities (history, geography, social sciences, religious education)</li> <li>▪ Modern Foreign Languages</li> </ul>

# PRIMARY SCHOOL

## GETTING YOUR CHILD INTO A PRIMARY SCHOOL

The process of getting your child enrolled in a school is complex and can be difficult, especially for people who have recently arrived in the UK. You may want to seek advice and support from friends or community organisations who speak your own language.

We describe below the process of applying for a school place. It is important to note that **if you arrive in the middle of the school year**, you will not be able to go through this process and many schools will already be full. You should remember that:

- Your child should be in full time school from the age of 5.
- If your child is 5 or over when you arrive in the country s/he is entitled to be admitted immediately.
- There may be a delay in securing a place.
- You may not be able to get your first choice of school if it is already full.
- The local education authority is legally required to ensure that all children of school age resident in their area have a school place.
- Your child can change school later providing another school is willing to offer a place.

### Finding out about local schools

You should start finding out about primary schools well **before your child reaches her/his fourth birthday**.

You can find the names and contact details of all schools in your area through the internet at: <http://schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk/> and then typing in your postcode. You can also contact your Local Authority (LA) which will provide you with a list of schools in your area.

#### *In deciding which school might suit your child you might want to consider:*

- How **close** is the school to your home? Most children, particularly in cities, will go to a primary school within walking distance of their home. This allows children to get to know others living in their area and parents to develop social networks around the school.
- Which school does your **child prefer**? Did s/he feel comfortable when visiting the school? Which school do her/his friends attend?
- Are there other children attending the school who speak the same language as you do?
- Does your child have **special needs**? If your child is very bright, shows particular patterns of behaviour or has learning difficulties it is important to find a school that will be able to give them the necessary support.
- What access does the school offer to **after-school childcare**?
- What **type** of school do you want your child to attend? There are several different types of school in the state system (see box) as well as private (fee-paying) schools.

You need to find out as much information as you can about the schools in your area. For example, you might like to:

- visit the schools
- ask friends and neighbours who have children at local schools
- read the schools' most recent reports from Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education)
- read the local authority and schools' prospectuses

## **Visiting the school**

The best way to find out about a school is to go and see it and you should try to visit at least once with your child. It is best to visit during the school day if possible. This will give you an opportunity to find out more about children's experience in the school and you may be able to see lessons in progress.

Most schools have open days or evenings, when parents and children will be shown round and you will have an opportunity to meet staff and ask questions. In some schools you may be able to arrange to visit at a different time. Ring or visit the school and ask for an appointment. You may want to bring a friend with you, especially if you do not feel confident in your knowledge of English.

***While you are at the school, these are some of the things you might look out for or ask about:***

- How welcoming does the school feel? Is parental involvement encouraged through informal contacts and organisations such as a Parents Teachers Association?
- Are you impressed by the children's work that you see? How much feedback is given by the teacher on the exercise books?
- If you see lessons in progress, how engaged do the children seem to be?
- Are there notices in different languages around the school?
- what kind of support is given to children whose first language is not English to learn the language and access the curriculum? How well do they do in the school?
- What kind of support is given for children with Special Educational Needs?
- What is the school's policy on issues like homework, whether children are placed in 'streams' according to ability, and how children's progress is monitored?
- What arrangements are there for communicating with parents about their children's progress?
- is the school well-equipped? find out where pupils do sport, and what computer facilities are available.
- What extra activities are available? e.g. is there any music, does the school organise visits?
- How will your child get to school? Think about safe routes, transport and the length of the journey.

## **School Prospectuses**

All schools are required to produce a prospectus which gives information about the staff, curriculum, resources and examination/test results and results of school inspections. You may obtain one from the school or get this information online from the school's website using the link <http://schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk/>.

## Reports by Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)

Ofsted is the official body with responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the education taking place in schools and other education establishments in England. Schools are inspected at least every three years and the results of their assessments are available in publically available reports which can be obtained at: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Improved-inspection-reports-search>

Ofsted's judgments are made on a four point scale:

- one – outstanding
- two – good
- three – satisfactory
- four - inadequate

A poor OFSTED report does not necessarily mean that your child will not do well at the school. The methods used in Ofsted inspections and some of their evaluations have been controversial.

## School attainment tables

National tables are available listing the results of school-administered tests for primary schools and national examination for all secondary schools in England. You can find these by going to: <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Diol1/DoltOnline> and typing in the name of the school you are interested in. You can use this information to see how each school near you compares with the average for:

- your local authority area
- across the country

For primary schools the tables show the percentage of pupils achieving the government-defined expected level of attainment (Level 4) in three subjects: English, Mathematics and Science at the end of Year 6. These tables therefore cover only part of what the school teaches.

## Contextual value added (CVA) scores

These scores show the progress the pupils have made from the end of one Key Stage to another and therefore provide a measure of the schools' contribution to the children's learning. CVA scores complement published test and examination results and give an additional guide to the performance of a school.

Test and examination results, CVA scores and Ofsted reports all give only a partial picture of a school. It is important to use as many sources of information as possible in choosing the school which you think is right for your child.

## The different types of primary schools

### **State Schools**

Most children attend state schools which are maintained through public funds and free. All state schools, except for some Special Schools, must follow the National Curriculum and are inspected regularly by Ofsted.

There is a variety of primary schools within the state system in the UK:

### ***Community Schools***

These schools are managed by the Local Authority (LA) through a Governing Body composed of 'stakeholders' (parents, staff, people appointed by the local authority, people co-opted for their specific skills and experience). These schools have their own budget determined by the number of pupils and other factors such as levels of social deprivation, numbers of children with English as an Additional Language (EAL). These schools are non-denominational and all children of the relevant age may apply. Admission to community schools is managed through the LA and places are allocated on the basis of residence, whether a sibling is already at the school and in some cases special educational or social needs.

### ***Voluntary-aided (or voluntary controlled) schools***

Most are religious or 'Faith' schools but some are linked to charitable foundations. Most faith schools are Church of England or Catholic, but there are a smaller number of Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh schools within the state system. For faith schools, except for Church of England (C of E) schools, members of other faiths are only admitted if there are spare places. C of E primary schools have generally been open to everyone and in rural areas may be the only local school available. Popular C of E schools are increasingly selecting on the basis of religious observance.

Most of their funding comes from the local authority but the faith group or charitable foundation controls the governing body and sets the admissions requirements. For faith schools, you will need to provide evidence of religious observance. These schools follow the National Curriculum but faith status may be reflected in their religious education curriculum and acts of worship as well as admissions criteria and staffing policies.

### ***Special schools***

Special schools cater for children with specific special educational needs (physical disabilities or learning difficulties). These may be community schools or voluntary aided. Some mainstream schools have special units for specific learning difficulties and many children with learning difficulties or disabilities attend mainstream schools. Many of these schools take children from aged 5-19.

### ***Maintained boarding schools***

These are for children with particular social or educational needs and the child lives at the school during the term. They offer free tuition, but charge fees for board and lodging.

### **Independent (or private) schools**

There are around 2,300 independent, or privately run schools in England. These schools set their own curriculum and admissions policies. Entry is based on ability to pay, but particularly for the more prestigious schools, this may include an aptitude test.

For information see the Guide to Independent Schools: <http://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/>. Some independent schools offer subsidized places to children who do well in their entrance exams but whose parents might be unable to pay the fees. See: [www.feeassistancelondonschools.org.uk](http://www.feeassistancelondonschools.org.uk)

## APPLYING FOR A PLACE

When you have decided which school/schools you prefer, **you are not guaranteed that your child will get a place in the school of your choice.** In applying for a school place, you can express a preference but places will be allocated according to criteria which vary according to the type of school.

### When to apply

When	What
May	Local Authorities (LAs) publish information about admission arrangements for the following year
September	Information and application packs for primary and secondary schools are available from LAs
December	Choose schools to apply for
September - February	Check the LA deadline date for applications Make sure you have all the necessary documents Submit an application for your child by post or on-line
After closing date	Admission authorities must consider all applications equally against the published oversubscription criteria
March- May	You will be offered a place – check the date of the offer with your LA. This may not be one of the schools you choose. If you are not happy with the decision you can appeal

- Apply in the **autumn term a year before your child is due to start school** (your child is likely to be 3 years old at that time – see section on Structure of Schooling).
- Each local authority sets a deadline for applications, after which they begin the process of allocating places. If you apply after the deadline, your application must be considered straightaway but you are less likely to be offered a place at your preferred school.
- If you move house (or you are relocated by the council) to another local authority, you are likely to need to change your child's school. **You will need to go through the admission process again in the new LA.** Contact your new local authority for more information well in advance of your move - some schools in your new area may already be full.

### Admissions Criteria

Before submitting your application read the school's admission criteria - these will give you a realistic idea of your child's chances of getting a place there.

Schools must accept all children who apply if there are enough places (except those, e.g. grammar schools, which select by academic ability). Popular schools may get more applicants than places available. In that case they must allocate places according to their **oversubscription criteria.** Community schools allocate places primarily according to:

- the distance of your home from the school. Local authorities designate a 'catchment areas' for schools in their area and people who live within that area have a higher chance of being accepted into the school.
- whether a child already has a brother or sister in the school.
- in some cases particular educational or social needs.

For popular schools the catchment area may be quite narrow and you need to check whether you live within this area.

Faith schools generally require proof of religious observance, for example a letter from a priest or imam, a certificate of baptism.

### **Where to apply**

Local authorities coordinate the admissions process for all types of state school. To apply for a school place you need to complete the local authority's common application form, online or on paper. This covers applications for all schools in its area (and also covers applications to secondary schools in other local authority areas). You may be asked to put down one or more primary schools, and for secondary schools you can apply for at least three schools.

Many secondary schools, particularly faith schools, will also have a Supplementary Application Form which can be downloaded from the school website and needs to be completed and returned directly to the school. This form is **in addition** to the Common Application Form available through the local authority.

### **What you need when applying for a school place**

- document confirming your child's date of birth (e.g. birth certificate, passport)
- document confirming your place of residence (e.g. electricity bill or a Child Benefit letter)
- if you are not the parent, a letter stating that you have parental responsibility for the child
- for faith schools, a document confirming that you belong to that faith (e.g. a letter from a parish priest, baptismal or communion certificates, etc.)

### **Appealing against a decision on a school place**

- If your child does not get a place at your preferred school, **you have a legal right to appeal to an independent appeal panel.**
- Appeals are only possible on the grounds of administrative mistakes (e.g. that the LA did not take account of a relevant document). **You cannot appeal merely because you do not like a school.**
- You will find details of how to make an appeal in the local authority's admission letter outlining your offer and the **deadline that you must meet** if you want to appeal.
- If your child has not been allocated a school place you will need to contact the admissions team at your LA. They can let you know which schools have places available.

### **WHEN YOU HAVE ACCEPTED A PLACE**

When you have been offered, and accepted, a place, you will normally be invited to the school for an induction interview with your child. This is a very important meeting. It is an opportunity for you

to find out more about the school and for you to give important information about your child which will help him/her settle into the school. You may for example want to discuss:

- You child's English language skills and any help s/he may need
- Your child's mother tongue and opportunities to use it
- Any special needs (for example physical disability, learning difficulty or behavioural problem) your child has
- Any other issues which may affect his/her progress
- The school uniform and whether there is any flexibility in what they must wear
- School meals and whether, e.g., Halal food is offered.

You may want to take a friend or an interpreter to this meeting. The school may be able to help with interpretation if, for example, there are staff available who speak your language.

## STARTING SCHOOL

### Term dates and school holidays

- For **community schools**, the dates of the school term and holidays are set by the local authority. There may be some extra teacher training days. The dates will be provided by the school and you can also find out online from your local authority website.
- For **other schools** term dates are set by the governing body and you need to contact the school directly to find out their dates.
- **Independent (private) schools** set term and holiday dates themselves.

### What your child will need

#### **School uniform**

In most schools in the UK children wear a school uniform. These can be quite simple (such as requiring white shirts and black trousers or skirts) or involve more specific clothes. The governing body of each school decides on the uniform policy or dress code, generally in consultation with parents and staff. As well as a uniform, the dress code could include, for example, not wearing jewellery. School uniform often includes clothing required for PE lessons, usually a t-shirt, shorts and plimsolls.

- Schools are generally strict about uniform and as a parent you need to ensure that your child is dressed correctly.
- Most schools allow some flexibility for religious reasons, e.g. girls may be able to wear loose trousers instead of a skirt.
- Some local authorities provide grants to help with buying school uniforms. For many schools you will be able to buy uniform in high street shops.

#### **Other equipment**

School materials such as text books, exercise books, pencils, art materials, photocopies, design and technology materials are usually provided by the school. Children can bring in their own pencil cases. Children do not bring textbooks and exercise books home unless they are being used for homework.

### Getting to School

- Most children in cities will be able to attend a primary school in easy walking distance of their home. In other cases you may need to use public transport or special transport provided by the LA.

- In London all those under 16 can travel free on buses and at children's rate on the Tube (free for under 11), DLR and London Overground services if they have an Oyster photocard.
- In other areas they will be entitled to free transport if they need to attend a school which is further away than the 'statutory walking distance' (two miles for pupils aged under eight and three miles for those aged eight and over).
- In rural areas they may need to take a special school bus.

## **The first day at school – overcoming fears**

Starting school can be an exciting time for a child but it can also be a difficult, and sometimes traumatic, experience as children may be leaving their family perhaps for the first time to spend time with strangers. This may be particularly difficult for children who have recently arrived in the country and who may not speak much English.

At first, your child may be overwhelmed with the new experience. Don't question them closely about what they have done at school – let them tell you what they want and give them time to relax and unwind. Children who do not speak much English when they start school may take some time before they begin to speak it. This is quite normal, but you could speak to the teacher if you are really concerned.

There are plenty of practical things that you can do to prepare children for their first day at school. Obviously these will vary depending on the age of your child and the length of time you have been in the UK before they start school.

For all children – wherever they were born and whatever their level of English language – the following can help children to settle in quickly at school:

- visit the school with your child so they become familiar with the building and the local area
- involve your child in choosing things needed for school such as school bags or uniform (though bear in mind that there may be peer pressure dictating what type of clothes/bags etc. are seen as 'acceptable')
- try to get to know other children who attend the school and their parents
- explain where they will be going, what they will be doing, and for how long and emphasise the things they may enjoy doing
- make sure your child is able to do simple tasks such as putting on shoes, buttoning coats
- get them used to using pencils and other equipment
- play games that involve taking turns or speaking in front of a group; and activities, such as drawing, which involve sitting down quietly for short periods of time
- let the school know of any particular difficulties/worries your child might have and of any special needs

**If they do not speak much English** you may need to do some extra things, for example:

- teach your child some important words/expressions in English such as 'I am hungry/thirsty'; 'I need the toilet'

- get them used to hearing English through for example listening to children’s television, radio programmes, speaking English yourself
- play games, sing songs in English
- if you are not confident in your own English, learn English together with your child

**Older children** who have already been to school in their home country need to know how schools are different from the schools they are used to. Explain to them, for example:

- how the length of the school day and the pattern of activities differs
- about the diversity and multiculturalism they will encounter in many British schools
- about the kind of behaviour that will be expected of them and the other children (for example that fighting is strictly forbidden; that discipline in schools may seem more relaxed than in their countries but it is important to behave appropriately)

## WHAT YOUR CHILD WILL BE DOING AT SCHOOL

### The school day

The organisation of the school day varies between schools but it might look something like the one described in the box below. This is only an example and you will need to check the exact arrangements, especially for arrival and going home, with the school.

8.50	<b>Arrival</b> - children gather into class groups in playground and move into classroom in lines
9.00	<b>Register</b> - teacher makes a note of those attending
9.10	<b>Assembly</b> (School or year group)
9.30	<b>Lessons</b>
10.15	<b>Playtime</b> – children will play in playground unless it is raining. Free fruit is provided in KS1.
10.30	<b>Lessons</b>
12.00	<b>Lunch</b>
12.45	<b>Lessons</b>
2.00	<b>Playtime</b>
2.15	<b>Lessons</b>
3.30	<b>End of school day</b>

### Arrival

It is important that your child arrives on time so that they are ready to start the school day at the right time.

### Lessons

- Your child will be placed in a class of about 30 other children.
- There will be one class teacher who will be with them for most of the day, working with them on a range of subjects and activities, possibly including PE and music.
- There may be some additional support to help with, for example, children with special needs and those who need support in learning English.

- There will be a classroom assistant as well as a teacher in the reception class.
- In the early years, children's learning is less formal than in many countries and children may spend some time sitting on the carpet (e.g. for stories) or in other activities.
- Children normally sit around tables to work rather than at desks.
- Children are not given timetables but you as a parent may request one from your child's teacher.
- Older children may have fewer breaks and more formal sessions for each subject.

### **Lunch**

A hot meal is served daily in the school hall/dining room. A charge is made but your child may be entitled to free school meals if you claim certain benefits. You will need to apply to your local authority. Children can also bring in their own lunch and they will eat this in a designated space in the school. If you provide a packed lunch this should be healthy and avoid things like sugary drinks.

The school may provide food to conform to particular religious or cultural traditions (e.g. Halal meat, vegetarian). If this is important to you, try and find out about this before your child starts school.

### **Playtime**

Children are usually split into infants and juniors during playtime which means that younger children are with older ones only for short periods. There are always members of staff (teachers and assistants) present in the playground during breaks to ensure the safety of children. Free milk and a portion of fruit are provided at this time.

### **End of the school day**

You need to ensure that you – or some other person you have arranged to do this – are at the school to collect your child. Younger children will not be allowed home unless a parent or carer has come to collect them. Children in Years 5 and 6 can travel independently with a letter signed by a parent.

The time waiting to collect your child is a good opportunity to get to know other parents and to discuss issues concerning the school.

## An example of a school week for a Year 5 class in a faith school

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9.10 - 9.20	<b>Register</b>	<b>Register</b>	<b>Register</b>	<b>Register</b>	<b>Register</b>
9. 20 - 10.00	<b>Assembly</b>	<b>Assembly</b>	<b>Assembly</b>	<b>Singing</b>	<b>Chapel</b>
10.00 - 11.05	Literacy	PE	Numeracy	Numeracy	Guided reading / Free time
11.05 - 11.25	<b>Play Time</b>	<b>Play Time</b>	<b>Play Time</b>	<b>Play Time</b>	<b>Play Time</b>
11.25 - 12.30	Numeracy	Foreign Language	ICT	Geography	Design & Technology
12.30 - 12.45	Spelling Test	Time tables test	Guided Reading	Literacy / Extended Writing	Quick Maths
12.45 - 13.45	<b>Lunch Time</b>	<b>Lunch Time</b>	<b>Lunch Time</b>	<b>Lunch Time</b>	<b>Lunch Time</b>
13.45 - 15.30	Quick Maths	PSHCE / Handwriting / Comprehension	Literacy	Literacy/ Extended Writing	Numeracy
	Science			RE	
	Guided Reading	Literacy	Choir/ Guided Reading	Library/ Guided Reading	

## Extra help for your child

### ***Learning English***

If your child does not speak much English, s/he may receive support to help learn the language and to be able to understand the lessons. There may be teachers or teaching assistants in the school who speak your language and who can help him/her to settle in.

It is also important to allow your child the opportunity to learn and use their first language – many community organisations run Saturday schools where children can learn about the language and culture.

### ***Special needs***

Schools offer special help for a range of special needs. This may include a physical disability, learning difficulty or behaviour problem. It can involve support in class or in separate groups for part of the day.

You should discuss your child's needs with the teacher if you are aware of any issues (see appendix for more details).

## Homework

- Children may get different homework depending on their abilities and the levels they have achieved.
- Schools set their own homework policy and the amount varies across schools.
- Not all primary schools set homework, particularly in the early years.
- A typical amount of homework for primary schools is twice a week, once in maths and once in English. They may also be expected to read aloud to their parents/carers for about 20 minutes a day and each week to learn to spell a list of words which they will be tested on.

The following are government guidelines for how much time children should spend on their homework in primary school:

- Years 1 and 2: 1 hour per week
- Years 3 and 4: 1.5 hours per week
- Years 5 and 6: 30 minutes per day

## Reading Schemes

In most British schools, children learn to read mainly through 'reading schemes'; they are given books of different levels to take home and are expected to practise reading: younger children with their parents and older children on their own.

## Monitoring the progress of your child

Your child's teacher will carry out regular checks on their progress in each subject as a normal part of their teaching. At the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 they will have tests called SATs which will indicate their level of knowledge in a particular subject.

You will receive **reports** on your child's progress each term and have the opportunity to discuss this with teachers at a **parents evening** once a year (for more details see appendix).

## SECONDARY SCHOOL

### TRANSFER TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

- Choosing a place at secondary school is often more complex than for primary schools
- There are more types of school, including schools specialising in particular subjects
- Some secondary schools are mixed sex and some boys or girls only
- Competition for places in some schools may be intense
- You should start thinking about your preferred school when your child is in Year 5

As with primary school, if you arrive in the middle of the school year, you will not be able to go through the process of applying for a school place which we describe below and many schools will already be full. You should remember that:

- Your child should be in full time school between the ages of 5 and 16 and is entitled to free education until the age of 19.
- If your child is 5 or over when you arrive in the country s/he is entitled to be admitted immediately.
- You may not be able to get your first choice of school if it is already full.
- The local authority (LA) is legally required to ensure that all children of school age resident in their area have a school place.
- Your child can change school later providing another school is willing to offer a place.

As with choosing a primary school, you should use as many different sources of information as you can in deciding on a school. The school that will be best for your child may not be the one with best examination results (usually GCSEs) or best Ofsted report and it is important to find out about what actually happens in the school.

You will need to consider whether you want your child to attend a coeducational (mixed) or single sex school and whether you want a school which specialises in a particular subject(s). You will also need to check whether your preferred school has an entrance test and what the arrangements are for this.

Your local authority will often provide events where schools give information about what they offer and you have a chance to ask questions of staff. Try to visit all the schools you think you may be interested in. There may be a tight timetable for open evenings, so make a calendar in advance and include all the schools which you think are possible

## Visiting the School

Bear in mind the questions we suggested in relation to primary schools but in addition you may want to find out about:

- subject choices or specialisms and how flexible the school is in relation to combinations of choices
- class sizes
- the foreign languages taught and whether your own language can be taken as an examination subject
- extra activities, for example foreign trips, work experience
- sports and music facilities
- discipline and behaviour in the school – this may be more important in secondary school (see appendix)
- whether the school favours streaming by ability and how easy it is to move between streams
- whether the school has a sixth form and/or has links with other sixth forms or colleges in the area.
- whether the school has specialist places (for example art or sports)?

### The Different Types of Secondary School

#### Community Schools

**Comprehensive Schools** do not select according to ability and are expected to have a range of pupils reflecting the local area. These represent the majority of community secondary schools. They may be single sex (boys or girls only) or mixed.

**Grammar Schools** select their intake on the basis of a test taken at the age of 11. A minority of local authorities have a fully or partially selective system and around 20% of children in these areas gain places in grammar schools. There are also some grammar schools in areas where the system as a whole is not selective.

**Secondary Modern** these schools take the children who do not receive grammar school places in areas where there is selection. They may also be called 'comprehensive' but their intake will be skewed by the existence of the grammar school.

#### Voluntary Aided Schools

These are run on similar lines to Voluntary Aided primary schools. They may be of various types, including comprehensives or grammar schools. The majority are faith schools.

### **Special schools**

Special schools cater for children with specific special educational needs (physical disabilities or learning difficulties). These may be community schools or voluntary aided. Many of these schools take children from aged 5-19.

Some mainstream schools have special units for specific learning difficulties and many children with learning difficulties or disabilities attend mainstream schools.

**Maintained boarding schools** are for children with particular social or educational needs. The children live at the school during the week. They offer free tuition, but charge fees for board and lodging.

### **Other types of State school**

**Foundation and Trust schools** are publicly funded but their governing body has chosen to 'opt out' of local authority control. The governing body is responsible for setting their own admissions criteria and they may select on academic grounds.

**Academies** have a sponsor from business, faith or voluntary groups who contributes £2 million towards the capital costs of the school. The remainder, and the running costs, are provided directly by the government. Academies are independent of the local authority and the sponsor appoints the majority of the governing body and chooses a 'specialism' for the school. They are allowed to select 10% of their intake on the basis of 'aptitude' for the specialism.

**Specialist Schools**, generally community schools, specialise in one or more of the ten national curriculum subjects. They must also have a sponsor who will provide at least £50,000. Specialist schools get additional funding per pupil. They can select 10% of their pupils by aptitude in the chosen subject.

**City Technology Colleges** are independently managed schools in urban areas which focus on science, technology and vocational subjects. Like Academies, they have a sponsor who appoints the majority of the governors and they organise their admissions. They do not select on the grounds of ability.

### **Independent (or private) schools**

Independent, or private, schools set their own curriculum and admissions policies. Confusingly, some of the most well known private secondary schools are called 'public schools' for historical reasons. Entry is based on ability to pay, but particularly for the more prestigious schools, this generally includes an examination. For information see the Guide to Independent Schools: <http://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/>. Some independent schools offer subsidized places to children who do well in their entrance exams but whose parents might be unable to pay the fees. See: [www.feeassistancelondonschools.org.uk](http://www.feeassistancelondonschools.org.uk)

## Applying for a place at Secondary School

You will start the process of applying for a place at the beginning of year 6. As with primary schools, admissions for state schools are managed by the local authority. The deadline for applying for secondary schools varies between local authorities so you will need to check the date. Offer letters are sent out in the following March.

### When to apply

When	What
May	Local Authorities (LAs) publish information about admission arrangements for the following year
September	Information and application packs for primary and secondary schools are available from LAs
September – December	Choose schools to apply for
September – February	Check the LA deadline date for applications Make sure you have all the necessary documents Submit an application for your child by post or on-line
After closing date	Admission authorities must consider all applications equally against the published oversubscription criteria
March 1 – National offer Day	You will be offered a place in a school. This may not be one of the schools you choose. If you are not happy with the decision you can appeal

### Admissions Criteria

Different types of school have their own admissions systems:

- Places at most comprehensive schools are allocated on the same basis as primary schools (place of residence, having a sibling in the school, social reasons).
- Some local authorities use strategies to ensure that there is a balance of different abilities – e.g. a lottery system; a ‘banding’ where children are placed into different ability ‘bands’ (high, medium and low) on the basis of test results.
- In areas where the state system is based on selection, all children have to sit an examination, known as the ‘11 plus’, which determines whether they are ‘selected’ to go to a grammar School or whether they go to a comprehensive or secondary modern school.
- For other grammar schools the school sets its own examination.
- Some other types of state school also admit some of their intake on the basis of ability.

## STARTING SECONDARY SCHOOL

Children will find secondary school very different from primary school. Secondary schools are generally much bigger and more complex but, as with primary school, being familiar with the place, having friends and knowing how the school works all help in settling down.

### Helping your child to settle into secondary school

- visit the school with your child so they become familiar with the building and the local area
- make sure that you and your child attend the induction meeting and discuss any issues or concerns with the teacher
- if your child does not speak much English, discuss their needs with the school (ensure you get an interpreter for the meeting if necessary)
- discuss the route to the school and if possible try to ensure that they have friends who will travel to school together
- involve your child in choosing things needed for school such as school bags or uniform (though peer pressure dictating what type of clothes/bags are seen as acceptable is likely to be more intense than at primary school)
- try to get to know other children who attend/will be starting the school and their parents
- discuss the differences between primary and secondary school with your child
- make sure that they know what clothing and equipment they need, including for games
- let the school know of any particular difficulties/worries your child might have and of any special needs
- discuss the kind of behaviour that will be expected of them and the other children (for example that fighting is strictly forbidden)

### Some key differences between primary and secondary schools

Primary	Secondary
most of the time is spent with the same class and with the same teacher  children stay in one room for most of the day	subjects are taught by specialist teachers – there may be as many as eight in a single day – and often with different groups of children.  children move around the school between lessons and have to find their classrooms.
A limited number of subjects are taught	More subjects are taught – there may be 15 per week – including new subjects such as foreign language, business studies
Children do not have fixed timetables	Children are given timetables which they have to keep with them
Homework is generally given twice a week, though some schools do not give homework	Children will be expected to do more homework – generally every day
Children normally travel to school with parents or other adults – at least in the early years	Children usually travel on their own or with friends
Reports given to parents once a year	Reports given to parents every term (or half term)

## School staff

There will be a much larger number of staff, with a variety of roles. The following staff may be in a typical school, though they may have different titles and there may be other roles according to the school's needs. Many staff will have more than one role, e.g. class tutors are usually also subject teachers.

- **Headteacher** – responsible for the leadership and management of the school
- **Deputy Headteacher (s)** – responsible for managing the school in the absence of the headteacher and for specific areas of the school's work
- **Heads of Department**– responsible for the leadership and management of a particular subject (e.g. languages)
- **Subject teachers** – teach lessons in a particular subject under the management of head of department.
- **Heads of Year** – responsible for the pastoral aspects of the children in a year group (i.e. issues other than the curriculum, including attendance, behaviour, contact with parents)
- **Class tutor** – responsible for the pastoral aspects of a tutor group; takes a daily register
- **Special Needs Coordinator (SENCO)** – responsible for coordinating the provision of support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)
- **EMA (Ethnic Minority Achievement) coordinator** – responsible for coordinating support for children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and other children at risk of underachieving
- **Supply teachers** – temporary teachers, employed when teachers are absent due to sickness, training or other reasons
- **Support teachers/teaching assistants** – provide support to class teachers
- **Technicians** – provide technical support for lessons, e.g. prepare apparatus for science
- **Inclusion Officers** – responsible for supporting pupils at risk of exclusion
- **Learning Mentors** – work with children who require assistance in overcoming barriers to learning
- **Careers Guidance Counsellor** – responsible for coordinating and providing careers advice to pupils
- **School-Home school Liaison Worker** – works with parents to support children facing difficulties at home
- **Extended School Worker** – responsible for the 'extended schools program' involving extracurricular activities
- **Leading Teacher for Gifted and Talented Education** - responsible for coordinating provision for Gifted and Talented children.

## The School Day – a typical timetable

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.30 - 8.50	<b>Assembly</b>	<b>Form Time</b>	<b>Form Time</b>	<b>Assembly</b>	<b>Form Time</b>
8.50 - 9.50	Design & Technology	Science	Religious Education	Music	PE (Indoors)
9.50 - 10.50	Design & Technology	English	Science	English	French
10.50 - 11.10	<b>Break</b>	<b>Break</b>	<b>Break</b>	<b>Break</b>	<b>Break</b>
11.10 - 12.10	English	Art	ICT	History	English
12.10 - 12.55	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
13.00 - 14.00	Maths	PE (Outdoors)	Geography	Maths	Science
14.00 - 15.00	History	French	Maths	Science	Geography

## Homework

The amount of homework will increase and homework will be in a larger number of subjects than at primary school. The government guidelines for the amount of homework secondary school children do are:

Year 7 -8	45 to 90 minutes per day
Year 9	1 to 2 hours per day
Year 10 -11	1.5 to 2.5 hours per day

- Schools normally provide **homework diaries** to help students organise their learning – parents may be asked to sign these daily to confirm that they have seen what is required.
- The load, and subjects, will be different on different days.
- Schools have different homework policies and give different amounts of work.
- If you have concerns about the amount of homework, talk to the child’s tutor.

Some schools run **homework clubs** which allow pupils to work on their homework in a supportive environment either at lunch time or after school. If your school does not have a club, the local authority may offer them, generally in a local library. Homework club venues and facilities differ and you should contact your local authority or visit their website for information on what is available.

## **Your involvement in your child's education at secondary level**

At secondary school, parents have less day-to-day contact with the school and their children's teachers than at primary school and also fewer opportunities to talk to other parents. Children at secondary school generally travel to school alone or with friends. In addition, your child may want to show their independence and not want you to come into school or to meet them at school at the end of the day.

Schools vary in the extent to which they welcome parental involvement in school. It is important to take the opportunities for meeting and gaining feedback from teachers and for meeting other parents (see appendix).

### **Contacting the school**

If you need to contact the school about an issue concerning your child, make sure that you know the name of the appropriate person. Your first point of contact may be his/her **class tutor**. You may be able to communicate through the homework diary but if necessary you should make an appointment to see them either through the homework diary or by telephoning the school.

You may also want to contact other staff, e.g. EAL support teacher or a subject teacher. Again you may be able to contact them via the homework diary or telephone to make an appointment.

If you need help with English or have trouble in making contact, ask a friend or community organisation to help.

## **Supporting your child's progress in secondary school**

In secondary school children take on more responsibility for their own learning. The amount of homework and the variety of subjects can be overwhelming at the beginning. You can support them in managing this new situation and encouraging them to develop the good habits which will help them to succeed. Some things that can help:

- make sure they familiar with their timetable and know what lessons they will need to prepare for
- encourage them to get their school bag ready in the evening with all the right books
- check that they are clear about their homework timetable and when they need to complete their work
- check their homework regularly – in some schools you will be asked to sign a homework diary to confirm that you have seen it
- take an interest in their progress, in the subjects that they are doing and show that you value what they are doing
- give them time and space to relax - remember there is a balance between being supportive and pressurising them all the time!

## Formal feedback on your child's progress

You will get increased formal feedback on your child's progress and it is important that you provide a good example to your child by reading these and responding where appropriate:

- your child will receive school reports more frequently - every half term or every term
- reports have to be signed by a carer to confirm that you have seen it
- homework diaries may need to be signed daily and you can also write comments in these

## MAKING SUBJECT CHOICES

During Year 9 your child will choose which subjects to study at Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11) and take in their GCSE examinations.

Even at this stage it is important to get advice, including from a careers guidance counsellor as often choices of subjects at this early stage will impact on the child's future career opportunities.

- It is important that parents find out about the options so that they can participate in decision making about those choices.
- Children should choose subjects they enjoy and can do well in, but should also try to get a balance of subjects - this will give them more options when deciding on courses and jobs in the future.

## OPTION CHOICES

All children must study English, Mathematics, Science and ICT which are generally taken as examination subjects, as well as citizenship and physical education. They will normally choose four or more optional subjects. These may (but do not need to) include one from each of the 'entitlement areas' humanities (e.g. history and geography), Arts (e.g. Art, Music), Design and Technology (including food technology) and Modern Foreign Languages.

Some schools offer two or more languages usually French, Spanish and German but in some schools other foreign languages can be taught – e.g. Polish, Turkish, Bengali, Chinese, Japanese. If your mother tongue is not taught at the school, you child may still be able to take an examination in the language, providing s/he receives tuition.

Children who wish to study science, or a course such as medicine or engineering, at university should take more than one science subject.

## EXAMINATIONS

### General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE).

This is the main examination taken at the end of compulsory schooling. GCSEs are available in more than 40 academic and nine 'applied' subjects. Students generally take between 5 and 10 subjects. Exams usually take place in January and May/June and the results are published in March and August.

These examinations are very important for your child:

- Some jobs may depend on GCSE passes in certain subjects
- If your child wants to continue with his/her studies, the results will determine which subjects s/he may take and which type of courses (e.g. A Level or vocational courses)
- They are used by universities in deciding whether to accept an application (together with expected A Level results and other evidence)

### Assessment

- GCSEs are assessed mainly on written exams, although in some subjects there are also elements of coursework.
- Some subjects, like art and design, have more coursework and fewer exams.
- For some subjects you have a choice of two tiers: 'higher' or 'foundation' leading to a different range of grades (A\* - D/higher; or C – G/foundation)
- Your subject teacher normally decides which tier is best for you.

### GCSE Results

- The exams are graded from A\* to G, but generally only A\* - C are viewed as good passes
- In most cases, pupils need at least five GCSEs at grades A\* - C in order to progress to Advanced Level
- School league tables are based on the proportion of pupils entered who receive 5 passes at grades A\*-C.
- A grade of B or above at GCSE may be needed in a particular subject in order to take it at AS or A level
- Some schools and colleges require GCSE grade C or above in English and maths

### Failing exams

If your child fails an examination, they can resit, generally six months later.

If on the day of the exam something happens which affects your child's performance, s/he may be eligible for special consideration. S/he should speak to their teachers as soon as possible. If your GCSE is made up of units, s/he can choose to re-sit individual units. The awarding body will count the higher mark from the different attempts.

## AS and A level

Advanced level examinations are the main qualification for those seeking to go to university. Most students take 3 or 4 subjects, often specialising in arts/humanities/languages or in science/mathematics, though it is possible to take some of each type of subject. There are about 80 AS and A level subjects available

- AS (Advanced Subsidiary) and A (Advanced) level qualifications focus on traditional academic skills
- AS examinations are normally taken after one year (end of Year 12) and A Level after two years (end of year 13).
- Students may take an extra subject for AS in order to retain more options for A Level.

## A Level Results

- The exams are graded from A\* to E (pass) with F and unclassified.
- In most cases, you need at least two, and often three, good passes to obtain a university place
- Some university courses require you to pass specific subjects
- For some subjects (e.g. medicine) you will need at least 2 grade As and one other good pass

## Other examinations/qualifications

There are a variety of other courses which children can take at school or college. These include vocational such as BTECs, City & Guilds and OCR Nationals which can be taken in a variety of subjects including art and design, business, health and social care and information technology (for further details see <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/>)

## EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Many schools offer a variety of clubs and activities which students may participate in. These include, for example, sports, drama, music and games such as chess. These are voluntary (i.e. outside the compulsory curriculum) but it is important for your child that they become involved in such activities:

- They can help them develop important skills, including social skills, building self-confidence, working with others and taking responsibility.
- They allow them to develop wider interests and to participate in new experiences, such as being involved in a school play or musical production.
- Participation in such activities is important for when your child applies for employment or to university. The school's report and the child's own 'personal statement' in the application will use this as evidence of their skills and interests.

## SOME IMPORTANT ISSUES IN RELATION TO SCHOOLING

### Assembly

- Assemblies are usually held daily (sometimes less often) in all schools and may involve the whole school or a particular year(s) group.
- They vary between schools, and on different days.
- They are led by senior staff but may include participation by children and visitors.
- All state schools are required to provide a 'broadly Christian' daily act of worship and this is generally combined with the assembly.
- In faith schools this will be accordance with their particular observance (e.g. Church of England).
- In community schools this may focus on more general moral issues rather than a specific religious dimension.
- Parents may withdraw their child from assembly if they object on religious grounds.

### Attendance

School attendance is very important in UK schools and it is crucial that you ensure that your child develops a good record of attendance and punctuality. This is essential to make the most of the opportunities in school and will appear in the child's reports and in references (e.g. to employers or university).

- You have a legal responsibility to ensure your child's attendance.
- Your child's attendance will be strictly monitored.
- If they are absent without good reason ('**unauthorised absence**') this will be noted and will appear on the child's record.
- '**Authorised absences**' include sickness, religious holidays and family emergency (e.g. bereavement). Other absences will generally count as **unauthorised**.
- If your child not well enough to attend you should notify the school (usually by phone) at the beginning of the school day.
- Children have the right to days off for religious holidays (e.g. Eid, Yom Kipur). You need to discuss this with the school in advance.
- It is not normally acceptable to take your child out of school for family holidays during term time. Schools can, at their discretion, grant up to 10 days leave each school year but most are reluctant to do this.

If your child is reluctant to attend school, it may be because they are experiencing bullying or other problems. Talk to them to try and find out what the problem is. You may be able to seek support from the school, the local authority or other organisations including community organisations. For further information, see:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/>

## **Behaviour**

The behaviour of children in British schools, and the teachers' behaviour towards the children, may seem less formal than in the schools that you are used to. Some differences may be:

- Children are often encouraged to say what they think.
- Except in single sex schools, boys and girls are taught together and by both men and women teachers.
- Teachers will normally call children by their first name, and pupils call teachers Ms/Mrs/Mr and their surname.
- Physical punishment is banned in schools (and is against the law generally) but schools have a range of punishments to deal with bad behaviour (see Discipline).
- Children are encouraged to talk to their teacher if they are worried about something – including things happening at home.

This can be confusing for children at first. If they are used to a more rigid system, they may believe that children do not respect their teachers and this can lead them to behave badly.

Good behaviour from children is vital to their learning and schools take it very seriously. You could help your child adapt by explaining that:

- They should respect their teacher and other staff, whoever they are
- They should always try to obey the instructions of teachers
- They should not talk to their friends during class unless the teacher says that they can (e.g. if they are told to work together in groups)
- Children should put up their hand if they want to ask the teacher something in class
- Fighting with other children (or pushing, pulling hair etc.) is forbidden and may be punished

## **Bullying**

### **What is bullying?**

Bullying includes teasing, calling someone names or threatening them. Sometimes it is physical, e.g. the bully takes a child's belongings or even pushes or hits them. Excluding a child from friendship groups is also a form of bullying. Often this behaviour can be persistent. Remember, girls can be bullies, and they sometimes bully boys.

### **How can I tell if my child is being bullied?**

It is not always easy to tell if your child is being bullied. Some symptoms to look out for are:

- Your child gets upset at the thought of going to school
- Your child says s/he feels too 'unwell' to attend school every day

- There is a change in the usual behaviour pattern of your child
- Your child has unexplained cuts and bruises

### **What can I do if my child is being bullied?**

Some children are afraid to talk about bullying as they think telling an adult might make things worse. If s/he does tell you:

- Let him/her know that you are there to talk about anything if s/he needs to
- Take your child seriously and help him/her feel that it's not his/her fault
- Keep a record of every incident, noting down what happened with dates and times
- Encourage him/her to talk to his teacher or form tutor
- Make an appointment yourself with the teacher, tutor or head of year head
- If the problem is not resolved, seek advice from other parents or from a community groups or an organisation specialising in children's rights

### **Racist bullying**

Racist bullying is a particular form of bullying where the bully targets an individual or group on the basis of their ethnic grouping for example their skin colour, the way they talk or religious or cultural practices. According to the Anti Bullying network, racist violence, harassment and abuse are sometimes difficult to distinguish from other forms of bullying. Racist bullying in schools can range from ill-considered remarks, which are not intended to be hurtful, to deliberate physical attacks causing serious injury.

It is mainly people from black and minority ethnic communities who are subjected to racism, but there may be racism against 'white' groups including Travellers. Children from minority ethnic communities may themselves be involved in the racist bullying of others.

All forms of racism are illegal in British schools and schools and local authorities have a legal duty to prevent it happening. Many schools, particularly those in areas where there are large ethnic minority populations, have well-developed policies on multi-cultural and anti-racist education. Nevertheless incidents do occur. There are also schools where there are few or no children from ethnic minorities and where little has been done to address racism.

If your child is experiencing this form of bullying you may want to follow the steps outlined above. If the situation persists you may also want to seek advice from local community organisations and/or from specialist organisations.

## Discipline

- Schools have a **written policy** setting out the standards of behaviour it expects. It describes what the school will do if your child's behaviour falls below these standards.
- Schools have a legal right to impose reasonable sanctions if a pupil misbehaves, e.g.:
  - a reprimand
  - a letter to parents or carers
  - removal from a class or group
  - confiscating something belonging to your child if it is inappropriate for school (e.g. a mobile phone)

These punishments are taken seriously by schools and if your child is punished it is important that you treat this seriously and talk to your child to help them work out how to avoid trouble in future.

- As well as punishment, schools often use 'positive discipline' involving using lots of praise, awarding 'stars' for good work or behaviour to reinforce good behaviour

### When things get more serious

- Schools have the right to use detentions (that is keep children in school after the school day has ended) if they continue to behave badly, the school but must give you at least 24 hours' notice beforehand.
- If you feel a detention or any other action (such as for example constant sending your child to exclusion room at school) is unfair you should contact the school to discuss the issue.
- In serious cases the child may be excluded for a fixed period of time or permanently
- The decision to exclude permanently is taken by the headteacher but you have a right to appeal.
- The local authority is obliged to find alternative education, either in school or elsewhere, for a child who is excluded, but some children may remain out of school for a considerable time while a school is found which is willing to take them.
- If problems become serious, you may want to enquire about support your child could be given, for instance the help of a psychologist, counsellor, mentors, coaches etc. Talk to your child's tutor to refer you to these services. The school may also refer a child to one of these services but would need to discuss this with you first.

### Physical punishment

- Teachers are not allowed to punish pupils physically - corporal punishment such as caning and smacking are illegal in school (and also at home).
- Teachers can physically restrain children where that is necessary.
- Teachers are allowed by law to use 'reasonable force' to prevent a child from:
  - committing a crime
  - causing injury or damage
  - causing disruption
  - hurting her/himself

## **Diversity**

- Many schools, particularly in large cities, have pupils with very different backgrounds – this includes national origin, religion, language and ethnic group, nationality of their pupils.
- It is against the law to discriminate on grounds of race or ethnicity in schools (as in public and private services generally).
- Schools have a legal obligation to promote equality and ‘social cohesion’ (good relations between different groups).
- Schools may celebrate diversity by, for example, teaching about different religious festivals, learning about different types of food or providing multilingual resources. Some schools help children maintain religious traditions by for example providing food such as Halal meat and allowing children to take time off for religious holidays.
- In spite of these policies, children from minority groups may still experience negative stereotyping. If you think this is happening to your child, it is important to discuss this issue with the school and if necessary seek advice from community organisations.
- Some newly arrived children and parents may be unaccustomed to diversity and this can lead to misunderstandings.

## **Information about your child’s progress**

There are many different ways in which you can find out about your child’s progress. As well as formal reports and meetings there are other ways in which you can communicate with staff at the school.

- You can make an appointment to see the teacher to discuss your child’s progress if you have any particular concerns – but bear in mind teachers can be busy.
- For primary school children, you may be able to speak to the teacher informally, for example when you collect your child from school - misunderstandings can sometimes be resolved through an informal chat.
- At secondary school, the homework diary provides day-to-day information about what your child is doing and you can use it to communicate with teachers.
- Your teacher or other school staff may contact you by letter, telephone, email or texts if they are concerned about your child. You need to take this seriously and respond as soon as possible.

## School Reports

You will receive a report on your child's progress every year in primary school and every term in secondary school. It will contain information on your child's progress, *levels of attainment* in the subjects they are studying, details of their attendance, behaviour and - where appropriate - special needs.

Your child will be given the report to bring home – it is important to make sure that they give it to you. The reports should be signed by a parent.

## Parents' evenings

These are held at least one a year in primary school and generally once a term in secondary schools. You will have individual meetings with your child's teachers (usually 10 minutes) to discuss how the child is doing in class and in school.

### How are parents' evenings organised?

- Schools have different styles of parents' meetings – some are held in classrooms, some in the school hall; they may be held in the afternoons or evenings.
- Parents and teachers should be able to hold their discussions without being overheard.
- There is normally an appointments system in order to avoid queues.
- Your child's latest report may help you to think of issues which you want to discuss.
- If your English is limited, bring a friend or ask for an interpreter. **It is not a good idea to use your children as interpreter.**
- Many schools hold a display of children's work and parents are invited to look at this.

### Why it is important to attend?

- You will receive detailed information about your child's progress
- They help you to understand how your child is being taught
- They provide a chance to get to know the teacher so you can work together to support your child

## Parental Involvement in the life of your child's school

As well as supporting your own child, English schools offer many opportunities for parents to get involved in the life of the school more generally.

## **Parent – Teacher Association (PTA) or Parents’ Associations**

- **Parent-teacher associations (PTAs)** are groups made up of parents, teachers and sometimes others within the school community.
- They provide a range of **opportunities for you to get involved in school life**, many of which don't take up too much of your time.
- They may organise **fundraising and social events** which allow parents to get to know each other and meetings to inform parents about **issues concerning education**.
- The meetings and activities will general be advertised within the school and you should receive a letter from the school inviting you to attend.
- Ask your child's teacher or other parents about getting involved in your local PTA.

## **Governing Body**

All state schools in England are run by a governing body working with the headteacher and senior management team. Governors at community schools include some members directly elected by parents at the school. Your parent governors may hold meetings to inform parents of important issues. You may wish to consider becoming a governor yourself. Parent governors are generally chosen through an election in which all parents can vote.

## **Community links**

Many schools work with parents and with community organisations to provide better support for children and to provide opportunities for parents. Examples might include:

- English classes for parents
- ‘Mother tongue’ classes for children
- Celebrations of festivals
- Parents reading stories to children in class
- Multicultural evenings with e.g. cooking, music and dance
- Advice and support for parents about other services

Find out whether any of these activities are available in your school – or contact your school and/or community group if you would like to help develop these activities.

## **What to do if you have cause for concern**

If you have a concern about the school, talk to other parents to find out if it is a general issue  
If you feel your teacher has low expectations of your child, you need to address the issue with your child’s school - speak to the teacher first and if necessary to more senior staff.

It is always better to discuss issues before things get serious - this may resolve the problem  
There are specialist organisations which can support and advice you (see appendix)

## Religious education

- The curriculum for religious education is developed by individual schools or representatives from nearby schools, teachers and faith groups.
- In most community schools the curriculum involves studying more than one religious faith.
- Children can take Religious Education as an examination subject at GCSE and A Level.
- You have the right to withdraw your child from all or part of the religious education curriculum.

## Sex and relationship Education (SRE)

- Children receive SRE in both primary and secondary schools.
- SRE involves teaching about sex and sexual health, as well as the importance of stable and loving relationships.
- Schools develop their own SRE programmes but they are encouraged to consult parents.
- A copy of the school's SRE policy must be available for you to inspect.
- If you have any concerns about it, talk them over with a member of staff.
- You can withdraw your child from all or part of the SRE programme but not from statutory elements which form part of the National Curriculum for science.

## Support for children with particular needs

### English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Children who come to school with little or no knowledge of English will need help with learning the language.

- The amount and kind of support given varies and when choosing school it is worth finding what is provided
- Children may be taken out of classes for some part of the day to work in small groups
- They may have extra support during lessons from teaching assistants and various resources (e.g. bi-lingual books)
- This type of provision is coordinated within schools by the Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA) coordinator

## Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The Government defines children with SEN as having 'learning difficulties or disabilities which make it harder for them to learn or access education than most other children of the same age.'

- Children with SEN may need extra help because of a range of needs, e.g.:
  - problems with thinking and understanding,
  - physical or sensory difficulties,
  - emotional and behavioural difficulties,
  - difficulties with speech and language
  - problems in how they relate to and behave with other people
- The SEN Coordinator (SENCO) will, with the class teacher, seek to identify children in need of special support
- You know your child best and may have concerns which the school has not picked up - discuss these with the class teacher and the SENCO
- Many children have special needs at a certain stage which may be resolved through extra help
- If your child needs continuing support then s/he might have a formal assessment which may result in a Statement of Special Needs which sets out the help which s/he is entitled to (see [www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk))

### How do schools identify children with SEN?

- Children who are working at a level significantly below other children of the same age will be identified as having SEN.
- Children may be given specific tests to identify particular conditions.
- Specialist professionals may be involved in this process.
- It may be more difficult and lengthy to identify SEN in children with limited or no English.

### What if my child just needs extra help?

- Remember, all children progress at different rates and learn in different ways.
- In the UK teachers are expected to plan carefully so that their lessons suit all children and to help them to learn in different ways - this is known as 'differentiation'.
- Don't assume your child has SEN just because s/he is making slower progress or getting some extra help.
- Extra support may help your child to catch up quickly and carry on working at the same level as the rest of the class.

If you think your child has learning difficulties but the school disagrees, contact the SEN section of your Local Education Authority and ask for your child to be assessed

### **Gifted and Talented**

'Gifted and talented' children are able to develop to a level significantly ahead of their year group:

- 'gifted' learners have abilities in one or more academic subjects, like maths and English
- 'talented' learners have practical skills in areas like sport, music, design or creative and performing arts

If you think your child is gifted or talented, you should first discuss their abilities and needs with your child's teacher or headteacher. All schools should have a Leading Teacher for Gifted and Talented Education (or share one in the case of some primary schools) whom you could speak to as well.

Schools have a responsibility to meet the educational needs of all their pupils including the gifted and talented. This includes providing greater challenges in lessons and opportunities for pupils to develop potential gifts and talents. Schools and local authorities may also provide additional activities beyond the everyday timetable.

### **The impact of trauma**

Some children may have experienced traumatic events in their country of origin or within Britain. This is particularly important for refugees who may have witnessed violent events or suffered the death or disappearance of family members. The impact of this kind of event can be long-lasting and may affect their health, their behaviour and their progress at school. The child may be reluctant to speak about the issue and thus to seek help and support.

If you know that your child has experienced trauma, you could:

- Make sure that the school is aware of the situation – you may need to seek support from a friend or community organisation to help explain the problem.
- If the problem affects the child's schooling, you may want to seek support from the school counsellor, Educational Welfare Officer.
- Seek advice and support from specialist organisations – for example the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (<http://www.torturecare.org.uk/>)

## Out of school activities

Many schools provide activities before or after school or during the holidays. These can include:

- **breakfast club** (8-9 am, usually a healthy breakfast is provided and various activities take place),
- **after school clubs** (normally 3.30-6.00 pm and activities may include sport, music or language classes)
- **holidays play schemes** (usually half terms and summer holidays)
- Schools may also provide **after school childcare** – this would normally take place outside school premises
- Some schools, particularly secondary schools, organise **school trips**. These may include a visit abroad for children studying a language.

Fees for clubs provided by schools or Ofsted-registered institutions can be partly refunded through Childcare Tax Credit, depending on your income.

## Appendix - Organisations and Online Resources

### OFFICIAL WEBSITES

**Note:** *The government changed on 11 May 2010 and policy on schooling has changed considerably. Some of the content on these websites do not reflect current government policy. All guidance continues to reflect the current legal position.*

**Department for Education**, the government department responsible for education, its website contains information about current policy and education news: <http://www.education.gov.uk/>

**To find information about a particular school:** <http://schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk/>

**Direct. Gov** provides general information and advice about about schooling:  
<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment>

**Office for Standard in Education (Ofsted)** responsible for carrying out inspections on schools. Results of the reports can be access on: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/>

**Teachernet**, an official website providing Information on educational issues (e.g. special needs)  
<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/>

### ORGANISATIONS OFFERING ADVICE AND SUPPORT TO PARENTS AND CHILDREN

#### General Advice

##### **Action for Social Integration (AFSI)**

AFSI provides advice, guidance and information to children and young people from disadvantaged families and lone parents, mainly black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. The charity works with families and schools to fight against child poverty, and to raise education attainment of school children from BME communities. – <http://www.afsi.org.uk>

**Parentline Plus** provides a wide range of information, advice and support for parents. It has a freephone 24 hour helpline and a wide range of useful information on their website  
520 Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road, London NW5 1TL  
Helpline: 0808 800 2222 - [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)

**Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)** an independent advice centre for parents, offering information about state education in England and Wales. Free telephone advice on topics including exclusion from school, bullying, special educational needs and school admission appeals.

1c Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2DQ  
0808 800 5793 - [www.ace-ed.org.uk](http://www.ace-ed.org.uk)

**Child Line** a free 24-hour helpline for children and young people in the UK, to help in relation to any problems. 0800 1111- [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

## **Bullying**

**Bullying Online** offers help and advice for young people and parents/carers.  
<http://www.bullying.co.uk/>

**Bullies Out** provides help, support and information to individuals, schools, youth and community settings affected by bullying, via email, letter or through Online Mentors.  
Unit 16, Sbectrwm Bwlch Road Fairwater Cardiff CF24 2RP  
029 2056 8947-<http://www.bulliesout.com>

**The Safe Network** us a network of children's charities, including the National Society for the prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) which campaigns and provides advice about children's rights including bullying  
[http://www.safenetwork.org.uk/help\\_and\\_advice/Pages/AntiBullying.aspx](http://www.safenetwork.org.uk/help_and_advice/Pages/AntiBullying.aspx)

**Anti-bullying network**, a charity based in Scotland, provides information about bullying, including racist bullying.  
<http://www.antibullying.net/racistinfo2.htm>

## **Mental Health**

**Young Minds** the UK's only national charity committed to improving the mental health and emotional well-being of all children and young people.  
48-50 St John Street London EC1M 4DG  
020 7336 8445-<http://www.youngminds.org.uk>

## **Equality Issues**

**Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)** give advice and information about the laws and rights in the UK about age, disability, gender, race, religion and sexual orientation.  
0845 604 6610-<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com>

## **Advice for refugees and asylum seekers**

The **Refugee Council** is the largest organisation in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees.

240-250 Ferndale Road Brixton London SW9 8BB

Tel: 020 7346 6700 Fax: 020 7346 6701

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

**Immigration Advisory Service (IAS)** is the UK's largest charity providing representation and advice in immigration and asylum law.

2nd Floor, County House, 190 Great Dover Street, London SE1 4YB

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7357 6917

<http://www.iasuk.org/home.aspx>

**Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture** offers in-depth treatment for torture survivors, including children and families. Referrals may be made by schools as well as doctors, refugee community organisations, family members and other voluntary and statutory bodies.

<http://www.torturecare.org.uk/>