

# School Year Abroad

## The English School System

For a non-UK student, spending a term or year in a school here is potentially an amazing, maybe even life-changing experience.

This document aims to give you general information about how the English school system works and other general information to help you prepare for your time at school in England.



The education system in the UK is divided into four main parts, primary education, secondary education, further education and higher education. Children in the UK have to legally attend primary and secondary education which runs from about 5 years old until the student is 16 years old.

Students can leave school on the last Friday in June if they are 16 by the end of the summer holidays and they need to do one of the following until they are 18:

- stay in full-time education, for example at a sixth form in a school or college
- start an apprenticeship or traineeship
- spend 20 hours or more a week working or volunteering, while in part-time education or training



**Primary Education** begins in the UK at age 4/5 (the student needs to be aged 4 on 1 September) and continues until age 11.

**Secondary Education** is for students from age 11 to 16.

Year 7	(age 11 on the the 31 <sup>st</sup> August – ie the day before the official start of the school year)	First year in senior schools that start at age 11
Year 8	(age 12 on the the 31 <sup>st</sup> August as above)	
Year 9	(age 13 on the 31 <sup>st</sup> August as above)	Foundation year in 'public school' Start of some senior or 'upper' schools – where there is a middle/upper school system.



In **Years 7-9** students in the UK take a wide range of subjects, usually including:

- English (Literature and Language)\*
- History
- Modern Foreign Language
- PE (Physical Education)
- Art
- Design and Technology (D&T) – Food Technology, Product Design etc
- Mathematics\*
- Geography
- Science – Physics, Chemistry Biology\*
- Music
- ICT/ Computer Science
- Religious Education/Citizenship/PSHE

*\*Compulsory until Year 11*

At **the end of Year 9** in most schools, students take their '**options**' which means they will choose subjects they want to study in Years 10 and 11 (in addition to the compulsory ones indicated above) and to take for GCSEs (the public exam taken at the end of Year 11) when they are aged 16.



Year 10	(age 14 on the 31 <sup>st</sup> August as above)	Start of 2-year GCSE courses
Year 11	(age 15 on 31 <sup>st</sup> August as above)	Final year of compulsory education - GCSE exam year

In **years 12 and 13**, students specialise in just 3 or 4 subjects, to include the ones above and, additionally (but this depends on the school or college) subjects such as: Philosophy, Politics, Sociology, Business Studies, Media Studies and Computer Science.

Sometimes, there are timetable "clashes", meaning that it is not possible to take both subject A and subject B. We will work with you, your home school and the UK school to get you enrolled for the best choice of subjects.

Year 12	(age 16 on 31 <sup>st</sup> August ie the day before the official start of the school year)	Sixth form – Further Education Start of 2 year A level courses
Year 13	(age 17 on 31 <sup>st</sup> August as above)	Sixth form – Further Education Final year of further Education – A level exam year

## The English School Year

The school year is split into three terms. Dates for each term are as follows and will vary from county to county and sometimes from school to school within the same county.

Autumn term	Early September to late December (just before Christmas), with a break of one week ("half-term") in October.
Spring term	Early January to Easter (variable) with a break of one week in the middle in February.
Summer term	Easter to late July, with a break of one week in late May.

## Uniforms

Most schools have uniforms up to and including year 11. Year 12 and 13 students do not usually have to wear uniforms.

Each school usually has several shops/online suppliers where their uniform can be bought. A uniform is usually made up of clothes you can buy before you come (for example white shirt or black shoes) and things that are specific to the school and must be bought locally (for example blazer – a jacket – with the school badge). For this reason we allow you to arrive at the host family a few days early so that you can get your uniform items before you start school.

## School Attendance

**By law** parents can only allow their child to miss school if either they're too ill to go in or you've got advance permission from the school. During your term/year abroad, you must also **adhere to these rules**.

Holidays in term time are not normally allowed. You have to get permission from the head teacher if you want to be absent from school during term time for a holiday – even if it is just one day.

You can only do this if:

- you make an application to the head teacher in advance
- there are exceptional circumstances

It's up to the head teacher how many if leave is granted. You can be **finned** if you go on holiday during term time without the school's permission. So Please make sure that you inform your school if you need to go away.