



Welcome to

**Guidelines for newly arrived
families from abroad**



**QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE
ABOUT SCHOOL AND EDUCATION**

CONTENTS

1. At what age do children start school in England?
2. At what age are children allowed to leave school and get a job?
3. Is there anything, like nursery education, for children under school age? Is it free?
4. Is education free in England? Is there anything to pay for?
5. What about school lunches? How much are they?
6. What is appropriate to bring for lunch and as a snack?
7. How do we organise a school place?
8. What are the schools for different ages called? At what ages do they move up?
9. What time does school start and finish each day?
10. How many breaks are there and when are they?
11. Does everyone in English schools learn the same things? What is in the curriculum?
12. Do students learn all the subjects at all ages, or do they get to choose at any stage?

21. Who can I phone for help?

COUNCIL

West Sussex County Council	01243 777100
Admissions – for applying for a school place and all questions about school places	<p>Crawley Pupil Admissions Office County Hall North Chartway Horsham, West Sussex RH12 1XA</p> <p>Worthing Pupil Admissions Office Centenary House Durrington Lane Worthing, West Sussex BN13 2QB Tel: 0845 075 1007 Email: admissions@westsussex.gov.uk</p>
Ethnic Minority Achievement Team (EMAT) – for all questions about support for BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) and EAL (English as an additional language) pupils.	<p>EMTAS Thomas Bennett Community College Ashdown House Ashdown Drive Crawley WEST SUSSEX RH10 5AD</p> <p>Email: chris.wallis@westsussex.gov.uk</p>
Early Years Team – for all questions about children under school age	<p>Early Childhood Service St James Campus St James Road Chichester WEST SUSSEX PO19 7HA</p> <p>Tel: 01243 520828</p>

Children's progress in the National Curriculum is measured in Levels. There are Levels that children are expected to reach by certain ages, although many children will be ahead of national expectations or will take a little longer to reach them. These Levels are measured at the end of each Key Stage – in Year 2, Year 6, Year 9 and Year 11. The expected Levels are as follows:

End of Key Stage	Age of children	Expected level
Key Stage 1	7 years	SATs level 2
Key Stage 2	11 years	SATs level 4
Key Stage 3	14 years	Level 5
Key Stage 4	16 years	5 GCSEs at A* - C including English and maths

20. Can I take my child out of school during term time?

It is important that you always inform school if your child is not going to attend, even for one day. Let them know if your child is ill or is unable to go to school for any reason.

Some absences are understandable, such as illness, urgent family matters (e.g. a family funeral) or an important religious holiday, but you still need to inform the school that your child will be away. If you have to make a medical appointment (doctor, dentist, etc) please try to make it out of school time so that your child will not miss anything that has been planned for their learning.

It is understandable that families will sometimes need to make an extended visit to their country of origin for family reasons, but schools would strongly recommend that families make every effort to have their children in school for the exam season, which is generally some time between May and July, depending on their age.

13. Are there national websites where I can get more information?
14. What equipment do children need to take to school? What kind of PE kit? What kind of maths/science equipment?
15. Are children allowed to walk to and from school by themselves? At what age?
16. How can we help our children learn English?
17. How can we help our children with their schoolwork?
18. How can we get more involved with our children's schools?
19. How will we know how our children are getting on or if they are having problems?
20. Can I take my child out of school during term time?
21. Who can I phone for help?



1. At what age do children start school in England?

Statutory school age is the term after the child's fifth birthday. However admissions authorities are able to decide whether the child can start earlier.

For more information, phone your local Admissions Team (see phone contacts page at the end of the booklet) or see if they have a page on the Council website.



2. At what age are children allowed to leave school and get a job?

The school leaving date for 16-year-olds is the last Friday in June. Usually this is at the end of Year 11.

As a governor you can make a real difference in helping your school provide the best possible education for each and every one of its pupils. Together with the Headteacher and the leadership team, Governors lead your school; setting the vision and developing the right culture to drive forward improvement to ensure the best life chances are secured for every child.

Parents can also get involved in school life by attending the parent/teacher meetings, which are held regularly, and by attending the many school events that take place throughout the year.

19. How will we know how our children are getting on or if they are having problems?

Schools have many ways of working with parents and want to work in partnership with them. They know that this is the best way to help children make good progress. Teachers will often talk to parents of primary children when they deliver and collect their children and this will include talking about how well children are doing as well as any problems they might be having.

All schools have parents' evenings, which are for parents to come and meet the teachers and to discuss the progress that their children are making in all the school subjects. Schools generally contact parents by letter for these evenings, although some are using their websites much more. It is a good idea to check the school's website from time to time to stay in touch with what is going on.

Schools will often use the phone to contact parents if they want to discuss anything to do with their children – their progress, any problems, whether they need extra help and so on. Parents may want to ask the school for a meeting and it is best if they phone the school to make an appointment, as it is often difficult for teachers to talk to parents during the school day.

18. How can we get more involved with our children's schools?

Parents can get involved in a variety of ways.

They can join the Parent Teachers Association (PTA), which are groups of parents who run fund raising activities to help buy extra resources for the school.

Parents can offer to be a volunteer and, with the Headteacher's agreement and subject to a Criminal Records Bureau check (CRB), come into school to help support children with reading or offsite visits or other activities.

Some schools also have Parent Councils which help the Governing Body find out and respond to parents' views. When parents are closely involved in their child's learning and in the life of the school, children do better.

Parents can offer to become School Governors. The number of governors who sit on a governing body is stated in the Instrument of Governance for the school. This also shows the various categories of governors who can sit on the Governing Body. Parent governors can be elected or sometimes appointed.



3. Is there anything, like nursery education, for children under school age? Is it free?

YOUR CHILD'S ENTITLEMENT TO FREE EARLY YEARS EDUCATION

1. All three and four year olds are currently entitled to 12½ hours free Early Years Education per week, for 38 weeks per year.

The national dates for funding are given below:

- if your child's third birthday falls between 1st January and 31st March, funding will start in the Summer term (April)
- if your child's third birthday falls between 1st April and 31st August, funding will start in the Autumn term (September)
- if your child's third birthday falls between 1st September and 31st December, funding will start in the Spring term (January)

2. You may choose to take up less than your child's full entitlement. If your chosen Early Years setting does not offer the full entitlement of 38 weeks per year, the authority may not fund the extra weeks at an alternative setting.

3. The setting attended by your child will claim the funding on your behalf, so if your child attends the setting for only the free entitlement of 12½ hours per week, you will not pay any fees or charges of any kind.

4. If, however, your child attends for longer than 12½ hours per week, (5 x 2½ hour sessions per week) then you can be charged for the extra hours of childcare.

5. If your child attends for more than 38 weeks per year, the setting will charge for the extra weeks.

6. You are under no obligation to take up extra hours or weeks over and above your child's free entitlement.

7. If you take up extra childcare over and above your child's free entitlement, you will only ever be charged for the extra hours. You will not be asked to pay for the free entitlement within the fees and have the government funding deducted from the fees or 'refunded' at a later date.

4. Is education free in England? Is there anything to pay for?

The education in state (maintained) schools run by local Councils is free.

Pupils need to pay for:

- Their lunch unless they get free school meals (or they can bring a packed lunch)
- Their school uniform (schools may have a shop and a system for selling good quality used clothes)
- Some educational visits outside school (if parents can't afford it, they should talk to the school)
- Musical instrument tuition (some whole-class work might be free)
- Social events at school in the evenings and at weekends

There are also private or independent schools in England and they charge a fee for the education they provide.

If you can speak and read English well yourself ask your child's teachers to let you know what texts will be read in class. It will be very helpful if you can read and discuss the texts with your child in the first language before they are read in class. You could also ask your child's teachers to give you some key words related to topics, which will be studied. It will be helpful if you discuss the meaning of these words in the first language with your child. You could help the child to find these words in a dual language picture dictionary. You could help your child to keep a vocabulary book with key words for topics/ subjects. They could write the words in English together with translations of the words in the first language (and/or an explanation written in the first language, and/or a picture).

General discussion of topics/ concepts in the first language before they are studied at school will also be helpful. Knowledge, understanding and skills developed in one language can easily be transferred to another language.

It will also be helpful to discuss a topic/concept with your child in the first language *after* they have learnt about it in school. This will help them to develop, review and strengthen their understanding and to develop academic English.

A leaflet entitled 'Homework and helping your child' is available in Bengali, English, Somali, Turkish and Urdu from www.parentscentre.gov.uk/publications.

At www.parentscentre.gov.uk/otherlanguages there is a list of translated publications available for parents in Arabic, Chinese, Gujarati, Punjabi, Turkish, Vietnamese, Bengali, Greek, Hindi, Somali and Urdu.

A leaflet on the advantages of being bilingual is available in Arabic, Bengali, English, Farsi, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Somali, Spanish and Urdu at www.hvec.org.uk/Hvecmain/index.asp.

17. How can we help our children with their schoolwork?

It will help your child with their schoolwork if you encourage them to develop their first language. If children keep their first language active while they are learning English and use their first language in their learning they can continue their intellectual development without a break. Also, there is evidence that knowing more than one language can increase the flexibility of children's thinking.

Encourage your child to read and write in their first language. This will develop their knowledge and understanding and their reading and writing skills. These skills will also apply to reading and writing in English.

Reading dual language books with your children will help them to make links between the first language and English and will help them with their reading and writing in English. Dual language books can be purchased from Mantra Lingua (www.mantralingua.com).



5. What about school lunches? How much are they?

Schools provide a mid-day meal and there is a small cost for this, usually about £1.60 - £2.00 for each day. If your child does not eat pork, beef, meat or anything else, tell the school. You can give your child a packed lunch to bring instead if you prefer.



Free school meals

You can get free school meals for your child if you or your partner gets either:

- Child Tax Credit (but not Working Tax Credit) and have a family income below £14,495
- State Pension Credit Guarantee (the 'guarantee credit element')
- Income Support
- Jobseeker's Allowance
- Support under Part V1 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

The school can give you a form to complete. You can get more information and help to complete the form at Jobcentre Plus or at the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

6. What is appropriate to bring for lunch and as a snack?

Advice from the School Food Trust says that packed lunches should include:

- At least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables or salad every day
- Meat, fish or another source of non-dairy protein every day
- Oily fish, such as salmon, at least once every three weeks
- Some starchy food such as bread or pasta, rice, couscous, noodles, potatoes, every day
- A dairy food such as semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais or custard every day
- To drink, only water, still or sparkling, fruit juices, semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, yoghurt or milk drinks and smoothies

Children in the infant years (Reception, Years 1 and 2) get a free piece of fruit every day at their schools.

Parents are asked not to send their children to school with crisps, sweets and chocolate, but to send them with nuts, seeds or fruit.

More detail and more advice for parents is on the website: www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk

7. How do we organise a school place?

Many Local Authorities have a central system for parents to use to get a school place for their children. Admissions teams run these systems. Some schools arrange their own admissions, but the Local Authority where you live will be able to tell you which is your nearest school and how to apply for a school place.

Phone your local Admissions Team (see phone contacts page at the end of the booklet) or see if they have a page on the Council website.

language rather than replacing their first language with English. Give babies and toddlers a good start with the first language by always using it in the home. Once children start learning English at school it is important for them to continue to use and develop their first language at the same time.

It is best for children to learn English at school and to continue using their first language at home. Let children learn English from English speakers and their first language from you. That way they have the best model for each language.

Good first language development acts as a support for learning other languages. It is a help, not an interference. The development of the first language at home teaches children how to speak and understand that language and it also teaches them about how languages work. Young children are not aware of it, but while they are learning a language, they are also learning about language. Encourage your child to read and write in the first language as well as to speak it.

Reading dual language books with your children will help them to make links between the first language and English and will help them with their reading and writing in English. Dual language books can be purchased from Mantra Lingua (www.mantralingua.com).



15. Are children allowed to walk to and from school on their own? At what age?

The Department of Transport (DoT) leaflets for parents at <http://www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/advice/parents.htm> are useful.

There is no law saying when children can walk to school themselves - depending on their age they should be gradually introduced to road safety. DoT advice is that children under 8 years cannot make sound safety judgements about speed/distance when crossing roads. Children's maturity, competence and independence vary, as does the nature of their route to school. It is usual for most children of secondary school age to make the journey to school themselves. In year 6, schools will work with parents to prepare children for transition to secondary school and may include things like local cycling proficiency schemes.

Transport assistance can be applied for if children are obliged to travel more than the 'statutory walking distance' to their nearest or designated area school - the route measured is the shortest 'safe walking route' - but 'safe' does not necessarily mean safe to be unaccompanied - this may not be appropriate even at secondary age, for example in rural areas.

The statutory walking distance (one way) is 2 miles (infant), 3 miles (junior and secondary), and 2 miles (all ages if on qualifying benefits - eg free school meals). Few children actually walk this far these days; the distances date from the 1940s.

16. How can we help our children learn English?

Research shows that children learn English more quickly (and do better at school) if they have a strong foundation in their first language and feel that they are adding English to their first

8. What are the schools for different ages called? At what ages do they move up?

The chart shows how children move through their schools and shows the main examinations (exams) that they will take:

Type of school	Age	Year	School stage (or phase)	National tests and assessments
Nursery	3 - 4		Foundation Stage	Foundation Stage Profile
Infant school	4 - 5			
Infant or primary school	5 - 6 6 - 7	Year 1 Year 2	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 1 SATs
Junior or primary school	7 - 8 8 - 9 9 - 10 10 - 11	Year 3 Year 4 Year 5 Year 6	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 2 SATs
Secondary school	11 - 12 12 - 13 13 - 14	Year 7 Year 8 Year 9	Key Stage 3	
Secondary school	14 - 15 15 - 16	Year 10 Year 11	Key Stage 4	Children take GCSEs or other similar examinations
Secondary school or Further Education College	16 - 17 17 - 18	Year 12 Year 13	Key Stage 5 (sixth form)	AS levels A levels or VCEs. These exams form the basis of admission to Colleges and Universities

Note: Early years care and education can be accessed in different types of setting. These include pre-schools, day nurseries or private nursery schools, nursery or reception classes in maintained schools, or Foundation Stage Units. Early Years Foundation Stage covers the non-statutory period from birth to the term following the child's fifth birthday, and also the period from the time the child becomes statutory school age to the time she starts Year 1.

9. What time does school start and finish each day?

School usually starts at about 8.45 each morning.

Schools usually finish at about 3.15 – 3.30 each afternoon.

Most schools have a range of after-school clubs for children to go to and these usually finish at about 4.30 in the afternoon.



Each school will have slightly different arrangements, so it is worth checking with your child's school for all these times.

What kind of maths/science equipment?

For **maths**, primary schools will provide anything needed other than the general equipment (above). Secondary schools will expect students to have a scientific calculator, protractor and pair of compasses. Some of the schools sell scientific calculators and bags of geometrical equipment to the pupils. Often schools will give students advance warning of when they will need this extra equipment so that they don't have to carry it with them all the time.



For **science**, general equipment will be needed (see page 14) and all scientific equipment is usually provided by the school.

14. What equipment should children take to school?

General equipment that children need in school is:

A writing pen

A writing pencil and some coloured pencils

A ruler, with measure in centimetres

An eraser (often called a rubber)

Usually, schools provide other equipment needed in lessons unless they have stated in their school brochure that other things are needed.

What kind of PE kit? What colour?

PE equipment (known as PE kit) is generally of three kinds:

- Kit for outside games and athletics
- Kit for inside gymnastics activities
- Kit for swimming (swimming costume and towel)

Many schools prefer pupils to wear PE kit in the school colours, and they will have a list of what is needed and what colours it should be. It is best to check with your child's school before buying kit.



10. How many breaks are there and when are they?

Most primary schools have a short break of about 20 minutes in the morning and a break for lunch of about one hour at about 12.00. There will be another short break in the afternoon.

Most children bring a small snack for the short morning break. Schools will usually encourage children to bring fruit and fruit juice rather than sweets, crisps, chocolate or sugary drinks.

In secondary schools there is usually no short afternoon break.

11. Does everyone in English schools learn the same things? What is in the curriculum?

There is a National Curriculum that all maintained schools teach. The curriculum aims to be broad and balanced and relevant. It is structured in the following way:

Curriculum area	Subjects
the core curriculum	English Mathematics (maths) Science
the foundation curriculum	Information Technology Art Design & Technology History Geography Music Physical Education Modern Foreign Language
statutory subject	Religious Education must also be taught in schools to all pupils. Parents have the right to ask schools not to include their children in this subject or in collective worship
other subjects	Business Studies Citizenship Drama Food Technology

The curriculum for secondary pupils is currently undergoing a big review and it is likely that schools will design their curriculum for September 2008 onwards in a more flexible way that combines two or more subjects in a topic or theme.

12. Do students learn all the subjects at all ages, or do they get to choose at any stage?

When pupils are about 14 and move into Key Stage 4, they generally choose a set of subjects, called options, for study for GCSE examinations. In addition to GCSE examinations, there will be options for Diplomas in a range of vocational studies, such as Construction, IT and Tourism.

After GCSEs, students who stay at school generally choose three or four subjects to study to 'A' level, which is the main basis for entry to University.

13. Are there national websites where I can get more information?

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/ExamsTestsAndTheCurriculum/index.htm> for the primary and secondary curriculum

<http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/> for the secondary National Curriculum

<http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk/educationandlearning/whatchildrenlearn/curriculumandassessment/thenationalcurriculum/> - the Parents' Centre for information about education