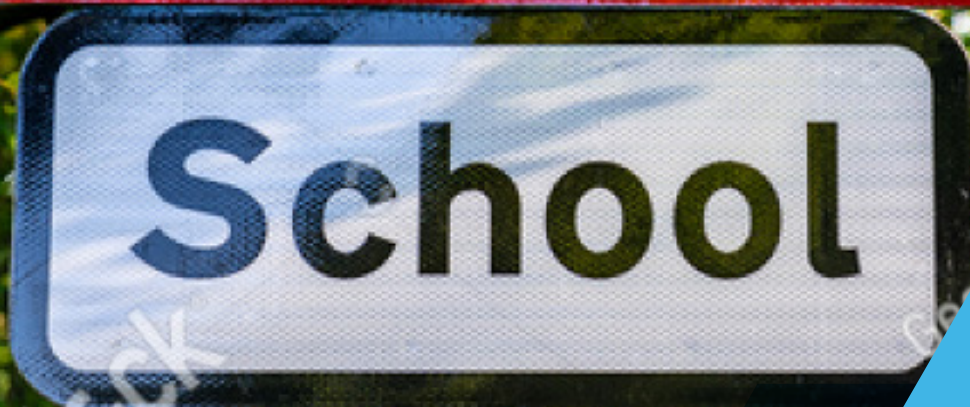


Information on schools in the UK

NHS

Professionals

International



Information on schools in the UK

Welcome to our guide for international healthcare workers exploring schooling options for their children in the United Kingdom (UK). This guide offers information on navigating the educational landscape, from choosing the right schools to understanding enrolment procedures.

- The education systems vary across countries, so the following link provides detailed information on how to apply to schools in the UK: <https://www.gov.uk/schools-admissions/how-to-apply>
- We recommend you research childcare costs, such as those during school holidays, wraparound care during the school day, or care for children under 4, to plan their finances accordingly
- The government links included in this document below provide links to nurseries and registered childminders in your local area
- If you have children starting school or transitioning to secondary school, it's important to understand the specific application processes for these stages, as they differ from those for children joining at other times
- You may need time to visit schools and ensure your children settle in, which will also help you adjust to your new work environment

General information on state schools in the UK

- In the UK, children begin to attend school from the age of 4. School term time starts in September. If your child is turning 4 in September usually you need to apply for a place starting school before April of that year. There is normally a separate process for this, but it is advisable to contact the local authority for more details
- Children will go to secondary school from the September after they turn 11 in the UK, again as this a change of school you need to apply for a place in that secondary school usually before April of that year. There is normally set process so as above contact the local authority
- School years in the UK are usually the following:

Infants

Reception - aged 4/5 years old

Year 1 – aged 5/6 years old

Year 2 – aged 6/7 years old

Primary (this is usually the same school as Infants, so there is no need to apply for a new school)

Year 3 – aged 7/8 years old

Year 4 – aged 8/9 years old

Year 5 – aged 9/10 years old

Year 6 – aged 10/11 years old

Secondary (this is usually a separate school from Infants and Primary)

Year 7 – aged 11/12 years old

Year 8 – aged 12/13 years old

Year 9 – aged 13/14 years old

Year 10 – aged 14/15 years old

Year 11 – aged 15/16 years old

- School day normally starts from 09:00 AM – 15:15 PM, however this may vary for each school. Please note, you may need to consider childcare before and after school finishes, depending on your working schedule. Visit: [Find a registered childminder - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- Parents in the UK have a legal responsibility to choose and send children to school. Visit: Parental rights and responsibilities: [What is parental responsibility? - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- As well as government funded schools, there are some alternatives. For example, you can choose to home school your child or to send them to an independent fee-paying school. Visit: <https://www.gov.uk/home-education>
- If your child has special education needs, then they may be able to attend specialist schools. To do this, your child will need an education healthcare plan to be considered as an alternative to mainstream schools. Visit: [Children with special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\): Special educational needs support - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- At the end of Year 11, children will take their General Certificate Secondary Education (GCSE's) examinations which are qualifications in the UK. Your children can decide if they want to go on to further education including A-levels, BTECs or other vocational qualifications at a local college
- A-Levels are for two years from ages 16-18 years. After this, your child can apply for university to complete a degree
- For education post-16 years, you can apply directly to the institute you want your child to attend. We recommend contacting them directly for more information on the application process
- Education up to 18 years is free. After this, your child will be required to pay tuition fees to study
- The academic school year is usually from September to July. Each local authority will have a published school timetable detailing the school holiday periods. Generally, in the UK children have the 1st week off in October, two weeks around Christmas Day, 1st week in February, two weeks in March/April, one week in May and 6 weeks from July to September. Additionally, there are some teacher training dates which vary depending on the local authority

Applying for a school place

Moving to the UK with school-age children, if your children have not turned four or 11 years old

- Apply for a school place through the local authority website. These two websites will take you to the relevant website where you enter a post code of your new UK address to get the right local authority (council) process:
 - [apply for a primary school place](#)
 - [apply for a secondary school place](#)
- If your child is moving outside the typical entry points for Infants or Secondary school, look for the "Applying for a place during the academic year" (in-year) option on most local authority websites.

- You will need to fill out an online form with your new address. Note that you can only apply for a school place once you have proof of a UK address.
- You can usually apply for a school place only 8 weeks before your child is due to start school, except when they are entering Reception or Year 7.
- The local authority will typically confirm which schools in your area have available places.
- If you are given several school options, review the Ofsted report for each one to get an idea about their quality. Visit: [Find an Ofsted inspection report](#)
- Visit the schools if possible and check the distance from your new address to each school. Consider whether the school is within walking distance and how your children will get there

If your child has just turned four or 11 years, click on the relevant link for primary or secondary school. Enter your new postcode and contact the local authority by email to find out the application deadlines and get information about the available schools in your area.

If your child is under four years old

- Children under the age of four years can attend a private nursery or pre-school, which you would need to find and pay for. For more information, visit: [Find a nursery school place - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Registered childminders, who look after children in their own homes, can be a more affordable alternative to private nurseries. For more details, visit: [Find a registered childminder - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Nurseries typically have long waiting lists, so it's best to check with local nurseries to find out if they have available spaces or if you need to join a waitlist
- Be aware of the costs, which are usually based on a daily rate paid monthly, depending on the number of days your child attends. You will still pay this fee even if your child is unable to attend. A holding deposit is often required to secure a place
- Nurseries are generally open year-round except for public holidays and have no school holidays. Pre-schools and registered childminders often follow school term times as they also care for school-age children before and after school
- There is some government funding available for working parents to help cover childcare costs. For more information on eligibility, see [Early education and childcare \(applies from 1 April 2024\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

If your child has educational or health needs, they may be entitled to additional support. You can find out more here: [Children with special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\): Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)