

The national curriculum

1. Overview

The ‘basic’ school curriculum includes the [‘national curriculum’](/government/collections/national-curriculum/) (</government/collections/national-curriculum/>), as well as [relationships, sex and health education, and religious education](/national-curriculum/other-compulsory-subjects/) (</national-curriculum/other-compulsory-subjects/>).

The national curriculum is a set of subjects and standards used by [primary and secondary schools](/types-of-school/) (</types-of-school/>) so children learn the same things. It covers what subjects are taught and the standards children should reach in each subject.

Other [types of school](/types-of-school/) (</types-of-school/>), like academies and private schools, do not have to follow the national curriculum. Academies must teach a broad and balanced curriculum including English, maths and science. They must also teach relationships and sex education, and religious education.

Key stages

The national curriculum is organised into blocks of years called ‘key stages’ (KS).

Your child will be tested at the end of some key stages. The teacher will also assess your child’s performance during lessons throughout the year.

Early years foundation stage (EYFS)

Child’s age	Year	Assessment
3 to 4	Not applicable	Not applicable
4 to 5	Reception	Assessment of pupils’ starting points in language, communication, literacy and maths, known as the reception baseline assessment (first 6 weeks). Learning and development assessment,

Child's age	Year	Assessment
-------------	------	------------

		known as the EYFS profile (between April and June).
--	--	---

[Find out more about the early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) \(/early-years-foundation-stage\).](#)

Key stage 1 (KS1)

Child's age	Year	Assessment
-------------	------	------------

5 to 6	Year 1	Phonics screening check
--------	--------	---

6 to 7	Year 2	Optional tests in maths, English reading and grammar, punctuation and spelling. Optional teacher assessments in maths, science, and English reading and writing.
--------	--------	--

Key stage 2 (KS2)

Child's age	Year	Assessment
-------------	------	------------

7 to 8	Year 3	Not applicable
--------	--------	----------------

8 to 9	Year 4	Times tables check
--------	--------	--------------------

9 to 10	Year 5	Not applicable
---------	--------	----------------

10 to 11	Year 6	National tests in English reading, maths, and grammar, punctuation and spelling. Teacher assessments in English writing and science.
----------	--------	--

Key stage 3 (KS3)

Child's age	Year	Assessment
-------------	------	------------

11 to 12	Year 7	Not applicable
----------	--------	----------------

Child's age	Year	Assessment
12 to 13	Year 8	Not applicable
13 to 14	Year 9	Not applicable

Key stage 4 (KS4)

Child's age	Year	Assessment
14 to 15	Year 10	Some children take GCSEs
15 to 16	Year 11	Most children take GCSEs or other national tests

Assessments

By the end of each summer term the school must write a report on your child's progress and talk it through with you.

2. Key stage 1 and 2

Compulsory [national curriculum \(/government/collections/national-curriculum\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum) subjects at primary school are:

- English
- maths
- science
- design and technology
- history
- geography
- art and design
- music
- physical education (PE), including swimming
- computing
- ancient and modern foreign languages (at key stage 2)

Primary schools must also provide:

- relationships and health education

- religious education (RE) - you may choose to [take your child out of these lessons \(/national-curriculum/other-compulsory-subjects\)](/national-curriculum/other-compulsory-subjects)

Schools often also teach:

- personal, social and health education (PSHE)
- citizenship
- modern foreign languages (at key stage 1)
- sex education - you may choose to [take your child out of these lessons \(/national-curriculum/other-compulsory-subjects\)](/national-curriculum/other-compulsory-subjects)

Year 1 phonics screening check

The check will take place in June when your child will read 40 words out loud to a teacher. The teacher will tell you how your child did, and will decide whether they need extra help with reading. If your child does not do well enough in the check they'll have to do it again in Year 2.

Year 2 (key stage 1)

Schools can choose whether they want to do any tests or assessments. If they do, the school will tell you. Tests will normally be held in May.

Tests will cover:

- English reading
- English grammar, punctuation and spelling
- maths

Teacher assessments will cover:

- English reading
- English writing
- maths
- science

Year 4 (key stage 2)

Your child will be tested on their times tables at the end of year 4.

Your child will answer 25 questions to check if they know their times tables up to 12. There's no pass mark, but teachers will share your child's score

with you and use it to decide if they need any extra help with maths.

Year 6 (key stage 2)

Your child will be assessed at the end of year 6.

National tests (previously known as SATs) will cover:

- English reading
- English grammar, punctuation and spelling
- maths

The tests last less than 4 hours. They're normally in May. You'll get the results in July.

Teacher assessments will cover:

- English writing
- science

The school will send you the results of your child's tests and teacher assessments.

When your child might be assessed in a different way

If your child is working below the standard of the curriculum, teachers may assess them using the [engagement model \(/government/publications/the-engagement-model-information-for-parents\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-engagement-model-information-for-parents) or pre-key stage standards instead.

3. Key stage 3 and 4

Key stage 3

Compulsory [national curriculum \(/government/collections/national-curriculum\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum) subjects are:

- English
- maths
- science
- history
- geography
- modern foreign languages

- design and technology
- art and design
- music
- physical education
- citizenship
- computing

Schools must also provide:

- relationships, sex and health education - you may choose to [take your child out of some of these lessons \(/national-curriculum/other-compulsory-subjects\)](/national-curriculum/other-compulsory-subjects)
- religious education (RE) - you may choose to [take your child out of these lessons \(/national-curriculum/other-compulsory-subjects\)](/national-curriculum/other-compulsory-subjects)

Key stage 4

During key stage 4 most pupils work towards national qualifications - usually GCSEs.

The compulsory national curriculum subjects are the 'core' and 'foundation' subjects.

Core subjects are:

- English
- maths
- science

Foundation subjects are:

- computing
- physical education
- citizenship

Schools must also offer at least one subject from each of these areas:

- arts
- design and technology
- humanities
- modern foreign languages

They must also provide relationships, sex and health education, and religious education (RE) at key stage 4. You may choose to [take your child out of some of these lessons \(/national-curriculum/other-compulsory-subjects\)](/national-curriculum/other-compulsory-subjects).

English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

The EBacc is a way to measure how many pupils in a school choose to take a GCSE in these core subjects:

- English language and literature
- maths
- the sciences
- history or geography
- a language

Find out more about the [EBacc \(/government/publications/english-baccalaureate-ebacc\)](/government/publications/english-baccalaureate-ebacc).

4. Other compulsory subjects

Children might also need to study relationships, sex and health education, and religious education (RE).

They may not have to take exams in these subjects.

Schools must have a written policy on relationships education (primary schools) and relationships and sex education (secondary schools), which they must make available to parents for free.

Parents may ask for their child to be taken out of some of these lessons.

Relationships education

Relationships education is compulsory for all primary and secondary school pupils.

Sex education

Sex education is compulsory in secondary schools. Parents can ask to withdraw their child from parts or all of sex education taught as part of relationships and sex education. Parents cannot withdraw their child from sex education taught in science.

Primary schools can choose to teach sex education but it's not compulsory. Parents can withdraw their child from sex education in primary school.

Health education

Health education is compulsory for all pupils in state-funded primary and secondary schools.

Religious education

RE is compulsory in schools up to the age of 18. Parents can ask to withdraw their child from parts or all of the lessons.

Local councils are responsible for deciding the RE syllabus, but [faith schools \(/types-of-school/faith-schools\)](/types-of-school/faith-schools) and [academies \(/types-of-school/academies\)](/types-of-school/academies) can set their own.



All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated



© Crown copyright