

A Parents' Guide to the English Education System



www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/emass

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Key Information

Do my children have to go to school?

Yes they do.

All children between the age of 5 years old and 16 years old must attend school. Children must be in full-time education from the start of the school term after their fifth birthday.

Parents or guardians are required under the Education Act to “secure the education of their children” of “compulsory school age”. For most children this means that they attend a state school, although some parents may choose to pay for their child to go to an independent school. Parents or guardians may also choose to take on the responsibility of educating their children at home.

If you want to educate your child at home you must write to the Local Authority to ask for your child to be “deregistered”. The Local Authority will then have to be satisfied that the arrangements you are making are satisfactory.

To find out more about home education and how you can “deregister” your child, contact the Education Welfare Service at 01908 657800

What does the “school year” mean?

The school year starts in September. There are three terms to every school year. There is a week’s holiday half way through each term and a longer holiday at the end of each term.

Autumn Term - September to December

Break (2 weeks over Christmas period)

Spring Term - January to March or April

Break (2 weeks over Easter period)

Summer Term - April to July

Break (6 weeks over the summer)

Do I have to pay for my child to go to school?

No. You do not have to pay for your child to attend school. However, you may be asked to provide equipment such as pens, pencils, ruler, rubber, etc. and a school bag in which to keep them.



Children of asylum seekers receive free school lunches. Some schools provide halal meals.

What if my child is under 5 years old?

In Milton Keynes, education and care for the under fives is provided by a wide range of services.

- Nursery school - children usually start at 3 years old, part time, in a “nursery”. This is called the Foundation Stage 1.
- Reception class - children start in “reception” classes at 4 or 5 years old and this may be called Foundation Stage 2.
- Nursery and Reception classes are open during school times.

Many parents need longer hours than this to enable them to work. Some also need childcare for children from the age of two or younger. There are a number of privately run nurseries for younger children. Some parents choose a child minder.

The child often stays with this person until nursery school age. The cost of these private facilities must be met by the parent or guardian.

All children from 0 to 5 years, regardless of the setting they attend, follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, which outlines six “Early Learning Goals”. This is different to the National Curriculum.



If my child is between the age of 5 years and 11 years old, where do they go to school?

Children between the ages of 5 and 11 years old attend primary school.

- The year group or class a child is placed in will depend on their age on 31st August.
- Children aged 5 – 7 years old are in the “infants”, also known as Key Stage One.
- Children aged 7 – 11 years old are in the “juniors”, also known as Key Stage Two.
- Some schools are combined and take ages 5 – 11.
- Some schools have a nursery or Foundation 1 class for younger children.
- Infants schools, sometimes called “First schools”, are usually either on the same premises as a Junior school or within easy walking distance.

If my child is 11 years old or older, where do they go to school?

Children between the ages of 11 and 16 years old attend secondary school. There are a limited number of places at each secondary school. Some schools have specialist status, such as Science.

Where can I find more information about the school admissions process?

For more information read the admissions guidance available on the website at: <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools/> .You can contact the school admissions team directly by e-mail: schooladmissions@milton-keynes.gov.uk or by phone using the admissions hotline: 01908 253338.

Can my child receive education after the age of 16?

Yes.

Education between the ages of 16 and 19 years is available to all children who want it and takes place either in a school “Sixth form” or at a Further Education College. In the Sixth form, students study Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 courses.

In this city, the Further Education (FE) College is called Milton Keynes College. Another type of learning for young people is an Apprenticeship, this is where a young person is employed and learns about the job at the same time, for example working in a restaurant and getting qualifications to be a chef, or working in a hairdressers and becoming qualified.

Whether a young person chooses to study at College, in a school sixth form or as an apprentice, it is very important that they obtain qualifications as this is very important if the young person wishes to go to university or straight into employment. In 2013 all young people aged 17 will be expected to be in either further education or employment with training. By 2015 all young people aged between 16 – 18 will be expected to be in further education, employment with training or voluntary work.

How do I find a school for my child?

- Contact the “[school admissions team](#)”. The school admissions team can tell you about the schools with places that are nearest to your home address.
- Talk to people who live near you about the closest schools
- Find out more about schools by viewing their website. Most schools have one.
- Contact the school and arrange a visit.

Schools are not allowed to discriminate against children because of their race or nationality. But, of course head teachers do have the right to refuse your child a place if the school is already full.

Apply for a school place through “school admissions”.

e-mail: schooladmissions@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Telephone: 01908 253338

For more information read the admissions guidance available on the website at: <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools/>

Are all schools the same?

No.

In Milton Keynes there are four main types of school: community schools, voluntary aided schools, private or independent schools (fee paying) and Academy schools.

What is the difference between a community school and the other types of school?

- Community schools
These are run and looked after by Milton Keynes Council. The Council is the admission authority.
- Voluntary Aided schools
These are schools run by the churches and the Council and have their own rules for admitting pupils. There are several schools in Milton Keynes, which are aided by the Roman Catholic or Church of England churches.
- Foundation schools
These are run by the Council, but their governing body is the admission authority.
- Academy schools
Academy schools are state maintained independent schools. This means that they are not run by the local council. The Government is keen for schools to become academies and lots of schools in Milton Keynes have converted into academies.
- Special schools
They have specialist staff to teach children with severe learning or physical difficulties, or those with serious behaviour needs.
- Private schools
Private schools are outside the state sector. They are fee-paying and have their own rules for admission.

Do all schools mix boys and girls?

Yes.

All primary and secondary schools are for both boys and girls.

Some private schools outside Milton Keynes are single sex.

What if my child is absent during the school term?

It is important for the progress of your child that attendance at school is good. You must contact the school immediately to notify them if your child cannot attend school because of illness or another genuine reason. Any planned absence must be approved by the school so you should discuss it with the as soon as possible.

Parents should not normally take pupils on holiday in term time.



If you must take your child out of school during term time, you should apply for leave in advance of taking it.

Each request for holiday absence will be considered individually, taking account of: the age of the child; the time of year proposed for the trip; its nature and parental wishes; the overall attendance pattern of the pupil; and the child's stage of education and progress. Schools should invite parents to discuss any proposed holiday in term time.

- Schools can only agree to absence for a family holiday if they believe there are special circumstances which warrant it.
- Schools can only agree to absence of more than 10 school days in a school year if they believe there are exceptional circumstances.
- Pupils who fail to return to school within 10 days of the end of extended leave of absence may be deleted if both the school and LA fail to locate them and they do not have good reason to be absent.

Applying for a place in school



How do I apply for a school place?

Contact the School Admissions team for guidance and an application form:

e-mail: schooladmissions@milton-keynes.gov.uk
Telephone: 01908 253338

Information and forms are also available on the website:

<http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools/>

What happens after I have applied for a school place for my child?

If there is a place available at the school of your choice you will be asked to attend an interview at the school.

What do I need to take to school when I get asked to come for an interview?

In primary schools you will normally meet the Headteacher at interview. In a secondary school you are most likely to meet a Head of Year, who is responsible for the children of a whole year group. You will be asked for evidence of your child's date of birth, for instance a birth certificate, a medical card or your benefits book.

If you want, you can show your passport to prove your child's date of birth, but schools will not ask to see your passport.

What if I can't understand English and I need to go to the school for an interview?

When you go to a school for an interview you should take a friend or relative who speaks English. If you don't know anyone who speaks English then the school should be able to arrange an interpreter for you. If you will need an interpreter, make sure that you ask the school to help you well before the meeting. Many schools have EMASS (Ethnic Minority Achievement Support Service) staff available to help you.

How Schools Work

Can my child go up a year or stay down a year?

Your child will usually be put in a class with children of the same age. All the children move up a class each year.

- In a primary school, children always move up a year at the end of each school year.
- In a secondary school, the Headteacher may choose to keep a child back a year if they are behind expectation, so they have the opportunity to catch up.



Will my child's progress be looked at regularly?

Yes.

As your child progresses through primary school the class teacher will continuously assess how they are doing. All children progress at different speeds. Your child will be given extra help if necessary.

During the Foundation Stage, your child will be assessed using the "Foundation Stage Profile".

Throughout Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, children are assessed in most subjects against the "National Curriculum" level descriptors and will be given National Curriculum grades to show progress and attainment.

At the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, when your child is aged 7 and 11 they will be tested. These tests are called SATs (Standard Attainment Tests). All children need to be tested, however some schools choose not to use the SAT tests and conduct their own assessments in school.

As your child goes through secondary school (Key Stages 3, 4 and 5), children will be continuously assessed by their different subject teachers. Children in Key Stage 3 (aged 11-14) continue to be assessed against the National Curriculum descriptors. However, at Key Stage 4 (aged 14 – 16) and Key Stage 5 (aged 16-19), children are usually assessed against examination board grade descriptors. Throughout Key Stage 4 and 5, children will take exams that lead to national qualifications at Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3.

Qualifications

It is very important that a child gains qualifications, particularly in English and Maths as most jobs require a good understanding of these subjects.

Qualifications are vital if a young person wants to go on to study at university.

Not all children reach either a Level 1 or a Level 2 qualification at school, if this is the case, it is very important that they continue with their education at either college or a school sixth form.

Children who pass their level 1 and 2 qualifications can study further and gain a level 3 qualification. Qualifications may be academic such as English or Mathematics, or vocational such as Business or Catering.

When does school start and end?

School is from Monday to Friday and school times are usually between 8.45 – 3.30. You will get the exact times when you go for interview.

Most Foundation 1 (nursery) classes have two sessions:

- 9 - 11.30 a.m. mornings
- 1 - 3.00 p.m. afternoons

Schools are required to monitor pupil punctuality and attendance. Try to get your child to school on time. It's very hard on your child if they come in late. They will feel left out as all the other children will be very busy with their lessons and they will not know what to do.

The school year begins in September and finishes in July
Exact dates vary from year to year, but broadly are as follows:

- Autumn term: September to December
- Spring term: January to April
- Summer term: April to July

Contact your school for exact term dates.

Does my child need to attend school everyday?

Yes.

Schools will check and follow up if a child does not come to school. If for some reason your child cannot come to school you need to tell the school about it. Parents have to send a letter to explain an absence. Letters can be written in your home language.

How can I keep in touch with the school?

You can phone, or send a letter, or send a message with your child. You are welcome to visit the school at any time, but it is best to make an appointment with the teacher you want to see.

What can I do if I am worried about my child at school?

In primary schools it is best to speak to your child's class teacher, as they know them best. You can always talk to the head teacher or a parent governor. Some schools have home-school liaison workers who you could contact.

In secondary schools, your child will have a tutor instead of a class teacher. Contact them first, to find out who is the best person for you to see.

Will I meet my child's teachers any other time?

Yes. Schools regularly have parents' meetings. These take place at school and teachers will talk to you about your child's school life. You should come to parents' meetings to find out about how your child is learning and being part of school life. You might need to come with someone to interpret. If it not possible for you to arrange, ask the school if they can provide an interpreter. Parents' meetings are usually after school, but some secondary schools also offer progress meetings during the school day

What about discipline?

All schools expect high standards of behaviour from their pupils. If the school is concerned about the child's behaviour they will contact you to discuss this. Schools expect parents to support them if they have to discipline your child. This may mean a detention (staying in after school) or them missing out on a special treat. However, it is against the law for the school to physically punish a child by hitting or smacking them.

What if my child is bullied or suffers from racist abuse?

All schools take racism and bullying very seriously. You must tell the school if your child is suffering any such behaviour and action will be taken. Ask your child's school for copies of their race equality and behaviour policies.

Do all schools have a uniform?

Children do not always have to wear a school uniform. This depends on the school. If your child has to wear a school uniform, the school will explain what is needed and where you can buy it. You can also ask the school if there are any second hand uniforms for sale. Your child will be able to wear a hijab in school colours.

Do I have to tell the school about my child's medical history?

Yes.

If you have worries about your child's health, or if there is anything the school needs to know about the child's medical history, please tell the school. You may be asked about this at interview.

What about food during the school day?

Some schools offer a mid-day meal for children who do not go home for lunch. If a meal is not provided children bring a cold lunch and drink from home. You can choose to bring a packed lunch even if there is a hot meal available.



Your child may be entitled to free school meals. To find out if you may be eligible, telephone 01908 254590 or check the website: <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schoolmeals/>

This web page also gives information about school meals and the national school food standards.

You can tell the school if you do not want your child to eat pork, beef or meat or anything else. You can also ask if they serve halal meals. All schools serve vegetarian meals.

The Curriculum

What subjects will my child study?

Foundation Stage (3 – 4yrs)

There are six areas covered by the early learning goals and educational programmes: Personal, Social and Emotional Development; Communication, Language and Literacy; Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy; Knowledge and Understanding of the World; Physical Development; Creative Development.



Key Stage 1 (age 5 – 7yrs)

The statutory subjects that all pupils must be taught at Key Stage 1 are: art and design, design and technology, English, geography, history, information and communication technology, mathematics, music, physical education and science. Religious education must also be provided.

Key Stage 2 (age 7 - 10yrs)

The statutory subjects that all pupils must be taught at Key Stage 2 are: art and design, design and technology, English, geography, history, information and communication technology, mathematics, music, physical education and science. Religious education must also be provided.

Key Stage 3 (age 11 – 13yrs)

The statutory subjects that all pupils must be taught at Key Stage 3 are: art and design, citizenship, design and technology, English, geography, history, information and communication technology, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and science. The teaching of careers education, sex education and religious education is also statutory.

Key Stage 4 (age 14 - 16yrs)

Pupils study a mix of compulsory subjects (core & foundation) and, if they so elect, a course of study in a subject within each of four 'entitlement' areas. The compulsory subjects (with statutory programmes of study) are the "core" of English, Mathematics, Science and "foundation" of ICT, PE and Citizenship. Core subjects receive more curriculum time.

The 'entitlement' areas are: the Arts, Design and Technology, Humanities, Modern Foreign language(MFL). Schools will offer a range of courses within each entitlement area.

Pupils may also study for vocational qualifications in such as Leisure and Tourism, Social and Community Care and Business.

The entitlement subjects are usually called "options". Pupils select options towards the end of Key Stage 3.

Key Stage 5 (age 16 – 19 years)

Pupils are usually called "students" in Key Stage 5. Students can follow a range of academic and/or vocational courses at a school "sixth form" or a college free of charge. Students study Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 courses. Level 3 qualifications, such as "A Levels", are required for entry to university. Work-based training is also available; the "apprenticeship" scheme allows young people to pursue qualifications while working through time provided by their employer.

Does my child have to study RE?

Religious Education (RE) has to be offered for all pupils, including Foundation Stage children. You have the right to take your child out of these lessons, but before you ask for this have a talk with the headteacher and find out what actually happens during these lessons. RE helps children to understand many different religions. Usually schools are very willing to make special arrangements for religious observance.

Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

About one in five of all school children will need special help with their learning at some stage. The majority of pupils have their needs met through special provision in mainstream schools, maintained by the Local Authority (i.e. Milton Keynes Council). However, some children (about 2% nationally) cannot have their needs met this way. They require specialist support due to the severity and complexity of their needs.

What should I do if I think my child has special educational needs?

If you are concerned about your child's progress at school you should firstly talk with your child teachers, his/her Headteacher or the school's SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator). Your child's school will be happy to talk to you about your child. Many voluntary organisations who work with or for children with special educational needs can give you advice. The Parent Partnership Service can also help to support you. They can give you information and advice and can put you in touch with local organisations to help you get your views heard.



When would my child require a statutory assessment?

If it is felt that your child cannot have his or her needs met through mainstream provision, it may be necessary to begin closely examining their needs through a process known as Statutory Assessment, under the regulations of the 1996 Education Act. There are two outcomes of Statutory Assessment; either a "Statement of Special Educational Needs" will be written or a "Note in Lieu" (of a statement).

What is a Statement?

A Statement is a legal document which outlines the needs of a child and the support that will be provided to meet those needs.

For more information, contact the SEN Team on 01908 253414

e-mail: sen@milton-keynes.gov.uk website: www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/inclusion/

What Schools are like in England

What happens in School?

Schools offer a wide range of experiences to produce independent, educated and responsible young people. Schools will educate and care for your child during the school day. A lot of learning is through experience. For example, in Food Technology your child will learn about healthy eating and healthy diet. Computer skills are taught in all schools and used to support learning in most subjects in both primary and secondary schools. In science pupils take an active part in experiments, with lessons taught in a number of ways. In PE there are games and physical activities.



In the youngest classes your child may think he or she is only playing, but really they are learning a great deal through many different kinds of activities. Learning through play is very important for young children. Play is children's "work" and this takes forward and builds on how you play and talk with your children at home.

There are many different ways of teaching. Sometimes the teacher might work with the whole class; sometimes children may work together in small groups or individually.

Some lessons may take place away from the classroom for example in the library or in the playground. School classrooms will probably look very different to the ones that you knew when you were young.

School libraries usually have a wide range of books and sometimes computers for pupils to work on. Many schools also have clubs and activities during the lunch hour and after school.

What if my child needs extra help with English?

Your child's class and subjects teachers will plan work and activities that will help your child learn English.

Many schools also have specialist bilingual assistants and some schools have specialist language teachers who help and support children to learn English in the classroom.

The school will assess your child's level of English language acquisition and plan support which matches need.

What other activities will the school organise?

The school might organise after-school activities to help learning, such as book clubs, homework clubs, or community language classes. The school might also organise out of school activities. They may arrange educational visits to museums, theatres and places of interest during the school day and your child will be encouraged to attend.

Schools often organise activity holidays, where your child may spend several days away from home. They also organise field trips in subjects like geography and science where children learn more about the subject from real life experience.

As all these are extra activities, you will be asked to contribute towards the cost.

If the school organises a journey, holiday or a field trip, can we get help to pay?

In these circumstances you should contact the school for information and advice.

Are there activities that happen during the holiday?

Individual schools do not organise whole-school activities, but they may have holiday clubs to look after the children of parents who work. There are many things for children to do during the holidays in Milton Keynes. These include: sport and fitness activities; visual arts; performing arts; career courses; language courses; computer studies and education opportunities. Check with your school, the local library and newspapers for details.



Home-School Partnerships

How can I help my child do well at school?

You should try to help your child develop reading and writing in your first language as well as in English. It is clear that children who read at home regularly with an adult generally do better than children who only read with a teacher at school. Teachers are usually very keen to discuss what your child is doing in school and how you can support his/her work. Most schools have books in languages other than English which you might borrow to read with your child.

If you have a computer at home, encourage your child to use educational software, to visit educational websites and to develop their general ICT skills. Translation software is freely available on the web that allows you and your child to check for understanding and convert texts between English and your home language.

You should also try to visit your public library regularly. They are free to join and often have books in other languages. You can also visit museums and other places of more general interest.

Will my child have to do homework?

Yes. Homework at primary level varies from school to school, but all schools like parents to help with reading. Many schools have a homework diary or a reading record for you to complete.

In secondary schools your child will have to do some homework almost every day. Homework tasks will be written in a homework diary.

You should encourage your child to do homework, talk to them about it and help if you can.

You need to sign the diary at the end of every week, to show that you have checked that your child has completed all homework tasks.

How can I get involved in the life of the school?

Primary schools are often happy if parents come to school and help. For instance you might like to tell or read a story in your mother tongue or demonstrate traditional cooking or help out in the library and go on school trips.

All schools will invite you to events that take place there, such as parents' meetings, concerts, performances and fund raising events. Schools have parent's groups, which you can join and parents are encouraged to help run the school by becoming school governors.



Useful contacts

Applying for school places

If you have any queries on school admissions please contact:

School Admissions information line

01908 253338

Email : schooladmissions@milton-keynes.gov.uk

<http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schooladmissions>

School Term dates

<http://www.miltonkeynes.gov.uk/schools/DisplayArticle.asp?ID=14639>

Ethnic Minority Achievement Support Service (EMASS)

The Queensway Centre, Queensway, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK17 0BZ

Tel: 01908 270409

Email: multicultural@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.miltonkeynes.gov.uk/emass>

Milton Keynes Equality Council (MKEC)

Milton Keynes Equality Council, Acorn House, 377 Midsummer Boulevard, Milton Keynes, MK9 3HP

Tel: 01908 606224

Email: enquiries@mkrec.org.uk

Milton Keynes Education Welfare Service

Holne Chase Centre, Buckingham Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK3 5HP

Tel: 01908 657800

Special Educational Needs Inclusion Team (SENDIS)

Holne Chase Education Centre, Buckingham Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes. MK3 5HP

Tel: 01908 657825

The Milton Keynes Council website: <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/>

Type your query into the search box or follow the link in the Easy Navigation panel to "Education and Learning".



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