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### Principles and general objectives of education

England is a constituent part of the United Kingdom (UK) of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, a constitutional monarchy. It has no separate government of its own and English legislation is passed by the UK Government in Westminster. In 1999, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were granted devolved powers from the UK Government to administer their domestic affairs, although they still retain representation in the UK Parliament at Westminster. Westminster, as the sovereign parliament of the UK, retains the power to legislate about any matter, including devolved matters, but will not normally do so without the agreement of the devolved governments. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10). The education and training systems of England, Wales and Northern Ireland are broadly similar. The education system in Scotland has, however, always been completely separate with its own laws and practices. Differences across the United Kingdom are particularly marked in the school systems. At the higher education and training levels, this is less so.

Under the Education Act 2002, which covers both England and Wales, the basic principle underlying school education is that it should provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum which is suitable to a child's age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs that he/she may have. The Act defines a balanced and broadly based curriculum as one which: promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

Currently (2012) the Department for Education is committed to creating a world-class state education system. Its vision is for a highly educated society in which opportunity is more equal for children and young people no matter what their background or family circumstances. The Department is committed to transforming the education system so that all children, regardless of their background, thrive and prosper. It is necessary to improve social mobility and to equip our school leavers to compete with their peers across the world. In placing a new emphasis on rigour, higher standards and great teaching, the Department will ensure that children can become authors of their own life stories, and young people can continue in their learning and contribute to their communities. The Department has five medium-term strategic aims, which are mutually reinforcing: raising standards of educational achievement; closing the achievement gap between rich and poor; reforming the schools system; supporting all children and young people, particularly the disadvantaged; and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Department. (DfE, May 2012a).

### Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The framework for the education system in England is set out in a number of Acts of Parliament. For the school system, the framework Acts are the **Education Act 1996** which defines primary, secondary and further education and outlines the principles



underlying compulsory education, and the **School Standards and Framework Act 1998** (as amended and supplemented by the Education Acts of 2002, 2005 and 2011) which established a new legal framework for maintained primary and secondary schools.

The **Education Act 2002**, covering both England and Wales, created a legislative distinction between key stages 1 to 3 and key stage 4. This allows for increased flexibility in education for students in key stage 4 and provides more opportunities to tailor education to their individual needs. The Act also enabled schools to directly provide a range of community services and activities often out of traditional school hours. Under this Act, the basic principle underlying school education is that it should provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum which is suitable to a child's age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs that he/she may have. Part 6, sections 76 to 96 of the Education Act 2002 make provision for the curriculum in England. The powers to review the local curriculum in accordance with the options outlined is contained in section 10 of the Education Act 1996 which imposes a duty on the Welsh Ministers to promote the education of the people of Wales. In addition, the Government of Wales Act 2006 provides that the Welsh Ministers may do anything which they consider appropriate to support the Welsh language.

The **Education Act 2005**, which also applies to Wales, was enacted in order to simplify the process of school improvement, strengthening the accountability framework for schools. It makes provision, amongst other, about the inspection of schools, child minding, day care, nursery education and careers services; about school education; and about the training of persons who work in schools and other persons who teach.

The **Education Act 2011** takes forward the legislative proposals in the Schools White Paper 2010 (*The Importance of Teaching*) and introduces important changes in terms of: good behaviour and discipline; sharper accountability; freeing up professionals; and using resources fairly. It is viewed as an important step in implementing the Government's education reform programme and helping to create an education system that delivers ever higher standards for all children. It also includes measures from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to improve skills, including two elements of the reforms to higher education funding. The Act abolishes the General Teaching Council for England, the Training and Development Agency for Schools, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, the School Support Staff Negotiating Body, and the Young People's Learning Agency transferring relevant functions to the Secretary of State. It changes the inspections framework for schools so that inspectors will report on: the achievement of pupils at the school; the quality of teaching in the school; the quality of leadership in and management of the school; and the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school. Furthermore, the Act among others: enables a new entitlement for disadvantaged 2-year-olds to 15 weekly hours' free early years education; requires schools to take part in international education surveys; amends the governance structure of the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual) and changes it to include international comparison; gives precedence to academy proposals, where a local authority identifies the need for a new school, and expands the academies programme to allow 16-19 and alternative provision academies, removing the need for academies



to have a specialism; extends the Secretary of State's powers to intervene in underperforming schools; and makes changes to LA powers over sixth form colleges. The Act is being implemented through a series of (Commencement) Orders, and many provisions came into force between November 2011 and September 2012.

The **Children Act 2004**, which also broadly applies to Wales, introduced a duty on local authorities (LAs) and their partners to cooperate to improve the wellbeing of children. It aims to maximize opportunities and minimize risks for all children and young people, by integrating services provided for children, and to centre these services more effectively around the needs of children, young people and families.

The **Childcare Act 2006** expands and clarifies in legislation the vital role LAs play as strategic leaders in the provision of childcare locally. The Act reinforces the framework within which local authorities already work – in partnership with the private, voluntary, independent, community and maintained sector – to shape and secure children's services, and focuses in particular on the provision of: sufficient, sustainable and flexible childcare that is responsive to parents' needs; and information, advice and assistance to parents, prospective parents and those with parental responsibility or care of a child, relating to childcare. It introduces a range of provisions including: improved access to free, quality early learning and care and early childhood services for all children under 5; a new quality framework for the early years, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which establishes a framework to support children's development from birth to the August after their fifth birthday. The EYFS, introduced in September 2008, brings together learning and development and welfare requirements regardless of the type, size or funding of the setting. It forms a single framework of requirements from birth to age 5, thus ending the distinction between education and care and between birth-to-3 and 3-to-5 provision. All registered early years providers and LAs must comply with the EYFS. Under this Act, from April 2008 local authorities have also had a duty to secure provision of sufficient childcare in their area.

The **Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001** came into force on 1 September 2002. This Act makes changes to the existing framework for children with special educational needs (SEN). It also places new anti-discrimination duties on schools, colleges, universities and providers of adult education, removing the exemption of education from the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The Act addresses the key education recommendations of the Disability Rights Task Force report, *From Exclusion to Inclusion*, published in December 1999. New duties have been placed upon LAs and schools including independent schools and non-maintained special schools in England and Wales. The Green Paper *Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability*, published in March 2011, made wide-ranging proposals for radically reforming the current system for identifying, assessing and supporting children and young people who are disabled or have SEN and their families.

The **Education and Inspections Act 2006** provides the legislative basis to implement the reform proposals set out in the White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All*. The Act refers mainly to England and includes: provisions to establish new 'trust schools', which will have greater independence and freedom to run their

own affairs, as they will be self-governing foundation schools funded by LAs but supported by external charitable trusts established by universities, companies, parent groups and voluntary sector organizations; a revised curriculum entitlement for 14- to 19-year-olds, who will have access to 14 new specialized diplomas; the introduction of a more strategic role for local authorities; the introduction of a new single inspectorate for children and learners (previously the Office for Standards in Education, Ofsted, and currently the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills). School inspections are governed by the Education Act 2005 (as amended), and the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Inspectors are required to report on the quality of education provided in the school and must, in particular, cover: the achievement of pupils; the quality of teaching; the behaviour and safety of pupils; and the quality of leadership in, and management of, the school. When reporting, inspectors must also consider: the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school; the extent to which the education provided by the school meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school, and in particular the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010. Ofsted introduced a new school inspection framework in January 2012 for implementation in September 2012.

The **Academies Act 2010** aims to make it possible for all publicly funded schools (maintained primary, secondary and special schools) to become academies that benefit from greater freedoms to innovate and raise standards. These include a freedom from local authority control, an ability to set pay and conditions for staff, the option not to follow the National Curriculum and the discretion to change the lengths of terms and school days. According to the Department for Education, as of November 2012 there are 2,456 academies open in England.

Qualified teachers who are employed in maintained schools, non-maintained special schools, maintained nursery schools and pupil referral units must, by law, complete an induction period after gaining qualified teacher status (QTS). The **Education (Induction Arrangements for School Teachers) (England) Regulations 2012** entered into force on 1 September 2012, amending the previous Regulations of 2008. The purpose is to reduce unnecessary prescription and bureaucracy, and give schools and appropriate bodies flexibility to use their professional judgement in managing their own arrangements according to local circumstances. The main changes introduced are: freedom given to schools to choose their appropriate body for the purposes of statutory induction; the appropriate body will have discretion to reduce the induction period (normally a period equivalent to three school terms of the institution in which induction is begun, based on a school year of three terms) to a minimum of one term where the newly qualified teachers (NQT) can show, through past experience, that they are teaching to the Teachers' Standards. Appropriate bodies should inform the Teaching Agency of any NQTs who start an induction period or who have taken up a post in which to continue their induction.

From 1 September 2012 the new **Teachers' Standards** replace the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and the Core professional standards previously published by the Training and Development Agency for Schools, and the General Teaching Council for England's Code of Conduct and Practice for Registered Teachers. The new standards have been designed to set out a basic framework within which all teachers should operate from the point of initial qualification. Appropriate

self-evaluation, reflection and professional development activity is critical to improving teachers' practice at all career stages. The standards set out clearly the key areas in which a teacher should be able to assess his or her own practice, and receive feedback from colleagues. As their careers progress, teachers will be expected to extend the depth and breadth of knowledge, skill and understanding that they demonstrate in meeting the standards, as is judged to be appropriate to the role they are fulfilling and the context in which they are working.

The **Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009** formally established the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (now abolished), which replaced the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, as well as the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual) as the new independent regulator of qualifications, tests and examinations. Following the Act, the Specification for Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE) was published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the National Apprenticeship Service in 2011. It sets out the minimum requirements to be included in a recognized English Apprenticeship framework to which compliance will be a statutory requirement.

Higher education is defined by the **Education Reform Act 1988**, but higher education institutions are diverse and there is no single legal framework setting out the legal basis on which they run their affairs. The principal pieces of legislation governing further and higher education in both England and Wales are the **Further and Higher Education Act 1992**, which took further education institutions out of local authorities' control, and the **Learning and Skills Act 2000** which set out the framework for further education. The **Higher Education Act 2004** introduced changes in the student finance system, introducing variable tuition fees.

The **Human Rights Act 1998**, which applies to all parts of the UK, incorporates into law nearly all the rights contained in the European Convention on Human Rights and gives citizens a clear legal statement of their basic rights and fundamental freedoms. With regard to education, the Act states that nobody should be denied the right to education. Parents also have the right to ensure that their religious or philosophical beliefs are respected when public bodies provide education or teaching to their children. The **Equality Act 2006** introduced a number of measures to promote equality across a broad range of areas in England, Wales and Scotland. It established the Commission for Equality and Human Rights, which aims to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people, and promote and protect human rights. The Commission enforces equality legislation on age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or transgender status, and encourages compliance with the Human Rights Act. The **Equality Act 2010** brings together and replaces the previous anti-discrimination laws, such as the Disability Discrimination, Race Relations, and Equal Pay Acts with a single Act. The majority of the Act came into force on 1 October 2010. The Act includes a new public sector equality duty (the 'general duty'), replacing previous separate duties relating to race, disability and gender equality. The **Child Poverty Act 2010** established four income-based UK-wide targets for 2020 and a duty to minimize socio-economic disadvantage.

In England compulsory education takes place between the ages of 5 and 16.



## Administration and management of the education system

Education in England is administered at both national and local level. The education system is characterized by its decentralized nature. Responsibility for different aspects of the service is shared between central government, local government, churches and other voluntary bodies, the governing bodies of educational institutions and the teaching profession. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

Prior to 2010 overall policy and funding for education was determined by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (which had replaced the Department for Education and Skills in June 2007). Currently, responsibility for the education service lies with the Department for Education (formed in May 2010) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, created in June 2009 by the merger of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

Responsibilities of the **Department for Education** (DfE) include planning and monitoring the education service in schools, ensuring the provision of integrated services for children, and bringing together policy relating to children and young people. DfE is headed by the Secretary of State who is responsible for all the Department's policies. As of October 2012, the Secretary of State is assisted by: (i) the Minister of State (schools), responsible for among others: teachers; school improvement, accountability, inspection; funding; admissions; the Teaching Agency and the National College for School Leadership; and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills; (ii) the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (schools), responsible for among others: academies, free schools, independent schools, school organization and the Education Funding Agency; (iii) the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (children and families), responsible for child protection, special educational needs and disability, and children's and young people's services among others; (iv) the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (education and childcare), whose responsibilities include childcare and early learning; assessment, qualifications, and curriculum reform; the Standards and Testing Agency; and the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator; and (v) the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (skills) responsible for apprenticeships, further education and 16-19 provision, and careers. As of May 2012, the DfE comprises three main Directorates – Infrastructure and Funding, Education Standards (responsible for the reform of the school curriculum and qualifications), and Children, Young People and Families.

The **Department for Business, Innovation and Skills** (BIS) is responsible for science and innovation, skills, further and higher education and enterprise. BIS is a ministerial department of the United Kingdom Government. Some policies under its authority apply to England alone due to devolution, while others are not devolved and therefore apply to other nations of the United Kingdom. Further and higher education policy is mostly devolved. Since April 2010, the **Skills Funding Agency** (a partner organization of the BIS) has been responsible for funding and commissioning post-19 education and training, and promoting adult further education and skills training in England. The Skills Funding Agency, alongside the Young People's Learning Agency



(YPLA) have replaced the Learning and Skills Council which had the broader remit of planning and funding all post-16 education. The YPLA itself closed in April 2012.

The Education Act 2011 abolished the General Teaching Council for England, the Training and Development Agency for Schools, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, the School Support Staff Negotiating Body, and the Young People's Learning Agency, transferring relevant functions to the Secretary of State. As a result of the DfE's arm's length bodies (ALB) reform programme there are now four new executive agencies responsible for key delivery functions, namely: the Standards and Testing Agency, the Teaching Agency, the National College for School Leadership, and the Education Funding Agency. The Standards and Testing Agency opened on 1 October 2011; the other three agencies began operating on 1 April 2012.

The **Education Funding Agency** provides revenue and capital funding for education for learners between the ages of 3 and 19, or the ages of 3 and 25 for those with learning difficulties and disabilities. It also supports the delivery of building and maintenance programmes for schools, academies, free schools and sixth-form colleges. The Agency is implementing funding reform for pre- and post-16 education for 2013-2014.

The **National College for School Leadership** works to develop and inspire great leaders of schools and early years settings so that they can make a positive difference to children's lives. Its principal aims are to: enable leaders to lead school and system improvement in partnership with each other; maintain the supply of high quality leaders for our schools and children's centres and support leaders in identifying and developing the next generation; improve the quality of leadership and, in particular, support leaders in improving teaching and closing achievement gaps for all groups. The National College offers a range of professional development opportunities for leaders at every stage of their career.

The **Teaching Agency** is responsible for ensuring the supply of high-quality teachers and training and for teacher regulation. The Agency delivers policy for teachers and instructors; those working in early years; classroom-based school support staff; special educational needs coordinators; educational psychologists and examination officers. The Agency is responsible for three key areas of delivery: supply and, with others, retention of the workforce; the quality of the workforce; and regulation of teacher conduct. The Agency also fulfils sector body responsibilities with regard to staff who support teaching and learning. The Agency is now the body responsible for the following activities in England (previously under the General Teaching Council for England, which ceased operations in March 2012): the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS); the issue of induction certificates; hearing induction appeals; and the regulation of the teaching profession. The Teacher Training Agency, established in 1994, became the Training and Development Agency for Schools in 2005 and was a body responsible for the initial and in-service training of teachers and other school staff in England. In 2012 many of its functions were taken on by the establishment of the Teaching Agency.

The **Standards and Testing Agency** is responsible for the development and delivery of all statutory assessments from early years to the end of key stage 3. This work was previously carried out by the Qualifications and Curriculum Development





Agency, which ceased its final remaining functions in March 2012. The core function of the Agency is to implement, effectively and safely, a system of testing and assessment which provides information about children's progress and which can underpin a sound system of accountability for schools. In doing so, the Agency will: develop high quality and rigorous National Curriculum tests in line with Ministerial policy; undertake operational delivery of assessment (including printing, distribution, marking and data capture as appropriate); and support schools and other stakeholders to deliver assessments. In carrying out these functions, the Agency is responsible for setting and maintaining test standards, including standards related to marking. Although the policy framework set by Ministers will define the standards required for tests or assessments, such as through the National Curriculum, the Agency will maintain independence from Ministers specifically in relation to standard setting and maintenance in National Curriculum tests to ensure confidence in the validity of the test outcomes.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) was a non-departmental public body formed in October 1997 by the merger of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. The QCA's function was to promote quality and coherence in education and training, from preschool to higher vocational levels, and to give advice on all matters affecting the school curriculum, pupil assessment and publicly funded qualifications offered in schools, colleges and workplaces (excepting higher education). In September 2007 the then Department for Children, Schools and Families, announced that the regulatory functions of the QCA were to become statutorily independent with the creation of a new body, the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual). In April 2008, Ofqual began work as the independent regulator of exams and tests in England, accountable to Parliament rather than to government ministers. The remaining work of the QCA was transferred to the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (which was formally established under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and ceased its functions in March 2012).

The **Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator** (Ofqual), formally established under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, is the new independent regulator of qualifications, tests and examinations. Ofqual's main role is to maintain standards and confidence in qualifications. It looks after GCSEs and A levels in England, and a wide range of vocational qualifications both in England and Northern Ireland. It also regulates the National Curriculum assessments in England. Ofqual is independent of Government ministers and reports directly to Parliament in Westminster and the Northern Ireland Assembly. Ofqual regulates qualifications that use the rules of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and qualifications that fit the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

England shares a common system of external qualifications with Wales and Northern Ireland. These qualifications are normally taken between the ages of 16 and 18 and are provided by independent organizations known as awarding bodies or awarding organizations. These organizations are funded by examination fees. Awarding organizations are subject to statutory regulation and their role involves: developing qualifications; assessing and quality assuring qualifications; awarding qualifications; and providing customer service to centres (including schools, further education colleges, and adult education centres) offering courses leading to their



qualifications. The five principal awarding bodies for general qualifications taken in schools are: the WJEC (previously the Welsh Joint Education Committee), the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA); Edexcel; OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations); and the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). These main awarding bodies offer both general and vocational qualifications. They offer the same type of qualifications, which must be centrally approved, but schools are free to choose examination specifications from any one of the five providers across England, Wales and Northern Ireland (although the WJEC offers qualifications which are tailored to the Welsh context).

AQA came into existence in April 2000 following the merger of the Associated Examining Board (AEB) and the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board. AQA is the largest of the three English exam boards, awarding 49% of full course GCSEs and 42% of A-levels nationally. The principal area of its work is in specification development and the preparation, production, delivery and marking of question papers leading to timely and accurate delivery of results to schools and candidates. Edexcel was formed in 1996 by the merger of the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), the country's leading provider of vocational qualifications, and the University of London Examination and Assessment Council (ULEAC), one of the major exam boards for GCSE and A-levels. Edexcel offers academic and vocational qualifications and testing to schools, colleges, employers and other places of learning in the UK and internationally. Academic qualifications include GCSE, GCE (A level) and International GCSE (Edexcel Certificate for UK state schools). Vocational qualifications include NVQ and BTEC from entry level to Higher National Diplomas. BTECs are recognized in more than 80 countries worldwide. OCR is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group which is a department of the University of Cambridge and Europe's largest agency. Cambridge Assessment plays a leading role in developing and delivering assessment across the world, operating in over 150 countries. OCR was formed in 1998 by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), now known as Cambridge Assessment, when it was joined by the leading vocational RSA Examinations Board. OCR offers a wide range of general and vocational qualifications including A-Levels, GCSEs and vocational qualifications including OCR Nationals, NVQs and Basic Skills. The **Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ)** is a membership organization comprising the seven largest providers of qualifications in the UK (AQA, OCR, Edexcel, CCEA, WJEC, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, and City & Guilds). Established in 2004 to replace the Joint Council for General Qualifications (1998-2003), the JCQ provides a single voice for its members on issues of examination administration and, when appropriate, qualification and wider education policy.

The **Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills** (previously the Office for Standards in Education, Ofsted), a non-ministerial government department, regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service, schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses children's services in local areas, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child



protection. Ofsted came into being on 1 April 2007 and brought together the wide experience of four formerly separate inspectorates: the previous Ofsted; the children's social care remit of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI); the inspection work of the Adult Learning Inspectorate; and the inspection remit of Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration. During 2001, Ofsted became responsible for inspecting all 16-to-19 education and for regulating early years childcare, including child minders.

Further and higher education institutions are fully autonomous. Higher education institutions that have the title 'university' are empowered by Royal Charter or Act of Parliament to develop their own courses and award their own degrees. The **Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)**, which was set up in 1997, provides an integrated quality assurance service for all the United Kingdom higher education institutions. The Agency is an independent body, funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges of higher education and through contracts with the higher education funding bodies. The **Higher Education Funding Council for England** promotes and funds high-quality, cost-effective teaching and research in universities and colleges in England, to meet the diverse needs of students, the economy and society. Its main role is to distribute public money to universities and colleges for higher education teaching, research and related activities, including strengthening their links with industry and the wider community. It funds programmes to support the development of higher education and ensures that the quality of teaching is assessed and maintained so that students have the best possible experience. The **Higher Education Statistics Agency** collects and publishes financial information from universities and colleges in the United Kingdom. The **Higher Education Academy (HEA)** is a UK-wide organization committed to enhancing the student learning experience, and championing excellent learning and teaching in higher education. It is an independent organization funded by grants from the four UK higher education funding bodies, subscriptions from higher education institutions, and grant and contract income for specific initiatives. The HEA England supports the higher education sector through its UK-wide services, direct work with higher education institutions and close relations with English organizations and groups.

At local level, the responsibility for organizing publicly-funded school education lies with 152 top-tier or single tier **local authorities (LAs)**. It is the duty of these authorities to secure sufficient suitable education and training opportunities to meet the reasonable needs of all young people in their area. Young people are those who are over compulsory school age but under 19, or are aged 19 to 25 and subject to a learning difficulty assessment. In deciding whether education or training is suitable, the LA must have regard to, amongst other things, the quality of the education and training and may challenge where this is poor or inadequate. LAs also have a major role as providers of schools but this role is now reducing as a significant number of secondary schools are converting to become academies, which are independent of LAs. Local authorities distribute government funding to maintained schools in their area, and apply a local funding formula. They do not fund academies or education and training for 16- to 19-year-olds (although the funding for 16- to 19-year-olds in maintained schools flows through local authorities). They also fund places for 3- and 4-year-olds in different early years settings, including private and voluntary providers as well as maintained schools and nursery schools. Recent years have seen changes to the way in which the responsibility for the education services is organized within the



LA. From 2005, following the introduction of the policy set out in *Every Child Matters* and the Children Act 2004, LAs have been required to appoint a **Director of Children's Services** (DCS) with overarching responsibility across both education and social services, where this function pertains to children. The role of the DCS is to ensure effective working across local authority services and improve outcomes for all children. There is also a requirement for an elected councillor to be designated Lead Member for children's and young people's services. (Eurydice, 2011).

All institutions have a **governing body**, responsible for the general direction of the institution, which includes representatives from a range of different stakeholders. The legal framework for maintained primary and secondary schools divides them into community, voluntary and foundation schools. The majority of schools are community schools which are established and fully funded by LAs. Voluntary schools were originally established by voluntary bodies, mainly churches, which retain some control over their management. They are now funded by LAs although they retain some responsibilities for capital works. Foundation schools are also funded by LAs, but are run by the school governing body or a charitable foundation. Trust schools are foundation schools that form a charitable trust with an outside partner, such as a business or an education charity. There is also a growing number of academies, which are funded directly by the Department for Education on a like-for-like basis with local authority maintained schools. All categories of schools enjoy a high level of autonomy and academies have some additional freedoms. (*Ibid.*).

Governors have a legal responsibility to conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement. The school governing body decides the general direction of the school and its curriculum, subject to the requirements of the National Curriculum. It must ensure that the National Curriculum is implemented and that religious education is taught. It also decides how the budget will be spent, determines the number and composition of the staff, and is responsible for selecting the head teacher and other members of the school's leadership group. The head teacher and staff report to the governing body on the school's overall performance, and in its turn the governing body should ensure accountability to parents and the wider local community. Since September 2007, governing bodies have had a duty to promote community cohesion. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

All schools have a **head teacher**, who is responsible for the internal organization, management and control of the school. Head teachers have a wide range of professional duties, including formulating the overall aims and objectives of the school; appointment and management of staff; evaluating the standards of teaching and learning at the school; determining and implementing an appropriate curriculum for the school; reviewing staff performance; ensuring that the performance of pupils is monitored and recorded; ensuring an acceptable standard of pupil behaviour; and promoting good relations between the school and parents. A school's staffing structure typically includes the **Senior Leadership Team** (SLT). As well as the head teacher, the SLT would include one or more deputy head teachers and one or more assistant head teachers. A small primary school might have just one deputy head who would combine management duties with classroom teaching, while a large secondary school might have up to half a dozen deputies and assistant heads who would spend only a small proportion of their time in the classroom. Parents have a responsibility to ensure that children of compulsory school age receive an efficient full-time education



suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs (SEN) they may have. In addition, parents may put themselves forward to serve as school governors. Many schools have school councils in which pupils, often representing individual year groups, can make an active contribution to the school environment and ethos.

Further education (FE) colleges are public corporations and are therefore subject to company law. They each have a governing body or corporation which fulfils a role similar to the board of directors of a company. They are responsible, within the limits imposed by their statutory obligations, for all decisions affecting the institution. Their main tasks are to set the strategic direction, mission and educational character of the institution; ensure accountability; and monitor and evaluate performance. Day-to-day management, organization and direction are the responsibility of the **principal** and the **management team**, working within the broad framework of policies and priorities determined by the governing body. The principal is directly accountable to the governing body/corporation for the performance of the institution, in terms of both academic and financial matters. In FE institutions other than sixth-form colleges, an **academic board** must be created to advise the principal on the standards, planning, coordination, development and oversight of the academic work of the institution. There is no nationally recommended internal organizational structure for FE colleges, and institutions are free to adapt their structures to meet changing circumstances. Most are organized into departments according to area of study. (*Ibid.*).

## Structure and organization of the education system

### Pre-school education

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as amended by the Education Act 2002, defines pre-primary education as full-time or part-time education suitable for children who have not attained compulsory school age (the term after a child's fifth birthday), whether provided at schools (normally nursery schools, nursery classes or in primary schools) or elsewhere. Under the Childcare Act 2006, from April 2008, local authorities have also had a duty to secure provision of sufficient childcare in their area. Participation in preschool education is voluntary. For 3- and 4-year-olds there is free provision for all whose parents want it. This may be in maintained nursery schools, nursery classes in maintained primary schools or in voluntary and private settings. The entitlement is for 15 hours each week for 38 weeks a year. The great majority of 3- and 4-year-olds participate. For children aged from three months to 3, provision is largely in the private and voluntary sectors and parents pay fees, although free provision for 10-15 hours a week is available for some of the most disadvantaged 2-year-olds. The Childcare Act 2006 led to the introduction of a new quality framework for early learning and childcare from birth to age 5 in September 2008 (e.g. the Early Years Foundation Stage). It forms a single framework of requirements, thus ending the distinction between education and care and between birth-to-3 and 3-to-5 provision. All registered early years providers and local authorities must comply with the framework.



## Primary education

Children must start primary school once they have reached compulsory school age, that is, at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. Many children start in the reception class of primary school at age 4. The Education Act 1996 divided the period of compulsory education (ages 5 to 16) into four key stages. Primary education covers key stage 1 (years 1 and 2, ages 5 to 7) and key stage 2 (years 3 to 6, ages 7 to 11). The majority of primary schools are community schools which are established and fully funded by local authorities. No charge may be made for education provided wholly or mainly within school hours (excluding mid-day breaks) for pupils in maintained primary schools. A phonics screening check must be administered to children in year 1 and children in year 2 if they did not meet the required standard in year 1. Towards the end of key stage 1 (children aged around 7), there is statutory assessment in English (reading, writing, speaking and listening), mathematics and science. It combines externally provided written tests and tasks in reading comprehension, spelling and mathematics, with continuous teacher assessment. At the end of key stage 2 (year 6, end of primary education), there is statutory assessment in English and mathematics. There will be no key stage 2 science sampling in 2013; a new, biennial (every other year), pupil-level sampling system will be introduced in 2014. The statutory assessment in English and mathematics comprises externally provided and marked written tests in English (one in reading, and one in grammar, punctuation and spelling – new for 2013 – replacing the English writing test). At the end of key stage 2, teachers should summarize their judgements for each eligible child, taking into account the child's progress and performance throughout the key stage. They need to determine: a level for each attainment target in English, mathematics and science; and an overall teacher assessment level in each of these subjects. The Standards and Testing Agency has also produced optional tests for years 3, 4 and 5 that can provide additional evidence to contribute to teachers' periodic assessment of their children throughout the key stage. The usual age for transfer to secondary schools is 11 years. There is no certificate awarded at the end of primary education.

## Secondary education

According to the Education Act 1996, secondary education is defined as covering education designed for young people from age 11 to 19 at school. Further education (FE) is defined as covering the education of people over compulsory school age (16) other than at school. The 1996 Act specifically excludes higher education programmes but includes access programmes and the continuing education of adults. Education is provided free of charge for students up to the age of 19. Secondary education covers key stage 3 (years 7 to 9, or lower secondary education, ages 11 to 14), and key stage 4 (years 10 and 11, or upper secondary education, ages 14 to 16). Post-compulsory advanced programmes are offered by secondary schools (many of which also have a sixth-form providing full-time post-compulsory education for students aged 16 to 19) or further education colleges which cater for students aged 16 to 19 and for older learners). Advanced programmes typically last two years when followed full-time by school leavers (age 16), but may be of varied duration when aimed at older learners. At key stages 3 and 4, secondary schools offer general/academic education as set out in the National Curriculum; and at key stage 4 and post-16, they provide external qualifications in general subjects along with some



courses in vocational/applied subjects. Until 2008/09, there were externally set and marked National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science for pupils at the end of key stage 3 (age 14). However, in October 2008, the Government announced that the tests would be abolished with immediate effect. They have been replaced by improved teacher assessment and more frequent reporting to parents throughout the key stage. Teacher assessment judgements in each of the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) have to be reported to the Standards and Testing Agency. At the end of compulsory education (age 16, end of key stage 4), the majority of pupils are assessed by means of external qualifications. These qualifications are developed by independent organizations, known as awarding bodies or awarding organizations. The most common qualification taken is the GCSE, a single subject qualification available in more than 40 academic subject areas. GCSEs in applied subjects are also available in nine work-related subject areas. Entry level qualifications are aimed at students who are not ready for GCSEs at the end of key stage 4. They are available in a range of general/academic subjects as well as in vocational areas. Introductory certificates and diplomas are vocational qualifications, available alongside GCSEs in applied subjects. They are designed to enable young people and adults to take part in full- or part-time programmes of study, which will enable them to enter employment or further/higher education. Post-compulsory upper secondary education typically lasts two years. The most common qualifications taken at the end of post-compulsory education are A-levels. These are single subject examinations which may be studied in any combination, within the limit of the range of subjects offered by the school or further education institution. Courses usually last two years. During the first year students typically take four or five subjects leading to AS-level qualifications. These are standalone qualifications and typically consist of three units. The second half of the full A-level qualification (A2) is taken in the second year, and consists of a further three units. The A2 covers more demanding material than at AS level. Students typically pursue three of their four or five AS qualification subjects to A2. GCEs or A-levels in applied subjects are also available to students in post-compulsory education. Full- and part-time post-compulsory education (students aged 16 to 19) may also be provided in FE institutions. Courses are, generally, the same as those offered in school sixth-forms, but sixth-form colleges often offer a wider choice of both general and vocational programmes. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) enable students as well as employees who have left full-time education to gain recognized qualifications for specific occupations. They recognize work-based competences, as well as study in an education or training provider. Key skills qualifications (from September 2010, functional skills qualifications) are also available. The qualifications are intended to be taken in tandem with other courses, such as GCSEs, A-levels or work-based training programmes. Functional skills are practical skills in English, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and mathematics, considered essential for individuals to work confidently, effectively and independently in life. They will be available as free-standing qualifications, but will also form part of the new Diploma qualifications and apprenticeship frameworks (see below). BTECs (Business and Technical Education Council) and OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts) Nationals are also designed for study in occupational areas. They involve a mixture of theoretical and practical work and are available at 3 levels (BTEC Firsts are available for students aged 14 to 16 in compulsory education). They are assessed, either by teachers or an external examiner, through a range of assignments, case studies, a portfolio of evidence and practical activities. They enable progression to



employment or higher level vocational courses. Once external qualifications have been accredited by the regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, they are placed on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) or the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), which is currently being implemented. Education for young people aged between 14 and 19 years is currently the focus of reform and reorganization. Reforms include the introduction of new diploma qualifications, which combine traditional (general) and work-based (vocational) learning, and raising the minimum age at which young people leave education or training to 17 by 2013 and to 18 by 2015. By 2013, as part of the reform of 14 to 19 education, the Government plans to create a more streamlined and understandable qualifications system based on four nationally available qualifications routes: GCSEs and A-levels; diplomas; apprenticeships; and foundation learning programmes (for young people and adults working at entry level and level 1 of the National Qualifications Framework, e.g. entry level qualifications). Diplomas are new qualifications combining theoretical study with practical experience. Diplomas are available at three different levels: foundation (equivalent to five GCSEs); higher (equivalent to seven GCSEs); and advanced (equivalent to three and a half A-levels). It is also intended that a larger 'extended' diploma will be available at all three levels. The main Government-funded training scheme for young people is the apprenticeship programme. It is available at several different levels: (i) young apprenticeships for 14- to 16-year-olds provide an opportunity for motivated school pupils to spend up to two days a week in the workplace learning a trade; (ii) entry to employment (or pre-apprenticeships), for young people aged 16 to 18, is designed to support disengaged young people to prepare for apprenticeships and employment; (iii) apprenticeships are a work-based training option and are based on NVQs; (iv) advanced apprenticeships are a partnership initiative between government and industry to provide a high-quality, work-based route to NVQ level 3. Advanced apprenticeships are intended largely for school leavers aged 16+, but are also open to more mature trainees.

## Higher education

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are diverse, ranging widely in size, mission and history. All are independent, self-governing bodies active in teaching, research and scholarship. Following the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, there is no longer a separate sector providing vocational higher education, and all HEIs are subject to the same requirements with respect to quality assurance and funding agreements. However, the legal basis on which individual institutions run their affairs varies. Most universities established prior to 1992 were established by Royal Charter. A very small number of pre-1992 universities were established by a specific Act of Parliament. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which date from the 12th and 13th centuries, have neither an Act of Parliament nor a charter. Post-1992 universities and certain other higher education institutions were established as Higher Education Corporations under the Education Reform Act 1988. These are sometimes called 'new' universities, even though many of them have their origins in vocational colleges with a long history. Degree-awarding powers are controlled by Government under the provisions of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Prior to 2005, only institutions with the power to award both taught degrees and research degrees were permitted to use the title 'university'. From 2005, institutions in England (and Wales as well) that award only taught degrees and which meet certain numerical criteria may also be permitted to use the title 'university'. Institutions that award only taught degrees but





which do not meet the numerical criteria may apply to use the title ‘university college’, although not all choose to do so. Other institutions are often referred to as higher education colleges but this title is not regulated by law and the titles of individual institutions vary. In England, there were 90 universities and 133 HEIs in total as of August 2008. HEIs determine their own admissions policies and the entry requirements for each programme, which are set out in the institution’s prospectus. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10). The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland has five levels numbered 4 to 8, with bachelor’s degrees located within level 6, master’s degrees in level 7 and doctorates in level 8. The level numbers correspond with levels 4 to 8 in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)/Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) for the vocational qualifications system and can assist with transfer and progression between different levels and types of study. Courses leading to qualifications at FHEQ level 4 (certificates of higher education, higher national certificates) are usually offered in a vocational subject and normally take one year of full-time study or the part-time equivalent. Courses leading to qualifications at FHEQ level 5 (higher national diplomas, diplomas of higher education, foundation degrees) are intended to take two years of full-time study to complete or the part-time equivalent. Courses leading to qualifications at FHEQ level 6 include bachelor’s degrees with honours (honours degrees) which form the largest group of higher education qualifications. Honours degree programmes typically last three years if taken full-time, although they may be longer or shorter than three years. Shorter courses include accelerated two-year degrees which require students to study during the normal vacation periods. Courses leading to qualifications at FHEQ level 7 include master’s courses which typically last at least one year (on a full-time basis), and are taken by persons holding an honours degrees (the Bachelor of Medicine, of Surgery and of Dental Surgery, are five-year programmes). Longer, research-based programmes often lead to the degree of MPhil. Some master’s degrees – for instance in chemistry, engineering, mathematics, pharmacy and physics– are integrated into first-cycle programmes lasting a year longer than bachelor’s programmes. Also at this level are advanced short courses, often forming parts of continuing professional development programmes, leading to postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas. Courses leading to qualifications at FHEQ level 8 (doctoral degrees) normally require the equivalent of three years’ full-time study.

Schools must be open for 190 days a year or 380 half sessions. Teachers are required to be available for an additional five days each year, which are devoted to non-teaching activities, such as continuing professional development. Term and holiday dates are determined by the local authority or the school governing body, depending on the legal category of school. The school year generally runs from early September to the latter part of July. It is divided into three terms with a long summer break of around six weeks in July and August, shorter breaks of around two weeks at Christmas and Easter, and one week in the middle of each term, known as the half-term holiday. An increasing number of schools are adopting a standard six-term school year. It is divided into six blocks of roughly even length which are more evenly distributed throughout the year: two, approximately seven-week blocks before Christmas, followed by four approximately six-week blocks afterwards. The spring break is taken around the first two weeks of April irrespective of the timing of Easter. The decision to implement the six-term year in schools remains at the level of the LA or school governing body. Schools normally operate five days a week (Monday to



Friday). The minimum recommended weekly lesson times are: 21 hours in years 1 and 2; 23.5 hours in years 3 to 6; 24 hours in years 7 to 9; and 25 hours in years 10 and 11. Many schools provide more hours than the minimum. The school day generally runs from around 9:00 to between 15:00 and 16:00, with a lunch break between morning and afternoon sessions. The organization of time within the school day is determined by the school. (Eurydice, 2011; Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

## The educational process

In 1985, the *Better Schools* White Paper recommended moving towards a nationally-agreed curriculum. A further related agency, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, was established in 1986. In 1987 the then Department of Education and Science issued a consultation document that set out the rationale for a national curriculum. This document essentially identified four broad purposes: introducing an entitlement for pupils to a broad and balanced curriculum; setting standards for pupil attainment and to support school accountability; improving continuity and coherence within the curriculum; and aiding public understanding of the work of schools. Following the consultation, Parliament passed the 1988 Education Reform Act, which established the framework for the National Curriculum. The key principles in developing the National Curriculum were that: (i) it would be underpinned by two aims, e.g. to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils, and to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life; (ii) it would be structured around ‘Key Stages’ and be subject-based, covering the ‘core’ subjects of English, mathematics and science, and the ‘foundation’ subjects of art, geography, history, music, physical education and technology, with all subjects studied from age 5 up to age 16, modern foreign languages from age 11, and (iii) the syllabus for each subject at each Key Stage would be set out in a ‘Programme of Study’, which would also include a scale of attainment targets to guide teacher assessment. Schools would also be required to teach religious education and areas such as personal, social and health education, though these subjects sat outside the National Curriculum. A number of non-statutory ‘cross-curricular’ themes and generic – or life – skills were added to this basic framework in the course of implementing the National Curriculum. (House of Commons, 2009).

Development of the National Curriculum was overseen by two new advisory bodies, the National Curriculum Council and the School Examination and Assessment Council. Formulation of the original Programmes of Study was handed to subject-based working groups, comprising experts from a wide variety of educational backgrounds and which drew on evidence and expertise from throughout the education system. Due in part to the different subject communities wanting to promote their subject within the National Curriculum, the documentation to emerge from this process was substantial and set out in considerable detail the subject content that schools should be required to cover. The drawing up of testing arrangements for the National Curriculum was taken forward by the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT). The TGAT report emphasized the formative aspects of assessment and the use of a range of assessment approaches that could be delivered and marked by teachers. However, the then Department of Education and Science regarded the TGAT recommendations as overly complex and simpler arrangements were ultimately put in place—teacher assessment accompanied by summative assessment



through nationally-administered standardized tests, known as ‘Key Stage tests’. More controversially, and again counter to the TGAT report, test results were to be published in performance tables.

The National Curriculum was introduced into primary schools in 1989, and implementation across the primary and secondary phases continued into the mid-1990s. The first run of Key Stage testing was completed in 1991. In 1993 responsibility for school inspections was transferred from Her Majesty’s Inspectors and local authority inspection teams to independent inspection teams, the work of which would be coordinated by a new Non-Ministerial Department of State, the then Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). (*Ibid.*).

The National Curriculum has subsequently been reviewed and reformed on several occasions. The first review, in 1993, was a response to teachers’ complaints that the National Curriculum and its testing arrangements were simply too unwieldy and, indeed, to proposed teacher boycotts of the Key Stage tests. The revised version of the National Curriculum was introduced in 1995. The key changes included a reduction in the amount of prescribed content, the restriction of Key Stage testing to the core subjects and the replacement of a 10-level assessment scale for each subject with 8-level descriptors. In 1993 the National Curriculum Council and the School Examination and Assessment Council were merged to form the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority. In 1996 concerns about the poor level of pupil performance in Key Stage tests prompted to oversee the addition to the National Curriculum of two parallel support projects. These were intended to improve the teaching of literacy and numeracy in primary schools. Following the change of Government in 1997 the projects continued in a modified form under the title of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. The Strategies were subsequently expanded into the secondary phase, across more subjects and to cover whole school issues, such as behaviour and attendance.

The National Curriculum itself next underwent substantial revision in 1999. This work was overseen by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), which was formed in 1997 through a merger of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. As well as further reducing the amount of prescribed content, in response to a growing number of requests from teachers for a fuller explanation of what the National Curriculum stood for, the 1999 reforms introduced an overt statement of aims and purposes. These were not significantly different to those already in place, just expanded upon in greater detail within the *National Curriculum Handbook* for teachers. The statement of purposes remains in place today: (i) to establish an entitlement. The National Curriculum secures for all pupils, irrespective of social background, culture, race, gender, differences in ability and disabilities, an entitlement to a number of areas of learning and to develop knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes necessary for their self-fulfilment and development as active and responsible citizens; (ii) to establish standards. The National Curriculum makes expectations for learning and attainment explicit to pupils, parents, teachers, governors, employers and the public and establishes national standards for the performance of all pupils in the subjects it includes; (iii) to promote continuity and coherence. The National Curriculum contributes to a coherent national framework that promotes curriculum continuity and is sufficiently flexible to ensure progression in pupils’ learning. It



facilitates the transition of pupils between schools and phases of education and provides a foundation for lifelong learning; (iv) to promote public understanding. The National Curriculum increases public understanding of, and confidence in, the work of schools and in the learning and achievements resulting from compulsory education. It provides a common basis for discussion of education issues among lay and professional groups, including pupils, parents, teachers, governors and employers. (*Ibid.*).

A loose national curriculum framework for early years provision (*Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage*) was first introduced in 2000. This guidance became statutory from 2002. In the same year guidance for younger children was introduced (*Birth to Three Matters*). From September 2008 both documents were replaced by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) as the new statutory framework for children from birth to age 5. The EYFS sits outside the National Curriculum. In 2005, the Department asked the QCA to review the secondary curriculum at Key Stage 3. This was with the principal aim of further reducing the amount of prescribed content in order to give teachers more time and space to support personalized learning—broadly understood as the tailoring of what is taught and how it is taught to the needs of the individual pupil. Key Stage 4 was later included in the remit of the review. The new secondary curriculum places greater emphasis on pupils' understanding of the concepts, ideas and processes of subjects, on cross-curricular themes and on pupils' development of life skills. It became statutory from September 2008 (and had been fully implemented by September 2010; see: Eurydice, 2011). The review of the primary curriculum commenced in 2008. In line with the reform of the secondary curriculum, the review has been tasked with, among other things, reducing prescription and addressing to a greater degree than before the development of pupils' life skills. (*Ibid.*).

A review of the National Curriculum was announced in January 2011. In the new curriculum there is likely to be a focus on core subject knowledge, rather than the acquisition of general learning skills and a reduction in central prescription, giving schools greater autonomy over how they teach the curriculum. There was the intention to introduce the new curriculum in phases, with the new curriculum for mathematics, English, science and physical education available from September 2012, and statutory from September 2013. The new curriculum for other subjects was to be made available from September 2013, and statutory from September 2014. (Eurydice, 2011). In December 2011 the Secretary of State for Education decided to change the planned timetable for the introduction of the new National Curriculum. Instead of new curricula for English, mathematics, science and physical education being introduced from 2013, and any other subjects in 2014, the new curriculum for all subjects will now be introduced in 2014.

After the United Kingdom general election of May 2010, the Government set out in the Coalition Agreement its commitment to give schools greater freedom over the curriculum. As part of that commitment, the Government announced proposals for a systematic and comprehensive review of the National Curriculum in England for 5- to 16-year-olds. The Secretary of State appointed an Advisory Committee to guide the review and help to frame recommendations. He also established an Expert Panel to provide an evidence base for the review and ensure that the construction and content



of the new National Curriculum is based in evidence and informed by international best practice.

Certain key principles that were set out in the National Curriculum review remit and that significantly informed the work of the Expert Panel can be summarized as follows:

- The new National Curriculum will be developed in line with the principles of freedom, responsibility and fairness – to raise standards for all children.
- Schools should be given greater freedom over the curriculum. The National Curriculum should set out only the essential knowledge (facts, concepts, principles and fundamental operations) that all children should acquire, and leave schools to design a wider school curriculum that best meets the needs of their pupils and to decide how to teach this most effectively.
- The content of our National Curriculum should compare favourably with curricula in the highest performing jurisdictions, reflecting the best collective wisdom we have about how children learn and what they should know.
- The National Curriculum should embody rigour and high standards and create coherence in what is taught in schools, ensuring that all children have the opportunity to acquire a core of knowledge in the key subject disciplines.
- The National Curriculum should provide young people with the knowledge they need to move confidently and successfully through their education, taking into account the needs of different groups, including the most able and pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.
- It is important to distinguish between the National Curriculum and the wider school curriculum (the whole curriculum as experienced by pupils in each school). There are a number of components of a broad and balanced school curriculum that should be developed on the basis of local or school-level decision making, rather than prescribed national Programmes of Study. To facilitate this, the National Curriculum should not absorb the overwhelming majority of teaching time in schools.
- The National Curriculum will continue to be a statutory requirement for maintained schools but will also retain its importance as a national benchmark of excellence for all schools, providing parents with an understanding of what their child should be expected to know at every stage of their school career. (DFE, 2011).

The Expert Panel recommended that aims and purposes of the curriculum should be expressed at the following levels: (i) affirming system-wide educational aspirations for school curricula (a statement at this highest level is crucial because it provides the foundation on which the National Curriculum is built); (ii) specifying more particular purposes for schools and for their curricula; and (iii) introducing the goals for the Programmes of Study of particular subjects. This will help to ensure congruence and coherence and to align assessment, resource development and allocation, teacher recruitment and training, and inspection. The Panel agreed with the stated intention of the National Curriculum review to draw a clear distinction between the National Curriculum and the school curriculum (i.e. the whole curriculum as experienced by the pupils in the school). This will help to ensure that pupils, parents, teachers and the wider public understand that the National Curriculum is not the totality of what is taught. The Panel emphasized the importance of establishing a very



direct and clear relationship between ‘that which is to be taught and learned’ and assessment (both formative and ongoing and periodic and summative). Imprecise Attainment Targets and the current abstracted, descriptive ‘levels’ are of concern since they reduce the clarity of this relationship. The Panel was therefore of the view that Attainment Targets in the presently established level descriptor form should not be retained. Instead, and consistent with separating ‘what is to be taught and learned’ from ‘statements of standards’, a new approach has been suggested. Programmes of Study should be stated as discursive statements of purposes, anticipated progression and interconnections within the knowledge to be acquired, with Attainment Targets being stated as statements of specific learning outcomes related to essential knowledge. (*Ibid.*).

With regard to the subjects, the Panel recommended that some subjects and areas of learning should be reclassified so that there is still a duty on schools to teach them, but it would be up to schools to determine appropriate specific content. In other words, there would no longer be statutory Programmes of Study for such subjects. In addition, subjects that retain statutory Programmes of Study should have their content specified in less detail. At Key Stage 4 there should be greater breadth than there is in the current system, and curricular provision in certain subjects should be made statutory. The Panel was also of the view that the four-year span of Key Stage 2 (as currently configured) is too long, and noted that this can result in a lack of pace and ambition in year 4 and year 5. Therefore it recommended that the present Key Stage 2 be split in two to form two new key stages, each of two years’ duration. (*Ibid.*).

### Pre-primary education

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as amended by the Education Act 2002, defines pre-primary education as full-time or part-time education suitable for children who have not attained compulsory school age (the term after a child’s fifth birthday), whether provided at schools (normally nursery schools, nursery classes or in primary schools) or elsewhere. The Act also placed a statutory duty on local authorities (LAs) to ensure the provision of pre-primary education in their area. Under the Childcare Act 2006, from April 2008, LAs have also had a duty to secure provision of sufficient childcare in their area.

Participation in preschool education is voluntary. For 3- and 4-year-olds there is free provision for all whose parents want it. This may be in maintained nursery schools, nursery classes in maintained primary schools or in voluntary and private settings. The entitlement is for 15 hours each week for 38 weeks a year. The great majority of 3- and 4-year-olds participate. For children aged from three months to 3, provision is largely in the private and voluntary sectors and parents pay fees, although free provision for 10-15 hours a week is available for some of the most disadvantaged 2-year-olds. The Government plans to extend the provision to the 20% most disadvantaged 2-year-olds from 2013 and to around 40% by 2014. (OECD, 2012).

Maintained schools, both primary schools and nursery schools, are major providers of preschool education places. These places can either be provided in standalone nursery schools, or in nursery classes and reception classes (children aged 4 to 5) within primary schools. They are also provided in children’s centres, which offer integrated early years education, childcare and related family support and health



services. The children's centres are being established initially in the most disadvantaged areas. In all preschool settings which receive government funding, the head teacher and staff are free to decide on teaching methods and on teaching materials, which they purchase from their budget. LAs may give advice about the organization of teaching and the teaching programme, but have no powers to impose teaching methods. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

The Childcare Act 2006 led to the introduction in September 2008 of a new quality framework for early learning and childcare (the Early Years Foundation Stage – EYFS) from birth to age 5. It brings together learning and development and welfare requirements regardless of the type, size or funding of the setting. It forms a single framework of requirements, thus ending the distinction between education and care and between birth-to-3 and 3-to-5 provision. All registered early years providers and LAs must comply with the framework.

The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities. The EYFS sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life. Four guiding principles should shape practice in early years settings. These are: (i) every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured; (ii) children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships; (iii) children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and (iv) children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. The EYFS specifies requirements for learning and development and for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The learning and development requirements cover: the areas of learning and development which must shape activities and experiences (educational programmes) for children in all early years settings; the early learning goals that providers must help children work towards (the knowledge, skills and understanding children should have at the end of the academic year in which they turn five); and assessment arrangements for measuring progress (and requirements for reporting to parents and/or carers). The safeguarding and welfare requirements cover the steps that providers must take to keep children safe and promote their welfare. (DfE, March 2012).

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas, the 'prime' areas, are: communication and language; physical development; and personal, social and emotional development. Providers must also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are: literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; and expressive arts and design. Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and



enjoyable experience for each child in all of the areas of learning and development. The three prime areas reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively, and become ready for school; they are the basis for successful learning in the other four specific areas. Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. For children whose home language is not English, providers must take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home. In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are: playing and exploring; active learning; and creating and thinking critically. The level of progress children should be expected to have attained by the end of the EYFS is defined by the early learning goals for both the prime and specific areas (in the 2012 version of the EYFS the number of learning goals has been reduced from 69 to 17). The learning goals refer to the following aspects: listening and attention, understanding, speaking (communication and language); moving and handling, health and self-care (physical development); self-confidence and self-awareness, managing feelings and behaviours, making relationships (personal, social and emotional development); reading and writing (literacy); numbers and shape, space and measures (mathematics); people and communities, the world, technology (understanding the world); exploring and using media and materials, being imaginative (expressive arts and design).

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. Parents and/or carers should be kept up-to-date with their child's progress and development. Practitioners should address any learning and development needs in partnership with parents and/or carers, and any relevant professionals. When a child is aged between 2 and 3, practitioners must review their progress, and provide parents and/or carers with a short written summary of their child's development in the prime areas. Beyond the prime areas, it is for practitioners to decide what the written summary should include, reflecting the development level and needs of the individual child. In the final term of the year in which the child reaches age 5, the EYFS Profile must be completed for each child. The Profile provides parents and carers, practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for year 1. The Profile must reflect: ongoing observation; all relevant records held by the setting; discussions with parents and carers, and any other adults whom the teacher, parent or carer judges can offer a useful contribution. Each child's level of development must be assessed against the early learning goals. Practitioners must indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are exceeding expected levels, or not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'). This is the EYFS Profile. Year 1 teachers must be given a copy of the Profile report together with a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective learning. These should inform a dialogue between reception and year 1 teachers about each child's stage of development and learning needs and assist with





the planning of activities in year 1. Early years providers must report EYFS Profile results to local authorities, upon request. Local authorities are under a duty to return this data to the relevant Government department. (*Ibid.*).

The safeguarding and welfare requirements are designed to help providers create high quality settings which are welcoming, safe and stimulating, and where children are able to enjoy learning and grow in confidence. Providers must take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well. The requirements explain what early years providers must do to: safeguard children; ensure the suitability of adults who have contact with children; promote good health; manage behaviour; and maintain records, policies and procedures. Schools are not required to have separate policies to cover EYFS requirements provided the requirements are already met through an existing policy. The daily experience of children in early years settings and the overall quality of provision depends on all practitioners having appropriate qualifications, training, skills and knowledge and a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Providers must ensure that all staff receive induction training to help them understand their roles and responsibilities. Induction training must include information about emergency evacuation procedures, safeguarding, child protection, the provider's equality policy, and health and safety issues. Providers should ensure that regular staff appraisals are carried out to identify any training needs, and secure opportunities for continued professional development for staff. Providers should support their staff to improve their qualification levels wherever possible. For staff without a relevant qualification, providers should consider supporting them to obtain a relevant level 2 qualification. Child minders must have completed a local authority approved training course which helps them understand and implement the EYFS before they can register with the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to promote equality of opportunity for children in their care, including support for children with special educational needs or disabilities.

In its 2009/10 Annual Report, Ofsted stated that after the EYFS was introduced in September 2008, there was an increase from 56% to 65% in the proportion of providers judged good or outstanding. In 2009/10, this position has been consolidated with a slight increase in the percentage of good or outstanding provision to 68% and a slight decrease in inadequate provision to 3%. The quality of provision of those inspected overall, therefore, remains strong and shows that providers continue to respond well to the requirements of the EYFS. Nearly two thirds of the providers found to be inadequate in 2008/09 have since been reinspected and 95% of these are now satisfactory or better. (Ofsted, 2010).

According to the Department for Education, in January 2012 the number of 3- and 4-year-olds benefiting from some free early education was 1,264,420 or 96% of the 3 and 4 year old population. The number of 3-year-olds benefiting from some free early education was 625,440 or 93% of the 3 year old population. This percentage is unchanged from 2011 and up one percentage point from 2008. The number of 4-year-olds benefiting from some free early education was 638,970 or 98% of the 4 year old population. As with the 3 year old rate, the value of 98% is consistent with previous years and only in 2010 did the value increase slightly to 99%. Over the period 2008-2012 the number of children benefiting from some free early education has steadily increased with the vast majority of children now accessing over 13 hours per week.

This increase has been broadly in line with the increase in the population. At the beginning of 2012 the distribution of the number of 3- and 4-year-olds by type of provider was as follow: 32% in infant classes in primary schools; 27% in nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools; 38% catered for by private and voluntary providers; and 3% in independent schools. (DfE, data made available on 28 June 2012).

## Primary education

Children must start primary school once they have reached compulsory school age, that is, at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. Many children start in the reception class of primary school at age 4. The Education Act 1996 divided the period of compulsory education (ages 5 to 16) into four key stages. Primary education covers key stage 1 (years 1 and 2, ages 5 to 7) and key stage 2 (years 3 to 6, ages 7 to 11). School organization is determined locally, and although many primary schools are for pupils aged 5 to 11, in some areas, there are separate ‘infant’ schools for children in key stage 1, and ‘junior’ schools for children in key stage 2. In addition, in a few areas of England, schools are organized in three phases: primary or ‘first’ schools for children aged 5 to 8/9 years, middle schools for pupils aged 8 to 12 years (or 9 to 13 years), and secondary or ‘high’ schools (for students aged 12 or 13 to 16+ years). The majority of schools are community schools which are established and fully funded by local authorities (LAs).

Foundation schools are also funded by LAs, but are owned by the school governing body or a charitable foundation. Voluntary schools were originally established by voluntary bodies, mainly churches, which retain some control over their management. They are now largely funded by LAs. All categories of maintained schools enjoy a high level of autonomy. There are also independent schools, commonly known as private schools. Independent schools receive no public funding and are largely financed by fees paid by parents. Virtually all primary schools are mixed sex.

No charge may be made for education provided wholly or mainly within school hours (excluding mid-day breaks) for pupils in maintained primary schools. Education which takes place wholly or mainly outside school hours, which is part of the National Curriculum, must also be provided free of charge. In addition, charges may not be made for the cost of materials, books, instruments or any other equipment. Primary schools may however, charge for activities that fall outside the above categories.

During primary education, children are usually taught by generalist teachers. Most children at primary level are taught in mixed-ability classes with children of the same age, with one teacher in charge of the class. Many schools employ teaching assistants, who work alongside teachers in the classroom supporting pupils on an individual or group basis. Some schools teach some subjects in groups organized on the basis of ability. Smaller or rural schools may have mixed-age classes.

The basic principle underlying school education is that it should provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum which is suitable to a child’s age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs (SEN) which he/she may have. The



Education Act 2002 defines a balanced and broadly based curriculum as one which: promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. All publicly-funded schools are required to follow the National Curriculum, which covers the full length of compulsory education. It includes 'programmes of study', which set out the minimum statutory entitlement to knowledge, understanding and skills for each subject at each key stage. The National Curriculum is not intended to constitute the whole school curriculum. Schools have considerable freedom to determine the character and distinctive nature of their curriculum. Under the Education Act 1996, the amount of time to be devoted to each curriculum subject cannot be prescribed. The allocation of time per subject is a matter for individual schools.

At key stages 1 and 2 (primary education), compulsory subjects include the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) and the following foundation subjects: design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), history, geography, music, art and design, and physical education. There is no statutory requirement to teach a modern foreign language at key stages 1 and 2. Religious education is also a statutory subject throughout compulsory education, although parents have the right to withdraw their children from this subject if they wish. All LAs are required to adopt a locally agreed syllabus for religious education, which must 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'. Drug, alcohol and tobacco education is a statutory part of the science curriculum at key stages 1 and 2. It is often delivered as part of a wider personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship programme. Although PSHE and citizenship are not compulsory subjects, primary schools are expected to provide them. Sex education is not currently compulsory during primary education. School governing bodies must decide whether and at what stage sex education should be introduced in the curriculum. They must keep an up-to-date written statement of the policy they choose to adopt. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from sex education lessons, if they wish.

Six key skills are embedded in the primary curriculum. These are: communication, application of number, information technology, working with others, improving own learning and performance, and problem-solving. They have been identified as the skills needed to succeed in work, education and everyday life. The 'thinking skills' of information processing, reasoning, enquiry, creative thinking, and evaluation, are also embedded in the National Curriculum. They complement the key skills and teaching of these is intended to enable children to 'learn how to learn'.

Teaching methods and learning materials are usually decided by the class teacher, in consultation with the head teacher and subject leader (or subject coordinators), who are classroom teachers with additional responsibility for a particular subject area and who give help and guidance to their colleagues within the school. As schools have a responsibility to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils, there is a need for differentiated teaching methods and learning materials to cater for pupils' individual needs. Textbooks are produced by commercial publishers and do not require government approval. All schools have computers available for use by pupils.



Towards the end of key stage 1 (children aged around 7), there is statutory assessment in English (reading, writing, speaking and listening), mathematics and science, which combines externally provided written tests and tasks in reading comprehension, spelling and mathematics, with continuous teacher assessment. Changes implemented in the 2004/05 school year increased the emphasis on the teacher assessment aspect of this process. In addition a phonics screening check must be administered to children in year 1 and children in year 2 if they did not meet the required standard in year 1. It has been designed to confirm whether children have learnt phonic decoding to an appropriate standard, and to identify the children who need extra help to improve their decoding skills.

Reporting to parents is now based on overall teacher assessment – combining test results with the child’s overall performance – and assessment and reporting is carried out as part of teaching and learning. Teachers have to summarize their judgements on children’s attainment in relation to the National Curriculum level descriptions for each eligible child. They need to determine: levels for reading, writing, and speaking and listening; an overall subject level for mathematics; and a level for each attainment target in science. Schools must report the following for all children: a teacher assessment level in reading, writing, and speaking and listening; a separate teacher assessment level for each science attainment target; and an overall teacher assessment level in mathematics and science. Local authorities are responsible for moderating teacher assessment judgements in maintained schools. The Standards and Testing Agency is responsible for monitoring the local authority moderation process.

At the end of key stage 2 (year 6, end of primary education), there is statutory assessment in English and mathematics. There will be no key stage 2 science sampling in 2013; a new, biennial (every other year), pupil-level sampling system will be introduced in 2014. The statutory assessment in English and mathematics comprises externally provided and marked written tests in English (one in reading, and one in grammar, punctuation and spelling – new for 2013 – replacing the English writing test). Local authorities and other accredited agencies must do all they can to ensure that assessment arrangements are implemented and, in particular, must monitor whether the National Curriculum tests are being administered correctly. At the end of key stage 2, teachers should summarize their judgements for each eligible child, taking into account the child’s progress and performance throughout the key stage. They need to determine: a level for each attainment target in English, mathematics and science; and an overall teacher assessment level in each of these subjects. Teachers should base their judgements on the level descriptions in the National Curriculum. The Standards and Testing Agency has also produced optional tests for years 3, 4 and 5 that can provide additional evidence to contribute to teachers’ periodic assessment of their children throughout the key stage.

The usual age for transfer to secondary schools is 11 years. There is no certificate awarded at the end of primary education.

In its 2009/10 Annual Report, Ofsted stated that in terms of overall effectiveness of primary schools inspected between September 2009 and August 2010, 9% of schools were outstanding, 44% good, 39% satisfactory, and 7% inadequate. Ofsted found that the quality of the curriculum in primary schools was



better overall in the core subjects (although less so in mathematics) than in foundation subjects. This reflects the continued attention primary schools give to the core subjects. Underpinning the success of the most effective primary schools in supporting literacy for disadvantaged pupils was systematic teaching of the basic skills of reading and writing, including spelling, grammar, phonics and the regular teaching of handwriting.<sup>23</sup> In mathematics, the move towards more flexibility in the primary curriculum has led to schools using more topics and themed approaches, providing opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematics across the curriculum. Although pupils find such activities interesting, this cross-curriculum approach to developing numeracy can lack coherence when poorly planned. (Ofsted, 2010).

According to the Department for Education, in January 2012 there were 4,217,000 pupils in 16,818 state-funded primary schools (including all primary academies and free schools), including 44,155 children in nursery 1, 260,370 children in nursery 2, and 605,955 children in the reception class. An additional 190,505 pupils (ages 5 to 10) were enrolled in independent schools. The total number of independent schools (all levels) was 2,420. In state-funded primary schools 27.6% of pupils (of compulsory school age and above) were classified as being of minority ethnic origin; 17.5% of pupils' first language was known or believed to be other than English. (DfE, data made available on 21 June 2012). In January 2012, some 226,125 pupils (2.8%) across all schools in England had statements of special educational needs (SEN); there were 1,392,215 pupils with SEN without statements, or 17% of pupils across all schools. Some 53.7% of pupils with statements of SEN were placed in mainstream schools (nursery, primary, secondary, academies, city technology colleges). In addition, 39% were placed in state-funded special schools, 4.7% in independent schools, 1.9% in non-maintained special schools and 0.7% in pupil referral units. The incidence of pupils with SEN with statements was higher in secondary schools (1.9%) than in primary schools (1.4%). The difference for those with SEN without statements was relatively less marked, 18.3% in secondary schools compared to 17.1% in primary schools. In state-funded primary schools the three most frequent types of primary need were: speech, language and communication needs (29.1%); moderate learning difficulty (21.8%); and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (18.6%). In all special schools the three most frequent types of primary need were: severe learning difficulty (24.6%); autistic spectrum disorder (20.4%); and moderate learning difficulty (18.6%). In January 2012, there were 967 state-funded special schools and 72 non-maintained special schools. (DfE, data made available on 12 July 2012).

## Secondary education

According to the Education Act 1996, secondary education is defined as covering education designed for young people from age 11 to 19 at school. Further education (FE) is defined as covering the education of people over compulsory school age (16) other than at school. The 1996 Act specifically excludes higher education programmes but includes access programmes and the continuing education of adults. Education is provided free of charge for students up to the age of 19.

The majority of schools are community schools which are established and fully funded by local authorities. The majority of maintained secondary schools are non-selective, e.g. they admit pupils without reference to ability or aptitude and



provide a wide range of secondary education for all or most of the pupils of a district. There are also grammar schools in some areas of England. These are the only maintained schools permitted to operate a fully selective admissions policy. In the 2007/08 academic year there were 164 maintained grammar schools. Grammar schools provide a mainly academic course for selected students from the age of 11 to 18 or 19. Outside the maintained sector, there are also academies. These are all-ability schools established by sponsors from business, faith or voluntary groups working in innovative partnerships with central government and local education partners. Each academy is set up as a company limited by guarantee, with charitable status, and the Government meets capital and running costs in full. A board of governors is responsible for the governance and strategic leadership of the school. Academies must be located in areas of disadvantage. They must provide a broad and balanced curriculum, with an emphasis on a curriculum area or areas. Independent (private) schools receive no public funding and are largely financed by fees paid by parents. Over 90% of publicly-funded secondary schools are mixed sex. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

Secondary education covers key stage 3 (years 7 to 9, or lower secondary education, ages 11 to 14), and key stage 4 (years 10 and 11, or upper secondary education, ages 14 to 16). Post-compulsory advanced programmes are offered by secondary schools or further education (FE) colleges which cater for students aged 16 to 19 and for older learners. Advanced programmes typically last two years when followed full-time by school leavers (age 16), but may be of varied duration when aimed at older learners. Many secondary schools also have a sixth-form providing full-time post-compulsory education (students aged 16 to 19).

At key stages 3 and 4, secondary schools offer general/academic education as set out in the National Curriculum; and at key stage 4 and post-16, they provide external qualifications in general subjects along with some courses in vocational/applied subjects. At the end of compulsory education (age 16, end of key stage 4), the majority of students are assessed by means of external qualifications. These qualifications are developed by independent organizations, known as awarding bodies or awarding organizations, which are regulated by the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual). The most common qualification taken is the GCSE, a single subject qualification available in more than 40 academic subject areas. Achieving five good GCSEs, which include English and mathematics, is a key Government benchmark for performance at secondary level. Achieving good GCSEs in English and mathematics is also usually a basic requirement for progression to post-compulsory education and for many jobs. GCSEs in applied subjects are also available in nine work-related subject areas. The results are reported on an eight-point scale ranging from A\* (highest) to G (lowest). Candidates who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade G are recorded as 'U' for 'unclassified' and do not receive a certificate. GCSEs at grades A\* to C are considered 'good GCSEs'. Achieving five good GCSEs, which include English and mathematics is a key Government benchmark for performance at secondary level. Achieving good GCSEs in English and mathematics is also usually a basic requirement for progression to post-compulsory education and for many jobs. GCSEs in applied subjects are also available in nine work-related subject areas. Results are reported on the same scale as other GCSEs (from A\* to G), but with two grades (e.g. 'BB' or 'DD') to reflect the fact that they are equivalent to two standard GCSE qualifications.



Entry level qualifications are aimed at students who are not ready for GCSEs at the end of key stage 4. They are available in a range of general/academic subjects, such as art and design and mathematics, as well as in vocational areas such as retail and leisure and tourism. They are pitched at levels 1 to 3 of the National Curriculum eight-level scale and are intended to offer progression to higher awards. Introductory certificates and diplomas are vocational qualifications, available alongside GCSEs in applied subjects. They are designed to enable young people and adults to take part in full- or part-time programmes of study, which will enable them to enter employment or further/higher education. They aim to develop the learner's knowledge, skills and understanding in a specialist vocational sector and to encourage learners to develop key skills, personal skills, and adult literacy and numeracy.

Post-compulsory upper secondary education typically lasts two years. Ongoing formative assessment is practised by all teachers throughout this phase. Students are also assessed by means of external qualifications. The most common qualifications taken at the end of post-compulsory education are A-levels. These are single subject examinations which may be studied in any combination, within the limit of the range of subjects offered by the school or further education institution. Courses usually last two years. During the first year students typically take four or five subjects leading to AS-level qualifications. These are standalone qualifications and typically consist of three units. The second half of the full A-level qualification (A2) is taken in the second year, and consists of a further three units. The A2 covers more demanding material than at AS level. Students typically pursue three of their four or five AS qualification subjects to A2. GCEs or A-levels in applied subjects are also available to students in post-compulsory education. These qualifications are intended to offer a comprehensive preparation for employment as well as a route to higher-level qualifications.

Key skills qualifications (from September 2010, functional skills qualifications) are also available. The qualifications are intended to be taken in tandem with other courses, such as GCSEs, A-levels or work-based training programmes. Functional skills are practical skills in English, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and mathematics, considered essential for individuals to work confidently, effectively and independently in life. They will be available as free-standing qualifications, but will also form part of the new Diploma qualifications and apprenticeship frameworks (see below).

Full- and part-time post-compulsory education (students aged 16 to 19) may also be provided in FE institutions. FE institutions vary in their size, mission, subject mix and history. They include: general FE colleges, which place a greater emphasis on vocational courses, but also offer general courses; specialist colleges, which provide courses in a specific area of the curriculum such as art, or in a vocational area such as agriculture; and sixth-form colleges, which offer full-time general secondary education courses and also some vocational courses for students aged 16 to 19. Courses are, generally, the same as those offered in school sixth-forms, but sixth-form colleges often offer a wider choice of both general and vocational programmes.

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) enable students as well as employees who have left full-time education to gain recognized qualifications for specific occupations. They recognize work-based competences, as well as study in an



education or training provider. They are available in 11 occupational areas at five levels, from foundation skills to chartered and professional. They are assessed on practical assignments and a portfolio of evidence and they offer progression routes to further education and training or employment. BTECs (Business and Technical Education Council) and OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts) Nationals are also designed for study in occupational areas. They involve a mixture of theoretical and practical work and are available at 3 levels (BTEC Firsts are available for students aged 14 to 16 in compulsory education). They are assessed, either by teachers or an external examiner, through a range of assignments, case studies, a portfolio of evidence and practical activities. They enable progression to employment or higher level vocational courses.

Once external qualifications have been accredited by the regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, they are placed on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) or the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), which is currently being implemented. The NQF includes both general academic and vocational qualifications at nine levels as follows: Level 8 (e.g. specialist awards); Level 7 (e.g. BTEC advanced professional diplomas, certificates and awards); Level 6 (e.g. BTEC professional diplomas, certificates and awards); Level 5 (e.g. NVQ level 5); Level 4 (e.g. NVQ level 4); Level 3 (e.g. GCE A-levels, A-levels in applied subjects and NVQ level 3); Level 2 (e.g. GCSE grades A\*–C and NVQ level 2); Level 1 (e.g. GCSE grades D–G and NVQ level 1); and Entry level (e.g. entry level qualifications). The QCF is a new framework which aims to enable learners to gain qualifications at their own pace along flexible routes by awarding credit for qualifications and units. All vocational qualifications are being placed on the QCF and it is expected that academic qualifications will also in the future be placed on the QCF. The aims of the QCF are to simplify the current complicated system by presenting qualifications in a way which is easier to understand, to recognize more learning through the award of qualifications and to instil more flexibility into the system through the use of units (components of qualifications) and credit awarded for achieving those units. Like the NQF, every unit and qualification in the 9-level QCF has a level between Entry level and level 8 which indicates the degree of difficulty. Level 2 is equivalent to GCSEs (grade A\* to C), level 3 is equivalent to A levels, and level 8 is equivalent to a doctorate. Every unit and qualification also has a credit value (with one credit representing 10 hours of study). There are three sizes of qualifications in the QCF: Awards (1 to 12 credits); Certificates (13 to 36 credits); Diplomas (37 credits or more). In the framework, it is possible to have an award at level 1 or an award at level 8, because the qualification type ('award, certificate, diploma') represents the size of a qualification, not how difficult it is. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

Education for young people aged between 14 and 19 years is currently the focus of reform and reorganization. Reforms include the introduction of new diploma qualifications, which combine traditional (general) and work-based (vocational) learning, and raising the minimum age at which young people leave education or training to 17 by 2013 and to 18 by 2015. By 2013, as part of the reform of 14 to 19 education, the Government plans to create a more streamlined and understandable qualifications system based on four nationally available qualifications routes: GCSEs and A-levels; diplomas; apprenticeships; and foundation learning programmes (for young people and adults working at entry level and level 1 of the NQF, e.g. entry





level qualifications). Diplomas are new qualifications combining theoretical study with practical experience. Since September 2009, Diplomas have been available in ten subjects or 'lines of learning'. Diplomas in other subject areas are being introduced and, from 2013, all young people will have an entitlement to all 17 diplomas in their local area. Diplomas are available at three different levels: foundation (equivalent to five GCSEs); higher (equivalent to seven GCSEs); and advanced (equivalent to three and a half A-levels). It is also intended that a larger 'extended' diploma will be available at all three levels. Diplomas are being delivered by 'diploma consortia' – partnerships of schools, colleges, training centres and employers that have been approved by the Government.

The main Government-funded training scheme for young people is the apprenticeship programme. It is available at several different levels: (i) young apprenticeships for 14- to 16-year-olds provide an opportunity for motivated school pupils to spend up to two days a week in the workplace learning a trade; (ii) entry to employment (or pre-apprenticeships), for young people aged 16 to 18, is designed to support disengaged young people to prepare for apprenticeships and employment; (iii) apprenticeships are a work-based training option and are based on NVQs; training frameworks have been developed in over 80 sectors of employment; (iv) advanced apprenticeships are a partnership initiative between government and industry to provide a high-quality, work-based route to NVQ level 3. They also aim to provide the broader skills and qualifications needed by industry and employers. Advanced Apprenticeships are intended largely for school leavers aged 16+, but are also open to more mature trainees. Most advanced modern apprentices have employed status and are paid a salary by their employer.

At key stage 3, the compulsory National Curriculum includes the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) and the foundation subjects, namely: design and technology, ICT, history, geography, art and design, a foreign language, citizenship, music and physical education. At key stage 4, there are fewer compulsory subjects: English, mathematics, science, ICT, physical education and citizenship. In addition, there are statutory 'curriculum entitlement areas' which are: the arts, design and technology, the humanities, and modern foreign languages. Schools must provide access to a minimum of one course in each of the four entitlement areas. There are a number of compulsory subjects outside the National Curriculum framework. As at primary level, religious education is compulsory at key stages 3 and 4, although parents have the right to withdraw their children from religious education lessons if they wish. Sex education is also compulsory at key stages 3 and 4. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from sex education lessons, although they do not have the right to withdraw their children from the National Curriculum science programme of study dealing with aspects of human biology and reproduction. Drug, alcohol and tobacco education is a statutory part of the science curriculum at key stages 3 and 4. It is often delivered as part of a wider personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship programme. Although PSHE is not statutory, schools are expected to provide it throughout the key stages. Careers education is also compulsory at key stages 3 and 4. Work-related learning is a statutory requirement at key stage 4. As at primary level, teaching methods and learning materials are usually decided by the class teacher, in consultation with the head teacher and subject leader (or subject coordinators), who are classroom teachers with additional responsibility for a



particular subject area and who give help and guidance to their colleagues within the school. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

The secondary curriculum for key stages 3 and 4 was recently revised and a new curriculum began to be introduced for students in year 7 (ages 11 to 12) in September 2008. Compulsory subjects have not changed, but new features include: less prescribed subject content; greater identification of key concepts and processes underlying each subject; more opportunities for cross-curricular links and activities promoting cultural understanding and enterprise and diversity. Functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) are embedded in the revised secondary curriculum. Functional skills are embedded in the revised programmes of study for English, mathematics and ICT and are the core elements of these subjects. The PLTS Framework, on the other hand, comprises six groups of skills requiring pupils to be: independent enquirers; creative thinkers; reflective learners; team workers; self-managers and effective participants. The Framework aims to support young people in their learning across the curriculum and to complement the programmes of study for different subjects. The National Curriculum does not apply to students in post-compulsory education. There are no compulsory subjects at this level. Students choose courses of study from the range offered by the school or FE college depending on the qualifications they seek. (*Ibid.*).

Until 2008/09, there were externally set and marked National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science for pupils at the end of key stage 3 (age 14). However, in October 2008, the Government announced that the tests would be abolished with immediate effect. They have been replaced by improved teacher assessment and more frequent reporting to parents throughout the key stage. Teachers must summarize their judgements on each pupil's attainment – based on the level descriptions in the National Curriculum – taking into account their progress and performance throughout the key stage. Teachers need to determine: a level for each attainment target in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages; and an overall teacher assessment subject level in each of the core (English, mathematics and science) and non-core subjects. Teachers should use their knowledge of a pupil's work over time to judge which level description is closest to the pupil's performance, taking into account written, practical and oral work, as well as classroom work, homework and the evidence from any tasks or tests. Teacher assessment judgements in each of the core subjects have to be reported to the Standards and Testing Agency.

In addition, the following information must also be reported to parents at the end of key stage 3: (i) teacher assessment levels for English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages, art and design, music and physical education; (ii) comparative information about the National Curriculum levels of attainment for pupils of the same age in the school; (iii) comparative information about the National Curriculum levels of attainment for pupils of the same age nationally; comparative information will comprise a national average from the previous academic year for each core subject at each level; (iv) a statement confirming the National Curriculum levels of attainment have been awarded in accordance with the statutory arrangements; (v) details of any National Curriculum attainment targets or subjects from which the pupil is exempt; (vi) a brief account of what the teacher assessment shows about the pupil's progress individually and in relation to other pupils in the same year, drawing attention to any particular strengths



and weaknesses. Standardized optional tests are available to support teachers in assessing pupils' progress throughout years 7 to 9. They are available for years 7, 8 and 9 in English and mathematics and year 9 in science.

In its 2009/10 Annual Report, Ofsted stated that in terms of overall effectiveness of secondary schools inspected between September 2009 and August 2010, 13% of schools were outstanding, 36% good, 41% satisfactory, and 11% inadequate. Ofsted found that secondary schools in which the curriculum is outstanding are characterized by a clear focus on ensuring that students acquire good basic skills in literacy, numeracy, ICT and learning skills. Strong partnerships with other schools, colleges and learning providers frequently underpin outstanding curricula in secondary schools. In particular, these often provide increased vocational or applied learning provision for young people aged 14 to 19 that, when carefully implemented, results in improved outcomes, especially for students whose achievement would otherwise have been low. The positive impact of specialism on the curriculum is also a key factor in a great many outstanding secondary schools, for example by promoting literacy through external partnerships linked to the specialism. (Ofsted, 2010).

According to the Department for Education, in January 2012 there were 3,234,875 students in 3,268 state-funded secondary schools (including city technology colleges and all secondary academies and free schools). An additional 232,190 pupils (ages 11 to 15) and 90,345 students (ages 16 to 19+) were enrolled in independent schools. The total number of independent schools (all levels) was 2,420. In state-funded secondary schools 23.2% of students (of compulsory school age and above) were classified as being of minority ethnic origin; 12.9% of students' first language was known or believed to be other than English. (DfE, data made available on 21 June 2012).

### **Assessing learning achievement nationwide**

The education service operates within a strong framework of accountability to students, to parents, to the community and to the Government and its agencies. External inspection plays an important role, as does the publication of performance data and other information on individual institutions and on wider aspects of the education system. Institutional self-evaluation is both an increasingly important part of the quality improvement process and a key input to external evaluation. Another important element in the accountability framework is the role of governing bodies – publicly-funded schools, colleges and universities are accountable for their own performance through a governing body which includes representatives of key stakeholders, such as, in the case of schools, parents, staff and representatives of the local community. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) is the non-ministerial government department responsible for the inspection and regulation of daycare and children's social care, and the inspection of children's services, schools, colleges, initial teacher training, youth work, work-based learning and adult education. The revised framework for school inspection sets out the statutory basis for inspections conducted under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), from September 2012. It summarizes the main features of school



inspections and describes how the general principles and processes of inspection are applied to maintained schools, academies and some other types of school in England. Ofsted's inspections of schools perform three essential functions. They: (i) provide parents/carers with an expert and independent assessment of how well a school is performing, and help inform those who are choosing a school for their child; (ii) provide information to the Secretary of State for Education and to Parliament about the work of schools and the extent to which an acceptable standard of education is being provided; this provides assurance that minimum standards are being met, provides confidence in the use of public money and assists accountability, as well as indicating where improvements are needed; and (iii) promote the improvement of individual schools and the education system as a whole. Inspectors are required to report on the quality of education provided in the school and must, in particular, cover: the achievement of pupils at the school; the quality of teaching in the school; the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school; the quality of leadership in, and management of, the school. When reporting, inspectors must also consider: the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school; the extent to which the education provided by the school meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school, and in particular the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Inspectors also consider and report on, where relevant, the overall effectiveness of the sixth form. The framework applies to all schools in England that are to be inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended). This includes all maintained schools and state-funded independent schools, and certain non-maintained independent schools. The schools subject to section 5 inspection are: community, foundation and voluntary schools; community and foundation special schools; pupil referral units; maintained nursery schools; academies; city technology colleges; city technology colleges for the technology of the arts; and certain non-maintained special schools approved by the Secretary of State. The framework does not apply to any other independent schools. Regulations require that each school must be inspected within five school years from the end of the school year in which the last inspection took place. (Ofsted, 2012).

Local authorities (LAs) are responsible for quality assurance in the schools which they maintain and for taking initial action in failing schools. They are expected to monitor schools' performance through the analysis of information about standards and other aspects of school performance already available to them, and through the examination of school development plans and post-inspection action plans. LAs also collect information through judgments made by schools' own self-evaluation and through direct observation of schools' activity through visits by their own inspection and advisory services. These services provide advice and consultancy to help schools analyze their current standards, identify effective ways of improving, set targets and keep in touch with good practice. There have been changes to arrangements for assessing the performance of local authorities (LAs). Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), a new system for the inspection of local public services (including education) was introduced in April 2009. Combining the perspectives of seven partner inspectorates, CAA will provide a joint assessment of outcomes for people in an area and a forward look at prospects for sustainable improvement. Ofsted's work in assessing the performance of children's services (including education) in each LA will contribute to the CAA. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).



England takes part in international studies of student attainment such as those organized by the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and the IEA Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).

The evidence from these tests shows that, over recent years, England has been slipping back in the rankings as others improve faster. For example, England fell in the PIRLS rankings from 3rd out of 35 in 2001 to 15th out of 40 in 2006. In the PISA survey in 2006, England fell from 4th to 14th in science, 7th to 17th in literacy, and 8th to 24th in mathematics. The highest performing students do well but the wide attainment gap between them and our lowest achievers highlights the inequity in the system. On a number of occasions, England has struggled to get enough schools and pupils to take part in international tests to give a valid sample and gather sufficiently reliable data. In the future, the Department for Education will ensure a sufficient sample of English schools participate in the international education surveys such as PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS. (DfE, November 2010).

A total of 65 countries participated in PISA 2009. This included 33 OECD member countries and 24 members of the European Union (EU). PISA 2009 is the fourth PISA cycle in which England has participated; 165 schools and 4,081 pupils participated. Twelve countries had mean scores for reading which were significantly higher than that of England. In 14 countries the difference in mean scores from that in England was not statistically significant. The mean score for reading in England was slightly above the OECD average but this difference was not statistically significant. The spread of attainment in England was slightly wider than the OECD average. Only 11 OECD countries had a wider spread of attainment than England. England had a slightly larger proportion of pupils at the highest levels of attainment than the average for OECD countries and a similar proportion at the lowest. Girls scored significantly higher than boys in reading. This was the case in every participating country. However, England had one of the lowest scale point differences between girls and boys, with a difference of 25 scale points compared to an OECD average of 39 scale points. England's performance in 2009 does not differ greatly from that in the last PISA survey in 2006. The mean score for mathematics in England was not significantly different from the OECD average. England had a low spread of attainment in mathematics compared with other countries. There was a smaller proportion of pupils at both the lowest and the highest levels compared to the OECD average. Boys performed significantly better than girls in mathematics. This was a common pattern internationally, with more than half the PISA countries showing a similar difference. However, England had one of the biggest gender differences. England's performance in mathematics in PISA 2009 does not differ greatly from that in the last PISA survey in 2006. The mean score for science in England was above the OECD average and this difference was statistically significant. England's spread of attainment in science was wider than the OECD average. In England, there was a smaller proportion of pupils at the lower levels compared with the OECD average and there was a larger proportion of pupils at the higher levels compared to the OECD average. In England there was no significant gender difference for science, which was also the case for the OECD average. England's performance in science in 2009 is similar to the performance in 2006, apart from a slight decrease in both low and high attainers. (NFER, 2010).



England has participated in all of the TIMSS studies. The 2007 study was similar in structure to that in 2003, with two grades tested: grade 4 pupils (year 5 in England) and grade 8 pupils (year 9 in England). TIMSS 2007 involved approximately 425,000 pupils in 59 countries around the world. England met the stringent sampling standards for both pupils and schools in both grades. Some 143 primary schools and 137 secondary schools participated. In year 5 science England's score, 542, was one of the highest, and is statistically significantly higher than the TIMSS scale average of 500. England's high level of performance in 2003 was maintained: the 2007 score of 542 was similar to the 540 achieved in 2003. Performance in 2003 was higher than in the earlier 1995 survey (528). In summary, England's performance in science at year 5 remains amongst the best in the world. In year 5 mathematics England's score, 541, was again very high, and significantly higher than in 2003. England improved on its level of performance in 2003: the 2007 score of 541 was 10 points higher than the 531 achieved in 2003. This was continued improvement as the 2003 score was much higher than in the earlier 1995 survey (484). As in science, England's performance in mathematics at year 5 is amongst the best in the world and continues to improve. In year 9 science England's score, 542, was again one of the highest. England maintained the high standard set in 2003 but did not improve on it. The scores for the two surveys, 542 in 2007 and 544 in 2003 were very similar. As at year 5 science, England's performance at year 9 was amongst the best in the world. In year 9 mathematics England's score, 513, was high enough for only five countries to have significantly higher levels of performance. England's performance level has improved from that shown in 2003. The 2007 score, 513, was significantly higher than the 2003 score of 498. No European country outperformed England in any of the four assessments, and nor did the United States or Australia. England's performance in both grades and subjects was very strong. In mathematics England's scores have improved in both grades, a continued increase at grade 4 (year 5) and the first upward trend at grade 8 (year 9). In science the previous high standard has been maintained at both grades. England was one of only seven of the 26 countries which tested both grades to show no overall gender differences in mathematics or science at either grade. (NFER, 2008).

## Teaching staff

All teachers employed in maintained schools, including nursery schools must have qualified teacher status (QTS) in order to be authorized to teach. The Secretary of State stipulates the criteria which trainee teachers must meet in order to achieve QTS. Providers of initial teacher training (ITT) must also meet approved criteria to be able to offer programmes leading to QTS, although they are responsible for course planning, content and management. Most ITT providers are higher education institutions (HEIs).

Routes into teaching can be concurrent or consecutive. Prospective teachers choosing the concurrent route follow a three or four-year programme in which general education is combined with professional training, leading to a bachelor's degree with QTS. Intending teachers who wish to take the consecutive route must first take a bachelor's degree, which can be in any subject, and then apply to take a one-year programme of professional training, the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) with QTS. The bachelor's degree with QTS and the PGCE both combine academic study with periods of teaching practice in a school.



Secondary teachers are generally trained as subject specialists to work with students aged 11 to 16 or 11 to 18. Although there are some concurrent programmes available, most intending secondary teachers follow the consecutive route, in which a bachelor's degree is followed by a one-year programme of professional training, the PGCE with QTS or eligibility to teach. PGCE programmes for secondary teachers are subject-specific. They focus mainly on developing teaching skills in that particular subject, rather than on knowledge of the subject itself, which will have been acquired during the preceding bachelor's degree. There are no ITT programmes specifically for those wishing to teach in the sixth form of secondary schools. Secondary school teachers who teach sixth form classes have normally been trained to teach students across the entire secondary age range.

The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) has developed national standards for achieving early years professional status (EYPS). It will be equivalent to QTS. To be awarded EYPS, candidates must demonstrate that they meet a set of 39 national professional standards, specifically covering child development from birth to age 5. Candidates holding a relevant degree, such as a degree in Early Childhood Studies, would probably be able to access the shorter pathways, while candidates holding a non-relevant degree would probably need to join the longer pathway, which would take 12 months of full-time study. The first candidates began assessment for EYPS in September 2006. Qualified nursery assistants usually need to hold a relevant child care qualification at upper secondary level. Examples include: CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Child Care and Education; a BTEC National Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development; or an NVQ Level 3 in Children's Care, Learning and Development. Qualifications for nursery assistants are also available at a lower level.

Major reforms to the initial teacher training, status and qualifications of teachers in the further education sector were introduced in September 2007. Prior to this, there were no qualification requirements for teachers in further education colleges, although teachers in sixth form colleges were expected to have QTS. The reforms in 2007 included the introduction of professional status as 'licensed practitioners' – all new entrants to teaching in the further education sector are expected to be working towards the new professional status of 'Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills' (QTLS) for those undertaking a full teaching role, or Associate Teacher, Learning and Skills for those undertaking less than a full teaching role. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

As mentioned, the Education (Induction Arrangements for School Teachers) (England) Regulations 2012 entered into force on 1 September 2012, amended the previous Regulations of 2008. The purpose is to reduce unnecessary prescription and bureaucracy, and give schools and appropriate bodies flexibility to use their professional judgement in managing their own arrangements according to local circumstances. The main changes introduced are: freedom given to schools to choose their appropriate body for the purposes of statutory induction; the appropriate body will have discretion to reduce the induction period (normally a period equivalent to three school terms of the institution in which induction is begun, based on a school year of three terms) to a minimum of one term where the newly qualified teachers (NQT) can show, through past experience, that they are teaching to the Teachers' Standards. Appropriate bodies should inform the Teaching Agency of any NQTs who



start an induction period or who have taken up a post in which to continue their induction.

From 1 September 2012 the new Teachers' Standards replace the standards for QTS and the Core professional standards previously published by the Training and Development Agency for Schools, and the General Teaching Council for England's Code of Conduct and Practice for Registered Teachers. The new standards have been designed to set out a basic framework within which all teachers should operate from the point of initial qualification. Appropriate self-evaluation, reflection and professional development activity is critical to improving teachers' practice at all career stages. The standards set out clearly the key areas in which a teacher should be able to assess his or her own practice, and receive feedback from colleagues. As their careers progress, teachers will be expected to extend the depth and breadth of knowledge, skill and understanding that they demonstrate in meeting the standards, as is judged to be appropriate to the role they are fulfilling and the context in which they are working. From 1 April 2012, teachers with QTLS status will be able to teach in schools as fully qualified teachers. This change has been made to give schools greater access to experienced teachers of vocational subjects.

The new standards define the minimum level of practice expected of trainees and teachers from the point of being awarded QTS. The new standards will need to be applied as appropriate to the role and context within which a trainee or teacher is practising. Providers of ITT will assess trainees against the standards in a way that is consistent with what could reasonably be expected of a trainee teacher prior to the award of QTS. Providers will need to ensure that their programmes are designed and delivered in such a way as to allow all trainees to meet these standards. Following the period of induction, the standards will continue to define the level of practice at which all qualified teachers are expected to perform. From September 2012, teachers' performance will be assessed against the standards as part of the new appraisal arrangements in schools. With regard to teaching, a teacher must: set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils; promote good progress and outcomes by pupils; demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge; plan and teach well-structured lessons; adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils; make accurate and productive use of assessment; manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment; and fulfil wider professional responsibilities. A teacher is also expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct. The following statements define the behaviour and attitudes which set the required standard for conduct throughout a teacher's career. Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by: (i) treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position; (ii) having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions; (iii) showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others; (iv) not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; (v) ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law. Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality.





Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities. (DfE, May 2012b).

Depending on the category of school, the employer is either the local authority (LA) or the school governing body. The LA is the employer of teachers in community schools and voluntary controlled schools and is the body which determines the majority of their conditions of service. However, the governing body has many of the functions of the employer, including determining the number and composition of staff. In voluntary aided schools and foundation schools the governing body is the employer of teachers and other staff. Teachers are public employees, but not civil servants. Full-time teachers are required, as part of their conditions of service, to teach for 190 days each year and to be available for staff development or other duties for a further five days a year. Within the 195 days, teachers must undertake duties at the direction of the head teacher for up to 1,265 hours per year. These directed duties include teaching, attendance at consultation meetings with parents and others, and staff development, but they exclude other professional duties such as the preparation of lessons, teaching materials and teaching programmes; the marking of pupils' work; and the writing of reports on pupils' progress, which must all be carried out in addition to the directed duties.

Participation in continuing professional development (CPD) is part of the contractual professional duties of a teacher. Responsibility for CPD is shared between the individual teacher and their employer, for example, the further education college in which they work. A wide variety of CPD activities are available, ranging from coaching and mentoring to short courses and higher degrees (a degree which follows a first degree). All full-time further education teachers and trainers must undertake a minimum of 30 hours of CPD per academic year. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

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## Web resources

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Department for Business, Innovation and Skills: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/> [Last checked: November 2012.]

Higher Education Academy (England): <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/england> [Last checked: October 2012.]

Higher Education Funding Council for England: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/> [Last checked: November 2012.]

Higher Education Statistics Agency (UK): <http://www.hesa.ac.uk/> [Last checked: November 2012.]

Joint Council for Qualifications (UK): <http://www.jcq.org.uk/> [In English. Last checked: October 2012.]

National College for School Leadership, Department for Education: <http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/> [Last checked: November 2012.]

National Foundation for Educational Research (UK): <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/> [Last checked: November 2012.]



National Institute of Adult Continuing Education: <http://www.niace.org.uk/> [Last checked: November 2012.]

Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual):  
<http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/> [Last checked: November 2012.]

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Teaching Agency, Department of Education: <http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching> [Last checked: November 2012.]

Teaching and Learning Academy: <http://www.tla.ac.uk/> [Last checked: November 2012.]

*For more detailed and updated information consult EURYDICE, the information network on national education systems and policies in Europe:*

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php)

*For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO:* <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>