

NOTIONS ON BRITISH SCHOOLS

[A general view](#)

[Some data around Education in the UK](#)

[How subjects are organized](#)

[State Schools and Private Schools](#)

[About teachers](#)

[Teaching Staff](#)

[Education in England summary](#)

[External exams](#)

[Main types of school in British System](#)

A general view

Simon James and Dave Smith explained deeply about all details of the National Educational System, from the economic foundations, to the teacher's standards going through the National Curriculum, the Key Stages -the Core and Foundation subjects-; the attainment levels or types of Primary and Secondary schools or the different routes into teaching. They clarified the way in which OFSTED works, so that every school and every teacher are subject to inspections. Besides, the school inspects the teachers so that they are prepared for OFSTED inspections.

Besides, they shared useful strategies used in their long years of work at school and ways in which things are generally done in the British classrooms.

Simon finally emphasized the **essential role of the environment**; most schools use the walls to give life in a visual way, for instance. They stressed that students come always first, that **personal rapport is essential** –and actually, they were consistent in that, as they spent some free time with us at the beginning of the program.

They said that in British schools there are no surprises for the students, as every teacher clarifies the aims of the lesson and the activities to be develop at the very beginning.

“It is true experience from where students learn, not from the teacher's words”, add Simon; students can't focus for a long time and will switch off after 15 minutes talk. The pace needs to be changed frequently.

Some data around Education in the UK

In the last ten years they have had many changes in Education along the country. In 2015 the government created a new single framework for schools with 4 main elements:

- Leadership and management.
- Teaching, learning and assessment.
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare.
- Outcomes for children and learners.

How subjects are organized

The National Curriculum is the set of subjects and standards used in Primary and Secondary schools to make sure students learn the same things. The teacher chooses how to do it.

As in Spain, there are **Core Subjects**, English, Mathematics and Science and **Foundation subjects**: Art and Design, Physical Education, Computing, Design and Technology, Modern Foreign Languages, History and Geography and others: Religious Education –in all Key stages; Sex and relationship Education and Citizenship from KS3; work related learning in KS4 and a number of schools include also: Personal, Social and Health Education PSHSE.

Each subject has **attainment levels** for each course, describing what a student working at that level will be achieving. They measure students' progress compared to students of the same age across the country. If a child fails, he will receive more assistance.

Subjects are graded from A* to G, where A is the best mark and below C is failed. In England teachers focus on students about C and D to push them further, so the measure of the school gets better. That is the perverse effect of the pressure of OFSTED on schools and teachers. All are focused on results, and the process is not enough taken into account.

According OFSTED, **in an outstanding lesson every child has to make real progress**. However, inspectors focus much more in progress than in the **process** of learning.

BTEC courses are **vocational** courses where the students can do an apprenticeship.

The Sixth Form is the equivalent of the Spanish *Bachillerato*, where students specialized in England and focused on just three-four subjects. But they have to be careful because if they don't choose well, they won't take at University the studies they wanted. It is a narrow way.

State Schools and Private Schools

It is allowed to educate your children at home, but it is still very minority but increasing. Sometimes parents pull their children out because they suffered bullying. The problem is that at University those students will lack a common ground. **It is compulsory and free to study from 5 to 18.**

Private schools have their own entrance exams. Only 6% of the children in England go to Private Schools. Just 7% of schools are private.

Theoretically, parents have a certain amount of freedom to choose the school but in practice it doesn't always work.

Schools have to publish the OFSTED report –with the strong and the weak points- but this is unfair as parents get a partial notion of the school.

The quality of State Schools depends on where you live –and parents have to be the owner of the house-. All state schools are subject to inspectors and regularly inspected by the office for standards in Education.

A school that requires improvement chances to get a good report, then it gets under special measures and if enough changes are achieved, the school is closed down. Then the principal and the leaders are replaced and the school gets a new name.

A **bursary** is a sort of grant for students without resources; a **scholarship** is a reduction of fees which parents get if their child does extra well in their entrance exam for a private school. You can say *I have been awarded a scholarship*.

The government used to give University **grants**, now students in the UK have to get a **loan**.

About teachers

In England there are around 243.00 full time **assistants** for 451.000 **teachers**. They help with the educational and social development of the students both in and out the classroom. It all depends on the school and the age of the children. In this moment there is a debate over effectiveness of TAs and the government is looking for evidence. It means 4.4 billion a year but they are great human resource.

Any **qualified teacher** in England must meet the teacher's standards, introduced in 2012, and is expected to have **evidence** of it. It applies to all teachers regardless to their career stage and they set out a basic framework. The **pressure on the teachers** and the amount of paper work has been increasingly growing. Some teachers take pictures as evidence of the process for inspections to save time.

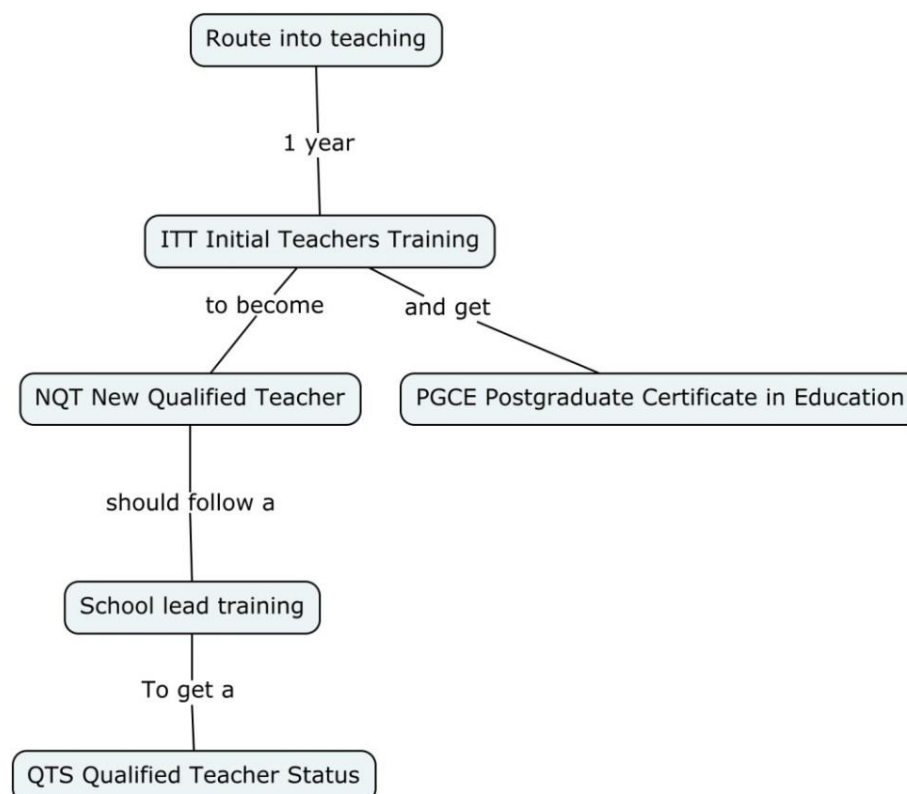
In England **teachers are** monitored, **observed and invited to observe other teachers** in their classes. Any moment another teacher may drop into the class, and the teachers are used to it. They have a formal appraisal every year from where they get feedback –this is supposed to support them and to help them to improve-. This should be a useful and recommendable practise; in Spain, especially brand new teachers feel a bit lost because there is no one there to help them, and they don't have the opportunity to see how other teachers manage to solve problems, for instance. But what I have seen in England is far to be perfect. The **teachers are obsessed with Inspection**; their salaries depend, in part, on both the results of the students and their colleagues' results, if they are head of department. Pressure is distributed along the

hierarchical structure of school, and, from what I have seen, **that doesn't benefit the students**, as teachers focus more on the outcomes than on the process of learning.

Both, teachers and schools are labelled on four categories according to the overall effectiveness: outstanding, good, require improvement or inadequate. The very fact of using labels doesn't seem to me to be either reliable or fair. From my point of view it is dangerous. The outstanding schools and teachers will do whatever it takes to keep that status, and a school labelled as requiring improvement may lose students...

Teachers set **three targets a year**. Teachers are in a permanent tension to maintain or even get better outcomes. Progress is on top of the pyramid and that, sadly leads to give **too much importance to appearances** and evidence than to real good practise in the class, many times. Too much time is invested in preparing external exams, and in the process, sometimes the real goal of learning is missing. If the students memorize things that doesn't make sense to them, they can probably achieve a good performance, but that doesn't prove any real thing. On the contrary, I believe that some important things cannot, easily at least, be proved, but are of the utmost importance.

If **the teacher devotes too much time to record evidence**, besides that being time that will not revert on the students, the motivation of the teachers will decrease, and they will not have enough energy to prepare interesting projects or to develop wonderful lessons.



Teaching Staff

Headteacher – Deputy Headteacher -Year Leader – Head of Department - Form Tutor - Teachers
--

Education in England summary

Age on 31 August (before school year)	Year	Curriculum stage	Schools		
3	Nursery	Foundation Stage	Nursery school		
4	Reception		Infant school	Primary school	First school
5	Year 1	Key Stage 1			
6	Year 2		Key Stage 2		Junior school
7	Year 3				
8	Year 4				
9	Year 5				
10	Year 6				
11	Year 7	Key Stage 3	Secondary school	Secondary school with sixth form	Upper school or High school
12	Year 8				
13	Year 9				
14	Year 10	Key Stage 4 / GCSE, etc.			
15	Year 11				
16	Year 12 (Lower Sixth)	Sixth form / A level, International Baccalaureate, Cambridge Pre-U, Vocational Training	College/Sixth Form		
17	Year 13 (Upper Sixth)				

External exams in Primary, Secondary and Sixth Form

Key Stage one SATS –National Curriculum Tests. Students get levels to mark where they are.	7 years old.
KS2 SATS - Transfer to Secondary school	11 years old.
11 Plus –Just for Grammar schools	11 years old.
GCSEs -	16 years old.
AS levels –Half way through A levels	17 years old.
A levels -Before going to University	18 years old.

Main types of school in British System

- 1) **A STATE SCHOOL =** This is the most common type of school which does not charge fees and is controlled by the local authority.
COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL
- 2) **AN ACADEMY =** This is a school which receives money from the government, but it is independently run. It is set up with the help of outside sponsors, e.g. entrepreneurs. It does not have to follow the National Curriculum.
- 3) **A FAITH SCHOOL =** This is a non-fee paying school which has Church of Enland to follow the National Curriculum except for R.S. -Religious Stadies-.
- 4) **A SPECIAL SCHOOL=** A school for children with special needs. e.g. autism, dyslexia.
- 5) **A PRIVATE SCHOOL=**An independent, fee-paying school.
- 6) **A PUBLIC SCHOOL =** An old private school which is very expensive and considered to be elitist. They are often schools for boys with mixed sixth forms.
- 7) **GRAMMAR SCHOOL =** Secondary school, non fee paying. Just for those students that pass 11 plus exams.
- 8) **BOARDING SCHOOL =** School for boys or girls that usually sleep at school. Parents have to pay a huge amount of money. Full boarder or weekly boarder school -if they go home for the weekends.