How the education system works

Education is compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 16. From 2013, all young people will be required to continue in learning or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17. From 2015, they will be required to continue in learning or training until age 18.

The education system is broken down into 5 stages:

Early years

This is for children aged 0 – 5 and is known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Primary

The primary stage covers 2 age ranges:

- infant (5 to 7 or 8) (Key Stage 1)
- junior (up to 11 or 12) (Key Stage 2)

Secondary

For children between the ages of 11 – 16 (and up to 18), secondary schooling covers 3 key stages:

1. 11 – 14 year olds – Key Stage 3
2. 14 – 16 year olds – Key Stage 4
3. 16 – 18 year olds – Key Stage 5

Further Education (FE)

Further education covers non-advanced courses for young people aged 16 and over. A wide range of courses at
different levels are available.

**Higher Education (HE)**

Universities and colleges offer a range of degree level courses for young people aged 18 and over.

**Cambridgeshire: Supporting school improvement**

Cambridgeshire County Council shares with schools a vision for learning that:

- is ambitious, innovative and collaborative;
- supports all children to achieve their potential;
- excites and stimulates, giving a lifelong love of learning;
- enables children to grow up as healthy, confident, safe and resilient young people who can, and want to, play an active role in their communities; and
- provides stimulating and rewarding jobs for all those who work and volunteer in learning.

Our school improvement strategy sets out how we aim to achieve this vision and how we will tackle the challenges that we face. There is much to be proud of but we need all of our schools to be good or outstanding, we need to accelerate the achievement of vulnerable groups and we need to ensure that we can recruit and retain the very best teachers and support staff across the whole of the county.

For further information on how the local authority is supporting school improvement, please visit the [Learn Together website](https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk).

**Further links**

- [Strategies and plans for schools and learning](#)
- [Apply for a school or nursery place](#)