

What is KS1 (Key Stage 1)?

[Key Stage 1](#) is a part of the National Curriculum. It covers children between the ages of 5 and 7 in Years 1 and 2, and sets out which subjects have to be taught. It also determines how children should be tested.

What are Key Stages?

Key stages are part of the National Curriculum and set out which subjects have to be taught. They also determine how children should be tested and what standards they should achieve.

Children's learning is divided into four key stages (KS1 to KS4). Key Stages 1 and 2 are taught in primary schools and Key Stages 3 and 4 in secondary schools.

Key Stage 1 covers children between the ages of 5 and 7 in Years 1 and 2.

Despite its name, Key Stage 1 does not apply to the youngest school children. Those 4 and 5-year-olds in the reception year are instead covered by the Early Years Foundation Stage. This gets children used to school before 'proper' lessons start in Year 1.

Must all schools teach KS1?

The National Curriculum sets out which subjects primary school children should be taught in KS1. Only state-funded local authority-maintained schools have to follow the National Curriculum. Independent (private), academy and free schools are all free to set their own, although in reality most do stick to the National Curriculum. Home schooled children are also exempt from the National Curriculum.

Which subjects are taught in KS1?

There are 10 subjects which must be taught in Key Stage 1. Here's the list in full:

- English
- Maths
- Science
- History
- Geography
- Art and design
- Music
- Design and technology
- Physical education (which must include swimming)
- Computing (often called information and communication technology or ICT)

Religious education is also a subject on the National Curriculum and all state-maintained schools have to teach it to KS1 pupils. Lessons should cover a range of religions, not just one. However, if parents don't wish their child to be taught about religious beliefs different to their own, they can choose to exclude their children from these lessons.

Ancient and modern foreign languages are also sometimes taught in KS1 but it's not compulsory.

PSHE (personal, social and health education) is another optional subject. It teaches children about staying safe, looking after themselves and living a healthy lifestyle. PSHE is meant to teach children positive social skills and how to understand other people's feelings.

Citizenship is another optional subject at primary level. It's similar to PSHE, but introduces pupils to debating, critical thinking, politics and law.

Key Stage 1 (KS1) is for children aged 5 to 7 in Year 1 and Year 2 of primary school.

How are children assessed in KS1?

At the end of each Key Stage, including KS1, children's abilities are formally assessed. How well they do in these assessments is measured against the level expected by the Government.

At the end of Year 1 pupils have their phonics skills checked. This involves reading 40 words to their teacher. Half the words are real and half are made up. The test allows teachers to see how well children can read and how they pronounce different combinations of letters. If a child doesn't do well enough in this test they'll be given extra help with reading. Then they can retake the test at the end of Year 2.

At the end of Year 2 (when KS1 finishes) all children are required to take national tests. Schools try to make these as comfortable as possible, like an ordinary class test, rather than an important exam. This is to avoid putting young children under any unnecessary stress.

Which tests are taken in KS1?

The tests taken at the end of KS1 are:

- English grammar, punctuation and spelling
- English reading (reading and understanding text)
- Mathematics (basic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division)

How are KS1 tests graded?

KS1 tests are graded in a different way than you might expect. Pupils' scores in the tests are converted into numbers between 85 and 115. A score of 100 is the expected standard, so any score over 100 means the child is doing better than required and less than 100 means the child is below the level set.

Teachers will also assess pupils on science. There's no national test for this subject in KS1 so the assessments are based on classwork or in-school tests.

What are SATs?

National Curriculum tests taken by primary school pupils are also known as SATs (standard attainment tests). Their main purpose is to make comparing schools easier. How well their pupils perform in SATs is how schools are ranked in league tables.

SATs have come under much criticism. Many people believe that tests in KS1 place young children under academic stress. It's also been said that the tests narrow the curriculum as schools may 'teach to the test' in order to up their standing. Two teachers' unions (the National Union of Teachers and the National Association of Head Teachers) voted to boycott the tests in 2010. They called for SATs to be replaced by teacher assessment. But they were ultimately unsuccessful and SATs remain.

Are SATs compulsory in KS1?

In 2017 it was announced that KS1 SATs will no longer be compulsory from 2023. Schools can continue to use them if they wish, as a way to assess their pupils, but they can choose to opt out. Until then children will continue to take SATs in May of Year 2.

How important are KS1 tests to a child's future?

The tests results are primarily used to compare different schools. But they do also give parents some idea of how well their child has done in KS1. The school should make you aware of the test results, either at a parents evening or via a report card.

KS1 has a lot to it - subjects studied, topics covered, tests taken and expected standards. But, armed with the information in this guide, you now know what it entails. This should help you to help your child through the trials and tribulations of Years 1 and 2 in primary school.

KS1 tests are a good indication of how well your child is doing academically in primary school.