



THE POST CODE LOTTERY

Is there a post code advantage in the UK education system? The following article may help you form your own opinion.

Definition: A **school catchment area** is the geographic area from which students are eligible to attend a local school.

Some LEA websites have a statement similar to the following on their home page:

All types of school including some Voluntary Aided schools - are surrounded by a catchment area. The local school generally admits pupils from its catchment area, although there is no guarantee of a place for pupils resident within it ... living in a catchment area can, however, give pupils a higher priority for admission to a school over other pupils who live outside the catchment area.

The above statement refers

only to state schools as they are the ones controlled by the LEA. However by inference your child's choice of school is more or less determined by where you live unless you opt for the independent sector.

Some secondary schools in the state sector are **selective and often rank ability or other criteria above living in the catchment area**. Even amongst these there are some who will not permit pupils from outside their catchment area to sit the selection tests at all. Some schools will allow any pupil to sit the test but if two or more pupils with equal ability are competing for the last few places the pupil who lives the shortest distance away from the school often has an advantage.

Most of this information is in the public arena therefore parents should be proactive, plan

ahead and take necessary steps to be in the right place at the right time. Some of the steps parents often take to ensure they are well positioned to give their children a head start in life by being in a good school are listed below:

Act early – if you wait till your child is in year six before you start making your enquiries about secondary schools it is probably too late. For enquiries about primary schools believe it or not it's useful to start the ground work when you are expecting a child!

Investigate – don't just assume your child will be attending that good school down the road without checking its admission criteria. It may be a selective school and the applicant's post code may not have a high ranking in their selection criteria.

Continuously appraise the

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CODE CRACKER

LEA This means Local Education Authority. It is a part of a council in England and Wales that is responsible for Education within that council's jurisdiction. **LEAs are in charge of all state schools in their area.** They organise funding for the schools, allocate places for pupils and employ teachers (the rules are slightly different

for foundation and voluntary aided schools). LEAs are also responsible for pupils entering higher education. They assess the income of a student or their parents; the assessment determines how much student loan they are entitled to. The LEA provides these services to a student whose home address is in the LEA, even if the stu-

dent chooses to go to a university outside that LEA.



SE5
N18
RM10
E15 W12
N17
N1

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situation – catchment area boundaries may change from one year to the other so if you moved into your house because it falls within the catchment area of a particular school you are gunning for, don't rest on your laurels check at least once a year that the boundaries have not yet been remapped also check that the standards of the school are improving or at least remain the same.

If you discover your current post code is a hindrance rather than a help, consider moving house. If you own the house and are sentimentally attached to it you can let it out and move into another property instead of selling it. Remember it is still yours and you can always move back in the future.

Generally selective schools are the best academically so prepare your child well in advance for the selection tests and check that he/she will not be disallowed from sitting the tests because of where you live.

Spread your bets – it is unwise to put all your eggs in the same basket, where possible live at a location that gives you a choice of more than one good school. You may be gunning for that fantastic selective school in your area but if your child does not pass the test and the local catchment school is your fallback option it had better be a good school as well.

Some good schools have wider catchment areas than others sometimes because there is a low population of

children living in the area it is therefore not uncommon, especially in towns and cities, for students to travel some distance to school however for this to happen the parents would have done some research beforehand.

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THE TRANSFER TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

Your child will transfer to secondary school in the **September after his/her 11th birthday**. If your child's birthday falls after 31st August, transfer will take place the following September. You must make your application on the application form provided by the LEA of your residence even if you are not applying to any school in that LEA. No application will be valid unless it is made on the application form of the LEA where you live.

Each LEA will deal with the applications made by its own residents, co-ordinating its activities with the other LEAs where its residents have applied for places. At the end of this procedure, your child will be offered a place at one school, and one school only, usually in the first week in March of the year of entry. The intention of the co-ordinated scheme is that this place will be at a school for which you have expressed a preference on your applica-

tion form. However many schools (especially the very good ones) have more applications than they have places hence this is not always the case.

You must also use the form if you are applying to Selective Schools and Voluntary Aided Schools (often called "church schools"). You may well have to complete the school's own application form as well. **Be sure to check with each school.**



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WORKING WITH YOUR CHILD

Your child needs as much support as possible from you to be able to succeed in the UK Education system. This is required irrespective of the type of school your child attends, be it state or independent; whether your child has extra tuition or not, your personal input is necessary. You are the one who has your child's best interest at heart therefore better positioned to identify the problem areas in his/her education. You know your child best and should be able to appraise the effectiveness or otherwise of the tuition your child is receiving. Here are **25 tips** to help you in this area:

1. Set aside quality time to spend with your child on a daily basis
2. As much as possible stick

to a regular schedule such as having a set time and place

3. Ensure the time and place are sacrosanct, not with several distractions in the background or postponing the exercise constantly due to other commitments, this is serious business - be committed
4. Let your child know his/her education is important to you
5. Cut down on time spent in front of the television watching soaps; invest that time in your child's future instead
6. If you need to catch up with your friends on the phone do it **after** the study time spent with your child, not during or before remem-

ber your child needs to know this is high priority

7. Be creative; make the study time fun not a bore or a chore
8. Build your child's confidence with lots of positive affirmation
9. Set up a reward system for effort, this tells your child hard work pays off in the long run
10. Celebrate achievements; this will inspire your child to achieve even more
11. No matter how frustrated or angry you are do not undermine or knock your child's confidence by calling him/her names it is counter-productive and tends to end up as a self-fulfilling prophecy



Celebrate achievements this will inspire your child to achieve even more

CODE CRACKER (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

State School State school is an expression used in the United Kingdom to distinguish schools provided by the government. In the United Kingdom state schools are under the control of local councils (LEAs in England and Wales).

Comprehensive School A comprehensive school is a secondary school that accepts pupils of all abilities. Comprehensives have dominated British secondary education

since the 1970s and currently educate over 90% of secondary pupils. Comprehensive schools in England are usually neighbourhood schools taking their students from a defined local catchment area. The principle of equality of opportunity underpins comprehensive education. Most comprehensive schools take students from the age of 11 to 16. Some have a sixth form, entry to which is often on an open basis, with some students taking A levels, whilst

others follow vocational programmes. The Comprehensive System results from a policy decision taken by the 1965 Labour government. By 1975 the majority of local authorities in England and Wales had abandoned the 11 plus examination and moved to a comprehensive system. Supporters of the Comprehensive System argue that it is unacceptable on both moral and practical grounds to select children on the basis of their ability whilst critics of system argue that



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12. Visit libraries and museums with your child regularly, these are mainly free in the UK

13. Spend time with your child going over his/her school day, ask questions about what they learnt

14. Check that your child has done the homework assigned at school properly and on time

15. Read out loud to your younger children and encourage them to read to you as well

16. Invest in materials/resources that are designed to help your child's learning process

17. If you are not academically inclined get a private tutor but you still need to work closely with the tutor and your child

18. Do not be overbearing towards his/her teachers give them a chance to

train your child properly

19. Don't pass your own fear of failure on to him/her

20. Always be positive about their education even when they are having difficulties

21. A 'Can Do' attitude to life is one that your child will easily pick up from you so why not adopt it

22. Be selective about the school your child attends, plan ahead before he/she starts school at all

23. Work in partnership with the school not against the school

24. You must attend the parents evenings at school, it's your opportunity to find out how to help your child better

Above all pray; for yourself, for your child and with your child, you will grow weary if you do all the above in your own strength alone!

Always be positive ... even when they are having difficulties

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the reality has been a levelling down of provision and a denial of opportunity to able children from disadvantaged backgrounds, who might once have expected to pass the eleven plus exam and have the advantage of a grammar school education.

Grammar School

There are about four distinct uses of the term Grammar School. Arguably the most famous grammar schools were those of the Tripartite System, also known colloquially as the grammar-school system. The first nationwide system of secondary education in the UK was created by an Act in 1944. Three

types of schools were planned, one of which was the grammar school, it was **intended to teach an academic curriculum to intellectually able children** who did well in their **eleven plus**, the grammar school soon established itself as the best tier in the Tripartite System. Grammar schools were largely abolished between 1965 and 1976. Some counties resisted the change, and 164 old-style state-run grammar schools exist today.

The Smart Kid is an organisation formed to empower 21st century parents in the UK by sharing vital information and motivating them to take positive action for their children. We expect that the parents who contact us will go on to share the information with their peers, friends and family thus empowering one another. These gradual but consistent efforts will produce a shift in the culture and value system in the UK. Our vision is that previously untapped ability, lying dormant in a sizeable proportion of the population, will be discovered thus creating a more productive society where the best opportunities are no longer restricted to the realm of a select few. Thanks for taking the time to read this and we hope you share our dream for all children in the UK.



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