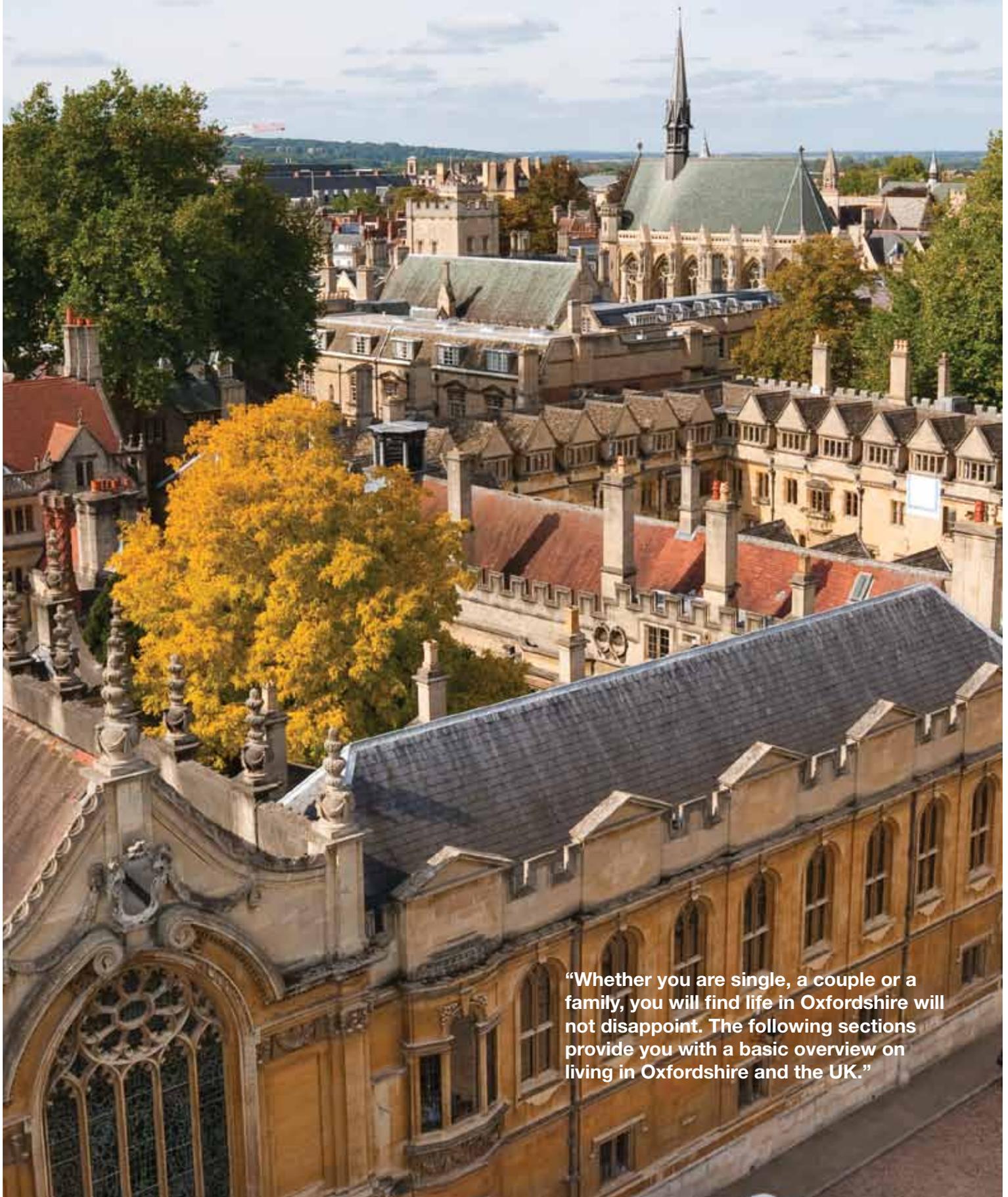


Welcome to Oxfordshire





“Whether you are single, a couple or a family, you will find life in Oxfordshire will not disappoint. The following sections provide you with a basic overview on living in Oxfordshire and the UK.”

Welcome to Oxfordshire

As one of the most sought-after UK counties to live and work in, Oxfordshire is internationally renowned as a centre of excellence for academia and research and as a place of architectural and natural beauty.

Right at the heart of England with excellent transport links, it covers a diverse rural and urban area of more than 1,000 sq miles (2,605 sq km) with a population of around 649,000. The city of Oxford is just 58 miles from London and 66 miles from Birmingham.

Forbes magazine rated the picturesque town of Burford in the west of the county sixth in its Most Idyllic Places to Live in Europe survey (2009). The UNESCO World Heritage site of Blenheim Palace, and the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are just two of the county's many attractions.

As well as being home to the world-renowned Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University, Oxford city is a vibrant, cosmopolitan centre for music and the arts, with cinemas and theatres. Its literary, TV and film connections include Inspector Morse and Harry Potter.

The annual Oxford Literary Festival celebrates world-class writers building on a heritage of famous authors including Lewis Carroll, CS Lewis, JRR Tolkien and, more recently, Philip Pullman and Colin Dexter (writer of Inspector Morse).

The varied retail experience includes the Bicester Village outlet, many top chain stores in the city and towns, and a diverse mix of independent retailers. Some of the market towns still hold weekly open-air markets. For eating out you are spoiled for choice with everything from pubs, to restaurants providing cuisine from all nations, to Raymond Blanc's two Michelin Star Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons.

Most sporting activities are catered for, from cycling and swimming to football and golf, with many towns having their own public swimming pools. And if you enjoy walking and discovering beautiful countryside, then Oxfordshire is the place for you.

The county's overall local authority is Oxfordshire County Council (www.oxfordshire.gov.uk). However, the area is also split into five districts, each with their own council. These are Cherwell District Council (www.cherwell.gov.uk); Oxford City Council (www.oxford.gov.uk); West Oxfordshire District Council (www.westoxon.gov.uk); South Oxfordshire District Council (www.southoxon.gov.uk) and Vale of White Horse District Council (www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk).

Whether you are single, a couple or a family, you will find life in Oxfordshire will not disappoint. The following sections provide you with a basic overview on living in Oxfordshire and the UK.

Finding a place to live

One of your primary concerns when moving to Oxfordshire is where you will live. The county offers a large choice of residential property - to buy and to rent - in the city, town and countryside.

Oxfordshire has grown rapidly in recent years but remains the least densely populated county in the South East region. Four of its district councils are classified as rural, and almost half of the population lives in settlements of less than 10,000 people - a third of the population (36 per cent) live in the market towns such as Wallingford, Witney and Abingdon.

The county is expected to continue to grow rapidly in the future. More than 55,000 new houses could be built in Oxfordshire up to 2026, mainly in urban areas such as Oxford, Bicester and Didcot.

When looking for housing you have many options, from studio apartments for one person to family sized houses in a range of locations.

Renting a property

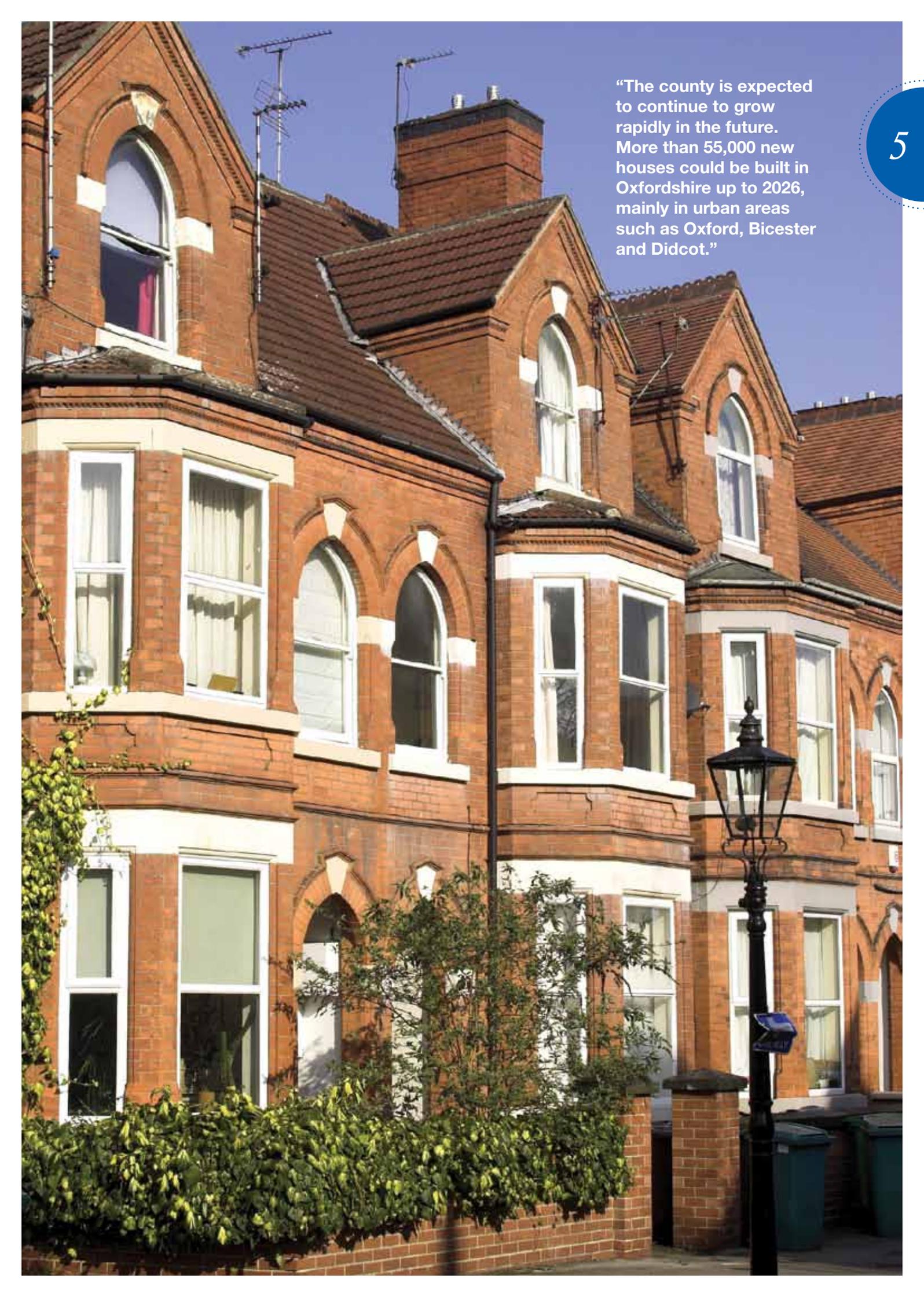
There are many properties available from private landlords. The usual way to find them is by contacting letting agents in the area you choose to live, or by looking for adverts in local newspapers. Many people coming to the country rent a property first, before deciding exactly where they would eventually like to buy a property.

For new arrivals in the UK the letting agency will normally require a letter from your employer confirming your level of income. A deposit and one month's rent in advance will also normally be required.

Buying a property

Most properties for sale are found by contacting estate agents in the area where you wish to live. Estate agents are usually based in the closest town or city area to where you are looking. You can also find properties by searching online. This will give you a good indication of prices in your chosen area. Some general websites that give you a good overview, where you can search by region, requirements and price include: www.rightmove.co.uk; www.primelocation.com; www.nestoria.co.uk; www.zoopla.co.uk. These sites will also redirect you to the local agent dealing with a particular property.

Of course, if you are working in the southern part of the county you are not restricted to living in Oxfordshire. You could also consider looking at properties within commutable distance in or around Reading to the east, Newbury in the south - both in the neighbouring county of Berkshire - and Swindon, in the county of Wiltshire to the west.



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Schooling in the county

All children in the UK aged 5 to 16 years, must receive a full-time education. In Oxfordshire, it is currently the duty of Oxfordshire County Council to provide this. Most children go to a state school, but some go to independent private schools, where the fees are paid by their parents. A small number of children have permission from the local authority to be educated at home.

The school year

The school year in the UK begins in late August or early September and is split into either three or six terms. Each term is about seven or 13 weeks long. Schools close for at least two weeks at Christmas and for two weeks at Easter, in March or April. There are short breaks of two to five days in the middle of each term, called a half-term. The school year ends during June or July, when schools close for about six weeks.

School and college

Education in the UK is generally divided into four separate stages:

- Age 5 to 11 years: Primary School
- Age 11 to 16 years: Secondary School
- Age 16 to 18/19 years: Secondary School, Sixth Form College or College of Further Education
- Age 18/19 years plus: College of Further Education or University

If your child chooses to continue their education after 16, they will have to decide whether to stay at school or go to college.

Travel to school is an important consideration and you will probably want to investigate the schools closest to where you will be living. Each school has its own geographical 'catchment area.' When you know your new address, visit www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/localview and enter the street name or post code to see the schools in that area.

All schools - both state and independent - special schools and day-care providers in the UK are regularly inspected by Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education).

Ofsted gives each establishment a score, from one (outstanding) to four (inadequate). For more details see www.ofsted.gov.uk

Of course, some schools with better scores are consequently more popular than others. However, each school is limited to the number of pupils it can cater for. Generally, the majority of parents manage to get their children placed in the school of their choice. Oxfordshire residents are able to apply for a place at up to three schools anywhere in the county.

If you are not currently resident in England and your child is moving to Oxfordshire then you should apply to the county council's Schools' Admission Team direct. You can do this in advance of your move.

If you are interested in schools outside Oxfordshire, we will also put you in contact with the relevant Schools' Admission Team.

The team will need to see proof of your Oxfordshire address. This should be one of any of the following:

- A solicitor's letter advising contracts have been exchanged (if the property is being purchased)
- A copy of a tenancy agreement (if the property is to be rented)
- A copy of your council tax bill showing the same name(s) as in Section 2 of the School Admissions In-Year Transfer form

For a wealth of information, including a list of all schools in Oxfordshire, see www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/schools.

You may then contact the Schools' Admissions Team direct by using the website's email facility, or telephone them on +44 (0) 1865 815175 for up-to-date information on places available.

For private education, you can contact the individual school direct.

There is a European School, the only one in the UK, at Culham in Oxfordshire that provides the European Baccalaureate qualification. In addition, three state providers and four private providers in Oxfordshire offer International Baccalaureate qualifications.

The three state providers of the International Baccalaureate are:

- Wallingford School
- North Oxfordshire Academy
- Henley College

The four private providers of the International Baccalaureate are:

- St Clare's, Oxford
- St Edward's, Oxford
- EF International Academy, Oxford (opening September 2012)
- Headington School, Oxford

Creche & Nursery Provision

Pre-school education in the county can be sourced from the Family Information Service at Oxfordshire County Council. Details can be found at www.fis.org.uk and their team of 10 Advisers can be reached on +44 (0)8452 262636.

Ofsted also provides details of registered childcare, including nurseries, pre-school, childminders and out-of-school clubs.



Connected Oxfordshire

The county's position in the heart of England makes it highly accessible to the rest of the UK, Europe and the world. Just an hour by car to either Heathrow Airport to the east near London, or Birmingham Airport to the north, and with its own smaller business airport at London Oxford, based in Kidlington, you can always be sure of making a rapid connection.

Excellent road, motorway, bus and rail links also mean you always have a good choice of routes to get around the county, and beyond, to the rest of the UK, or Europe.

Airport distances by car

Oxford to:

Heathrow, 47 miles (96 km) 1 hour

Birmingham, 66 miles (106 km) 1 hour

Gatwick, 85 miles (137 km) 2.5 hours

Stansted, 125 miles (201 km) 3 hours

Rail link to London

Oxford Railway Station to London Paddington, approximately 1 hour.

See www.nationalrail.co.uk



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Working in Oxfordshire

The county's world class clusters of Advanced Engineering, Life Sciences, Medicine, Information Technology, Publishing and Education make it an attractive proposition for the most highly-skilled workers. The county has seen a higher growth rate in high-tech employment than anywhere else in the UK and many of its 2000 high-tech companies have links to Oxford University or Oxford Brookes University.

Diverse Economy

Scientific research and space technologies are clustered around Science Vale UK and Oxfordshire's Enterprise Zone. This includes the UK's national synchrotron science facility, the Diamond Light Source.

Oxford is at the centre of the largest and fastest growing bio-tech cluster in the UK, attracting 20% of all investment in the UK into bioscience since 2008, and houses the world's number one medical school at Oxford University.

Software development is another key sector,

with specialisms in financial trading, security, space telemetry and games software. Oxford City also has the UK's largest centre of publishing outside London, including Oxford University Press, the world's largest University Press.

For the family members of staff, the county offers a diverse range of employment opportunities. The list to the right provides a range of local recruitment agencies.

Immigration & Visas

To find out if you have the right to work in the UK, and the visas required, there is a short

questionnaire on the UK Border Agency's (UKBA) website www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/countries/

The UKBA site also includes information for Commonwealth citizens who have UK ancestry through one or more grandparents if this applies to you.



Local recruitment agencies

- **Career Boutique**
(www.thecareerboutique.com)
Tel: 0845 5204010
- **Select Appointments**
(www.select.co.uk)
Tel: 01865 724 439
- **Brook Street (UK) Ltd**
(www.brookstreet.co.uk)
Tel: 01865 722 571
- **Hays Recruitment**
(www.hays.co.uk)
Tel: 01865 727 071
- **Manpower UK Ltd**
(www.manpower.co.uk)
Tel: 01865 245 257
- **Paterson**
(www.paterson-recruitment.co.uk)
Tel: 01865 790 100
- **Susan Hamilton Group**
(www.susanhamilton.co.uk)
Tel: 01865 261 682
- **Allen Associates**
(www.allen-associates.co.uk)
Tel: 01865 481459
- **Champion Recruitment**
(www.champion.co.uk)
Tel: 01865 264050
- **Bluefire Consulting**
(www.bluefireconsulting.co.uk)
Tel: 01865 930104
- **Reed Scientific**
(www.reed.co.uk)
Tel: 01865 728702

National Insurance (NI) Number

Everyone with the right to work in the UK must then also apply for a National Insurance (NI) number.

Your National Insurance number is a personal account number. It is unique to you and always stays the same.

It ensures that the National Insurance contributions and tax you pay are properly recorded against your name. It also acts as a reference number when communicating with the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC).

You can find out more about National Insurance numbers, including what they are used for and why you need to keep yours safe, by visiting www.hmrc.gov.uk/ni/intro/number

To get a National Insurance Number you will be required to contact the Jobcentre Plus on 0845 600 0643 when you arrive in the UK.

Deductions

Employers are legally allowed to make deductions from your wages for Income Tax, and National Insurance contributions. Any other deductions made, such as contributions to pension schemes, have to be agreed with you first.

The website www.hmrc.gov.uk/working/intro/employed provides information on how tax will be deducted from your wages under the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) scheme.

Some useful information

Opening times

The usual opening times in the UK for banks, businesses, Post Offices and shops are:
Monday-Friday: 9am to 5.30pm.

Saturday: Most retail shops will open 9am to 5.30pm. However, only some banks and Post Offices will be open. These are mainly in the city centres and will close around midday.

Sunday: Banks and Post Offices are not open on Sunday. But some retail shops in city centres, supermarkets and retail parks open on a Sunday, usually between 10am and 4pm.

If you live in a rural area you may find that the opening times are different.

Social activities

If you take part in social activities you will find it easier to make friends. You can visit your local community or sports centre to find out what activities they arrange. Go to your public library, or read the local newspaper to find out about upcoming events. Going to a public house (pub) is a common social activity for people in the UK. Pubs also sell non-alcoholic drinks and often hold special events, such as quiz nights and live music evenings.

Smoking

In the UK smoking is forbidden in all enclosed public places such as pubs, restaurants, nightclubs, shops, offices, government buildings, factories, private members' clubs, in cinemas and on public transport.

You are allowed to smoke outdoors, at home or in provided smoking rooms.

Driving

In the UK you will still drive on the left side of the road. All drivers must follow the Highway Code. For more information, including accessing the Highway Code, see www.direct.gov.uk/travelandtransport. For information on exchanging your driving licence to a UK licence see www.direct.gov.uk/motoring/driverlicensing

Expatriates

For an inside view on what it is like to be an expat living in the UK, take a look at www.expats-blog.com/destination/europe/england for lots of information and blogs.

Personal Finances

For those arriving in the UK for the first time they will need to set up a personal bank account. A wide variety of national branches will set one up and you will need proof of a UK address, such as a utility bill. Loan requests will be based on earnings and assets located in the UK.

Further Information

An informative website, sponsored by the Government, is www.gov.uk that provides useful additional information on a variety of subjects.