

## Education in Great Britain

- Education is compulsory from the age of 5 (4 in Northern Ireland) to the age of 16.

The system of education is divided into 3 stages:

1. Primary education
2. Secondary education
3. Higher education

- Before the start of formal schooling, many children attend *nursery schools*, also known as *Pre-Schools* (actually 47% of 3 and 4 year old children). Many nursery schools actually allow children to start in the term after that they are two and a half years old.
- Pre-schools are optional.  
These schools are often staffed by teachers and students in training.

### 1. PRIMARY EDUCATION

- Primary education is given to children between the ages of 5 to 11.  
Primary schools are divided into two parts: infant schools and junior schools.

#### a. infant schools

School year	Age
Reception	4-5
Year 1	5-6
Year 2	6-7

Children first attend Infant school from the age of 5 to 7. Actually English children enter the reception class of primary school in the next term after their fifth birthday.

Reading, writing and arithmetic are taught. By the time they are ready for Junior school, they will be able to read, write, and do simple addition and subtraction of numbers.

#### b. junior schools

School year	Age
Year 3	7-8
Year 4	8-9
Year 5	9-10
Year 6	10-11

From the age of 7 to 11 children then move to Junior school. This marks the transition from play to "real work".

Children study English, Mathematics, Science, Information technology, history, Geography, Modern foreign languages, Art, Music, Physical Education and religious Education.

- In Great Britain parents have a choice between State schools and Independent schools.

State schools are schools run by the government. They are financed by public funds: the money comes from the national and local taxes.

Independent schools, also called "public schools" are private, expensive and elitist. Their traditional values are very strict. These fee-paying schools also called preparatory schools prepare children for the Common Entrance Examination set by the independent schools.

Most Independent schools are boarding schools. The most famous are Rugby, Harrow, Winchester, and Eton.

95% of parents prefer State primary schools whilst only 5% prefer Independent schools.

Most schools in England require children to wear a school uniform (normally with a logo on the cardigan or jumper which is special to that particular school).

## 2. SECONDARY SCHOOL

The usual age for transfer from primary school to secondary school is 11 (12 in Scotland).

Secondary schools provide compulsory education for children between the ages 11 to 16.

Over 85% of secondary school pupils attend **Comprehensive schools**.

Comprehensive schools are state schools, non-selective, free and co-educational. They are often very large schools.

Comprehensive schools were introduced in 1965. The idea of this form of education, supported by the Labour Party, was to give all children of whatever background the same opportunity in education.

There are also **Grammar schools**. These are selective.

Entrance is based on a test of ability. Children enter Grammar schools on the basis of their abilities, first sitting the **11+** or entrance examination. Up until the 1970's every child in England and Wales had to sit the 11+ examination to determine which type of secondary school they would go to once they had left their primary school. Those who passed the exam successfully went to Grammar school. Nowadays only a few will take the exam.

There can be state or independent schools.

Independent schools are known as public schools. These private schools take boys who are nearly all sons of people who have some social position, but some private schools also take girls.

Private schools can be entered into through scholarship..

There are also **Secondary modern schools**: a small minority of children attends these schools which provide a more general and technical education for children aged 11 to 16.

During the whole process of education the child is taught the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum is what the Government says teachers have to put into practice so parents are sure that their child will have a broad-based education.

### 3. SECONDARY SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS

*Exams the young people in Britain take during their process of education:*

- At 16 students in England and Wales take **GCSE** examinations (in 1988 this exam replaced the GCE-General Certificate of Education- and O-levels i.e. Ordinary levels.)
- Pupils, who stay on at school from the ages of sixteen to eighteen in England, may take the Advanced **(A) level** examination, which is traditionally required for entry into higher education.

Children may stay on at school until the age of 18 in order to pursue further studies; however **this is not compulsory!**

### 4. HIGHER EDUCATION

Entry into University is competitive. Admission depends not only on A level results but also on interviews.

#### ■ Universities

The most prestigious Universities are Oxford (dates back from the 12th Century) and Cambridge (13<sup>th</sup> Century) -often called Oxbridge-

#### ■ Polytechnics

#### ■ Different colleges

Those who decide to leave school at 16 may go on to a further education college where they can learn typing, engineering, cooking, hairdressing...

Students take a Bachelor degree (after 3 or 4 years). They can then take a Master's degree (M.A.) and a Doctorate (PhD).

Degrees are awarded at public degree ceremonies.