

## EDUCATION IN BRITAIN



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Education is an important part of British life. There are hundreds of schools, colleges and universities, including some of the most famous in the world.

Education is free and compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 - 16. Some children are educated at home rather than in school.

Children's education in England is normally divided into two separate stages. They begin with primary education at the age of five and this usually lasts until they are eleven. Then they move to secondary school, there they stay until they reach sixteen, seventeen or eighteen years of age.

### **An Overview of Education System**

The school education system in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is divided into three stages:

- Primary education
- Secondary education
- Further education

#### **Primary education:**

Pre Prep is also known as Infants – Reception class, Year 1 and Year 2 (4 years old to 7 years old)

Prep is also known as Juniors – Year 3 to Year 6 (7 years old to 11 years old)

#### **Secondary education:**

Seniors – Year 7 to Year 11 (11 years old to 16 years old)

#### **Further education:**

Year 12 and Year 13 also known as Sixth Form or Lower and Upper Sixth (16 years old to 18 years old).

By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must receive a full-time education. A National Curriculum was introduced in the UK in 1992 and

state schools are required to adhere to it until age 14 while independent or 'public schools' are not obliged to do so.

After five years of secondary education, students take exams in a range of subjects at the level of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). The GCSE is a single subject exam set and marked by independent exam boards. British students usually take up to ten GCSE exams in different subjects, including mathematics and English language. Students are given a letter score of A-G where A is the top grade. A, B or C grades are regarded as equivalent to the 'pass' grades in the previous GCE exam, known as O-Level.

After taking GCSEs students may leave secondary schooling, may go on to further education colleges (typically for vocational or technical courses) or may take a higher level of secondary school exams known as A-Levels (typically in 2-4 subjects) after a further two years of study. A-Levels (short for Advanced level) are required for university entrance in the UK.

Independent schools, 'private schools' or 'public schools' are privately funded from tuition fees and are independent of

government control although the majority follow the National Curriculum and sit GCSEs and A-levels.

## Types of Schools

Children's education in England is normally divided into two separate stages. They begin with primary education at the age of five and this usually lasts until they are eleven. Then they move to secondary school, there they stay until they reach sixteen, seventeen or eighteen years of age.

The main categories of school are:-

- ◆ **local authority maintained schools** (State Schools) free to all children between the ages of 5 - 16
- ◆ **independent schools.** (Private/Public Schools) Parents pay for their children's education.

## State Schools

In the UK 93% of the children in England and Wales go to "state schools". State schools are non fee-paying, funded from taxes and most are organised by Local Authorities (LA).

Parents are expected to make sure that their child has a pen, pencil, ruler etc. but the cost of other more specialised equipment, books, examination fees are covered by the school.

### **Primary schools (5 - 11 year olds)**

In the UK, the first level of education is known as primary education. These are almost always mixed sex, and usually located close to the child's home. Children tend to be with the same group throughout the day, and one teacher has responsibility for most of the work they do.

Parents are strongly encouraged to help their children, particularly with reading and writing, and small amounts of

Parents are, however, expected to pay for their child's school uniform and items of sports wear. Charges may also be made for music lessons and for board and lodgings on residential trips. Schools may ask for voluntary contributions for school time activities - but no pupil may be left out of an activity if their parents or guardian cannot or do not contribute.

homework are set to all children, even during the early years at school.

### **Secondary schools (11 - 16 year olds)**

Most children transfer at the age of 11 - usually to their nearest secondary school, though the law allows parents in England and Wales to express preferences for other schools too. A place has to be offered at the parents' preferred school unless the school has more applicants than places; in

that case it will admit the children who have the highest priority under its published admission arrangements which can vary a little in different places.

Most secondary schools cater for both sexes. They tend to be much larger than primary schools.

Nearly 88 per cent of secondary school pupils in England go to **comprehensive schools**, as do all pupils in Wales. These take children of all abilities and provide a wide range of secondary education for all

or most of the children in a district from 11 to 16 or 18. All children in Scotland go to non-selective schools.

**Grammar Schools** are selective, they offer academically oriented general education. Entrance is based on a test of ability, usually at 11 (11+). Grammar schools are single sexed schools i.e. Children either go to a boys Grammar School or a Girls Grammar School. There are grammar schools in Northern Ireland and some parts of England.

### **Fee Paying Schools**

#### **Independent Schools**

7% of the children in England go to independent schools. Independent schools are known as **private schools and public schools**. Parents pay for their children to attend these schools.

Nursery/Kindergarten 2 to 4 years  
Pre-preparatory 3 or 4 to 7 years  
Preparatory 7 to 11 or 13 years  
Public 11 or 13 to 18 years

A **preparatory school** is a school to prepare pupils to go to a public school.

A **public school** is an independent secondary school. Public schools in

England are not run by the government. The entrance exams used by most public schools are known as **Common Entrance exams** and are taken at the age of 11 (girls) or 13 (boys).

The most famous public schools are **Eton, Harrow and Winchester**.

#### **Higher Education**

Around 30% of the 18 to 19 year olds enter full-time higher education. The formal entry requirements to most degree courses are two A-levels at grade E or above. In practice, most offers of places require qualifications in excess of this.



*Those explanations are general overview of British education system. Try to find out more information related to the system! These following questions will help you to elaborate the ideas.*