

# Education

## THE BRITISH SCHOOL SYSTEM

The educational system in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland differs. Primary education starts in a nursery school and a kindergarten. British children begin their education at the age of 5 and must attend school until the age of 16. In Britain there are state schools and public schools. The majority of British children are educated in state schools which are free of charge. There are many public schools in Britain, mainly for the 13-18 age group. Their tuition fees are very high.

Children in Britain continue to study at a secondary school:

1. comprehensive schools /which offer a general education/,
2. grammar schools /which prepare students for university study/,
3. modern schools /which provide general education and focus on practical activities/,
4. technical schools /which emphasize industry, commerce and agriculture/.

General Certificate of Secondary Education /GCSE/ exams are taken at the age of 16. These exams give pupils a qualification that is recognised across the whole country. Most students continue their further education after 16, for another 2 years, in the 6th form /2 extra years at school/ or at college. This study is leading to advanced examinations.

These examinations are important for those who want to go on to higher education:

1. universities,
2. polytechnics and
3. colleges of higher education /e.g. for teachers/.

The oldest and the most prestigious British universities include Oxford and Cambridge Universities. The most common titles for those who have graduated from university are Bachelor of Art, Science and Education. Postgraduate titles include Master of Arts, Science, and Doctor of Philosophy.

# THE AMERICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

There is great variety in elementary, secondary and higher education throughout the country. Each state is responsible for its own educational system. There are both private and state schools in the USA. Private school pupils pay for their tuition. Most American children attend state schools. American state schools are called public schools /in contrast to public schools in Britain, these are not private/.

Three levels can be distinguished in the American public school system:

1. Elementary /Kindergarten - 6th grade/,
2. Middle School /6th - 8th grade/,
3. High School /9th - 12th grade/.

At high schools students have both compulsory and optional subjects. At the end of the final year at high school, students take a nationwide test, called the Scholastic Achievement Test /SAT/ in all subjects. About half of all young people who graduate from American high schools continue their education at colleges and universities. The USA has some of the world's most outstanding universities including Harvard University /Massachusetts/, Yale University /Connecticut/ and Princeton University /New Jersey/.

# THE SLOVAK SCHOOL SYSTEM

In Slovakia, pre-school education starts at kindergarten. School attendance is compulsory from the age of 6. There are private, state or church schools. The school year lasts 10 months and is divided into 2 terms.

Primary education takes 9 years at primary school. However, some students start their studies at "8-year grammar school" as soon as they finish the 5th grade of primary school. Most students start the secondary level of education after finishing the 9th grade of primary school. Those students who want to get into secondary grammar school or high school /gymnazium/ have to take entrance exams. This type of school is popular since it prepares students for university study. Studies usually last four years and end with a school leaving exam called "maturita". This exam is very important because its results are taken into account when students apply for university studies.

However, most students in our country have to pass entrance exams to be accepted into most universities. Applicants can decide whether they want to study full-time or part-time. The largest and oldest Slovak university is Comenius University in Bratislava. In recent years, the European Union has tried to reform higher education across the whole Europe. In 2015, a new "maturita exam" /school leaving exam/ was introduced. Its main goal was to unify written tests and standardise other exams. Furthermore, the Anglo-

Saxon BA /bachelor/ - MA /master's/ degree system has been introduced.