

## 3 The UK Education System

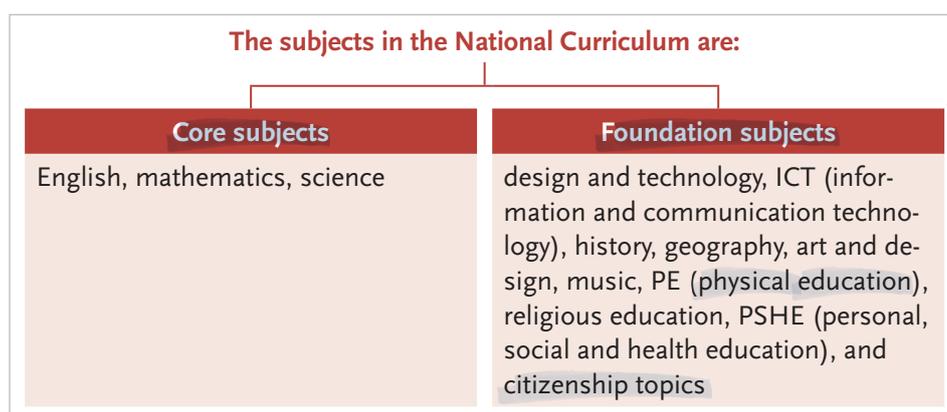
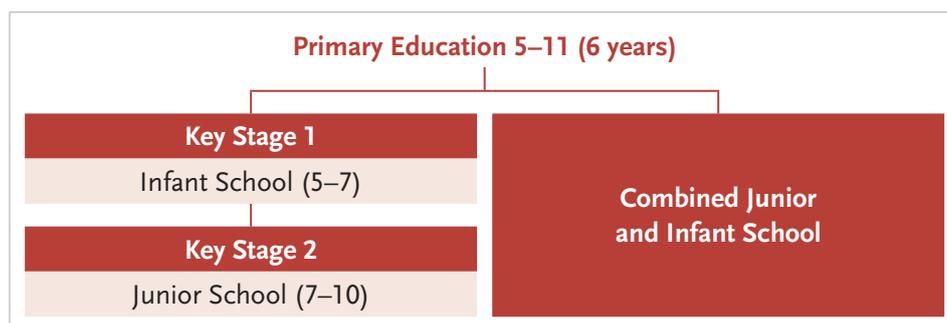
In Britain, compulsory education lasts from age 5 to age 16. Many three and four-year-olds go to nursery schools, which may be full-time or part-time. By the Education and Skills Act in 2008, parliament decided to raise the leaving age for compulsory education to 18, with the change taking effect from the year 2013.

Basically, there are two types of school in the UK: state schools, which are free of charge, and private schools, which are also called 'public schools'.

Public schools have fees between £ 2,500 and £ 30,000 per year; that is why only approximately 7 % of British parents can afford to send their children there. They may be day schools or boarding schools, with Eton and Harrow being the most famous. Public schools can also be found in many Commonwealth countries as relics of the British Empire, e. g. Canada, India, Australia. However, they are usually called 'private schools' there.

### 3.1 Primary Education

This may be two years in infant schools and four years in junior schools, or combined junior and infant schools, lasting six years.



### 3.2 Secondary Education

This covers schooling from the age of eleven to the current minimum school leaving age of 16.



The term 'public' historically refers to the fact that the school was open to the paying public, as opposed to a religious school that was only open to members of a certain church.

**relic** = das Überbleibsel



**core subject** = das Kernfach

**foundation subject** = das Pflichtfach

**physical education** = der Sportunterricht

**citizenship topic** = die politische Bildung



In England, compulsory education has been extended to 18 for those born after 1 September 1997.

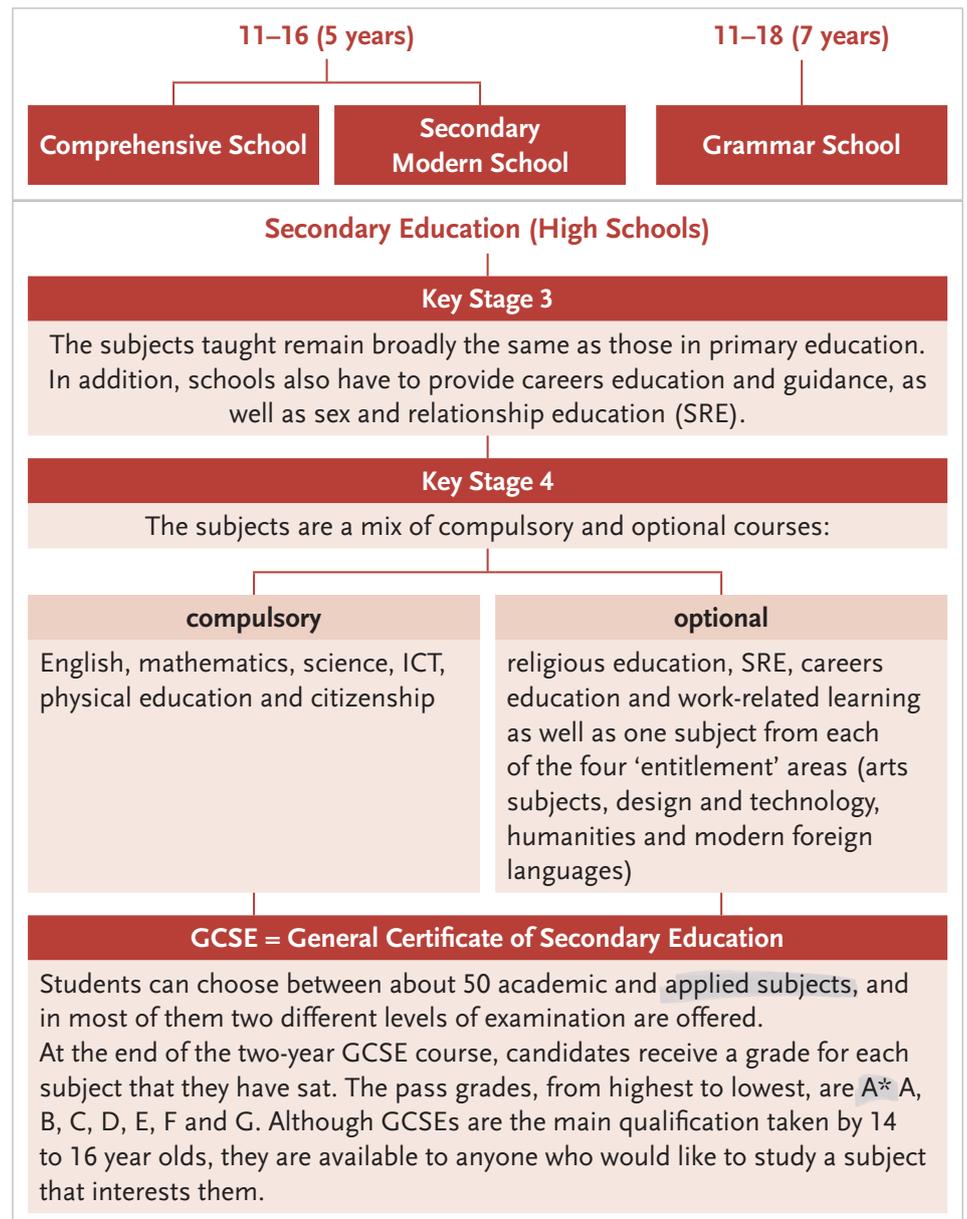
to subsidise = fördern



About 90 % of all children of this age go to comprehensive schools. Anyone can attend them – they are non-selective, and many of them have become ‘specialist schools’. This means that they specialise in a particular field such as sports, technology, or modern languages and are subsidised by the state.

Less than 5 % of all schoolchildren go to grammar schools or secondary modern schools. Children must sit the 11-plus-exam to get into grammar school, which is very academic and encourages students to go to university.

Those who don’t pass the exam go to secondary modern schools, which offer a more practical education. As many people think that it is not fair to test children at such a young age, this system is rather unpopular with British parents and not so widespread. Secondary schools are often referred to as ‘high schools’.



applied subject = das praktische Fach

A\* = pronounced ‘A-star’

### 3.3 Further Education

Five or more A\*–C grades, including English and Maths, is the usual requirement for taking A-levels, either in a school sixth form, at a sixth form college, a further education college or a specialist college after leaving secondary school.

### Further Education

#### Sixth Form 16–18 (2 years)

Students typically study for two years, known as Years 12 and 13, or lower sixth and upper sixth. They may choose between science, language and creative subjects. In addition, in recent years a variety of vocational courses have been added to the curriculum.

#### GCE Advanced Level ('A-levels')

The number of A-level exams taken can vary. There is no upper limit, and three is usually the minimum number required for university entrance, with some universities demanding a fourth subject. Some students obtain five or even more A-levels.



## 4 The US Education System

The US education system is a bit different from the one in the UK. It is highly decentralised, as the federal authority has no authority to establish a national system. The structure and content of education programmes may vary greatly from state to state, however, as a whole, they are remarkably similar.

The system comprises of 12 years of primary and high school education, which is mandatory for getting admission to any graduate college, university, or for some professional and technical schools.

Before compulsory education, children may attend kindergarten. From around 5 to 11, children go to elementary school. From 11 to 14 they attend junior high school, and from 15 to 18 they go to senior high school.

Primary and secondary education together are sometimes referred to as 'K-12' education, with K for 'kindergarten' and 12 for 'twelfth grade'. Students can choose between education either in public schools, private schools, or home-schooling.

Students have a wide range of subjects to choose from, however they usually take four or five for their diploma, specialising in two subjects only. At 18, when they finish school, they get their high school diploma, which allows them to go to university.

0–~5	Kindergarten
~5–10	Elementary School
11–14	Junior High School
15–18	(Senior) High school
<b>High School Diploma</b>	



High school is often used instead of senior high school. Students are commonly referred to as **freshmen** (first year), **sophomores** (second year), **juniors** (third year) and **seniors** (final year).

**Words you might consider useful:**

**der Hauptschulabschluss** =  
successful completion of lower  
secondary level

**die Polytechnische Schule** =  
pre-vocational year

**die Lehrabschlussprüfung** =  
Apprenticeship Diploma

**die Meisterprüfung** =  
Master Craftsman Diploma

**die Berufsreifeprüfung** =  
Vocational Education and Training  
(VET) Access Examination

**die Weiterbildung** = further  
education and training



### Pair Work

As all of you have probably gone through the Austrian educational system, you are able to compare it to the UK and US systems and give first-hand information on similarities and differences.

First, talk about the schools you attended.

- What was your favourite subject?
- Why did you like it?
- Did you enjoy going to school?
- What were the rules?

Together, prepare a presentation on the different schools and school stages in Austria. Draw an overview on a large poster.



### Role Play

An Austrian and an English person compare their school careers. Talk about the benefits of each system and say what you did not like about your days at school.