

THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS OF ENGLAND & WALES, SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

There are several key areas in which the 3 education systems differ.

School year groupings (see overleaf) Please note, secondary school in Scotland starts at age 12.

Curriculum

The term “National Curriculum” refers to **England & Wales only**. In Northern Ireland there is a common curriculum, and in Scotland the nearest equivalent is the 5-14 programme (= national curricular guidelines for the Primary 1 to Secondary 2 age-range).

Testing

Testing takes place at various stages in all 3 education systems but the term “Key Stage” refers to England, Wales and Northern Ireland only.

Examinations

GCSE)	
AS)	
A2 (A Level))	England, Wales and Northern Ireland only
GNVQ)	
NVQ)	

SCE Standard Grade = Scottish equivalent of GCSE taken at end of S4 (age 15)

SCE Higher Grade = Scottish equivalent of A Level taken at end of S5/S6 (age 16/17)

SCE Higher Still = a new system of exams for post-16 in Scotland, which started in 1999

GSVQ

SVQ

Term dates

School year in Scotland runs from **mid August to end June**, and in Northern Ireland from **beginning of September to end June**.

Modern Languages in the Primary School (MLPS)

This is a national policy in Scotland which involves the teaching of a foreign language (French, German, Spanish or Italian) in P6 or P7.

Terminology

Head of Department = Principal Teacher (Scotland)

Deputy Headteacher = Depute Headteacher or Depute Rector (Scotland)

Northern Irish schools

The names of schools may often (but do not always) indicate their religious denomination. This can be a sensitive issue in Northern Ireland.

Controlled schools – non-denominational but mainly attended by pupils from the Protestant community

Voluntary maintained schools – mainly Roman Catholic (RC)

Voluntary grammar schools – centrally funded, similar to grant-maintained schools

RC voluntary grammar schools are attended by Catholics. If they are not RC schools, they will be attended by a majority of Protestants but Catholics may also attend.

Integrated schools – non-denominational and grant-maintained

UK SCHOOL SYSTEM IN YEAR GROUPINGS

Age	England & Wales	Northern Ireland	Scotland
3	Nursery (non-compulsory)	Nursery (non-compulsory)	Nursery (non compulsory)
4-5	Primary - Key Stage 1 Reception class	Primary - Key Stage 1 Year 1	Nursery (non-compulsory)
5-6	Year 1	Year 2	Primary P1
6-7	Year 2	Year 3	P2
7-8	Key Stage 2 Year 3	Key Stage 2 Year 4	P3
8-9	Year 4	Year 5	P4
9-10	Year 5	Year 6	P5
10-11	Year 6	Year 7	P6
11-12	Secondary - Key Stage 3 Year 7	Secondary - Key Stage 3 Year 8	P7
12-13	Year 8	Year 9	Secondary S 1
13-14	Year 9	Year 10	S2
14-15	Key Stage 4 Year 10	Key Stage 4 Year 11	S3
15-16	Year 11	Year 12	S4
END	OF	COMPULSORY	SCHOOLING
16-17	Year 12 (Lower Sixth)	Year 13	S5
17-18	Year 13 (Upper Sixth)	Year 14	S6