

In the UK there are five stages of education: early years, primary, secondary, further education and higher education. Education is compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 16. Further education and higher education are not compulsory and can be taken at further education colleges and higher education institutions.

Early years education is for children between 3 and 5 years old. It takes place in a variety of institutions such as state nursery schools, private nursery schools, nursery classes and reception classes. Reception classes help to prepare children for primary school.

The primary stage covers two age ranges: infant from 5 to 7, which is called Key Stage 1 and junior from 8 to 11 and this stage is called Key Stage 2. Most state primary schools take both boys and girls in mixed classes. At the age of 11 or 12 children go to secondary school.

Secondary education in the UK is provided by different types of schools: comprehensive schools, academies, grammar schools, studio schools and city technology colleges. At the end of secondary school children pass an exam and get a certificate called GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education). This certificate is needed to go to college or start working.

Further education in the UK is not compulsory, it is optional. It can be taken after the period of compulsory education from the age of 16 years old. There are a lot of further education institutions in the UK, which offer different types of diplomas and certificates. One of the most popular qualifications among students is A level (Advanced Level Qualification). To get this qualification students usually study for two years, they are called sixth forms (like 10 and 11th years of school in Russia). Students choose three or four subjects to learn and at the end of A level, they pass an exam called “GCE Advanced Level”, which is used to enter a university. Another option is to attend college or get an International Baccalaureate Diploma.

Higher education is higher than GCE A level and is provided by universities and colleges. There are a lot of higher education institutions around the UK offering various professions. Students choose a university they want to enter and send their documents there. Later, they get the answer if they are accepted or not.

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