

Table 4

**Recent education reforms**

Table 4 provides an overview of the timing of the introduction and review of legislation and key initiatives in six key areas. Dates in blue indicate the current key legislation or initiative. Dates in a normal font imply that the major legislation has been amended without changing the major direction of the legislation/initiative. Dates included in the table only cover legislation/initiatives which are already in force. Pending legislation or initiatives awaiting implementation are covered in footnotes.

	<b>Length of compulsory education</b>	<b>Promote pre-school education</b>	<b>Primary curriculum</b>	<b>Secondary curriculum</b>	<b>Standardised national assessment</b>	<b>Examinations</b>
<b>England</b>	1973 <b>2008</b>	1998, <b>2006</b>	1988 1995, 96, 97, 98 <b>2000</b>	1988 1995, 96, 97 2000, 02, <b>2006</b> , 08	1988 1996, 97 2002, <b>2004</b> , <b>2008</b>	1988 <b>2000</b> , <b>2008</b>
<b>Ireland</b>	1937, 1998 <b>2000</b>	1994, 1999 2009	1971 <b>1999</b>	1989 1994 <b>1995</b>	1989 1999 <b>2007</b>	<b>1989</b> <b>1995</b>
<b>N. Ireland</b>	1973 <b>1989</b>	1998	1989 2004 <b>2006</b>	1989 <b>2006</b>	1989 1996, 98 <b>2006</b>	1989, 1998 2000, 02, 04, 05 <b>2006</b> , <b>2008</b>
<b>Scotland</b>	1947 1980	1947 1968	1989 2000 <b>2004</b>	1977, 1987 1999, 2000 <b>2004</b>	1991 2003 <b>2004</b> , <b>2005</b>	1980, 1992, 99 2002, 04, 05
<b>Wales</b>	1973	1998 2001 <b>2008</b>	1988 1995, 96, 97 2000, 01, 03 <b>2008</b>	1988 1995, 96, 97 2000, 01, 03, 04 <b>2008</b>	1988 1996, 97, 99 2001 <b>2004</b> , <b>06</b>	1988 1996, 97 2000, 01, <b>2007</b> , <b>2008</b>

*Continued*

	Length of compulsory education	Promote pre-school education	Primary curriculum	Secondary curriculum	Standardised national assessment	Examinations
France	1936 1959	1989	1991, 95 2002, <b>05</b> , 06, <b>2008</b>	1995, 99 2001, <b>05</b> , 06, 09, 10	1985, <b>89</b>	1985, 87 1999 2001, <b>05</b>
• Germany	n/a	1993, <b>96</b>	1994	1993, <b>96</b>	<b>2002</b>	1971 1994, 97, 99 <b>2005</b>
Hungary	1993, <b>96</b>		1993, 95, <b>99</b> <b>2007</b>	1993, 95, 99 2000, <b>2007</b>	1993, 95, 96, <b>99</b> <b>2004</b>	1993, 96 <b>2002</b>
Italy	1999 2006	1968 <b>1991</b>	1985 <b>1991</b> <b>2004, 07</b>	1979 <b>2001</b> , 04, 07	1977 1996, <b>97</b> <b>2007</b>	1979 1992, <b>97</b> <b>2004</b>
Netherlands	1981	1981	1993, 95, 98 2003, <b>06</b>	1993, 98, 99 2003, <b>06</b>	<b>2006</b>	1998, <b>99</b>
Spain	1990	1990 <b>2006</b>	1990 <b>2006</b>	1990, 92, 93 <b>2006</b>	1990 <b>2006</b>	1990 <b>2006</b>
Sweden	1985	1991, <b>98</b>	1965 1994, <b>98</b>	1965 1994, 98 2000	1995 2000, 09	1969 <b>1995</b> 2000
• Switzerland	1970	n/a	n/a	n/a	1968 1994 <b>2002</b>	1968 <b>1994</b>
• Australia	n/a	n/a	<b>1991</b> <b>2011</b>	<b>1991</b> <b>2011</b>	1991, <b>97</b> <b>2008</b>	n/a
• Canada	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1989 2003, <b>07</b>	n/a
Japan	1947 <b>2006</b>	1947 <b>2006</b>	1989 <b>1998</b>	1989 <b>1998</b>	1964 <b>2007</b>	1994
Korea	1949 <b>1997</b>	1969 1982 1999 2007	1992 1997 <b>2007</b>	1992 1997 <b>2007</b>	1987 1995, <b>99</b> 2000	1974 1991, 95, 97, <b>98</b>
New Zealand	1993	1989 1996 <b>2002</b>	1991, <b>93</b> <b>2007</b>	1991, <b>93</b> <b>2007</b>	1995, 97	<b>2002</b> , 07
Singapore	2000	2000	1997 <b>2001</b> , 08	1997 <b>2001</b> , <b>02</b>	1997 <b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b> , 03
• South Africa	1996	2002	1998 2002, <b>2010</b>	1998 2002, <b>2010</b>	1998 2005	1995 2001, 08
• USA	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1969 <b>2002</b>	n/a

## Notes

- England** The Education and Skills Act 2008 introduced a requirement for all young people to participate in (at least part-time) education and training until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The first cohort to be affected by the changes began secondary education (Year 7, age 11) in September 2008. The minimum age at which young people can leave learning will be raised in two stages – to 17 from 2013 and to 18 from 2015. In 2006, the weekly free entitlement of 12.5 hours of early education and childcare for three- and four-year-olds was extended from 33 weeks per year to 38 weeks. Since 2010, all three- and four-year-olds have been entitled to 15 hours of free early education and childcare provision. In September 2008, a new secondary curriculum came into force and 14- to 19-year-olds began to have access to a range of new specialised diplomas. Also in that month, revised GCE A Levels began to be introduced. A review of the National Curriculum for primary and secondary education began in January 2011.
- Ireland** The Education (Welfare) Act of 2000 raised the school leaving age from 15 to 16 or the completion of three full years of second level education. This was implemented in the 2002/03 school year. The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Bill 2011 is currently before Parliament. This provides for a single qualifications authority for compulsory, further and higher education. A framework for early learning (*Aistear*) was launched in 2009. In 2007, all children at the end of Year 1 or the beginning of Year 2, and at the end of Year 4 or the beginning of Year 5 of primary education began to take standardised tests in reading (English) and maths. Reviews of the curriculum (led by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, NCCA) are currently underway; all are at different phases of development.
- Northern Ireland** Under the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, revised statutory curriculum and assessment arrangements for compulsory primary and secondary education were implemented gradually from September 2007. Revised GCE A Levels were introduced in September 2008.
- Scotland** The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 empowered local authority social work departments to set up day nurseries to care for children across the whole pre-school age group and to provide pre-school education for the older child. A new curriculum for three- to 18-year-olds was proposed in the 2004 document 'A Curriculum for Excellence'. Schools began to adopt this new curriculum from August 2009. The curriculum phase of the Curriculum for Excellence Programme has now been implemented. The Programme will continue until 2016, when the implementation of the new qualifications which are being developed by the Scottish Qualifications Agency (SQA) is completed.
- Wales** A new 'foundation phase' of education for three- to seven-year-olds began to be introduced in September 2008. At that time, a revised curriculum for three- to 19-year-olds also began to be introduced. Changes to the national assessment system in Wales mean that statutory assessment at the end of key stages 1, 2 and 3 (ages seven, 11 and 14 respectively) is by teacher assessment only. Following a successful pilot, the Welsh Baccalaureate (16+) qualification was also introduced in a staged roll-out from September 2007. Revised GCE A Levels were introduced in September 2008.
- France** Compulsory schooling was extended to age 14 in 1936 and to 16 in 1959. Following extensive revisions, and the development of the *socle commun* (the common basis of knowledge and skills), a new primary programme of study was introduced from the beginning of the 2008 school year. Similar new programmes of study were introduced to lower secondary education at the start of the 2009 school year. Phased introduction of the new upper secondary curriculum started in August 2010.
- Germany** National tests to assess performance against common standards in primary and lower secondary education are being introduced gradually. The results of the first standardised tests were published in 2010. The process began in the 2004/05 school year, based on an agreement of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Culture of the 16 German *Länder* first signed in 2002.
- Hungary** The school leaving age was raised to 16, as a result of 1993 legislation, and to 18 in 1996.
- Italy** Legislation makes provision for compulsory education to last 10 years, from age six to 16; this came into effect from the 2009/10 academic year. In 2004, the *primo ciclo* (first cycle of education), consisting of five years of primary education and three years of lower secondary was introduced. Schools are currently required to apply the 2007 Guidelines for the Curriculum, whilst bearing in mind some aspects of the 2004 guidelines. Reform of the upper secondary curriculum is also imminent.
- Netherlands** The Primary Education Act 1981, which lowered the starting age of compulsory education from six to five years, abolished separate nursery schools and brought provision for four- and five-year-olds into primary education, came into effect in 1985.

- Sweden** Compulsory education normally begins at age seven and lasts nine years. However, since 1991, six-year-olds have been able to enrol in Year 1 of compulsory education if places are available. Since 1998 it has also been possible to postpone a child's entry to Year 1 of compulsory education until the age of eight. National tests for children in Year 3 (aged nine-10) were introduced in the spring term of 2009. New syllabuses for all subjects in compulsory education and a new grading system were introduced in July 2011.
- **Switzerland** A national agreement on the objectives and content of education, including the introduction of curricular standards during compulsory education, is in the process of deliberation and ratification by the cantons.
- **Australia** Education is the responsibility of individual States and Territories. There is collaboration through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment and Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). In May 2008, students in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 (ages eight/nine, 10/11, 12/13 and 14/15 respectively) took the first (NAPLAN) national tests in literacy and numeracy. NAPLAN is the National Assessment Programme in Literacy and Numeracy. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority has been charged with developing a national curriculum to be introduced from 2011; introduction may be delayed until 2012/2013 depending on the state or territory. Aligned to this will be a national assessment and reporting programme.
- **Canada** Provinces and territories control education; there is some national influence through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) which is responsible for national-level communication. The CMEC-developed national School Achievement Indicators Programme (SAIP) (standardised lower secondary tests) was replaced by the Pan-Canadian Assessment Programme (PCAP) in spring 2007.
- Japan** In 2006, the Fundamental Law of Education was revised for the first time in 60 years. Following a review in 1998, revised courses of study were introduced at primary and lower secondary level in 2002. In 2009, these were reviewed again. As a result, the Education Ministry plans to fully implement new curriculum guidelines in elementary schools (six- to 12-year-olds) in the 2011 school year, in junior high schools (12- to 15-year-olds) in 2012, and in high schools (15- to 18-year-olds) in 2013. In March 2010, the Japanese Government also passed legislation to abolish tuition fees for public high schools (students aged 15 to 18+). New national standardised tests in Japanese and mathematics took place for all pupils in Year 6 (ages 11 to 12) and Year 9 (ages 14 to 15) in April 2007.
- Korea** The curriculum was last revised in 2007.
- New Zealand** A new curriculum was released in November 2007 and was introduced in schools between 2007 and 2010. The National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP), an assessment programme for small samples of primary age children and children at the primary-secondary transition stage, began in 1995 and has recently been discontinued. Voluntary assessment on school entry was initiated nationally in 1997. A National Assessment Strategy (for compulsory education) was introduced in 1999. A modular/cumulative National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) (15+) began to be introduced in 2002/3 although it was launched initially in 1998. National standards, which set out descriptions of what students should know and be able to do in reading, writing and mathematics at different points in their schooling from Years 1 to 8 (aged five/six to 13) were introduced in 2010.
- Singapore** Following legislation passed in 2000, six years of primary education became compulsory for children starting primary school in the 2003/4 school year. A new pre-school curriculum framework, drawn up in 2000, was launched in January 2003. Following a review of upper secondary education in 2002, a revised curriculum and more flexible educational pathways began to be introduced in junior colleges (ages 16 to 18) from 2006. In 2008, the Ministry of Education conducted a review of primary education; changes arising from this review are in the process of implementation.
- **South Africa** Following a review of the implementation of the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) in 2009, a revised curriculum for all learners began to be introduced in 2011.
- **USA** The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has been assessing students' knowledge nationally in reading, writing, mathematics, science and other subjects since its introduction in 1969. President Bush's 2002 national education reform strategy - 'No Child Left Behind' (NCLB) - signed into law statutory testing in reading, maths and science throughout the USA. Work is underway on the Obama Administration's reauthorisation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which focuses on preparing students for college and the workplace.

## Sources/further information

The tables above indicate recent major reforms in specific policy areas. Where available, the date of the legislation or regulation which introduced the reform is given. A blank on the table means that the information received does not indicate that there has been a reform in the relevant policy area. For further information on each of the headings used, see the following sections and their subsections of the full Archive.

### **Length of compulsory education**

Education Structure (ages 3–19) ⇒ 3.1 Compulsory education and 3.2 Educational phases (ages 3–19)

### **Promote pre-school education**

Education Structure (ages 3-19) ⇒ 3.1 Compulsory education and 3.2 Educational phases (ages 3–19)

### **Primary curriculum**

Curricula (age 3–19) ⇒ 5.2 Second phase: Primary

### **Secondary curriculum**

Curricula (age 3–19) ⇒ 5.3. Third phase: Lower secondary or 5.4. Fourth phase: Upper secondary

### **National assessment**

Assessment arrangements (information may be available on the introductory page to a chapter).

### **Examinations**

Assessment arrangements ⇒ 6.3. Third phase: Lower secondary or 6.4. Fourth phase: Upper secondary, age