

Table 5

**Schooling: duration, phases****Table 5.1 Compulsory education**

	Starting age	Minimum school leaving age	Duration in years
England	5	16	11
Ireland	6	16	10
Northern Ireland	4	16	12
Scotland	4/5	16	11
Wales	5	16	11
France	6	16	10
• Germany	6	15/16+	9/10 Full time + 3 Part time
Hungary	6	18	12
Italy	6	16	10
Netherlands	4/5	18	13
Spain	6	16	10
Sweden	7	16	9
• Switzerland	4/5/6	15	9 – 11
• Australia	5/6	15/16/17	9-11
• Canada	6/7	16/18	10-12
Japan	6	15	9
Korea	6	15	9
New Zealand	6	16	10
Singapore	6/7	16/17	10
• South Africa	7	15	8
• USA	6	16	10

## Notes

- England** Although children must start school the term after they reach the age of five years, many children start school at age four. 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.
- Ireland** Although compulsory education does not begin until age six, more than 50 per cent of four-year-olds and almost all five-year-olds are in publicly-funded provision in the infant classes of primary schools.
- Scotland** A child is of school age between five and 16; depending on when they are born in the school year they may start at age four.
- Wales** Although children must start school the term after they reach the age of five, many children start school at age four.
- **Germany** Students must complete at least nine or 10 years of full-time education, followed by three years of part-time education (dependent on the jurisdiction).
- Hungary** All five-year-olds must also attend kindergarten for up to four hours each school day to prepare for compulsory school. Since 1998, all students commencing compulsory education have had to remain in education until the age of 18. Previously the upper limit was 16. In principle, there are eight years of basic education, plus four years of upper secondary education.
- Italy** Legislation passed in late 2006 made provision for compulsory education to last 10 years from age six to 16.
- Netherlands** Most children (99 per cent) start school at age four although it is not compulsory until the age of five. Children must attend school full-time until age 16 and must continue learning until they have obtained a basic qualification up to age 18.
- Sweden** Although compulsory education begins at age seven, municipalities must allow six-year-olds to commence compulsory education. Entry may also be deferred to age eight. Children who commence compulsory education at age six complete the nine years of compulsory education at age 15; entry at age eight means completion of compulsory education at age 17.
- **Switzerland** Currently, starting and leaving ages and the duration of compulsory education vary from canton to canton, with nine years being the norm. The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education has approved an agreement to standardise school starting and leaving ages across Switzerland by 2015/16. In line with this agreement, cantons have begun to introduce compulsory pre-school education from age four. The agreement is currently subject to ratification by each canton.

- **Australia** Although six is the usual compulsory starting age, most children start school at age five. In Tasmania, every child who is at least five years old on 1 January must be enrolled in the Preparatory Year in a school or be provided with home education. The minimum school leaving age is 15 in most States/Territories, 16 in Tasmania. In Queensland, since January 2006, it has been compulsory for young people to remain in school until they finish Year 10 or reach age 16. Unless in full time work, they must then stay in education or training for a further two years or until they have a senior certificate, vocational certificate or have reached the age of 17. Similar arrangements were introduced in Tasmania in January 2008, where, after leaving Year 10, young people must now continue in education or training for two years or until they turn 17. School education is compulsory for all children aged six to 17 years of age in Victoria.
- **Canada** Although, in most Canadian provinces, education is compulsory to around age 16, in two provinces - Ontario and New Brunswick it is compulsory to age 18.
- **New Zealand** Although education does not become compulsory until age six, children almost universally start school at age five.
- **Singapore** Six years' primary education is compulsory. The remaining four years' formal general education is universal, not compulsory. Children start primary school in January of the year in which they become seven.
- **South Africa** Children normally begin school at age five, turning six, for admission into Grade R (reception), or six turning seven, for admission into Grade 1. Education is compulsory from age seven (Grade 1), however, it is intended that all children will attend Grade R.
- **USA** The figures/ages in the table are generalisations. In some states, the kindergarten year (children aged five-six) is compulsory; in others, students may be expected to stay in compulsory education until the age of 18.

**Table 5.2 Educational phases (not necessarily involving transfer from one school to another)**

	<b>Pre-school</b>	<b>Primary/basic</b>	<b>Lower secondary</b>	<b>Upper secondary</b>
<b>England</b>	0-5	5-11	11-16	16-18
<b>Ireland</b>	3-6	6-12	12-15	15-16/17/18
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	2-4	4-11	11-16	16-18
<b>Scotland</b>	3-5	5-12	12-16	16-18
<b>Wales</b>	3-5	5-11	11-16	16-18
<b>France</b>	2-6	6-11	11-15	15-18
• <b>Germany</b>	3-6	6-10/12	10/12-15/16	15/16-18/19
<b>Hungary</b>	3-6 (compulsory at age 5)	6-10/12/14	6-10/12/14	10/12/14-18/19/20
<b>Italy</b>	2½-6	6-11	11-14	14-18/19
<b>Netherlands</b>	0-5	5-12	12-15	15-18
<b>Spain</b>	0-6	6-12	12-16	16-18
<b>Sweden</b>	0-7	7-16	7-16	16-19
• <b>Switzerland</b>	4/5-6/7	6/7-10,11,12	10,11,12-15/16	17/15/16-18/19
• <b>Australia</b>	3-5/6	5/6-12/13	12/13-15/16	15/16-18+
• <b>Canada</b>	4/5-6/7	6/7-11,12,13	11/12/13-15/16	15/16-17/18+
<b>Japan</b>	3-6	6-12	12-15	15-18
<b>Korea</b>	3-6	6-12	12-15	15-18
<b>New Zealand</b>	3-5/6	5/6-12/13	12/13-16	16-18+
<b>Singapore</b>	3/4-6	6/7-12	12-16/17	16/17-18/19+
• <b>South Africa</b>	0 to 4/5	5/6-12	12-15	15-18
• <b>USA</b>	3-5/6	5/6-13/14	5/6-13/14	13/14-17/18

## Notes

- England** The period of education from birth to the end of the academic year in which a child has his/her fifth birthday is known as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Compulsory education begins the term after a child reaches the age of five. However, many children begin school at four+. The compulsory age of leaving education and training will be raised to 17 by 2013 and 18 by 2015. Those children entering secondary education (Year 7, age 11) in September 2008 were the first cohort to be expected to remain in (at least part-time) education and training until the age of 17.
- Ireland** Although compulsory education does not formally begin until age six, the majority of four- and five-year-old children are in publicly-funded provision in primary school education. At age 15+, students follow either a one-year Transition Year course; three types of two-year Leaving Certificate course; or a three-year course (Transition Year followed by a two-year Leaving Certificate course).
- Wales** The foundation phase covers children aged three to seven years. Compulsory education begins the term after a child reaches the age of five. However, many children begin school at four+.
- France** Compulsory education ends at age 16. Students must therefore spend at least one year in the upper secondary phase.
- **Germany** Primary education ends at age 10 in 14 of the 16 *Länder*, and at age 12 in the remaining two (Berlin and Brandenburg).
  - **Hungary** Attendance in the kindergarten year, age five-six, is compulsory. Traditionally, Hungarian secondary education admitted general school leavers aged 14+. It is now increasingly common for secondary schools to admit students aged 10+ or 12+. This depends on the type of institution and, as a result, students receive either eight, six or four years of upper secondary education.
  - **Italy** Primary and lower secondary education forms the first cycle of education in Italy (six- to 14-year-olds). Compulsory education currently ends at 16; students must spend at least two years in the upper secondary phase. Since September 2009, it has been possible for children to enrol in pre-school from the age of two-and-a-half.
  - **Sweden** Compulsory phase education is provided in the all-through compulsory school (*grundskola*) and usually begins at age seven. Children who start earlier (age six) may finish earlier (age 15) after nine years' compulsory education.
  - **Switzerland** Starting and leaving ages and the duration of compulsory education vary from canton to canton. The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education has, however, approved an agreement to make these the same across Switzerland. This agreement to 'harmonise' education systems is currently in force in 15 of the 26 cantons, making pre-school education compulsory for two years (ages four to six) rather than one (five-six).
  - **South Africa** The Reception Year (Grade R) (age five-six) is not yet compulsory but it is expected that it will be available to all in 2011. Upper secondary provision (15- to 18-year-olds) is not compulsory.
  - **USA** Phases vary dependent on the individual state. The INCA Archive reflects the system of eight-year elementary school, followed by four-year high school. Other jurisdictions have a three-year primary school (includes a kindergarten year), four-year intermediate school, three-year junior high school and three-year senior high; others a five-year elementary school, three-year middle school and four-year high school.

## Sources/Further information

For further information – see the following sections and their subsections of the full Archive.

### **Table 5.1 Compulsory education:**

Education Structure (ages 3-19) ⇒ 3.1 Compulsory education

### **Table 5.2 Educational phases:**

Education Structure (ages 3-19) ⇒ 3.2 Educational phases (ages 3 - 19)