



Thematic Probe

Transition from Primary to Secondary Education in Selected Countries of the *INCA* Website

Report prepared for the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum,
Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) from data available via
www.inca.org.uk and respondents in the selected countries

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1. Introduction

This report looks at the transition of children from mainstream primary to post-primary (secondary) education in a range of countries, and considers the role (if any) which school reports play in the choice of, and admission to, secondary school. It includes general information on a wide range of countries, and supplementary details on Australia, Finland, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Spain and Sweden, because they are of particular interest to Northern Ireland¹. Australia, Canada, Germany and the *USA* have decentralised education systems and generalisations cannot be made across provinces/states/*Länder*.

2. Provision/Policy

Full-time education (although not necessarily by school attendance) is compulsory for all children between the ages of five/six and 15/16. Germany and the Netherlands require some part-time education thereafter. Three countries prohibit home schooling.²

Annex 1 outlines the following information relating to compulsory education:

- ◆ compulsory school starting age. Note that increasing numbers of children, in most countries, are receiving at least one year's pre-compulsory education
- ◆ the age of transfer to secondary education
- ◆ the nature of secondary provision, that is, inclusive schools, which receive all students regardless of ability, or differentiated schools or tracks, which provide for students of different abilities or prepare them for different final qualifications
- ◆ whether access to secondary schools is automatic or subject to a primary certificate or other evidence of performance and/or primary school recommendation, and
- ◆ whether children in primary and secondary education are grouped by age or according to general (stream) or subject-specific ability (set) and whether progression between years is automatic or subject to performance.

¹ The *INCA* website from which most of the data is sourced (www.inca.org.uk) provides information on the education systems in Australia, Canada, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the USA and Wales. The additional information on Finland in this report has been provided by Eurydice – the information network on education in Europe (www.eurydice.org).

² Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden.

2.1 Primary education

There is considerable similarity in the age of those designated as primary phase children: generally from the age of five/six to 11/12 years. Exceptions are most states in Germany (ages six to 10) and Finland and Sweden, where all-through ‘compulsory’ schools cater for seven- to 16-year-olds and there is no formal demarcation between primary and secondary education.

The majority of countries have dedicated primary schools, often linked to pre-compulsory nursery schools or classes. In less populated areas, children may be taught in vertically grouped classes and/or in all-through schools catering for the full five/six to 16+ age range.

Public sector primary schools are generally coeducational and take children of all abilities.³ Most are non-denominational, although religious education may be compulsory. State-subsidised private sector education is offered in many countries, and this sector caters for significant proportions of children in Australia (25-30 per cent of children, of whom 70 per cent attend Catholic schools) and the Netherlands (67 per cent⁴).

Children are generally grouped by age, although there may be some setting by ability for specific subjects. Progress through the years is usually automatic, although particularly weak performance across subjects may mean a child has to repeat a year.

The most common ages of transfer to secondary education are 11 and 12. However, children may transfer at age 10 (most states in Germany), age 13 (some parts of Australia, Canada and New Zealand) and age 14 (in the remaining areas of Canada and, in most instances, the *USA*). In German *Länder* (federal states) which offer an *Erprobungsstufe* (period of orientation and decision-making between the two phases, during Years 5 and 6⁵), the choice of secondary

³ There are some private, so-called, ‘escalator schools’ in Japan, especially in Tokyo, where a place gained at six entitles a child to a place all the way through the system to 18 without any further examination. Some pre-compulsory children prepare for the entrance examination for such schools (at age six) in pre-compulsory evening ‘crammers’ or *juku*.

⁴ About 33 per cent of schools are non-denominational ‘state’, 30 per cent are Roman Catholic; 30 per cent Protestant; seven per cent other denominations (mainly Jewish and a few Muslim and Hindu schools) or based on a specific educational philosophy, for example, Steiner, Montessori or Jena Plan.

⁵ In some *Länder* children follow this course in primary school whilst in others it forms a transition phase.

school orientation is taken at age 12. In Finland and Sweden, there is no formal transfer but some students change school building within the complex at age 12 or 13.

2.2 Post-Primary education

School types

In some countries, there are ‘middle’ or ‘intermediate’ schools to ease the transition from primary to secondary education. Such schools exist, for example, in some areas of the *USA* (middle schools, age 10-14) and parts of New Zealand, (intermediate schools, age 11-13).

Lower secondary education in most countries is inclusive, that is, schools cater for the full range of abilities. However, Germany and the Netherlands have differentiated secondary systems, preparing students for different terminal examinations and/or at different speeds. Singapore, offers three main tracks, normally within the same school: the four-year ‘special express’ course leads to *GCE O Level* and the four-year normal (academic) or normal (technical) courses lead to *GCE N Level*. Successful *GCE N Level* students, who wish to, can study for a further year to achieve *GCE O Level*. Some countries combine selective and non-selective schools (for example, England and Germany).

Most public sector secondary schools are non-denominational and coeducational, but in Singapore, there are 24 single-sex secondary schools.

Transition to post-primary education

Transition to the post-primary phase is generally automatic, except in Italy and Singapore, where children must first have obtained the primary school leaving certificate. In Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and Singapore, a child’s performance in primary school affects the type of secondary school or course to which s/he is admitted.

- Finland** The school system is not differentiated, but consists of a nine-year compulsory school common for all children.
- Germany** Primary schools (*Grundschule*) make recommendations on the basis of a child’s abilities, performance and inclination, and after detailed consultation with parents. In the event of disagreement, *Land* (federal state) law determines whether parents, school or the school supervisory authority has the final say. Recent education policy has tended to favour parental choice and it is usually

possible for children to spend a ‘probationary’ period in a specific type of lower secondary school, with the possibility of transfer after a review.

- Japan** Most Japanese children pass automatically to the local *junior high school* at age 12. A small minority of parents transfer their children into private education.
- Netherlands** The receiving school board (analogous to the school governing body) decides on admissions, on the basis of the primary school report and recommendation and parental preference. The recommendation is based on the child’s general performance and, increasingly, on his/her results in the *CITO* Final Test of Primary Education, which was used by 86 per cent of Dutch primary schools in 2001. Some secondary schools conduct their own tests. If the school board refuses admission, parents have a right of appeal. Sixty per cent of all students transfer to *VMBO*, the least demanding of the three secondary school types/tracks.
- Singapore** At the end of Primary 6 (age 12+), students take the national Primary School Leaving Examination (*PSLE*). Their results determine their placement on differentiated courses of lower secondary education (special express, normal academic or normal technical), according to their learning pace, ability and inclinations. Parents and students are given four days after the publication of results to make their school choice.
- Spain** Access to compulsory lower secondary education (*ESO*) is automatic, but oversubscribed schools may apply admissions criteria, including annual family income, proximity of the child’s home or the parents’ workplace to the school, and the prior enrolment of siblings in the school.
- Sweden** The school system is not differentiated, but consists of a nine-year compulsory school common for all students.

It should be noted that, where parental choice exists, oversubscribed schools may set admissions criteria, which may affect the composition of the school population. The trend towards the designation of specialist secondary schools, whilst not formally selective, may have a similar effect.

Internal grouping and progression

Students are generally grouped by age (within differentiated school types, in Germany, the Netherlands and Singapore) but they may be grouped by ability for some subjects (set).

In most cases, students move automatically to the next class. Where performance governs progression,⁶ the decision is generally made by all the teachers of the relevant class/year group and includes consultation with parents and the headteacher. In Sweden, children stay in the same class with the same teacher for several years.

Transition courses or phases

Concern about making early, but far-reaching, decisions about school type has led to the introduction of transition courses. In parts of Germany, Years 5 and 6 of compulsory education (children aged 10-12 years) can be organised as an orientation phase (*Erprobungsstufe*), with the choice of school type being left open until the end of Year 6. In those *Länder* (federal states) where the orientation stage is a separate organisational unit, the selection of lower secondary schools type is deferred to Year 7 (age 12-13).

In the Netherlands, basic secondary education (*basisvorming*) is the compulsory core curriculum for the lower years of all types of secondary education (12- to 15-year-olds).⁷ The emphasis is on applying knowledge, acquiring skills and delivering an integrated curriculum. Students are taught a minimum of 15 subjects. The period of basic secondary education is normally three years, but can be less, according to the ability of the students in the school.

Although students in intermediate schools (New Zealand, age 11-13) and middle schools (*USA*, age nine-13) follow the same curriculum as their peers in primary and secondary schools, it is hoped that the relatively smaller school community will provide greater support during early adolescence and facilitate the transition from a class teacher to a range of subject teachers.

2.3 Primary school reports to parents/guardians

Schools generally report to parents one or more times per year, but the form of reports is seldom prescribed. Examples of provision are indicated below.

Finland Throughout the compulsory phase, a ‘school year report’ is issued at the end the year, an ‘intermediate report’ may be given during the school year and a ‘school leaving certificate’ is given to students who have completed the entire compulsory education syllabus. Reports may include comments but, from Year 8 (age 14), a numerical grade is compulsory. The grades reflect knowledge and skills at 7 levels: 4 (fail), 5 (fair), 6 (passable), 7 (satisfactory), 8 (good), 9 (very good) and 10 (excellent). Supplementary comments provide feedback on schoolwork and progress. The assessment is carried out by subject teachers.

6 France, Germany (from age seven), the Netherlands, Singapore, Spain and, in some cases, in Italy, Sweden and the USA.

⁷ The subject areas, time allocation and core objectives of *basisvorming* are governed by decree and updated every five years (1993-1998, 1998-2003, 2003-2008).

- Conduct and schoolwork are assessed by the class teacher, or, where a child has several teachers, jointly.
- Germany** From Grade 2 (primary, age seven) onwards, half-yearly reports comprise comments on a child's progress and marks, which compare their performance with that of others in the teaching group. There is a trend towards reporting on learning processes and performance, and on class participation and social conduct in school. Children whose grades are inadequate must (and others may choose to) repeat the year. There is no primary leaving examination or certificate, other than the end-of-year report or *Zeugnis*.
- Japan** Schools determine the name, content and frequency of reports. However, most schools provide non-statutory termly reports for children and parents called a *Tsuchihyo* or *Tsushino*. Some local boards of education prescribe a standardised format of *Tsuchihyo*. A leaving certificate is usually presented to children who have satisfactorily completed the whole elementary (primary level) programme of study.
- Netherlands** There are no statutory regulations governing reports, but the Inspectorate includes the way a school arranges contacts with parents in its evaluation. In general, a report (issued at least three times a year) is followed by a parents' evening where parents can discuss the results with the teacher. Most schools report more than just learning results.
- Spain** At the end of primary education parents receive a report of their child's marks and a certificate to show that s/he is eligible for lower secondary education.

Parents' evenings

Most countries arrange evenings when parents can meet teachers to discuss their child's progress. Open evenings or explanations of the school's provision, curriculum and teaching methods may also be held. Many schools have close contact with parents and adopt an 'open-door' policy which gives parents easy access to the school. The following description from Sweden outlines commonly-held objectives.

At least twice a year, the teacher, the child and his or her parent(s) or guardian(s) conduct a personal development dialogue, which can be in oral or written form. They are an explicit part of quality assurance and replace annual reports or marks until Year 8, but continue thereafter. The dialogue is intended to give students a voice, allow them to take responsibility, and empower them in their education and the planning of their studies. Parents receive information – the school's objectives and organisation; how teachers organise and assess students' work and progress – to enable them to provide their child with proper support. Teachers have an opportunity to find out about how the child and parents see and experience things. There are no set guidelines for this information, but the information should be based on the student's results and development, in relation to goals in Years 5 and 9, and should lead to an individual development plan with a focus on the coming school year. (Skolverket, Swedish National Agency for Education, July 2003.)

Long-term record of development

Two countries have specific ongoing records. In Tasmania (Australia), the student's Record of Development grows over time from Kindergarten to Year 12 (ages four/five to 17-18). It is jointly owned by the school and the student and contains samples of work which might be chosen by a teacher, the student or both together. It can also contain copies of recent reports by teachers to parents and details of the attainment of intended outcomes of education. It is meant to be used by students, teachers and parents and forms a cumulative 'history and portrait' of the child.

The *Shidoyoroku* (Japan) is a statutory, cumulative record of a child's school attendance and learning throughout Years 1-6 (ages six to 12 years), and must be updated annually.

2.4 The role of primary reports in transition

Where children transfer automatically to an inclusive secondary school system, the role of the primary education report is generally limited. In some cases, parents may not (be asked to) pass the report to the secondary school; in others, the secondary school may issue a form for primary school teachers to complete. In Japan, the *Shidoyoroku* (see above) is passed to the secondary or other school when a child transfers. In Finland and Sweden, students remain in the same school throughout the compulsory phase and therefore there is no transition between phases.

School reports generally indicate how students have performed in each of the subject areas and, in some cases, comment on other aspects of student behaviour and attitudes. Whilst we can assume that this covers 'knowledge and understanding', the extent to which it also reports on 'skills and personal capabilities' and 'dispositions to learning, aptitudes and interests' is less clear, and may vary between schools or even between teachers. The following examples have been provided by respondents to our questionnaire, issued in July 2003.

Australia Current reporting focuses largely on student progress in the different subject areas, in the literacy and numeracy assessments, and in general and social development. However, the Essential Learnings curriculum is being piloted and will be the intended curriculum for all children aged four to 16.⁸ This

8 The *Essential Learnings* curriculum was introduced in 40 pilot schools in 2000 and more pilot schools have been added in subsequent years. See <http://www.education.tas.gov.au/ocll/currcons/>

organises learning under five main headings (thinking, communicating, personal futures, social responsibility, and world futures) and is likely to affect school reports.

Germany New forms of learning in primary school are contributing towards a new understanding of what is conducive to learning, and of assessing performance. The focus has shifted to encouraging each individual child to achieve his/her potential, guided by the learning requirements for the respective school year. In order to do this, the development and performance, as well as the working and social behaviour of each child, is continually monitored, and comprehensively assessed.

Japan The record of knowledge and understanding for each subject has three elements including Units of Study (*Tangen*), Assessment Points (*Kanten*), and grades/marks. Units of study and assessment points include at least three to five items for every subject, and student performance and attainment in each unit of study is graded according to a three-point assessment scale (A-C). Teachers sometimes add an overall assessment (*Hyoutei*) for each subject. The report (*Tsuchihyo*) addresses the skills of talking, listening, reading, writing and thinking in the study units of relevant subjects. Social, personal and interpersonal skills are dealt with in the Record of Behaviour and Attitude and Record of special activities. *ICT* is not yet included as a separate aspect of assessment. The record of study for each subject includes comments about interests, desire to learn and attitude toward the study of subjects as an aspect of assessment.

Spain The primary school certificate indicates the extent to which the child has achieved the main objectives of primary education (excellent, good, average, etc). It does not provide information on individual skills or subject areas or on the child's interests, aptitudes or disposition to learning. However, the *LOCE* legislation (2002)⁹ requires special attention to be paid to the early diagnosis of children's aptitudes, disposition to learning etc and the provision of support to avoid school failure at an early age. It also requires a general assessment of the child's knowledge of the primary curriculum. This test will be diagnostic and formative, so that parents, children and teachers may share feedback.

Sweden The national tests focus on knowledge and understanding, not facts. This focus is also very clearly expressed in the legislation:

Knowledge is a complex concept which can be expressed in a variety of forms – as facts, understanding, skills and accumulated experience – all of which presuppose and interact with each other. The work of the school must therefore focus on providing scope for the expression of these different forms of knowledge as well as creating a learning process where they balance and interact with each other to form a meaningful whole for the individual. (Sweden. Statutes, 1994, p 1.¹⁰)

9 SPAIN. STATUTES (2002). *Ley Orgánica de Calidad de la Educación*. (Organic Act on the Quality of Education).

10 SWEDEN. STATUTES (1994). *1994 Ordinance for Compulsory Schools (Lpo 94) (SKOLFS 1994)*. Now superseded by SWEDEN. STATUTES (1998). *Ordinance for the Compulsory School System (SKOLFS 1998)*.

Different parts of the national tests for English and Swedish/Swedish as a second language focus on talking, listening, reading and writing, and support teachers' assessment of those skills. Information given to parents concerning thinking, *ICT*, social and personal skills is primarily based on teacher assessment. These skills form an implicit (albeit untested) element of the group tasks in the national tests. However, following high levels of investment in resource centres, computers and the Internet are now more commonly used. Dispositions to learning, aptitudes and interests are also recorded.

2.5 Collection and quality of assessment information

Teacher assessment is widely used, in accordance with state or regional guidelines concerning educational goals, knowledge and levels of performance. In some countries (for example, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden) national systems of marks are laid down. Increasingly, teacher assessment is supplemented by external assessment at some stages and in some subject areas, especially literacy and numeracy. Where promotion to the next class depends on satisfactory performance, decisions are generally taken by a committee of teachers (for example, France and Spain).

Primary school leaving examinations are compulsory in Italy and Singapore. In the Netherlands, some 86 per cent of schools offered the voluntary *CITO* primary school test in 2001, and monitoring systems (for example, *CITO* and *IPMON*) are used for quality control. Over 90 per cent of Swedish municipalities use the optional national tests in English, mathematics and Swedish/Swedish as a second language, to indicate progress at the end of Year 5 (aged 12). All these tests are pre-tested and validated, but are administered and marked by class teachers.

Annex 2 provides a summary of assessments used throughout the primary and lower secondary phases.

2.6 Input and feedback from parents and children

Parents' evenings generally offer an opportunity for parents and teachers (and sometimes children) to share information about the child and his/her performance. In addition, there may

be space for parental comment on school reports (for example, in Japan¹¹) or Record of Development (Tasmania, Australia). Children are specifically involved in Sweden:

The democratic principles of being able to influence, take responsibility and be involved should embrace all children. Development of children's knowledge and social awareness requires that they take increasingly greater responsibility for their own work as well as for the school environment and that they are also able to exercise real influence over their education ... it is incumbent on all who work in the school to work for democratic working structures. (Swedish respondent, July 2003.)

3. Overall Conclusions

As the foregoing shows, transition is a virtually automatic process in most countries. In Italy, Singapore and Spain, children formally have to demonstrate mastery of the primary curriculum, by means of a certificate. It is likely that countries where progression between years depends on performance, apply similar performance criteria to assessing readiness for secondary education. It has been argued that repeating a year isolates children from their peers without having a particularly beneficial effect on their learning. As a result, 'repeating' has been steadily decreasing in favour of supplementary or remedial support.

Most of the countries described above have 'inclusive' secondary systems, which offer students the same curriculum, although there may be some grouping according to ability in one or more subjects. In this case, transfer to secondary education does not require early decisions which might affect future learning or career options. As a result, the role of primary school reports does not appear to be significant.

However, in Germany, the Netherlands and Singapore, children are admitted to differentiated schools or tracks, in line with the final qualification. All three countries lay strong emphasis on primary performance in the choice of secondary education. In Germany and the Netherlands, the parents' voice carries some weight, and children may have an opportunity to 'prove their worth' in the desired school type. This trend may be due to the fact that, although both systems allow for transfer between tracks or schools, in practice most transfers tend to be 'downwards', to a less demanding course of study. A child who demonstrates exceptional progress after the very early months of secondary education, may find it hard to transfer

11 There is space for parents in *Tsuchihyo* to give feedback to the teacher. Recently, some but very few schools include space for student self-evaluation in *Tsuchihyo*.

‘upwards’ because of the faster rate of learning and, in some cases, the additional subjects studied¹² in the more demanding school types, leave the incoming student significantly behind his/her peers.

Both Singapore and the Netherlands allow students who have successfully completed a ‘lower’ form of education to continue their studies to obtain a higher qualification¹³, and with it, the opportunity to progress to higher education. Whilst this is egalitarian, it has costs for both society and the individual, especially in the Netherlands, where means-tested school fees are payable for students over the age of 16.

Because of the impact of school choice, attempts have been made to defer the decision by means of the *Erprobungsstufe* (orientation phase, ages 10-12) in parts of Germany, and the common core *basisvorming* (age 12-15) in the Netherlands. However, because there is no minimum duration of the *basisvorming*, the differences in learning speed, and the introduction of other subjects alongside the core curriculum reduce the opportunity for transfers between learning tracks.

Transfer to secondary school usually involves a change from a small community and a single or main class teacher, to a large community with numerous changes of teacher and location each day. This coincides with a time when young people are undergoing many other changes in their development. It was hoped that middle or intermediate schools might facilitate the transition, and such schools were introduced in England, New Zealand and parts of the *USA*. New Zealand’s intermediate schools were originally intended to broaden from two to four years, but this never happened and their role is currently being reviewed.

Whilst there appears to be no single ‘best’ system, experience suggests that differentiated secondary systems place great pressure on children, their parents and their teachers to make a choice at an early age which will have far-reaching consequences.

¹² For example, students in the Dutch *VWO* study Latin, and in some cases Greek, which are not studied in the *HAVO*.

¹³ In Singapore, holders of the *GCE N Level* may take a further year to obtain the *GCE O Level* (on completion of lower secondary education). In the Netherlands, holders of the *VMBO* may transfer to Year 4 of *HAVO*, completing that course in two years; and holders of the *HAVO* may transfer to Year 5 of the *VWO*, to obtain that qualification after a further two years.

4. Main Sources

The International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Archive, which covers 18 countries (Australia, Canada, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, the USA and Wales) and is available online at: www.inca.org.uk.

The website of the EURYDICE information network on education across the Member States of the European Union - <http://www.eurydice.org/> (click on *EURYBASE*).

Annex 1 Organisation of primary and secondary education

Countries in italics have devolved education systems.

	Primary School				(Lower) secondary school			
	Compulsory Start	Grouping	Progress	Transfer	Secondary school types	Access	Grouping	Progress
<i>Australia</i>	5/6	Age/set	Automatic	12/13	Inclusive high school	Automatic	Age/set	Automatic
<i>Canada</i>	6/7	Age	Automatic	12/13	Inclusive high school	Automatic	Age	Automatic
Finland	7	Age	Mainly automatic	n/a ¹⁴	Inclusive <i>Peruskoulu</i>	Automatic	Age	Mainly automatic
France	6	Age	Automatic	11	Inclusive <i>collège</i> ¹⁵	Automatic	Age	Performance
<i>Germany</i>	6	Age/set	Performance from age 7	10 or 12	Inclusive <i>Gesamtschule</i> ¹⁶ or differentiated: <i>Gymnasium</i> leads to <i>Abitur</i> and university <i>Realschule</i> ¹⁷ general and vocational education <i>Hauptschule</i> ¹⁸ basic general education	Automatic by performance	Age/set	Performance
Italy	6	Age	Mainly automatic	11	Inclusive <i>scuola media</i>	Certificate	Age	Mainly automatic
Japan	6	Age/set	Automatic	12	Inclusive <i>junior high school</i> ¹⁹	Automatic ²⁰	Age/set	Automatic
Korea	6	Age/set	Automatic	12	Inclusive <i>junior high school</i>	Automatic	Age/set	Automatic

14 Compulsory education is provided in an 'all-through' school (*Peruskoulu*, age six/seven to 16/17) although the younger and older students may be taught in separate buildings.

15 Education is compulsory to age 16. Consequently, students must normally complete at least one year at either the upper secondary *lycée générale et technologique* (general and technological upper secondary school) or the *lycée professionnel* (vocational upper secondary school), according to ability and career intentions.

16 Non-selective, full-day schools (unusual in Germany). Fewer than 10 per cent of children attend the *Gesamtschule*, attributed to general parental preference for differentiated secondary schooling.

17 The *Realschule* curriculum stresses mathematics, science and modern languages and offers numerous vocational courses.

18 The status and enrolments of the *Hauptschule* have declined in recent years.

19 A few experimental 12 to 18+ schools aim to decrease competition for entry to *senior high school*. A strategic plan (2002) proposed Super English Language Schools at junior and senior high levels.

20 Japan: Children receive an *elementary school* (primary school) leaving certificate (age 12), but usually progress automatically from their local *elementary school* to their local *junior high school*.

	Primary School				(Lower) secondary school			
	Compulsory Start	Grouping	Progress	Transfer	Secondary school types	Access	Grouping	Progress
The Netherlands	5	Age	Mainly age ²¹	12	Differentiated: <i>VWO</i> – prepares for university <i>HAVO</i> – prep for non-university higher and further education <i>VMBO</i> – general and pre-vocational ²²	By performance	Age, within school ‘type’	Performance ²³
New Zealand	6	Age/set	Automatic	12/13	Inclusive intermediate (12-14) or high (12-16/18) school	Automatic	Age/set	Automatic
Singapore	6/7	Age; stream from age 10	Performance	12	Differentiated streams: Special express - leading to <i>GCE O Level</i> in four years Academic Normal and Technical Normal – leading to <i>GCE N Level</i> in four years	Certificate and by performance	Streamed by target qualification	Performance
Spain	6	Age	Performance	12	Inclusive <i>ESO</i> ²⁴	Automatic	Age	Performance
Sweden	7 ²⁵	Age	Mainly automatic	n/a ²⁶	Inclusive <i>grundskola</i>	Automatic	Age	Mainly automatic
USA	6	<i>Varies</i>	<i>Mainly automatic</i>	<i>13/14</i> ²⁷	<i>Inclusive high school</i>	<i>Automatic</i>	<i>Varies</i>	<i>Mainly automatic</i>

21 Repeating a year is at the discretion of the school, but is rare.

22 The three ‘types’ of education may be offered in separate schools, or in ‘combined’ schools which place students in the ‘type’ (or track) which best suits their needs. Transfer between the types is possible.

23 Students who experience difficulties may transfer to a less demanding school type/track.

24 Spain also offers specialist music and dance schools and specialist language schools.

25 Children may start at six (and leave at 15) or defer entry to age eight.

26 *Grundskola* cater for children aged six or seven to 15/16, but the younger and older children may be taught in separate buildings.

27 In some states, children transfer to middle schools at age nine and to *high school* at age 13+.

Annex 2 - National assessment and public examinations age five-16

All systems feature ongoing teacher assessment, which frequently determines progression between classes. This is NOT shown in the tables. Figures indicate the ages at which national assessment or public examinations take place. **Bold** figures indicate that assessments/examinations are compulsory or essential for admission to the next phase. *Countries in italics have devolved education systems.*

	<i>Australia</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>Finland</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Japan</i>	<i>Korea</i>	<i>Netherlands</i>	<i>New Zealand</i>	<i>Singapore</i>	<i>Spain</i>	<i>Sweden</i>	<i>USA</i>
National/ standardised assessment system	<i>(yes)</i>	<i>no</i>	no	yes	<i>no</i>	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	<i>no</i>
During compulsory primary phase	<i>varies</i>	<i>varies</i>	no	8	<i>no</i>	11	no	<i>SAT</i>	12 for some	8/9	10, 12	<i>INCE, 12</i>	9	<i>varies</i>
Exam/certificate to mark end of primary	<i>no</i>	<i>no</i>	n/a	no	<i>no</i>	11	no	no	12	no	12	12	n/a	<i>no</i>
During compulsory secondary phase	<i>varies</i>	<i>varies</i>	16	11/ 15	15/16	14	15	<i>SAT</i>	14/15	12/ 13	16/17	<i>INCE, 16</i>	12,14,16	<i>varies</i>

- Australia** School entry assessment is compulsory in the state of Victoria. (Voluntary) national statements and profiles are adapted by individual States/Territories. National literacy and numeracy benchmarks and an associated national testing programme against these benchmarks have/are being gradually introduced for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9/10 (children aged eight-nine, 10-11, 12-13 and 14-16 respectively). Various forms of diagnostic and monitoring assessment are used in some other key learning areas.
- Canada** Several provinces implement provincial testing/assessment programmes for specific subjects (literacy and numeracy, in particular) and specific age groups during primary and secondary education. Periodic national assessment takes place, usually via the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (*CMEC*). Examples include the School Achievement Indicators Programme (*SAIP*).
- Finland** Primary and lower secondary compulsory phase education is provided in one all-through school. Recommended assessment criteria have been prepared for the intermediate year (8) in all common subjects. The comprehensive school leaving certificate is given to a student who has completed the entire comprehensive school syllabus.
- Germany** No formal **national** assessment, but teacher assessment, using a national marking system, leads to school certificates. Various lower secondary leaving certificates (15/16+).
- Italy** Written and oral tests every three/four months throughout compulsory education determine progress to the next class. Successful completion of examinations at the end of primary education (*licenza elementare*, 11) and lower secondary education (*licenza media*, 14) are essential for access to the next phase.
- Japan** Teacher assessment is the norm, often using commercial tests influenced by examination expectations higher up. Prefecture tests (in Japanese, social studies, mathematics, science and English) are taken on completion of compulsory education, age 15. Access to *senior high school* or vocational/technical schools is by competition (individual entrance examinations, 14+exams, or similar).

- Korea** Annual nationwide scholastic achievement tests (*SATs*) of a proportion of students in certain year groups and certain subjects. Entrance tests, combined with continuous assessment results and lottery allocation govern access to *senior high school*, age 15+.
- Netherlands** Around 80 per cent of primary schools voluntarily administer *CITO* tests towards the end of primary level education to guide students' secondary school choice. School leaving examinations of all types: *VMBO* (pre-vocational education, 16+), *HAVO* (17+), and *VWO* (18+), grant access to further and higher education of designated types. There are also *CITO* tests to assess whether students have achieved the attainment targets of the compulsory core curriculum for lower secondary education (*basisvorming*), which may be taken after two or three years.
- New Zealand** The National Education Monitoring Project (*NEMP*) assesses a three per cent sample of children aged 8/9 and 12/13. Cumulative credits acquired from age 15+ lead to various levels of National Certificate of Educational Achievement, (*NCEA*) which is gradually replacing the School Certificate (15/16), Sixth Form Certificate (16/17) and University Bursary (17/18).
- Singapore** Children are streamed at the end of Year 4 (age ten) for the final two years of primary education – via a school-based examination in English, the mother tongue and mathematics. The Primary School Leaving Examination (*PSLE*) is required for admission to secondary education at age 12. Singapore Cambridge *GCE O Level* and *GCE N Level* examinations are available for students of different levels of ability during lower secondary education (taken at age 16 or 17).
- Spain** *INCE* national, sample assessments are administered at the end of primary and lower secondary education (aged 12 and 16 respectively). The lower secondary education (*ESO*) qualification is required for access to upper secondary education.
- Sweden** Primary and lower secondary compulsory phase education is provided in *grundskola* (age six/seven-15/16). There are voluntary national diagnostic tests (in literacy/numeracy) at the end of Year 2 (age nine) and tests in Swedish, English and mathematics at the end of Year 5 (age 12, voluntary), Year 7 (age 14, voluntary) and Year 9 (school leaving certificate, age 16, compulsory).
- USA** Many states operate state assessments (especially for diagnostic purposes) or participate in periodic large scale assessments such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (*NAEP*). *No Child Left Behind* legislation (January 2002) introduces statutory assessment in English (reading) and mathematics in Grades/Years 3-8, and for some Grades in science, from autumn 2005.