

English schools

Education in the United Kingdom, excluding Scotland, is regulated by the **National Curriculum**.

- 1. Like Italy, education is obligatory in the UK between the ages of 5 and 16.
- 2. The School Year starts in early September and finishes after the third week of July. It is divided into 3 terms : the Autumn term from September to Christmas, the Spring term from January to Easter and the Summer term between April and July.
- During each term a 'half-term break' of about one week is a short holiday for students and teachers.
- There are some other differences between the two systems, of course. In Italy two students with an 11 month age difference can be in the same class, while in the UK the classes are composed of pupils whose age is not relative to the class year. In other words, a child born in July will be placed in a class one year ahead of a child born in August.
- Another difference is the wearing of uniforms, obligatory in the vast majority of schools – both state and private. The uniforms are generally inexpensive, and are sold in many supermarkets and cheaper clothes shops.
- In the UK text books, exercise books, pens, pencils, rubbers and the variety of instruments used by students (rulers, compasses, etc.) are all free, provided by the schools themselves. Pupils also have a personal locker, where they can leave the books that they do not need to study in class or at home.
- Private schools are often very expensive and are commonly believed to be places of learning for an élite few. Although UK university students receive subsidies to cover the cost of tuition and books (according to the family income), many students in the UK leave with large debts (the banks support students during the time of their studies with loans).
- Classes are generally composed of smaller numbers of students than in Italy, with an average of 9 students in secondary school classes.
- Private, or Independent schools, have longer holiday periods than State schools in the UK, but the school day is longer, with more hours of lessons.
- In England only three subjects are considered obligatory, and are taught in all schools at all levels: English, Maths and Science. Other subjects depend on the type of school or course followed. These subjects include Design and technology, Informatics and communication technology, History, Geography, Art, Foreign languages, Music, Physical Education, Civic Education or Social Studies. There are also three optional subjects; Personal, Social and Health Education, Comparative Religious Studies and Sexual Education.

- There are three 'Key Stages' in the British system : Stages 1 and 2 are effectively equivalent to elementary school education (from the age of 5 to 7 years old and from 7 to 11 years of age); stages 3 and 4 correspond to Middle school education (from 11 to 14 years old) and from 14 to 16 years of age ; Key stage 5 is the equivalent of the final two years education in an Italian Lyceum.
- During their time at school, pupils will sit various National Tests. At the end of Stages 1 and 2, for example, the results of SATs tests decide where the children will continue their secondary education.
- "A" Level Exams (Advanced) at the age of 18, are the equivalent of the Italian Esame di Maturità, however, most UK students will sit exams in 3 subjects (4 at most). A good mark in these exams can make the difference in being accepted for enrolment at University.