

## INVESTICE DO ROZVOJE VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ

### System of education in the Czech Republic, Great Britain and the U.S.A.

#### *The Czech system*

In the Czech Republic school attendance is **compulsory** for children from the age of 6 up to 15. Most children attend state schools where education is free of charge but there are also some private schools where parents have to participate in covering expenses, and church religious schools. All schools are coeducational. Children do not wear uniforms. Physically or mentally disabled children are educated in special schools.

The **school year** starts on 1st September and ends on 30th June of the following year. It is divided into two terms (September – January, February – June). There are several short vacations during the year (Christmas, spring, Easter). Classes usually begin at about 8 a.m. and there are from 4 to 7 lessons in a row, followed by lunch break and then sometimes by afternoon classes which end at about 5 p.m. at the latest. Breaks between lessons last from 5 to 20 minutes.

Pupils and students are **evaluated** by marks from 1 to 5. 1 is the best, 5 is the worst. Each term students get their school report with marks from both compulsory and elective subjects. University students can get grades from 1 to 3 to be successful.



The Czech educational system includes **four levels**.

**Pre-school** education is provided by **nursery schools** and **kindergartens** for children up to 6 years. Most children attend these schools from the age of 3 or 4. At the age of 6 they must undergo the primary school registration but some of them can receive the suspension for one year after the psychologist's advice. At kindergartens children do not learn read or write, they mostly play games, draw, sing and try to get along with other children.

**Primary schools** have 2 stages. Children in the first five grades are mostly taught by one class teacher. Older children (6 - 9 grade) have more teachers who specialize in various subjects. Some

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pupils can transfer to grammar school after the fifth grade and having passed an entrance examination.

There is a variety of **secondary schools**: grammar schools prepare students for university studies with general and academic education. Special schools include technical colleges specialized in building, chemistry, engineering etc., business academies, agricultural schools, nursing schools, music and art schools. They are finished with **school-leaving examination** called „maturita“ which is required for all universities and other further studies. This examination is taken in four subjects at grammar schools and in five or more subjects at specialized schools. The educational reform has been in progress recently. The result should be „The new state maturita exam“.

**Vocational schools** and **apprentice centres** train their students for practical jobs.

**Universities and colleges** provide tertiary education which lasts from three to six years. Students can study economics, law, journalism, medicine, science etc. Every large town in Czech republic is a seat of a university or college now but the oldest ones are the most renowned. Our oldest university is Charles University in Prague (founded by Charles IV in 1348 as the first Central and East European university). Other notable universities are Masaryk University in Brno, Palacký University in Olomouc and Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem. To receive the diploma at a graduation ceremony students have to pass the state examination and defend the thesis. After three-year courses students can get Bachelor's Degree, after four to six-year courses a Master's Degree.

For those who do not want to enter the university there are various types of **two-year training courses** such as for managers, businessmen, social workers, specialized nurses or language experts.

### *The British system*

In Great Britain education is **compulsory** for everyone between the ages of 5 to 16. Most British pupils attend state schools which provide free education. There are also fee-paying independent or private schools which are better known as Public Schools.

The **school year** runs from early September to the middle of July. There are three terms: autumn, spring and summer with a couple of weeks vacations at Christmas and Easter. The lessons start at 9 a.m. with an assembly and last till 3 or 4 p.m.

The pupils are **evaluated** by the marks from A to D (A is the best), F means fail.

Most schools have some kind of **uniform** even if this is just a coloured sweatshirt and a badge. Some private schools are more formal and they have specific regulations for all clothing and items can only be bought in specialist shops. Students over 16 in state schools generally have a free choice of clothes.

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Parents may send their child to a private **nursery school** at the age of 3 or 4, or there are some nursery classes at state primary schools.

Children from the age of five attend **primary schools** where they follow the National Curriculum that dictates what is to be taught at each age and when the pupils will be tested. Education in the independent system is called preparatory education and is available for children aged 5 to 13. State and independent schools follow the same schedule. In the state system, children enter primary school at the age of 5 and then move to secondary school at 11.

All **secondary schools**, both state and independent, teach pupils until they reach the age of 16 when they take exams called GCSE – **General Certificate of Secondary Education**. A balance between the art and the science subjects is chosen. Some pupils manage one or two GCSEs while others can pass up to twelve. There are league tables that show which schools get the best examination results. Studying at **Public Schools** is considered to be the most prestigious. The majority of them are single-sex boarding schools where children live during the school term. Eton, Harrow and Rugby are the most famous Public Schools.

After completing compulsory education at the age of 16, students may legally leave school and start work. Or they can go on to study **A levels** or **International Baccalaureate** (IB) during the following two years. A-level course students have a free choice of about five subjects but focus on two or three in the second year. They take A levels (advanced GCSE) at the age of 18. IB students also have choices but cannot escape subjects such as mathematics in their studies.

Many students want to go on to either Further or Higher Education. **Further Education** (FE) colleges tend to focus on career based courses, eg. motor mechanics or computing. They do offer some degree courses. **Higher Education** (HE) is education and training that takes place at universities, colleges and institutes offering studies at degree level or higher (post graduate qualifications). The oldest and most prestigious universities in Great Britain we can find in Oxford and Cambridge (sometimes the abbreviation „Oxbridge“ is used for both of them together).

### ***The American system***

The United States of America do not have united system of education. Each state makes its own laws about attending school and tests. There are some federal laws that all states must follow but mostly



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the laws are different in every state. Generally we can say that school attendance is **compulsory** from the age of 6 to 16. Children in the US have to take lots of tests. Each year students must take exams on writing, reading and math. Many states design their own **tests** but some use a general test. In high school, many states require students to pass a specific exam on reading, writing and math in order to graduate. Marks are A, B, C, D and F (with A for excellent and F for failure) in most US schools.

For children under 6 **pre-school** education is provided by nursery schools and kindergartens. Most parents put the children to the kindergarten at the age of five to give them a chance to be with other kids and get them ready for „real“ school.

At the age of 6 children start to attend **elementary / grade school** and stay there until 11 (six grades). Then they transfer to secondary / middle / junior high school.

Secondary education is provided by **Middle schools** (from 11 to 14 years of age) or by **High Schools** which are often divided into Junior High (from 12 to 15) and High School (from 15 to 18 years of age). The basic school leaving qualification is usually the High School Diploma. After passing an examination the student is awarded the General Education Diploma at the big ceremony when students wear special school uniforms and the best student of the year has a speech.



If students want to go on to university, they have to take the SAT (**Scholastic Aptitude Test**) exam. The SAT is the national exam that nearly every university requires as a part of its admittance policy. This test is usually taken when students are in the eleventh or twelfth grades, when they are getting ready to apply for university. It lasts almost 4 hours and students must solve math problems like algebra and geometry, write an essay that effectively shows their viewpoint on a certain subject and demonstrate their ability to understand vocabulary and literary texts. Most universities require a certain grade of SAT to admit a student. Some universities give special scholarship for very good sportsmen to represent them at students' leagues.

High school graduates have three possibilities to continue their studies. They can go to **technical schools** which train students for a specific job, like repairing computers or working in a doctor's office.

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Or they can choose **community college** where they study for two years, or **university** where studies last at least four years. The area in which a college or university is situated is called a campus. Usually, there are lecture halls, libraries, student residential areas, and parks. Students often stay in the campus all through the week and go home only for longer weekends and vacations. The oldest and most respected universities in the USA are all private, for example Harvard, Yale University, Princeton University etc.

### Vocabulary

<b>school attendance</b>	školní docházka
<b>compulsory</b>	povinný
<b>free of charge</b>	zdarma
<b>participate</b>	podílet se
<b>coeducational</b>	koedukovaná (pro obě pohlaví)
<b>vacations</b>	prázdniny
<b>evaluate</b>	hodnotit
<b>elective</b>	volitelný
<b>provide</b>	poskytovat
<b>receive</b>	obdržet
<b>grammar school</b>	gymnázium
<b>entrance examination</b>	přijímací zkouška
<b>thesis</b>	diplomová / ročníková (písemná) práce
<b>fee</b>	poplatek (školné)
<b>assembly</b>	shromáždění
<b>curriculum</b>	osnovy
<b>focus on</b>	zaměřit se na
<b>degree</b>	titul
<b>be provided by</b>	být poskytován (kým)
<b>apply for</b>	přihlásit se
<b>admittance policy</b>	přijímací politika
<b>student residential area</b>	studentské koleje



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### Tasks

#### 1. Complete the table with these expressions:

6 – 16 GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) Charles University  
Oxford 6 – 15 SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) Harvard Cambridge 5 –  
16 Masaryk University in Brno Yale School Leaving „Maturita“ Exam

	Compulsory education (age)	Important examination	Two best-known universities
Czech Republic			
Great Britain			
U.S.A.			

#### 2. Answer following questions (with full sentences):

- What is your opinion on wearing school uniforms?
- Can you describe your school experiences?
- What are your plans for the future, would you like to continue your studies?
- What do you think about going to nursery schools?  
Did you go there?  
Did you like going there?
- Why is education important for people?
- Can you compare private and state schools in Czech Republic?  
What are their advantages and disadvantage

#### Sources of information

Přehledně vypracovaná témata MATURITA Angličtina – nakl. Fragment, K. Matoušková, B. Faktorová  
Reading Material for the Graduation Exam – nakl. Práh, J. Odehnalová  
Časopis Bridge  
Google

#### Solutions

1.

	Compulsory education (age)	Important examination	Two best-known universities
Czech Republic	6 – 15	„Maturita“ exam	Charles University Masaryk University in Brno
Great Britain	5 – 16	GCSE	Oxford Cambridge
U.S.A.	6 - 16	SAT	Harvard Yale

2. Your own answers