

## Schooling in Germany

Schooling in Germany is presented using the example of the federal state of North Rhine Westphalia where the Heinrich–Böll–Gesamtschule is located.

In Germany, schooling is decided in each of the 16 Federal States. For this reason, there are some variations throughout the country. Schooling in North Rhine-Westphalia as outlined below, however, in many ways reflects the educational system of the other federal states, too.

In North Rhine Westphalia the children may attend a nursery school (Kindergarten) at the age of 3 (between 64 % and 80 %). When they are 6, they enter a primary school, which lasts 4 years.

According to their performance, then they either change to the *Hauptschule* or *Realschule*, two forms of secondary school, the *Gymnasium*, the German grammar school, or the comprehensive school which integrates the three school forms. Thus, the integrated comprehensive school co-exists with the selective school system in Germany.

Most of the schools in Germany are run as half-day schools. In the years to come more and more schools will be led as all–day schools.

In all school forms, English is taught as the first foreign language. English is even taught from Year 3 in primary school. In the coming years, English will be taught from Year 1. Further foreign languages are French (secondary modern schools, grammar schools and comprehensive schools), Latin, Italian, Spanish, Russian or Greek (grammar schools and comprehensive schools). At present, they are taught from 7th or 11th form.

The other subjects beginning in Year 5 are: German, Maths, Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics), Social or Civic Studies (Geography, History, Politics), Domestic Science, Metal- and Woodwork, Religious Instruction or 'Practical Philosophy', Physical Education, Art, Music, Information Technology, and more optional subjects depending on the Year that the pupils are in.

Schooling at the grammar school level now lasts 8 years and leads to A levels which qualify the students to take up their studies at university.

Secondary school (*Realschule*) takes 6 years ending with an intermediate certificate of O levels. The students now have the chance either to start an apprenticeship or to attend a college of further education — or, if they qualify, to join Sixth Form at a grammar school or at a Comprehensive to do their A levels. Secondary modern school (*Hauptschule*) also takes 6 years and also finishes with an intermediate certificate which may even qualify for Sixth Form. Afterwards, the students begin a vocational training or attend a vocational school.

After Year 10 or also after Year 12 (currently, still Year 13), having successfully passed the school leaving examinations, the students begin their vocational training in many areas (for example in various trades, in business or administration, or in the health sector). The higher the demands of the jobs are, the more important is an adequate academic performance, the student's school leaving certificate. An apprenticeship takes two years for simpler jobs, three years for most other occupations. The vocational training is either part of the so-called dual system of training while working, complemented by vocational school, or it consists of attending courses at specialised schools leading to a diploma.

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