

## **British and Czech educational systems**

### **The British system of education**

The education system in the UK is divided into four main parts, primary education, secondary education, further education and higher education. There are two basic types of schools in the UK. These are state schools (no school fees are charged) and public schools (independent with school fees). Full time education in the UK is compulsory from the age of 5 to the age of 16 or 18. Parents can send their kids to nursery schools or playgroups for two or three years before they start primary school.

Primary school education begins in the UK at the age of 5 and continues until the age of 11. Some primary schools are split up into Infant and Junior levels. The infant age range is from age 5 to 7. The Junior age range is from age 7 to 11.

### **Secondary school education**

Secondary education is provided by several types of schools for example grammar schools, secondary technical schools, comprehensive schools, secondary modern schools. Grammar schools provide scientific education and prepare for university studies, secondary modern schools provide general education with focus on practical activities. Secondary technical schools provide education related to industry, commerce or agriculture and comprehensive schools provide general education regardless the pupils' abilities.

All students study English, Math, Sciences, a Humanity and a Modern Language. Besides these subjects, each school has a list with optional subjects (Art, Music, Drama, Latin, Sport Science, Design Technology, Computer Science) and students may choose a few subjects that interest them.

Between ages of 14 or 16, British pupils prepare for their GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) certificates. They are based on a mixture of course work and written exams in individual subjects. At the age of 16 pupils can either leave school and start work or they can stay at the school for another two years and prepare for GCE (General Certificate of education) exam at Advanced levels (A-levels). These exams are used as entrance qualifications for university studies, other types of higher education or for professional training. Students specialize in 3 or 4 subjects, that are usually relevant to the degree subject they wish to follow at university. A-levels are state examinations and are recognized by all UK universities and by institutions worldwide.

Many students decide to leave school at the age of 16 and go to a Further education college. These colleges provide studies which are connected to vocational training – for example in engineering, cooking, hairdressing.

### **Higher education**

Higher education means courses at a university, institute of polytechnics or a college of higher education. There is no automatic admission to university, students are accepted on the basis of their A-levels exam results. Universities and institutes of polytechnics provide degrees to their successful students at the end of their studies.

In the UK, a British bachelors' degree normally takes three years to complete. Examples of degrees are: BA (Bachelor of Arts), BEng (Bachelor of Engineering), BEd (Bachelor of Education) and BSc (Bachelor of Science).

Postgraduate courses in the UK education system are very intensive. This means that the courses are usually much shorter than in other countries. A master's degree typically takes 12 months to complete, for example an MA - Master of Arts and an MEng - Master of Engineering. An MBA (Master of Business Administration) is a high profile Masters course which can take 2 years. A PhD research degree in the UK can take between 2 and 7 years.

British universities are not a part of state system of education. They are independent, but a lot of them are supported by public funds. The Open University is a unique one, because it provides degree courses by correspondence for students who are already working. Anyone can register as a student and doesn't need to have A-levels exams. Their degrees are equivalent to degrees from other universities.

### **Uniforms at British schools**

Uniforms are very common at British schools. There are many types of uniforms. Some look like casual clothes, usually consist of smart trousers or a skirt for girls and a sweater with the school logo on. Some schools prefer a more formal look of the uniform and that means for example a blazer, shirt and a tie.

## The Czech system of education

The system of education in the Czech republic can be divided into 4 stages – pre-school education, elementary education, secondary education and tertiary education.

### Pre-school education

Children can go to nursery school or kindergartens at the age of 3. The last year of the pre-school education is now compulsory, so kids at the age of 5 have to go to kindergartens as they are preparing for entering the elementary school.

### Elementary education

Czech elementary education lasts for 9 years and it is compulsory. Most children attend state schools, but there are also some private and church schools in the Czech republic. Czech elementary schools are divided into two parts – the first grade (class 1 to class 5) and the second grade (class 6 to class 9). After the fifth class children can choose to continue at the elementary school or they can try to pass entrance exams and study at 8-year grammar school. Most students continue their studies at elementary school and if they want to study at a secondary school, they need to pass their entrance exams when they are at the ninth class. If students want to study at a vocational school, they usually don't need any entrance exams, they are accepted to these schools on basis of their elementary school results in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> classes.

### Secondary education

At the age of 15 or 16, Czech pupils can choose from a variety of secondary schools. They can choose from grammar schools (which provide general studies and prepare for university studies), special schools (including technical colleges focused on building, engineering, business academies, agricultural schools, nursing schools, music and art schools which offer professional education) or vocational schools (where students prepare for their practical education). Studies at grammar schools or special schools usually take 4 years and at the end of the studies students take their school leaving exams called maturita. There are two compulsory exams – in the Czech language and literature and then either in Foreign languages or Math. The next two or more exams are chosen according to the specialization of the secondary school. Studies at vocational schools usually take 3 years and at the end of the studies students take practical exams according to the specialization of the vocational school.

### Tertiary education

After finishing secondary education, students can continue studying at a university or they can study in two-year training courses such as for managers, businessmen, social workers, specialized nurses or language experts.

Most universities offer bachelor's, master's/engineering degrees. A bachelor's degree is usually a three-year course of study. Students can complete it by means of a final exam including the defense of a bachelor's thesis, or may continue on to the master's program, where they can get a narrower specialization. A master's degree consists of either a five or six-year study program (medicine), or as a two-year program following the completion of a bachelor's degree. After finishing university studies, students get their diplomas and degrees. If it was a bachelor's programme, they get the Bachelor's degree or if it was the master's or engineering programme, they get their master's/ engineering degree. When students want to have a doctoral degree, they can study a doctoral programme at a university. During the studies students need to publish some work and they finish their studies by defending their dissertation work and are awarded PhD title.

### Some other differences between the Czech and the British system of education

The Czech students mostly don't wear a school uniform and lessons usually start at 8 o'clock and finish at around 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Young pupils usually finish their school day even earlier, usually at 12 o'clock. British pupils usually start at 9 o'clock and finish at 3.30 p.m. Czech students also have school holidays. They have holidays in October (they are called Autumn holidays), in December (they are called Christmas holidays), then one day in February (this day is called a half-term holiday), a week-holiday in February/ March (this week is called a spring holiday), then Easter holiday and then a two-month holiday in July and August. British school holidays are different depending on the part of the UK students study in. In general they have a four-day break in October, then they have a Christmas break (the length

is similar to the Czech Christmas holiday), a five-day break in February, Easter break for 12 days, then they have a May break for 5 days and then summer break beginning in mid-July and finishing at the end of August.