

= Raising of school leaving age in England and Wales =

The raising of school leaving age (often shortened to ROSLA) is the name given by the government to refer to changes regarding the legal age a child is permitted to leave compulsory education , usually falling under an Education Act . In most countries , the school leaving age often reflects when young people are seen to be mature enough within their society , but not necessarily when they are old enough to be regarded as an adult .

In England and Wales , this age has been raised numerous times since the introduction of compulsory education in 1870 . On 1 September 1972 , the age was raised from 15 to 16 , following preparations which began 8 years earlier in 1964 . This increased the legal leaving age from 15 to 16 , leaving a gap year of school leavers who , by law , had to complete an additional year of education from 1973 onwards .

There are several reasons why the government may wish to increase the school leaving age , considering it has raised the age numerous times over the 19th and 20th centuries , the last time being in 2015 . With past age raisings , the reasons given have been focused mainly on generating more skilled labour by providing additional time for students to gain additional skills and qualifications . In recent years , it has become apparent that most 16- to 18 @-@ year @-@ olds are not as motivated to continue their education after completion of their GCSEs , thus increasing the overall unemployment rate , as many are unable to find work . The British government hoped that by making education compulsory up to the age of 17 by 2013 , and 18 by 2015 , it could change this .

= = 19th century = =

Prior to the 19th century , there were very few schools . Most of those that existed were run by the church , for the church , stressing religious education . In the latter part of the 19th Century , compulsory attendance at school ceased to be a matter for local option , with the introduction of the Elementary Education Act 1870 a milestone in the British school education system . Children had to attend between the ages of 5 and 10 though with some local discretion such as early leaving in agricultural areas .

The introduction of the Elementary Education Act 1870 (applying to England and Wales) , commonly known as Forster 's Education Act having been drawn up by William Edward Forster , created the concept of compulsory education for children under thirteen , although didn 't insist on compulsory attendance initially , as it only required the provision for education of children up to 10 years of age . In areas where education was considered a problem , elected school boards could be set up . These boards could , at their discretion , create local by @-@ laws , confirmed by Parliament , to require attendance and fine the parents of children who did not attend . There were exemptions for illness , living more than a certain distance (typically one mile) from a school , or certification of having reached the required standard (which varied by board) which were made mandatory across England and Wales by the 1880 Act .

The Elementary Education Act 1880 insisted on compulsory attendance from 5 ? 10 years . For poorer families , ensuring their children attended school proved difficult , as it was more tempting to send them working if the opportunity to earn an extra income was available . Attendance Officers often visited the homes of children who failed to attend school , which often proved to be ineffective . Children under the age of 13 who were employed were required to have a certificate to show they had reached the educational standard . Employers of these children who weren 't able to show this were penalised . An act brought into force thirteen years later went under the name of the Elementary Education (School Attendance) Act 1893 , which stated a raised minimum leaving age to 11 . Later the same year , the act was also extended for blind and deaf children , who previously had no means of an official education . This act was later amended in 1899 to raise the school leaving age up to 12 years of age .

= = 20th century = =

The start of the 20th century saw school boards abolished in 1902 and replaced with local education authorities , which are still in use to the present day .

= = = The Fisher Act of 1918 = = =

The year 1918 saw the introduction of the Education Act 1918 , commonly also known as the Fisher Act as it was devised by Herbert Fisher . The act enforced compulsory education from 5 ? 14 years , but also included provision for compulsory part @-@ time education for all 14 to 18 @-@ year @-@ olds . There were also plans for expansion in tertiary education , by raising the participation age to 18 . This was dropped because of the cuts in public spending after World War I. This is the first act which starting planning provisions for young people to remain in education until the age of 18 . The 1918 act was not implemented until a further act of 1921 was passed .

= = = Butler 's post @-@ war education changes = = =

In 1944 , Rab Butler introduced the Education Act 1944 which amongst other changes , including the introduction of the Tripartite System , included raising the school leaving age to 15 . Although the act should have been brought into effect as from September 1939 , it was not implemented because of the effects of World War II , but was eventually enforced from April 1947 . The Comprehensive school system has since replaced the Tripartite System brought in by this act across most of England . This act also recommended compulsory part @-@ time education for all children until the age of 18 , but was dropped , in similar fashion to the 1918 Act , to cut spending after World War II .

= = = = Reasons = = = =

Changes in government approaches towards education meant that it was no longer regarded adequate for a child to leave education aged 14 , as that is the age when they were seen to really understand and appreciate the value of education , as well as being the period when adolescence was at its height . It was beginning to be seen as the worst age for a sudden switch from education to employment . Although there were concerns about the effects of having less labour from these children , it was hoped that the outcome of a larger quantity of more qualified , skilled workers would eliminate the deficit problem from the loss of unskilled labour .

= = = = Effects = = = =

This act introduced the concept of the famous 11 + examination , which determined whether a child would be entitled to schooling in a grammar school , secondary modern or technical college , under the Tripartite System . The examination was devised by Rab Butler , but has since been phased out across the majority of the United Kingdom , with just several boroughs in England and Northern Ireland still using it . League tables published in March 2007 , however , show that existing grammar schools throughout the country are outperforming comprehensive schools .

Changes in society and approaches towards education , including equal opportunities , has meant that all children now deserve to have the same education and not singling out those who learn at a slower rate than others , thus every child has the opportunity to gain secondary school level qualifications or similar , regardless of background or intelligence .

= = = Leaving age raised to 16 = = =

In 1964 , preparations began to raise the school leaving age to 16 . These were delayed in 1968 , and eventually the decision was taken in 1971 that the new upper age limit be enforced from 1 September 1972 onwards . As well as raising the school leaving age in 1972 , the year also saw the

introduction of the Education (Work Experience) Act , allowing LEAs to organise work experience for the additional final year school students . In some counties around the country , these changes also led to the introduction of middle schools in 1968 , where students were kept at primary or junior school for an additional year , meaning that the number of students in secondary schools within these areas remained virtually constant through the change . In others , more radical changes led to middle schools for pupils aged up to 13 opening in smaller secondary school buildings , with other schools accommodating students over 13 . As of 2010 , there are fewer than 300 middle schools across England , situated in just 22 local education authorities ; the number of remaining middle schools has gradually fallen since the mid @-@ 1980s .

= = = ROSLA Buildings = = =

For many secondary schools around England and Wales in areas without a Middle School , accommodating for the new 5th year students would be a struggle . A popular solution was to provide those schools with a pre @-@ fabricated building (often referred to as ROSLA Buildings or ROSLA Blocks) that were in need of additional capacity , providing them with the resources to cope with the new generation of 5th year students . This solution proved popular with many schools across the country , not least due to the low cost involved for materials and construction , but also the speed which these buildings could be erected . Many were supplied by F. Pratten and Co Ltd .

The ROSLA Buildings were delivered to schools in self assembly packs , being assembled by a team often within days , regardless of weather conditions . Consequently , they were not intended to stand long @-@ term , though some have proven to have stood much longer than was initially planned . Many ROSLA Buildings shared similar exterior attributes such as their design , with the only difference being the separation of rooms within the building . The room separation within the building was decided upon by senior school management , hence many walls are false from being added in after construction .

Although the majority of schools around England and Wales have since replaced the ROSLA Building at their site , there are still numerous schools around the country which are still actively using these buildings . Some schools which still have a standing ROSLA Building that isn 't in use serve for youth centres for the community or are simply derelict . The majority have since been demolished or extensively refurbished .

= = = Education Act 1996 = = =

Between 1976 and 1997 , the minimum school leaving arrangements were :

A child whose sixteenth birthday falls in the period 1 September to 31 January inclusive , may leave compulsory schooling at the end of the Spring term (the following Easter) .

A child whose sixteenth birthday falls in the period 1 February to 31 August , may leave on the Friday before the last Monday in May .

Under section 8 (4) of the Education Act 1996 , a new single school leaving date was set for 1998 and all subsequent years thereafter . This was set as the last Friday in June in the school year which the child reaches the age of 16 .

= = 21st century = =

= = = Education and Skills Act 2008 = = =

Reports published in November 2006 suggested that Education Secretary Alan Johnson was exploring ways to raise the school leaving age in England to 18 , just over 40 years later than the last rise in 1972 , pointing to the decline in unskilled jobs and the need for young people to be equipped for modern day employment .

==== Participation Age ====

A year later , on 6 November 2007 , Prime Minister Gordon Brown unveiled the government 's plans in his Queen 's Speech . The plans included the duty for parents to assist their children in education or training participation until the date of their 18th birthday , as well as detailing proposed moves to reform the apprenticeship system and to improve achievement for children in care . The Education and Skills Act 2008 , when it came into force in the 2013 academic year , initially required participation in some form of education or training until the school year in which the child turned 17 , followed by the age being raised to the young person 's 18th birthday in 2015 . This was referred to as raising the " participation age " to distinguish it from the school leaving age which remains at 16 . To qualify as participation the young person must be in education or training for the equivalent of one day a week (at a minimum) . The local council is responsible for ensuring that a suitable place is available . The Act makes similar powers available to the National Assembly for Wales . A spokesperson for the Welsh Assembly indicated that it would want to encourage more young people to stay in education , but without compulsion , so school leavers there are not required to continue with any education or training .

==== Reasons ====

Figures were published in June 2006 showing that 76 % of all young people aged 16 ? 18 are already in further education or training , meaning that the rise might only affect around 25 % of young people who may have otherwise sought employment immediately upon finishing compulsory education . This did not specifically state that young people would remain in secondary school , but rather by law be required to continue their education full or part time , whether that be in sixth form , college or work based training . Around 80 % of 16 - 18 year olds stay in full time academic or vocational education , or go on a government financed training course . In a survey of 859 people , 9 / 10 supported the plans for the age increase .

Reports published by the DfES showed that although there are around 70 % of 16 year olds who remain in full time education , this declines to less than 50 % by the time they reach 18 , with the majority finding unskilled employment and even fewer going into employment where their training has relevance . There is also a small increase in those who become unemployed by the time they reach 18 , which the government hoped to reduce with the act . It is these cases of unemployment which the government believes to be the toughest , whom it classifies as NEET (Not in Education , Employment or Training) . In 2006 an additional 7 % of 16 year olds fell into this category and the proportion rose to 13 % among 18 year olds . In practice , only 1 % of young people are classified as NEET during their time aged 16 ? 18 , due to churn between training , employment and NEET classification . In 2015 the percentage of 16 - 18 classified as NEET fell to 7 % , the lowest figure since 2000 .

The government believed that the changes were needed because of the collapse in unskilled jobs in the economy , which means that young school leavers at 16 years of age are finding it increasingly more difficult to find employment , consequentially in many cases making them unemployable . Within the last 40 years , the number of unskilled jobs available have more than halved , from 8 million in the 1960s to 3 . 5 million in the present day , with predictions of further drops to just 600 , 000 by 2020 due to the increasing demand for skilled labour . This , together with fewer students continuing their further education , increase the difficulty for young school leavers to find work if they were either not able , or chose not to , stay on at school and complete further education .

==== Opposition ====

Whilst the government is eager to implement the changes , many oppose the proposal , some on civil liberties grounds . Compulsory school attendance is usually justified by reference to the argument that minors are incapable of making sufficiently reasoned choices . However , the 16

@-@ 18 age group falls into a grey area , being regarded as effectively adult in a number of contexts . Indeed , in some jurisdictions (e.g. Scotland) , individuals are considered to reach full maturity at 16 .

The proposal of using criminal sanctions to enforce attendance under this new system was opposed by MPs from both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats , who believed compulsion and threats were the wrong approach to increasing participation . A spokesperson for the DfES said the proposals were not about " forcing young people to do something they don 't want to " , and that " we are letting young people down if we allow them to leave education and training without skills at the age of 16 . " However , the Prime Minister 's Queen 's Speech in November 2007 , which discussed the raise in school leaving age , suggested that pupils who failed to comply with new laws are to be expected to face fines or community service , rather than custodial sentencing which had previously been proposed . Local Authorities will also be expected to ensure pupils are participating up to 18 years of age .

= = = = Effects = = = =

The downward trend in the number of unskilled jobs available throughout the country is continuing . The government believes that the extension of compulsory education until the age of 18 will mean many more young people will leave education in a much better position to find skilled employment . Speaking in March 2007 , Chancellor Gordon Brown stated that around 50 @,@ 000 teenagers would be paid a training allowance to sign up to college @-@ based courses , with estimates on the available number of apprenticeships available to double to around 500 @,@ 000 by 2020 , with 80 % being available in England , which will be an increase from the current 250 @,@ 000 apprenticeships available , offered by 130 @,@ 000 employers .

Speaking in June 2007 , Barry Sheerman , Labour MP and chairman of the Commons education and skills select committee , says that " young people not in education are one of the biggest social problems facing a modern government " . The government is hopeful that the changes will also have an effect on preventing the increase in crime levels , as currently a substantial percentage of young people leaving school are turning to a life of crime , most unable to find suitable work due to lack of skills and qualifications .