

CULTURE

SECONDARY SCHOOL IN THE UK

1 Discuss the questions with your partner.

- 1 Do you like going to school?
- 2 Why? / Why not?
- 3 At what age do people start secondary school in your country?

2 Work with a partner. What do you know about secondary schools in the UK? Discuss your ideas. Read the web page. Were any of your ideas mentioned?



The secondary school system in the UK

From the age of 11 to 16, children go to secondary school. Most take children of all abilities and are called comprehensive schools. But there are also grammar schools, where children take an exam to enter, especially in Northern Ireland. In Scotland, secondary schools are called high schools or academies. When they are 14, all children choose the subjects they want to study at GCSE (or National 5 exams in Scotland). These are national exams you take at 16. Everyone has to do English and maths. Students also choose four or more additional subjects from a list. This includes subjects like languages and sciences but also photography and drama.

The school year

The school year goes from September to July in England and Wales, August to June in Scotland and September to June in Northern Ireland. There are three terms and short holidays in the middle of each term. The Christmas and Easter holidays are usually two weeks, and the summer holiday is six weeks, or two months in Northern Ireland.

The school day

The school day at secondary schools goes from about 8.45 am to 3.30 pm. There's a break in the morning and another for lunch. Most British school students have to wear a uniform. Each school has its own colours for the uniforms.

Sixth form / S5 and S6

When students are 17 and 18, they take more exams. In Scotland, these exams are called Highers in the first year and Advanced Highers in the second year. In the rest of the UK, students go into the sixth form to study four subjects at AS level in their first year and three of these at A level in the second year. You need to pass these high-level exams to go to university.

3 Read the web page again and complete the table.

Types of public secondary schools in the UK

- 1 _____ schools – These schools take children of all abilities.
- 2 _____ schools – Children need to pass an exam to get in these schools.
- 3 _____ schools or academies – These are secondary schools in Scotland.

Secondary school	England and Wales	Northern Ireland	Scotland
National exams at age 16	GCSEs	4 _____	National 5 exams
National exams at age 17	AS levels	AS levels	5 _____
National exams at age 18	6 _____	A levels	Advanced Highers
School year starts	September	7 _____	August
School year finishes	8 _____	June	June



TALKING POINTS

In groups, compare the UK secondary school system with your own.

- 4 Read the information on the Woodedge Secondary School website. Is this school similar to your school? Answer the questions.

Woodedge

Secondary School

Parents Teachers **Students**



Welcome to the Woodedge School website. We are a comprehensive school for girls and boys aged 11–18. Our children come from many different cultures and backgrounds. We are a popular school and children who come here do very well in their exams. As well as excellent teaching, we offer many interesting after-school clubs, including sports, drama and dance.

1 At what age do students leave Woodedge School?
2 Why do students need to bring money to school on 13th November?
3 Do students have to wear their school uniform on 13th November?
4 How many tickets can each student buy for the concert?
5 What must students wear for the football competition?
6 Where are Year 11 students going on 30th November?

School Diary

Important dates for November

Friday 13th: **Charity Day** Can everyone please bring £1.00. This is a non-uniform day. Wear your own clothes, but no hats, please, and don't colour your hair. There will be things for sale, so bring in some extra money. All the money we make will go to the charity Save the Children.

Friday 20th: **Autumn concert** Tickets £3.00 on sale now – maximum four per student.

Tuesday 24th: **Years 7–10 Girls' indoor football competition** Sports Hall – trainers only, please.

Monday 30th: **Year 11 school trip to the National Theatre**

- 5 Listen to Aleesha talking about Woodedge School. Answer the questions.

- 1 How many pupils are there at Woodedge?
- 2 What is Aleesha's cultural background?
- 3 What time does school finish?
- 4 What do students learn about in PDT?
- 5 What kind of food can you get at lunchtime?
- 6 How does Aleesha pay for her lunch?
- 7 What after-school clubs is she doing this term?
- 8 What is she making for Charity Day?

- 6 Compare Woodedge School with your own. Talk to your partner about these things.

- after-school clubs
- how long the day is
- mix of cultures
- number of students
- school concerts
- special days (like Charity Day)
- school lunches
- school trips

PROJECT

A school web page

Design a web page for your school. Include this information:

- a description of the school
- photos of your friends and the building
- a newsletter with school events for one month

Present your web page to the class.