**The French School System**

**Private schools and public schools.**

Since 1967, school has been compulsory for all children between the ages of 6 and 16. However, most of the pupils start school around the age of 3. A pupil can either go to a public school or to a private school. The public schools (which attract 80% of the pupils) are run by the state. They must therefore follow some basic rules among which:

* Free education for everyone.
* Political and philosophical neutrality.
* Secularism: No religious belief can be displayed. This also means that religion is not taught in public schools.

On the other hand, private schools which are not free, may have religious instruction in their curriculum.

**French school grades.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Age** | **France** | **UK** | **USA** |
| **Ecole maternelle** |  |  |
| 3 | Petite section | Nursery | Nursery |
| 4 | Moyenne section | Reception | Pre-Kindergarten |
| 5 | Grande section | Year 1 | Kindergarten |
| **Ecole primaire** |  |  |
| 6 | CP | Year 2 | 1st Grade |
| 7 | CE1 | Year 3 | 2nd Grade |
| 8 | CE2 | Year 4 | 3rd Grade |
| 9 | CM1 | Year 5 | 4th Grade |
| 10 | CM2 | Year 6 | 5th Grade |
| **Collége** |  |  |
| 11 | 6ème | Year 7 | 6th Grade |
| 12 | 5ème | Year 8 | 7th Grade |
| 13 | 4ème | Year 9 | 8th Grade |
| 14 | 3ème | Year 10 | 9th Grade |
| **Lycée** |  |  |
| 15 | 2nde | Year 11 | 10th Grade |
| 16 | 1ère | Year 12 | 11th Grade |
| 17 | Terminale | Year 13 | 12th Grade |

**Primary education and secondary education.**

The “école maternelle” and the “ecole primaire” are part of the primary education whereas the “college” and “lycée” form the secondary education.

In the primary education, the pupils will have only one teacher who will cover the different subjects (mathematics, French, Modern languages, sciences, history, …).

They will attend school 24 hours a week, 5 to 6 hours a day, 4 to 5 days a week.

The secondary education is a major change for the pupils since they now have one teacher for each subject. They will spend up to 35 hours a week at school.

At the end of the collége, depending on his/her results and wishes, the student may pursue the general studies or attend a vocational high school, which focuses more on the manual skills needed for a fast track entry in the job market. These students will take a final exam called baccalauréat professionnel.

**« Baccalaureat Général » and « Baccalauréat technologique »**

As for the students whose grades allow them to carry on studying in the general high school, they are meant to take a final exam which will give them access to higher education: the baccalauréat.

Once again there is another distinction, at the end of the year 11 the student has to choose if he wants to pursue the general studies or prepare a technological baccalauréat.

The technological Baccalauréat offers a wide range of possibilities such as marketing management, hotel management, arts and design, or even laboratory sciences.

The general Baccalauréat offers 3 different choices: Literature, sciences or economics.

In order to pass this exam, the pupil will need to score an overall average of 10 out of 20.

**Teaching Languages**.

The pupils have their first language classes in year 2. The first year is mainly based on the oral aspect of the language. They will be taught songs and words related to the everyday life. Progressively, the written comprehension and expression will be added so as to reach the A2 level by the end of the year 6. The teacher in charge of the class will give the language lessons. Most of the teachers offer English classes. This mainly depends on the language skills of the teacher.

In high school, the Year 7 pupils may join a bilingual class where they learn two languages straight away. The other students will start learning a second language two years later. The first language chosen is generally English while the second is Spanish ( 70% of the choices), followed by German (13%).

The “Common European Framework for Languages” guideline is used in France as well as in all European countries. At the end of the terminale, all students should reach the B2 level in their first language, and B1 for the second one.

All skills are examined for the baccalauréat. The students will take:

* An oral comprehension exam. They listen to a recording that is played 3 times and they then have to write everything they understood in French.
* An oral expression exam: the students will talk for 5 minutes and will then answer some questions.
* A written expression and a written comprehension exam.

Moreover, the students who do possess a good level of English may attend a class called “la classe européenne”. This is not an English class anymore, English is the language used to teach another subject. In our high school the pupils have a history and geography lesson in English. They are also offered the possibility to undergo an English examination provided by Cambridge English Language assessment, this will give our students the opportunity to have an English certification.