

15 The Czech education system

The Czech education system is based on a long tradition beginning in 1774, when compulsory school attendance was instituted.

There are all types of education – preschool, elementary, secondary, university and postgraduate.

Preschool education

crèches - for little kids up to the age of 3
kindergarten - also called a nursery school, for kids from 3 to 6 years old

Elementary education

Compulsory school attendance takes nine years, usually from the age of 6 till the age of 15. It is divided in two cycles. *The first cycle* is from the age of 6 to 10. They learn to write, read and count, basics of sciences. *The second cycle* is from 10 to 14 years of age. They get ready for secondary school.

The school year usually starts on September 1st and ends on June 31st. The students have many holidays during the school year, such as Autumn, Christmas, Spring Break, Eastern and so on.

The classes usually take 45 minutes and are followed by a 10 or 5 minute break. The students have also a lunch break that takes 45 minutes.

To evaluate the results of students' work, there is a classification scale of grades from 1 (the best) to 5 (the worst) applied in the Czech Republic.

Pupils obtain a summary classification (report cards) that state the received grades for each subject.

Secondary education

The secondary education usually lasts for 4 years.

It ends with a school-leaving examination (Maturita) which is required by all universities and colleges.

There are many types of secondary schools:

- *language schools*
- *technical – technická – schools*
- *business schools*

• *grammar schools* - the students gain general knowledge and they get ready for universities

• *schools for apprentices* - schools that give students special education, for example music schools, art schools, agricultural schools and so on.

• *vocational schools* - they train students for special jobs and do not expect the students to go to universities

• *boarding schools* - school at which the pupils receive board and lodging during the school term

Tertiary education

Tertiary education includes advanced vocational and university education.

Higher vocational education deepens general and professional knowledge and takes three years in the daily form, practice included.

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University education is available to all applicants with completed secondary education (i.e. leaving exam) that successfully pass the entrance exam.

Most universities have the following accredited degree programs:

Bachelor's: Usually a three-year course of study in which students get an elementary survey of highly specialized areas. Students can either leave their studies after these three years, or they can complete it by means of a leaving exam including the defence of a bachelor's thesis, or may continue into the master's program, where they can achieve a narrower specialization.

Master's: Operates either as five-year (or, more precisely, six-year), or as two-year programs following bachelor's studies. During the course, students gain both a basic survey of highly specialized subjects and a certain grade of specialization. The program culminates with students taking required state leaving exams and defending their diploma thesis.

Engineering: Relates to technical and economic fields.

The best known university is probably **Charles University** in Prague, founded during the reign of the Czech king Charles IV in 1348.

Questions to this topic:

Can you tell me something about your elementary school?
Can you tell me something about your secondary school?

What foreign language have you studied?
How long have you been studying the language?
Why do students in the CR study foreign languages?
Do you think that a foreign language is important for you? Why?
What other foreign language would you like to learn? Why?
Would you like to go abroad to learn a foreign language? Why?
What is the most difficult thing about studying a foreign language?

CZECH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM:

Vocabulary: school attendance, compulsory, state/ privat, schedule, lessons, subjects,

To attend = to go to school = chodit do školy, navštěvovat školu

To graduate = to finish attendance (ukončit docházku) at a school/ attending a school = absolvovat školu

To do/ to take exam = dělat zkoušku

To take/ to do Maturita = to take a final exam/ a school leaving exam = dělat maturitu

To have lessons from.. to.. = mít školu od.. do..

To pass exam = to go through an exam successfully = udělat zkoušku

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Medical College and Secondary Medical School is situated in a historical building in the centre of the city of Hradec

Kralové.

There are about 990 students - mostly girls - who are taught by a team of 60 staff. The school offers both academic and vocational education. It prepares its students for careers in social services, health establishments, and nursing care in various departments of a hospital, general practitioner surgeries, or consulting rooms of specialists, home care, and charity nursing.

Fields of study

4-year Secondary Medical School provides education for students at the age from 15 to 19. The students are prepared for these professions: dental assistant, laboratory assistant, and health assistant.

Students at Health Lyceum aim to continue their studies at university.

The first two years are devoted to general subjects - Czech language and literature, English, German and Latin languages, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Information and Computer technology, PE. Vocational subjects are Nursing, First Aid, Psychology and Communication strategy, Biochemistry, Microbiology, Histology. The next two years students have practical lessons in a hospital.

Medical College, which is post secondary education, offers education for such professions as qualified general

nurse, pharmacy assistant, dental technician, and health laboratory assistant.

3-year full time study is completed by passing the final exam called the Absolutorium. The graduate is able to work in any kind of specialized health institution, and in emergency unit.

The school is well equipped with laboratories, language classrooms and PC classrooms, special classrooms for nursing, library, gym.

Dormitory and school canteen are the part of this school.

A psychologic, war drama called Vyssi princip directed by Jiri Krejčík in the corridors of the school in 1960.

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4-year Secondary Medical School provides education for students at the age from 15 to 19. The students are prepared for these professions: dental assistant, laboratory assistant, and health assistant.

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TASK: Read the following article and try to fill in the gaps with the most appropriate words from the box below. (Solution on p.3)

age, art, business, ceremony, degree, entrance, grades/marks, graduates/students, handicapped/disabled, jobs, obligatory/compulsory, optional, primary/elementary, private, school-leaving, state, state, subjects, thesis, uniforms

In the Czech Republic all children go to school from the 1) of 6 to 15, because school attendance is compulsory. Six-year-olds enroll in the nine-year 2) school. Most children attend 3) schools where education is free of charge but there are also some 4) schools where parents have to participate in covering expenses of the education of their children, and church religious schools. Physically or mentally 5) children are educated in special schools.

Primary schools have 2 stages. Children in the first five grades are mostly taught by one class teacher. Older children (6 - 9 grade) have more teachers who specialize in various 6) Czech, math, physics, chemistry, history, geography, biology, etc.

Pupils in the CR do not wear 7) to school. The school year starts on 1st September, and ends on June 30th, when pupils get their school report with 8) from 1 to 5, in the 5th, 7th or 9th class, children try to pass 9) exams and continue their studies at a secondary school.

Students can enroll in secondary general school (grammar school) which prepares its students for university studies and lasts 4, 6 or 8 years. Students complete their studies with a 10) exam, which is required for all universities and colleges. The exam is taken in 4 subjects. Czech and a foreign language are 11) and math, history, biology, physics, chemistry, geography, music, art or civics are 12)

Secondary technical schools (SOŠ) train students for various branches: chemistry, glassmaking or agriculture. Economics can be studied at 13) colleges, culture, singing, dancing and drama at 14) schools. Most of the courses last 4 years and then the students can apply for university or go to work.

Secondary vocational schools (SOU) train apprentices - future bakers, bricklayers, hairdressers etc. for practical 15)

University education is provided from 3 to 6 years. Most secondary school 16) have to pass an entrance exam. Students can study at the School of Economics, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Journalism, Teacher's Training College, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Science etc. The university is finished with a 17) exam. Students have to defend a 18) in order to receive a diploma at a graduation 19) After 3-year courses they receive a Bachelor's 20) after 4 and 5-year courses a Master's degree.

Jana Kutnáková (teacher of English at the Gymnázium Budejovická in Prague 4)

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● **Do you like going to school?**
Yes, I like it because... my friends are there / the teachers are nice / I learn a lot / it gives me something to do. No, I don't like it because... it's boring / the classes are hard / I don't learn anything. I like my classes / the teachers but I don't like that I have to get up so early / that I have to take / do tests.

● **What subjects do students study at secondary schools?**

There are basic / core subjects such as maths / Czech / foreign languages. Students also have humanities, which include history / civics / history of art, and science which consists of physics / chemistry / biology / geography. Usually students have to attend physical education / PE classes. More specialized schools may offer accounting / typing / technical drawing.

● **What's your favourite subject?**

I like maths because it's challenging / different. I like English because... it helps me listen to music / I want to travel. I like history because... I like to learn about the past / I am interested in how things happened. I like art because... I can be creative / it is different from my other classes. I like biology because it studies life / how nature works.

● **What's a typical school day like for you?**

I arrive at school early / late / at 9 am. I have classes / I go to three classes / I have English and history then it is time for lunch / lunchtime. In the afternoon / After the break / After lunch I have more classes / I go home / I study and do my homework.

● **Tell me about your study habits...**

I study a lot because... my subjects are hard / I want to do well / I have a lot of homework. I like to study / usually study in the evenings / at school / at the weekends and need to be... alone / at school / in the library / with friends. I hate studying because... it's boring / I'd rather be with my friends / I don't like my school subjects. I spend three hours a day studying / Every day I study for three hours.

● **How do you learn best?**

I learn best in class / at school because I need / like the teacher to explain things / to be with others learning / to talk to my classmates about the subject. I learn best alone / on my own because... I can study what I want / I learn a lot from books / reading / the internet. Usually I remember more of what I've learned when I've read about it / heard someone talk about it / written an essay / report about it / taken a test on it. I have to memorize things / learn by heart.

● **What do you think about exams?**

I think exams are important / useful because they show how much you've learned / tell you what you need to work on / you need them to graduate. Exams are a waste of time because we spend too much time studying for them / we could use the time to learn more / different things. I think exams are stressful / difficult for students but they don't help / give a true picture of how a student is doing / learning.

● **What do you think about the issue of uniforms in school?**

Uniforms are wrong because no one should have to wear / students can't be themselves / they are boring. I think uniforms are a good idea because they are bad / old. I also think the school day should be shorter / longer because we need more time / less time to study / see our teachers / to learn.

● **What do you think could be improved at your school?**

I think my school should have more computers / teachers / study space / books. There are not enough classrooms for all the students. Lunches / classes / resources could also be improved at my school because they are bad / old. I also think the school day should be shorter / longer because we need more time / less time to study / see our teachers / to learn.

● **Do you think education is important and why or why not?**

Yes, education is very important because you need it to get a job / be successful / earn money. Education gives you things to talk about / something interesting to do / the chance to do different things. I don't think / believe education is important because it's better to learn in the real world / I don't need it for work / it costs too much / it takes too long / it's a waste of time.

● **Will you continue your education after graduation?**

Yes, I want to go to university and study English / history / computers because I want to find a good job / I like to learn / meet a lot of interesting people. No, I won't continue my education because I don't need it / I already have a job / it's / I'd rather spend my time working.

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I think uniforms are wrong because no one should tell you what to wear / students can't be themselves / they are ugly / boring. I think uniforms are a good idea / good thing because then everyone is the same / if someone doesn't have nice clothes they don't have to feel ashamed / embarrassed / it makes school about learning, not fashion.

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