

Sekundarschule

At the “Sekundarschule”, pupils with different levels of knowledge and ability can learn together for longer. As part of its vocational orientation programme, it prepares pupils for both vocational training and for a transition into a grammar school-style upper school. Lessons also provide grammar school standards right from the start and cover Years 5 to 10. Every “Sekundarschule” has a binding cooperation agreement with at least one grammar school-style upper school. The “Sekundarschule” is generally run as an all-day school.

School for children with special needs (“Förderschule”)

Due to learning difficulties or a developmental disorder, or on account of a disability, some pupils require extra support. These pupils are entitled to what we call “special educational support”. The usual setting for students with special educational needs to receive support is in a mainstream school. However, parents also have the right to send their children to a school for children with special needs. There are seven different focal areas for extra support:

- ▶ Learning
- ▶ Language
- ▶ Emotional and social development
- ▶ Visual skills
- ▶ Hearing and communication
- ▶ Intellectual development
- ▶ Physical and motor skills development.

Secondary Level II (Sekundarstufe 2)

Secondary Level II continues and expands on the educational work of Secondary Level I. It is divided into a general education pathway (grammar school-style upper school) and a vocational pathway (vocational college).

Pathways to the “Abitur”

In North Rhine-Westphalia, general education can be continued in a grammar school-style upper school in a grammar school (“Gymnasium”) or a comprehensive school (“Gesamtschule”) or in the vocational grammar school pathway of a vocational college (“Berufskolleg”).

At the end of the grammar school-style upper school or the vocational grammar school pathway, students can acquire the general higher education entrance qualification by passing the “Abitur” examination. They can also obtain the general higher education entrance qualification in the vocational grammar school pathway in combination with a vocational qualification. The “Abitur” (high school diploma) allows students to enrol on degree programmes at universities or universities of applied sciences.

Vocational college (“Berufskolleg”)

At vocational colleges, students can enrol on vocational training programmes that

- ▶ give them a vocational orientation and equip them with professional skills
- ▶ offer preparation for training schemes, jobs or degree courses
- ▶ give them a vocational qualification or
- ▶ provide further vocational training.

At the same time, all vocational college programmes give students the opportunity to acquire or catch up on general education qualifications, even up to the “Abitur”.

Further education college (“Weiterbildungskolleg”)

The further education college offers education programmes for working people of various ages and people who have some previous work experience. Their “Abendrealschule”, “Abendgymnasium” and “Kolleg” programmes allow students to catch up on any of the school qualifications from Secondary Level I and II. The “Abitur-Online” course is a special option which requires only minimal in-person attendance at the school.

Further information:

Further information is available from schools, education authorities and local government offices, as well as online at: **www.schulministerium.nrw**
Follow this link to find the contact persons for your local area:
www.mkffi.nrw/kommunale-integrationszentren

Impressum

Herausgegeben vom Ministerium für Schule und Bildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen
Völklinger Straße 49 | 40221 Düsseldorf | Telefon 0211 5867-40
poststelle@msb.nrw.de | www.schulministerium.nrw
Foto: iStock@kali9
MSB 09/2024



The school system in Nordrhein-Westfalen
Explained quickly and easily



ENGLISCH



Information and guidance

The school programme in North Rhine-Westphalia covers a broad spectrum. It offers all children and young people very good educational opportunities, according to their abilities and preferences. This flyer gives you an overview. You can obtain more detailed information at schools, local education authorities and district councils. People with a migrant background can also contact the municipal integration centres. The integration centres advise in particular on the transitions between the educational levels – from kindergarten to primary school, right through to the transition from school to work.

You can find the contact persons for your municipality here:

www.mkffi.nrw/kommunale-integrationszentren

Comprehensive information about the school system in Nordrhein-Westfalen is available at: **www.schulministerium.nrw**

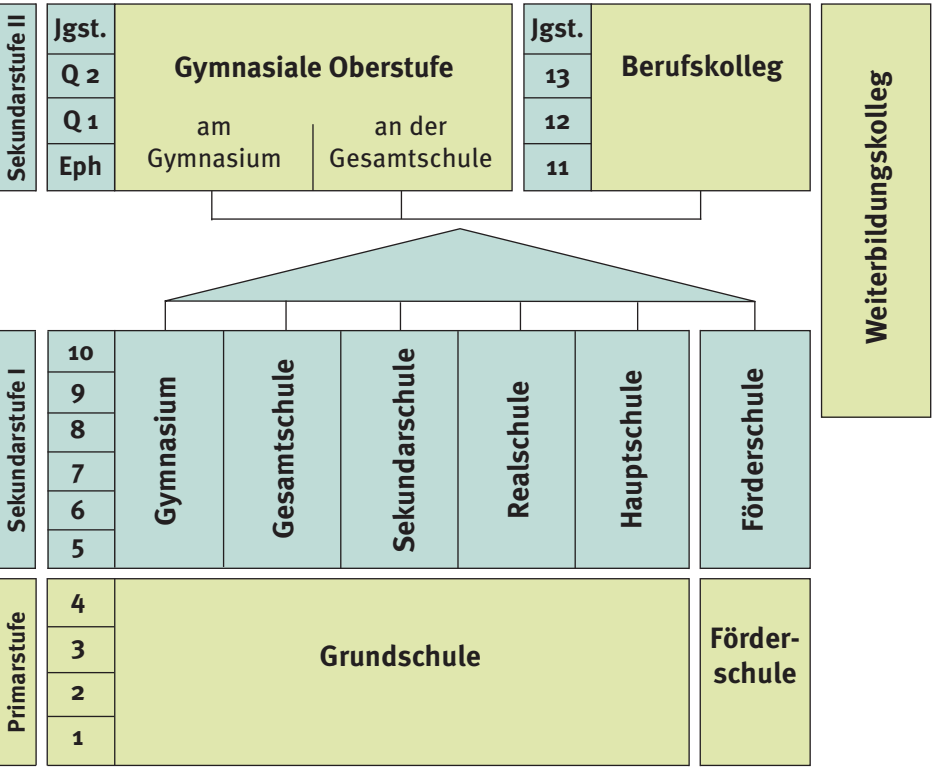
Compulsory school age

In Nordrhein-Westfalen, the Education Act requires children to start school in the year in which they reach the age of six by 30 September. The new school year always starts in the summer. Children and young people attend school for at least ten years. Firstly, from year 1 to year 4, they attend primary school (Grundschule). They then attend school from year 5 to the end of secondary level I. Young people must attend either a vocational college or the sixth-form style ‘gymnasiale Oberstufe’ until the end of the school year in which they reach 18 or graduate from a full-time secondary education programme at secondary level II. Those starting a vocational training programme before reaching the age of 21 must continue to attend until it finishes.

Grundschule

A child’s school education begins in Grundschule. It comprises grades 1 to 4. The children are individually supported from the very beginning, taking into account their personal requirements and interests. Basic knowledge, abilities, skills and values are taught.

The school system in North Rhine-Westphalia



Sekundarstufe I

Sekundarstufe I builds on primary school. In Nordrhein-Westfalen, the following school forms offer secondary education:

- ▶ **Hauptschule** (grades 5 to 10)
- ▶ **Realschule** (grades 5 to 10)
- ▶ **Gymnasium** (grades 5 to 9)
- ▶ **Gesamtschule** (grades 5 to 10)
- ▶ **Sekundarschule** (grades 5 to 10).

Hauptschule

The Hauptschule provides students with a basic general education. The teaching is highly practice-orientated. The students receive intensive support at an early stage with their professional orientation, career choice and start of vocational training. Regular internships at companies enable students to gain insight into the world of work. The business and world of work learning area prepares students for work-relat-ed life situations, and makes the living environment – insofar as it is characterised by work – tangible and transparent to them.

Realschule

The Realschule provides students with an extended general education. In the lessons, practical and theoretical abilities and skills are promoted on an equal basis. Accordingly, the teaching is practice orientated, but also offers scientific perspectives. Work-orientated competencies acquired and the subject of economics enable students to continue their educational path after completing the tenth grade, either in a vocational training programme or at the Sekundarstufe II in the gymnasiale Oberstufe.

Gymnasium

The Gymnasium provides a more in-depth general education. Students acquire knowledge and skills that are a prerequisite for university studies or highly demanding vocational training. In a continuous education programme, it comprises both Sekundarstufe I (grades 5 to 9) and the subsequent three-year Sekund-arstufe II with gymnasiale Oberstufe.

Gesamtschule

With a differentiated teaching system, the Gesamtschule prepares for vocational training and for studying at a university. There, students with different learning abilities can learn together. The students are not assigned to specific training programmes as at a Hauptschule, Realschule or Gymnasium. In order to accommodate the different knowledge and skills of the students, teaching is offered at two levels (basic level and extended level) in some subjects. The Gesamtschule comprises both Sekundarstufe I (grades 5 to 10) and the subsequent three-year Sekundarstufe II with gymnasiale Oberstufe. Gesamtschulen usually operate as all-day schools.