

The French education system is regarded as being one of the best in the World, although opinions may vary according to different schools. The system is almost entirely based on state schools although private schools do exist but these are mainly bilingual or religious schools.

Since 1967, school attendance has been compulsory for those from 6 to 16 years of age. France has 60,000 primary schools catering to pupils during their first five years of formal education: the first three years (CP - cours préparatoire - and CE1/CE2 - cours élémentaire 1 and 2) provide a grounding in the basic skills. The next stage - CM1/CM2 (cours moyen 1 and 2) takes the children up to the end of primary school.

Secondary schooling is divided into two successive stages, known as cycles. From 11 to 15 years, almost all children now attend a collège, taking them from form 6 (sixième) to form 3 (troisième) (1). Since 1975 there has been a single mixed-ability collège for all pupils regardless of their level of achievement. After form 3, they move onto a general, technical or vocational lycée. These prepare pupils for the corresponding baccalauréat examinations (referred to as le bac), which they normally take at the age of 18.

If you would like your child to go to an International school, then you can find details of these in your yellow pages, or contact ELSA FRANCE. (a non profit making association composed of schools which offer advanced programmes of study in English). ELSA FRANCE can be contacted on: (33) 01 45 34 04 11.