



DVD „Schools in the county of Zurich – information for parents“

Summary and supplementary information

Secondary school

Levels and classes

Depending on your local council, the secondary school in your area is either made up of two levels (Abteilungen): A and B, or it comprises three levels: A, B and C. Level A is the most challenging for learners. Schools can create further separate classes within certain main subjects. For example, a school offers levels A and B, and for math and German young people from both levels are placed in one of three classes I, II and III (Anforderungsstufen I, II, III). This could mean that one student from level B and one from level A both attend class I in math as they are both very competent.

Transferring up and/or down

Teachers can transfer a student – depending on performance – to a different level or class. Transfers, either up or down, are possible two or three times a year. If parents do not agree with a proposal, the school governing board (Schulpflege) decides on the outcome.

Learning goals, number of lessons and subject options

Secondary school aims to provide a comprehensive education. After three years, young people should leave school with a broad general education; the ability to continue learning independently; and a sense of responsibility and community. To achieve this, they attend lessons for between 30 and 36 lessons per week. A considerable number of lessons comprise language lessons in German, French and English. Math and the subject ‘man and the environment’ (Mensch und Umwelt) are covered in depth. In addition, design and music, and sport are a part of the curriculum. In year three, students can adapt a part of the timetable according to their own talents and interests. Available options are, for example, further English lessons, Italian, a photography course, sewing and further subjects. The range of options differs from school to school.

Varied ways of learning

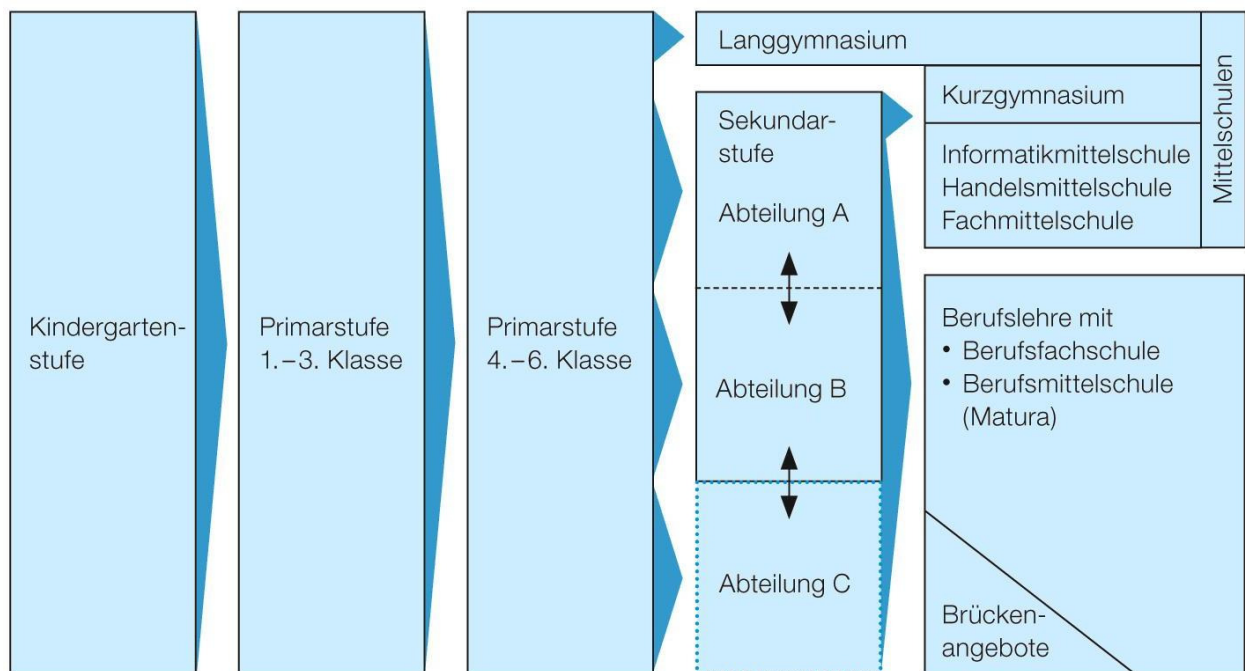
The way in which students learn is varied. Sometimes the teacher stands at the front of the class and the students all learn in a teacher-led lesson. Sometimes the students do group work. Alternatively, the students work on their own over a longer period following a weekly plan, or work on a larger project with a group.

Encouraging different work, learning and social skills

Secondary school encourages different skills: If students plan and complete a large project, they practise planning and working independently, among other things. By working on projects with others, they further develop their social skills. By keeping their own learning journal, they consider their own learning processes and find out how they learn successfully. They also learn how to deal with information: How do I find useful information and can I separate it from useless information? How can I get hold of information? How can I establish causal relations? These skills are not just important for learning at school: They are also important for a later career path and even for a lifetime of learning.

Further education opportunities following elementary education: Academic high school

Post-compulsory education follows on from secondary school. In the main, it is made up of two different routes: Vocational training and academic high school. Level A students can take the entrance exam for academic high school after year 2 or year 3 of secondary school. Many secondary schools offer courses to prepare those students who are interested for the exam. The 'short academic high school' (Kurzgymnasium) lasts a further four years and leads to a Swiss maturity certificate (Matura). Such a qualification is required to enter university or a college of higher education. Young people who want to attend academic high school need to be able to learn independently, in a focused way and easily; and be academic.



Further education opportunities following elementary education: Vocational training

The majority of young people go on to do an apprenticeship (Berufslehre), lasting between two and four years, after completing compulsory education. For this reason, this kind of training is particularly prevalent in Switzerland compared with other countries. An apprenticeship has an excellent record here as training that enables a solid career path. Further, strong students can combine an apprenticeship with a vocational qualification (Berufsmatura) that allows them to enter higher education. Options are available to young people who do not find any further education opportunities. They are an interim solution until a route to further education is found.

Preparing for a career choice

From year 2 of secondary school, students take a close look at their professional future, supported by their teacher and specialists from the career advisory service. They consider questions such as: What aptitudes and interests are particular to me? What are my strengths and weaknesses? Young people can also complete 'taster courses' (Schnupperlehren), enabling them to try out their career ideas first hand in the shape of work experience within a firm. The firm, on the other hand, can get an idea of the young person: Would we consider taking them on as an apprentice?

Looking for an apprenticeship

Once the young person has decided on a career path, the search for an apprenticeship in the job market begins. At school, young people learn how to look for an apprenticeship, how to send in an application and how to behave in an interview. Getting a good apprenticeship can often prove difficult. Young people – especially from secondary C – need to make a huge effort and have a great deal of stamina.

Parental support

Parental support is key to young people transferring successfully to the world of work. Therefore, parents should find out about vocational training and attend events the school offers on the topic. Making a career choice is easier if parents show a real interest in their son or daughter by asking questions such as: What are your greatest talents and interests? What job could you see yourself doing? Further, parental support is essential when it is difficult to find an apprenticeship. When there is a prospective apprenticeship, parental support is often a deciding factor: From experience, firms are more willing to offer someone an apprenticeship if they think they can count on the parents as a point of contact at any time.

For further information, go to: www.vsa.zh.ch/dvdeltern

DVD stockists:

Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich, Räfelstrasse 32, Postfach, 8045 Zürich,
Tel. 044 465 85 85, lehrmittelverlag@lmv.zh.ch
or a bookstore