

The secondary schools

- After attending Grundschule (primary or elementary school), every child in Baden-Württemberg goes to a secondary school, known in German as a weiterführende Schule.
- Types of weiterführende Schule: Hauptschule/Werkrealschule, Realschule, Gemeinschaftsschule, Gymnasium.
- Every child is different. That's why parents and children choose the secondary school that suits their child best, after getting advice from their child's teacher. It should be a school in which the child can develop well, according to their abilities and potential.
- No-one knows for sure how the abilities and interests of the child will develop during their time at school. It's a good idea to set a short-term goal and focus on your child successfully completing the current school year. Then you can build on this and plan the next stage with your child.
- At the weiterführende Schule, pupils can get the following school leaving qualifications: Hauptschulabschluss (basic school leaving certificate), Mittlerer Bildungsabschluss (intermediate school leaving certificate), Fachhochschulreife (advanced technical college diploma), Abitur/Allgemeine Hochschulreife (general higher education entrance qualification).
- Some secondary schools offer different points of focus. For example, there are secondary schools that place a special focus on sport.
- More subjects are taught at the weiterführende Schule than in the Grundschule. Pupils can choose between some of the subjects.
- Pupils who have fled to Germany or who otherwise have a migration background have the opportunity to attend a preparatory class (Vorbereitungsklasse or VKL) of the general educational schools. There they primarily learn the German language. The aim is to integrate them into school life as quickly as possible.
- These are the school types that follow on from the Grundschule:
- **The Hauptschule/Werkrealschule**
- The Hauptschule/Werkrealschule gives your child a general education. Practical skills, in particular, are developed. This is important to get started in working life.
- The pupils receive intensive support.
- The Hauptschule/Werkrealschule is the right type of school for pupils who like doing practical things and who need personal support.
- The **Hauptschule** offers school years 5-9.

- It ends with the Hauptschulabschluss (basic school leaving certificate) examination at the end of year 9.
- The **Werkrealschule** offers school years 5-10. Pupils can take the Hauptschulabschluss examination at the end of year 9 or year 10. The pupils can also take an additional examination after year 10. If they pass this, they receive the Mittlerer Bildungsabschluss or Werkrealschuleabschluss (intermediate school leaving certificate).
- During year 9, pupils, together with their parents and in consultation with the teachers, decide which educational qualification they will aim for.
- Pupils are able to visit businesses and companies, learn about different occupations and prepare for working life. This work experience, similar to an internship, is known as a Praktikum or Praktika. In the Hauptschule/Werkrealschule, the pupils also practice how to prepare applications for a job or Praktikum and how they need to behave.
- There are various possibilities after attending a Hauptschule/Werkrealschule:
 - They can start an apprenticeship and learn a vocational occupation. To do this, pupils attend a berufliche Schule (vocational school) to learn theory and the practical side in a company.
 - Pupils who achieve good marks can then attend a further school and gain a higher educational qualification.
 - Pupils who are not able to get any kind of educational qualification (Schulabschluss) can go to special schools that offer training courses to prepare them for working life.
- **The Realschule**
- The Realschule prepares pupils for a transition to working life or a vocational Gymnasium (academic high school). Pupils are supported according to their abilities.
- The Realschule is the right type of school for pupils who like learning and doing practical things. They receive personal support in these things.
- The Realschule offers school years 5-10. After years 6, 7 and 8, a decision is made about which leaving qualification the pupils will aim for. At the end of year 9, pupils have the opportunity to achieve the **Hauptschulabschluss** (basic school leaving certificate). At the end of year 10, pupils have the opportunity to achieve the **Mittlerer Bildungsabschluss** (intermediate school leaving certificate)
- Pupils can learn at two levels: the basic level or the intermediate level. This means that all pupils can be supported exactly according to their abilities.
- Pupils who are higher achievers are offered classes at a third, advanced level from year 8 onwards. This prepares them to attend classes at the academic high school level (Gymnasium).
- To prepare pupils for working life, the pupils do a Praktikum. They go into businesses and companies to learn about different jobs. All pupils also practice how to prepare applications for a job or Praktikum and how they need

to behave.

■ After the Realschule, pupils have various possibilities:

- They can start an apprenticeship and learn a vocational occupation. To do this the pupils attend a berufliche Schule (vocational school) to learn theory and the practical side in a company.
- Pupils who achieve good marks can attend a further school and gain a higher educational qualification.

■ **The Gemeinschaftsschule**

■ The Gemeinschaftsschule supports all pupils according to their individual abilities. Everyone learns together. Pupils can get different school leaving qualifications.

■ The Gemeinschaftsschule is suitable for all children, because it leads to all school leaving qualifications. The decision about which school leaving qualification to aim for does not need to be taken until year 8 or 9.

■ Pupils can learn in the different subjects at different levels: basic level, intermediate level and advanced level.

■ The requirements of the pupils are different, depending on the level. At the advanced level, pupils are expected to learn more independently. At the basic level, they need more support.

■ The Gemeinschaftsschule offers school years 5-10. It can also include an upper level (years 11-13) which is equivalent to a Gymnasium. Pupils can take the Hauptschulabschluss examination (basic school leaving certificate) at the end of year 9 or year 10.

■ Pupils can take the **Realschulabschlussprüfung** (intermediate school leaving certificate) examination at the end of year 10. Pupils who want to do the Abitur (university entrance qualification) can sometimes do this at a Gemeinschaftsschule that offers up to year 13, or they can change to an allgemeinbildendes Gymnasium (general educational academic high school) or a berufliches Gymnasium (vocational academic high school) after completing year 10 at their Realschule.

■ To prepare pupils for working life or university studies, pupils gather work experience known as Praktika. Pupils go into companies and learn about different jobs and the different qualifications they require.

■ After the Gemeinschaftsschule, pupils have various possibilities:

- Those with a Hauptschulabschluss, Realschulabschluss or Hochschulreife can start an apprenticeship and learn a vocational occupation. To do this the pupils attend a berufliche Schule (vocational school) to learn the theory and learn the practical side in a company.
- Those who have passed the Hochschulreife (university entrance qualification such as the Abitur), can go to a university or other higher educational institution.
- Those without any school leaving qualification can attend a berufliche Schule (vocational school) that will prepare them for a job.

■ The Gymnasium

- The allgemeinbildendes Gymnasium (general educational academic high school) teaches theoretical knowledge and skills that lead to the allgemeine Hochschulreife (general university entrance qualification).
- The Gymnasium is the right type of school for pupils who can and enjoy learning independently. Topics are studied and researched critically.
- The Gymnasium offers school years 5-12. It is known as “G8”.
- Some Gymnasien offer years 5-13, which gives pupils an extra year at school before they take the Abitur examination. This is known as “G9”.
- It ends with the **Allgemeine Hochschulreife** examination, also known as the **Abitur**.
- If a pupil has passed year 10, they have automatically passed the Mittlerer Bildungsabschluss (intermediate school leaving certificate), without taking a special examination.
- The pupils at a Gymnasium also do a Praktika. They are organised and implemented independently.
- After the Gymnasium, pupils have various possibilities:
 - They can study at a higher education institution such as a university.
 - They can start an apprenticeship and learn a vocational occupation. To do this, pupils attend a berufliche Schule (vocational school) to learn theory and the practical side in a company. If pupils have gained their Abitur, the apprenticeship may be shorter, for example only 2 years instead of 3 years.