



Photo: Rahi Rezvani

Education in the Netherlands

Dutch public education is of a very high standard, and only a very small proportion of pupils attend private schools. There are three types of education: public, private and special education. The difference is that public schools receive government funding, while private schools do not. Both types of school are supervised by the schools inspection service, which monitors the quality of education. In the Netherlands, children aged between 5 and 18 have to go to school, according to the Compulsory Education Act. This means that parents are obliged by law to enrol their children at school.

The Dutch school system

Preschool

Pre-school prepares children for primary school so that they get a good start. Pre-school is a playschool (*peuterspeelzaal*) or day care centre (*kinderdagverblijf*) where children between 2.5 and 4 years old learn through play. A great deal of focus and time is devoted to language games, reading, drawing, listening, singing and

movement. Preschools cooperate with a primary school, and their programme and approach is geared to the curriculum and way of working in year groups 1 and 2 at the primary school. Preschool is not compulsory.

Primary education

There are 218 primary schools in Amsterdam. Children generally attend primary school (*basisschool*) from age 4 to age 12. There are eight year groups at primary school. Groups 1 and 2 are

sometimes referred to as infant or kindergarten classes (*kleuterklassen*). From group 3, the children learn reading, writing and arithmetic. Pupils in group 8 take a compulsory final test, for example the Cito test, which is held in April. Enrolment at secondary school then takes place in March. The primary school provides a recommendation (*advies*). The results of the test and the recommendation, as well as pupils' and parents' own preferences, determine the type of curriculum the pupil should follow at secondary school. In this system, the school's recommendation usually outweighs the test result, unless the test result places the student in a higher curriculum type than the recommendation. Secondary education is divided into four different types, which prepare pupils for tertiary education (mbo and hbo).

Secondary education

There is a total of 67 secondary schools in Amsterdam. Depending on the type of education, pupils attend secondary school (*middelbare school*) for either four, five or six years. During the first two years (for vmbo) or three years (for havo and vwo), pupils follow a basic curriculum (*basisvorming*). They then go on to choose either a vocational sector or a subject cluster (*profiel*) which leads on to specialised vocational training or higher education after secondary school.

There are four main types of secondary education:

1. Practical education

Practical education (*praktijkonderwijs*)

is for pupils who have the ability to learn a trade but for whom vmbo (see graph) would be too difficult, even with extra help. The curriculum includes theory at an appropriate level, plus the development of individual personality and social skills. Practical education concentrates on preparing the pupil to participate in the regional labour market, and on achieving the key aims of the basic curriculum as far as possible. To be eligible for practical education, pupils require an admission certificate (*toelaatbaarheidsverklaring, tlv*).

2. Vmbo (preparatory secondary vocational education)

Vmbo (preparatory secondary vocational education) lasts four years and is for pupils aged 12 to 16 years. It is divided into four streams, of which the theoretical track vmbo-t (previously known as mavo) is the highest level. After the final exams, the pupils can move on to do havo or mbo (see graph). Vmbo is the type of curriculum followed by the majority of pupils in the Netherlands. During the first two years of vmbo, all pupils follow the basic curriculum, which for the most part is the same for everyone. During the last two years, pupils must be divided into different learning tracks. The track is determined by the results achieved during the first two years, and it leads to a diploma.

3. Havo

(senior general secondary education)

Havo (senior general secondary education) lasts five years and is for pupils aged 12 to 17 years. Pupils can move on from havo to do hbo or mbo (see graph).

4. Vwo

(university preparatory education)

Vwo (university preparatory education) lasts six years and is for pupils aged 12 to 18 years. Pupils can move on from vwo to do hbo (see graph) or go to university. Schools with vwo offer different streams, such as *atheneum*, which may include bilingual education; *gymnasium*, in which pupils study the two classical languages, Latin and ancient Greek; or *technasium*, with an extra focus on science and engineering.

Kopklas

Does your child have the ability to do vmbo-t, havo or vwo, but at the end of primary school his or her command of Dutch is still not quite good enough? In that case, the right place for your child might be a bridging year between primary and secondary school known as a *kopklas* (literally 'head class'). The *kopklas* is located in the building of a secondary school, but administratively the child remains in primary education. Children stay in the *kopklas* for one year. The pupils work on themes in all subjects, but the emphasis lies on improving their knowledge of Dutch. Their arithmetic has to be at an adequate level from the start, and they will maintain it throughout the year. The effect of the bridging year is to raise their recommended level, so they are able to move on to the type of secondary education that matches their ability. The pupils follow the secondary school timetable, and are able to use the multimedia centre and take physical education lessons. Pupils are enrolled in the *kopklas* bridging year via their primary school. They take an admission test to see if it is appropriate for them.

Further and higher education

Mbo (senior secondary vocational education and training)

Mbo courses are vocationally oriented. Many pupils who have successfully completed vmbo at secondary school go on to do mbo. An mbo course lasts between one and four years, depending on the level: there are mbo2, mbo3 and mbo4 courses. Pupils can then enter the job market; those to have graduated from an mbo4 course can also go on to study at hbo level (see graph).

Hbo (University of applied science)

An mbo, havo or vwo diploma qualifies students for admission to hbo. Oriented towards professions in specific areas, hbo consists of a four-year bachelor's degree. There is a limited number of hbo master's degrees that an hbo bachelor can be followed with. Students with an hbo bachelor's degree can also go on to study for a wo master's degree (see graph); however, for this they usually need to first follow a so-called pre-master's course, which normally takes a year.

wo (Research university)

A vwo diploma qualifies students for admission to university (wo). In the Netherlands this is research-oriented higher education with an emphasis on research. It consists of a bachelor's degree (duration: three years) and a master's degree (duration: one or two years, dependent on the course). Dutch universities offer a large amount of English-language programmes, particularly at master's level.



Photo: Rahi Rezvani

✘ Gemeente
✘ Amsterdam
✘

Education in the Amsterdam area



Photo: Sebastiaan ter Burg

New arrivals in Amsterdam

For children between 6 and 12 who have been in the Netherlands for less than a year and speak no Dutch, there is special education for newcomers. Pupils in the newcomers' class focus on learning Dutch with the aim of continuing in regular education after one year. Children aged 12 years and above join an international bridging class. If a school has room to take on new pupils, your child will always be allocated a place.

Is your child younger than 4 years old?

For children between 0 and 4 years, there are preschools in the form of playgroups and day-care. As soon as your child is 4, he or she can start primary school. In Amsterdam there are rules and agreements on enrolling children at school. According to the city admissions policy, a child can be enrolled at primary school from his or her third birthday. You then have six months to explore possibilities, visit schools and enrol your child. At www.amsterdam.nl/schoolwijzer you can find information on the enrolment procedure and on every primary school in Amsterdam and compare schools. Children have priority for placement at eight schools in the neighbourhood of their officially registered address.

Is your child between the ages of 4 and 6?

Enrol your child at a primary school of your choice in your neighbourhood. Children aged between 4 and 6

years will join a regular infant class, where they will gradually learn Dutch alongside the other children.

Is your child between the ages of 6 and 12?

Enrol your child at a primary school of your choice in your neighbourhood. The school will then register the pupil at the Central Reporting Point for Newcomers, a joint initiative by primary school governing bodies. He or she will then be allocated a place in a newcomers' class for approximately one year. The newcomers' class will preferably be in the same district as the school at which you have enrolled your child. Your child will transfer to the school of choice after a year in the newcomers' class.

Criteria for admission to a newcomers' class

- the pupil speaks little or no Dutch, and
- the pupil has been in the Netherlands for less than one year, and
- the pupil is at least 6 years old

Enrolment procedure

Parents of a child eligible for a newcomers' class are still free to choose at which school they would like to enrol their child – it doesn't have to be a school that already offers a newcomers class. The school will then contact the Central Reporting Point for Newcomers. Nearly all newcomers' classes are part of a regular primary school.

Is your child aged 12 years or above?

From the age of twelve, children are placed in an international bridging class (*internationale schakelklas, ISK*).

After enrolment, the child will first be tested by the school so he or she can be taught at an appropriate level. The bridging period varies between one and three years. In the first year, the pupils have lessons in Dutch as a second language for 18 hours a week. They also study the subjects English, arithmetic, mathematics, sports, world studies, talent development and art education.

Enrolment procedure

Pupils can be enrolled at any time of the year. You can contact the school to make an appointment. The pupil must also be present when you enrol them.

For more information about newcomers' classes:

English: <http://www.hetabc.nl/professionals/metropool/nieuwkomers/central-reporting-point-newcomers-primary-education-amsterdam/>

French: <http://www.hetabc.nl/professionals/metropool/nieuwkomers/le-centre-dinformation-pour-nouveaux-arrivants/>

Information about the Dutch school system:

email: onderwijs@amsterdam.nl

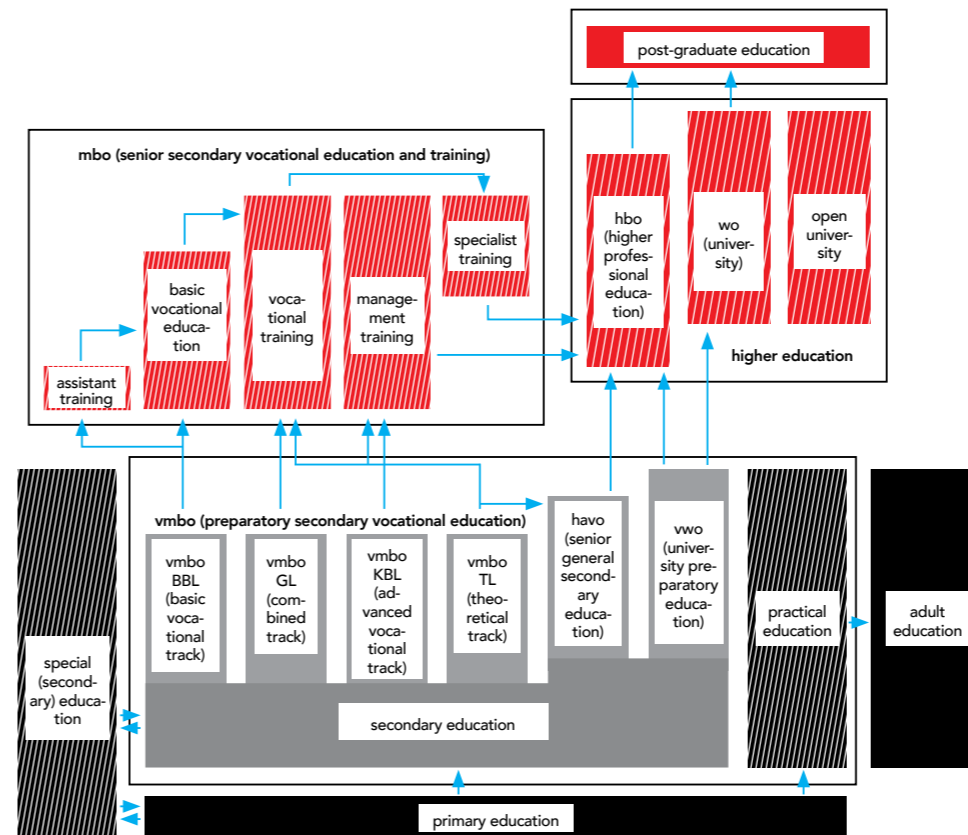
<http://www.iamsterdam.com/en/local/move/dutch-education-system>

[amsterdam.nl/schoolwijzer](http://www.amsterdam.nl/schoolwijzer)

[amsterdam.nl/onderwijs](http://www.amsterdam.nl/onderwijs)

[naardebrugklas.amsterdam.nl/](http://www.naardebrugklas.amsterdam.nl/)

<http://www.kopklasamsterdam.nl/>
www.epnuffic.nl/en/study-and-work-in-holland/dutch-education-system



Educational 'flow' in the Netherlands

Schools with an international bridging class (age 12 and over)

The following schools offer international bridging classes for international children over 12 that are new to the Netherlands.

Amsterdam New West Mundus College

<http://mundus.espritscholen.nl/home/info@mundus.espritscholen.nl>
 020 - 5854854

Amsterdam East

Montessori College Oost
www.montessoricollegeoost.nl
mco@msa.nl
 020-5979899

International schools

There are a number of international schools in and around Amsterdam, covering a wide spectrum of learning, languages and cultures.

Amsterdam International Community School (private education)

British School of Amsterdam (private education)

European School Bergen (private education; multi-lingual)

iDealFuture Chinese International Community School

International Primary School Letterland (public education)

International School Almere (public education; multi-lingual)

International School of Amsterdam (private education)

International School Hilversum (public education)

Lycée Français Vincent van Gogh (private education)

The Japanese School of Amsterdam (private education)

Further information

The Foundation for International Education in the Netherlands (*Stichting Internationaal Onderwijs*) offers a listing of all international departments in Dutch schools, as well as all independent international schools in the Netherlands. Website: www.sio.nl

Primary schools with bilingual education

There are several schools in Amsterdam where some lessons are given in English and others in Dutch.

De Visserschool Little Universe (private education)

School of Understanding (Amsterdam and Amstelveen)

Alberdingk Thijm Schools (Gooi en Vechtstreek)

Secondary schools with bilingual education

Various secondary schools in and around Amsterdam offer bilingual education.

Almere - OSG De Meergronden (VMBO havo vwo)

Amstelveen - Hermann Wesselink College (vmbo-t, mavo, havo)

Amsterdam - Berlage Lyceum (havo and vwo)

Amsterdam - Bredero (mavo mavo, havo)

Amsterdam - DENISE (vmbo-t, havo and vwo)

Amsterdam - Hervormd Lyceum West (havo and vwo)

Amsterdam - Hubertus & Berkhoff (vmbo)

Amsterdam - SG Reigersbos (vmbo, havo, vwo)

Amsterdam - St. Nicolaaslyceum (vwo)

Amsterdam - Montessori college Oost (vmbo-preparatory, secondary, vocational education, havo, vwo)

Castricum - Jac. P. Thijssse College (mavo, havo, vwo)

Haarlem - Mendelcollege (gymnasium, atheneum, havo & mavo)

Haarlem - Schoter SG (vwo, havo en mavo)

Hoofddorp - Haarlemmermeer Lyceum (vwo, havo en mavo)

Hilversum - Alberdingk Thijm College (ATC) (vmbo-t, havo and vwo)

Hilversum - Laar en Berg (havo, vwo)

Hilversum - St. Aloysius College (mavo, havo)

Purmerend - Da Vinci College (havo, vwo)

Weesp - Vechtstede College (vwo)