**Secondary Education in Great Britain**

After the age of 11, most children go to comprehensive schools of which the majority are for both boys and girls.

About 90 per cent of all state-financed secondary schools are of this type. Most other children receive secondary education3 in grammar and secondary modern schools.

Comprehensive schools were introduced in 1965. The idea of comprehensive education, supported by the Labour Party, was to give all children of whatever background the same opportunity in education.

At 16 students in England and Wales take GCSE examinations. In 1988 these examinations replaced the GCE and O-levels which were usually passed by about 20 per cent of school students. GCSE examinations are taken by students of all levels of ability in any of a range of subjects, and may involve a final examination, and assessment of work done by the student during the two-year course, or both of these things.

Some comprehensive schools, however, do not have enough academic courses for sixth-formers. Students can transfer either to a grammar school or to a sixth-form college to get the courses they want.

At 18 some students take A-level examinations, usually in two or three subjects. It is necessary to have A-levels in order to go to a university or Polytechnic.

But some pupils want to stay on at school after taking their GCSE, to prepare for a vocational course or for work rather than for A-level examinations. Then they have to take the CPVE examination which means the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education.

In Scotland students take the SCE examinations. A year later, they can take examinations called Highers after which they can go straight to a university.

Secondary education in Northern Ireland is organized along selective lines according to children’s abilities.

One can hardly say that high quality secondary education is provided for all in Britain. There is a high loss of pupils from working-class families at entry into the sixth form. If you are a working-class child at school today, the chance of your reaching the second year of a sixth-form course is probably less than one-twelfth of that for the child of a professional parent. Besides, government cuts on school spending caused many difficulties.