

Overview

Population

Russia is the largest country in the world in terms of surface area, although large areas in the north and east are inhospitable and sparsely populated. It covers more than 17million sq. km. The population of Russia is around 143,800,000.

Climate

In general, the climate of Russia can be described as highly influenced by the continental climate, with warm to hot dry summers and (very) cold winters with temperatures of -30°C and lower and sometimes heavy snowfall.

Education System (for children from Russia)

Education in Russia is compulsory for children between the ages of 6 or 7 and 15. It consists of primary school education for ages 6-10, followed by senior school for ages 10-15. If a pupil at secondary school wishes to go on into higher education, he or she must remain to complete secondary school for 2 more years, from ages 15-17.

Primary and secondary school education totals 11 years of study. There are other extra schools that specialise in certain subjects, such as maths, music, arts, and sports. These schools can also offer more specialised education for children, alongside the general courses.

SEN: Children with special needs of any kind are not usually educated in a main stream school but attend a special school.

EAL: The majority of Russian schools teach English as the predominant foreign language starting in the first year of schooling.

Education System – main differences and implications for schools

Preschool education

Although it is not compulsory, nearly 90% of preschool age children in Russia attend state owned kindergartens. Children can be enrolled from the age of 12 months to the age of 6 or 7. Kindergartens are open 12 hours a day and have sleeping, eating, educating and entertaining facilities. Apart from social skills, children receive education to the levels expected for when they start primary school: being able to read, count and recite classical poems.

School starting age

Most children start school at the age of 6, but some start later at 7. This decision is taken by the child's parents. If parents decide that their child is not mature enough to start school, they are allowed to delay the start.

School day

The school day normally starts at 8-8.30 am and finishes at 1 or 2 in the afternoon. Students generally attend classes 5 days a week, although many schools require extra study on Saturdays. A typical lesson lasts 40 - 45 minutes with a 5 -10 minute break in between. In primary school students have 4 lessons a day. This increases to 5 or 6 lessons a day in secondary school, and 6 or 7 at a senior high school.

Curriculum

Every school has a compulsory core curriculum of academic subjects, such as Russian literature, Russian language, Russian history, world history, foreign languages, maths and natural sciences, PE and Technology.

Class work often means memorising, reciting, frequent written work and oral testing. Group work is not as common as it is in UK schools.

Students are normally graded on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the top grade. Each student has his or her "diary"; a personal book of academic achievements in which teachers record their given grades.

Literacy

- Primary school children are used to line guides for their writing, starting with 3 lines for children first learning to write.

Maths

- Decimals are written using a comma rather than a full stop, e.g. 2,5 instead of 2.5.
- Methods taught for multiplication and division are different from those taught in English schools.
- The Russian multiplication sign is usually written 2•5, and division sign 2:5.
- Time: Russian children often get confused with reading the clock as 'half past six' in English is read as 'half (to) seven in Russian. "Half seven" would be interpreted as "six thirty".

Cultural sensitivities

- Children are encouraged to deal with playground squabbles themselves and, although they are not allowed to start a fight, it is usually tolerated should they hit back if someone attacks them. Often, they are discouraged from complaining to adults. It is important to familiarise new arrivals with the school rules, especially playground rules.
- Russian teachers tend not to be as positive as teachers in the UK when giving feedback, e.g. when a teacher in this country says to the Russian parent: "Your child is doing very well" - this can be interpreted as the child is going to have no less than excellent grades in all subjects. Russian parents interpret it as more favourable than may have been intended, which often creates misunderstandings between a teacher and a parent.
- Russian pupils very rarely express an apology verbally as it is done at British schools, but try to do this with their body language (looking guilty).

Parental involvement and attendance in Russia

- Russian parents are very much involved in the education process and this is expected by all schools.
- Children sit individual subject tests almost on a weekly basis, with regular feedback to the parents.
- Parents are used to regular feedback through frequent whole class and individual parents' evenings; teachers write a child's grades and notes in the pupil's diary on a daily basis.
- Children bring all their school text and exercise books home every day for homework so parents can see what they have been learning. In the UK, Russian parents often feel 'left out' or poorly informed about their child's progress and what they are learning at school - a home-school diary is very effective to put parents' minds at rest.
- Russian children are given a lot of homework every day (up to 2 hours at primary school and more in later years) and parents are expected to control and help with it.
- Russian children have to repeat a school year if they do not achieve the expected minimum grade; the responsibility to achieve this lies mostly with the parents; often parents have to pay for private tuition to ensure their child achieves the expected grades.

Language differences that may cause problems with Literacy

Alphabet/Script

Russian is written using the Cyrillic alphabet, which has some letters that are similar to letters in the Latin alphabet used by English. Russian consists of 5 vowel sounds, with no differentiation between short and long vowels. The /θ/ and /ð/ sounds do not exist in Russian, so words such as thin, then and clothes are predictably difficult.

Intonation

Russian learners may ask questions with a falling instead of rising intonation at the end of a sentence, which does not sound polite to English native speakers.

Auxiliaries/negatives/questions/tenses

Russian and English convey meaning through the verb systems in different ways. The Russian system is based on the concept of aspect: actions are either completed or not completed. This is shown by appending affixes to the verb stem. There are few auxiliary verbs. This contrasts with English which has progressive and perfect tense forms, and avoids the need for affixation or inflection by the extensive use of auxiliaries.

Modal verbs

In comparison with Russian, the modal verb system in English is very complex. Mistakes such as 'Must you to work on Friday?', 'I will not can come', etc. are common among beginners. The lack of a copula in Russian leads to errors such as 'She good teacher'.

Word order

In the Russian language, the word order is rather flexible. Though the Russian sentence is generally arranged SUBJECT-VERB-OBJECT, the grammar rules allow you to use virtually any combination of subject, verb and object within the sentence.

Gender

All Russian nouns are one of three genders: masculine, feminine or neuter. This results in problems such as: 'Have you seen my book? I put her on the table'.

Articles

Russian has no articles. Russian speakers very often experience difficulties in using English articles correctly.

<http://www.hants.gov.uk/emtas>

Useful classroom words

Greetings

| | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Welcome | Добро пожаловать |
| Hello | Здравствуй |
| Thank you | Спасибо |
| Please | Пожалуйста |
| Goodbye (formal) | До свидания |
| Bye (casual) | Пока |
| Morning | Доброе утро |
| Afternoon | Добрый день |
| Are you OK? | Все в порядке |

School Routine

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| School playground | Школьная площадка |
| School office | Секретарь |
| Hall | Актный зал |
| School | Школа |
| Assembly | Линейка |
| Toilets | Туалет |
| School field | Школьное поле |
| Classroom | Класс |
| Registration | Отметка |
| присутствующих | |
| Computer suite | Компьютерный класс |
| Tutor | Классный руководитель |
| Break time | Перемена |
| Outside | На улице |
| Inside | В помещении |
| Fire drill | Пожарная тревога |
| Packed lunch | Обед из дома |
| School dinner | Школьный обед |
| School nurse | Медсестра |
| First aid room | Комната первой помощи |
| Staff room | Учительская |
| Lunchtime | Большая перемена |
| School uniform | Школьная форма |
| Library | Библиотека |
| Reading book | Книга для чтения |
| Library book | Библиотечная книга |
| Copy | Копия |
| Label | Ярлык |
| Colour | Цвет |
| Pen | Ручка |
| Pencil | Карандаш |
| Yes | Да |
| No | Нет |

Days of the week

| | |
|-----------|-------------|
| Monday | Понедельник |
| Tuesday | Вторник |
| Wednesday | Среда |
| Thursday | Четверг |
| Friday | Пятница |
| Weekend | Выходные |

Numbers

| | |
|-----------|---------|
| Zero | Ноль |
| One | Один |
| Two | Два |
| Three | Три |
| Four | Четыре |
| Five | Пять |
| Six | Шесть |
| Seven | Семь |
| Eight | Восемь |
| Nine | Девять |
| Ten | Десять |
| How many? | Сколько |

Instructions/Questions

Work with a partner - Работай с партнером
Use your dictionary - Используй словарь
Do you understand? - Ты понимаешь?
Talk about this at home - Поговори об этом дома
Translate these words at home - Переведи эти слова дома
You can write in Russian - Можешь писать по русски
Write in sentences - Пиши предложениями
Fill in the blanks - Заполни пропущенные места
Annotate - Снабди примечаниями
Highlight - Выдели
Draft - Эскиз, проект
Please be quiet - Не шуми, пожалуйста
Come here please - Подойди сюда, пожалуйста
Sit on the carpet - Сиди на ковре
Where does it hurt? - Где болит?
Well done! - Молодец!