



MFL Sunderland Primary French Podcasts

intercultural
understanding

La Rentrée

Welcome to the MFL Sunderland Primary French podcast. Intercultural Understanding – La Rentrée

In this lesson you'll learn about the French school system, and especially about the start of the new school year in September.

La Rentrée

"La Rentrée", or "The Return", is the name given to the return to school after the long summer holidays. It's a big event in France, as it's not just the return to school for the children, but often the return to work for many adults too, as a lot of shops and businesses in France close for part or all of August.

Children are given by their schools a list of all the things they will need for the rentrée. They have to buy exercise books, paper, files and folders, pencils, pens, colouring pens, paints, glue and their text books. The most important thing that they have to have is "un cartable"- a special kind of school bag. French children have to carry a lot of equipment to and from school, and so need a big bag. There has been a lot of concern raised in recent years about the weight of the bags that they have to carry – some seven year olds, for example, have to carry more than five kilos! For this reason cartables are now made with wheels.

School holidays

Children will return to school this year on 2nd September, and their teachers return the day before on 1st September. They will have had nine weeks of summer holiday, having finished at the end of June or beginning of July. They will then have a week and a half of holiday for "Toussaint" (All Saints' Day), two weeks for Christmas, two weeks in February, and two weeks for Easter. There are a few bank holidays ("jours fériés") as well, but many of these fall in school holiday time, as in England.

The French school system

French children have the opportunity to start "école maternelle", nursery school, when they are two. Then when they are six they begin their compulsory education, which continues until they are 16. When they are 11 they move to "collège", secondary school. At the age of 15 they move onto the final stage, which is "lycée". The nearest equivalent we have to that in English is high school. When they are 16 they take exams called the "Brevet". Most then stay on until they are 18 to take the Baccalauréat. If you would like more information about the French school system, have a look at the end of the transcript of this podcast.

Most schools in France are public, in other words they are funded by the state, and they are non-religious. Private schools are often faith schools, usually Catholic.

Primary school children attend school four days a week. Wednesdays have traditionally been for extra-curricular activities. Children no longer go to school on Saturdays in France. School begins at 8.30 in the morning, and finishes at 4.30 in the afternoon. They have breaks of 20 minutes at 10 o'clock and 3 o'clock, and a two-hour lunch-break from 11.30 to 1.30.

Children in their first two years of primary education, the equivalent of Y2 and Y3, have ten hours of French each week and five hours of maths. They also do foreign languages, sport, art and "world discovery". In the other three years of primary school, they have eight hours of French each week, five of maths and the other subjects, languages, sport, science, technology, humanities, art and art history.

That's the end of this podcast.

A tout à l'heure !

England		Age	France	
EYFS	Nursery	3-4	École maternelle	
	Reception	4-5		
Primary KS1	Year 1	5-6		
	Year 2	6-7	CP*	
Primary KS2	Year 3	7-8	École élémentaire	CE1
	Year 4	8-9		CE2
	Year 5	9-10		CM1
	Year 6	10-11		CM2
Secondary KS3	Year 7	11-12	Collège	Sixième (6 ^e)
	Year 8	12-13		Cinquième (5 ^e)
	Year 9	13-14		Quatrième (4 ^e)
Secondary KS4	Year 10	14-15	Lycée	Troisième (3 ^e)
	Year 11	15-16		Seconde (2 ^e)
Secondary KS5	Year 12	16-17	Lycée	Première (1 ^{ère})
	Year 13	17-18		Terminale

*CP = cours préparatoire

CE = cours élémentaire

CM = cours moyen