

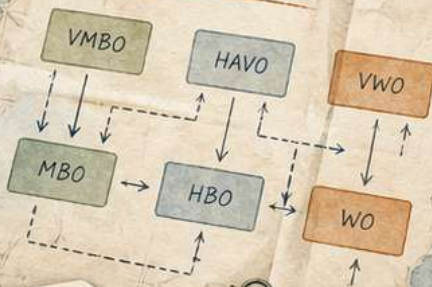
2026

Dutch Education System Guide

Primary school, VMBO, HAVO, VWO, MBO, HBO and WO explained



Routes after secondary school



For parents

- Find the right school
- Dutch language support
- School advice in groep 8
- The right route
- Plan for the future

Useful documents

- BSN
- Proof of address
- School enrollment
- Dutch health insurance

Dutch education at a glance



Note:
Each path has its own requirements and entry conditions.



PRACTICAL NOTES

- Talk to the school early
- Understand the advice
- Explore all options
- Plan ahead

INSCHRIJFFORMULIER
(ENROLMENT FORM)

Naam / Name _____

Geboortedatum / Date of birth _____

Adres / Address _____

School / Programme _____





When do children start school?



Age 4

Most children start primary school.



Age 5

Compulsory education generally begins.



Age 16-18

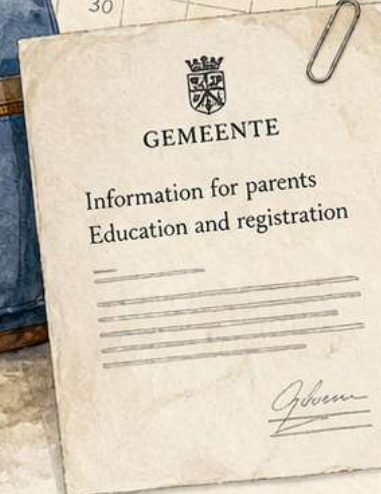
Without a starting qualification, young people normally still need to work toward one.

Parent tip:

ask early about taalklas or newcomer support.



SCHOOL CALENDAR						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	4
	Start school	8	9	10	School holiday	
		15	16	17	18	
		22	23	24	25	
		30				



Primary school: groep 1-8

Groep 1-2

Play, language, routines and social development.

Groep 3-6

Reading, writing, maths and broader subjects become more structured.

Groep 7-8

The school builds the picture for secondary school advice.



Dutch terms: basisschool · groep · schooladvies

Around age 12: the transition point

Groep 8 advice shapes the
first secondary route.

SCHOOLADVIES GROEP 8

Based on:

- Learning results
- Work attitude
- Development & potential
- Discussion in the team
- Conversation with parents

*Advice is not a final label,
but a starting point.*



GROEP 8 SCHOOLADVIES



BRIDGE CLASS

Extra support
to make a
strong start



VMBO

Preparation
for practical
vocational
learning



HAVO

General
secondary
education



VWO

Pre-university
education



PARENT MEETING NOTES

- How is schooladvies formed?
- What support is available?
- Is a bridge class recommended?
- What are the options if my child develops quickly?
- How do we keep in touch?

SCHOOL REPORTS
GROEP 6-7-8



① Ask how schooladvies is formed.



② Check mixed bridge classes: VMBO/HAVO or HAVO/VWO.



③ Fit and support matter, not only the track name.



④ For later arrivals: ask about newcomer or transition routes.



Secondary tracks: VMBO, HAVO, VWO

VMBO



Usually 4 years
• pre-vocational

Often leads
to **MBO**



HAVO



Usually 5 years
• general secondary

Often leads
to **HBO**



VWO

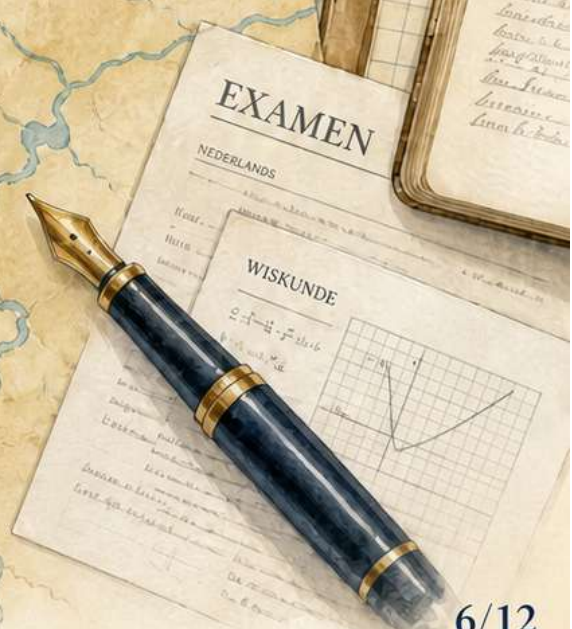


Usually 6 years
• pre-university

Often leads
to **WO**



Routes can be flexible.
Talk to the school early.



MBO, HBO and WO

explained



From VMBO

From HAVO

From VWO

MBO

Secondary
vocational education



Skills, workplace
learning, professions

HBO

Higher professional
education



Applied sciences,
projects, internships

WO

Research university
education



Academic, theoretical,
research-oriented

Route options

- VMBO → MBO
- MBO-4 → HBO
- HAVO → HBO
- VWO → WO
- HBO Bachelor →
Master (HBO or WO)

AANMELDFORMULIER

- MBO
 HBO
 WO

Naam _____

Adres _____

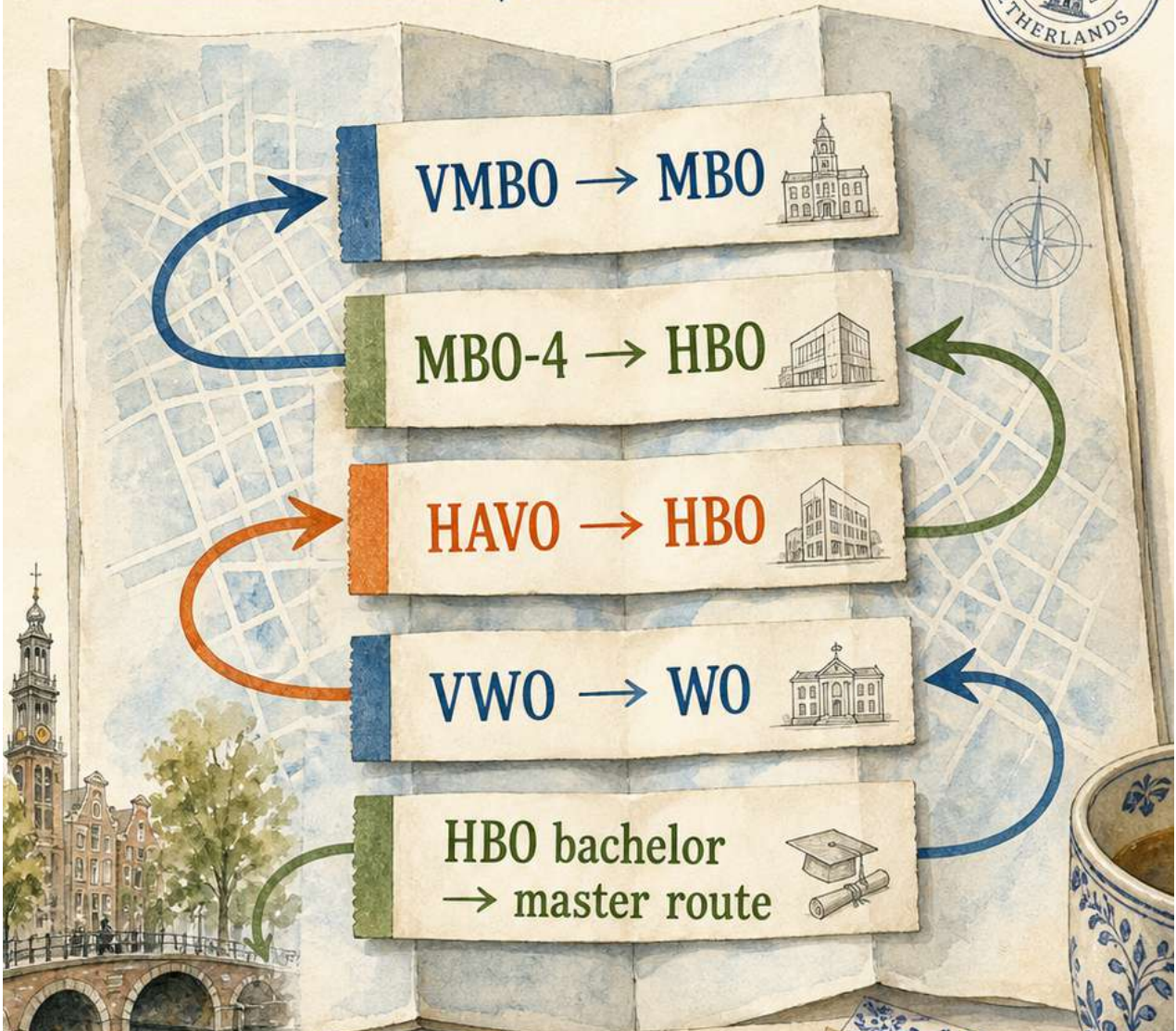
Geboortedatum _____



Different routes,
each with
real opportunities.



Routes can be flexible



Reality check

Switching may require grades, extra subjects, Dutch level, a bridging year or school approval.

Schooladvies

- VMBO
- HAVO
- VWO



School visit checklist

Ask these before choosing



A good school partnership makes a big difference.

1. What Dutch language support is available?

2. Is there a taalklas or newcomer route?

3. How do you communicate with international parents?

4. How is schooladvies decided?

5. Are there mixed bridge classes?

6. Can pupils move track later?

7. Who coordinates extra support?



Our priorities

- Safe environment
- Dutch language support
- Clear communication
- Good fit for our child

Notes





Common misunderstandings



NOT QUITE

1. Age 4 does not matter

Most children start at 4; it helps language and routine.



NOT QUITE

2. VMBO is a bad route

No. It is a real pre-vocational route.



NOT QUITE

3. HBO and WO are the same

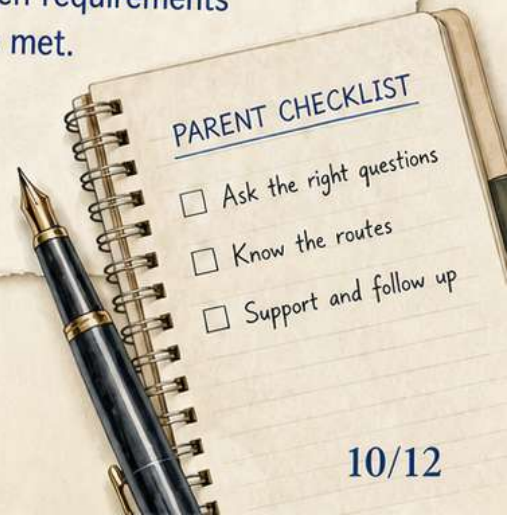
No. HBO is applied; WO is research-oriented.



NOT QUITE

4. Age 12 decides everything

No. Routes can change when requirements are met.





Quick terms



basisschool

Primary school

The Dutch term for primary school. Children can start at age 4, compulsory education starts at age 5.



groep

School year group

Dutch schools use groepen 1 to 8 in primary school. It roughly matches year levels.



schooladvies

Secondary school advice

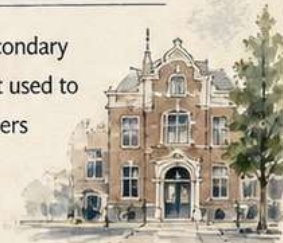
The advice primary school gives at the end of groep 8. It helps decide the most suitable next step.



brugklas

Bridge class

The first year of secondary school. Students get used to new subjects, teachers and school life.



taalklas

Dutch language support route

Extra support for students who need more time to learn Dutch and follow regular classes.



startkwalificatie

Starting qualification

A basic requirement in the Netherlands. Young people need a starting qualification by around age 18.



Official sources:
Government.nl · SLO ·
Dutch Inspectorate of Education

Aanmelding
middelbare scho

Naam leerling

Geboortedatum

School

Datum

Thank you for reading.

Follow Hokimi for more Netherlands guides

01 Save this guide

Useful info you may need again.



02 Check before choosing a school

Compare routes, requirements and support.



03 Share with families new to NL

Help other parents settle in smoothly.



04 Keep the terms for school visits

Bring this list to open days and information sessions.



Contact

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 **Instagram:** [@hokimi_nl](https://www.instagram.com/hokimi_nl)

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Education Route

