

# The Swedish Education System and the Chimney Sweep Trade

## 1. Summary of the Swedish Education System

In Sweden, children may attend preschool from the time they are one year old. Play is an important element of preschool. When they turn six, children may attend a one-year preschool class, which is intended to prepare children for the first grade. Both preschool and preschool class are voluntary.

All children attend compulsory school from about the age of 7 to the age of 15, that is, grades 1-9.

After compulsory school, most young people attend upper secondary school for three years. Upper secondary school prepares pupils for university or higher vocational education, or for going on to the labour market without further education.

### **Upper secondary school prepares students for work or further studies**

Upper secondary school, grades 10–12, is optional. Many students begin immediately after comprehensive school, when they are 16. The limit for beginning upper secondary school is the year you turn 20. If you are older than that, you may attend upper secondary adult education.

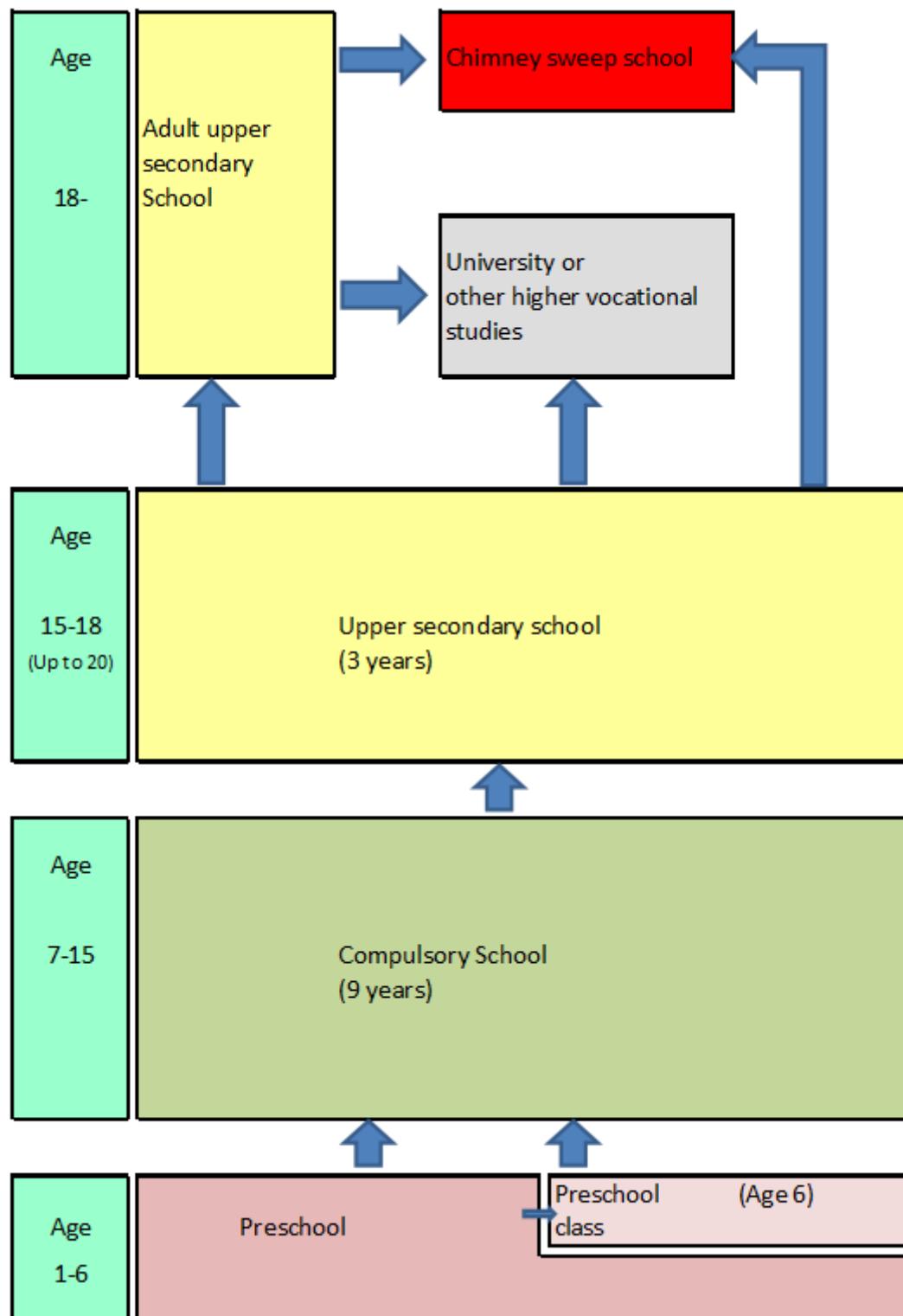
Upper secondary school has eighteen national programmes to choose from. Twelve of these are vocational programmes, which provide students with full professional training in specific areas, so that they can go straight into employment after graduating. The other six programmes prepare students for further studies at university level.

There is no special chimney sweep programme. The chimney sweep education is beyond the upper secondary school system. For upper secondary students who are considering studying in the future to become a chimney sweep, it is recommended that they take the vocational programme “HVAC and Property Maintenance”.

Students attending a vocational programme carry out a minimum of 15 weeks of their programme at a workplace. An alternative is to do an upper secondary apprenticeship programme, which means most of the programme is carried out at a workplace.

### **Adult upper secondary school**

Municipal adult upper secondary school is primarily for those who lack all or part of an upper secondary education. Even those who have already completed an upper secondary programme can enroll in adult upper secondary school, if they want to change career direction or to raise certain grades in order to be eligible for university or higher vocational studies.



## 2. The Chimney Sweep Trade in Sweden

In Sweden, there is a law that says that chimney sweeping and fire safety inspections must be carried out for all fireplaces/furnaces, including the chimneys, as well as for ventilation systems in restaurant kitchens.

It is the municipality that is responsible for chimney sweeping and fire safety inspections. Most municipalities choose to contract out these services to private chimney sweep companies. It is also the municipality that decides the frequency of the sweeping and inspections, as well as the fees that the homeowner (or restaurant owner) must pay the chimney sweep company for the services.

There are over 1,000 professional chimney sweeps in Sweden. A total of 160 chimney sweep companies carry out the sweeping in the country. In addition to the legally required sweeping, the chimney sweep companies offer other services, such as cleaning of ventilation systems in homes and at workplaces. It is becoming more and more common that chimney sweep companies install fireplaces and ventilation systems.

## 3. Education for Chimney Sweeps

The Swedish chimney sweep education is a postsecondary education provided by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, which is responsible for the regulations around chimney sweeping. There are two levels of the education: the basic programme for the trade certificate and the advanced programme for the master's certificate.

The basic education is required for chimney sweeping and cleaning restaurant ventilation systems. The master's education is required for carrying out fire safety inspections.

### 3.1 The Trade Certificate

The basic education to become a chimney sweep is 20 weeks long and comprises both classroom learning and practice at a workplace. The education is free of charge and anyone who has passing grades from upper secondary school is eligible to apply. The individual can either first complete the education and then apply for a job at a chimney sweep company, or first be hired by a company and then go through the education.

The course prepares the student for work in the field of civil protection, primarily for work with heating flues and kitchen flues. It provides the student with the skills needed to independently clean (sweep) heating flues and kitchen flues, in order to reduce the risk of chimney-/flue-related fires.

The course also furnishes the student with knowledge on how to provide advice and information to property owners/proprietors with regard to the measures they need to take for fire safety and environmental and energy saving purposes.

## Course objectives

On completion of the course the student will:

- Have knowledge and understanding about the differences between individuals and the importance of working toward ethnic diversity and equality between men and women.
- Be able to work with a company's organisational and administrative tasks.
- Within the framework of a good work environment, be able to independently clean (sweep) common heating flues and kitchen flue.
- Be able to identify the most common risks leading to chimney-/flue-related fires, and to suggest helpful measures.
- Within the framework of a good work environment, be able to work with common inspection and certification tasks in the field of heating and ventilation.
- Be able to communicate basic information and advice for domestic fire safety.
- Within the framework of a good work environment, be able to work with environmental- and energy-related measurements in the field of heating and ventilation, and communicate basic information and advice in this field.
- Have a capacity for independent and critical assessment and to solve problems him/herself.

## 3.2 The Master Certificate

Anyone who has completed the basic education and has at least two years of working experience is eligible to apply to the master's education. As with the basic education, the master's education is 20 weeks long and comprises both classroom learning and practice at a workplace.

The course delves deeper into the topics that are covered in the basic course for chimney sweeps, with particular focus on fire safety inspections and business administration.

Three ways to become a certified chimney sweep.

