

Basic Schools: Formal education starts at the young age of three, in community-operated Basic Schools which are regulated, supervised and partially funded by the Jamaican government. The government stipend is usually just enough to pay one trained teacher. The majority of funding for additional teacher's salaries, school maintenance and school supplies comes from either school fees paid by parents, the community and/or outside donors. Children transition from Basic to Primary school at age six.

This early-childhood education curriculum includes reading, writing, basic counting, personal hygiene and safety, art, music and science. Basic Schools also serve as a setting at which students can hone their cooperativeness, learn to socialize with others, and follow directions, providing the strong foundation for their primary education in years to come.

The Jamaica School Readiness Assessment is the first phase of a system to identify children who have developmental, behavioral or learning problems that are likely to impair their readiness for primary school, and for whom additional developmental and/or behavioral evaluation is necessary.

Infant Schools: An alternative to Basic school is Infant School or a Primary school that has an affiliated Infant school. These schools are fully operated and funded by the government. Children attending these schools are not required to pay any fees unlike Basic school. Unfortunately many areas of Jamaica do not have Infant schools leaving these communities to fund their own Basic school for their children to receive an education.

Primary Schools: From age six to eleven, children attend government-funded Primary (Elementary) Schools, moving on to Secondary (High) Schools at around age 12. Students learn a wide range of skills and subjects, and prepare for standardized testing which is completed at all levels of schooling (including at Basic Schools) to assess proficiency on a regular basis.

The Primary Exit Profile (PEP) is the exam that is used to place grade 6 students as they transition to secondary (High) schools. The score on the PEP determines what High School the student may attend based on a list of preferred schools submitted by the parents and student. Unlike Primary School, High School is not free. The average cost per year is US\$1,500.

School uniforms and shoes – school uniforms and black or brown shoes are required to attend school at all levels. No child will be turned away if they do not have a uniform, but they must have a plan to obtain one as soon as possible. This is yet another expense for the parents. School uniforms and shoes can easily cost more than US\$60.

Transportation – Transportation to and from school in Jamaica is not free. Students rely on the bus system (if they are close to a larger town/city) or private taxis to take them to and from school. If parents cannot afford to pay for transportation, the children will not be able to attend school. The round trip fare for a taxi to school each day is 75 cents USD. Ultimately many children in rural areas of Jamaica have to walk very long distances to attend school.