Curriculum, Subjects, Number of Hours

Curricula are decrees issued by the Federal Minister of Education, Science and Research based on the School Organisation Act. They specify the statutory educational task of the respective school type. Experts are involved in preparing and developing the curricula.

The curriculum of primary school comprises the following areas:

- the general educational objective,
- general didactic principles,
- the educational and teaching tasks as well as the syllabus and didactic principles of the individual subjects of primary school and of the compulsory exercises in the pre-school stage,
- the total number of lessons and the number of lessons of each subject (timetable),
- where this is required according to the curriculum provisions based on school autonomy: description of the core themes of the educational and teaching tasks, the didactic principles or in the syllabus.

The curriculum of primary school is a curriculum with a framework character. It forms the basis for teachers to plan and hold classes at their own responsibility.

Based on the primary school curriculum, the goal of primary education is to impart a basic and well-balanced education in the social, emotional, intellectual and physical spheres.

Taking the pupils’ individual requirements into account, primary schools have to fulfil the following tasks:

- to develop and promote the pupils’ eagerness to learn, their skills, interests and talents,
- to strengthen and develop the pupils’ trust in their own ability to act,
- to strengthen and build their social competence (responsible behaviour, team spirit, integration, development and acceptance of rules and norms, critical thinking),
- to enhance their language skills (communication, expression),
- to develop and impart basic knowledge, skills, abilities, insights and attitudes that serve
  - to acquire reading, writing and arithmetic skills (including the use of modern communication and information technologies in a manner suitable for children),
  - to get into contact and deal with the environment and
  - to broadly develop artistic and technical skills as well as physical and motor skills,
- to gradually develop an appropriate attitude towards learning and working (perseverance, care, accuracy, the readiness to help others and considerateness),
- to guide pupils towards purposeful, independent and focused learning (based on more play-
oriented forms of learning before school attendance).

Source:

Primary School Curriculum, Federal Law Gazette no. 134/963 as amended by Federal Law Gazette II no. 303/2012 of 13 September 2012

The timetable of the pre-school stage

The timetable of the pre-school stage comprises the following compulsory exercises (total number of weekly lessons: 20): Religious Education, Elementary Science, Road Safety Instruction, Language and Speech, Preparation for Reading and Writing, Early Mathematics, Singing and Music, Rhythmic/Musical Education, Art, Handicraft, Physical Activity and Sport, Play.

The specific learning situation also has to relate to the experiences and interests of the children in the pre-school stage. The major portion of the time available is to be used for work in small groups. This enables the children to be active in different areas and in different ways (alternating work and play). Work in small groups is particularly suited to encourage and motivate the pupils and provides the opportunity to support them individually.

Timetable for primary school (grades 1 to 4, numbers of weekly lessons)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compulsory subjects</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th grade</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Science</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German, Reading, Writing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical/Textile Craft</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education and Activity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory exercises (1.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Foreign Language</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road Safety Instruction</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of weekly lessons (2.)</td>
<td>20-23</td>
<td>20-23</td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedial instruction (3.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1.) Attendance of compulsory exercises is obligatory but the pupils’ performance is not marked. Modern Foreign Language instruction (extent: 32 lessons per year) is carried out in an integrative manner in the first and second grade, which means it is included in the individual subjects. This does not affect the total number of weekly lessons. Road Safety Instruction (extent: 10 lessons per year) must be taken into account in all four grades within the total number of weekly lessons available in individual subjects.

(2.) Based on the curriculum provisions which fall within the autonomous remit of the individual schools, it is permitted, within the foreseen framework, to increase or reduce the number of weekly lessons in individual compulsory subjects (with the exception of Religious Education) and in the compulsory exercise [5] Modern Foreign Language by no more than one
weekly lesson in each grade, overall by no more than two weekly lessons.

(3.) Remedial instruction in languages and Mathematics is offered where necessary to the extent of one period of instruction per week. It can be held either on an integrative basis or as an add-on.

In addition, pupils can attend so-called optional exercises [6] on a voluntary basis: Choir, Instrumental Music, Physical Activity and Sport, Drama, Creative Music, Art, Modern Foreign Language, Development of Special Interests and Talents, Mother Tongue Instruction.

**Mother Tongue Instruction**

The optional exercise Mother Tongue Instruction for pupils with a first language other than German at primary schools and special needs schools aims to develop and consolidate their bilingualism. For reasons of early language support it is recommended to employ mother tongue teachers already in the pre-school stage [7].

Mother Tongue Instruction can, where necessary, be held all-year, as an add-on and, on certain conditions, parallel to classes or integrated into them in the form of an optional exercise. Around 25 languages are offered; the vast majority of these classes are in the languages Turkish and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian.

**Curricula for pupils with special educational needs** [8]

Primary school curricula apply to pupils with special educational needs who attend a primary school provided they can, in principle, reach the respective teaching objectives without this representing an excessive workload for them. Otherwise the curriculum of a special needs school [9] appropriate for the respective type of disability must be applied. There are special curricula for general special needs school, special needs school for blind children, special needs school for deaf children, special needs school for children with multiple disabilities, and special needs school for severely disabled children.

**Teaching Methods and Materials**

As the curriculum of primary school [10] has a framework character, teachers enjoy a certain freedom of choice regarding the selection and weighting of the syllabus and the choice of teaching methods and materials.

To design teaching at primary school in a way that is appropriate for children, lively and stimulating for them, teachers have to impart various learning techniques depending on the situation and try out forms of learning appropriate for primary school:

- learning by playing,
- open learning,
- project-oriented learning,
- learning by discovery,
- learning through information,
- learning by repetition and practice.

The possibilities offered by computers must be used to encourage independent, target-oriented and individualised learning and creative work.

The teaching content of primary school is organised by subjects, but the individual subjects should not be too strictly separated because the teaching of knowledge also requires the establishment of cross-links and therefore an interdisciplinary approach. This is especially true for the
implementation of the following teaching principles:

- health education
- reading skills
- media education
- artistic education
- citizenship education (including peace education)
- intercultural learning
- sex education
- speech education
- environmental education
- road safety education
- economics education (including saving and consumer behaviour)
- education for gender equality

The teachers and the school community have some leeway in selecting the teaching materials to be used. In general, however, the competent Federal Minister is responsible for decreeing the basic materials a school should have for teaching purposes. Here, teaching materials are those aids that serve to support or facilitate individual teaching tasks and ensure that the teaching outcome is achieved. The content and form of these teaching materials must be in line with the curriculum of the respective school grade and with the competences (education standards) to be imparted by the respective school type. Their acquisition must be economically justifiable and they must be used appropriately. Before any teaching materials (such as school textbooks, CD-ROMs, DVDs, maps and therapeutic teaching materials) are declared suitable for use in the classroom, an expert report must be obtained. Exceptions are reading materials (literary texts) and working materials (for writing, drawing, measuring and for practical classes).

**Homework**

Complementing school-based instruction, pupils can be given homework. Here the teachers have to ensure that the pupils can do their homework without the help of other people. Regarding the amount of homework, the teachers have to consider the pupils’ capacity to fulfil the tasks, the number of lessons on the respective days as well as any school events. It is not permitted to give homework for pupils to do on Saturdays, Sundays, public holidays or during the school holidays.

The learning times foreseen at all-day schools have to be used to do the homework, consolidate and support the teaching activities and support the children individually, but not to develop new teaching content.