Curriculum, subjects, number of hours

Primary education curricula have been drawn up by the Institute of Educational Policy [1] (IEP). The latter is responsible for delivering opinions or recommendations on issues related to primary education programmes, school textbooks and other teaching material.

The curricula are implemented at all schools across the country.


The cross-thematic approach defines the structure of teaching. It aims at a balanced horizontal and vertical distribution of educational material. It promotes cognitive subjects interconnection, as well as comprehensive analysis of key concepts.

In addition, the innovative "Flexible Zone of Interdisciplinary and Creative Activities" is part of DEPPS.

According to law 4547/2018 [4], the support structure of school units and educational work moved towards an interactive and dynamic relationship between the school and support structures.

The institution of the school advisors is abolished. Their responsibilities are now carried over to the educational co-ordinators (Ministerial Decision 158733/ΓΔ4/27-09-2018 [5]).

Educational goals, pedagogical practices, types of exams and formative assessment are formed by school units and groups of schools with the co-operation of:

- Educational and Counselling Centres (KESY)
- Environmental Education Centres (KPE)
- Regional Centres for Educational Planning (PEKES).

Nipiagogeio (pre-primary school)

The Cross Thematic Curriculum Framework for pre-primary school and the relevant National Curriculum determine the guidelines for the design and development of activities in:

a. Language
b. Mathematics
c. Environmental Study
d. Creation & Expression
e. ICT.
These programmes are not considered distinct teaching subjects. They offer guidelines for the implementation of activities, developmentally suitable and effective for all pre-primary school children.

Therefore, in the pre-primary School, subjects are not distinguished into compulsory and optional. There is no specific syllabus, as in primary and secondary education.

These programmes aim to provide all-round child development with regard to their physical, emotional, social and cognitive skills.

Programmes are designed around themes that trigger the child's interest while using pedagogical practices.

Thematic and project-based learning are key components of the programmes implemented. Emphasis is placed upon the interdisciplinary and holistic approach to knowledge, as well as making use of children's curiosity and ideas for conducting the learning process.

The single type of all-day pre-primary school has:

- The mainstream compulsory programme for all pupils (infants and pre-schoolers). It concerns all classes. It lasts from 8:30 to 13:00
- The non-compulsory all-day programme lasts from 13.00 to 16:00. It may include early arrival classes (07:00 – 08:00), if parents apply for them and only for pupils, who have chosen the optional all-day programme (13:15 – 16:00).

The mainstream compulsory programme are developed in **25 teaching hours per week**, while the optional in **4 teaching hours per day**, according to the current Cross Thematic Curriculum Framework and the National Curriculum for pre-primary school.

The timetable of the pre-primary school is described in detail in Chapter 5.1 “Organisation of Primary Education” [6].

**Dimotiko scholeio (primary school)**

National Curricula for each subject are organised into **6 levels**, each of them corresponding to one (1) out of six (6) primary school grades or into fewer levels, depending on the subject.

National Curricula specify:

- The aims of the subject
- Educational objectives
- Thematic Units
- Indicative activities and cross-thematic projects.

The syllabus for the subjects taught is **compulsory for all pupils** at all primary school grades (i.e. syllabus content and its distribution across all 6 Grades).

The teaching subjects of the single type of all-day primary school are:

1. Religious Education
2. Language
3. Mathematics
4. History
5. Study of the Environment
6. Geography
In accordance with presidential decree 79/2017, the following table presents instruction time per subject and class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECTS</th>
<th>WEEKLY TIMETABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Religious Education</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Language</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Mathematics</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 History</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Study of the Environment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Geography</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Natural Sciences</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Civics Education</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Arts Education:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Physical Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 English Language</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Flexible Zone - Experiential Activities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 2nd Foreign Language (French or German)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Information &amp; Communication Technologies (ICT)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The curricula of primary schools (see Chapter 5.1 [9]) which operate with 4 teachers and above are defined by the presidential decree 79/2017 [7], while Ministerial Decision 83939/Δ1/19-05-2017 [10] specifies the curricula of primary schools, which operate with one (1) teacher, two (2) teachers and 3 teachers.
Teaching methods and materials

Nipiagogeio (pre-primary school)

Until school year 2017-2018, school advisors were responsible for the scientific and pedagogical support and guidance of nipiagogeio teachers.

Law 4547/2018 [4] replaced the institution of school advisors with that of co-ordinators of educational work and established new support structures for educational work:

- Regional Centres for Educational Planning (PEKES)
- Educational and Counselling Support Centres (KESY)
- School Networks of Educational Support (SDEY)
- Committees of Interdisciplinary Educational Evaluation and Support (EDEAY)
- Environmental Education Centres (KPE).

The nipiagogeio curricula and the relevant educational support material are designed under the supervision of the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) and are approved by the Ministry of Education.

Pre-primary school teachers are supported in their work both by the guidelines in the pre-primary school National Curriculum (Ministerial Decision 21072β/Γ2/28-2-2003 [2]) and the "Teacher's guide - Educational Plans - Creative Learning Environments (2005)". They offer them a basis for theoretical and methodological support and a bank of ideas with direct examples of learning activities.

To reinforce all-day pre-primary school institution, a new package of educational and support material has been developed with multiple recipients (parents, pre-primary school teachers, pupils). It includes both printed and electronic material. Seminars have been organised for education executives on this new educational material and new curriculum.

The entire pre-primary school work programme promotes autonomy of children in order to learn how to co-exist, co-operate, capitalising on their knowledge and skills associated with different cognitive fields.

The teacher creates the appropriate conditions for ensuring learning incentives and prerequisites for all children in an attractive, safe, friendly and stimuli-rich environment. In other words, the teacher provides help, co-operates, intervenes and facilitates the entire learning process.

The main means and tools used in pre-primary schools in order to meet the objectives of National Curricula for pre-school education are:

1. Images
2. Data reconstructions
3. Exploration
4. Educational games
5. Practice exercises
6. Case studies
7. Open activities
8. Research Activities.

Within the context of school activities, teachers undertake actions pertaining to:

- Environmental education
- Health education
- Culture and arts oriented issues.
The above emphasise the empirical, interdisciplinary and team approach to knowledge, so as to help pupils develop their social skills and critical thinking, while encouraging schools to open up to society.

The educational material is available free of charge.

**Dimotiko scholeio (primary school)**

Until school year 2017-2018, school advisors were responsible for the scientific and pedagogical support and guidance of primary school teachers. 

*Law 4547/2018* [4] replaced the institution of school advisors with that of co-ordinators of educational work and established **new support structures for educational work**:

- Regional Centres for Educational Planning (PEKES)
- Educational and Counselling Support Centres (KESY)
- School Networks of Educational Support (SDEY)
- Committees of Interdisciplinary Educational Evaluation and Support (EDEAY)
- Environmental Education Centres (KPE).

Teachers must implement the curricula, taking into consideration the special conditions prevailing in their classes, in order to achieve the educational objectives.

In order to **guide teaching work**:

- Teachers are provided with guidelines on teaching in line with the current curricula by the Institute of Educational Policy
- They are supplied with teacher manuals accompanying each subject
- They co-operate with educational co-ordinators.

In the curricula, particular emphasis is placed on **the cross-thematic approach to knowledge**. It is within this framework that the "Flexible Zone of Cross-thematic and Creative Activities" is introduced, based on the pupil's experience through activities and projects.

Within the context of both the Flexible Zone and the optional school activities, teachers undertake **actions** pertaining to:

- Environmental education
- Health education
- Culture and arts oriented issues.

The above emphasise the empirical, interdisciplinary and team approach to knowledge, so as to help pupils develop their social skills and critical thinking, while encouraging schools to open up to society.

Teachers take the to implement various optional educational programmes-activities within or outside the classroom through student participation.

**School textbooks** have been elaborated based on National Curricula, applicable to all subjects, grades and education levels. They are distributed free of charge to pupils across the country.

The selection and approval of the material is conducted at central level by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (they are designed by the Institute of Educational Policy).

It is noted that:
A new textbook in Mathematics for the 5th grade was introduced in 2018, while portfolios for the subject of Religious Education were designed on the basis of new curriculum in 2017 (ministerial decision 101470/Δ2/16-06-2017 [11]).

Since school year 2016-17, there is a systematic effort to restructure and rationalise the syllabus in primary school.

The issue of pupils' homework is defined based on the directions provided at central level, while relevant instructions can be found in teacher books.

Since school year 2017-2018, the action "Leaving textbooks at Dimotiko scholeio for at least two weekends" has been implemented. The aim is a general re-evaluation of the importance and the role of homework in relation with the free time of pupils.

It offers a balance between work performed at school and homework. It should be noted that this is not a symbolical intervention. It is meant for pupils not to prepare for lessons during these weekends.

**Foreign languages**

The implementation of the single curriculum in foreign languages has been a big change in foreign language education (ministerial decision 141417/Δ2/9-9-2016 [12]).

Its basis is the teaching of foreign languages throughout the spectrum of compulsory education. Foreign languages are considered to be a single cognitive subject with a common curriculum.

The above curriculum describes in detail the communicative objectives through indicators of:

- Communicative language proficiency
- Partly communicative language actions.

The above are classified according to the levels of language proficiency of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (NRFL, Council of Europe, 2001).

The choice of teaching methods depends on the teachers’ judgment and on the basis of the social, cultural and learning traits, as well as the interests and needs of students.

Apart from lesson plans, teachers create suitable educational material. Hence, they enrich the school textbook, to reinforce learning incentives and meet the interests and inclinations of students.

**Natural Sciences**

A major effort is made for the promotion of laboratory teaching for the subjects of natural sciences.

In order to offer extra support to lab teaching of natural sciences, laboratory centres of natural sciences (EKFE) operate. There can be one or more depending on the number of school units at each education directorate.

EKFE are centres of research, technical and pedagogical support of the lab teaching of natural sciences subjects. They use all appropriate means. They co-operate with the coordinators of educational work of natural sciences.

Finally, they contribute to the organisation of the school laboratories of natural sciences (SEFE) of primary and secondary education schools.

**ICT in primary education**

Special emphasis is given in the inclusion of ICT in the educational process. To this end, the Ministry
of Education provides software for classroom use. Moreover, there are two websites maintained by the Ministry of Education:

- The official educational portal e-yliko.gr [14]
- Digital School [15]

These two constitute interactive communication and teaching support channels, where teachers and schools can post relevant educational material. In parallel, primary schools equipment is enriched with computer laboratories.

In addition, the Advanced Electronic Scenarios Operating Platform, Aesop [16] is another support website for the educational community. It is developed by IEP and offers teaching scenarios for various cognitive subjects of primary education.

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[3] http://www.et.gr/docs-nph/search/pdfViewerForm.html?args=5C7QrtC22wFahF2BrTT7HdtvSoCirL8UTALmb-QtlSMXD0LzQTLF7MGccO23N88knBzLCmTXKa06fpVZ6Lx3UnKl3nP8NxdnJ5r9cmWjyWelDvWS_18kAehATUkJbox1LidQ163n9K--td6SluTAzQgok1r2PciYA2QIraYxCGF6lnljQWjnNS5x7-A-E
[4] http://www.et.gr/docs-nph/search/pdfViewerForm.html?args=5C7QrtC22wG3UHk-ZeQumndtvSoCirL8sn_CiStj5zV5MXD0LzQTLWPU9yLzB8V6knBzLCmTXKa06fpVZ6Lx3UnKl3nP8NxdnJ5r9cmWjyWelDvWS_18kAehATUkJbox1LidQ163n9K--td6SluUfwsuG5x2FZp4dRmpsHuoxzyOwkWo8OopyrDmjzyCMW
[5] http://www.et.gr/docs-nph/search/pdfViewerForm.html?args=5C7QrtC22wG3UHk-ZeQumndtvSoCirL8sCxEEjRXO2rdp6k5uE6xNdujlnj48_97uHrMts-zFzeycIBSQOpYnT36MaccUfCxc2ppFvBej56Mmc8Qdb8ZFrljQznlAdk8Lv_e6czmhEembNmZCMxLMtsZ3ZPCUEmX_X4n75VW-dnXj1eFxa3OAxjBKUK9NZFP
[7] http://www.et.gr/docs-nph/search/pdfViewerForm.html?args=5C7QrtC22wEsrjP0AlXbXdtvSoCirL8njuEuKFUXzB5MD0LzQTLPWU9yLyB8V68knBzLCmTXKa06fpVZ6Lx3UnKl3nP8NxdnJ5r9cmWjyWelDvWS_18kAehATUkJbox1LidQ163n9K--td6SluSYBwcdOxW3yqcfxOUwvCby87v1hfyYrPtisbI2WOuh
[8]