Curriculum, subjects, number of hours

At primary level, the curriculum is defined through National Guidelines for the curriculum (Indicazioni nazionali per il curriculum [1]) implemented from school year 2012/2013. This document replaced the National Guidelines for the personalised study plans in primary schools (Indicazioni nazionali per i piani di studio personalizzati nella scuola primaria) of 2004 and the Guidelines for the curriculum (Indicazioni per il curricolo [3]), of 2007.

According to new Guidelines, the general aim of school is the harmonious and comprehensive development of the individual, according to the principles of the Italian Constitution and the European cultural tradition, to be achieved through the promotion of knowledge, respect for individual diversity and the active involvement of students and their families. The reference for these new guidelines is the Framework for key competences for lifelong learning set up by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union through the Recommendation of 18 December 2006.

Specifically, the purpose of primary education is to enable pupils to acquire the fundamental knowledge and skills to develop basic cultural competence.

The subjects taught during the 5 years of primary school are: Italian, English, history, geography, mathematics, sciences, technology, music, art, sports education, Catholic religion. Catholic religion is optional.

The curriculum includes the teaching of 'Citizenship and Constitution' that schools must include it in their three-year educational offer plan (PTOF [4]). It is not a separate subject and its contents are developed by individual schools through teaching projects.

Each subject has goals for the development of skills, to be reached at the end of primary education, which are mandatory for teachers. The National guidelines also set, for each subject, the learning objectives that indicate the experience fields, knowledge and skills which are needed to reach the goals for the development of competences at the end of primary education.

The goals for the development of competences and the specific learning objectives of Catholic religion are defined in agreement with the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI). The most recent document that defines such goals and objectives is the Presidential Decree of 11 February 2010.

At primary level, there are not specific subject timetables. Only English and Catholic religion have a specific timetable: one hour of teaching for English in the first grade, two hours in the second grade, three hours in the third, fourth and fifth grades, amounting to a minimum compulsory total of 396 hours throughout primary education. Two hours a week are allocated to either the teaching of Catholic religion or alternative activities for those who opt not to take Catholic religion.
Teaching methods and materials

Freedom of teaching is a principle set out in the Italian Constitution (art. 33). The choice and use of teaching methods and materials must be consistent with each school's three-year Plan for the educational offer (PTOF), which, in turn, must be consistent with the general and educational objectives of the different branches and levels of study established at national level.

While safeguarding the freedom of teaching, the National guidelines for the curriculum suggest some basic methodological approaches, such as, taking advantage of pupils' experiences and knowledge, promoting exploration and discovery activities, encouraging cooperative learning, developing awareness of one's own learning method, carrying out in-lab learning, etc.

Teachers choose the textbooks and other didactic tools for their classes and submit their choice to the Teachers' assembly that formally approves it. This formal procedure, known as ‘adoption of textbooks’ is not mandatory for schools and teachers. Textbooks can be in digital or mixed version (mixed versions are meant as paper versions, paper and digital versions or digital versions, all with integrative digital contents). In any case, textbooks and didactic tools must be consistent with the curriculum and with the Plan for the educational offer of the school (PTOF).

Textbooks are free for pupils and costs are met by municipalities, in accordance with regional legislation on the right to study. Every year, the Ministry establishes the retail price of textbooks.

In addition, for specific subjects, schools can create their own digital teaching tools which students will use as textbooks. Teachers develop such tools in class during the teaching hours and in collaboration with the other class teachers and students. Schools willing to share and distribute their textbook free of charge to other State schools should register their product.

As for school year 2019/20, the cover price of textbooks is the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>First grade textbook</th>
<th>Primary school textbook (all subjects)</th>
<th>Language textbook</th>
<th>Various subjects textbook</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Foreign language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>€ 11.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>€ 7.34</td>
<td>€ 3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>€ 16.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>€ 5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>€ 23.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>€ 7.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>€ 15.47</td>
<td>€ 19.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>€ 7.34</td>
<td>€ 7.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>€ 18.77</td>
<td>€ 22.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>€ 9.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministerial Decree no. 367/2019

Primary schools are usually provided with many teaching materials and tools. Schools are encouraged to arrange labs or rooms destined to libraries, gyms, scientific or music labs. In general, primary schools have ICT labs for supporting teaching activities, whereas several classes are also equipped with interactive whiteboards (IWB).

Each school pays for didactic materials, tools and equipment within the limits of its financial resources. Local authorities can share in the expenses in accordance with the regional legislations on the right to study.
Legislative references

Ministerial Decree 16 November 2012, no. 254 (National guidelines for the curriculum 2012)

Law Decree 18 October 2012, no 179 converted in Law 17 December 2012, n. 221 (textbooks)

Law 6 August 2008, no. 133 (textbooks)

Law 30 October 2008, no. 169 (Citizenship and Constitution)

Ministerial Decree 31 July 2007 (Guidelines for the curriculum)

D.Lgs. 19 February 2004, no. 59 (National guidelines)

Source URL:
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/teaching-and-learning-primary-education-23_en

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