



Published on *Eurydice* (<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice>)

Primary education in Malta is distinct from the secondary cycle. However, there exists an area of overlap with kindergarten education since the first two years of primary education are considered as a continuation of the two-year Kindergarten period with this phase being regarded as a preparation for more formal learning. However, while kindergarten education is not compulsory, the start of primary education at age five marks the beginning of compulsory education. The two years of kindergarten and the first two years of primary education are considered as the Early Years cycle. This description applies also to private grant-aided schools which in Malta are schools administered by the Catholic Church and Catholic religious orders.

The primary cycle is the initial stage in the compulsory education phase and lasts for six years, from Year 1 up till Year 6. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) sets out three broad learning outcomes for pupils in primary education as per the following:

Outcome 1: Learners who are capable of successfully developing their full potential as lifelong learners. This outcome leads to the development of:

- Children who are confident and able to establish effective relationships with other children and with adults, leading to positive self-esteem, self-confidence and self-awareness.
- Children who are able to value, appreciate and interact with their immediate environment.
- Children who competently use the range of age-appropriate language skills in both Maltese and English.
- Children who are able to recognise and value the importance of foreign language for communication purposes.
- Children who are able to apply basic numeracy and problem-solving skills. Children who are able to engage confidently with basic levels of technology.
- Children who are able to demonstrate a positive disposition towards investigation, designing and making, testing and reporting at elementary levels.
- Children who are able to express their own ideas and experiment with different ways of solving problems.
- Children who are able to appreciate, respond to, participate in and experiment with basic creative performances and expression.

Outcome 2: Learners who are capable of sustaining their chances in the world of work. Although

children are far-removed from the world of work in the primary years, the foundation skills and attitudes for employability are to be nurtured from an early age. Such skills and attitudes develop through:

- The ability to communicate with confidence utilising various communication skills and media.
- The ability to apply basic ICT skills whilst observing netiquette and online safety measures.
- The ability to learn and to adapt to changes.
- The ability to adapt to an environment of geographic change.
- The ability to take the initiative and are capable of working independently and collaboratively.
- The ability to create and to experiment with the basics of entrepreneurship.
- The ability to use curiosity for positive judgment.
- The ability to appreciate the environment and act positively in favour of sustainability.

Outcome 3: Learners who are engaged citizens who are able to secure social justice in constantly changing local, regional and global realities. These learners need to:

- View diversity as a cohesive force rather than a dividing force.
- Appreciate and promote their Maltese culture and heritage.
- Appreciate their Mediterranean, European and global contexts.
- Value and respect difference whilst recognising similarities.
- Develop an awareness of their rights and responsibilities as active citizens.
- Adopt a healthy and active lifestyle, conscious of the long-lasting implications.

All children of primary school age attend mainstream primary schools except for a small proportion of children (0.26%) with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) who attend specialised settings, mainly the Primary Education Resource Centre. This Resource Centre is accessible to students in the primary age bracket, who can visit it periodically, and for 3- to 13-year-olds in the case of PMLD students. Progression from this Resource Centre to subsequent ones is to be made following a detailed individual transition plan.

The relevant law governing the operation of primary schools in Malta is Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta – the Education Act.

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