Curriculum, subjects, number of hours

The scope of primary education is determined by two elements: the national core curriculum and outline timetables. The core curriculum determines curricular contents in primary education. It provides a list of teaching and learning aims, and knowledge, skills and competences which pupils are expected to acquire at a given education level. The outline timetable specifies the weekly number of hours for pupils in individual grades (semesters) in a given type of school which are allocated to education classes, in particular compulsory general education classes (see below).

In the school system with eight-year primary education, schools have started to implement a new core curriculum, laid down in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 14 February 2017 on the core curriculum for pre-school education and the core curriculum for general education in primary schools, incl. for pupils with moderate and severe intellectual disability, and for general education in first-grade sectoral vocational schools, general education in special schools preparing for employment, and general education in post-secondary schools. However, in the transition period, some grades of the primary school still follow the previous core curriculum, based on the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 27 August 2012 (as amended by the Regulation of 30 May 2014). In the school year 2018/2019, the new core curriculum for general education in the primary school is implemented in grades I and II, IV and V, and VII and VIII of the primary school; and the previous core curriculum for general education in the primary school is still in place for grades III and VI.

Both documents, i.e. the previous and new core curricula, aim to present general and detailed requirements (learning outcomes) which determine the scope of knowledge and skills for pupils. The knowledge and skills acquired by pupils are, in general, subject to objective assessment, i.e. so-called external examinations conducted by examination boards (pursuant to the legislation currently in force, however, an external test will no longer be conducted at the end of primary education; it has been replaced by the eighth-grader exam).

The core curriculum should be adhered to by each school. It is implemented through school curricula which describe how the aims and contents of education are implemented as part of individual classes. Teachers are free to follow curricula developed by them independently or other curricula chosen, provided that they are approved for use by the school head, upon consultation with the teaching council (rada pedagogiczna).

A curriculum can be:

- developed by the teacher individually or in cooperation with other teachers;
- chosen by the teacher from the set of curricula prepared by other author(s), e.g. from among those available on the market;
The curriculum proposed by the teacher should be adjusted to the needs and abilities of the pupils concerned.

School curricula are approved for the use at school by the head of a given school at the request of (a) teacher(s), after consultation with the school's teaching council.

**Learning process in the primary school**

Stage I of the primary school covers grades I, II and III. Teaching at this stage is designed to ensure smooth transition from pre-school education to school education. It is organised on an integrated basis.

Classes are taught according to a timetable prepared by the teacher, with the duration of lessons and breaks determined by pupils’ activity.

The next stage (grades IV to VIII) comprises education divided into subjects.

The curriculum reform which was implemented between 2009/2010 and 2014/2015 (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 27 August 2012 on the core curricula for pre-school education and general education in individual types of schools) is currently being replaced by a new one based on the Law on School Education. The reform is linked to a comprehensive transformation of the schooling model in Poland. Further details are available in the section ‘Teaching and Learning in Primary Education: Curriculum, subjects, number of hours’ above.

The school reform has also introduced changes in outline timetables which were in place from the school year 2012/2013 (Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 February 2012 on the outline timetables in public schools, as subsequently amended). A new Regulation of 28 March 2017 has recently been adopted on the basis of the Law on School Education; the 2012 Regulation, based on the repealed provisions of the School Education Act, remains in force only in the transition period, i.e. until the final cohort of pupils completes education in the types of schools which are currently being phased out (in particular, lower secondary schools).

**Outline Timetables in 2016/2017**

1. In grades I to III of the primary school (Stage I: early school education), the **minimum weekly number of teaching hours in the three-year period** is as follows:

Compulsory integrated teaching (Polish language, Social education, Natural sciences, Mathematics, Technology, Modern foreign language, Music education, Art education, ICT education, and Physical education): in total, **60 hours per week in the three-year period**. Hours are distributed among the individual types of classes by the generalist teacher who conducts classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Compulsory classes</th>
<th>Weekly number of hours by grade</th>
<th>Total in the three-year period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Early school education</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hours left to the school head’s discretion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As part of compulsory classes in grades I to III, **3 hours per week** are allocated to physical education.

Separate regulations specify the number of hours for subjects such as religion or ethics; a national or ethnic minority language / the regional language / history and culture, and geography of the country with which a national minority identifies itself; sports classes; additional classes; sign language classes; and counselling (psychological and educational support). These are not included in the total duration of compulsory classes.

2. In grades IV to VIII of the primary school (Stage II), the **minimum weekly number of teaching hours in the five-year period** is as follows:

- Polish language: 25 hours per week in total in grades IV to VIII;
- Modern foreign language: 15 hours per week in total in grades IV to VIII (plus, additionally, 4 hours in total in grades VII to VIII for a foreign language which is the second language of tuition in bilingual primary schools);
- Music and art: 4 hours for each per week in total in grades IV to VII;
- History: 9 hours per week in total in grades IV to VIII;
- Civic education: 2 hours per week in grade VIII;
- Natural sciences: 2 hours per week in grade IV;
- Geography: 5 hours per week in total in grades V to VIII;
- Biology: 5 hours per week in total in grades V to VIII;
- Chemistry: 4 hours per week in total in grades VII to VIII;
- Physics: 4 hours per week in total in grades VII to VIII;
- Mathematics: 20 hours per week in total in grades IV to VIII;
- Computer science / ICT: 5 hours per week in total in grades IV to VIII;
- Technology: 3 hours per week in total in grades IV to VI;
- Physical education: 20 hours per week in total in grades IV to VIII;
- Safety education: 1 hour per week in grade VIII;
- Class hours / Hours with the class tutor: 5 hours per week in total in grades IV to VIII.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Compulsory classes</th>
<th>Weekly number of hours by grade</th>
<th>Total in the five-year period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Polish language</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Modern foreign language</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Second modern foreign language</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Art education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Civic education</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Natural sciences</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Weekly Teaching Hours

#### 3. Weekly number of teaching hours for:

1. The number of compulsory teaching hours for pupils in individual grades at Stage I is 20 for grades I, II and III. Additionally, throughout the early school education period, 2 hours are left to the school head’s discretion.

2. The number of compulsory teaching hours for pupils in individual grades at Stage II (grades IV to VIII):
   - grade IV: 24,
   - grade V: 25,
   - grade VI: 25,
   - grade VII: 32 (plus 2 additional hours for the foreign language of tuition in bilingual schools),
   - grade VIII: 31 (plus 2 additional hours for the foreign language of tuition in bilingual schools).

3. The number of rehabilitation class hours for disabled pupils is defined separately.

#### 4. Number of hours left to the school head’s discretion

- Defined by the school head for each school year, according to separate regulations.

#### 5. Separate regulations

- Define the number of teaching hours for Religion or Ethics; Education for family life; National or Ethnic minority language, or Regional language, and National / ethnic minority history and culture; and Sports activities in sports classes or sports schools, or schools of sports championship.
The outline timetables based on the regulations issued earlier are still in place in the types of schools which will be phased out as the new school system is being introduced. For further details, see: [Poland:National_Reforms_in_School_Education][1]

For more information, see the annually updated Eurydice publication entitled ‘Recommended Annual Instruction Time in Full-time Compulsory Education in Europe 2017/2018’ [2].

### Teaching methods and materials

Pursuant to the legislation, teachers are free to choose forms and methods of teaching, based on achievements in education sciences. Methods depend largely on the number of pupils per class and on the equipment available in the school (e.g. the number of computers, audio-visual equipment and other teaching aids). Schools are free to choose teaching aids to be used in classes. Some classes require the class to be divided into smaller groups (e.g. foreign languages, computer science). See the section “Age levels and grouping of pupils” above.

Teachers may choose to use or not to use a textbook, educational resources or exercise materials in implementing the curriculum. Educational resources replace or supplement a textbook; these could be, for example, contents downloaded from the Internet, copied or created by the teacher in order to conduct classes (slide shows, presentations, notes, excerpts from literature, etc.). Textbooks for primary education should be chosen from among the textbooks approved for the use at school by the Minister of National Education. The school head publishes annually the list of textbooks or educational resources and exercise materials to be used in a given school from the beginning of the next school year.

As from 2014 pupils in primary schools (and lower secondary schools currently being phased out) have been gradually provided with publicly funded textbooks and exercise materials for general education. As from 1 September 2017, all pupils in primary schools, and lower secondary schools existing until now, should have access to free textbooks. With such materials funded from State-budget grants, costs of education incurred by parents can be reduced.

Practically all primary schools in Poland have access to the Internet and enable teachers and pupils to use it. Thus, schools are required by law to install special Internet safety software in computers used for teaching and learning purposes. The software should protect pupils, in particular, against pornography, brutal and aggressive contents, and contents breaking social norms and promoting hatred and discrimination.

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YES

NO

Contact *

Message *

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