Separate special education of children and pupils with health disadvantage takes place in schools:

- kindergartens for children with health disadvantage,
- primary schools for children with health disadvantage,
- secondary schools for children with health disadvantage (for pupils with visual or hearing impairment and physical disability),
- vocational secondary schools (for pupils with mental disability),
- practical schools (for pupils with mental disability).

The Education Act guarantees pupils who are not able to attend school due to their disability such form of education that will enable them to achieve the same results as if they were attending school.

Definition of the target groups

The system of special education admits children and pupils who were in special medical, psychological and pedagogical examinations diagnosed with such deficiencies in mental, psychosocial and physical development that make them impossible to be successfully educated in regular schools and facilities even with the use of compensation-rehabilitation aids.

Within the framework of special educational diagnosis the children with health disadvantage are differentiated as follows:

- child with mental handicap (brain injury or injury of its functions),
- child with impaired communication ability,
- child with hearing impairments (defects of hearing and speech),
- child with visual impairments (inborn or acquired impairment of sight) deaf and blind child,
- child with physical disability,
- child with multiple disabilities (combination of sensory impairments mental handicap),
- child with autism or other pervasive developmental disorder,
- child with learning difficulties dyslexia or discalculia with hyperactivity disorder (ADD, ADHD),
- child sick and physically weakened,
- maladjusted child.

The child with health disadvantage is recommended to be integrated into the special-educational care in the system of counselling and into the educational process as soon as possible – before starting the compulsory school attendance.
Admission requirements and choice of school

An incentive for integration of the child into the system of special education may come either from the child’s parent or guardian, physician, headteacher of the special school or facility, head of the counselling centre or social institution.

The parent of the child with health disability is recommended to visit the special-educational counselling centre which mediates examinations and prepares documentation. According to the above examination, the headteacher decides on enrolment of the child in the primary school (school integration or in special class), or in special school. special education system.

The proposal for admission into special education system in school integration is reviewed by experts from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health Care, and in some case the proposal can be made also by experts from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Family.

The decision on admission of the child to the system of special education is within the competence of headteacher of the school or school facility, always with the informed consent of the child’s guardian.

Children are admitted to special kindergartens according to their disability.

Medical diagnosis

If a child is disabled, medical diagnosis is required. As a part of the screening examination – performed by the 36th month of child’s age – a doctor will look for possible disabilities, indicate a diagnosis with a recommendation for further medical examination.

Upon setting a medical diagnosis, the doctor will recommend further examination for the child in counselling facilities of the Ministry of Education. Medical diagnosis is supplemented by a psychological and special pedagogical examination.

Special pedagogical diagnosis

The team of experts composed of a physician, psychologist, social worker, and special pedagogue, rehabilitation worker and technician, or other specialists give complex evaluation of the child – pupil with health disadvantages.

Finally, a special pedagogue determines the final special-educational diagnosis, namely, after assessment of all examinations. At the same time, special education needs are defined by stating educational prognosis. The complex evaluation given like this is a part of the "Proposal for admission of the child, pupil with special education needs to the special school, special kindergarten, primary
school and to secondary school”.

The content and scope of education come from curricula designed for pupils with mental handicap or and individual educational plan compiled in dependency to the degree of the disorder.

### Age levels and grouping of pupils

The levels of education of children and pupils with special education needs are analogous to levels of education in mainstream schools of common population. Differences ensue from the kind and relevance of the handicap.

### Children and pupils with sensory and physical disability

Special schools up to upper secondary education level, i.e. kindergartens, primary schools, gymnasium, secondary vocational schools are established for children and pupils with sensory impairments and physical disabilities.

Children are enrolled into **special kindergarten** usually from three to six years of their age. Pupils with health disadvantages sensory and physical disability enter the **primary school** usually at the age of six years. These primary schools have 9 grades or 10 grades and also they can have a preparatory grade. Preparatory and 1. – 4 grades create 1st stage of primary school and 5.- 9. grades create a 2nd stage of primary school (ISCED 2).

**Secondary schools for physically disabled with sensory impairments** and organize postsecondary study for applicants who received upper secondary education and follow-up study for applicants who received secondary vocational education. The pupils are integrated into individual schools according to their defects, in case of multidefects according to dominant defect. They are grouped in classes according to their age.

Kindergartens and primary schools, which may have a zero grade, are established for **children with impaired communication ability and children and pupils with autism** and other pervasive developmental disorders.

School leavers who complete a primary school for pupils with sensory or physical disability **can continue in their school attendance in regular secondary schools, special classes of regular secondary schools or special secondary schools** after an admission interview.

Education obtained in mainstream schools and education obtained in the system of special education for children and pupils with sensory and physical disability are **equal**.

Headteachers may enable seriously disabled pupils to take part in primary education until the end of the school year in which they reach the age of 18.
**Children and pupils with mental disabilities**

The children and pupils with mental handicap are offered

- special kindergartens,
- special primary schools,
- vocational schools,
- practical schools.

Special primary schools for pupils with mental disability do not provide a level of education equal to education obtained in mainstream primary schools.

Pupils are assigned to schools and classes for pupils with mental disabilities according to their age and degree of disability). Classes with individual curricula are founded in special primary schools for pupils with a serious degree of mental disability.

Education in schools for mentally disabled pupils is provided according to schools’ internal differentiation in three variants

1. A (pupil with a minor degree of mental disability),
2. B (with a moderate degree of disability),
3. C (with a serious and profound degree of mental disability).

Primary schools for mentally handicapped pupils with educational variant A have the zero grade and 9 grades.

Special primary schools for mentally handicapped pupils with educational variants B and C have the zero grade and 10 grades divided into 4 levels:

1. Lower level,
2. Middle level,
3. Higher level,
4. Vocational level.

Lower and middle levels are three year programmes and the higher and vocational levels are two year programmes.

Zero grade and 1. - 4. grades with educational variant A comprises the first level, and 5. - 9. grades comprise the second level of primary school education.

The minimum number of pupils in a class of special school is 4; maximum numbers are set up according to individual kinds and types of schools from 8-12, with the exception of classes with individual educational programme in which the highest number of pupils is four (pupils with autism and deaf blind) and maximum is 5-6 pupils in classes of the variant C.
**Vocational secondary school**

For school-leavers of primary school for **mentally handicapped who have prerequisites to master the training** are offered a vocational school. The education in vocational school lasts from one to three years, before that a preparatory grade can be provided. A maximum number of pupils per class is 14. The school-leavers are ready for work in simple worker’s professions and crafts.

**Practical school**

Mentally handicapped pupils who after completing compulsory school attendance have no prerequisites to complete vocational school, have the possibility to be educated in practical school.

Practical school is a type of school which prepare pupils for performing simple occupational activities usually under supervision.

The educational programme prepares pupils for life in family, self-service, simple practical jobs and for performing simple, mostly supervised occupational activities.

Training in practical schools takes up to three years. A maximum number in classes of practical school is 10. Practical schools provide lower secondary vocational education without certificate of apprenticeship.

**Schools at health facilities**

At the health centres, the kindergartens, primary schools and special primary schools are established. In these schools the pupils are educated during treatment of their illness or health weakening for which they have been temporarily placed in the health centre. They are grouped in classes according to age with maximum number 6 - 10 (according to type of illness).

**Curriculum, subjects**

The education and training of children and pupils with special education needs are based on the following educational programmes designed for:

- children and pupils with mental disorder,
- children and pupils with hearing disorder,
- children and pupils with sight disorder,
- children and pupils with physical impairment,
- children and pupils with impaired communication ability,
Content of education is adapted to the mental level of each pupil.

**Teaching plans** for pupils with mental disabilities contain almost **all subjects like in regular schools.** However, there is more time allocated to the subject **Work education** and the subjects are supplemented by individual logopaedic care.

Deaf children are also guaranteed a right to education in sign language for the deaf.

The subjects contained on education plans of special schools are divided into **compulsory and optional.**

Compulsory subjects include: Slovak language and literature, natural science, history, geography, civics, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, work education, art and crafts, music education, physical education, in schools for pupils without mental handicap there is also foreign language.

In primary schools religious education is taught in alternation with ethics, at schools for mentally handicapped pupils religious education is an optional subject and ethics is a part of the subject of civics.

**The school can exercise the different ways of organisation of teaching** taking into account specificities of pupils with health disadvantages, mainly

- by dividing teaching hours into shorter time segments,
- by introducing breaks,
- block teaching and other organisational forms.

Pupils can be fully or partially exempted from taking a subject either for the whole school year or its part.

A pupil is exempted by the headteacher based on a statement of the pupil’s teacher and doctor. If the pupil concerned has visual, hearing impairment and physical disability or speech impairment, the headteacher will exempt the pupil based on an additional statement of a special pedagogue, psychologist and specialist doctor.

In case of education and training of pupils, for which, out of different reasons procedure of following curriculum of particular school or particular educational program is not optimal, it is appropriate to follow **individual educational program.** This education is necessary supplemented to certificate.

If the education takes place in premises of the home of social services, the spatial provision in terms of operation is provided by the respective home, textbooks, teaching aids and personnel is provided by the Ministry of education. If the children are educated outside the home of social service, the spatial, material and personnel provision falls under the competence of the education sector. Education of children and pupils in home of social service is regulated by the valid legislation.
Teaching methods and materials

In kindergartens and kindergartens for children with special education needs, children with incorrect pronunciation are provided with speech care.

Special pedagogic and other professional care for the children with diagnosed special education needs and their parents is provided by the centres of special pedagogic counselling.

Professional pedagogic and psychological activity for children of pre-primary age and their parents is provided by centres of special pedagogic and psychological counselling and prevention. In the process of developing some of children personality areas, individual support programs are used, like e.g. programs for speech developments, graphomotoric skills.

Support of special methods carries out the education of pupils with special education needs.

These methods are aimed at overcoming, mitigation or prevention of the handicap. **Special-educational methods** used in special schools may be summed up as follows:

- **method of re-education** - special-educational procedures which are aimed at the affected function,
- **method of compensation** - special-educational procedures aimed at development of compensatory unaffected functions,
- **method of rehabilitation** - special-educational procedures aimed at socialisation - integration of the handicapped individual in the community.

Within the framework of the above methods, the methods and forms of special education of such a kind are used which are characteristic of **individual procedure**.

Further, they are the methods using various **compensatory aids**, such as computers, hearing aids, various optic aids, etc. Bibliotherapy as a part of therapeutic-educational intervention, a method of communicative nature proved to be effective too. These compensatory aids are used individually or collectively - special classrooms such as video studios, logopaedic workplaces, etc.

Progressions of pupils

**The children with health disadvantages** integrated in the system of special needs education and training in special primary and secondary schools based on professional recommendations fulfils his compulsory school attendance and subsequently applies for study in secondary vocational schools (special secondary schools or mainstream secondary schools).

**Pupils with mental disabilities** can continue with their study at vocational secondary schools or practical schools.

Progression from lower to higher grade is conditioned by fulfilling school duties and by evaluation and
marking of pupils’ achievements, which were marked “passed”.

The possibilities of admission of the school-leavers with health disability from mainstream and special primary schools depend on the level of achievements at primary school that the pupil had attended.

The application contains medical statement and confirmation about the nature of his defect in case that the pupil completed the compulsory school attendance at a mainstream primary school and applies for a special secondary school.

The character of his/her defect must correspond to the type of the special secondary school that the pupil has applied for.

In case that the pupil applies for a mainstream secondary school the application must contain the decision of the appropriate medical expert commission of social insurance on ability to pursue the field of selected study. The application form of the pupil with health disability also contains pedagogical documentation that is made up of psychological and special educational examinations.

The guardian of the pupil submits the application; it contains statement by professional physician for adolescents on health fitness of the pupil along with educational documentation. The headteacher of special primary school send application to the vocational school or practical school.

After successfully completing study at secondary school the pupil with health disability may further apply for higher education study only through integrated form of education. At all higher education institutions are coordinators for students with health disability.

Certification

Certification of education of pupils with health disability (integrated in mainstream primary and secondary schools in separate classes or schools) corresponds to certification of other pupils according to the relevant level of education.

Primary schools at health care centres do not issue certificates, they provide material for assessment and grading of pupils’ study results and behaviour in the school they were admitted to.

Pupils with mental disability are assessed and graded based on a written report on pupils’ progress and educational activities results.

Pupils who complete an educational programme for pupils with a minor degree of mental disability will obtain a certificate of the attained level of education – certificate with supplement.

Pupils who complete an educational program for pupils with a moderate level of mental disability will obtain a certificate of the attained level of education – certificate with supplement.

Pupils who complete an educational programme for pupils with a severe or profound degree of mental disability will obtain a certificate with supplement.
Legislative references

National Council of the Slovak Republic, 2008. Act No. 245/2008 on education and training (Education Act) and on the change and supplement to some acts as amended by subsequent provisions (Zákon č. 245/2008 Z.z. o výchove a vzdelávaní (školský zákon) a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov v znení neskorších predpisov [1]) (last accessed 07/01/2020).


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