



Schola Europaea

Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools

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Definitive version

## **General introduction to the nursery and primary school curricula**

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Approved by the Board of Governors of the European Schools at its meeting in Brussels on 1 and 2 February 2005

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**Entry into force immediate**

**This syllabus cancels and replaces the syllabus with the reference number 74-D-85**

## **General introduction to the Nursery and Primary school curricula**

**Nursery school** forms an integral part of the European Schools education system. It has several objectives:

- To provide four-year-olds with an opportunity to socialise for the first time with children of the same mother tongue, preferably in a group comprising children of a slightly different age (aged four and five).
- To teach children how to behave in a classroom group: listening, asking permission to speak, waiting one's turn, sharing toys with others, concentrating for some time, etc.
- To introduce four- and five-year-olds to play-based learning, without formal systematic teaching and learning: basic mathematical language, quantification, seriation, classification, etc.
- To teach children how to handle coloured pencils and drawing implements, to use construction cubes, to participate in team games.
- To teach children to obey the rules of communal life, to eat their snacks tidily, not to push, to respect other people's property.
- To prepare pupils for entry into their first year of compulsory education, namely primary year 1, by ensuring that they acquire the basic competences.
- To diagnose possible learning difficulties in pupils and help them to overcome them through early (preventive) intervention.

The nursery school has no curriculum in the strict sense of the word but follows a framework plan (ref.: 1999-D-132), drawn up by the Board of Inspectors (Nursery and Primary) in cooperation with the nursery teachers and approved by the Board of Governors. This framework plan describes educational activities in terms of the different learning areas. The teaching staff carry out both long-term planning (topics to be dealt during the school year cycle in the time available) and short-term planning (content to be dealt with during a set time period) in line with the activities in the framework plan.

Learning is assessed on the basis of a profile of the behaviours and attitudes acquired which are the prerequisites for successful entry into primary year 1.

**Primary school**: Admission into the first class of the primary takes place in September of the civil year in which the child reaches 6 years of age. Pupils are normally admitted into the language section corresponding to their mother tongue or dominant language, or, where they do not have their own language section, in accordance with the provisions approved by the Board of Governors at its meeting of 30 and 31 January 1990 (see Digest of Decisions 95-D-19). Teaching is based on the basic competences acquired in the nursery which are the prerequisites for primary education. The emphasis is on learning in all areas of the curriculum (years 1-5 syllabuses). The objectives of primary school are as follows:

- To continue the education started in the nursery, expanding, deepening and building on the learning processes initiated, by introducing formal systematic teaching and learning, focusing on literacy (linguistic activities,

reading, writing, etc.) and numeracy (mathematical language, such as numbers, quantification – addition, subtraction, multiplication, introduction to division, etc.).

- To introduce learning to write and draw and to build on the skills acquired.
- To ensure that in the different learning areas, pupils acquire the basic competences laid down in the respective syllabuses and defined in the pages of the school report.
- To teach pupils how to learn effectively by themselves in all areas, by stimulating their interest in discovery, how to put clearly the questions relating to the problem and how to search for the appropriate answers and solutions with the help of present-day didactic resources (library, the internet, documents, etc.) and of the teachers.
- To teach pupils how to ask essential questions and how to search for answers and solutions by themselves, to fix in their minds and remember the main knowledge and skills required (ref.: 2002-D-7710-en-3 Exploring Our World).
- To foster a European spirit in pupils through the mixing of nationalities and languages during common activities in European Hours, a subject newly redefined by a Board of Inspectors working group (ref.: 2001-D-85)
- To develop in pupils an interest in and attraction to other languages through the learning of a second language (L2)
- To encourage pupils to exploit their natural gifts in artistic and musical activities by following the progressive stages of the syllabuses in question (ref.: 2002-D-19-en-3; 2002-D-7410-en-3)
- To promote a sporting spirit in pupils by getting them to participate actively in the physical education activities described in the syllabus (2002-D-7510-en-3)
- To help pupils experiencing learning difficulties by means of appropriate learning support measures (ref.: 1999-D-383)
- To integrate SEN (special educational needs) pupils into mainstream classes as far as possible, by defining the integration means in an agreement signed between the educational partners, the parents and the School.
- To promote, through internal differentiation within the section, the progression of pupils who learn differently in the sense that they are in advance of their peer group.

Primary school activities therefore break down into:

- a) mother tongue, mathematics, language 2 and exploring our world
- b) educational activities fostering self-expression: art and music
- c) physical education

The mother tongue syllabuses have been updated and are in the process of being finalised, thus bringing them into line with the national syllabuses. For certain language sections, e.g. the francophone section, pooling of the French, Belgian and Luxembourg contributions is involved. The same applies to the language 2 syllabuses.

The syllabuses for the other subjects are common to all the language sections: mathematics, exploring our world, art, music, physical education. These syllabuses are the teachers' basic tool of work. They are accompanied by a pedagogical document entitled 'Recommendations for harmonised preparation of teaching'. It explains the stages in the methodological process, namely planning, programming, preparation, differentiation (ref.: 2001-D-54)

**Formative assessment at primary school level** is based on cross-curricular competences and subject-specific competences. It involves assessing acquisition of these competences in standard of attainment terms. The decision as to whether a pupil may move up to the year above or is required to repeat the year is taken by the Class Council as proposed by the class teacher, on the basis of the pupil's profile (standard of attainment of the relevant competences).

There are several opportunities during the school year to try to remedy manifest shortcomings in a pupil's learning profile: discussion with the parents on cross-curricular competences as early as November, first school report in February, with the possibility of requesting learning support between these two dates. A warning letter is sent to parents in April if there is any risk of their child's having to repeat the year, thus giving them the time and opportunity to seek outside remedial help or support for their child before it is too late.

### **Information for parents:**

It is very important for parents to receive accurate and appropriate information. Every teacher is supposed to explain to parents the main features of the curriculum and how he/she intends to initiate learning processes in practice and which methods he/she intends to use to assess the knowledge and skills acquired by his/her pupils.

The syllabuses must be available in the school for parents to consult if they so wish.