



European Schools

Office of the Secretary-General

Pedagogical Development Unit

Ref.: 2019-04-D-13-en-4

Orig.: EN

The European School Curriculum: Structure and Organisation of studies and courses in the European Schools.

Document approved by the Board of Governors at its meeting of 6th, 7th and 8th of December 2022 in Brussels (Hybrid)¹

This document cancels and replaces document 2019-04-D-13-en-2 approved by the Board of Governors at its meeting of 9, 10, 11 and 12 April 2019 in Athens².

Amended by:

Decision of the Board of Governors at its meeting of 16, 17 and 18 April 2013.³

Decision of the Board of Governors in its meeting of 3, 4 and 5 December 2013 and approved by Written procedure No 2014/13 on 14 May 2014.⁴

Decision of the Board of Governors at its meeting of 17, 18 and 19 April 2018 in Tallinn.⁵

Decision of the Board of Governors at its meeting of 15, 16 and 17 April 2020 in Brussels - Online⁶

Immediate entry into force

This document repeals and replaces all the existing rules and decisions of the Board of Governors concerning:

- a) the organisation of teaching and class/group creation, division or regrouping.
- b) the primary cycle's harmonised timetable.
- c) the secondary cycle's harmonised timetable

¹ Decisions of the BoG: 2022-12-D-7

² Decisions of the BoG: 2019-04-D-12 -This document cancelled and replaced the original document 2011-01-D-33-en-9 approved by the Board of Governors at its meeting on 12, 13 and 14 April 2011 in Brussels. (Decisions of the BoG: 2011-04-D-7)

³ Decisions of the BoG: 2013-04-D-15

⁴ Decisions of the BoG: 2013-12-D-5

⁵ Decisions of the BoG: 2018-04-D-11

⁶ Decisions of the BoG: 2020-04-D-26

1. The European Schools Curriculum structure.

1.1. Primary school harmonised timetable

Subject	Years 1 and 2	Years 3, 4, 5
Mother tongue (SWALS L1)	8 hours (2 hours 30)	6 hours 45 (3 hours 45)
Mathematics	4 hours	5 hours 15
Language 2	2 hours 30	3 hours 45
Music Art Physical Education	5 hours	3 hours
Discovery of the World	1 hour 30	3 hours
European Hours		1 hour 30
Religion/Ethics	1 hour	1 hour 30
Recreation	3 hours 30	2 hours 30
Total	25 hours 30	27 hours 15
ONL - Irish/Maltese*	1 hour 30	1 hour 30
ONL - Finnish/ Swedish*	1 hour 30 ⁷	1 hour 30
*ONL is taught during the school year day		

⁷ Decision of the Board of Governors: 2018-04-D-11.

1.2 Secondary school harmonised timetable

s1-s3

Overview of courses and periods: s1 to s3

	Number of periods per week (1 period = 45 minutes of teaching)		
	s1	s2	s3
Language 1	5	5	4
Mathematics	4	4	4
Language 2	5	4	4
Language 3	2	3	3
Physical Education	3	3	3
Religion / Ethics	2	2	2
Human Sciences	3	3	3
Integrated Science	4	4	4
Latin	-	2*	2*
Art	2	2	2
Music	2	2	2
ICT	1	1	2*
TOTAL	33	33 or 35	31 or 33
Ancient Greek for pupils with EL as L1	-	2**	2**
ONL - Other National Language	2**	2**	2**
TOTAL for pupils entitled to receive Ancient Greek or ONL**	35	35 or 37	33 or 35

*Optional courses

- S1: No optional courses
- S2: Optional LATIN
- S3: Optional ICT and LAT, pupils can choose only one of these two options.

**Options governed by specific rules (ONL and Ancient Greek) => see "Language Policy" 2019-01-D-35

s4-s5

Overview of courses and periods: s4 to s5

	Number of periods per week	
	s4	s5
Mandatory Core Subjects		
Language 1	4	4
Mathematics	4 or 6	4 or 6
Language 2	3	3
Language 3	3	3
Physical Education	2	2
Religion / Ethics	1	1
History	2	2
Geography	2	2
Biology	2	2
Chemistry	2	2
Physics	2	2
TOTAL	27 or 29	27 or 29
Options	s4	s5
Latin	4	4
Ancient Greek	4	4
Language 4	4	4
Economy	4	4
Art	2	2
Music	2	2
ICT	2	2
TOTAL	31* to 35**	31* to 35**
Ancient Greek for pupils with EL as L1	2	2
ONL - Other National Language	2	2
TOTAL for pupils entitled to receive Ancient Greek or ONL	33 or 37	33 or 37

*The minimum number of courses taken by the pupil must amount to 31 or more periods per week.

**Exceeding the maximum 35 periods.

As an exception, pupils are allowed, with the agreement of the Class Council and the approval of the directorate, to have more than 35 periods per week if they wish to attend other existing courses which can be combined with their personal timetable.

s6-s7

The following table shows the curriculum structure and choice possibilities:

COMPULSORY SUBJECTS				OPTIONS				COMPLEMENTARY SUBJECTS ⁵	
Column 1		Column 2		Column 3		Column 4		Column 5	
Language 1	4 p.	Biology ¹	2 p.	Ancient Greek	4 p.	Advanced L1	3 p.	Biology Lab ⁶	2 p.
Language 2	3 p.	Geography ²	2 p.	Latin	4 p.	Advanced L2	3 p.	Chemistry Lab ⁶	2 p.
Maths 3 or	3 p.	History ²	2 p.	Biology	4 p.	Advanced Maths ⁴	3 p.	Physics Lab ⁶	2 p.
Maths 5	5 p.	Philosophy ²	2 p.	Chemistry	4 p.			ICT	2 p.
Religion or Ethics	1 p.			Physics	4 p.			Sociology	2 p.
Physical Education	2 p.			Geography	4 p.			Lab Art	2 p.
								Art 2 ⁷	2 p.
				History	4 p.			Music ⁷	2 p.
				Economics	4 p.			Language 5	2 p.
				Philosophy	4 p.			Sustainability and Active Citizenship	2 p.
				ONL ³	4 p.			Introduction to Economics	2 p.
				Language 3	4 p.			Sport	2 p.
				Language 4	4 p.			History of Art	2 p.

	Art	4 p.		Technical Drawing	2 p.
	Music	4 p.		Myth and Society in the Classical World	2 p.
				Electronics	2 p.
				Political Sciences	2 p.
				Performing Arts and Media	2 p.
<p>¹ Biology 2p. is compulsory unless Physics or Chemistry or Biology is chosen in column 3.</p> <p>² All courses in column 2 must be taken if not chosen in column 3.</p>	<p>³ If ONL is chosen, L4 cannot be chosen.</p>	<p>⁴ Advanced Maths can only be chosen together with Maths 5 periods in column 1.</p>	<p>⁵ The offer of complementary courses may vary from one school to another.</p> <p>⁶ Laboratory subjects should only be taken if the corresponding 4-period subject has been chosen.</p> <p>⁷ Art 2 p. and Music 2 p. not allowed if taken in column 3.</p>		

2. Organisation of studies: class sizes – grouping – division of classes – regrouping divided classes

The Annual School Plan determines the amount of teaching time allocated to the school, as well as the number of classes and groups to be created.

The Annual School Plan is approved annually by the Administrative Board.

The Administrative Board provides authority for cases where extra provision is proposed but will also legitimise any measures for a departure from the normal rules in order to enable schools to find local solutions and initiatives to reduce costs. The exceptions and derogations to group/class/options creation/division or grouping rules have to be approved by the Administrative Board of the school. The Budgetary Committee will be informed annually about the derogations from these rules.

The Annual School Plan is drawn up in the context of the overall pedagogical framework set by the Board of Governors and shall:

- show the total teaching time required to meet the needs of the school, i.e. a numerical estimate based on the forecast of the number of classes and teaching groups;
- show the cases where a departure from the normal rules was proposed;
- show the reduction in teaching periods;
- show groupings of classes/groups/options;
- show the courses which are organised in Language 2 or in the language of the host country;
- enable each school to put forward specific local projects and initiatives.

2.1. REGULATIONS

2.2. Class/group sizes

Classes/groups shall have a maximum of 30 pupils.

2.3 Class/group creation:

a) Nursery

Nursery classes with more than 30 pupils shall be divided.

- If there are more than 15 children in a class, a half-time nursery assistant shall be appointed.
- If there are more than 25 children in a class, a full-time nursery assistant shall be appointed.

b) Primary

Primary classes/groups with more than 30 pupils shall be divided.

Exceptions:

- For 'European Hours', classes/groups with more than 25 pupils shall be divided.
- In Language 2, classes/groups with more than 25 pupils shall be divided

c) Secondary

Classes/groups with more than 30 pupils shall be divided.

Language 2, 3 and 4 groups with more than 28 pupils shall be divided. Subjects taught in languages 2 with more than 28 pupils shall be divided.

Exceptions:

- Science classes/groups, including laboratory work, with more than 25 pupils may be divided.
- ICT classes/groups should be organised according to the places available in the ICT classrooms.

2.4. Minimum group/class/option sizes

The minimum group/class/option size is seven pupils. In years 6 and 7 the minimum option size is five pupils.

Exceptions:

It is possible to create groups/classes and options with fewer than seven pupils in some exceptional cases (a, b, c, d, e, f, g):

a) Compulsory courses for existing classes should be created, subject to 1.5

b) Other National Language groups;

Other National Language groups shall be created with fewer than seven pupils in accordance with the ONL rules.

c) Teaching of Ancient Greek for Greek pupils in the secondary school

Greek pupils taking the Greek L1 course in secondary years 2 to 5 are entitled to receive complementary tuition in Ancient Greek consisting of two periods per week.

d) Religion (Ref.: 2008-D-356-en)

In principle, Religion courses are offered in L1 up to secondary year 2. As from secondary year 3¹, Religion courses are in principle taught in L2.

If the threshold (seven pupils) for creating a group cannot be met, even after combining different groups vertically and horizontally, and the consequence would be that courses in certain Religions cannot be offered, it is within the autonomy of the school to find alternative solutions to facilitate the organisation of these Religion courses.

Examples are (this list is not exhaustive):

- to organise Religion courses in L2 in S1 and S2 also,
- to organise Religion courses in the language of the host country,
- to reduce the number of Religion lessons in the secondary cycle,
- to create mixed Religion groups (such as Protestant/Catholic), by way of exception.

¹ - A relatively small group of students coming from different countries but of one particular religious confession taught in Language 2 may be joined by students of this same religious confession, even when the Language 2 in question corresponds to the latter's Language 1.

- Where a group of students of the same religious confession is composed solely of students having their Language 1 in common, the course will be taught in that language.

e) Ethics

In principle, Ethics courses are offered in L1 up to secondary year 2. As from secondary year 3², Ethics courses are in principle taught in L2.

If the threshold (seven pupils) for creating a group cannot be met, even after combining different groups vertically and horizontally, and the consequence would be that courses cannot be offered, it is within the autonomy of the school to find alternative solutions to facilitate the organisation of these Ethics courses.

Examples are (this list is not exhaustive):

- to organise Ethics courses in L2 in S1 and S2 also,
- to organise Ethics courses in the language of the host country,
- to reduce the number of Ethics lessons in the secondary cycle subject to 1.5.

f) Educational Support courses

g) Groups/classes/options decided by the Administrative Board of the school for a number of duly justified reasons (e.g.: infrastructure constraints, special school projects, other relevant pedagogical reasons, etc.)

2.5. Grouping of groups/classes

a) Nursery

Year 1 and Year 2 shall be grouped up to 30 pupils.

b) Primary

Two consecutive classes, with a total of 25 pupils or fewer, shall be grouped. Three consecutive classes, with a total of 20 pupils or fewer, shall be grouped.

If the minimum number of seven pupils is not reached, pupils from consecutive classes/groups in a language section, or parallel groups/classes in different language sections, should be grouped, where timetable and pedagogical constraints so permit.

c) Secondary

If the minimum number of seven pupils is not reached, pupils from consecutive classes/groups in a language section, or parallel groups/classes in different language sections, should be grouped, where timetable and pedagogical constraints so permit. The school should use all five weekly working days efficiently.

2.6. Regrouping divided classes/groups

A divided group/class shall be regrouped from the beginning of the next school year if the combined number of pupils is below the number which would justify dividing the group/class.

² - A relatively small group of students coming from different countries but of one particular religious confession taught in Language 2 may be joined by students of this same religious confession, even when the Language 2 in question corresponds to the latter's Language 1.

- Where a group of students of the same religious confession is composed solely of students having their Language 1 in common, the course will be taught in that language.

2.7. Reduction in teaching time for small groups/classes/options

If a compulsory course (e.g.: L1, L2, Mathematics, etc.) or an option (e.g.: Economics, Art, etc.) in the secondary cycle is created for fewer than seven pupils (five pupils in years 6 and 7) and no grouping is possible (see 1.5), the periods allocated to the course shall be reduced in accordance with the table below:

Number of periods/week	Number of periods to be organised
6	4
5	4
4	3
3	2
2	2*

* From secondary years 1 to 3, Religion and non-confessional Ethics periods should be reduced from two to one.

The reduction is not applicable to L1 courses in years 6 and 7 of the secondary cycle.