



Schola Europaea

Office of the Secretary-General

Pedagogical Development Unit

Ref.: 2006-D-105-en-7

Orig.: FR

## **GUIDELINES FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION**

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**APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS ON 30  
AND 31 JANUARY 2007 - BRUSSELS**

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**ENTRY IN FORCE IN SEPTEMBER 2007**

## Introduction

Since the document 'Guidelines for Nursery and Primary Education' was approved back in April 1991, landmark changes have occurred in the European Schools, whose operation is governed by new texts.

This new 'Guidelines' document takes them into account.

The document presents the specificities of the European Schools, as far as the nursery and primary cycles are concerned, by dealing with four areas:

- Purpose and tasks of the European Schools,
- Structures,
- Human resources,
- Education.

Finally, it gives the references of the texts which are essential for the Schools' proper operation.

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## **1- Purpose and tasks of the European Schools**

### 1.1 Background

The European Schools were created in Luxembourg in October 1953, at the instigation of the European Coal and Steel Community and with the support of the Community institutions and of the Luxembourg government. It was initially an experiment in the education together of children of different nationalities and languages. In April 1957, with the signing of a Protocol, the Luxembourg school became the first European School. The first European Baccalaureate session was held two years later, in 1959. The success of the initial experiment in Luxembourg encouraged the EEC and Euratom to open further European Schools. In 2006, they number 13. The European Baccalaureate is recognised as a qualification for university entrance in the 25 EU member countries and in a number of other European and overseas countries.

### 1.2 Legal status

The European Schools are intended mainly for the children of the staff of the EU institutions. They are official educational establishments, controlled by the governments of the Member States. Each country appoints Inspectors for the primary and secondary teaching levels. They are jointly responsible for guaranteeing the quality of the education provided and for developing the system, in conjunction with the directorate and the teaching staff. Each country concerned is responsible for the recruitment of teachers, who are selected in the national systems.

### 1-3 Purposes and objectives of the European Schools

The educational purposes can thus be described as follows:

- to offer a high-quality education, from nursery to university entrance level;
- to give pupils confidence in their own cultural identity, the bedrock for their development as European citizens;
- to contribute to pupils' personal, social and academic development and prepare them for the secondary level of the European Schools;
- to promote tolerance, cooperation and concern for others in the school community and beyond.

These purposes call for the following general objectives to be aimed at:

- to develop high standards in mother tongue and in foreign languages;
- to develop mathematical and scientific skills throughout schooling;
- to encourage a European and global perspective overall, particularly in the human sciences;
- to develop skills in art, music and physical education and to instil in pupils an appreciation of the need for a healthy lifestyle, by engaging in sporting and recreational activities;

## **2- Structures**

## 2-1 The European Schools

There are currently thirteen Schools (Alicante, Bergen, Brussels I (Uccle), Brussels II (Woluwé), Brussels III (Ixelles), Culham, Frankfurt am Main, Karlsruhe, Luxembourg I, Luxembourg II, Mol, Munich, Varese), in seven different countries (Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Spain and Luxembourg), with a total of approximately 20,000 pupils on roll.

Every European School is divided into three teaching levels:

Nursery and Primary schools, headed by the same Deputy Director:

- nursery school, for 4- and 5-year-olds
- primary school, comprising 5 year groups, for children in the 6-11 age range.

Secondary school, comprising 7 year groups: focus on basic education in years 1-3, semi-specialised education in years 4-5 and preparation for the European Baccalaureate in years 6-7.

The European Baccalaureate is common to all the Schools, setting of the question papers and correction of the written examination scripts being centralised in Brussels.

## 2-2 Language sections

In the European Schools, pupils are taught in different language sections, which are distributed according to the requirements and to the number of pupils on roll.

Students without a language section (SWALS) are integrated into other language sections but they receive tuition in their mother tongue.

## 2-3 Categories of pupils

There are three categories of pupils in the Schools:

- Category 1 – Children of EU officials and of school staff; their parents do not pay school fees.
- Category 2 – Such children are admitted subject to the conditions laid down in agreements entered into by the Schools with certain companies or organisations, whereby school fees – representing the actual cost of pupils' schooling – are paid to the Schools concerned.
- Category 3 – Such children are enrolled privately; the parents of these pupils pay school fees whose level is set annually by the Board of Governors.

Education in the European Schools is based, in all language sections, on European curricula, comprising syllabuses designed and written to link up with those of the member countries, so that every pupil can, if necessary, move back into his/her own country's education system.

A table of equivalence of compulsory schooling in the different Member States allows the appropriate year group into which a child should be integrated to be determined, in the event of his/her changing system (moving from the European Schools to the country of origin and vice versa). (See Annex II appended to the General Rules – 2011-04-D-11-en-1).

## **3-Human resources**

### 3-1 Management team and administration

A European School is headed by a Director (Head teacher), who is responsible for all three teaching levels (nursery, primary and secondary) and for the school's administration; he/she must have the qualifications required to hold an equivalent post in his/her country of origin.

In performing this complex job, the Director is assisted by:

- a Deputy Director (Deputy Head) for the secondary,
- a Deputy Director (Deputy Head) for the nursery and primary.

Each of the Deputy Directors has major administrative and pedagogical responsibilities for the respective teaching levels. They lead a European teaching team, oversee liaison between the different language sections and ensure harmonisation, quality, consistency and continuity of educational action within and between the different teaching levels. They act as an intermediary between parents and teachers. They are attentive to teachers' needs, providing them with professional support as and when necessary.

### 3-2 Teachers

Teachers are seconded by their country of origin for a specific period, at the end of which they are invited to return to their own education system. Knowledge of the language of the host country of the school in which they teach is desirable.

The Schools may also use the services of locally recruited (part-time) teachers.

Seconded teachers are expected to adapt to their new structure; a teacher must:

- work as part of a teaching team in the school in which he/she teaches and in the appropriate language section and year group,
- teach to the European Schools' syllabuses (and not the syllabuses of his/her country of origin),
- be attuned, in order to apply them, to the didactic and pedagogical principles specific to the European Schools,
- if necessary, take on particular teaching duties (European Hours),
- on request, take on particular coordination duties (coordination of a section, of a class or of subjects),
- be prepared, if an English-speaker, a French-speaker or a German-speaker, to teach his/her language as Language 2.

Teachers receive local or centralised in-service training, enabling them to:

- take on board the didactic changes decided by the Board of Governors (for example, new syllabuses, new school report, etc.),
- gain greater experience in certain areas,
- increase their expertise through exchange of knowledge in educational science (learning theories, pedagogical approaches, etc.).

### 3-3 Pupils

The vast majority of pupils attending a European School have to adapt to and integrate into a new environment outside their country of origin. The European School, providing a response tailored to their educational needs, must give them every opportunity to fulfil their potential in their new environment by accepting and respecting their differences.

Each school's educational project must enable every pupil (while protecting his/her cultural identity):

- to develop social skills (living with others, developing points of reference, communicating, etc.),
- to learn (to acquire knowledge and skills and to learn appropriate behaviour) in a way consistent with his/her age and schooling stage,
- to become a European citizen.

Some children need special support; this is given first in class through the use of pedagogical differentiation and, should that prove inadequate, in the form of learning support, provided by teachers with expertise in this field in conjunction with the class teacher of the pupil concerned. SEN (special educational needs) children can be integrated into the school on condition that all possible support and assistance is provided (by the school and/or by qualified external experts), each individual case being carefully examined.

### 3-4 Relations with parents

Parents are co-educators and, as such, they must receive information about the education offered by the school in general and about the education which their child is receiving in particular.

The school must arrange times (class meetings, individual meetings between teachers and parents, etc.) when parents can be provided with information. Moreover, the Convention defining the Statute of the European Schools provides for parents' participation or representation at all consultation levels.

Just as the school undertakes to inform parents, so they must undertake to support and develop the school's educational action. Through their cultural input, they may, incidentally, be a possible source of input for the pedagogical project of a class or section.

## **4-Education**

### 4-1 Syllabuses

Syllabuses are designed and written by Inspectors and teachers, then approved by the Board of Governors following a favourable opinion from the relevant Teaching Committee.

The main syllabuses cover eight areas:

- nursery education
- mother tongue
- second language
- mathematics
- exploring our world
- art
- music
- physical education.

The following should be added to these areas:

- religion or ethics
- European Hours.

In mathematics, there is a scheme with textbooks called Intermath, which implements the European syllabuses, common to all the language sections, and which has to be used compulsory in the classroom by all teachers.

Pupils have the opportunity for exchanges in inter-language classes called 'European Hours'. They also benefit from going on educational or cultural outings, for a day or for a weekend. These are specific to each school.

European Hours provide an opportunity:

- for communication between pupils and teachers in different languages
- for exploration of subjects of cultural or general interest through a wide range of creative activities.

They may also lend themselves to educational or cultural extra-curricular and para-curricular activities lasting one day or more (school trips).

These activities are specific to each School.

All pupils are also expected to acquire appropriate skills in the information and communication technologies (ICT) area.

#### 4-2 Timetable and lesson preparation

Teachers must refer to the syllabus in planning their teaching. They must devise activities allowing pupils to acquire the expected competences.

While the content and the number of lesson hours per week and per subject are determined and approved by the Board of Governors, the organisation of teaching is agreed in the school in liaison with the teachers. Teachers are expected to ensure that lessons are devised in such a way that all pupils are offered consistent and balanced teaching, maximising interdisciplinary/cross-curricular links.

All teachers are required to submit to the Deputy Director their annual and periodic planning, reporting on how the syllabus will be taught in practice. They must provide detailed pedagogical plans for sessions and sequences, defining clear objectives which meet the needs and abilities of the different groups of pupils.

In their plans, teachers must show how they intend to adapt the objectives to pupils' abilities and ensure that they meet the needs of both the least able and the most able alike (pedagogical differentiation).

#### 4-3 Approaches and methodology

The fundamental principles to be taken into account are as follows:

- set high standards and instil confidence in his/her ability to succeed in each pupil
- organise and structure the learning process, so that pupils find it enjoyable and stimulating
- make pupils keen to learn by communicating a passion for the subjects taught

- actively involve pupils in their learning
- develop pupils' aptitude for learning and their personal qualities
- assess what pupils know and build on the knowledge and skills which they have acquired.

Teachers need to vary methods and approaches. For the pupils' benefit, teaching should alternate between the whole class method and the group or individual method. All pupils should have the opportunity to work as a whole class, in a group or in a team, but must also be allowed to work independently on occasion. Whole class teaching must be as interactive as possible and allow pupils to answer questions and to take part in discussions, putting forward their views or ideas.

The key factors in learning are as follows:

- self-knowledge and awareness of one's potential
- recognition of others and of their needs
- commitment to and solidarity in work, team spirit
- the desire to communicate
- the desire to learn
- development of critical faculties
- ability to solve problems of all kinds.

As far as possible, teachers must endeavour to capitalise on the opportunities offered by ICT, in order to make their teaching more productive or to support pupils' learning. Pupils must be enabled to use their ICT skills in activities engaged in both inside and outside school.

Through the education which they provide and their commitment, the European Schools must foster a European spirit, whilst also recognising the importance of individual culture and experience and capitalising on them appropriately.

#### 4-4 Assessment

All teachers are responsible for assessment of their pupils' progress and success.

In addition to biannual summative assessments for the school report, teachers must check learning on an ongoing daily basis, so that their teaching progresses seamlessly. A wide range of assessment tools is required. Teachers must make a clear distinction between formative and summative assessment (both of these types of assessment have their place in teaching). Pupils have an important role to play in their own assessment if they wish to have a clear idea of what they know and what still has to be learned (use of self-assessment).

On a daily basis, assessments can be made by means of:

- questioning
- observation
- discussion
- analysis
  
- checking of understanding

- pupils' involvement in revision.

#### 4-5 Pupils with learning difficulties

Special arrangements are in place for two groups of pupils with learning difficulties.

##### Learning Support

When a pupil is not making sufficiently good progress, the teacher may:

- when the difficulties experienced so permit, introduce pedagogical differentiation, thus allowing the pupil to progress at his/her own pace,
- or, when the difficulties are greater, suggest that the pupil be offered extra support by means of learning support, organised at school level and provided by a teacher with the appropriate expertise.

##### SEN pupils

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) may be covered by an agreement (SEN pupils), which includes in particular an individual educational scheme geared to their specific needs. Such pupils may have temporary or permanent learning disabilities, motor, sensory or behavioural problems or be intellectually gifted. (See Document 2009-D-619-en-3, which defines the policy on integration of SEN pupils).

## **Annex**

## References of the official texts governing the European Schools

### 1- Concerning the curricula

(Reference to document 2005-D-72: publication on the website of the nursery and primary curricula)

General introduction to the nursery and primary school curricula	2004-D-207-en-7
Early Education Curriculum Programme (Nursery)	2011-01-D-15-en-3
Annexes to Early Education Curriculum Programme (Nursery)	Annexes 2011-01-D-15-en-3
Early Education Curriculum Portfolio (Nursery)	2011-01-D-14-en-3

### *Languages*

Bulgarian Language 1	2008-D-222-bg-3
German Language 1	97-D-136
English Language 1	2011-01-D-59-en-3
Danish Language 1	2005-D-1710-da-3
Spanish Language 1	2008-D-301-es-3
Estonian Language 1 (Primary and Secondary)	2005-D-4410-et-4
Finnish Language 1 (Nursery, Primary and Secondary)	2008-D-5210-fi-4
French Language 1	2000-D-72
Greek Language 1	2007-D-351-el-4
Hungarian Language 1 (Nursery, Primary and Secondary)	2006-D-342-hu-4
Irish Language 1	2006-D-272-ga-3
Italian Language 1	2010-D-351-it-3
Lithuanian Language 1 (Primary and Secondary)	2005-D-481-lt-4
Maltese Language 1 (Nursery and Primary)	2006-D-492-mt-3
Dutch Language 1	2011-01-D-43-nl-2
Dutch Language 1 SWALS	2011-01-D-44-nl-2
Polish Language 1	2009-D-451-pl-3
Portuguese Language 1	3112-D-92
Slovak Language 1 (Primary and Secondary)	2005-D-361-sk-4
Slovenian Language 1	2011-01-D-67-sl-2
Swedish Language 1 (Nursery, Primary and Secondary)	2011-06-D-9-sv-1
Czech Language 1 (Nursery and Primary)	2009-D-441-cs-3
Finnish as a second national language (Primary 3-5, Secondary)	2002-D-4510-fi-3
German Language 2	1999-D-65
English Language 2	97-D-204
French Language 2	2002-D-7810-fr-3
Swedish as a second Language 2 for Finnish pupils (primary 3-5, secondary)	2002-D-76-sv-2

### *General Education*

Discovery of the World	2002-D-7710-fr-3
Art	2002-D-19-fr-3
Music	2002-D-7410-en-3

Physical Education	2002-D-7510-en-3
European Hours	2001-D-85-fr
Ethics (Non-denominational)	2002-D-56-fr
Catholic religion	2011-02-D-3-fr-2
Orthodox religion	2011-01-D-87-fr-2

### ***Scientific Subjects***

ICT (Primary and Secondary)	2000-D-218
Mathematics (years 1-5)	1998-D-710

### 2- Other texts (chronological order)

Quality Assurance and Development in the European Schools	2006-D-102-en-4
Harmonised lesson planning	2001-D-54
Guidelines for school outings and trips (organised by the nursery and primary departments)	2002-D-54
SEN teaching in the European Schools	2011-01-D-57-en-4
Learning Support in the Nursery and Primary Cycles	2009-D-669-en-2
Guidelines for primary education	2006-D-105-en-7