

POLAND

Introduction

In 2003/04 almost all pupils attended public-sector schools (98%). Most of the funds come from the state budget. The administration, organization and decisions relating to the use of financial resources by schools are the subject of consultation between the school and the body running the school, i.e. local authorities (*gminy*) and district authorities (*powiaty*). The inspection of teaching standards in schools comes directly under the Ministry of National Education and Sport and is represented by a regional administrative body (*kuratorium*).

Pre-primary education

Age	From 3 to 6 years of age.
Duration	3 years
Description	A child aged 3 to 6 may receive pre-primary education, which is not compulsory, but the majority of six year-old children attend either kindergartens (<i>przedszkola</i>) or pre-primary classes attached to primary schools (<i>oddziały przedszkolne</i>). The Ministry of National Education and Sport has introduced an obligatory 0 grade starting the school year 2004/2005 and therefore the age of beginning of the compulsory schooling has been lowered from 7 to 6.
Timetable	A kindergarten is obliged to provide unpaid teaching and nursing for at least 5 hours a day – the time necessary for the implementation of the content included in the Core Curriculum for Pre-School and General Education. The majority of pre-school institutions work for 5 to 11 hours a day. As a rule, two teachers working in shifts take care of one section (group of children) – one up to 12 o'clock, the other from 12 o'clock.
School year and holidays	From 1 September, until the end of June.
Subjects	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Acquisition of knowledge and understanding of oneself and the world2. Acquisition of skills through activities3. Finding one's place in the peer group and community4. Construction of the system of values
Exams	There are no formal principles for evaluating or monitoring pre-primary school children. The only exception was the so-called „balance-sheet of the child aged 6” which was connected with the recruitment to primary schools.
Schools	Public kindergartens are administered and financed by local governments – communes

Primary education

Age	Children between the ages of 7 and 13
Duration	6 years
Description	General objectives of the primary school are formulated as follows: to develop in children the ability of self-expression, reading and writing, the ability to solve arithmetic problems, the ability to use simple tools, to develop habits of social life, to develop cognitive abilities enabling mature understanding of the world, to develop conscious motivation to prepare for undertaking tasks requiring systematic intellectual and physical effort, to develop aesthetic and moral sensitivity of children and their creative abilities, etc.
Polish name	<i>szkoły podstawowe</i>
Timetable	Lessons start at 8 a.m. and finish at 2 or 3 p.m. in the senior years if a school works in one shift. Each lesson lasts 45 minutes. Breaks are considered sufficient if they last at least 5-10 minutes, but no longer than 25 minutes. Pupils attend primary school five days a week, from Monday to Friday.
School year and holidays	The school year is divided into two semesters: (1) from 1 September, until the end of January; (2) from 1 February, until the end of the year (the last Friday of June).
Subjects	Stage 1 (grades 1-3, primary school): Integrated teaching, Religion/Ethics Stage 2 (grades 4-6, primary school): Polish language, History and civics, Modern foreign language, Mathematics, Natural science, Music, Art, Technology, Computer science, Physical education, Lessons with Class Tutor
Exams	In years 1-3 the assessment is descriptive. Starting with grade 4, the teacher has the following scale of marks at his/her disposal: 6 - excellent, 5 - very good, 4 - good, 3 - satisfactory, 2 - acceptable, 1 - unsatisfactory. School marks, as well as assessment criteria, should be overt to the pupil and his/her parents.
Schools	Public (state) schools are free of charge

Lower secondary education

Age	13 to 16 year-olds
Duration	3 years
Description	Core curriculum for the <i>gymnasium</i> is included in the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 26 February 2002 on Core Curriculum for Pre-school and General Education. Core curriculum has to be respected by every school. The teaching at

	<p>this stage is arranged in subjects, taught by specialist teachers.</p> <p>Beside separate subjects, the following cross-curricular themes have been introduced at this stage: philosophical education, reading and media education, health education, ecological education, regional education – cultural heritage of the region, civil defense, European education, Polish culture in the context of Mediterranean civilisation.</p> <p>The school head is responsible for the inclusion of these paths in the school curriculum. Subject teachers are responsible for the implementation of these in their curricula or teaching them during separate modular classes.</p>
Polish name	<i>gimnazjum</i>
Timetable	Lessons start at 8 a.m. and finish at 2 or 3 p.m. in the senior years if a school works in one shift. Each lesson lasts 45 minutes. Breaks are considered sufficient if they last at least 5-10 minutes, but no longer than 25 minutes. Pupils attend primary school five days a week, from Monday to Friday.
School year and holidays	The school year is divided into two semesters: (1) from 1 September, until the end of January; (2) from 1 February, until the end of the year (the last Friday of June).
Subjects	Polish language, History, Civic education, Modern foreign language, Mathematics, Physics and astronomy, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, Fine art/ Music, Technology, Computer science, Physical education, Lessons with Class Tutor
Exams	At the end of the 3 rd year of the gymnasium, an external standardised examination has been introduced. This examination checks abilities, skills and knowledge in the field of humanities and science. It is compulsory for all pupils. The results are indicated on the gymnasium leaving certificate. They are comparable on the national scale.
Schools	Public (state) schools are free of charge.

Upper secondary education

In the reformed post-gymnasium education the following post-gymnasium schools are operational starting the school year 2002/03:

- a) *liceum ogólnokształcące* (3 years general secondary school) offering 3 years of full-time general upper secondary education for students aged 16 to 19. It offers the *Matura* examination necessary for admission to higher education.
- b) *liceum profilowane* (3 years specialised secondary school) - new institution established in 2002/03 offering 3 years of full-time general and specialised upper secondary education for students aged 16 to 19. It offers the *Matura* examination necessary for admission to higher education.

- c) *technikum* (4 years technical secondary school) - institution offering 4 years of full-time technical and vocational upper secondary education for students aged 16 to 20. It offers the *Matura* examination necessary for admission to higher education.
- d) *zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa* (2 to 3 years basic vocational school) - institution offering 2 to 3 years of full-time upper secondary vocational education for students aged 16 to 18. The leavers have access to the vocational trade or occupation or to the *liceum uzupełniające* or *technikum uzupełniające*.

At the levels of upper secondary/post-secondary education in Poland there are also the following types of institutions:

- e) *uzupełniające liceum ogólnokształcące* (2 years supplementary general secondary school) - new institution introduced in 2004/05 offering 2 years of full- or part-time general upper secondary education for students aged 18 to 20 in preparation for the *Matura* examination. This school is meant for leavers of the 2-3 years vocational school.
- f) *technikum uzupełniające* (3 years supplementary secondary technical school) – new institution introduced in 2004/05 offering 3 years of full- or part-time vocational upper secondary education for students aged 18 to 21 in preparation for the *Matura* examination. This school is meant for the leavers of the 2-3 years vocational school.
- g) *szkoła policealna* (maximum 2,5 years post-secondary school) - this institution enables people with secondary education to obtain a vocational qualifications diploma upon passing of an exam.

Upper secondary education

Age	From 16 to 18 years of age.
Duration	3 years
Polish name	See description above
Description	Upper secondary schools are non-compulsory and mostly co-educational. There are also a small number of girls' or boys' schools in vocational and professional education.
Timetable	Lessons start at 8 a.m. and finish at 2 or 3 p.m. in the senior years if a school works in one shift. Each lesson lasts 45 minutes. Breaks are considered sufficient if they last at least 5-10 minutes, but no longer than 25 minutes. Pupils attend primary school five days a week, from Monday to Friday.
School year and holidays	The school year is divided into two semesters: (1) from 1 September, until the end of January; (2) from 1 February, until the end of the year (the last Friday of June).
Subjects	Polish language, Modern foreign language, Latin and ancient culture, Mathematics, History, Civics, Geography, Biology, Physics and astronomy, Chemistry, Technology, Information technology, Art, Music, Defense training, Physical education, Ethics (optional), Philosophy (optional), Education for family life, Cultural studies, Entrepreneurship, Minority language.

Exams	<p>The principles of internal evaluation are the same as at primary schools. Upon completion of the 3 years general upper secondary school (<i>liceum ogólnokształcące</i>), pupils are awarded a school leaving certificate (<i>świadectwo ukończenia liceum ogólnokształcącego</i>) on the basis of school results, without a final examination. It mentions the subjects and the marks obtained at the end of the final year. It gives access to the <i>Matura</i> examination or to post-secondary education.</p> <p>At the end of upper secondary education (except basic vocational schools) pupils may sit for <i>egzamin dojrzałości (Matura)</i>, a national examination, which is compulsory only to receive the <i>Matura</i> certificate and to gain access to higher education. It consists of written and oral parts. Topics for the written part are set by regional educational authorities (<i>kuratoria</i>), but the assessment is done by teachers. The oral part is totally the responsibility of teachers.</p>
Schools	Public (state) schools are free of charge.

Vocational training

Age	From 16 to 18 or 20/21 depending on the type of school.
Duration	2 to 4 years.
Description	The main objective of vocational upper secondary education is to prepare youth for the world of work.
Polish name	See description above.
Timetable	Lessons start at 8 a.m. and finish at 2 or 3 p.m. in the senior years if a school works in one shift. Each lesson lasts 45 minutes. Breaks are considered sufficient if they last at least 5-10 minutes, but no longer than 25 minutes. Pupils attend primary school five days a week, from Monday to Friday.
School year and holidays	The school year is divided into two semesters: (1) from 1 September, until the end of January; (2) from 1 February, until the end of the year (the last Friday of June).
Subjects	
Exams	The vocational examination is held in two forms: written and practical. The exam is organised by the relevant Regional Examination Commission and aims at the assessment of students' knowledge and practical skills related to a given vocation. The scope of the examination is defined in the vocational qualifications examination standards (the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 3 February 2003).
Schools	Public (state) schools are free of charge.