

Polish Education System

The system of school education in Poland is currently undergoing important changes.

The major reform was initiated in the school year 2016/2017, to be completed in the school year 2022/2023.

The aim of the reform is to strengthen general education as the basis for further personal development of pupils and students and to address the evolving needs of today's labour market.

Structure of education system up to 2017

- 6-year primary school
- 3-year lower secondary school
- 3-year general education high school
- 4-year technical high school
- 3-year vocational school
- post-secondary school

New targeted structure of education system

- 8-year primary school
- 4-year general education high school
- 5-year technical high school
- 3-year stage I vocational (branch) school
- 2-year stage II vocational (branch) school
- 3-year vocational school for special needs students
- up to 2.5-year post-secondary school

I. Pre-school Education

Pre-school provides for educational needs of children from 3 to 6 or 7 years of age.

Every child before starting primary school education, must attend a one-year preparatory course organised by a kindergarten or a primary school.

If their parents wish so, 6-year-olds may start primary school if they have completed the one-year preparatory course and obtained positive psychological assessment.

II. Primary Education

Primary 8-year education is divided into two levels:

- 1. grades I – III**
- 2. grades IV – VIII**

Grades I – III: Integrated early school education - for children aged 7 to 10 years

It is a transition period from pre-school to school education and is organised on integrated education basis. Classes take place without division into subjects. Conducting classes with each group is entrusted to one teacher-tutor. Foreign language teaching, music education, arts and computer classes can be entrusted to a specialist teacher.

Classes are taught according to a timetable developed by the teacher, with the duration of lessons and breaks depending on pupils' activity.

Pupils' learning achievements are assessed by the teacher. Pupils in grades I to III receive one end-of-year mark for educational activities and one end-of-year mark for behaviour. Marking is descriptive.

Grades IV – VIII: Subject-based education - for children aged 10 to 15 years

In grades IV to VIII, education takes place within a framework of subjects taught by teachers – specialists.

Each class is supervised by a class tutor who deals with pastoral aspect of school formation.

Pupils' learning achievements are assessed separately for each subject, by the teacher of a given subject.

Teachers use a marking scale of 1 to 6, where 6 is excellent, 5: very good, 4: good, 3: satisfactory, 2: acceptable, and 1: unsatisfactory.

Pupils receive a school certificate at the end of each school year and upon completion of primary education. They also receive a certificate with results of the Eighth-Grader exam, issued by the relevant Regional Examination Board.

III. Secondary Education System

1. General High School Education

- **4-year high school** is intended for students aged 15 to 19 years. The school prepares students for higher education and leads to the external Maturity Exam. It has replaced entrance exams to most higher education institutions where results of the Maturity Exam are the key admission criterion.

2. Vocational High School Education

- **5-year technical high school** is intended for students aged 15 to 20 years. This school allows the students to acquire vocational qualifications, as well as to study selected general education subjects, to take relevant exams confirming vocational qualifications as well as to take the Maturity Exam.
- **3-year stage I vocational (branch) school** is intended for students aged 15 to 18 years. The school leads to vocational qualifications and provides access to a stage II sectoral vocational (branch) school. Students of the school can take relevant exams confirming vocational qualifications.
- **2-year stage II vocational (branch) school** is intended for students aged 19 to 20 (starting from the school year 2020/2021). It will enable students to take required branch exams and obtain vocational qualifications at the level of Technician and take the Maturity Exam.
- **3-year vocational school for special needs students** prepares students with moderate intellectual deficiencies or conjugate disabilities to obtain a certificate of vocational qualification enabling them to undertake employment.

IV. Post-Secondary Education

- **up to 2,5-year post-secondary school**

Post-secondary schools mainly take students who have graduated from a general education high school. Most of them require only a High School leaving certificate rather than the Maturity Certificate. Completion of this school and passing final exams allows students to obtain a diploma confirming vocational qualifications.

Final remarks:

- **Education in Poland is compulsory** for children and young people aged 7 to 18 years (school obligatory up to the age of 15, then either attending a secondary school or participating in other forms of education/training).
- The above described changes in educational system do not affect the existing scheme of college/university admittance.