

4. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

4.1. Introduction

Traditionally in Germany children under the age of three years are looked after in *Kinderkrippen* (crèches) and children from the age of three up to starting school in *Kindergarten*. In past years the profile of day-care centres has changed considerably. The number of facilities, which offer day care exclusively for children from the age of three up to starting school has decreased while more and more facilities offer day care for different age groups. One reason for this change in the supply structure is the expansion of day care for children agreed by the Federation, Länder and local authorities for children under three years of age, which is expected to create a needs-oriented supply of day-care places for children nationally and thus establish the basis for fulfilling the legal right to early childhood education and care in a day-care centre or child-minding service from the age of one which has entered into force on 1 August 2013. This complements the legal entitlement introduced back in 1996 to day care in a day-care centre for children from the age of three up to starting school. The heightened efforts to expand day care for children aged below three have since the introduction of official statistics in 2006 led to a steady rise in day-care uptake.

General objectives

Under the Social Security Code VIII (*Achtes Buch Sozialgesetzbuch – Kinder- und Jugendhilfe – R61*), day-care centres for children and child-minding services are called upon to encourage the child's development into a responsible and autonomous member of the community. Furthermore, day care is designed to support and supplement the child's upbringing in the family and to assist the parents in better reconciling employment and child rearing. This duty includes instructing, educating and caring for the child and relates to the child's social, emotional, physical and mental development. It includes the communication of guiding values and rules. The provision of education and care is to be adjusted to the individual child's age and developmental stage, linguistic and other capabilities, life situation and interests, and take account of the child's ethnic origin. In terms of pedagogy and organisation, the range of services offered should be based on the needs of the children and their families.

Under the joint framework of the Länder for early education in day-care centres for children (*Gemeinsamer Rahmen der Länder für die frühe Bildung in Kindertageseinrichtungen*), educational objectives in early childhood education focus on attaining basic skills and developing and strengthening personal resources, which motivate children and prepare them to take up and cope with future challenges in learning and life, to play a responsible part in society and be open to lifelong learning.

Specific legislative framework

Under the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz – R1*), as part of its responsibility for public welfare, the Federation has concurrent legislative competence for child and youth welfare. This also applies to the promotion of children in day care (*Kinderkrippen, Kindergärten, Horte* or *Kindertagespflege*). The Federation exercised its legislative authority in this field by passing the Social Security Code VIII in June 1990. The legal

framework of the Federation for child and youth welfare is completed, supplemented and extended by the Länder in their own laws (R63–78).

The Social Security Code VIII was amended in July 1992 and expanded to include the legal right, introduced on 1 January 1996 and in force without restriction since 1 January 1999, to a *Kindergarten* place for all children from the age of three years until they start school. The Social Security Code VIII was last amended in December 2008 by the Children Promotion Act (*Kinderförderungsgesetz – KiföG – R62*). The Child Promotion Act laid down a gradual expansion of supervision and care offers for children under the age of three. In a first stage the maintaining bodies of public youth welfare had been obliged to increase the number of places available to children under the age of three in day-care centres or child-minding services and to provide a place if required for child development purposes or because the parents are in employment, seeking work or in training. This was an objective obligation, however, not a legal right to a place. On 1 August 2013 the second phase of the expansion of supervision and care offers was achieved: since this point there has been a legal entitlement to a place in day care for children who have reached the age of one. The implementation and financing of child and youth welfare legislation lies, under the Basic Law, in the sphere of competence of the Länder and, as a matter for local self-government, is the responsibility of the *Kommunen* (local authorities).

Under Federal Law the legal framework for day care for children provided under the youth welfare office is regulated by the Child and Youth Welfare Act (*Kinder- und Jugendhilfegesetz*) and covers the placement, briefing, training and payment of suitable day-care staff by the youth welfare office. The Länder and local authorities are responsible for implementation, and have as a rule adopted their own legal provisions substantiating the framework conditions.

4.2. Organisation of Programmes for Children under 2-3 Years

Geographical Accessibility

Needs-oriented day-care services are to be established for children under three years of age in day care and in day-care centres.

Admission Requirements and Choice of ECEC institution

Since 1 August 2013 there has been a legal entitlement to support in a day care centre for children or in a child-minding service for children who have reached the age of one. The scope of daily support is oriented to individual needs.

Age Levels and Grouping of Children

Children under the age of three may be looked after in *Kinderkrippen* (crèches), in groups of children under the age of three in day-care centres or, in mixed-age groups, in day-care centres together with children between three up to 14 years of age or in child-minding services. At present, day care for children under three years of age is undergoing expansion. Day-care for children under the age of three was initially expanded due to the legal entitlement introduced in 2013. This expansion is currently being continued as there are still day-care requirements which need to be covered.

Organisation of Time

For the organisation of time in day care for children, the information in chapter 4.6. applies.

Organisation of the Day and Week

For the organisation of the day and week in day care for children, the information in chapter 4.6. applies.

4.3. Teaching and Learning in Programmes for Children under 2-3 Years

Steering Documents and Types of Activity

According to the specialist recommendations of the national working group of the Land youth welfare services (*Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Landesjugendämter*) of November 2009 on the quality of the education, upbringing and care of children under three in day-care centres for children and child-minding services, early child-care must respond in particular to the basic needs of small children. The specific needs of children under three include:

- loving attention;
- sensitive care based on stable relationships;
- sympathetic support appropriate to development stage;
- empathy and support in stressful situations;
- unconditional acceptance;
- safety and security.

Educational support at this stage in life is primarily understood as shaping relationships with the child and as holistic support complementing development. It is accompanied by educational partnership with parents. The educational processes take place through social interaction and communication, and above all through play. Special development themes of early childhood promotion include supporting communication, language and motor development.

Teaching Methods and Materials

The promotion of communication and language is a core educational task. Language development is promoted in an emotionally approachable atmosphere. Children acquire language skills not in isolation, but in daily interaction with adults and other children. Educational staff are expected to support workflows and care processes with language, and to structure them as language-stimulating situations. Language development is also supported by the language model provided by educational staff, through customs including songs, finger play and verse, teaching work with picture books, and much more besides.

Another development aspect is the promotion of motor development. Extensive opportunities for motor activities are designed to support secure movement and the development of body awareness, self-acceptance and the attentiveness of the child. This includes inter alia a wealth of physical activities, open spaces, programmes such as rhythmic early education, and song and movement games. Children should also have enough time to make motor advances by themselves.

4.4. Assessment in Programmes for Children under 2-3 Years

There is no assessment of performance in day-care centres for children, as there are no lessons in the traditional sense. Regular observation and documenting of development and the abilities and needs of the children allows educational staff to support individual development tasks competently. Staff incorporate these observations into dialogue with the child and conversations with the parents.

4.5. Organisation of Programmes for Children over 2-3 Years

Geographical accessibility

The local maintaining bodies of public youth welfare (local authorities – *Kommunen*) are obliged to provide places in day-care centres to all children from the age of one until they start school. In this regard, they cooperate with the non-public youth welfare services.

Admission requirements and choice of institution/centre

Early childhood education includes all institutions run by the non-public and public child and youth welfare services which cater for children until they start school.

Under the Social Security Code VIII (*Achtes Buch Sozialgesetzbuch – Kinder- und Jugendhilfe* – R61), all children who have reached the age of three have the legal right to be admitted to a day-care facility until school entry. Since 1 August 2013 there has been a legal entitlement to support in a day care centre for children or in a child-minding service for children who have reached the age of one. This complements the legal entitlement introduced back in 1996 to day care in a day-care centre for children from the age of three up to starting school.

The *Kindergarten* is the traditional form of institutionalised early childhood education for children from the age of three until they start school in Germany. Some Länder have group care facilities for children of all ages between four months and up to 14 years.

Besides the day-care centres, in some Länder other forms of institution and care facilities exist in the early childhood sector. However, in terms of the number of children they cater for, these institutions are of lesser significance. For information on *Vorklassen*, *Schulkindergärten* and *heilpädagogische* or *sonderpädagogische Kindergärten* for children with disabilities see chapter 12.3.

Age levels and grouping of children

Early childhood education and care is not organised into grades, groups generally consist of children from different age groups.

Organisation of time

The organisation of early childhood education and care in day-care centres during the year corresponds to a large extent with the organisation of school time (see chapter 5.2.). If day-care institutions close during holidays, the maintaining body of the public youth welfare has to ensure alternative supervision for children who cannot be supervised by the persons who have parental power.

Organisation of the Day and Week

In Germany, early childhood education and care in day-care facilities is not part of the state-organised school system, but is assigned to Child and Youth Welfare, which means that the Ministries of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder therefore do not adopt regulations governing the time-table in the early childhood sector. There are legal rights to supervision times in certain Länder, however, that have to correspond with the child's well-being.

Opening hours are largely arranged by the maintaining bodies in consultation with the parents. These times may vary between the different *Kindergärten* and depend to some extent on the needs of the families in their catchment areas. The contracted child-care hours range, as a rule, from up to five hours in the morning to between six and seven hours of care daily, sometimes with a midday break, to seven-hour full-day care including lunch. There are considerable regional differences in the pattern of daily use of places in day-care centres.

Many day-care facilities are now trying more consciously than before to adapt their opening times in line with the needs of families and, if necessary, are organising an early-morning service or a late service as well as a lunch-time service for some children or groups of children. However, any extension in opening hours is to some extent limited by the number of staff employed at each establishment, the capacity of its premises and the obligation to take into account the child's best interest.

4.6. Teaching and Learning in Programmes for Children over 2-3 Years

Steering Documents and Types of Activity

Subjects and weekly teaching hours are not laid down for the sector of early childhood education and care, and there are no curricula such as those in schools. The Länder have laid down objectives and areas of education in education plans which are implemented in agreement with the maintaining bodies of the day-care centres for children. The aim of supporting the development of children from the age of three until they start school is to develop their intellectual, physical, emotional and social abilities. According to the joint framework of the Länder for early education in day-care centres for children (*Gemeinsamer Rahmen der Länder für die frühe Bildung in Kindertageseinrichtungen*), educational areas are:

- language, writing, communication
- personal and social development, development of values and religious education
- mathematics, natural sciences, (information) technology
- fine arts/working with different media
- body, movement, health
- nature and cultural environments

The early educational and school education concepts in each case are to be agreed at local level between the non-public youth welfare services and the primary schools (*Grundschulen*).

Teaching methods and materials

The educational work in day care facilities for children is dominated by the principle of holistic support and learning together with others (co-construction). The main emphasis here is on individual educational work with the children, be this in pro-

jects or integrated in day to day life. Educational work shall encourage self-organised learning, give the child the freedom for creativity, encourage team work, enable the child to learn from mistakes, as well as to investigate and experiment.

The educational work in day-care centres for children is essentially based on the situational approach: it is guided by the interests, needs and situations of the individual children. The pedagogical staff therefore have to observe the children, document their development and talk to parents regularly.

4.7. Assessment in Programmes for Children over 2-3 Years

Children's performance at day-care facilities is not assessed, as teaching does not take place in the sense of lessons at school. Trained educational staff monitor and document the development of the children and use this as a basis to draw up, with the assistance of parents and in dialogue with the children, individual measures to support the children's development.

4.8. Organisational Variations and Alternative Structures in Early Childhood Education and Care

As well as day-care centres for children, child-minding services are also available, especially for children under the age of three. Here one or more children are cared for by a childminder in a private home or an apartment or house rented for this purpose. Children in day-care facilities are sometimes also looked after by a childminder if the opening times of the institution do not suit the needs of parents. It is mainly younger children who are cared for by childminders. In recent years the share of publicly-funded childminders has reached 14.4 per cent of day-care on offer for children under the age of three, and has therefore gained increasing importance.

Since 2005 minimum qualification requirements for the childminder are in place. Child-minding services should provide an alternative which in terms of quality equals the supervision in day-care centres, in particular for children below the age of three. Within the scope of the *Action Programme Day Care for Children*, in close cooperation of the Federation, the Länder, the local authorities and the associations, the quality of day care for children is to be ensured and improved, more personnel is to be engaged, the infrastructure expanded and the parental role reinforced. At the same time through the Action Programme Day Care for Children (*Aktionsprogramm Kindertagespflege*) the German Youth Institute (*Deutsches Jugendinstitut*) curriculum has established 160 hours as the minimum standard for the training of childminders. Besides the qualification of childminders on the basis of this standard, the programme also provides for the option of continuing education while in employment and permanent employment models for childminders.

5. PRIMARY EDUCATION

5.1. Introduction

The *Grundschule* (primary school) is attended by all school-age children together. It covers grades 1 to 4. In Berlin and Brandenburg the *Grundschule* covers grades 1 to 6.

General objectives

The tasks and objectives of the *Grundschule* are determined by its position within the school system. The primary school's role is to lead its pupils from more play-oriented forms of learning at pre-school level to the more systematic forms of school learning, and also to orient the form and content of teaching programmes towards the different learning requirements and capabilities of individual pupils.

In June 2015, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (*Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK*) resolved recommendations on the work in the primary school (*Empfehlungen zur Arbeit in der Grundschule*) which amounted to a fundamental realignment and reorganisation.

According to the recommendations, the task of the primary school is to enable basic school education in a joint educational programme for all children. The goal is to acquire and extend basic and adaptable competences. These include above all the key competences of reading and writing as well as mathematics, which form a basis for not only all other educational areas in the primary school but also for continuing education as well as lifelong learning and independent appropriation of culture. The nationwide educational standards in the subjects German and mathematics are hereby decisive for the primary sector, grade 4 (resolutions of the Standing Conference of October 2004). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as well as the Perspectives Framework for General Studies also provide an orientation.

Primary schools cater for the heterogeneity of their pupils through individualised and differentiated lessons that are oriented on their initial learning situation. Decisions on the content and didactics as well as determinations as regards targeted methods, social forms, ways of working and task formats are taken by the teaching staff on the basis of the individual premises and needs of the learners.

Specific legislative framework

The Basic Law (*Grundgesetz – R1*) and the constitutions of the Länder (R13–28) include a number of fundamental provisions on schools (inspection, parents' rights, compulsory schooling, religious instruction, privately-maintained schools) which also have a bearing on primary schools. The legal basis for the *Grundschule* as the first compulsory school for all children is to be found in the Education Acts (R84, R86, R88, R90, R92, R95, R97, R99, R101–102, R104, R106, R112, R114–115, R117) and the Compulsory Schooling Acts (R107) of the Länder as well as in the *Schulordnungen* (school regulations) for the primary school enacted by the Ministries of Education and Cultural Affairs in the Länder.

5.2. Organisation of Primary Education

Geographical Accessibility

One of the responsibilities of the Länder in their education policy is to maintain a sufficiently varied range of schools. As the highest school supervisory authority, the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs of each Land is therefore concerned with establishing the base for an efficient school system. Accordingly, present and future school needs and school locations are identified in a school development plan drawn up at Land level. The establishment of plans for developing schools is regulated by the Education Acts in some Länder.

The *Kommunen* (local authorities), i.e. the municipalities, districts and municipalities not being part of a district, must, in their capacity as the maintaining bodies of public-sector schools, ensure that a well-balanced choice of education is available in their area. This means that school development planning is a task of the local authority maintaining bodies, which identify the school capacity required and determine the location of schools. The plans of each of the local authorities must be established on the basis of mutual consultation and approved by the schools' supervisory authorities, in most cases by the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs. The exception to this is Bayern, where schools are generally established by the Land in consultation with the local authorities.

Regional differences in the number and geographical distribution of schools depending on the type of school result from the number of children and youths of school age, demographic forecasts, the voting behaviour of parents, the economic and social situation in the region or school planning stipulations of the competent authorities.

Admission Requirements and Choice of School

Choice of school

In order to complete general compulsory schooling, pupils must, in principle, attend the local *Grundschule* (primary school). In Nordrhein-Westfalen and Schleswig-Holstein parents have been free to enrol their child in a *Grundschule* other than the one nearest their home. The school maintaining bodies have the opportunity to fix catchment areas for schools. In some Länder, the school authorities can establish overlapping or coinciding school catchment areas for several primary schools.

Start of compulsory schooling

Compulsory schooling starts on 1 August for all children having reached their sixth birthday before a statutory qualifying date. Following the resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (*Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK*) of October 1997 entitled Recommendations on Starting School (*Empfehlungen zum Schulanfang*), the Länder can set the qualifying date between 30 June and 30 September. They can also make provision for the possibility of starting school during the course of the school year. The aim of the recommendations is to reduce what are, in part, high deferment rates and to encourage parents to send their children to school as early as possible. The strengthening of the collaboration between day-care centres for children and primary schools in most of the Länder serves the same purpose. Offers of flexible school entrance phases are being further developed.

In 2004, Berlin had set the statutory qualifying date for compulsory schooling at 31 December; thus, compulsory schooling starts after the summer holidays for all children who reach the age of six before the end of the year. As of the academic year 2017/18, all children have to attend school who turned six between 1 October of the previous year and 30 September of the enrolment year. Through this regulation, Berlin adjusts its enrolment age to that of Brandenburg and other Länder.

Early entrance

All children who have their sixth birthday after the statutory qualifying date as determined by the Länder may be permitted to start school early on their parents' application. Compulsory schooling for such children starts with their admittance. This applies for children in Berlin who turn six by 31 March of the following year.

Deferment of schooling

The conditions for a deferment of schooling differ by Land. In most Länder a deferment is possible in exceptional cases if support in a school environment is not expected to create conditions more favourable to the child's development. In some Länder a deferment of schooling is possible only on health grounds. If a flexible school entrance phase is in place, where teaching is provided across grades, and which pupils complete in minimum of one year and a maximum of three years, there is no deferment of schooling.

In the majority of the Länder the children involved may attend a *Schulkindergarten* or a *Vorklasse* or *Grundschulförderklasse* (see chapter 12.4.). Should neither of these be available within a reasonable distance, children whose compulsory schooling has been deferred may attend a *Kindergarten* or receive special help in grade 1 at primary school.

Where doubts still remain at the end of the period of deferment as to which school can best support the child, it lies within the responsibility of the school supervisory authority to determine whether the child is entitled to special educational support.

Age Levels and Grouping of Pupils

Primary school pupils (aged six to ten, in Berlin and Brandenburg six to twelve) are normally taught in classes according to age. Lessons are taught in classes organised by grade; in some Länder classes are also organised across grades. In the first two grades especially most lessons are taught with just a few teachers, particularly the class teacher. It helps pupils become accustomed to school life if they can relate to a small number of teachers rather than having different members of staff for each subject. The principle of class teachers is used to ensure a certain combination of education and teaching, and a consistent pedagogical approach and makes it easier to respond to pupils' individual needs. From grade 3 onwards the children increasingly encounter subject teachers, which helps them prepare for the transition to secondary school where subject teachers are the rule. In addition to lessons according to age group, individual Länder provide teaching for mixed age groups for the first two years of school in particular. In these cases, pupils can pass through the first two years of school in one to three years, depending on their own individual progress.

Organisation of the School Year

With a five-day school week, teaching takes place on 188 days a year on average (365 days minus 75 days holiday, minus ten additional free days, minus 52 Sundays and 40 Saturdays). As a rule, in Länder with a six-day school week, there are two Saturdays per month on which no lessons take place. In this case, the number of days on which lessons are taught increases to 208 (365 days minus 75 days holiday, minus ten additional free days, minus 52 Sundays and 20 Saturdays). However, the total number of teaching hours per year is the same regardless of whether teaching is carried out on the basis of a five-day or six-day week, since the lessons which are held on a Saturday in the six-day week are distributed among the other weekdays in the five-day week.

In accordance with the Agreement between the Länder on harmonisation in the school system (*Hamburger Abkommen*), the school year begins on 1 August and ends on 31 July. The actual beginning and end of the school term depend on the dates of the summer holidays. Summer holidays have been restricted to the period between mid-June and mid-September for educational, organisational and climatic reasons. Pursuant to an agreement of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder, the six-week summer holidays are fixed within this period in accordance with a rota system, whereby the Länder take turns to have the summer holidays later or earlier. The long-term agreement adopted by the Standing Conference in June 2014 lays down the dates of the summer holidays for all Länder until 2024. Under the rotating system, the Länder are divided into five groups each with about the same population. Apart from the summer holidays, there are shorter holidays which the Länder decide annually on the basis of certain principles and their own considerations. These minor holidays fall at Easter and Christmas. The teaching administration can fix a shorter holiday at Whitsun and in autumn, and authorise individual variable holidays to take account of special local situations. The total annual duration of school holidays is 75 working days.

Organisation of the School Day and Week

Primary school pupils attend lessons for 20 to 29 periods a week. In most Länder there are 20 to 22 periods in the first year, rising to 27 in the fourth (final) year of primary education. As a rule each period lasts 45 minutes. Lessons are usually held in the morning, with up to six periods a day.

The weekly teaching periods laid down by the Ministries of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder for the different types of school may be distributed over five or six days in the week. As a rule, in Länder with a six-day school week, there are two Saturdays per month on which no lessons take place. In most Länder, the responsible Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs has introduced a five-day week for all schools. In some Länder, the *Schulkonferenz* (school conference) may decide the number of days in the school week.

In the primary sector, lesson times are laid down from 7.30/8.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. or 11.30 a.m. (Monday to Friday or Monday to Saturday) for the so-called reliable half-day primary school (*verlässliche Halbtagsgrundschule*).

Supervision of pupils outside lesson times and provision of all-day education and supervision

Changes in children's living conditions have meant that the development and education of pupils before and after lessons as well as in the afternoon have become more important in the primary school too. All-day supervision and care for children aged between six and ten is increasingly provided through intramural offers, and also by *Horte* (after-school centres). Intramural all-day education and care offers are to be organised under the responsibility of the head staff and are implemented in many places in cooperation with partners from outside school such as the maintaining bodies of child and youth welfare services or bodies maintaining cultural education, youth sport clubs and parents associations. In the majority of Länder, after-school centres are run by the public child and youth welfare services. Pedagogical efforts are concentrated on closer cooperation between schools and after-school centres.

All Länder are currently expanding their provision of education and care for children outside lesson time. A growing number of primary schools have introduced fixed opening hours (approximately 7.30 a.m. to 1.00/2.00 p.m. depending on local conditions) so that parents can be sure their children are cared for even outside compulsory lessons. This involves amended school and teaching concepts, and offering activities which complement lessons and are run by non-school bodies. Participation in the additional activities is usually voluntary. The children are looked after, amongst others, by qualified employees and part-time staff who as a rule are paid by the maintaining bodies providing the care, which also cover the material costs. Parents are normally expected to pay a charge for such services, the actual amount depending on their circumstances. This extra supervision is subject to the consent of the school supervisory authorities in some Länder, particularly where there are provisions for subsidies by the Land. The primary school with fixed opening times (*verlässliche Grundschule*) and the primary school with guaranteed support and surveillance are currently being further expanded.

In all-day schools, an all-day option is provided for pupils pursuant to the nationwide definition of the Standing Conference on the primary or lower secondary level beyond morning lessons on at least three days a week, comprising at least seven hours daily. There are three different forms:

- in the *fully bound form*, all pupils are obliged to make use of the all-day offer;
- in the *partially bound form*, part of the pupils (e.g. individual class units or grades) commit to making use of the all-day offer;
- in the *open form*, the all-day offer is made available to the pupils on a voluntary basis; registration is usually binding for half a school year.

Activities offered in the afternoon are to be organised under the supervision and responsibility of the head staff and to be carried out in cooperation with the head staff. The activities are to have a conceptual relationship with the lessons in the morning. Typical extracurricular offers include learning and practice offers, study periods, homework supervision, learning support and inclination offers, study groups, recreational activities, periods used by the class teachers to settle class business. All-day schools provide a midday meal on the days on which they offer all-day supervision.

As of the school year 2016/17, open all-day schools will also include those offers that

- provide an all-day option for pupils on at least three days a week comprising at least seven hours a day;
- provide a midday meal for all participating pupils on every day on which all-day schooling is offered,
- the school head cooperates with an extracurricular maintaining body on the basis of a joint pedagogical concept, and
- the school head bears partial responsibility for the offer.

The sharp rise in the number of schools offering all-day schooling is reflected in the report *Allgemein bildende Schulen in Ganztagsform in den Ländern in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland – Statistik 2010 bis 2014* – that is available on the website of the Standing Conference. The internet portal www.ganztagschulen.org provides information on the development of all-day offers in the Länder and on current empirical accompanying research.

In the school year 2014/2015, 53.3 per cent of all public and private primary schools were *Ganztagschulen*. A total of 33.1 per cent of all primary school pupils were involved in all-day education – an increase of 1.7 percentage points over 2013. Most of the all-day primary schools in Germany operate in the open form.

5.3. Teaching and Learning in Primary Education

Curriculum, Subjects, Number of Hours

Development of curricula

The material and competences which are important to the educational process at primary school are laid down in curricula, education plans or framework plans which may be subject-related, area-related or interdisciplinary. To implement the *Bildungsstandards* (educational standards) of the Standing Conference for the primary sector, the subjects in the curricula are adapted accordingly. The educational standards binding for all Länder specify the goals themselves, whilst the curricula describe and structure the way in which to achieve these goals. For further information on quality assurance and quality development by means of educational standards, see chapter 11.2.

Curricula or education plans for the primary school as well as for other types of school are the responsibility of the Ministries of Education and Cultural Affairs in the Länder. The curricula or education plans are published as regulations of the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs. They take the form of instructions from a higher authority and, as such, are binding on teachers. It is the responsibility of the head teacher to ensure that the current curricula are taught at his/her school. At the same time, curricula are formulated in such a general way as to leave the teachers the freedom of teaching methods in practice. Nevertheless all the teachers of a specific subject at one school hold conferences to reach a consensus on methods and assessment criteria.

A curriculum is usually drawn up as follows. Once the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs of a particular Land has reached the decision to revise or completely reorganise a curriculum, a commission is appointed usually consisting in the main

of serving teachers, including heads, as well as school inspectors, representatives of the school research institute of the Land concerned and of experts in the relevant disciplines from institutions of higher education. As a rule, it is the job of the commission to devise a curriculum for a certain subject at a specific type of school, for a specific school level or for a type of school. It will then work on a draft. Experience gained with previous curricula is taken into account when it comes to devising new ones. In some Länder curricula are launched on a trial basis before being finalised and becoming universally valid. Finally, there are set procedures according to which the commission may consult associations, universities and parents' and pupils' representative bodies.

As soon as a new curriculum has been completed and is introduced on a definitive or preliminary basis at schools, the in-service training institutes for the teaching profession maintained by the Ministries of Education and Cultural Affairs are charged with training teachers to work with it. Textbook publishers also embark on a revision or completely new edition of their titles.

A central database with curricula for schools providing general education is accessible on the website of the Standing Conference (www.kmk.org).

Subjects

The primary school curriculum covers in particular

- German
- Mathematics
- General studies
- A foreign language
- Art
- Handicrafts/textile design
- Music
- Sports
- Religion/Ethics

Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work is the driving force in the context of all subjects. German, mathematics and general studies hereby form the core subjects in primary school.

The educational standards of the Standing Conference for the primary sector (grade 4) in the subjects German and mathematics are the bases for the subject-specific requirements on teaching in primary schools in all Länder. The educational standards describe the competences with defined sub-competences that a child should usually have acquired at the end of grade 4 in the core areas of the subjects German and mathematics. At the same time they provide a clear orientation for individual support. These norm standards relate to competences that on average should have been achieved by pupils up to the end of grade 4.

The challenge for both lessons concentrating on a specific subject or area and cross-disciplinary classes is to find appropriate and manageable requirements for every child on different competence levels. The pedagogical diagnostics and the counselling and support for especially gifted pupils as well as for pupils with reading and spelling or calculating difficulties based on this are among the tasks of primary schools or special diagnostic centres. Primary schools receive professional support

in the field of diagnostics and counselling from school psychologists, school social workers, child and youth welfare organisations or the school doctor service.

Foreign language teaching

Foreign language lessons are already provided in the primary sector in all Länder. In most Länder compulsory foreign language lessons begin in grade 3; in six Länder they already begin in grade 1. With competence-oriented foreign language lessons in primary school the Länder follow the principle of learning language using real-life situations, authentic language and action-based methods. Learning is also based on specific fields of experience, the everyday world, and the cognitive potential of the children, and initiates the first steps towards automation and linguistic reflection. These are also facilitated by bilingual lessons, which have been greatly developed in recent years. In most Länder bilingual lessons are offered at individual primary schools, sometimes in addition to regular lessons and sometimes as an integrated concept. As the Standing Conference stated in its Recommendations on Work in the Primary School (*Empfehlungen zur Arbeit in der Grundschule*) from June 2015, bilingual teaching and learning also form the basis for viable bilingual concepts of secondary schools.

The basis for the definition of the final qualification level in foreign language learning from primary education through to upper secondary level is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), with its defined competence levels. Foreign language lessons at primary schools are based predominantly on competence-oriented curricula (framework curricula, core curricula) which – in line with the recommendations adopted by the Standing Conference to strengthen foreign language skills (*Empfehlungen zur Stärkung der Fremdsprachenkompetenz*) – are oriented towards the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the recommendations for the primary sector. The target level for functional communicative competences at the end of grade 4 is geared to CEFR level A1. This competence level describes an elementary use of language. The pupils can communicate in a simple manner, understand and use everyday expressions and very simple sentences.

For compulsory foreign language lessons in primary school the Länder predominantly offer the languages English and French taught in the entry-level classes of the secondary general education schools. Lessons are also offered in the languages of the neighbouring countries (Danish, Dutch, Polish, Czech) and in the languages spoken by foreign fellow citizens (e.g. Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish) or in the settlement areas of minorities (e.g. Sorbian (Wendish)) or regionally (Frisian, Low German).

Alongside compulsory foreign language lessons, the Länder also offer additional optional lessons to learn languages of the country of origin, languages of neighbouring countries and languages of encounter.

The report *Fremdsprachen in der Grundschule – Sachstand und Konzeptionen 2013* (foreign languages in primary school – state of play and concepts) published by the Standing Conference provides an overview of the areas of competence and expectations as regards the curricula, and the range of languages on offer, and also the organisational structures of foreign language lessons in the primary schools of the different Länder.

Cross-curricular topics

Apart from the subjects that have already been named, comprehensive educational areas have been adopted in the curricula or education plans of the Länder in different ways: language education (development of language and communication skills), intercultural education (acquisition of a deeper understanding of different cultures), MINT education (establishment of application-oriented and integrated natural science-technical knowledge that can be built on), media education (extension of media competence, participation in the digital world and ability to reflect critically), health education (anchoring prevention and health promotion in everyday school life), musical-aesthetic education (access to cultural education through intramural and extracurricular offers), education for sustainable development (training of basic competences to recognise and actively contribute to sustainable developments), values education (introduction to the basic principles of the democratic state and social order).

Besides, in recent years, the curricula of the Länder have increasingly taken into account the concept of lifelong learning. The acquisition of fundamental knowledge, abilities and skills, as well as the acquisition of a knowledge that will serve as an orientation aid for further learning, together with the development of key competences, have become main educational objectives.

Teaching Methods and Materials

Staff at primary schools face the challenge of providing high-quality teaching characterised by efficient classroom management, a supportive teaching climate and multi-variant cognitive activation. The class teacher principle as a constitutive element of work at primary schools is in a well-balanced relationship to the expertise of the teaching.

The quality standards for teaching at primary schools include on the one hand an efficient classroom management with rules and disturbance prevention that affect behaviour, a teaching climate conducive to learning with a constructive treatment of errors and cognitive activation. On the other hand, this also calls for structure and clarity with professional correctness.

The teaching staff involve their pupils in planning, carrying out and analysing lessons in a manner appropriate for their age and makes their experiences, questions, concerns, knowledge and competences the starting point for lessons. They are also allowed to participate in organising school life through project-oriented initiatives and interdisciplinary projects. This participation in lessons encourages responsibility for one's own learning process and performance motivation.

In order to do justice to the specific way in which primary school children think and experience things, a holistic approach is the principle of teaching in primary schools.

It is the task of the teachers' conference to select textbooks from the regularly published lists of textbooks which are, as a rule, approved by the Ministry. The use of digital media (multimedia) and the internet is becoming increasingly important, both as a teaching aid and as something to be taught and learnt. The latest information about the use of online resources in teaching and internet projects can be found on the Education Servers provided by the Länder Ministries which is accessi-

ble via the national information portal maintained by the federal and Länder authorities, the German Education Server (www.eduserver.de).

5.4. Assessment in Primary Education

Pupil assessment

Competence-oriented learning calls for corresponding forms of performance assessment. Competence-oriented feedback in the course of the learning process provides information on how far the individual child has progressed along the path to the target competences at the end of a learning pathway. It is the basis of the assessment. Feedback instruments include competence-based reports, observation sheets, learning development reports, learning diaries, portfolios. Children and their parents are provided with regular information on the next learning steps in counselling and learning development talks. This feedback takes place according to transparent criteria and illustrates the individual progress and standard competence level that has been achieved.

The teaching staff familiarise pupils with self-assessment instruments and encourage them to reflect on their learning pathways and results in a manner appropriate for their age and development. They therefore successively strengthen them in their self-assessment competence and enable them to set their own goals and to see external assessments as an opportunity for learning.

Altered forms of learning in the Grundschule are contributing towards a better understanding of what is conducive to learning, and of assessing pupil performance. The focus has shifted to encouraging each individual pupil to achieve all that he or she is capable of – guided by the learning requirements for the respective school grade. In order to do this it is necessary to monitor the individual development and performance of each pupil on a constant basis, as well as their working and social behaviour, and assess these factors comprehensively.

Educational progress is normally examined by constant monitoring of the learning processes and by the use of oral and written controls. In grades 1 and 2, the focus is on direct observation of the pupils. In grade 3, pupils also begin to be familiarised with written tests in certain subjects (especially German, *Sachunterricht* and mathematics).

Assessment is always based on the standards indicated in the curricula and the knowledge, abilities and skills acquired in class. Assessment is carried out by the teacher responsible for lessons, who is responsible educationally for his or her decision.

In most Länder, for the first two grades of primary school this assessment takes the form of a report at the end of the school year describing in detail a pupil's progress, strengths and weaknesses in the various fields of learning. At the end of grade 2, or sometimes later, pupils start to receive their reports at the end of each half of the school year with marks, which enable the individual pupil's performance to be recorded and placed in the context of the level achieved by the entire teaching group, and thus a comparative assessment to be made. In addition to the marks awarded for the individual subjects, the reports can also contain assessments concerning participation in class and social conduct within the school. In approximately 50 per cent of the Länder, an assessment of the work-related and social behaviour is al-

ready being performed. The reintroduction of assessments of this kind simultaneously gives rise to heated debates in other Länder.

Pupils experiencing difficulties with reading and writing or in mathematics are generally subjected to the same assessment standards that apply for all pupils. Compensation for any disadvantages and deviations from the basic principles for surveying and assessing performance generally take place in primary schools.

Progression of pupils

All children automatically move from grade 1 to grade 2 at the primary school. In some Länder there is a flexible school entrance phase, where teaching is provided across grades, and which pupils complete in minimum of one year and a maximum of three years. As a rule, from grade 2 of the primary school onwards each pupil is assigned to a suitable grade depending on his or her achievement level, either by being promoted a grade or by repeating a grade. The decision whether or not to move a pupil to the next grade is based on the marks achieved in the pupil's school report (*Zeugnis*) at the end of the school year.

Pupils who are not moved up have to repeat the grade they have just finished. Under certain circumstances, a pupil may also repeat a grade even if a decision has been made to let him or her move up from that grade at the end of the school year. On the basis of the total number of pupils in the primary sector, 0.9 per cent of pupils repeated a class in school year 2014/2015.

Certification

There is no leaving examination at the end of primary school, and, as a rule, pupils are not awarded a leaving certificate. However, at the end of grade 4 (or grade 6) pupils do receive a report for that year. Exceptions are the Länder Baden-Württemberg and Rheinland-Pfalz, where a leaving certificate is issued at the end of the *Grundschule*. There only pupils who have not achieved *Grundschule* target outcomes at the end of grade 4 receive a report. The transition from primary school to one of the secondary school types is regulated differently according to Land law. For further information, see chapter 6.2.

5.5. Organisational Variations and Alternative Structures in Primary Education

Pupils who are not ready to go back to school following hospital treatment may receive lessons at home. Teachers of the school type which the pupil is to attend after his or her convalescence are employed to this end, thus effectively working towards the pupil's reintegration.

Pupils who cannot attend school for a longer period or even permanently, due to illness, without requiring hospitalisation, should also be taught at home. This depends on their ability to follow lessons. This, and the pupil's physical capacity, is certified by a doctor.

For children and young people whose life is characterised by continual moves and a consequent lack of continuity in their school development, an improvement in the schooling situation must aim above all at continuity, and at elements which stabilise their school career and motivate those pupils to attend school. Children of circus artists, fairground entertainers and other occupational travellers have to change

school up to thirty times a year. This particular situation calls for coordinated supporting systems that take into account the special learning conditions of these children and young people, allowing them to gain a school-leaving qualification and thus guaranteeing a successful transfer to working life.

The Länder have developed several schemes to improve the school education of the children of professional travellers. In almost all Länder, special regulations apply for teaching the children of professional travellers. This teaching is based on a system of *Stammschulen* and *Stützpunktschulen* (regular and base schools) that has been introduced in all Länder. The *Stammschule* is the school attended by the children of travelling families during the periods when they are not travelling. This is usually a school at the primary residence or winter quarters of the family. This is where the pupils' files are kept and where certificates and the learning materials, and usually the school logbooks, are issued too. The *Stützpunktschule* are schools that the children attend when travelling. They are normally located near fairgrounds or the residential locations of the travelling family and are specially adjusted to meet the needs of travelling children. Remote supervision can supplement and in some cases even replace classroom teaching during the travelling periods of the children of professional travellers. This enables instructed learning over greater distances, i.e. without the children having to be present in a school. In addition, some Länder also provide pupils with additional digital learning offers (*E-Learning*) that they can deal with on their own during the travelling period. In addition to the system of regular and base schools, mobile schools for the regular teaching of the children of professional travellers were introduced in Nordrhein-Westfalen in 1994 and in Hessen in 2010. The School for Circus Children (*Schule für Circuskinder*) in Nordrhein-Westfalen is a state-approved private alternative school on the primary and lower secondary level offering all-day teaching. The School for the Children of Professional Travellers (*Schule für die Kinder beruflich Reisender*) in Hessen is also a pilot project under private sponsorship.

The *Bereichslehrer* (regional teachers) make an important contribution to supporting and encouraging the travelling children in 15 Länder. They look after not only the children from their own Federal State but also travelling children and act as a link between the school and parents, the *Stammschule* and *Stützpunktschule* as well as the relevant teachers. They particularly offer counselling and information during the child's entire school career, accompany the children outside the lessons and can also offer homework supervision and remedial teaching. So as to enable clarity and continuity in the learning processes of travelling children, the school logbook with individual learning plans for the subjects German, mathematics and the first foreign language was introduced in 2003 through a resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (*Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK*). The school logbook lets the children of professional travellers continue learning at their individual level of learning. Furthermore, the school logbook documents the individual learning development and is proof of their attendance at school. The school logbook and the handout for teachers were updated in 2012 and have been introduced in all Länder.

In addition to the general education sector, vocationally-oriented educational measures are also offered at individual institutions within the scope of the EU pro-

ject BeKoSch (development of professional skills for showmen by means of modules). Children of circus artists can also attend this scheme.

The Standing Conference discusses educational issues for travelling children and related questions, in particular on schooling and support schemes, in annual joint conferences with representatives of the associations and parents of professional travellers. The medium-term goal is to enable nationwide comparable schooling based on the existing concept for travelling children that takes into account the current framework conditions in the Länder. The existing schemes should be expanded in particular through a nationwide network of *Bereichslehrer* and through the gradual establishment of a nationwide digital platform.

As a rule, International Schools in Germany cater for primary as well as secondary school pupils. There are also three European Schools, which offer bilingual lessons in various languages.