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# Elementary education

*Enseignement fondamental*

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# Elementary education

In the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, elementary education (*enseignement fondamental*) is provided by public, private or international schools.

Children aged between 3 and 11 attend public elementary school, covering nine years of schooling subdivided into four learning cycles. All children living in Luxembourg who are 4 years old before 1 September must attend elementary school.

- Cycle 1 (3-5 years) corresponds to pre-primary education and includes: early childhood education and care (*éducation précoce*) (3-4 years) and preschool education (*éducation préscolaire*) (4-5 years). The first year (*éducation précoce*) is optional.
- Cycles 2 to 4 (6-11 years) correspond to primary education.

The future of our children demands to meet the challenges of a constantly changing society: multiplication of knowledge, abundance of information, new technologies, multiculturalism.

In the Grand Duchy, the numerous linguistic differences of residents and the trilingual tradition added to the diversity of family situations increase the expectations towards school education.

Elementary school must provide each child with the tools to succeed. To achieve this, methods and contents focus on the needs of each pupil, with a practical approach of knowledge based on skills, promoting cooperation between the various actors and relying on the professionalism of teachers.

# Elementary education directorates

Elementary education inspection is structured into fifteen elementary education directorates (*directions de l'enseignement fondamental*), managed by teams comprising one director and two to four deputy directors. They oversee the management and pedagogical supervision of schools – but also the coordination for the supervision of pupils with specific needs

The elementary education directorates (*directions de l'enseignement fondamental*) are based throughout the country according to a division that takes into account the number of pupils, the number of teachers, schools, municipalities, distances between schools... Located at the regional level, directorates are better suited to allocate educational resources and staff in line with the needs of the schools and the local population. This regional structure also promotes a better exchange of experiences and information between schools with the aim of improving the development of the quality of education.

In the elementary education directorate (*direction de l'enseignement fondamental*), deputy director is responsible for the care of pupils with special needs and for the inclusion committee (commission d'inclusion). The « équipes de soutien pour les élèves à besoins éducatifs particuliers ou spécifiques » (ESEB - support teams for pupils with special needs) are also managed by the directorates.

A mediation unit, which may be seized by a member of the teaching or educational staff in case of a conflict situation in relation with the director of directorates will be created.

## The missions of the elementary education directorates

More in detail, the elementary education directorates (*directions de l'enseignement fondamental*) oversee:

- the administrative management and pedagogical supervision of the schools in their region ;
- the consultation and support of professionals ;
- the professional integration of young teachers and educators ;
- the management of the relations between the teaching staff within the schools and the relations in the school-pupil and school-parent fields

After consultation with the presidents of the school committees, the elementary education directorates

- organise school inclusion measures ;
- follow the implementation of the school development plan (*PDS – plan de développement de l'établissement scolaire*)
- determine professional development priorities of the actors in order to establish effective and trusting collaboration between schools and education and care structures of the non-formal sector.

# Available school options and organisation

## Available school options

In addition to elementary public schools, available options include a private elementary school providing the same curriculum as public schools, private elementary schools providing a different curriculum while being subsidised by the State, as well as private-initiative schools not benefiting from subsidies.

### Public school options

Luxemburg has 157 public elementary schools spread over the [102 municipalities of the country](#).

Some of these public elementary schools provide **alternative pedagogical approaches**.

This is the case for the following schools:

- [Eis Schoul](#), school with inclusive pedagogy in Luxembourg-Kirchberg,
- [Jean-Jaurès](#), continuous day school in Esch-sur-Alzette,
- [Villa Mirabella](#), continuous day school in Wiltz.

An **international public school**, the [École internationale de Differdange et d'Esch-sur-Alzette](#) (EIDE), operates according to the curricula, promotion criteria and schedules of the **European school system**. It is open to all pupils without tuition fees. It offers five years of European primary education in a French-speaking and English-speaking section. Students can then pursue secondary education leading to the European baccalaureate.

Three other international schools operating according to the model of the accredited European schools opened their doors for the academic year 2018-2019 in Clervaux, Junglinster and Mondorf-les-Bains. The international school in [Junglinster](#) and [Mondorf-les-Bains](#) are open for pupils in elementary education (click here for more information).

[Lycée Michel Lucius](#) provides **English-speaking classes** at the elementary school level.

### Private and international school options

The private school [Notre-Dame](#) (Sainte-Sophie) provides classes with the same curriculum as public schools as well as classes (at the level of “Petite Section de maternelle” at CM2) teaching the official French curricula.

The following private elementary schools teach a different curriculum than the official one while being subsidised by the state:

- [École Charlemagne](#)
- [École Française de Luxembourg](#) (EFL)
- [École Maria Montessori](#)
- [Fräi-ëffentlech Waldorfschoul Lëtzebuerg](#)
- [International School of Luxembourg](#) (ISL)
- [Over The Rainbow](#)
- [St. George's International School Luxembourg](#)
- [École Montessori Schule, Hobscheid](#)

The pre-school and primary classes of the two European schools in Luxembourg, European School Luxembourg 1 (ESL1) in Kirchberg and European School Luxembourg 2 (ESL2) in Mamer complete this offer.

## Organisation

In Luxembourg, the State and the municipalities oversee elementary school and work together for the education and the supervision of more than 55 700 children aged in principle between 3 and 11 years.

Organisation of elementary education was profoundly renewed by the laws of 2009 and 2017.

### Enrolment at the school of the municipality of residence

Public elementary schools welcome children aged between 3 and 11. Every child who is 4 years old before the 1 of September and living in Luxembourg must go to elementary school.

Children who are 3 years old before the 1 of September may, if the parents so wish, attend a pre-school class - an optional year offered by all municipalities. In general, enrolment takes place at the beginning of the school year. Some municipalities accept enrolments for the start of the second and third term. Parents receive an enrolment form from the municipal administration.

The municipality automatically enrolls the child in the school corresponding to its child's place of residence.

Parents moving to a municipality during the year must immediately contact the [municipal administration of their residence](#).

### Organisation in cycles

Elementary education is organised in four learning cycles.

Cycle 1 corresponds to pre-school education and generally covers three years. It is open for children aged between 3 and 5 years. The first year (early education) is optional.

Cycles 2 to 4 correspondent to elementary or primary education.

- cycle 2 is for children aged between 6 and 7 years.
- cycle 3 is for children aged between 8 and 9 years.
- cycle 4 is for children aged between 10 and 11 years.

In principle, each cycle has a duration of two years. At the end of each cycle, the pupil must have acquired the skills bases (*socles de compétences*), i.e., the learning objectives, to be able to continue with the following cycle.

In exceptional cases, pupils may cover one cycle in one year or take three years to acquire the defined skill bases.

This organisation provides for greater flexibility for the acquisition of skills.

### Areas of competence of the municipalities and the State

Municipalities put at the disposal the infrastructures and equipment that are necessary for elementary education. They are competent for school organization and approve the school development plan (PDS - *plan de développement de l'établissement scolaire*).

Since 2009, teachers are appointed by the State and then allocated to a municipality.

The State allocates the necessary resources to each municipality in form of teaching units. In the interest of social justice, the socio-economic diversity of municipalities is taken into consideration for the allocation of teaching units : this is referred to as quota (for further information regarding quotas please go to: [Elementary education : detailed description](#)).

## The actors of elementary education

Elementary education is subdivided into 15 regional directorates (*directions de région*).

Each [directorate](#) is headed by a **director** (*directeur*) and his assistant directors (*directeurs adjoints*). Their role is to supervise the teachers and be the parents' contact persons for specific issues.

Each class has a main teacher, **called class teacher** (*titulaire de classe*). The teaching and educational staff of the classes of the same cycle in a school form the **teaching team** of that cycle. Each class teacher continues to be responsible for the pupils of his/her class. The team meetings are managed by the **learning cycle coordinator**. The team will participate in the development of the school through the school development plan.

Each school has a **school committee** of which the members are elected among the school staff. The **president of the school committee**, who is elected for 5 years, supervises the good functioning of the school and oversees the relations with the municipality and the parents of the pupils.

Regular collaboration with [parents](#) is essential for the motivation and the progress of pupils.

To assist pupils requiring specific support in class, 150 **teachers specialised in the schooling of pupils with special needs (I-EBS - instituteurs spécialisés dans la scolarisation des élèves à besoins spécifiques)** are recruited over 4 years and directly intervene in the schools.

For pupils with special educational needs, the **équipes de soutien pour les élèves à besoins éducatifs particuliers ou spécifiques (ESEB)** can advise the school staff as well as the parents of these pupils, either through ambulatory supervision or by submitting the proposal to the inclusion committee (*commission d'inclusion*) to involve a specialised institution.

ESEB staff can comprise teachers, pedagogues, psychologists, curative educators, speech therapists, psychomotricity reeducators and psycho-reeducators, ergo-therapists, social workers, nurses, paediatric nurses, qualified educators, educators and members of the pool of substitute teachers.

The ESEB is under the lead of a deputy director of the elementary education directorate (*direction de l'enseignement fondamentale*).

The **municipal school committee** monitors the implementation of the school organisation and the school development plans, it reviews the schools' extracurricular programmes and budget. It includes among others the mayor or the deputy mayor, representatives of the municipal council, representatives of the school staff and of the parents.

# Learning areas and assessment

Today just like in the past, schools teach how to read, to write and to calculate. However, these subjects are no longer a target by themselves but a starting point for the acquisition of further skills.

The subjects in elementary school are the bases of any further skill acquisition, be it the progressive mastering of the language, the apprehension of the surrounding world or the acquisition of values and rules of life in a community.

For this reason, the essential skills that each child must acquire at the various levels of his/her curriculum were defined so that the child can progress towards a qualification matching his/her capacities and interests. These skills are assessed with a double scope: on one hand guide the pupils in their learning in order to help them position themselves and make progress (formative assessment) and on the other hand, to certify that the pupils have reached the level (*socle de compétence* - skills base) which allows them to move on to the next cycle (certifying assessment).

## Learning areas

Learning is based on skills, i.e., on the capacity of the child to use acquired knowledge in order to achieve a result. The child must be able to use such knowledge and skills in specific and new situations, whether at school or in real life. If learning grammar and multiplication tables remains essential, it is also necessary to put these skills in action.

This skill-based approach is motivating for the children who are more aware of why they need to learn these subjects.

The skills base (*socle de compétence*) to be reached at the end of each cycle is defined for each development and learning field. The bases include essential knowledge and skills to move from one cycle to the other.

The detailed study plan for each of the development and learning fields in elementary education covers:

- the skills base the pupil has to achieve at the end of each learning cycle ;
- the programme of the subjects to be taught ;
- the weekly schedules.

### In cycle 1

The child's learning process in cycle 1 is mostly considered as a social experience involving meaningful interactions. Diversified situations allow children to interact with their pairs and the people around them as well as to work with a multitude of objects and materials. The skills to be acquired are included in the following development and learning fields:

- logical and mathematical reasoning;
- language, Luxembourgish, awareness of languages and initiation to the French language ;
- discovering the world using all senses ;
- psychomotricity, body language and health;
- creative expression, initiation to aesthetics and culture;
- life in a community and values.

### In cycles 2 to 4

Skills to be acquired are included in the following development and learning fields:



- literacy, German, French and Luxembourgish as well as openness to other languages ;
- mathematics;
- discovering sciences as well as human and natural sciences;
- body language, psychomotricity, sports and health ;
- initiation to aesthetics, creation and culture, arts and music ;
- life in a community and values taught through the subject « [vie et société](#) ».

## Differentiation

Teachers are encouraged to pay special attention to pupils as soon as they show first signs of learning difficulties and to motivate the more gifted ones by implementing what is called differentiation. This is an essential tool to deal with pupils with increasingly heterogenous capacities and possibilities. It is a factor of social justice.

## Assessment

Teachers regularly **assess** their pupils using methods that may vary from tests, analysis of the pupil's work, observations, exams...

During the learning cycle, parents are directly informed about the assessment and the progress of their child regarding the objectives to be achieved : individual exchanges (*entretiens individuels*) with the teacher take place three times a year at the end of each term.

This information is communicated by two different tools : the **intermediate report** (*bilan intermédiaire*) and the **bilan de fin de cycle** (*end of cycle review*).

### The *bilan intermédiaire*

At the end of the three terms of each school year (before the Christmas holidays, the Easter holidays and the Summer holidays), the teaching team prepares an intermediate report of the skill development (**formative assessment**). This intermediate report shows the learning progress of the pupil in relation with the objectives to be reached at the end of the cycle.

The review eases **communication between parents and teachers** during the personal meeting at the end of each term :

- A mark assesses the performances of the pupil during the term. There are eight possible marks : A+, A, B+, B, C+, C, D+, D. In German, French, Luxembourgish and mathematics, this mark is allocated for each field of competence (e.g. in the languages : written production, oral production, reading comprehension, listening comprehension). In the other development and learning fields (initiation to sciences), it applies to the subject.
- In each development and learning field, the learning motivation of the pupil is assessed on a four-level scale (ranking from « rarely » to « frequently »).
- The progress of the pupil regarding the skill bases is documented by field of competence (e.g. in the languages: written production, oral production, reading comprehension, listening comprehension).
- The skills that are the priority targets of each field are described in an understandable way providing parents with a clearer picture of the performance and skills their child is supposed to develop during the cycle.
- Transversal skills i.e. not linked to a specific development and learning field are assessed on a four-level scale (ranking from « slightly developed » to « well developed »).

- For each development and learning field, the review gives the possibility to write down comments, observations and perspectives that the teacher and the parents have discussed during the individual exchange.

### The *bilan de fin de cycle*

At the end of each learning cycle, the teaching team prepares an end of cycle review (*bilan de fin de cycle*). It certifies the skills acquired by the pupil in order to move on to the next cycle.

The intermediate report (*bilan intermédiaire*) and the end of cycle review (*bilan de fin de cycle*) refer to the skills bases (*socles de compétences*) the pupil is supposed to develop during the cycle.

# Transition from elementary education to secondary education

The orientation procedure (*procédure d'orientation*) from elementary to secondary education starts as of the first year of cycle 4. Parents are involved in the decision-making process. The class teacher submits them a first prognosis as well as exhaustive information on the available classical and general secondary education options. At the end of cycle 4, parents and the class teacher express a joint decision concerning the orientation.

## The role of the *entretiens individuels*

As of the first year of cycle 4, individual exchanges (*entretiens individuels*) are held between the class teacher and the pupil's parents – there are three exchanges in total at the end of each term – giving them the possibility to share their point of view on the future orientation of the pupil. A **first prognosis** is prepared by the class teacher during the third term. At the same time, the teacher provides information on the available **classical secondary education and general secondary education options**, including specific options : European curricula in Luxembourg public schools, ALLET classes (German as a foreign language) as well as French-speaking, English-speaking and German-speaking classes, international baccalaureate in English or in French...

For the purpose of this orientation, two individual meetings are scheduled between the teacher and the parents. The first meeting takes place at the beginning of the third term of the second year of cycle 4 in the presence of the psychologist from the CePAS if the parents have opted for the latter's intervention. Parents are informed about the results of the *épreuves communes* (tests at national level in cycle 4.2), the school results (intermediate report) and if applicable, the results of the tests conducted by the psychologist.

The next individual exchange is called **orientation exchange**. Parents and the class teacher, who acts as the representative of the teaching team have an orientation meeting during which they will take a joint orientation decision. In case of disagreement, the class teacher and the parents jointly submit a form acknowledging their disagreement to the president of the relevant committee.

## The joint decision

At the end of cycle 4, the final orientation decision is taken jointly during the orientation meeting between the pupils' parents and the class teacher. The orientation decision is based on:

- the work of the pupil during cycle 4 showing his/her skills, fields of interests and aspirations;
- the results of the assessment of the skills acquired by the pupil ;

- the results obtained at the *épreuves communes* organised at the national level by the ministry. They provide information about the pupil's performance compared to the national average and about the development of the pupil's skills against the expected competence levels at the end of this cycle ;
- the information collected by the psychologist, if the parents have opted for the latter's intervention.

## In case of disagreement

In case of disagreement between the parents and the class teacher an **orientation commission** meets in order to find a solution. It is chaired by the elementary education director and comprises a teacher of cycle 4, a teacher of the classical secondary education; a teacher of the general secondary education and a psychologist of the **Centre psycho-social et d'accompagnement scolaires** (CePAS). The pupil's parents participate as invited members as well as the class teacher and the psychologist, if the parents have opted for the latter's intervention.

## High school enrolment

The documents required to enrol in high school (*lycée*) are:

- a copy of the final report of cycle 4 (*bilan de fin de cycle*);
- a duly filled out enrolment form ;
- a copy of the orientation decision;
- a recent identity picture of the pupil.

The enrolment period extends from end of June until beginning of July.

# School – parents partnership

Cooperation between parents and school is one of the key factors for the pupil's success.

The class teacher regularly organises information and concertation meetings for the pupils' parents to discuss the objectives of the cycle, the skill assessment modalities and the organisation of the class attended by their child.

Furthermore, the class teacher invites the parents at the end of the term to inform them about the learning progress of their child. Parents have to comply with invitations to appear at the school to 3 annual meetings (cf. page [Assessment](#)).

## Representation

Every three years in each school parents elect at least two parents' representatives. The school committee and the representatives meet at least three times a year to discuss the proposed organisation of the school as well as the school development plan ([plan de développement de l'établissement scolaire](#)) prepared by the school committee.

Parents are also represented in the:

- [National parent representation](#) (*Représentation nationale des parents*). It covers all education levels and is a democratically elected body acting as the parents' spokesperson and as an advisor to the minister for national education.
- The municipal school committee (*Commission scolaire communale*), promotes the partnership between school authorities, school staff and parents at the municipal level.
- The national school commission (*Commission scolaire nationale*). It submits proposals to the minister about reforms, research topics, continuing training offers and improvements it deems necessary. In addition to the other partners, it includes two parents as members. They are appointed by the minister upon proposal of the organisation representing parents' associations (*organisation représentative des associations des parents d'élèves*).

[FAPEL](#) - *Fédération des associations de parents d'élèves du Luxembourg* – is recognised as the organisation representing parents' associations at the national level.