



Getting a Good Start to School Life, Basel Primary Schools in Switzerland



Dear Readers,

Primary school, together with kindergarten, constitutes the beginning of 11 years of compulsory education. After kindergarten comes primary school, which lasts for six years. Children attend the same school for all six primary school years. In primary school, children's perception, thinking-expression skills and social skills are supported. The primary school level has to introduce children to the fundamentals of lifelong learning. Teaching in primary school is holistic and experience-oriented. Depending on their age, children often learn by living, acting, and experimenting. Children are encouraged in their personal, social and professional skills. Teachers take into account the relevant developmental level of a child and develop individual abilities and skills. In addition, students are prepared for the transition to three-tier secondary school. School trips, excursions and school colonies are part of the lessons. (Erziehungsdepartement, 2023a).

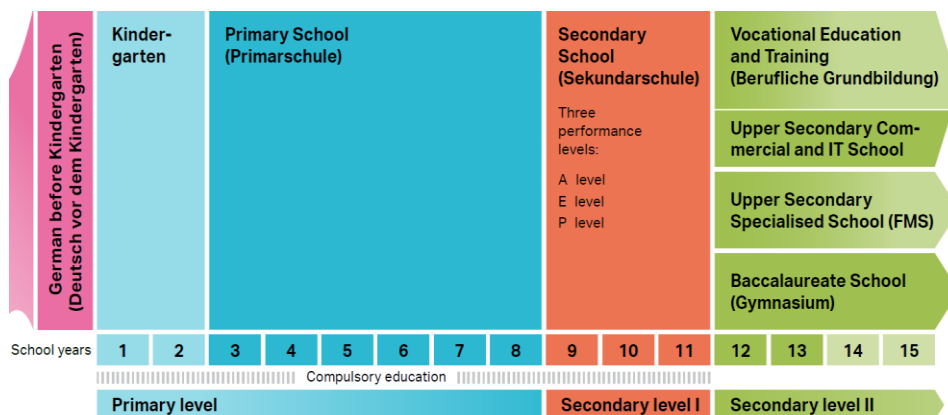


Figure 1
 The Education System in Basel (Erziehungsdepartement, 2022b)

Generally, a maximum of 25 students attend a class together. Classes are available in all classrooms, five days a week, from 8:00 am to 12:15 pm, Monday through Friday. Classes 1 and 2 have one-afternoon class (from 14:00 to 15:45), and classes 3 to 6 have two or three-afternoon classes (14:00 - 15:45 or up to 16:30). Primary school provides

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students with a stable basic education for each subject and department as outlined in Lehrplan 21. The subject and competence areas described here are based on that of kindergarten. During the whole primary school period, attention is paid to the personal learning, work and social behavior of the students. Foreign language education starts with French in the 3rd grade and continues with English in the 5th grade. Interdisciplinary teaching is also often used. The courses are divided into the following subject areas (Erziehungsdepartement, 2022c):

- Languages (school language German, French from 3rd grade, English from 5th grade)
- Maths
- Nature, people, society
- Design (artistic design, technical design, textile design)
- Music, music and movement
- Movement and sports



From Year 1 to Year 4, students receive a graded certificate of "high requirements met", "intermediate requirements met", "basic requirements met", and "basic requirements not met" at the end of the school year that demonstrates school performance in subjects. In addition, a learning report is presented after the first semester of each school year, which is discussed at the field meeting. From the 5th grade, school performance is evaluated by grades. Proficiency areas in German and mathematics are also assessed with the grades described above. Full grades 6 to 1 and half grades in between are used to evaluate the subjects. Grades mean: 6 = very good; 5 = good; 4 = sufficient; 3 = insufficient; 2 = weak; 1 = very poor or no performance. Grades below 4 indicate poor performance. In the 5th grade, a report card is issued at the end of the school year (Erziehungsdepartement, 2023a).

In the 6th grade, two certificates are given due to the transfer. With these two certificates, students are assigned to one of the secondary school's three performance (A, E, P Level) paths based on their academic performance. After primary school, all children move on to three years of secondary school. This classification is not fixed for three years. In case of very good performance, students may move to a higher level of performance, if their performance is insufficient, they may move to a lower level of performance (Erziehungsdepartement, 2023c).



In the education of children with special needs, children are mainly encouraged in their classrooms, for example by working on different tasks or being trained by two teachers. Support options are available at every school for children with more special needs: remedial education, speech therapy, psychomotor skills, German as a second language, support for the gifted and measures to deal with developmental delays. In this case, too, support teachers and specialists often come to the classroom and work with all children, a group, or a single child. If a child needs more support, special education offers are available, including private schools (Erziehungsdepartement, 2023a).

Primary schools are semi-autonomously managed institutions. Primary schools are managed by school administrations in terms of pedagogical, personnel, organizational and administrative aspects. Children are insured by health insurance against accidents that may occur during school and on the way to school. School attendance is mandatory. Parents are obliged to give a reason to the teacher if the child does not come to class. Basel-Stadt attaches great importance to good and regular cooperation with parents. Parents are invited by the classroom teacher to a mandatory parent's evening at least once during the school year. There they are informed about class activities, teaching

materials and current issues. Parents of each school class appoint two parent representatives at the beginning of the school year. They collect each class's parents' wishes and concerns and discuss them with the class teacher or raise them at the parents' council. Parent delegates support teachers in organizing special projects and classroom activities (Erziehungsdepartement, 2023a).

Sincerely,

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