

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The objectives of preschool education

The objective of preschool education is to develop children in such a way so that by the end of their preschool education they have become unique and relatively independent individuals who are capable of actively and satisfactorily coping with the demands of life that will face them and await them in the future.

The objectives of preschool education in the Czech Republic include:

- supplementing and supporting the family upbringing;
- supporting the development of the child's personality;
- supporting the child's healthy emotional, intellectual and physical development;
- assisting the child to understand the world around them and motivating them to learn and find out more about it;
- enabling the child to adopt basic rules of conduct, life values and interpersonal relationships;
- straightening out any uneven patches in the child's development prior to their entry into primary education;
- creating the prerequisites for continuing in education;
- providing specialist educational care to children with special learning needs.

The specifics of preschool education

- The methods and forms of work during preschool education are adapted to meet the needs of each child.
- Preschool education offers children a friendly and stimulating environment where they can feel satisfied and able to express themselves and occupy themselves in a natural childlike way.
- The individual needs and possibilities of each child are respected.
- The education especially takes place through experiential learning and learning through play. These methods are intended to support the children's curiosity and need to discover.

The educational content is based on 5 educational areas:

1. **The child and their body** - physical development and the coordination of movement, fine motor skills, hand/eye coordination, looking after oneself, health and safety.
2. **The child and their psyche**
 - Language and speech - pronunciation, the grammatical correctness of speech, comprehension, making oneself understood, expression.
 - Cognitive ability and function, imagination, fantasy, mental operations – perception, attention, concentration, memory, creativity, inventiveness, imagination, differentiation between figurative and graphic symbols, graphic expression, space-time orientation, basic pre-mathematic concepts, numerical concepts and operations, problem-solving, learning.
 - Self-perception, emotions, will – self-confidence, self-realisation, self-control, adaptability, self-perception, emotions, will.
3. **The child and others** - communication with adults, communication with children, cooperation during activities, sociability.
4. **The child and society** - social rules and customs, inclusion in society, culture, art.
5. **The child in the world** - knowledge, social informedness, adaptability to changes, the child's relationship with the environment.

The organisation of pre-school education

- The school year starts on 1 September and ends on 31 August of the following calendar year.
- Pre-school education is organised for children aged between 2 and 6 (a two-year-old child has no legal entitlement to be accepted into a kindergarten).
- The registration for preschool education in the subsequent school year takes place from 2 May to 16 May. The kindergarten principal will set the precise date and place.
- The obligation to enrol in preschool education occurs from the beginning of the school year that follows the day when the child turned 5.
- Compulsory preschool education applies to the citizens of other European Union member states who spend more than 90 days in the Czech Republic, to other foreigners who are authorised to reside in the Czech Republic permanently or temporarily for a period in excess of 90 days and to participants in asylum proceedings. Compulsory preschool education does not apply to children with severe mental handicaps.
- The requirement of completing the compulsory year of preschool education can also be met in other ways. These include individual education, education in a preparatory class

at primary school, education in the preparatory level for a special primary school and education at an international school located within the Czech Republic.

- The school principal will enable a child with special educational needs or exceptional educational talent to be included in an individual educational program on the basis of a recommendation received from an educational advisory facility. The program will define the options and methods of supporting the child in any problematic areas.
- The General Education Program, which defines the compulsory contents, scope and conditions of the education, is binding for preschool education. The General Education Program is binding for the creation of the curriculum.

Kindergarten

- Children can attend state or private kindergartens in the Czech Republic.
- The parents pay for the education of their child at a kindergarten by paying the so-called kindergarten fees. They also pay for the child's meals. As such, the child receives both food and drink throughout the day. No kindergarten fees are paid (although meals are still paid for) in the last year at a kindergarten established by the state, a region, a municipality or a municipal association and this applies for a maximum period of 12 months.
- A class at a state kindergarten may consist of a maximum of 28 children and each class will usually have 2 teachers. There may also be, for example, a teaching assistant, a bilingual teaching assistant or a nanny present in the class.
- The children may be allocated to classes by age or without any regard for age.
- The children leave the kindergarten for home after lunch or after the afternoon rest period and must be accompanied by an adult.
- Parents must excuse the absence of their child from kindergarten according to the rules that apply in the given kindergarten.
- Every kindergarten may have a different daily regimen, whereby it will be necessary to comply with the period for dropping off and picking up the children. A parent may reach an individual agreement with the kindergarten management and the teachers, if necessary.
- An example of the daily regimen:
 - o the children assemble, free playtime, individual work with the children;

- a community circle – thematic discussions, nursery rhymes, songs, riddles;
 - exercise – active games, exercising at stations, healthy exercise, relaxation;
 - the morning snack;
 - educational activities on a selected topic – art, music, active movement, work, intellect;
 - time spent in the kindergarten’s garden or on a walk around the environs;
 - lunch;
 - afternoon rest time;
 - the afternoon snack;
 - free playtime, the departure of the children.
- The education takes place on the basis of integrated blocks which offer the children content on selected topics. The experience is easily understandable and practically applicable for the children. The covered topics are always based on the curriculum for the given kindergarten.
 - The activities for children can be divided into spontaneous and managed activities. As such, the children regulate some activities themselves and others are managed directly or indirectly by the teacher.

The kindergarten teachers

- In order to be able to work in this profession, a kindergarten teacher must have obtained expert qualifications from studies in a preparatory course for kindergarten teachers.
- Teachers are required to undergo further education in order to renew, maintain and especially increase their qualifications throughout the period that they are active as teachers.
- The teacher’s task is to initiate suitable activities, to prepare the environment and to offer the children the opportunity to get to know, think about and comprehend themselves and the world around them.
- The activities of the teacher are based on pedagogical diagnostics which are distinguished by observation and awareness of the individual needs and interests of each child and are further based on knowledge of the child’s current status, knowledge of the child’s development and also the regular monitoring of the child’s progress.

Compiled by: Bc. Kristýna Zimková, the Matěchova Kindergarten, Prague 4

Source

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Czech Republic. *The general education plan for preschool education* [online]. Prague: MEYS, 2018 [cit.11.05.2020]. Available from: <http://www.msmt.cz/file/45303/>.

Act no. 561/2004 Coll. on preschool, primary, secondary, expert tertiary and other education (the Education Act).