

The Italian Educational System



The Italian educational system is organised as follows:

- pre-primary school for children between 3 and 6 years of age;
- first cycle of education lasting 8 years, made up of primary school and lower secondary school;
- second cycle of education;
- higher education offered by universities, including polytechnics, institutes of Higher Education in Art and Music (Alta Formazione Artistica e Musicale - AFAM) and Higher Technical Institutes (Istituti Tecnici Superiori - ITS).



Education is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16. This covers the first cycle of education, which lasts eight years, and the first two years of the second cycle.

In addition, everyone has the right and duty to receive education and training for at least 12 years.

15-year-old students can also spend the last year of compulsory education on an apprenticeship.



- Compulsory education can be undertaken at a State school, a non-State publicly subsidised school (scuola paritaria) or through home education or private schools.
- Parents or guardians are responsible for ensuring that children complete compulsory education, while the local authorities and the managers of the schools have a responsibility for supervising.
- The Constitution of the Italian Republic establishes that the State must provide access to education to all young people living in the country, regardless of the geographical condition of the area they live in and their individual social and economic situation.



ADMINISTRATION

- The Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), headquartered in Rome, is responsible for general administration at national level. School education is organised at a decentralised level by the MIUR through the Regional School Offices (Uffici Scolastici Regionali, USR), which operate at provincial level in Local Offices.
- Schools at pre-primary, primary and secondary level have teaching, organisational and research autonomy. Schools were granted autonomy and legal status in 2000.



ADMINISTRATION

- The school manager is the legal representative of the institution and is responsible for its overall management.
- The administrative manager of schools is called the Director of General and Administrative Services (DSGA).



NURSERY SCHOOL

Early childhood education and care has two different stages based on child age groups. Nursery schools, for children aged 0-3 years, are not part of the educational system and, thus, outside of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR).



PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL

“Scuola dell’infanzia”, for children over 3 years of age, is part of the educational system. This level of education lasts up to three years (from 3 to 6 years of age) and is not compulsory. Nevertheless, the State has adopted a policy of generalising the service. In State pre-primary schools each section contains children of the same age. However, sections may be made up of children of different ages. The aim of pre-primary school is to promote the development of identity, autonomy and competences in children and to initiate them into citizenship.



PRIMARY SCHOOL

Primary school (*scuola primaria*) is compulsory, lasts for a total of five years and is attended by pupils aged between 6 and 10. The aim of this level in the educational system is to provide pupils with basic learning and the basic tools of active citizenship. According to the new guidelines, the general aim of school is the harmonious and comprehensive development of the individual, according to the principles of the Italian Constitution and European cultural tradition. Parents are free to choose the school they want to send their children to.



PRIMARY SCHOOL

The teaching timetable offers the following options:

- 24 hours a week;
- 27 hours a week;
- up to 30 hours a week, involving additional activities;
- 40 hours a week, including the lunchtime meal, known as 'full-time'.



PRIMARY SCHOOL

The subjects taught during the 5 years of primary school are: Italian, English, history, geography, mathematics, science, technology, music, art, sports science, religious education (optional).

Pupils do not take final examinations at the end of primary school.



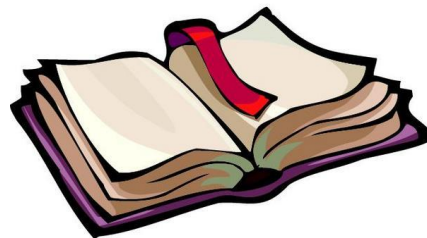
LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL

- Lower secondary school (scuola secondaria di I grado) lasts 3 years and is for pupils between 11 and 13/14. Parents are free to choose which school to send their children to.
- At enrolment, students and their parents sign a 'Joint responsibility agreement' which details the rights and duties (e.g. use of mobile telephones and electronic devices at school) of the school itself, the students and their families.



LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL

- The purpose of lower secondary education is to enable pupils to acquire the fundamental knowledge and skills to develop basic cultural competence.
- The subjects taught are: Italian, English, a second foreign language, history, geography, mathematics, science, technology, music, art, sports science, religious education (optional).



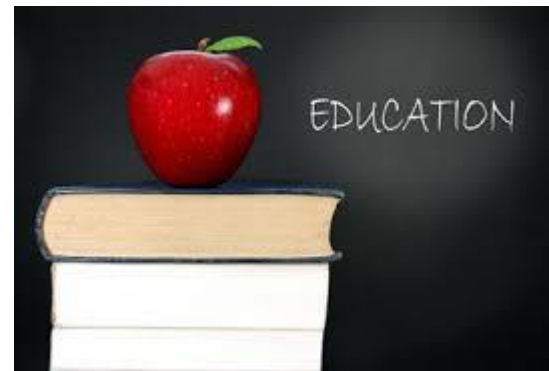
FIRST-CYCLE STATE LEAVING EXAMINATION

- The first-cycle State leaving examination takes place at the end of the third year of lower secondary school. The Class council decides by majority vote whether or not pupils can be admitted to the examination and assigns a mark out of ten. An examination committee is set up in every school consisting of all teachers of all classes and chaired by the school manager. The examination consists of a national written test set by INVALSI (National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System) and four written tests in the following subjects: Italian, Mathematics and Rudiments of Science and ICT, the two community languages studied. After the written tests, students also sit an oral test on all subjects from the last grade of school.
- The Diploma shows the final mark obtained at the State examination.



UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

- The first two years of the second cycle of education and training are compulsory.
- State upper secondary school (scuola secondaria di II grado) lasts 5 years for students from 14 to 18/19 years of age. It is offered by licei, technical institutes and vocational institutes.



UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Access to tertiary education is only for students who have passed the State examination at the end of upper secondary school. Students who pass it receive a Diploma and a certificate.



ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education and training is for people whose age puts them at risk of dropping out of school and for those who, despite completing compulsory education, have left the school system and wish to re-join it. Permanent Territorial Centres (CTPs) were set up in 1997 for adult education. Adults and young adults older than 16 can enrol in courses from the first cycle of education.



Adult Education

ORGANISATION OF TIME

- Every year, the Ministry of Education establishes the calendar for nationwide holidays. The Regions are responsible for defining the school calendar (start and end of school activities, length of breaks for national holidays, other holidays) so that it reflects local needs.
- Educational activities take place between 1 September and 30 June. There are at least 200 teaching days in a year. For pupil evaluation purposes, the school year can be divided into two or three terms.



- Schools autonomously define what timetable model to offer, in accordance with their educational offer plans (POF) and taking into account the requests of parents and staff. The days of the week on which lessons are conducted can be no fewer than 5.
- Lessons are usually held from Monday to Friday, but some schools offer a six-day week with lessons on Saturdays.



TEACHING METHODS AND MATERIALS

- Generally, schools have a gymnasium, a library and ICT, science and multimedia laboratories. Increasing numbers of classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards (IWB). Teachers choose textbooks and teaching tools. Textbooks should be in digital or mixed format. Textbooks are free for pupils in Primary school.
- Class teachers are responsible for periodic and final assessment and certification of the students' acquired skills. They assign a mark out of ten. A mark of 6 corresponds to a pass. If a pupil is admitted to the following grade with learning gaps, the school might inform parents in a note on the personal assessment document.



TEACHING METHODS AND MATERIALS

Freedom in teaching is a principle set out in the Italian Constitution. The choice and use of teaching methods and materials must be consistent with each school educational offer plan (POF), which, in turn, must be consistent with the general and educational objectives of the different branches and levels of study established at national level. The National Guidelines for the Curriculum suggest some basic methodological approaches.

