

EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

Reference: 1998 - D - 5510

Orig: FR

Version: EN

Teaching Committee 18 November 1998

BOARD OF INSPECTORS (PRIMARY)

FINAL DOCUMENT

Subject : Nursery Education

EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

Reform Committee

EDUCATION IN THE NURSERY SCHOOL
FINAL VERSION OF DOCUMENT 83 - D - 219

This final document has been harmonised with the french and german versions according to the mandate given by the Board of Primary Inspectors in the meeting of the 15 th of September 1998 to the following working-party :

Paul Rieff, Inspector, President
Mrs Breen, teacher in the english section , Luxembourg
Frau Sommer, teacher in the german section, Luxembourg
M.Mangin, teacher in the french section, Luxembourg

Contents

Part One

- I. Aims
- II. Children and their environment
- III. Teachers and Assistants ¹
- IV. School and Parents
- V. Educational principles

Part Two

- General introduction
- Spoken and written language
 - Listening
 - Speaking
 - Reading
 - Writing
 - Introduction
- Mathematics
 - Introduction
 - Properties and relationships
 - Space
 - Time
 - Number and size
- Environmental studies
 - Introduction
 - The living world
 - The non-living world
 - Time
 - Space
- Art
- Physical Education
- Music

¹ The terms “teacher” and “assistant” used in this document refer to both male and female staff.

PART ONE

I . Aims

The aim of nursery education as the first stage in a child's schooling is to enable each individual to develop his full potential in terms of intellectual ability, at the same time allowing his personality to develop. To reach this aim it should be born in mind that each child develops at his own pace.

Nursery education should enable children to acquire the basic skills necessary for a successful school career. The four main areas of development involved are intellectual, physical, emotional and social.²

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Children's intellectual development involves concrete sensory motor experiences, and a child interacts with his (or her) environment in ways which enable him to deepen and extend his knowledge and skills. New concepts should be gradually introduced in ways which are appropriate to the intellectual development of each child.

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

The experiences mentioned above enrich language and aid communication with others. Children should be made aware of the workings of written language as a means of communication, in accordance with the "mother tongue" syllabus of the appropriate language section. Teachers should provide opportunities for children to communicate effectively with both their peers and adults. They should be encouraged to talk to one another, to express their opinions and to listen to the opinions of others, all of which contribute to the development of a critical mind.

² NB: The order is not hierarchical: each of these areas is considered to be equally important.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Gross and fine motor skills enable children to explore the world.

The development of a general awareness of their bodies helps children to become more self-aware and self-confident; this development is aided by activities such as gymnastics, the use of musical instruments, and regular use of different tools during practical work.

Children can develop sensory abilities and express themselves creatively through physical activities.

EQUIPMENT

It is important that special attention is paid to the quality and the equipment of the areas required for gymnastics, outdoor games and music.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Emotional development plays a significant role in children's learning. It is important, therefore, to:

- help the children to express their feelings, emotions and personality.
- encourage their awareness and appreciation of beauty.

THE ROLE OF CREATIVITY IN EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Children should be encouraged to express their individual ideas and to extend their new experiences through language, the use of different materials, music and movement.

The introduction of as many different techniques as possible is a useful aid to imagination and creativity.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

A child's social and communicative skills depend upon the development of sensitivity, spontaneity and a critical mind. Social stability is fundamental to the development of high self esteem and personality.

Pupils should be taught to develop a questioning attitude towards themselves, others, and towards their surroundings. The development of self - reliance, a positive self - image, and positive reactions to people and to the world around them should be encouraged. In a multicultural society nursery education should be the first stage in the development of an understanding of different peoples and cultures. The European School offers opportunities for social interaction leading to this understanding.

II . Children and their environment

Children are influenced by their surroundings, and the school should make every effort to provide an environment which is both intellectually stimulating and psychologically sound. Pupils may be coping with difficult family circumstances; for example, parental working patterns may mean frequent absences of one parent, or a daily routine which is out of step with a child's needs. Language difficulties and loss of familiar points of reference are specific problems associated with life in a multicultural community and can cause a feeling of isolation in any family. This in turn can undermine the confidence of the child. School should therefore be made especially welcoming and enjoyable, with a calm and receptive atmosphere being important to both parents and children.

The teacher should provide a range of activities which encourage the children to learn through practical experience. It is essential to create a rich and varied environment, which teaching staff can use to support their activities. Classroom displays should be used to attract, inform, and to provoke curiosity. The general layout of the room should be open and attractive, with areas for specific activities which may be adapted to current projects, and to the available space.

Ideally, each classroom should include:

- an area for imaginative play
- a computing area
- a book corner
- an art and craft area
- an observation and discovery table
- a music corner
- a construction area
- a mathematics table
- Personal space.

The layout of the playground should be designed to enable the children to develop a wide variety of games and activities in complete safety. Each child should be able to find something to satisfy his play needs: games which encourage coordination and dexterity, an area set aside for pedal vehicles, a sandpit, and corners for quiet games. These activities should be governed by a few simple rules, accepted by everyone.

The layout of the halls and corridors is important in two respects: firstly, a building attractively decorated with children's work is a pleasure in itself, and secondly, it offers the opportunity to display all the classes' work for the parent's benefit, giving them an insight into nursery activities.

The school should strive to integrate children whose development is delayed or who require particular educational provision. The physical environment should be carefully planned, with classrooms designed to ensure the safety, mobility, and full participation of all pupils. It is important that the furniture and equipment provided is appropriate for the requirements of children with special educational needs.

III . Teachers and assistants

Teachers of nursery age children have an important role to play as they are closely involved in the children's upbringing.

The teacher has full responsibility for the organisation of activities related to the aims of the nursery school. This entails structured and detailed long and short term planning, including clear and concise objectives.

The organisation of these activities should take account of each individual child's pace and should be play- centred wherever possible. Projects common to several classes and language sections should be incorporated in planning.

Nursery assistants should have educational qualifications and experience, in order to support the teacher's work by helping to extend nursery activities.

There is therefore a special recruitment procedure for nursery assistants. (Ref; Document 96-D-31).

IV. School and parents

The school has a duty to make the parents aware of their role as partners, to keep them informed about everything affecting their children, and to enable them to participate in the school's activities. The setting of limits to this participation is, however, a matter for the teacher and for the school's management to decide.

There should be regular consultation between teachers and parents (guardians). Contacts may take the form of group information meetings, or individual discussions.

V. Pedagogical principles

The nursery teachers' planning should incorporate certain basic pedagogical principles.

- The teacher must produce an overall plan of activities for the whole school year. The plan needs to be adaptable to unforeseen but exploitable circumstances, such as family, school or local events, or children's particular needs. The planning of these activities should become progressively more detailed throughout the school year.
- Opportunities should be provided both for individual work and for speaking, listening and discussing in groups. Group sessions can be used to present materials, to introduce a new activity, to listen to a story, a poem, or music, etc.
- Play is a very important activity at nursery school level. It covers a wide variety of situations and activities contributing to children's development. The teacher needs to ensure that play activities are constructively organised, to maximise their pedagogic value.
- Even though play should be given priority, there should be room for increasingly structured activities in the physical, musical, scientific and artistic areas, encouraging the children to develop their reasoning skills in carefully chosen situations.
- Different styles of working (individual, group, whole class) will be chosen, depending on the precise objectives.
- Depending on the child's degree of maturity, some systematic learning may start in the nursery school.

PART TWO

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The skills and activities presented below are intended to be a set of suggestions, starting points and objectives, from which the teacher will choose in order to frame an education designed to encourage the children's continued development.

In the interests of clarity, the activities have been divided into six categories, namely:

- Oral and written language
- Mathematics
- Environmental studies
- Art
- Physical education
- Music

This artificial division does not correspond to the multidisciplinary nature of the activities involved at nursery school level. In addition, each area dealt with will need to be considered in terms of its implications in physical, intellectual, emotional and social development.

Teachers should always bear in mind that:

- the design of the curriculum needs to take account of the child's abilities;
- school time should be adapted to the child's pace and not the opposite;
- the child's learning started before nursery school and continues outside school.

ORAL LANGUAGE AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Introduction

The abilities of the children are developed by activities in the following areas:-

- Listening
- Speaking
- Writing
- Reading

1. Introduction

Language plays an essential part in each aspect of the curriculum. It is essential to successful learning in other areas and should not be seen in isolation but in a wider context, at the same time as the development of graphic skills and the introduction to written language.

In the European Schools, particular attention needs to be paid to children living in a multilingual environment and to children whose mother tongue is not the language in which they are being educated. This should be considered when planning activities.

Attention needs to be paid to the acquisition of skills which enhance language development, thus extending the child's ability to communicate effectively. In this way, the child will be able to understand and interpret new knowledge and become increasingly self-confident. Children need to experiment with writing to understand that symbols have a meaning and offer a wide variety of means of expression.

Where possible, language development should be enhanced through interesting and relevant activities.

LISTENING

<i>General objectives</i>	<i>Specific objectives</i>
---------------------------	----------------------------

The child should be able to

Listen attentively to others	Listen to and appreciate short stories, poems, nursery and counting rhymes, etc.
Identify individual sounds	Recognise sounds in the environment and distinguish between them Recognise sounds and rimes in poems, nursery and counting rhymes. Find the odd one out (eg. cat, rat, hat, dog).

SPEAKING

<i>General objectives</i>	<i>Specific objectives</i>
<i>The child should be able to</i>	
Express himself intelligibly	Participate in language activities
	Use correct pronunciation when speaking.
	Use common grammatical structures correctly.
Develop vocabulary	Use the vocabulary encountered during everyday work in class
Develop powers of reasoning	Ask simple questions
Develop his powers of communication	Describe a picture in detail.
	Explain how a piece of work was done and which materials were necessary.
	Predict what is going to happen next in a simple story.
	Give a simple account of something to an adult or to classmates
	Invent and tell stories, dramatise a story, explain the rules of a game, a recipe, etc.
	Express himself coherently and naturally in order to satisfy his needs.
	Communicate with others expressively (eg. role playing, telephone conversation)

READING

General objectives

Specific objectives

The child should be able to

Enjoy reading

Listen to and appreciate the daily reading of a story

Handle books carefully

Spend some time quietly with a book of his choice.

Take and put books away properly

Know which is the beginning and end of a book.

Know appropriate vocabulary (eg. cover, page, picture, etc.

Understand the connection between written language.

Understanding that a piece of writing spoken and conveys a meaning, and that its function is to encode a message which has to be decoded.

For example :

Recognise his name after having seen it several times.

Identify labels alongside objects.

Name common objects in the environment and recognise their representations.

Develop visual skills

- Visual perception

Recognise and complete unfinished pictures of simple familiar objects.

- Visual discrimination

Note similarities and differences in pictures and patterns.

Identify missing objects in a set (Kim's game, memory games).

WRITING

<i>General objectives</i>	<i>Specific objectives</i>
---------------------------	----------------------------

The child should be able to

Develop general motor skills	See 'physical education' section
Develop fine motor skills	Hold a piece of chalk, a pencil, scissors, a paintbrush, etc. correctly, and use these tools.
Develop left to write orientation	Begin graphic exercises at the correct place on the page.
Adopt the correct position for writing.	Be seated in a position which assists writing.
Develop early writing skills	Compose texts for the teacher to scribe. Play at writing by informing the teacher of the content of "scribble" writing.
Introduce the correct formation of letters, where appropriate.	Write his/ her name legibly. Play at writing letters

MATHEMATICS

Introduction

Properties and relationships

Space

Time

Number and size

1. Introduction

Young children should be introduced to mathematical concepts only through real - life situations. A number of techniques, such as the sorting of objects, construction games, manual activities and games involving the body can be used.

These situations should be absorbing enough to arouse and sustain the child's interest.

PROPERTIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

<i>General objectives</i>	<i>Specific objectives</i>
---------------------------	----------------------------

The child should be able to

Recognise and name properties.	Colours, shapes (circle, square, triangle), sizes, dimensions.
Sort and classify	Sort on the basis of one or two criteria. Sort on the basis of whether the object has a property or not Make sets. (Concepts of classes and sub-classes). Reproduce and continue patterns.
Order	Name the sequential position of an object. (concept of ordinal numbers). Arrange in order of size, length, weight, preference, etc.
Discover the relationships between sets.	Represent relationships with arrows. Use a matrix table.

SPACE

<i>General objectives</i>	<i>Specific objectives</i>
<i>The child should be able to</i>	
Explore the environment	Find his bearings and orientate himself. Move objects in an agreed direction.
Recognise spatial relationships	Use the terms: left, right, on the left, on the right, indoors, outdoors, in , inside, outside, on the edge, on, under, top, bottom, above, below, in front of, behind, next to, opposite, right way round, wrong way round, etc.
Construct	Manipulate, observe, construct, take apart, compare solids. Cover, delimit surfaces, associate objects with their 2 - dimensional shapes, (puzzles, shadow games, tracks, etc.)
Measure space	Compare objects. Use standard and non- standard measures.

TIME

<i>General objectives</i>	<i>Specific objectives</i>
---------------------------	----------------------------

The child should be able to

Understand the passing of time.	Develop an understanding of the passing of time through everyday experiences. (day, week, month, season, period, year, cycle, etc.) for example by observing the growth of a plant in the course of a season.
	Illustrate the passing of time by making chronological charts. (eg. illustrated time lines).
	Talk about the present, the past, the future, simultaneity, (yesterday, today, now, at the same time, etc.)
Measure time	Use a few instruments: timer, watch, etc.

NUMBER AND SIZE

<i>General objectives</i>	<i>Specific objectives</i>
---------------------------	----------------------------

The child should be able to

Count	Count to ten. Count sets of objects up to ten. Associate sets of objects from one to ten with their cardinal number.
Talk about quantity	Evaluate quantities: all, little a little, a lot, some , large, small, etc.
Manipulate and compare sets of objects.	Take away, add, divide quantities
Recognise numbers to ten.	Recognise and write the 10 numbers.
Understand simple graphs.	Represent some class activities in simple graph form.

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

1. Introduction

The immediate environment can be used to show that some conditions are necessary to sustain life, and to highlight the importance of the quality of life.

Children should learn that our actions can affect other species, and should learn respect for all forms of life. They need to know the value of natural resources and to learn to preserve them by recycling and by avoiding waste.

Activities should arouse children's curiosity and encourage them to test their ideas and explore their environment. Practical experiments, using all sorts of materials, will enable them to observe natural phenomena.

Teachers need to interest their pupils in the immediate environment. The European school offers access to the traditions and cultures of various European countries.

THE LIVING WORLD

<i>General objectives</i>	<i>Specific objectives</i>
<i>The child should be able to</i>	
Recall the parts of the body and their functions	<p>Name the parts of the body.</p> <p>Observe and record their own growth</p> <p>Understand the functions of the five senses.</p> <p>Understand some contrasting concepts, eg. sweet / sour, loud / quiet.</p>
Understand what is healthy and what is unhealthy.	<p>Appreciate some basic principles of nutrition and hygiene</p> <p>Understand the way the weather influences our lives.</p> <p>Learn and follow safety rules (movement around school, safety in the kitchen, danger of certain substances, road safety, etc)</p>
Know some characteristics of plants and animals, and the conditions necessary for their growth.	<p>Learn how to care for plants and animals.</p> <p>Distinguish between animals of different classes, eg. fish, birds, insects, etc.</p> <p>Observe and record the growth of plants.</p> <p>Understand the origins of some foods.</p>
Learn to respect all forms of life.	<p>Talk about the importance of a clean, and healthy environment.</p> <p>Talk about the importance of avoiding waste.</p> <p>Take part in simple recycling activities, eg. separating waste paper from other rubbish.</p> <p>Understand that human activity can disturb animal and vegetable life.</p>

THE NON-LIVING WORLD

General objectives

Specific objectives

The child should be able to

Describe differences between materials	Experiment with solids and liquids Observe changes in materials caused by heat, cold, etc. Test different materials for solubility, buoyancy, etc.
Observe climatic changes	Observe seasonal changes
Experiment with sound and light	Play with sound, eg. making a string telephone, shakers, etc. Understand that the position of the sun changes throughout the day. Play with shadows.
Experiment with some of the basic principles of physics	Magnetism (playing with magnets) Optics: using magnifying glasses. Movement: experiment with moving objects (eg. wheels, brakes, slopes etc.)
Learn to use everyday technological tools.	Learn to record material, eg. using video, cassette recorder, computer. Use programmable toys.

TIME

<i>General objectives</i>	<i>Specific objectives</i>
<i>The child should be able to</i>	
Understand that his environment is constantly changing.	Talk about his personal history. Understand cyclical changes in the environment, (eg. days weeks, months, seasons). Understand the recent past by observing old photographs, objects, etc. Begin to understand the distant past by visiting museums, historical sites, etc.
Plan future events.	Plan the week's activities. Note the days of the week Arrange parties, visits, etc.

SPACE

<i>General objectives</i>	<i>Specific objectives</i>
<i>The child should be able to</i>	
Describe some geographical features of his immediate surroundings.	NB For activities concerning orientation see mathematics "exploring space." Make simple models. Draw simple plans, eg. the classroom, the playground. Observe and follow simple signs, eg road signs. Compare different environments, eg. town and countryside.

ART AND CRAFT

Introduction

Art and craft work is a means of expression which contributes to the all- round development of the child.

It is also a means of expressing emotions, feelings and imagination, and allowing the child to be creative.

Art and craft involves the acquisition of specific techniques associated with the materials and tools used, and helps to develop fine motor skills.

Finally, it helps to develop aesthetic awareness.

TECHNIQUES

- Tearing
- Folding
- Cutting out
- Making three dimensional models
- Modelling - sculpting.
- Drawing
- Painting.

ART AND CRAFT

METHODS

<i>General objectives</i>	<i>Specific objectives</i>
---------------------------	----------------------------

The child should be able to

Use tools	Fingers, hands, feet. Pencils, felt pens, brushes, sponges, rolls of foam, printing blocks.
Use different materials	Ink, paint, water, dye, wax, enamels, candles, wool, string, ribbons, rope, earth, plaster, modelling clay, papier mâché, snow, etc.
Apply to different surfaces	Various kinds of paper and board, plastic, fabric, wood, glass, stone, plaster, aluminium foil.

ART AND CRAFT

<i>General objectives</i>	<i>Specific objectives</i>
---------------------------	----------------------------

The child should be able to

Motor skills	Improve control of movement Develop hand - eye coordination
Cognitive skills	Create patterns, colours and shapes. Organise working space. Learn to use tools and materials Use new skills and techniques in other work. Comment on well known works of art.
Emotional development	Take pleasure in his activities. Develop self confidence.
Social development	Show a willingness to help others and to cooperate. Begin to develop a critical mind.
Different uses of colour	Paint, colour, blow, splash, wet, rub, dye, enamel, print, mottle, dab, roll, mix, etc.
Use of light	Project shapes, make slides.

Layout of activities

The layout of activities should encourage personal experimentation by providing a range of artistic materials.

Where possible the classroom layout should allow:-

- Availability of materials and tools at all times,
- Freedom of movement
- Collaboration between the children
- Display of work
- Storage of work.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

In the nursery school physical education is connected with other activities which also develop motor skills, for example musical activities and outdoor games.

PE contributes to A child's general development. It enables him to discover the possibilities and limitations of his body, and to practice a whole range of activities. It helps the child to develop certain abilities, to develop self discipline and to extend social skills.

The emphasis should be on the child's individual development in two respects: physically, through exercises, and socially, through games requiring cooperation and adherence to rules. The child's adjustment to increasingly complex rules will be a major element of progression in play activities.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

General objectives

Specific objectives

The child should be able to

Discover the possibilities of movement and the limitations of his ability.	Run, walk, skip, climb, crawl, roll or turn over, swim, float, throw, aim, catch, pass a ball, dodge, carry.
Develop his confidence.	Balance, clear obstacles, climb higher and higher, jump down, wait for a signal, choose the right moment, the right place, get ready, anticipate, get into the right position,...
Use equipment during individual or team games.	Roll, push, hit, throw, catch, hurl, aim at a target, kick, etc. Use different equipment - sticks, racquets, beanbags, balls, balls of paper, feathers, etc.
Play with others in a group	Traditional children's games with set rules (cat and mouse, off- ground tag, etc.) Games based on hockey, handball, football, etc. with rules adapted to children. The rules evolve with the progress of the children.
Participate in athletic activities	Run, jump, throw.
Dance.	Participate in dances, dancing games.

MUSIC

Introduction

Music is a source of enjoyment which can help the child to be happier and more fulfilled.

Listening to, and playing music can help individuals to integrate into a group.

In a nursery school, music is incorporated into many activities: games, songs, nursery and counting rhymes, listening, clapping rhythms, etc.

MUSIC

General objectives

Specific objectives

The child should be able to

Listen for, and identify sounds	Identify sounds inside and outside the classroom, recognise the sounds made by animals, tools, vehicles
	Appreciate the intensity, duration, pitch and timbre of sounds of musical instruments
	appreciate silence.
Locate the source of a sound.	Determine the direction
Listen to others	Recognise music, song and rhythm
Listen to well known music.	Build up a repertoire of familiar music, songs and rhymes.
Make free and guided movements	Use the body to express varied rhythms, with or without musical accompaniment.
Express himself through dance.	Learn children's dances and dancing games.
Sing	Take pleasure in singing
	Know how to pitch his voice.
	Copy and reproduce rhythms.
	Reproduce sounds of different pitch and intensity.
Use instruments	Explore the possibilities of instruments, and use them.
	Accompany a familiar song, dramatisation or story.
	Produce sounds of different duration.