



ACCESSING THE EARLY AND PRIMARY EDUCATION IN PORTUGAL

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My child is going to school... What do I need to know?

A. WHAT ARE THE LEVELS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN PORTUGAL?

CRECHE	Early Years Provision "Creche"	From 4 months old to 3 years of age			Not compulsory
EDUCAÇÃO PRÉ-ESCOLAR	Preschool "Educação Pré-escolar"	From 3 to 6 years of age			
EDUCAÇÃO ESCOLAR	Primary School "1º Ciclo do Ensino Básico / 1º CEB"	Duration of 4 school years	1º ano, 2º ano, 3º ano, 4º ano	6 to 10 years of age	Compulsory
	Lower Middle School "2º Ciclo do Ensino Básico / 2º CEB"	Duration of 2 school years	5º ano, 6º ano	10 to 12 years of age	
	Upper Middle School "3º Ciclo do Ensino Básico"	Duration of 3 school years	7º ano, 8º ano, 9º ano	Approx. 12 to 15 years of age	
	Secondary School "Ensino Secundário"	Duration of 3 school years	10º ano, 11º ano, 12º ano	Approx. 15 to 18 years of age	
EDUCAÇÃO EXTRAESCOLAR	University or Polytechnic "Ensino Superior"	Duration of minimum 3 years	From 18 years of age onwards		Not compulsory

B. WHAT TYPES OF SCHOOLS EXIST IN PORTUGAL?

Public (State)	<p>Free of charge, supported by the Portuguese government</p> <p>PLEASE NOTE: Provision is only from the age of 3, and priority is given to children aged 4 or over.</p>	<p>Classes are free of charge.</p> <p>However, public schools provide some other services, for example meals and other activities, at an extra cost.</p>
IPSS - INSTITUIÇÕES PARTICULARES DE SOLIDARIEDADE SOCIAL (not for profit)	<p>Privately managed, with some financial support by the Portuguese government</p>	<p>Monthly fees for classes and meals are based on a formula calculated according to the family's income and expenses.</p> <p>IPSSs provide a choice of optional extracurricular activities for a fee to be paid by parents.</p> <p>When enrolling, a "<i>matricula</i>" is paid; the cost is charged again annually upon enrolment renewal.</p>
PRIVATE AND COOPERATIVE (for profit)	<p>Privately managed, with no financial support from the Portuguese government.</p> <p>There are also private international schools teaching international curricula.</p> <p>Their systems may vary.</p>	<p>Each school has its own fee scale.</p> <p>Each service has a separate cost, and the monthly bill could be the sum of: regular classes, meals, extracurricular activities, extra hours at school, and transport (if the school provides this service).</p> <p>"<i>Matricula</i>" payment is required upon admission, and again each year upon enrolment renewal.</p>



School Insurance is compulsory and has an annual cost, charged upon Enrolment or Renewal. Generally, school insurance covers any individual accidents that may occur during school activities, or on the journey from home to school and school to home. It does not cover any loss or damage to the child's personal objects. Should the parents take their child to a public hospital, they will need to inform the hospital that it was an accident at school ("*accidente escolar*") and provide the School Insurance number, **having previously informed the school that the insurance will be activated.**

C. SCHOOL WORKING HOURS

From Monday to Friday (so called “*dias úteis*”). The timetable and opening hours are set by each school. Schools in Portugal usually close on Saturdays and Sundays.

D. HOW TO ENROL AND TO OBTAIN A “*MATRÍCULA*”?

ENROLMENT (that is, formally asking for a “*matrícula*” or enrolment)

The enrolment (“*inscrição*”) serves the purpose of stating the intention of parents or carers to enrol a child at a chosen school.

Usually, “*inscrição*” can be done at any stage of the year, directly through the chosen school’s front office / secretariat. You will need both the child’s and the parents’/carer’s identification documents. Not proceeding with the “*inscrição*” implies you run the risk of not having a place at the school of your choice, and will have to look for another school for your child.

Enrolment - *inscrição* - can be actively requested at several schools at the same time, but the school must confirm availability of a vacancy (“*vaga*”) for the new child, to later provide a “*matrícula*”. Only once the school confirms a space allocation - *vaga* - will it be possible to proceed and obtain a “*matrícula*” that shall guarantee admission, at which point you will need to inform the other schools approached that your child was already granted a space elsewhere.

You should only confirm one “*matrícula*”. The remaining schools where “*inscrição*” for your child were requested should be notified of your choice.

The Ministry of Education service within CNAIM offices offers further information and support on this process.

Should you want your baby to go to day-care (between 4 and 12 months of age) you need to request a *pré-inscrição* (pre-enrolment) at the chosen school during pregnancy. You will then need to formalise it once the baby is born, by presenting his/her identity documents at the school.

MATRÍCULA (that is, confirmation of a place at a chosen school)

Each individual school sets their own date to release enrolment confirmations (“*matrícula*”). The school’s secretariat will be able to tell you what the specific dates of *matrícula* release are for a given school year. Beware of the deadlines for this process, which differ from school to school.



Between the ages of 6 and 18 it is compulsory for a child or youngster to be enrolled at a school.

Families need to actively ask the school secretariat for an update about the status of this *matrícula* process.

The identification documents and the Vaccination card (“*Boletim de Vacinas*”) are both required to confirm the enrolment process. Should you not have the “*Boletim de Vacinas*”, you can obtain one by updating your child’s vaccination processes at the local Health Unit (*Centro de Saúde* or *USF/UCSP*).

Enrolment confirmation, is subject to availability of places at each school, whereby the following will have priority:

- ▶ Children who may have Special Education Needs
- ▶ Children who attended a school in the same family of schools - *Agrupamento* - during the previous school year
- ▶ Children whose siblings, brothers or sisters, are already attending the same school
- ▶ Children living in the same area as the school, whom are entitled to *ASE* (*ASE* is a form of government financial support - ask the secretariat for further information)
- ▶ Children whom are entitled to *ASE*, and whose parents work in the same local Borough or *Freguesia* as the school
- ▶ Children whose parents’ official residence / address or workplace is in the same local Borough or *freguesia* as the school
- ▶ Children who attended preschool in an *IPSS* in the same area as the family of schools (“*agrupamento*”, which is a legal and administrative name given to a group of State schools defined by the Ministry of Education) they are enrolling at.

Within *IPSS*’s and Private and Cooperative schools, each school defines their own priority criteria.

Please check if the child’s - *matrícula* - process has been confirmed and accepted.

E. WHAT IF MY CHILD GETS TO PORTUGAL AFTER THE BEGINNING OF A SCHOOL YEAR?

If your child is over the age of 6, they will have to be immediately enrolled at a school upon arrival and settling in Portugal, in order to start classes.

Should your child have started their schooling in another country, you should present the following documents upon enrolment request, translated into Portuguese and certified by the Embassy of the country where your child previously attended school:

- ▶ A certification from the previous school, stating what school year / level your child attended prior to moving to Portugal
- ▶ A document stating the child's academic achievement.



F. WHAT IS THE DURATION OF THE SCHOOL YEAR IN PORTUGAL?

The dates of each school year are set each year by the Ministry of Education. All school years are split into three school terms:



The Ministry of Education may split the school calendar into 2 semesters. The longer holiday period occurs between mid June and September (summer break).

The breaks in between each term all correspond to school holiday time, before which families shall get information about their child's learning and development process. The longer holiday period occurs between mid-June and September (summer break). During this period, there will be no classes; however, most schools provide some additional opening hours for children to stay at school for play activities and meals (lunch and break) during part of the summer break.

G. HOW SHOULD PARENTS TAKE PART IN THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL DAY?

- ▶ During the child's adaptation period, while he/she is still new at a crèche or preschool, parents are allowed to remain in the classroom with their child for a few moments at the beginning of the day. This will be until the early years practitioner considers the child ready to embrace the day without that additional support
- ▶ During activities, you can encourage other adults to share their family cultures and habits, or else express openness to share your own. Knowledge about yourself and your culture enriches the children's learning experience and knowledge
- ▶ By taking part in collective or individual parents meetings, where you get to know about your child's learning process and achievements, or clear any remaining doubts. Ask the teacher when and where the meetings are, how the communication between school and family is expected to occur (e.g. through e-mail, phone, personally, face-to-face, etc.) and what you should do to book an individual moment if you want to talk about your child. You are very welcome to bring someone you trust with you, if necessary, to translate for you and to enable dialogue
- ▶ By asking questions and offering the teachers or school your suggestions.

Your family's participation is a right as well as a duty



Up to the age of 18, all children in Portugal must have an official carer, who can be one of the parents or a tutor with official legal responsibility for the child.

How can a family take part in the children's school life?

Express your availability to collaborate



Read a book to the class.



Volunteer to share your experience and talents



Approach the teachers to share your suggestions

H. ANY SPECIFIC MATERIALS TO PURCHASE?

- ▶ Yes. All schools issue a list of activity and classroom materials for parents to buy. These may include, for example: textbooks, pens, exercise books, pencils, glue, sports clothing, musical instruments, uniforms (only at *IPSS*'s and private and cooperative schools) that each child will need in order to be able to engage in their school activities and work. They may also advise on specific clothing you may have at home for some activities (for example, trainers for physical exercise days)
- ▶ Textbooks for Year 1 at Primary school and following years are chosen by the school. You should only buy them once they have been announced through a written list given to you or exhibited at the school your child is enrolled at.

If you choose a public/state school, please ask the secretariat for information about *ASE - Ação Social Escolar* (school welfare) - that is, financial support for children and youth from families in need, and linked to "*Escalão do Abono de Família*" ("*Segurança Social*") which may help towards the cost of textbooks, classroom materials, meals and transport for the students.

I. WILL THE SCHOOL PROVIDE MEALS?

The majority of schools provide a hot meal at lunchtime, for free or at a cost, depending on the type of school. If your child is enrolled at a public school, you can apply for *ASE* for your child to benefit from a reduced meal price (please check information box on section H). Meals and dietary requirements are planned according to the needs of the majority of the children. Moreover, they can also be adapted according to the specific health or cultural requirements if parents wish so and expressly ask for it. Normally, children are allowed 30 to 45 minutes for lunch, with some flexibility to respond to their individual pace.

If your child has specific eating requirements, for health, cultural or religious reasons, please make sure to inform the school management and the child's teacher.

EARLY YEARS PROVISION OR “CRECHE”

J. WHAT AGE GROUPS?

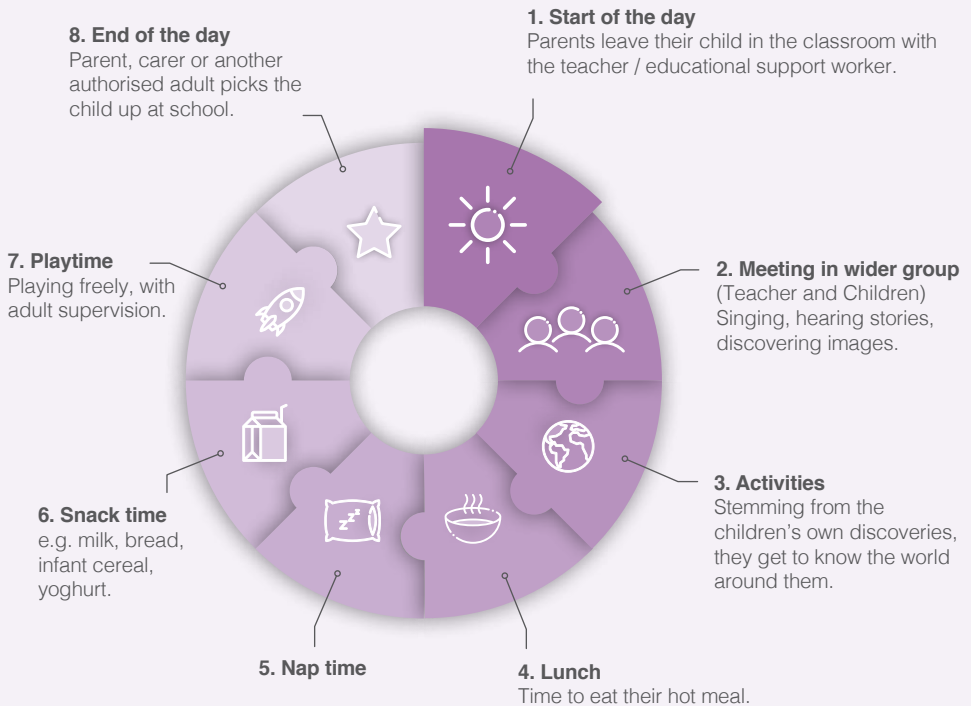
From 4 months old to 3 year old children.

K. WHAT DOES THEIR DAILY LEARNING AT SCHOOL INVOLVE? WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES?

- ▶ Developing relationships carrying out group activities to learn to trust others, for example
- ▶ Socialising and learning with other children and adults, to learn about respect
- ▶ Exploring their own as well as different spaces at school, to start feeling comfortable and to learn to be more adaptable
- ▶ Solving minor conflicts, such as learning to share toys with other children, for them to develop the value of generosity
- ▶ Satisfying basic needs like sleeping, eating and basic personal hygiene, to learn about rules and to start developing self-sufficiency in daily routines.

L. WHAT IS THE CHILDREN'S DAILY ROUTINE AT SCHOOL AT THIS AGE?

Children should attend creche between 9 a.m. (9h00) and 4 p.m. (16h00). Moreover, crèches are normally open between 8 a.m. (8h00) and 7 p.m. (19h00) and children can be there at any time during such hours, if required.



M. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ATTEND EARLY YEARS PROVISION / CRÈCHE?

Because an Early Years Education setting...

- ▶ Promotes the child's own self-awareness
- ▶ Stimulates his/her social skills' development
- ▶ Supports the family in the child's development and education process
- ▶ Helps detect any special needs or adaptation issues, guaranteeing adequate referral.

PRESCHOOL OR “EDUCAÇÃO PRÉ-ESCOLAR”

N. WHAT AGE GROUPS?

From 3 to 6 years of age.

O. WHAT DOES THEIR DAILY LEARNING AT SCHOOL INVOLVE? WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES?

Activities are developed on the basis of the “Curricular Orientation for Preschool Education” by the Portuguese Ministry of Education, which outlines suggestions on contents for the following areas: Social and Personal Development, Getting to know the world around, Expression and Communication.

Learning occurs through informal activities, play, different experiences, games and sensory exploration. The child’s curiosity is stimulated. The daily observations, knowledge and interests of each child are valued, aiming to foster an aptitude and desire to learn.

In Portugal, children only learn to write and read from Year 1 of Primary school.

Structured play and activities are facilitated as a way to learn.

P. WHAT IS THE CHILDREN'S DAILY ROUTINE AT SCHOOL AT THIS AGE?

Children should attend preschool during class hours, between 9 a.m. (9h00) and 4 p.m. (16h00). However, if you need to be at work during longer hours than the regular class hours, preschools usually stay open between 8 a.m. (8h00) and 7 p.m. (19h00) and your child can stay for any of these longer hours upon the family's request.



Classroom activities have the duration of a total of five hours per day, and are taught by an Early Years Teacher - *educador / educadora* - with the support worker. The rest of the day is led by the “*Componente de Apoio à Família*” (CAF) team, subject to separate enrolment as these activities are delivered by other education professionals.

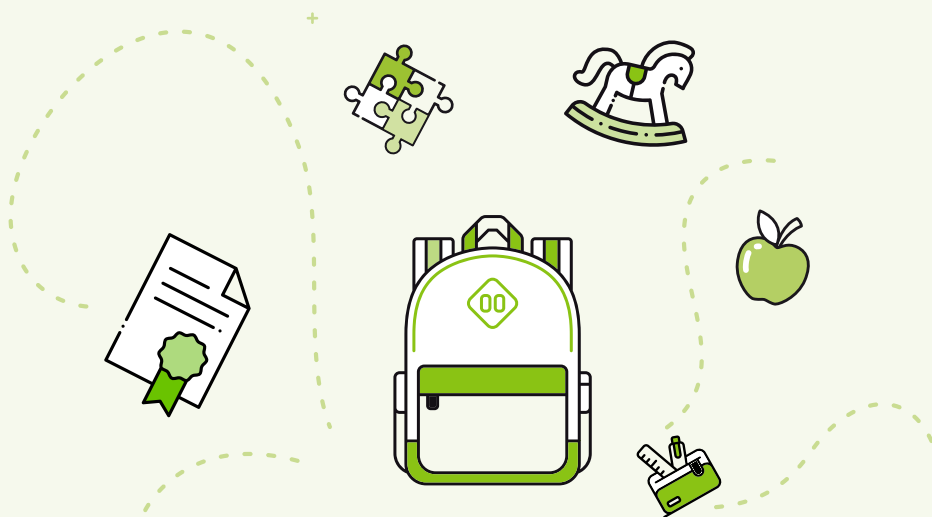
Q. HOW ARE CHILDREN ASSESSED?

At the end of each of the 3 school terms, an assessment is carried out and shared with the child's family through a written Assessment Record and discussed at the Parents' Meeting (or meetings with carers).

R. THE CHILD HAS COMPLETED PRESCHOOL. WHAT'S NEXT?

It is time for a new phase, the beginning of compulsory schooling. If the preschool doesn't have a Primary school in the same establishment ("1^o CEB"), you should look for a school in your area of residence or work. It is compulsory to request an enrolment number - *matrícula* - for Year 1 of Primary school when your child turns 6 years old.

If the Teacher advises that your child stays one more year in preschool, she or he will talk to you individually to explain the reasons why, and how your child's development needs to be supported.



PRIMARY SCHOOL OR “1º CICLO DO ENSINO BÁSICO (1º CEB)”

S. WHAT AGE GROUPS?

From 6 to 10 years of age.

T. WHAT DOES THEIR DAILY LEARNING AT SCHOOL INVOLVE? WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES?

- ▶ Reading, writing, calculating, communication, and scientific, artistic and cultural expressions
- ▶ Social skills and citizenship values, both of which are important to develop understanding and for integration within the Portuguese society
- ▶ Basic beginners English language learning.

U. WHAT SUBJECT AREAS ARE TAUGHT?

Primary school is divided into 4 school years. The mandatory subject areas are:

- ▶ Portuguese language
- ▶ Mathematics
- ▶ “*Estudo do Meio*” which includes natural and social sciences
- ▶ English language, from Year 3 onwards
- ▶ Artistic Expressions – that is, drama, music and plastic arts
- ▶ Physical and Motory education
- ▶ Study techniques – “*Apoio ao Estudo*” (didacts and study methods used in Portugal).

- ▶ Complementary subjects: Citizenship and/or Communication & Information Technology (“*TIC*”)
- ▶ Moral and Religious Education (“*EMR*”) – optional / not compulsory.

If you wish to know more about work contents for each subject area, or what your child is specifically learning, please feel free to talk with the teacher.



All schools teach subject areas outlined by the Portuguese Ministry of Education’s National Programme.

V. WHAT IS THE CHILDREN’S DAILY ROUTINE AT SCHOOL AT THIS AGE?

- ▶ Classes will occur during 5 to 7 hours each day from Monday to Friday. That is aimed at teaching compulsory subject areas
- ▶ After classtime, from Monday to Friday, *Componente de Apoio à Família* is also provided. Various activities occur during this time, such as sports, arts - music / dance / painting, free playtime, or time to study and do homework.

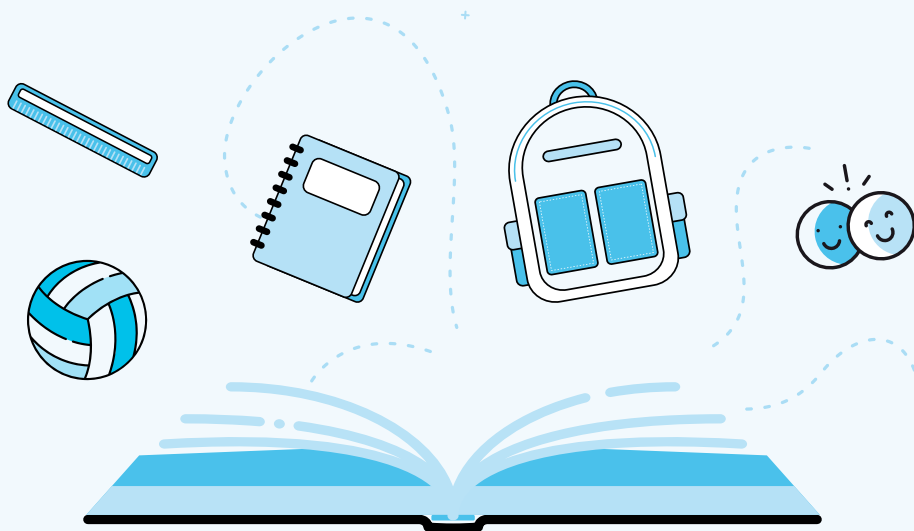
Componente de Apoio à Família is also referred to as ***CATL*** - *Centro de Atividades de Tempo Livres* (Spare time activities) or ***AEC*** - *Atividades de Enriquecimento Curricular* (Curricular Enrichment Activities), aimed at play and educational activities.

W. HOW ARE CHILDREN ASSESSED?

- ▶ Assessment is compulsory, qualitative in nature, and it occurs at various times throughout the school year
- ▶ It is the teacher's duty to keep an evaluation record for each school term (1 record per child, per term) and to share it with the parents or carers, in writing, during the parents' meeting at the end of term or at other chosen times
- ▶ In Year 2, the children will be taking tests in Portuguese language, Maths, *Estudo do Meio*, Artistic Expressions and Physical Education ("*Provas de Aferição*"). The tests provide general information, at a National level, on the children's learning, and also help schools to improve their pedagogical work.



"Provas de Aferição" are compulsory National tests that all Year 2 students must fulfil. They are usually carried out during the 3rd school term, and compiled on the same date across the whole country. They are aimed at assessing achievement levels of students, without affecting their evaluation.



X. WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT?

In the respect of the learning and development pace of each child (and the fact that each individual learns at a different speed and in different ways), the assessment of a child's progress relates to and is influenced by a variety of learning criteria.

Criteria used for assessment can be shared by each teacher, and will take into consideration social and emotional development as well as subject area learning. Examples of such criteria could include a variety of elements: attendance and punctuality, effort, active participation in each activity and engagement in tasks, relationships and interactions, organisation and self-sufficiency, as well as curricular content development. Each one of these elements is taught through structured school activities, throughout their school day.

If your child needs more time to achieve the school targets and goals, the teaching staff will work with you and your child to overcome current challenges and respond to the child's learning needs.

Y. THE CHILD HAS COMPLETED PRIMARY SCHOOL. WHAT'S NEXT?

They will move on to Lower Middle school ("*2º Ciclo do Ensino Básico / 2º CEB*"), by obligatory renewal of their enrolment confirmation - *matrícula* - for the *2º CEB*. Should their Primary school establishment not have a Lower Middle school, you should look for a school in your area of residence or work.



Any questions and suggestions coming from families are most welcome!

Any time you feel the need to share concerns and comments about your child, please set a time with the teachers to express your needs or doubts.

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