

Overview

Population

The population of Poland is 38.5 million. Poland is the 34th most populous country in the world and the 6th most populous member of the European Union.

Climate

The average monthly temperature in July is 19°C (66° Fahrenheit), but sometimes in the summer the temperature rises to 30°C (86° Fahrenheit). Winters are usually very cold, but can be mild some years. The temperature is usually below 0 and sometimes goes down to -20 °C (-4° Fahrenheit). In the mountains the snow stays until April or in some years even May.

Education System

Age 3-6 yrs Pre-School (Optional)
Age 6-12 yrs Primary School
Age 12-15 yrs Lower Secondary School
Compulsory education lasts 9 years.

There are several alternatives for the upper secondary education later on, the most common being 3 years in a 'liceum' or 4 years in a 'technikum'. Both end with a maturity exam ('matura'), and may be followed by several forms of upper education, leading to a Bachelor, a Masters or a PhD.

SEN:

Children with special needs of any kind are not usually educated in a main stream school but attend a special school.

EAL:

Students in Polish lower secondary schools (Gymnasium) must learn two different foreign languages. The first foreign language is usually English) .

Education System – main differences and implications for schools

School starting age:

In Poland children start compulsory education during the calendar year in which they have their 6th or 7th birthday.

- Polish children arriving in Year R, Year 1 and sometimes Year 2 in the UK may not have experienced formal schooling yet and may require a gentle introduction to school life.
- Emphasis in Nurseries and Pre-Schools is on play rather than learning. Polish children in Year R and Year 1 will often not recognize any letters or numbers yet.
- Older new arrivals will have had fewer years in school than their English peers and will therefore not have covered as many concepts.
- Students appear to have 'jumped' a year or two (a child who was in Year 1 in Poland will suddenly be in Year 2 or Year 3 in England) – parents often find this disturbing and think their child should be placed in a lower year group. Parents need re-assurance that their child has been placed in the correct year group and that special attention will be given to his/her individual needs.

School day:

- In Poland, the school day usually starts at 8a.m. and each lesson lasts 45 minutes.
- Breaks between lessons last from 5 to 20 minutes. The 20 minute break is called the snack break.
- The school day is usually much shorter, especially at primary school: 3-4 hours in the first two years and 5 hours at secondary school. A longer settling in period may be required when a pupil starts school in the UK where younger pupils gradually build up the amount of time spent at school.
- Children in Poland are brought up to be independent from a very early age and most children walk to and from school on their own or with friends shortly after having started school.

Curriculum:

There are no official recommendations or guidelines with respect to teaching methods in Poland.

Literacy:

Literacy education in Polish schools is based on a range of compulsory and additional reading materials. In most cases these are books written by Polish authors and not a lot of international literature is taught in schools.

Maths:

Maths education covers almost exactly the same range of topics as in British schools but methods are very often different (e.g. division, equations). Also some topics can be taught in different year groups, e.g. probability will not be taught until 2nd year of gymnasium (when pupils are around 13-14 years old).

Cultural sensitivities

Due to the fact that Poland is predominantly Catholic (around 96% of the population), religion and the Catholic Church can be sensitive topics. Poland itself is strongly polarised in this matter, especially as there are big differences between rural urban areas. Another sensitive topic is sexuality – especially homosexuality and transgender issues. These are usually taboo for older generations.

Parental involvement and attendance in Poland

- Parents are expected to be strongly involved in their child's education.
- They will have access to everyday information from school with regards to what was done during the school day (as children bring home their notebooks from each topic).
- Attendance is usually not a concern to schools - school is only required to investigate if a child's attendance falls below 50%.
- In a case of illness, or any other situation resulting in school absence, parents are **not** required to inform the school on the actual day. They should inform the school of the reason during the week **after** the child returns to school. No doctor's notice is required.

Language differences that may cause problems with Literacy

Alphabet/Script:

- There are 32 letters in the Polish alphabet: 9 vowels and 23 constants.
- It is a Latin script with certain additional letters formed using diacritics: "kreska" (similar to acute accent): ć, ś, ź, ó, ł, "kropka": ż and "ogonek": ą, ę.
- Some letters (x, q, v) are not considered to be Polish letters and are used only in foreign words and names.
- There are also many digraphs and trigraphs: dz dź, dż, cz, rz, sz, trz

Spellings:

Polish spelling is mostly phonemic – the written letters (or combinations of them) correspond in a consistent manner to the sounds (phonemes) of spoken Polish.

Punctuation:

Polish punctuation is similar to that of English. However there are more rigid rules concerning the use of commas. Subordinate clauses are almost always marked off with a comma, while it is normally considered incorrect to use a comma before a coordinating conjunction with the meaning 'and'.

Auxiliaries/negatives/questions/tenses:

- The Polish language has 3 tenses: Past, Present and Future.
- Questions (direct and indirect) are formed by placing the word "czy" at the start of the sentence. Negations use word "nie" (no) before the verb or item being negated. "Nie" is still added before the verb, even if the sentence also contains negatives such as *never* or *nothing* (double negation).

Modal verbs:

Polish forms the conditional (or subjunctive) using the particle '*by*' *together* with the past tense of the verb. This is an enclitic particle, which often attaches to the first stressed word in the clause, rather than following the verb. It also takes the personal endings (in the first and second person) which usually attach to the past tense.

Word order:

The Basic word order in Polish is subject-verb-object; however, as it is a synthetic language, it is possible to move words around in the sentence to give a different emphasis. Polish is a pro-drop language; subject pronouns are frequently dropped.

Gender/Articles:

- There are no articles in the Polish language.
- Polish has 3 genders: He (On), She (Ona), and It (Ono).

Vocabulary:

Polish has many words borrowed from German, French and English – but there are numerous words that are "false friends" among the Slavic languages.

Useful classroom words

Greetings:

Welcome	Witam/Witamy
Hello	Czesc
Thank you	Dziakuje
Please	Proszę
Goodbye (formal)	Do widzenia
Bye (casual)	Czesc
Morning	Dzien dobry
Afternoon	Dzien dobry
Evening	Dobry Wieczor
Are you OK?	Wszystko w porzadku?

School Routine:

School playground	Boisko
School office	Sekretariat
Hall	Sala
School	Szkola
Assembly	Apel
Toilets	Toalety
School field	Boisko
Classroom	Klasa
Registration	Sprawdzanie obecności
Computer suite	Sala komputerowa
Tutor group (class)	Klasa
Break time	Przerwa
Outside	Na zewnatrz/na dworze
Inside	W srodku/w
Fire drill	Alarm przeciwpozarowy
Packed lunch	Sniadanie/kanapki
School dinner	Szkolny obiad
School nurse	Pielegniarka
First aid room	Gabinet lekarski
Staff room	Pokoj nauczycielski
Lunchtime	Przerwa obiadowa
School uniform	Mundurek
Library	Biblioteka
Reading book	Podrecznik
Library book	Ksiazka z biblioteki
Copy	Kopia/egzemplarz
Label	Nalepka
Colour	Kolor
Pen	Długopis
Pencil	Ołówek
Yes	Tak
No	Nie

Days of the week:

Monday	Poniedziałek
Tuesday	Wtorek
Wednesday	Środa
Thursday	Czwartek
Friday	Piątek
Weekend	Weekend

Numbers:

Zero-	Zero
One –	Jeden
Two –	Dwa
Three –	Trzy
Four –	Cztery
Five –	Pięć
Six –	Sześć
Seven –	Siedem
Eight –	Osiem
Nine –	Dziewięć
Ten –	Dziesięć
How many? –	Ile?
	20 - Dwadzieścia
	30 – Trzydzieści
	40 – Czterdzieści
	50 – Pięćdziesiąt
	60 – Szaśćdziesiąt
	70– Siedemdziesiąt
	80– Osiemdziesiąt
	90 – Dziewięćdziesiąt
	100 -Sto

Instructions/Questions:

Work with a partner – Pracuj z partnerem
Use your dictionary – Używaj słownika
Do you understand? – Czy rozumiesz?
Talk about this at home – Porozmawjaj o tym w domu
Translate these words at home – przetłumacz to w domu
You can write in Polish – Możesz pisać po Polsku
Write in sentences – Napisz w zdaniach
Fill in the blanks – Wypełnij puste pola
Annotate - Skomentuj
Highlight - Zaznacz
Draft - Szkic
Please be quiet – Proszę bądź cicho
Come here please – Proszę podejdź tu
Sit on the carpet – Usiądź na dywanie
Where does it hurt? – Gdzie cię boli?
Well done! – Dobra robota!