

11 Physical education and sport

The importance of physical exercise for the development of young people in a physical, cognitive, emotional and social respect is taken into account by teaching the **compulsory subject** Physical Education and Sport in all school types (except for part-time vocational school in the dual training system).

Physical Education and Sport at primary school level

The class-teacher principle applies at Austrian primary school. This means that Physical Education and Sport is taught for the entire class (boys and girls jointly) by primary school teachers.

This creates the opportunity for flexibility regarding the time allocated for physical education in the syllabus, with the aim of offering children **physical exercise on a daily basis**. In the first four years of schooling, primary school provides elementary education jointly for all pupils, taking into account the social integration (physical and/or mental) of children with disabilities. The law also provides for the additional employment of a qualified teacher for children with special educational needs (also in Physical Education and Sport).

Physical Education and Sport at lower and upper secondary level

From the 5th year onwards, Physical Education and Sport is taught by female (for girls) and male subject teachers (for boys), essentially **separated by gender**. There is the option for teachers of both sexes to organise joint sport classes for girls and boys in appropriate pedagogical circumstances (such as swimming, winter sports).

Where special educational needs have been determined for a child, it is incumbent on the school conference to decide if and to what extent the respective child needs to be instructed according to the syllabus of another school type (special needs school).

It is possible to hold PE lessons with children from different classes or grades; in addition, there is the option of allowing for special focuses on sport and pupils can make their choices across the school year.

Additional provision of Physical Education and Sport

In some school forms (including part-time vocational schools run as boarding schools), Physical Education and Sport is offered as an **optional subject**. Where a sufficient number of pupils enrol in the optional PE class, the class will be held and the pupils who have registered are obliged to attend it and will be graded.

The compulsory subject Physical Education and Sport can also be offered as an elective session, which aims to **deepen, supplement or extend** the learning content of the compulsory subject – including ball games, jazz dance as well as climbing or rowing. Registration for elective sessions is voluntary. The pupils who register for such sessions are obliged to attend them but will not be graded.

Schools with a focus on sport

School autonomy implies that every school is entitled to develop its own profile and set a focus on Physical Education and Sport. This decision makes it necessary, as compared to the regular form, to allow for **additional physical exercise** or even exercise-oriented subjects and projects.

To promote individuals with special motor skills, schools with a focus on sport were set up in Austria in 1962. These schools aim to employ teachers with sport-oriented qualifications that go beyond the regular teaching diploma. Students have to take an **aptitude test** to prove their motor skills and undergo a mandatory medical examination.

General secondary schools with a focus on sport and new secondary school with a focus on sport (general sport focus)

At present there are 107 general secondary schools with a focus on sport and new secondary schools with a focus on sport in Austria. The main characteristic of this school form is an additional 3 to 4 exercise-oriented lessons a week in the subject Physical Exercise and Sport compared to a regular general secondary school. This is supplemented by elective sessions, participation in a higher number of competitions and a higher number of school events (winter and summer sport weeks). General secondary schools with a focus on sport and new secondary schools with a focus on sport aim to promote students who are talented athletes.

Due to the varied training (basic motor skills, basic sport disciplines, recreational sport), the school **sets the course towards competitive sport** and forms an ideal basis for health promotion and lifelong sporting activities.

General secondary schools/new secondary schools with a focus on skiing

With the objective of promoting competitive skiing in particular, general secondary schools with a focus on skiing and new secondary schools with a focus on skiing have been established. They aim to enhance the technical skills required for ski racing based on the acquired basic skills, which enables pupils to compete in ski racing (via an association of the Austrian Ski Federation). The demands of high performance ski training require targeted development of basic motor skills (wide variation and increasing strain). At the same time and in direct connection with sports practice, pupils are taught basic knowledge about the kinematics in skiing as well as the theory of ski training.

As not all students will become top athletes, it is also necessary for instruction to focus on other aspects of skiing, such as later professional fields (ski instructor, trainer). Physical Education and Sport is taught for **12 lessons a week** between years 5 and 8.

Schools and colleges with a focus on skiing

Skiing is the only sport in Austria for which there are special forms in the school system. State certified trainers provide sport education to students. In addition to regular school instruction, specific lessons are offered for pupils to make up for the teaching content they have missed due to sport training or competitions. A special programme to **promote elite sport** is offered by the **sport schools in Stams, Schladming, Bad Hofgastein and Waidhofen/Ybbs**. Special cooperation with the Austrian Ski Federation enables best-possible coordination for the students' admission to the top teams and their participation in training courses and competitions. One major feature of this school form is the objective of providing students with final school qualifications while they reach an as high as possible sport performance level at the same time.

Sportgymnasium-type new secondary school with a focus on sport

This school form is characterised by broad practical sport training (moderate priority) and the close integration of the subject Sport Theory. The **number of lessons** in Physical Education and Sport is 7 to 8 hours a week in each grade. Elements of this training are to set the path to youth-oriented competitions, participation in competitions of the professional associations, an **increased offer** of elective sessions, and winter and summer sport weeks. The reorganisation of the matriculation exam and the new syllabus of Sport Theory have enhanced the quality of school-based training. The complex matter of **holistic sport education** is ensured by including Sport Theory as a compulsory subject in the matriculation exam, holding physical exercise-related preliminary exams, introducing team teaching and cross-curricular forms of teaching.

Schools for competitive athletes

Upper-cycle traditional secondary schools and schools of business for competitive athletes have been established as school pilot projects to open up the possibility for **top young athletes** to obtain a **school qualification** or take the **matriculation examination**. With an additional school year and flexible school organisation it becomes possible to take part in intensive training and cope with school demands at the same time.

Training is organised and financed by training centres and/or the respective professional associations. The subject Sport Theory is compulsory and forms part of the matriculation examination.

The **requirement profile** for admission to a school for competitive athletes comprises a sport-related qualification (top performance, international successes), school prerequisites (certificate, learning reserves) and a positive medical report.

The Austrian federal sport academies

The educational objective of the federal sport academies is to impart high-quality **teaching competence in sport**

and physical exercise (competitive sport, recreational sport and health-promoting sport).

As an intermediate school for teacher and educator training, the federal sport academies can also provide training in sport, games and exercise for people who do not meet the requirements for the higher education sector. Graduates at the instructor, teacher, trainer and qualified coach level are

- internationally qualified people who are able to coach internationally competitive athletes of all age groups,
- people who are committed to the objectives of health promotion and risk prevention who are available for health-related and recreational sport (sport associations, sport clubs, municipalities and companies),
- qualified teachers available for public schools for the subject Physical Education and Sport.

The **training for qualified sport teachers** imparts comprehensive content on Sport Theory, Sport Methodology and Sport Practice in 6 semesters. Attendees of the training for sport teachers can take the *Berufsmatura* examination.

The **training for sport teachers** qualifies participants for areas including working as teachers of the subject Physical Education and Sport, as sport teachers in associations, clubs, municipalities, companies, etc.

Following completion of the training and qualification as exercise instructors in a sport association and an aptitude test, participants are qualified, after taking part in a programme of at least 150 hours, to **prepare people for training in youth sport and popular sport**. **Training programmes for state instructors** are held in all types of sport whose associations are full members of the Austrian Federal Sport Organisation. In addition, training programmes are offered jointly with public institutions such as the army, law enforcement agencies and others to provide further qualifications to people who train in this field.

Following completion of **instructor training** people can acquire further qualifications. In cooperation with relevant sport institutions – sport associations, universities, Institute for Sport Medicine and Science (IMSB Austria), Austrian Federal Network for Sport Psychology (ÖBS), National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), etc. – and experienced trainers, students learn about the latest scientific evidence on the structuring of basic, upgrade, follow-up and high-performance training.

The target group of **training programmes for qualified coaches** is people who already have a state coach qualification and can prove **several years of experience as coaches in competitive sport**. The programmes last one semester and aim to teach participants about the requirements of high-performance sport.

The state training programmes for teachers in one type of sport have a long tradition in Austria. State certified tennis coaches, ski instructors and ski guides, mountain and ski guides, snowboard instructors, equestrian vaulting instructors, instructors for combined driving are international figureheads of Austria. Instructors in one type of sport are **qualified experts** who are trained to offer their instruction services on the free market, with a focus on the tourism sector.

School sport competitions

School competitions constitute a fixed part of physical education in Austria. They aim to supplement – or even change – sport activities outside school and emerge organically from classes and sport cooperation between schools and associations. One objective is to create **varied options to compare the performance of gifted and enthusiastic students**. In addition, school competitions are an option for students who have not yet found their way to sport activities in order to motivate them for non-school-based sport, including in sport associations. Participation by teachers and students is voluntary.

Major features of school sport competitions (mission statement)

No exclusivity

Competitions are a pedagogical principle of physical education which, as well as other teaching principles, have their place in the subject Physical Education and Sport. The competitions offered supplement and extend instruction based on the syllabus of Physical Education and Sport.

No victory at all cost

Every human endeavour demands to be compared with others, to compete and possibly to foster individualism. The containment of competition forms an indispensable basis for a thriving democratic society. Therefore the idea of fair play constitutes an inherent pedagogical principle of school sport competitions and in this way fulfils a very essential task of social learning.

Careful selection and alignment

School competitions must be planned so that they are useful elements of learning and challenges set to enable students to prove their sporting skills and demonstrate their character. The competitions need to match the participants' age groups and the rules must be adapted to their skills and perception where necessary. Today, cooperation with the professional associations in the creation of accompanying measures jointly with the business sphere forms an integral part of Austrian school sport activities.

Emphasis on team spirit

It is on purpose that school competitions differ from competitions that are held by sport associations in that they always emphasise the team philosophy in individual sport as well. In teams, the performance of everyone and the principle of teamwork play a role. Therefore the following principle applies here: A school team comprises schoolchildren from one school (school management).

Participation is voluntary

The schoolchildren's participation in school sport competitions is voluntary. Pedagogical support for the competitors ensures that they benefit from the experiences gained in school sport competitions.

Cross-curricular organisation

It is only natural to involve schoolchildren in all subjects in the organisation of a school sport event. Different organisational areas such as the evaluation of results, the supporting programme or reports offer the possibility for many subjects of co-designing school sport competitions in a practice-oriented way.

Encounter – enthusiasm – success

School sport competitions aim to enrich school life and create additional possibilities to come together. They contribute to health and social education and stimulate schoolchildren to take part in non-school-based sport, whether actively or in an organisational role for sport: The principles guiding school sport events should be everything that is justifiable in sport, appropriate from the perspective of pedagogy, beneficial for health, and financially and organisationally feasible.

13 national championships
8 School Olympics
with 101,117 participants overall

1,800 graduates
in 75 VET programmes
at 4 locations