# Welcome Guide to Polish School

#### Dear Parents.

We are delighted to welcome you to Polish school, where your children are beginning an exciting new chapter in their education. Congratulations on this important milestone, and we wish you every success on this journey.

Before classes and new challenges begin, we invite you to explore this guide, which offers valuable information to help you navigate the Polish education system and the daily school life of your children.

The guide provides detailed information about the structure of the school year, essential contacts, and support available to families in challenging situations. You will also find practical information regarding school organization, including grading policies, attendance, and progression requirements. The guide outlines requirements for school dress code and behavior, as well as tools like electronic registers (Librus and Vulcan) that facilitate communication between parents and the school. Additionally, it includes information on extracurricular activities, student health, and necessary medical documentation.

We hope you find this information useful. Enjoy reading, and we wish you every success in supporting your children's growth and development!

Your class
Homeroom teacher (name, surname)
Intercultural assistant (name, surname)

# 1. School year calendar

SEPTEMBER 01.09 - Start of the school year
OCTOBER 14.10 - National Education Day (Teacher's Day) - this may be a day off in some schools
NOVEMBER  01.11 - All Saints' Day (holiday)  11.11 - Independence Day (holiday)
DECEMBER  23.12-01.01 - Christmas break  24-26.12 - Christmas holidays
JANUARY  01.01 - New Year's Day (holiday)  06.01 - Epiphany (holiday)
JANUARY / FEBRUARY  Winter break - 2 weeks (exact dates and provincial schedules are determined by the Ministry of Education)
MARCH / APRIL <b>Easter holidays</b> – up to 6 days off (usually from Thursday to Tuesday in March or April, depending on the school's schedule, as this is a movable holiday)
MAY 01.05 - Labor Day (holiday) 03.05 - Constitution Day (holiday)
JUNE  End of the school year (last or second-to-last week of June)
JULY and AUGUST Summer break
In our school: Eighth-grade exam dates: Additional days off (at the principal's discretion):

# 2. Important contacts

In Poland, there are several support institutions that provide various forms of assistance for families facing challenging life situations. Here are some key contacts:

**Social Welfare Center (OPS)** – provides comprehensive support to families in need, including financial aid and social services offered by social workers, psychologists, and family assistants. OPS is also responsible for processing applications and making decisions on financial benefits and allowances.

Local Social Welfare Center: Phone number:		
Psychological and Pedagogical Counseling Centers – provide support to students, preschool aged children, and their parents in addressing educational and developmental challenges. These centers work closely with public schools and kindergartens, offering free consultations assessments, psychological evaluations, recommendations for special education needs, and other essential documentation.		
Local Counseling Center: Phone number:		

If you, a family member, or someone you know is experiencing **emotional difficulties** or may be a victim of **domestic violence**, it's important to seek support. Here are some essential helpline numbers:

National Domestic Violence Helpline "Blue Line" 800 120 002

Children and Youth Helpline, Empowering Children Foundation 116 111

Children's Ombudsman Helpline 800 12 12 12

Youth Helpline, ITAKA Foundation 22 484 88 04

Lambda Warsaw Helpline for LGBTQIAP+ people and their families 22 628 52 22

Ponton Group Sexual Education Helpline 22 635 93 92

# 3. School organization

**Parent council** – a school body made up of representatives from each class. The council supports school activities and organizes various events for the school community.

Class committees - groups of parents and guardians who help organize class-related activities.

**Common room** – an educational and care space where younger students can stay before or after classes. To use the common room, a formal request must be submitted, along with a list of individuals authorized to pick up the child from school.

Information from the homeroom teacher				
(contact details for class committee members, the treasurer, and class rules)				

If your child is starting school in Poland and has limited proficiency in Polish, they are entitled to receive assistance from:

- a teaching assistant for foreign students
- an intercultural assistant

# Who is a teaching assistant?

This is someone who speaks your child's native language and offers support during lessons. Such assistance can be provided for up to 12 months. To arrange this support, a written request must be submitted to the school principal. A sample request form is included in the appendices.

# Who is an intercultural assistant?

An intercultural assistant is someone who helps foreign students who do not speak Polish or have limited proficiency in it for learning purposes. They assist the child in building connections with the school community and work collaboratively with the child's parents and the school.

Regulations governing the provision of assistance from an intercultural assistant are outlined in Article 8a of the Education Act. A sample request form to request an intercultural assistant for your child is provided on the next page.

To be filled out in Polish
miejscowość data (place and date)
Pan / Pani Dyrektor Szkoły (name and surname of the school principal)
(nazwa i numer szkoły / name and number of the school)
(adres szkoły / school address)
Podanie
Zwracam się z prośbą o przydzielenie mojemu dziecku (imię i nazwisko dziecka / child's name and surname) uczącego się w klasie (klasa / class number) asystenta międzykulturowego.
Prośbę swą motywuję tym, iż kompetencje językowe mojego dziecka są na niewystarczającym poziomie, aby efektywnie korzystać z edukacji szkolnej. Jestem przekonany/a, że wsparcie asystenta międzykulturowego przyczyni się do łatwiejszej adaptacji mojego dziecka w szkole i pomoże mu/jej w nauce.
Z poważaniem,
(podpis rodzica / opiekuna dziecka) (signature of parent / guardian)

# 4. Grading, behavior, and attendance

<u>Grades</u> and <u>behavior</u> assessments In grades 1-3, children do not receive subject grades. Instead, the teacher maintains communication with parents and provides written feedback to help them understand their child's progress.

In grades 4-8, primary grades are assigned on a 6-point scale, where 6 is the highest grade and 1 is the lowest. Grades from 2 to 6 indicate that the student has mastered the material, while a grade of 1 signifies that the material has not been understood and requires a retake.

Note: In Polish schools, student behavior is also assessed. Behavior grades can be: exemplary – wz (6), very good – bdb (5), good – db (4), satisfactory – pop (3), inappropriate – ndp (2), or poor – ng (1).

Subject	grading	scale	in	Polish	school:
6		-			excellent
5	-		very		good
4		_			good
3		_			satisfactory
2		-			passing
1 - failing					

#### Grade weight

In addition to the numerical grade, the "grade weight" is also considered when evaluating educational achievements. This coefficient reflects the difficulty of the completed schoolwork. Once grade weights are applied, the grades are totaled, and an average score is calculated accordingly.

#### Attendance and safety

The school closely monitors student attendance. If a student is absent or misses classes without a valid reason, parents may face consequences from the school and social services. Accident insurance is also important in Polish schools (commercial insurance can be purchased for your child).

#### **IMPORTANT**

<u>Progression</u> requirements

A student may be deemed 'ineligible' ('niekwalifikowalny') if they miss more than 50% of classes in one or more subjects during a semester.

If a student has failing grades (i.e., a grade of 1) at the end of the first semester, they must improve these grades in the second semester.

If, by the end of the school year, a student has more than two failing grades, they may not progress to the next grade. In such cases, the student will be required to repeat the school year at the same level.

# 5. What to bring to school

**Textbooks** – these are provided by the school for the current academic year. In most cases, workbooks are also issued by the school library. However, if a child joins the class mid-year, it may be necessary to purchase the workbooks independently.

**Indoor shoes** – required for all students, preferably sport shoes with white soles (or slippers for younger students).

**Physical education (PE) attire** – in the lower grades, this typically includes a white T-shirt, dark shorts, and sport shoes. In the higher grades, comfortable sportswear is required (please check with the PE teacher for specific requirements).

**School supplies** – for art and craft classes, applicable to primary school students or those taking art and craft classes in grades 4-8. Please check with the teacher for a list of necessary supplies.

#### 6. Dress code and school conduct

**School ID** – each child attending the school is issued a school ID card, which allows them to purchase discounted tickets for public transportation. State discounts include a 37% reduction for PKP trains and PKS buses, as well as free access to public transportation for children attending schools in Warsaw. Children should remember to carry a valid ID if they wish to use these benefits (including for school trips).

IMPORTANT: If your child's school ID is issued in paper form, it must be renewed each year with a stamp from the school office; otherwise, the document will become invalid. The ID must be signed in the designated area. To issue a school ID, a photo of your child is required, which can be taken at any photo studio.

As of July 2024, Polish schools issue mandatory plastic school ID cards. First-grade children and new students receive this card. Children who already have a paper version may continue to use it; however, if the document is lost, a plastic version will be issued (for a fee).



Image from the website (https://opteam.pl/)

Plastic school ID with electronic access module – this is more than just an ID card confirming your student's identity. It also serves as an access card for the school library, lockers, and for purchasing meals in the school cafeteria. The ID can also be integrated with a public transportation pass.

For further details, please contact the homeroom teacher or the school office.

**Bicycle card** – this is a document that a child can obtain after passing an exam to be certified for cycling. Individuals under 18 are required to have a document allowing them to use a bicycle, escooter, or other electric devices. The bicycle card fulfills this requirement and can be issued to any child over the age of 10. The card may be issued by:

- the school principal if the child is a primary school student and has parental or guardian consent
- the director of the Provincial Road Traffic Center if the child has completed primary school
- a certified driving instruction center for children who have completed primary school, provided the center holds a certificate confirming the fulfillment of additional requirements.

<u>School statute</u> – this is the primary document governing the internal life of the school and defining its goals, objectives, and methods of implementation. The statute outlines the school's grading policies, the roles of teaching staff, available forms of assistance and support for students in need, and collaboration with organizations that provide specialized support and counseling for children (including cooperation with psychological and pedagogical counseling centers). Additionally, the statute describes the roles and interactions of governing bodies, such as the principal, school council, teaching staff council, parent council, and student council.

Students are required to adhere to two types of school uniforms:

- everyday uniform
- formal (ceremonial) uniform

The appearance and attire of students should reflect the values promoted by the school, such as respect for oneself and others, as well as the ability to express individuality without violating commonly accepted norms. Clothing should be suitable for the specific activity (ceremonial assemblies, PE classes, sports events, etc.).

Details regarding clothing, hairstyles, and permissible manicure styles are typically outlined in the school regulations, which may vary by school.

#### 7. Introduction to Vulcan / Librus

**Librus and Vulcan** are electronic class registers that allow parents to quickly and conveniently communicate with the school (primarily with their child's homeroom teacher) and access up-to-date information on their child's academic progress. These registers are used to connect with teachers, the school psychologist, and the educational counselor, as well as to access information on grades, behavior, and attendance. Both children and parents have access to the electronic register.

Using the electronic class register **is mandatory!**Check it **daily** to stay up-to-date with important information.

# Login links:

• Librus: https://portal.librus.pl/szkola

• Vulcan: <a href="https://eduvulcan.pl/">https://eduvulcan.pl/</a>

Learn how to use LIBRUS on the PFM YouTube channel:

- POLISH VERSION:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3yAgwssImSUgEwziHa4mHGzrS9Q5BnnC

- UKRAINIAN VERSION:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3yAgwsslmSX1CUEJe8h5eRjAay8ylNjD

- BELARUSIAN VERSION:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3yAgwssImSWeTplp5bhBtKKHsJG4pL3L

- RUSSIAN VERSION:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3yAgwsslmSWd\_7gulUetFPNH\_KLucNNo

- ENGLISH VERSION:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3yAgwsslmSXCWl1AJ-7UQCl2A3O9YMdE

- VIETNAMESE VERSION:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3yAgwssImSU2QDnkJ2JBSHQwMDygImXk

How to use VULCAN?

First login:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUlt4XcjEbg

Updating parent account for existing users (prior to changes):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6ZWQJ-7WwU

How to add a child's account:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjECJaqawZw

# 8. What else happens at school beyond the curriculum?

**Polish as a foreign language** – additional Polish language classes for foreign students. Children are entitled to 2–6 hours per week, depending on current legislation and the resources of the specific school.

**Compensatory classes** – these sessions provide children with the opportunity to review previously learned material.

**Consultation hours** – each teacher offers one additional hour per week for students. This time can be used to catch up on missed material, complete written assignments, or improve grades.

**Extracurricular activities** – these are activities offered on public school premises by private companies (such as sports, dance, music lessons, programming, etc.).

Information on compensatory and extracurricular activities can be obtained from:

# 9. Optional Curricular Classes

Public schools in Poland offer participation in the following classes:

- **Religion** classes intended for students of the Roman Catholic faith; topics related to other religions are not included in these lessons.
- **Ethics** classes aimed at fostering values, developing critical thinking, and promoting responsibility and openness to the world.
- Family education covers topics related to family life, including aspects of sexual education.

These subjects are **not mandatory**, and parents may choose to exempt their child from attending. For more detailed information, please contact the school office or your child's homeroom teacher.

#### 10. Meals and lunchboxes

Proper nutrition is an essential part of supporting a child's health and development. In Poland, school lunches are paid, and in many schools, they are provided by either the school cafeteria or a catering company.

The cost of school meals varies by institution. A typical school lunch includes soup, a main course, and compote, water, or another drink. An increasing number of schools offer vegetarian and glutenfree options to accommodate the diverse dietary needs of students.

If a family is in a difficult financial situation and cannot afford to pay for lunches, they should contact the Social Welfare Center to apply for school meal funding. It is also advisable to meet with the school counselor, who can guide you through the necessary steps and required documents.

Social Welfare Center address:
It's also important to provide your child (especially younger students) with a lunchbox containing a mid-morning snack and a water bottle.
<b>Canceling meals</b> : if your child will not be attending school, you should inform the cafeteria or catering company to cancel the meal for that day. Parents will receive a refund for meals canceled in advance.

In our school, meals are provided by:

# 11. Health services

Students have the right to access various medical services provided by the school nurse while on school premises. At the beginning of the school year (or after a child is enrolled mid-term), parents are asked to provide the school with health information about their child, including chronic illnesses and allergies (e.g., food allergies, diabetes, epilepsy). This information allows the school nurse to offer more effective assistance if needed. The nurse not only provides medical services but also gathers information about students' health and development. Parents can sign a consent form for medical assistance, medication administration, and fluoride treatments for their child.

Additionally, it's advisable for parents to ensure their child is registered with a local clinic to access family doctor services.

The nearest National Health Fund (	NFZ)	clinic to our school is located at:
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A sample consent form for providing medical assistance to primary school students is available at the end of this guide, in the document templates section.

# 12. How to prepare your child for stressful situations at school

Every student may encounter situations such as being late, feeling unwell, or facing conflicts with peers. If this happens, it is important to prepare your child to respond appropriately. One useful exercise for this is 'What do I do if...':

#### I MISSED A CLASS

I bring an absence note from my parents, either in handwritten form or via the Librus/Vulcan electronic register.. A sample note can be found in the appendices.

#### • I NEED TO LEAVE SCHOOL EARLY

I bring a permission note signed by my parents, either handwritten or in electronic form. A sample permission note can be found in the appendices.

#### I AM LATE

When entering the class, I say, "Sorry for being late."

#### • IFEEL UNWELL

I inform my homeroom teacher, the intercultural assistant, or the school nurse. They will contact my parents or guardians, who will pick me up from school.

#### • I HAD A CONFLICT WITH A CLASSMATE

I speak with my homeroom teacher, the intercultural assistant, or the school counselor.

#### • I WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

lask my homeroom teacher, "How can I get involved?"

# 13. What does school expect from parents?

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to participate in school life. The school expects parents to:

- communicate with school representatives and regularly use the electronic class register
- provide all medical reports and certificates regarding the child's health
- attend parent-teacher meetings
- explain any student absences\*
- submit requests for exemptions from classes, if necessary\*
- ensure the child's basic needs are met (e.g., lunchbox, clean clothes)
- actively participate in school and class activities (your homeroom teacher will inform you about any initiatives)
- inform the school about any potential issues

<sup>\*</sup> Samples of absence notes or exemption requests can be found in the appendices.

# 14. Mini glossary of school terms

**Kartkówka (short test)** – a brief test, usually lasting 15–20 minutes, which may be unannounced by the teacher.

**Sprawdzian (test)** – a test covering a substantial amount of material, such as for a semester or a year, and always announced in advance.

**Egzamin (exam)** – an exam for eighth-grade students, held annually in May, covering three subjects: Polish, a foreign language, and mathematics. Passing this exam is required to complete primary school and advance to the next educational stage — secondary school.

**Apel (assembly)** – a formal gathering of students, teachers, and school staff, which may serve informational, educational, disciplinary, or patriotic purposes.

**Ferie (winter break)** – a two-week winter holiday, with dates that may vary depending on the region. During this period, some schools are closed, and parents are responsible for organizing their child's activities and supervision outside of school.

**Wakacje (summer vacation)** – the summer break from school, typically lasting from the end of June to the end of August.

**Klasa integracyjna (inclusive classroom)** – a class where students with and without learning differences study together, following the same curriculum as general classes.

**Nauczyciel wspomagający (support teacher)** – a person present in the classroom to assist and support children with diverse learning needs, based on recommendations from a psychological and pedagogical counseling center.

**Legitymacja szkolna (school ID)** – a document that confirms a child's enrollment in school and entitles them to transportation discounts on public transit, rail, and bus services.

**Strój galowy (formal attire)** – attire worn by students for official school events, typically in white and navy blue or white and black.

**Samodzielne wyjście (independent dismissal)** – younger students are not allowed to leave the school grounds without special permission from parents or legal guardians. To allow a child to return home independently, contact the homeroom teacher for permission or use the independent dismissal consent form sample available in the appendices.

**Usprawiedliwienie nieobecności (absence note)** – regardless of the reason, parents or guardians are required to provide an explanation for their child's absence. This explanation should be sent via the electronic register or written by hand using the absence note template available in the appendices.

**Dzienniczek ucznia (student diary)** – in some grades 1–3, teachers use traditional paper diaries where students and teachers can record grades, notes, and important messages for parents.

Wywiadówka, zebranie (parent-teacher meeting) – a meeting organized by the school where teachers inform parents about their children's academic achievements, behavior, and important events or issues related to school life.

**Dni otwarte (open days)** – days dedicated to individual discussions with parents or guardians. Teachers typically allow parents to schedule a specific date and time for these meetings.

**Grono pedagogiczne (teaching staff)** – the team of teachers, homeroom teachers, and school specialists, led by the school principal.

WF (PE) - physical education classes.

**Psycholog (psychologist)** – a specialist who helps children manage challenging emotions and feelings.

**Pedagog (educational counselor)** – a specialist who assists students in addressing school-related issues, including academic challenges.

**Ocena proponowana (proposed grade)** – a grade the teacher intends to assign to a student. It is not final and may be adjusted, either higher or lower.

Ocena końcowa (final grade) - the final annual grades for each subject.

**Waga oceny (grade weight)** – a measure that indicates how much a grade influences the final grade.

**Zielona szkoła (outdoor education trip)** – a multi-day trip during the school year with teachers and homeroom teachers. It is an extracurricular activity, usually organized in spring and often held outside the city.

Asystent/ka międzykulturowy/a (intercultural assistant) – a person, often with migration experience, who provides support to foreign students in Polish schools and speaks the child's native language. The intercultural assistant also supports the school community, including teaching staff and parents.

**Świadectwo szkolne (school certificate)** – a document that certifies the completion of a school year (e.g., a certificate for completing the third grade) or an entire stage of education (e.g., a certificate for completing primary school).

#### 15. Useful links and resources

In creating this guide, we relied on the publications, knowledge, and experience of the intercultural assistant team at the Polish Migration Forum Foundation (PFM). We also used materials from various sources, including: "Szkolny pakiet startowy. Poradnik dla rodziców i opiekunów" by the Wrocław Center for Social Development; "Witajcie w gdańskiej szkole!" by the Department of Social Development of the Gdańsk City Administration; "Sopocki Pakiet Powitalny dla uczniów i rodziców" by the Center for Continuing Education in Sopot; and "Pakiet powitalny dla uczniów i rodziców" by the Warsaw Education Office.

We encourage you to explore the materials and support offered by the Polish Migration Forum Foundation:

#### PFM website

https://forummigracyjne.org/

# PFM brochure on Polish school

https://forummigracyjne.org/publikacja/edukacja-w-polskiej-szkole-wszystko-co-nalezy-wiedziec-o-edukacji-szkolnej-w-polsce-wersja-polska/

# PFM School of Diversity

Online course for those working with children with migration experience <a href="https://szkola-roznorodnosci.org/">https://szkola-roznorodnosci.org/</a>

# 16. Document templates

# Single-day absence note (indicate the date of absence)

USPRAWIEDLIWIENIE (nieobecność jednodniowa)

Proszę o usprawiedliwienie nieobecności mojego dziecka				
(data / date of absence). Nieobecność spowodowana była chorobą				
dziecka / złym samopoczuciem dziecka / sprawami rodzinnymi / koniecznością odbycia wizyty u lekarza.*				
(Data i podpis rodzica / opiekuna)				
(Date and signature of parent / guardian)				
* underline where applicable				
Long-term absence note (indicate dates from and to) USPRAWIEDLIWIENIE (nieobecność wielodniowa)				
Proszę o usprawiedliwienie nieobecności mojego dziecka				
(imię i nazwisko / child's name and surname) w szkole w dniach od (data / from)				
do				
rodzinnymi. *				
(Data i podpis rodzica / opiekuna)				
(Date and signature of parent / guardian)				
* underline where applicable				
One-time consent for independent dismissal from school, underline the reason ZGODA NA SAMODZIELNY POWRÓT ZE SZKOŁY (jednorazowa)				
Wyrażam zgodę na samodzielny powrót do domu mojego dziecka				
(imię i nazwisko / child's name and surname) dnia				
(date) po zakończonych zajęciach edukacyjnych / po zakończonej wycieczce klasowej / po				
zakończonym wyjściu klasowym.*				
(Data i podpis rodzica / opiekuna)				

(Date and signature of parent / guardian)  * underline where applicable		
Wyrażam zgodę na samodzielne powroty do domu mojego dziecka		
(academic year) po zakończonych zajęciach edukacyjnych.		
(Data i podpis rodzica / opiekuna) (Date and signature of parent / guardian)		
* underline where applicable		
Early dismissal note (if the student needs to leave school before classes are finished) ZWOLNIENIE Z LEKCJI		
Proszę o zwolnienie mojego dziecka		
(Data i podpis rodzica / opiekuna) (Date and signature of parent / guardian)		
* underline where applicable		

# Consent form for medical assistance by the school nurse

# Zgoda na objęcie ucznia opieką zdrowotną w Szkole Podstawowej

Nazwisko i imię / imiona dziecka (Child's surname and first name/s)):				
Klasa (class):				
Nazwa i adres przychodnia lekarza pierwszego the child is registered	kontaktu (Name and address of the NFZ clinic where			
Nie wyrażam zgody / wyrażam zgodę* na obję	ęcie mojego dziecka opieką zdrowotną w szkole oraz sent / I consent* for my child to receive medical hygiene checks.)			
have any medical conditions requiring special	ce szczególnego nadzoru i opieki?* (Does the child supervision and care?*)			
Czy dziecko uczulone jest na leki?* (Is the chile NIE / TAK (jakie? / which?)	d allergic to any medications?*)			
telefony pozwolą na sprawowanie nad Państw Zgodnie z ustawą o ochronie danych osobow innych celów. (The information provided on documents and current phone numbers, will o	cka, dostarczone dokumenty medyczne, aktualne wa dzieckiem prawidłowej opieki medycznej w szkole. wych, uzyskane dane nie będą wykorzystywane do n the child's health, along with submitted medical ensure that your child receives appropriate medical otection law, this data will not be used for other			
	data i podpis rodzica / prawnego opiekuna dziecka  (Date and signature of parent / legal guardian)			
	(Date and Signature of Parent / Tegal Gudfuldin)			

<sup>\*</sup> underline where applicable