

1 Pre-school Education

In the Czech Republic, institutional pre-school education is provided by nursery schools. Generally, children from three to six years of age are admitted. However, pre-school facilities can accommodate children younger than three year olds or children with postponement of elementary education.

According to the Education Act, children in the last year before starting compulsory primary education receive priority over younger children. In other words, the children of this age group are entitled to placement in the nursery school by law. The highest participation of children in pre-school education is within one or two years before entering primary school.

The number of nursery schools has slightly increased in the last couple of years in reflection of high demand for the placement of the children. In the school year 2014/2015, **5,158 nursery schools** were registered, which means an increase by 73 schools over the previous year.

In the school year 2014/2015, a total of **367,603 children attended pre-school education** according to the data of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, which is an increase of more than 4,000 children from the previous school year. The proportion of children with special educational needs did not change; it has remained at roughly the same level for several years (2.8%). The share of foreign children increased to 2.0% (in the previous year it was 1.7%). Similarly, there was a slight increase in the proportion of children under three years of age to 10.3% (in the previous year it was 9.1%).

Figure 1

Pre-school education – performance indicators

Monitored parameter in the Czech Republic	School Year		
	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Total number of number of nursery schools	5 011	5 085	5 158
Number of nursery schools for children with SEN	110	113	115
Percentage of private nursery schools	3,9	4,9	5,8
Percentage of church nursery schools	0,8	0,8	0,9
Percentage of small nurseries (up to 50 children)	51,9	51,7	52,1
Total number of children attending nursery schools in the Czech Republic	354 340	363 568	367 603
Number of inspected nursery schools	840	831	829
Number of inspected lessons in nursery schools	2 363	2 591	2 626

In calendar year 2014, the **expenditure on pre-school education amounted to 10.8%** (19 317 700 000 CZK) **out of the total public expenditure on education.**

In the school year 2014/2015, a total of 829 entries were made to facilities providing pre-school education by the Czech School Inspectorate. In total, 2,626 classroom observations were made with an emphasis on conditions, the course and results of provided pre-school education. The inspectors checked, among other things, spatial, material, safety and financial conditions. They were interested in the school management, staffing, system of school counselling and prevention of risky behaviour. They also focused on ensuring equal opportunities in education, supporting children with special educational needs and gifted children, promoting the development of language skills and supporting the development of knowledge and skills of the children. Moreover, it was monitored how nursery schools prepare children for the first year of the compulsory schooling; if children younger than three years of age are accepted or if healthy lifestyle is promoted.