

## **Time for Teaching Mathematics in Irish Schools**

### **Length of the school year**

Primary schools must be open for a minimum of 183 days per year. Post-primary schools must be open for a minimum of 167 days per year; the State examinations (for the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement and the Leaving Certificate) take place outside this period.

### **Length of Mathematics courses**

According to the latest curriculum framework for primary schools, it is suggested that *Mathematics in primary schools* should be allocated at least **three hours per week** (less for the Infants' classes; they have a shorter day).

*Mathematics for the Junior Cycle* (1<sup>st</sup> Year to Third Year) is designed as a **240**-hour course of study. With about 30 weeks of teaching per year (allowing for activities outside the normal timetable) the mean number of hours per week is therefore intended to be around two and a half.

*Mathematics for the Leaving Certificate* (5<sup>th</sup> Year and 6<sup>th</sup> Year) is designed as a **180**-hour course of study. With about 30 weeks of teaching per year, the mean number of hours per week is therefore intended to be around three.

As shown by the table below, time in individual post-primary schools varies (and typically differs by year, with extra time given in the years in which there is a State examination). The “official” allocation is seen by many as insufficient for appropriate teaching and learning.

### ***Data from an Irish Mathematics Teachers' Association survey of its members (February 2023)***

[Taken from: Duffy, C., & Oldham, E. (2023). Problems for teachers? Views of members of the Irish Mathematics Teachers' Association on current issues in mathematics education. In A. Twohill & S. Quirke (Eds.), *Ninth Conference on Research in Mathematics Education in Ireland (MEI 9)*, Dublin City University, 2023 (pp. 132–139). DCU Institute of Education, Dublin City University.]

With regard to teaching time for Mathematics, respondents were asked to indicate how many periods per week were assigned for their classes in each year of the two cycles. Table 2 [overleaf] presents the data for 40-minute and one-hour periods. The variation is striking, and the fact that some teachers meet their First Year classes only twice a week is a matter for concern. Also, asked whether they could teach the Higher level Leaving Certificate course in the time available, a disturbing 61.0% chose the response “To get the course done I have to do extra classes with my students” – that is, meeting them outside the “normal” school timetable.

**Table 2***Number of classes per week for each year – percentages*

School year	40-minute periods (N = 243)					School year	1-hour periods (N = 201)			
	3	4	5	6	7		2	3	4	5
First year	8.7	52.2	36.7	2.4	0	First year	6.7	80.3	12.1	0.8
Second year	3.2	43.3	50.2	2.5	0.7	Second year	7.1	70.8	21.2	0.9
Third year	1.8	28.4	62.9	5.5	1.5	Third year	0	73.0	24.8	2.2
Fifth year	1.2	2.1	36.6	55.6	4.5	Fifth year	0	12.9	75.4	11.6
Sixth year	0	2.7	25.2	60.8	11.3	Sixth year	0	6.9	72.5	20.6