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THE TRANSITION OF CHILDREN FROM PRESCHOOL TO PRIMARY SCHOOL AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POSTPONEMENTS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

Abstract: This article focuses on an analysis of the current conditions related to school enrolment and the transition of children from preschool to primary school in the Czech Republic, with particular attention paid to organizational aspects and the assessment of school maturity and readiness. Furthermore, it addresses the issue of postponed school attendance, a currently relevant topic that can be approached in various ways. The methodological section of the article presents a detailed analysis of the trend in school entry postponements based on statistical data from 2023, providing valuable insight into the number of children entering school on time versus those whose attendance has been postponed. The findings confirm a strong demand for preschool education in kindergartens, with individual education being used only minimally. A significant observation, however, is the increasing trend of school entry postponements, as a large number of children remain in preschool for an additional year. A negative factor is that many of these children with postponed attendance are educated in preparatory classes at primary schools, which may have long-term effects on their educational trajectory.

Keywords: preschool education, school attendance postponement, school maturity and readiness, school enrolment, kindergarten

PRZEJŚCIE DZIECI Z EDUKACJI PRZEDSZKOLNEJ DO SZKOŁY PODSTAWOWEJ ORAZ ODROZCZENIA OBOWIĄZKU SZKOLNEGO W REPUBLICIE CZESKIEJ: ANALIZA OBECNEJ SYTUACJI

Streszczenie (abstrakt): Artykuł koncentruje się na analizie obecnych warunków związanych z zapisami do szkoły oraz przejściem dzieci z edukacji przedszkolnej do szkoły podstawowej w Republice Czeskiej, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem aspektów organizacyjnych oraz oceny dojrzałości i gotowości szkolnej. Ponadto porusza kwestię odraczania obowiązku szkolnego, która jest obecnie istotnym zagadnieniem i może być analizowana z różnych perspektyw. Część metodologiczna artykułu przedstawia szczegółową analizę trendu odraczania rozpoczęcia nauki szkolnej na podstawie danych statystycznych z 2023 roku, dostarczając cennych informacji na temat liczby dzieci rozpoczynających naukę w terminie oraz tych, których obowiązek szkolny został odroczony. Wyniki potwierdzają duże zapotrzebowanie na edukację przedszkolną w przedszkolach, przy czym edukacja indywidualna jest wykorzystywana jedynie w minimalnym stopniu. Istotną obserwacją jest jednak rosnący trend odraczania rozpoczęcia nauki szkolnej, ponieważ znaczna liczba dzieci pozostaje w edukacji przedszkolnej o kolejny rok. Negatywnym czynnikiem jest to, że wiele z tych dzieci z odroczonym obowiązkiem szkolnym uczęszcza do oddziałów przygotowawczych w szkołach podstawowych, co może mieć długofalowe skutki dla ich ścieżki edukacyjnej.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja przedszkolna, odroczenie obowiązku szkolnego, dojrzałość i gotowość szkolna, zapis do szkoły, przedszkole

I. Introduction

The transition from preschool to primary school represents a critical milestone in a child's life and has a long-term impact on their future educational path. This process requires thorough preparation and the creation of optimal conditions that take into account the individual needs of each child. A key factor in this transition is school maturity and readiness, which determine a child's ability to meet the demands of compulsory education. These factors are not only developmentally conditioned but are also embedded in binding educational programs and legislative frameworks across individual countries.

In the Czech Republic, preschool education is guided by a humanistic, personality-oriented model as defined by the *Framework Educational Program for Preschool Education*¹. This curriculum focuses on the holistic development of the child with emphasis on individuality, social skills, and creativity. Additionally, it emphasizes the development of school maturity and readiness, which encompasses cognitive abilities, communication skills, physical fitness, psychological stability, and social competence.

According to the Education Act², preschool education in the Czech Republic is organized for children aged 2 to 6, with the upper age limit defined by the child's entry into primary school. At present, only the final year of preschool is compulsory, meaning that children in the year prior to entering primary school are required to attend kindergarten. In terms of admission, two-year-old children do not have a legal right to preferential admission under this law, although in practice, there is a growing interest in placing children of this age into preschool facilities.

The aim of preschool education is to support the overall development of the child, including social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills. As Opravilová (2004) notes, „Preschool education is understood in pedagogical theory as a process of intentional and organized influence on preschool-age children, aimed at developing, supporting, motivating, and guiding them toward acquiring the so-called competencies of a future pupil”³. This process takes place in kindergartens, forest kindergartens, and preparatory classes, which represent the initial stage of systematic educational influence. Preschool education thus plays a crucial role in preparing children for compulsory schooling and forms the foundation for their future learning and development.

¹ The Framework Educational Programme for Preschool Education is a binding document issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, which sets out the basic requirements for preschool education in the Czech Republic. It determines the objectives, content and conditions of education in kindergartens (MSMT, 2021).

² Education Act No.561/2004 Coll. – This Act regulates the conditions of education in the Czech Republic, including pre-school, primary, secondary and higher vocational education. The Act is regularly amended and the official version is available on the public administration portal (zakonyprolidi.cz).

³ E. Opravilová, *Předškolní pedagogika* [Preschool pedagogy], Grada 2016.

II. Conditions for Enrolling Children in Primary School

Enrolment in the first year of primary school in the Czech Republic is governed by the applicable legislation, specifically Act No. 561/2004 Coll., known as the Education Act, which regulates preschool, primary, secondary, tertiary professional, and other forms of education⁴. According to Průcha⁵, the Education Act defines the conditions of education at all levels and reflects current trends and societal needs, which is evident in its regular amendments. According to § 36 of this act, children who turn six years of age by 31 August of the relevant calendar year are required to start primary education. Children who turn six between 1 September and 31 December may also be enrolled, provided their legal guardian submits a request and the child undergoes an expert assessment, typically conducted by a school counselling centre or a paediatrician.

The rules for starting school attendance and the age of children at the time of enrolment are not only part of the Education Act but are also based on the principles outlined in the *Framework Educational Program for Preschool Education*⁶, which focuses on the optimal preparation of children for entering school. This program emphasizes the development of competencies and skills necessary for a successful start in primary education.

In the Czech Republic, new innovative approaches are emerging to support the transition from preschool to primary school and promote school readiness and maturity. Key innovations include: *modern diagnostic tools*: Current methods and diagnostic tools are increasingly used to assess school readiness. These tools allow for a comprehensive evaluation of a child, including not only cognitive abilities but also social, emotional, and physical preparedness. This enables a better identification of individual children's needs and appropriate support can be tailored to them. *Inclusive and individualised approaches*: There is a growing emphasis on adapting the transition process to the developmental pace of each child. Particular attention is given to inclusion, especially for children with special educational needs. *Increased collaboration between schools*: Kindergartens and primary schools are working more closely together. Some schools organise activities that allow children to visit the primary school before enrolment, helping them become familiar with the environment and teachers, thus facilitating adaptation. *Support for school entry postponement*: For children not sufficiently mature to begin primary school, special programs are created during the postponement year. These programs offer activities designed to prepare children more effectively for the demands of school. *Implementation*

⁴ Education Act No.561/2004 Coll. – This Act regulates the conditions of education in the Czech Republic, including pre-school, primary, secondary and higher vocational education. The Act is regularly amended and the official version is available on the public administration portal (zakonyprolidi.cz).

⁵ J. Průcha, *Školský zákon a vzdělávací politika ČR: Komentář k legislativě a aktuálním otázkám vzdělávání* [The Education Act and educational policy of the Czech Republic: Commentary on legislation and current issues in education], Wolters Kluwer 2020.

⁶ The Framework Educational Programme for Preschool Education is a binding document issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, which sets out the basic requirements for preschool education in the Czech Republic. It determines the objectives, content and conditions of education in kindergartens (MSMT, 2021).

of digital technologies: Educational processes for preschool children increasingly involve the use of digital technologies. Interactive tools and educational applications are being integrated into preschool education, which helps children develop digital skills and improves their readiness for primary school. These *innovative approaches* reflect the current efforts of the Czech education system to ensure a smooth and successful transition into primary education.

The term *school maturity* was historically used before the term *school readiness* became common and has its roots in developmental psychology. In contemporary pedagogy, the term school readiness is used more frequently⁷. The difference between these two terms lies in the fact that school readiness is primarily influenced by learning and the environment surrounding the child, while school maturity is more related to the biological development of the child⁸. According to Průcha, Walterová, and Mareš⁹, school maturity can be understood as a state in which an individual is capable of meeting the demands of primary education. This includes psychological, health, and social readiness for starting school. Kropáčková¹⁰ also stresses that school maturity is determined by a child's ability to cope with the requirements of primary education in all its areas, with biological development playing a key role.

The **organizational and time-related aspects** of enrolment are defined in § 36 of the Education Act. Enrolment in the first year of primary school takes place annually from 1 to 30 April, with the specific date set in agreement with the school's founder (typically the local municipality). While the Education Act provides a general timeframe for enrolment, the exact date is determined by each school and its founder. Enrolment typically involves a face-to-face meeting between the child, their legal guardian, and school representatives, during which basic information about the child and their school readiness is gathered. This process may include a variety of activities aimed at verifying the child's preparedness for primary education – for example, through conversations with the child, assessments of communication skills, graphomotor abilities, and other skills essential for a successful start in school¹¹. If parents apply for a school attendance postponement, the enrolment process still takes place, but it results in a decision to defer compulsory school attendance by one year.

The documentation required from parents or legal guardians at enrolment includes the child's birth certificate and the parent's identity document (e.g., ID card). If

⁷ Z. Syslová, J. Kratochvílová, T. Fikarová, *Pedagogická diagnostika v mateřské škole: práce s portfoliem dítěte*, Portál, Praha 2018.

⁸ O. Zelinková, *Pedagogická diagnostika a individuální vzdělávací program* [Pedagogical diagnostics and individual education plan], Portál, Praha 2011.

⁹ J. Průcha, E. Walterová, J. Mareš, *Pedagogický slovník* [Pedagogical dictionary], Portál 2013.

¹⁰ J. Kropáčková, *Budeme mít prvňáčka: Pro rodiče dětí od 5 let* [We are going to have a first-grader: For parents of children from 5 years of age], Portál 2008.

¹¹ Education Act No.561/2004 Coll. – This Act regulates the conditions of education in the Czech Republic, including pre-school, primary, secondary and higher vocational education. The Act is regularly amended and the official version is available on the public administration portal (zakonprolidi.cz).

applying for a postponement, expert assessments (e.g., from a counselling centre or a doctor) must also be provided. Schools may additionally request information regarding the child's special educational needs or health conditions.

In recent years, an increasing number of schools in the Czech Republic have introduced **electronic enrolment**, allowing applications to be submitted online via a specialised digital system. Electronic enrolment is more convenient for parents, as they can complete the required information in advance and book a specific date for an in-person meeting at the school. In practice, however, a combination of online and physical enrolment is still the norm, where parents must visit the school with their child for document verification and a brief assessment of the child's school readiness.

Parents play a crucial role in the entire enrolment process, as they are responsible for submitting the application on time, providing the necessary documentation, and communicating with the school. They are also informed about the possibility of postponing school attendance and any special conditions associated with their child's school entry.

Schools and their founders (usually municipalities or city districts) are responsible for the organisational aspects of enrolment, setting dates, and informing the public about the process. Administrative authorities oversee the process to ensure transparency and compliance with the legislation on school attendance¹².

III. School Readiness and Maturity for Primary Education

In the Framework Educational Program for Preschool Education¹³, a **child's school readiness and maturity** are described as **a developmental state enabling the child** to manage the demands of primary education across *physical, psychological, emotional, and social* domains. The program focuses on the holistic development of the child to ensure preparedness for the challenges associated with starting school. *Physical readiness* primarily involves physical fitness and motor skills – both fine and gross – which influence abilities such as writing and participating in physical activities. *Psychological maturity* refers to the development of cognitive functions, including concentration, memory, and problem-solving. *Emotional stability* includes the ability to handle frustration, regulate emotions, and face new challenges. *Social maturity* relates to the child's ability to cooperate with peers, respect rules and authorities, and communicate effectively with others.

Language and communication readiness involves the child's ability to express thoughts, listen, and engage in conversation. Finally, self-regulation and independence imply the ability to organise tasks, control behaviour, and take responsibility for learning¹⁴.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ The Framework Educational Programme for Preschool Education is a binding document issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, which sets out the basic requirements for preschool education in the Czech Republic. It determines the objectives, content and conditions of education in kindergartens (MSMT, 2021).

¹⁴ Ibid.

The RVP PV also emphasises that school readiness should be developed through playful and varied activities that naturally promote the development of all key areas of school maturity. Readiness is thus not only seen as achieving certain abilities, but also as the child's capacity to adapt to new conditions and successfully integrate into the school environment. This maturity and readiness are regularly monitored in preschools through teacher assessments, diagnostic tools, and long-term developmental tracking. One increasingly important tool in this process is the use of child development portfolios, which not only document children's progress but also promote self-reflection, fostering independence and motivation.

Assessment **tools and methods** for evaluating school maturity include **diagnostic assessments**, systematic observation, interviews with children and parents, and portfolios, which track the child's development and acquired competencies. **Cooperation with primary schools** plays a key role in supporting school maturity, gradually introducing children to the school environment and structure in a sensitive and respectful manner. This cooperation, embedded in the FEP PE as a foundational condition for preschool education, is essential for a successful transition to primary school.

Collaboration between preschools and primary schools is a long-standing practice in the Czech Republic. It facilitates a smooth transition to first grade and significantly influences parental decision-making when choosing a school. Preschool teachers, along with children and parents, share key information about the child's readiness, providing valuable insights that support parents in selecting an appropriate educational pathway. This collaboration has thus become an integral part of preschool education and plays a vital role in ensuring successful adaptation to the new school environment¹⁵.

IV. Postponement of Compulsory School Attendance

In the Czech Republic, **the process of postponing compulsory school attendance** is regulated by the Education Act No. 561/2004 Coll.¹⁶, which mandates that children who reach the age of six by 31 August of the given calendar year¹⁷ must begin primary education. Children who turn six between 1 September and 31 December may have their school attendance postponed based on an expert assessment if it is determined that the child is not sufficiently mature for school entry. This process involves the evaluation of school readiness, conducted in cooperation with preschools, pedagogical-psychological counselling centres, and medical professionals. The assessment includes a comprehensive analysis of the child's cognitive, motor, emotional, and social abilities, and decisions regarding postponement are made based on expert recommendations.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Education Act No.561/2004 Coll. – This Act regulates the conditions of education in the Czech Republic, including pre-school, primary, secondary and higher vocational education. The Act is regularly amended and the official version is available on the public administration portal (zakonyprolidi.cz).

¹⁷ Ibid.

If school attendance is postponed, the child may continue their education either in a preschool or in a preparatory class, the establishment and conditions of which are defined in § 47 of the Education Act No. 561/2004 Coll. Such a class may be established by a primary school based on a decision by the school's founding body. Preparatory classes offer a specially adapted educational program tailored to the individual needs of children and support their preparation for entering the first grade. Teaching in these classes is conducted through play and activities that promote social and cognitive skills and familiarize children with the basic structure and expectations of the school environment. Children in preparatory classes are entitled to an individualised approach that reflects their specific developmental needs and abilities.

Postponement of school attendance is often granted due to insufficient school maturity – whether in cognitive, physical, or social development. Common reasons include poor concentration, underdeveloped fine motor skills, communication difficulties, or emotional and social immaturity. Other contributing factors may include health problems that could negatively impact the child's ability to start school.

The Czech School Inspectorate, in its annual report, highlights the negative impact of the high proportion of children with postponed school attendance on their success in preschool education. One concern is the increasing number of children who, instead of completing the final compulsory year in preschool, are educated in preparatory classes at primary schools. Additionally, efforts to reduce the overall number of postponements have not been successful, with the current rate reaching 22.5%. This trend negatively affects children's readiness for school entry and may have long-term consequences for their future academic performance.

V. Analysis of Trends in Postponement of Compulsory School Attendance

In the Czech Republic, preschool education is provided predominantly by nursery schools, which may be established by municipalities, regions, churches, or private entities. There is a particularly high level of interest from parents in preschool education in nursery schools; however, the perceived prestige of preschool education and nursery schools remains low among the public. This is confirmed by 35% of preschool and preparatory class teachers and almost 42% of first-grade primary school teachers¹⁸.

¹⁸ Česká školní inspekce, *Kvalita vzdělávání v České republice ve školním roce 2023/2024: Výroční zpráva České školní inspekce* [The quality of education in the Czech Republic in the 2023/2024 school year: Annual report of the Czech School Inspectorate] 2024, <https://www.csicr.cz>.

Status of Children in Preschool Education (School Year 2023/2024)	
<i>Younger than 2 years:</i>	0.2%
<i>2 years:</i>	27.4%
<i>3 years:</i>	83.1%
<i>4 years:</i>	90.8%
<i>5 years:</i>	94.5%
<i>6 years:</i>	17.8%
<i>Older than 6 years:</i>	0.1%

A positive finding is the increase in the proportion of five-year-old children in preschool education following the introduction of compulsory preschool education in 2017. In the school year 2023/2024, this proportion increased by two percentage points (compared to a 1% increase the previous year). Overall, 99% of five-year-olds participated in compulsory preschool education during this period, not including children residing abroad long-term. However, since 2017, the proportion of children completing their final compulsory year of preschool education in nursery schools has decreased. In contrast, there has been an increase in the number of children receiving education individually based on notifications from their legal guardians. Another trend is the growing number of five-year-olds educated in preparatory classes at primary schools. Interestingly, approximately 0.5% of children begin primary school education at the age of five and are enrolled in the first grade¹⁹.

Preschool enrolment varies regionally. A contributing factor to unsuccessful preschool education and subsequent school entry postponements is that some children do not enter nursery school until age five – already the final year of preschool education. This late enrolment may affect their school readiness and contribute to a higher number of postponed school entries.

The high rate of postponed school attendance (PSA), around 23%, remains a long-standing issue that has not yet been successfully addressed. Among six-year-old children, 18% continued their education in nursery schools (down from 20% in the previous year). It is clear that the introduction of compulsory preschool education has not led to a significant positive shift, as the proportion was already 19% in 2017/2018. Among children with postponed school attendance are also children with special educational needs, whose numbers have also increased²⁰.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ In the school year 2022/23, 48% of children with disabilities attended mainstream classes in kindergartens, more than double the proportion of children with disabilities in mainstream classes a decade ago, when "only" 22.1% of children with disabilities were integrated into mainstream kindergarten classes. A total of 6 252 children with disabilities attended mainstream classes in kindergartens in the school year 2022/23. In 2012/2013, this number was 2 156 children (CSO – Czech Statistical Office, public database).

Forms of Education for 5-Year-Old Children (in %) 2023/2024	
Nursery school:	94.5%
Preparatory classes and special preparatory stages:	1.6%
Individual education:	2.3%
Primary school (Grade 1):	0.2%
Total:	99%

Children with postponed school attendance continue their education in preparatory classes at primary schools or in the preparatory stage of special primary schools. Their total share accounts for 4.5%. In the school year 2023/2024, 5,214 children were enrolled in preparatory classes, of which 53 had a repeated postponement. In the preparatory stage of special primary schools, 159 children were enrolled, including 18 with repeated postponements²¹.

An important finding is that 93% of nursery school teachers report supporting the development of children's independence; however, this support is not always evident in practice, according to first-grade primary school teachers. These teachers note significant differences in the level of independence among newly enrolled children. This discrepancy between nursery school preparation and primary school reality reveals potential gaps in children's school readiness²².

Methods and Approaches Supporting the Transition to Primary School According to School Principals – Proportion of Schools (in %).

Method or Approach	2022/2023	2023/2024
Graphomotor exercises, correct pencil grip, prevention of motor difficulties	95.1	95.1
Support for independence	92.3	92.5
Regular preparation activities for school attendance	91.8	91.7
Development of communication skills	93.0	89.5
Use of didactic materials, literature, learning programs	86.4	82.0
Gradual transition from play to learning	77.6	79.4
Problem- and situation-based learning	52.3	50.1
Other approaches	9.1	8.0

²¹ Česká školní inspekce, *Kvalita vzdělávání v České republice ve školním roce 2023/2024: Výroční zpráva České školní inspekce* [The quality of education in the Czech Republic in the 2023/2024 school year: Annual report of the Czech School Inspectorate] 2024, <https://www.csicr.cz>.

²² Ibid.

Another concerning trend is the decline in support for preventing school failure in the 2023/2024 school year. Nursery school teachers report a lower level of support in developing school readiness and adaptation compared to the previous year. This represents an average drop of six percentage points, indicating a need to improve the preparation of children for primary school and to strengthen cooperation between nursery and primary schools.

In the Czech Republic, the proportion of school attendance postponements (PSA) has long exceeded the European average, remaining around 20%. This high rate presents a significant challenge, particularly in regions where it restricts access to preschool education for younger children. Strategy 2030+ targets the reduction of this proportion through early and comprehensive support for children in nursery schools. It emphasizes improving the quality, accessibility, and equity of education, with a primary objective of preparing students for future challenges, particularly in the context of digitalisation and labour market transformation²³.

The most common reasons for postponing school attendance are overall developmental immaturity (35%) and speech disorders (22%). Immaturity encompasses social, cognitive, and emotional development and is assessed by school counselling services. Parents and counselling centres are not obliged to inform nursery schools about the reasons for PSA, meaning that nursery schools work with information provided by parents or derived from their own observations. This process is more complex when the child enters compulsory preschool education later than usual.

Reasons for Postponement of School Attendance

Reason	% in 2023	% in 2024
General immaturity	37.2%	35.4%
Speech defects and disorders	22.7%	22.3%
Delayed overall speech development	8.6%	7.9%
Social immaturity	7.5%	7.2%
Disability/disadvantage	5.7%	5.8%
Psychological reasons	4.5%	4.8%
Graphomotor difficulties	3.9%	4.0%
Immaturity due to socio-cultural background	2.8%	3.5%
Work habits	1.5%	2.6%
Other reasons	2.2%	2.4%
ADHD	1.8%	1.8%
Somatic problems	0.8%	0.8%

²³ Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy ČR, *Strategie vzdělávací politiky ČR do roku 2030+* [Education Policy Strategy of the Czech Republic until 2030+] 2020, <https://www.msmt.cz/strategie-2030>.

Reason	% in 2023	% in 2024
Reason unknown to school	0.9%	0.6%

Based on the presented results, we conducted a comparison and evaluation of the reasons for deferred school attendance in the 2023/2024 academic year compared to the previous year.

General immaturity (37.2% vs. 35.4%) – The most common reason for deferral remains the overall immaturity of the child. This proportion increased by 1.8 percentage points year-on-year, indicating a persistent issue in children's school readiness. Various aspects of immaturity – cognitive, emotional, and social – continue to be the dominant reasons for postponement. *Speech disorders* (22.7% vs. 22.3%) – The share of children with speech and language impairments remained nearly unchanged between the two years. This category continues to constitute a significant portion of deferral cases, highlighting the need for greater emphasis on early speech therapy intervention in preschool education. *Overall delayed speech development* (8.6% vs. 7.9%) – Although this indicator decreased slightly, it still represents a significant factor influencing school deferral. Emphasis must be placed on the development of speech and language skills in early childhood to prevent such delays. *Social immaturity* (7.5% vs. 7.2%) – This factor declined by 0.3 percentage points. Social immaturity, which includes the child's ability to adapt to group settings and follow basic social norms, remains a notable reason for deferrals despite the slight decrease. *Health disabilities/disadvantages* (5.7% vs. 6.8%) – The share of children with health-related reasons for deferral increased by 1.1 percentage points. This likely reflects a growing recognition of medical issues that may significantly affect a child's ability to adapt to the school environment. *Psychological factors – adaptation and concentration* (4.5% vs. 4.8%) – The proportion of children with issues related to adaptation and concentration increased slightly, indicating a growing need for support in managing school-related stress and adjustment. *Graphomotor skills* (3.9% vs. 4.0%) – This factor remained stable but continues to influence deferrals. Ensuring the adequate development of graphomotor abilities in preschool settings is essential for preparing children for school. *Immaturity due to socio-cultural background* (2.8% vs. 3.5%) – A 0.7 percentage point increase in this category suggests improving conditions for children from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds, possibly due to better access to quality preschool education. *Work habits* (1.5% vs. 2.6%) – A noticeable increase of 1.1 percentage points may reflect improved attention to developing work-related behaviors and routines in young children. Educational institutions seem to be placing more emphasis on fostering work habits. *Other reasons* (2.2% vs. 2.4%) – The share of children with other, less specific causes for deferral increased slightly. These cases may reflect diverse individual factors that are not easily categorized. *ADHD* (1.8% vs. 1.8%) – The proportion of children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder remained unchanged. This condition continues to affect some children's ability to focus and manage their behavior, leading to deferrals. *Somatic problems* (0.8% vs. 0.8%) – This category also remained stable. Somatic issues, such as chronic health conditions, still play a role in decisions to postpone school entry.

Unknown reason (0.9% vs. 0.6%) – A decrease of 0.3 percentage points suggests improved communication and information sharing between schools and parents, although some cases still lack a clearly defined cause for deferral.

VI. Results of the Analysis of Deferred School Attendance

The results of the analysis confirm that the high rate of deferred compulsory school attendance (DCSA) in the Czech Republic represents a persistent issue requiring substantial changes in the approach to preparing children for entry into primary education. Nursery schools must place greater emphasis on individualized approaches and on strengthening children's school readiness. A key factor in ensuring optimal preparation remains the ability of educators to effectively respond to the specific educational needs of children, with individualized education playing an irreplaceable role in supporting their development.

The analysis also identifies concerning findings regarding recommendations for DCSA. In cases where nursery school teachers concluded that a child was not sufficiently prepared, they recommended deferral to legal guardians in 77% of cases. However, only 41% of these cases included documented efforts to address partial educational deficits, and in just 20% of cases were first-level support measures provided. This indicates a need for improved collaboration between nursery and primary schools, as well as for more effective strategies for early identification and intervention in educational deficits. In this context, it is essential to seek new approaches and measures that enable better adaptation of preschool children to school life and support both their psychological and cognitive readiness for school²⁴.

A comparison of the reasons for DCSA over recent years reveals several important trends. Among the most prominent and persistent causes are general developmental immaturity (37.2%), which has long been the most frequent reason, and speech disorders (22.7%), both of which remain dominant factors. These findings underscore the need for continued focus on early detection of speech and cognitive developmental delays. Conversely, the increasing share of children with disabilities or disadvantages (5.7% in 2023 vs. 6.8% in 2024) points to a growing need for targeted support for this group of children, highlighting the importance of ensuring equal access to quality education for all, regardless of health status or social background.

The decline in some causes, such as sociocultural immaturity (2.8% in 2023 vs. 3.5% in 2024) and underdeveloped work habits (1.5% in 2023 vs. 2.6% in 2024), is a positive signal indicating an improvement in children's school readiness. This may reflect better access to quality preschool education focusing on these key areas. Nevertheless, it remains essential to provide support strategies for all children and to consistently apply individualized approaches in practice for those with specific needs.

²⁴ Česká školní inspekce, *Kvalita vzdělávání v České republice ve školním roce 2023/2024: Výroční zpráva České školní inspekce* [The quality of education in the Czech Republic in the 2023/2024 school year: Annual report of the Czech School Inspectorate] 2024, <https://www.csicr.cz>.

From both pedagogical and organizational perspectives, it is necessary to develop effective measures and strategies to support children's readiness for compulsory school attendance. These steps should include quality training for educators in working with young children, early identification of educational deficits, and active involvement of parents in the educational process. The findings of this analysis suggest that only a comprehensive approach to these issues will contribute to a reduction in the current 20% rate of deferrals and improve children's overall preparedness for primary school entry.

VII. Discussion

The analysis of trends in deferred school attendance indicates that the transition of children from preschool to primary education still lacks a sufficiently developed systemic framework. This area should be addressed in future revisions of national curricular documents for both educational stages. Despite measures taken in recent years – such as mandatory preschool attendance, revised school enrollment deadlines, and expanded professional development for teaching staff – the number of DCSA cases has not significantly decreased. Reducing deferrals remains a key challenge for the coming years, as current interventions have not resulted in notable practical impact.

Achieving a successful transition from nursery to primary school requires a balance between the child's readiness and the school's preparedness to meet each child at their developmental level. Further improvement could be achieved through enhanced cooperation between nursery and primary schools, greater parental involvement, and the introduction of an adaptation period during the early weeks of primary education.

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