



Introduction to schools

Guide to
comprehensive
education in
Helsinki

Information
about schools
for families
new to Finland



City of Helsinki
Education Department



"Hello!"

This is the Introduction to schools Guide that includes the key information about the Finnish comprehensive education. The guide provides support for your family in starting school in Helsinki and starting a new stage in your lives.

In Finland, education is compulsory for every child and every child has a right to go to school. It is easy; basic education, learning materials and the daily lunches are all free. These are paid by the city of Helsinki with tax money.

At school, pupils acquire knowledge and skills that will eventually help them to find their own place in society. Pupils learn to recognise their strengths and to work together with others.

All this takes place in an encouraging and safe environment with teachers supporting pupils as individuals and as part of a group. Teachers develop different learning environments in which the students can find the best way of learning for themselves.

We hope that this guide will provide answers to any questions your family has. Teachers and other staff at your school will be happy to tell you more.

Wishing you a happy start at school!"

Marjo Kyllönen

Educational Manager

City of Helsinki Education Department

Basic Education Division

Contents

Suitable schooling for every pupil.....	4
Some practical issues	5
Teaching and timetable of grades 1 to 6	6
Pupil's voice	
Polina's Friday in grade 2.....	8
Teaching and timetable of grades 7 to 9	10
Pupil's voice	
Kushal's Friday in grade 7	12
School days are filled with activities.....	14
Language skills enable pupils to learn and make friends	16
Teacher Päivi Lavonen: "S2 instruction creates opportunities for the future".....	17
Religion or ethics	18
Holistic assessment.....	19
After-school activities.....	20
School year.....	22
School and home cooperation	24
Parents and children: "We use Wilma to discuss issues with the teachers"	25
Help and support for learning	26
Education paths in Finland.....	28
Alternatives for those left without a place in upper secondary education	29
Study Counsellor Tiina Valtonen: "Study and find work".....	30
More information on education and training....	31

Polina's and Kushali's day at school

During the school day, Polina, aged 9, did gymnastics and Kushal, aged 13, took a history test. Between the lessons, they spent time with their friends. Both pupils enjoyed a free lunch.

Read their stories on pages 8 and 12



Mastering the mother tongue and Finnish

Pupils are able to learn when they master their mother tongue and the Finnish language. This is why pupils participate in S2 instruction (Finnish as a second language) until their language skills are at the level of those whose mother tongue is Finnish. In addition, pupils may have two lessons per week to study their mother tongue.

Read more on pages 16 and 17

School and homes work in close cooperation

Communication between guardians and teachers supports children in learning. Messages are sent and received via the internet.

Read more on pages 24 and 25

Suitable way

for every pupil to go to school

Comprehensive education is a part of life for all children and young people in Finland. According to the Basic Education Act "compulsory schooling shall start in the year during which the child turns seven. Compulsory schooling shall end when the basic education syllabus has been completed or ten years after the beginning of compulsory schooling. The parent/carer of the pupil in compulsory education shall see to it that compulsory schooling is completed".

When compulsory schooling has been completed, pupils are issued with a final certificate. The certificate is used when applying for a place in upper secondary schools or vocational institutions.

Place in a local school

The City of Helsinki places each pupil in a comprehensive school of the pupil's living area, this is called the local school. Helsinki also has privately contracted schools within the city's school network, as well as private and state-owned schools.

Instruction preparing for preparatory education

Pupils who have just moved to Finland will attend preparatory education class if their language skills in Finnish are not sufficient enough for studying in a basic education group. The preparatory education normally lasts for one year. After that, pupils will be integrated into their local school.

Special needs in education

Each child has an individual method and pace for learning. The school will consider the special needs in teaching of the pupil and there will be a suitable schooling/teaching for each individual pupil. Learning support is available at general, enhanced and special-needs level.

Weighted-curriculum and foreign-language education

Pupils can apply to a school offering weighted-curriculum or foreign-language education. Weighted-curriculum means that pupils in the school can study certain subjects, e.g. music, a little more than normally.

In foreign-language education some of the instruction is in Finnish and some in another language, or all instruction is in another language. Schools offering weighted-curriculum and foreign-language education use aptitude tests to select their pupils.

Read more

www.hel.fi/palvelukartta > *Teaching and education*

All education-related services on a map of Helsinki.

How to enrol your child in school

The Education Department sends notification of compulsory schooling by post to families living in Helsinki. The notification includes detailed enrolment instructions.

If your family has moved to Helsinki recently, you should visit the office of a school near your home or the Education Department's information services or information desk at the offices.

Some practical issues

The family and the teacher meet each other before the pupil starts school. This way, the school building, the classroom and the teacher will be familiar. The teacher will talk about starting school, and the school secretary will help with the practical issues.

Teacher's tips for starting school

1. Take care of suitable clothing

Pupils go outside during breaks. In the winter, children need warm outdoor clothes for school, such as quilted jackets and trousers. School uniforms are not used in Finland.

2. Learn the route to school

Practice the route the school with your child. It is important to arrive at school on time, a little before the start of the school day.

If your child travels several kilometres to school and takes the bus, metro or train, they may be entitled to a free pass or ticket. Ask for more information at the school office.

City of Helsinki takes out insurance policies for all pupils in case of accidents. The insurance is valid

at school, on the way to and from school, and during planned activities outside the school arranged within the framework of the curriculum.

3. Prepare for starting school

For school, your child will need a bag, a pencil case, and clothes for indoor and outdoor sports. Teaching, mate-

rials and school lunch are free of charge.

4. Read this guide and talk to your child

Talk with you child about any questions they may have. Encourage your child by telling them that they can ask the teacher anything.



Every school day includes short breaks. Pupils spend the breaks in the school yard with their friends. Older pupils may spend their breaks indoors. Teachers supervise break times.

Teaching and timetable of grades 1 to 6

During the first years at school, pupils acquire important information and basic skills, and they learn to manage issues related to going to school. They learn how to work in a group and make friends. The number of subjects and amount of homework will increase gradually. School days will also become longer.

Curriculum provides guidelines for school work

Schools in Helsinki follow a local cur-

riculum prepared on the basis of the national core curriculum. The contents of the subjects taught, among other education-related issues are determined in the local curriculum. The curriculum regulates teaching and all activities in schools. The distribution of lesson hours for all schools in Finland is decided nationally.

In addition, each school has an individual curriculum explaining the way the school works and where the focus is.

In grades 1 to 6 pupils study this

- Finnish language and literature, Finnish as a second language (S2)
- A language
- B language
- Mathematics
- Environmental and natural sciences*
- Biology
- Geography
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Religion or Ethics
- History/Civics
- Music
- Visual arts
- Textile and technical work
- Physical education

* As of 1 August 2016, environmental and natural sciences will include biology, geography, physics and chemistry.



In the first grades, pupils acquire basic knowledge and skills.

Swimming lessons are part of physical education

Pupils in grades 1 to 5 participate in swimming lessons. Teachers assess swimming skills as part of physical education. Pupils go swimming four times a year.

Example of a timetable for grade 2

The timetable is a plan for the week.

TIME	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
8.15–9		Mother tongue		Group A	Group B
9–9.45	Group A	Mother tongue	Group B	X	X
9.45–10.15	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10.15–11	X	X	Physical education	X	X
10.50–11.10	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
11–12	X	X	X	X	Physical education
12–12.15	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
12.15–1	X	Finnish S2	Finnish S2	Religion or Ethics	Music
1–1.15	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
1.15–2	X	Group B	Group A		

X

= A lesson for the whole class, where pupils will study one of the following subjects: biology, visual arts, crafts, mathematics, Finnish

Finnish
S2

= Finnish lesson
S2 (Finnish as a second language) = Finnish lesson for pupils developing their Finnish skills to the level of native speakers S2 teacher takes the S2 lesson simultaneously with the Finnish lesson.

Ethics

= Ethics lesson for pupils who do not belong to religious communities

Mother tongue

= Mother tongue lessons may be arranged at another school

Group A
Group B

= Group lesson with half the class present. Various subjects; focus on crafts and mathematics

Pupil's voice: Polina's Friday in grade 2

Polina

9-year old Polina is in grade 2. She has lived in Finland since she was a baby. Polina goes to Nalli annex of Keinutie Comprehensive School. Her mother is from Belarus and her father is Russian-Finnish.



At 8 am

"It takes me five minutes to walk to school. I came to school by myself and played in the school yard with my friends. One of our games involves a bee chasing a kitten, with the kitten's owner and mummy cat protecting the kitten. One of the teachers was supervising us in the school yard."

At 8.15 am

"The school bell rang. I went in the queue with my friends. We walked to the coat racks outside our classroom and took off our outdoor clothes and shoes. I put on my indoor shoes. In the classroom I went to my desk and hung my rucksack on the back of my chair. I sit next to Jonne."

At 8.20 am

"My teacher Miikka told us that we have physical education in the school hall. I took with me my indoor sports clothes: jogging trousers and a t-shirt, and my towel and water bottle. There are separate changing rooms for boys and girls."

At first we played tag. Then we did gymnastics; like throwing bean bags and jumping sideways. Physical education is one of my favourite subjects. I love it when I get sweaty and use up lots of energy.

After a shower I put on my normal school clothes. I am wearing jeans, a t-shirt and a sweatshirt."





At 9.45 am

"In Visual arts, we drew traditional Finnish zithers. My drawing has lilac, green and light blue. I am good at drawing. Some days, we have a break at this time for playing outdoors."

At 10.15 am

"In environmental and natural sciences we talked about months and which holidays belong to each month. Shrove Tuesday is usually in February, Easter in April, Mothers' Day in May, and so on."

At 10.55 am

"We went to the school dining room for lunch. The food was great, I had mini meatballs and salad. I also like filled corn tortillas."

At 11.15 am

"We had a 100-page party. We always have a party when we have learnt 100 pages of a book, like in Mathematics. Mathematics is never boring. We celebrated by watching the animated film Rio, with birds that go on an adventure. Miikka is a really nice teacher. He is really kind. If you make a mistake, he'll let you try again. I like going to school."

At 12 noon

"School finished. I took my rucksack, put on my outdoor clothes and went to the after-school club. It takes me a few minutes to walk there. In the club, I played with my friends and had a snack. The snack is usually bread and butter with fresh fruit or vegetable. I usually also do my homework there. Today I didn't, because we never have homework for the weekend."

At 4 pm

"I walked home on my own. Sometimes I leave early if I have piano practice or a dance lesson."

Teaching and timetable of grades 7 to 9

In grades 7 to 9, pupils start studying new subjects. Each subject is taught by a different teacher and in different classrooms.

It is important to concentrate on studying as the syllabi of some subjects are completed in grade 7. Grades for these subjects will remain in the final certificate.

Read more

Curriculum regulates

school work..... p. 6

Continuous assessment p. 19

In grades 7 to 9 pupils study this

- Finnish language and literature, Finnish as a second language (S2)
- A language
- B language*
- Mathematics
- Biology
- Geography
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Health education**
- Religion or ethics
- History/Civics
- Music
- Visual arts
- Textile and technical work
- Physical education
- Home economics**
- Student counselling**
- Optional subjects

* As of 1 August 2016, starts in grade 6

** New subjects starting in grade 7



School days become longer in the upper stage.

Example of a timetable for grade 7

The timetable is a plan for the week. Each school uses their own codes.

TIME	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
8.15–9.45		yMA72 KiE A 212 KU	yTN73.1 PeS 27 PeS		yTN73.1 PeS 27 PeS
9.45–10	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10–11.30	yAIS273.1 NiT A 208	yA2RU71.1 HyH A2	yHI72 RyP A 216	yFY71 OnS A 105 FK	yA2RU71.1 HyH A2
11.30–12.15	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12.15–1.45	yFY71 OnS A 105 FK	yLIP72.1 MäJ LI	yAIS273.1 NiT A 208	yMA72 KiE A 105 FK	yHI72 RyP A 216
1.45–2	Break		LV.A HMN	Break	Break
2.15–3.45	yET71.1 LaM A 102				

yMA72:

y = lower secondary school
MA = subject, i.e. Mathematics
72 = grade level and course number
KiE = abbreviation of the teacher's name
A 212 KU = classroom space

yA2RU71.1:

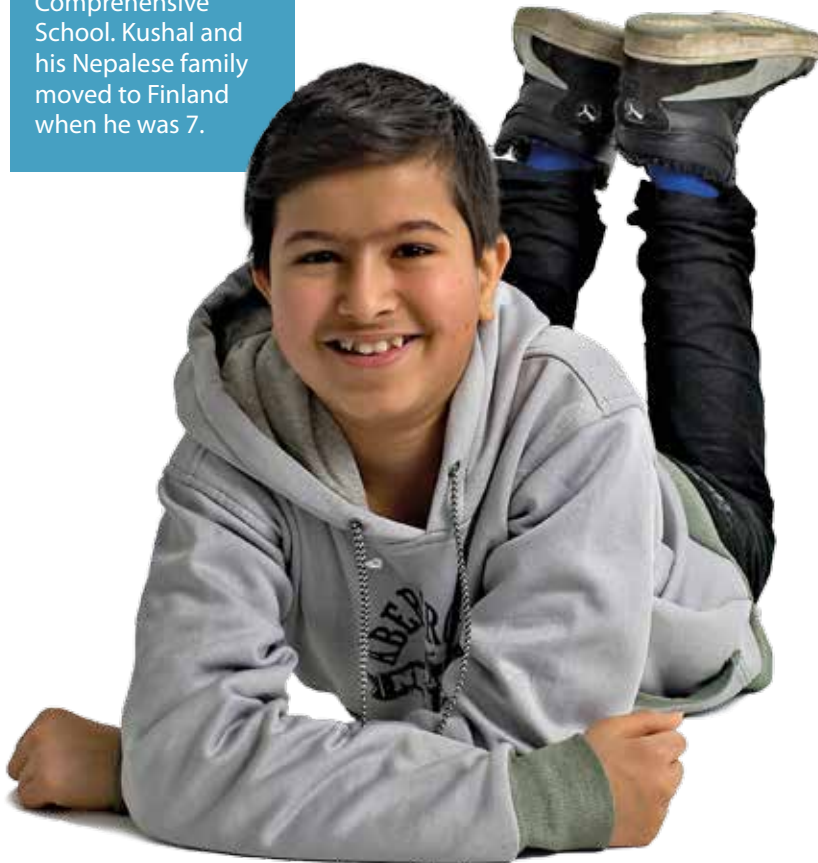
y = lower secondary school
A2 = extent of studies, subject started in grade 4
RU = Swedish
71.1 = 71 grade and course number, .1 pupils can be divided into different groups
HyH = abbreviation of the teacher's name
A2 = classroom space

LV.A HMN = homeroom tutor meeting

Pupil's voice: Kushal's Friday in grade 7

Kushal

13-year-old Kushal is in 7th grade at Vesala Comprehensive School. Kushal and his Nepalese family moved to Finland when he was 7.



At 7.45 am

"I left for school, I take the bus by myself. Today, school started at 8.15 am, as it does three days a week. Other days, school starts at 10 am. School days typically last between 5 and 7 hours."

At 8.15 am

"In technical work, we built electronic roulette machines. Our teacher Sauli told us how. I like building things, and I want to be an engineer. I have chosen technical work as an optional subject for grades 8 and 9. I am studying it in addition to the compulsory subjects."

At 9.45 am

"At break-time, we went to the football pitch in the school yard to play football. If we had not played football, I would have talked with my friends or played games on my mobile phone. Breaks are great for spending time with friends and getting some fresh air."

At 10 am

"We have a different teacher for each subject, unlike in the lower grades. I am used to it. Our Swedish teacher was away and we had a substitute



teacher. We learnt about possessive pronouns: my is min and her is hennes. The lesson was ok.”

At 11.30 am

”Our lunch break is almost an hour. For lunch we had spinach pancakes, they were good. As I am Hindu, I eat fish, chicken and vegetarian dishes. Vegetarian dishes are available everyday. Tortillas are my favourite.”

At 12.15 pm

”We had a history test on imperialism. Petri, our teacher, has told us many stories, about the Opium Wars between Britain and China, for example.

This week, we’ve had quite a few tests. They make me nervous, but not as much as they did in the lower grades. It is because I concentrate on learning during the lessons. I listen carefully to what the teacher says.”

At 1.45 pm

”School finished and I went home. I normally do my homework after school and then see my friends.”

At 5.30 pm

”I left to go to a class for my mother tongue, Nepalese at Itäkeskus Comprehensive School. My teacher is Khimanand. We study in three groups: the young ones learn the alphabet, the middle group learns to speak and write, and the oldest pupils learn the history of Nepal. I am in the middle group. It is good to know your mother tongue, because then I can act as an interpreter for my parents if they do not understand a Finnish expression, for example.”

School days are filled with activities

▼ Tasty meals at school

The daily meal is free for children. If children have allergies or special diets, their guardians must inform the school.



▲ Making things

Technical work is the favourite subject of many pupils. In the lessons, pupils make all kinds of things from wood and metal, and experiment with electronics.



▲ Latest technology

Teachers utilise the latest educational technology in their teaching.



▲ Physical education outdoors and indoors

In the winter, pupils can go cross-country skiing or ice-skating in their PE lessons. In the summer the lessons include running and learning the Finnish national game of baseball, pesäpallo. Throughout the year PE lessons can be held indoors in the school's gym hall.



▼ Own classroom in the lower grades

The learning environment feels safe, as pupils have their own teacher and most of the lessons are held in the same classroom. The teacher supports each pupil's strengths, which builds their confidence.

▼ Different learning environments

Pupils and their teacher studying a typical Finnish fish, the Baltic herring, in a biology lesson. Sometimes pupils go out to explore the natural environment or go on different types of visits, for example visiting a fisherman.



Language skills enable pupils to learn and make friends

Pupils learn many languages at school. Knowing your mother tongue and Finnish gives you a strong base for learning. Language skills can take you far.

Finnish as a second language

Pupils, whose mother tongue is not Finnish, learn Finnish in S2 lessons, that is Finnish as a second language. S2 lessons are not remedial or special education. They are equivalent to Finnish language and literature lessons.

S2 education can be offered in smaller groups or the group can be combined with the Finnish language and literature lessons. If pupils in S2 education participate in Finnish language and literature education, their performance is assessed in accordance with the S2 syllabus. S2 education will be continued until the pupil's

language skills are at the level of native Finnish speakers.

Mother tongue

The native language lessons supports the development and preservation of the pupil's mother tongue and reinforces their cultural identity. When the pupils mother tongue is strong/good it helps the pupil in learning new information and languages. Mother tongue is taught two hours a week at the local school or another school. Guardians must register pupils for mother tongue lessons when they start school. Information on the mother tongue timetables can be obtained from the school secretary.

Compulsory and optional A-language

Schools in Helsinki offer a wide range of foreign languages. Language selec-

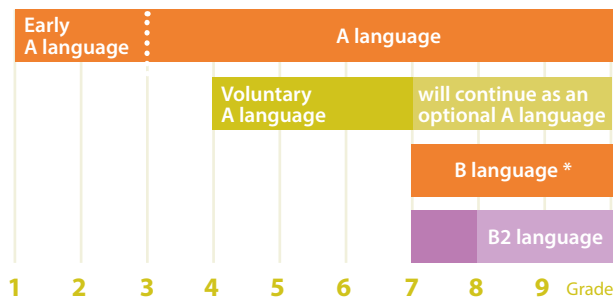
tion depends on the school.

In the lower grades, pupils learn the A language as a compulsory subject. This language may be English, Spanish, French, Swedish, German or Russian. In addition, pupils can study an optional A language. Alternatives include English, Spanish, French, Swedish, German and Russian.

Compulsory and optional B language*

In the lower secondary school, pupils start learning another compulsory B language. It is normally the second official language of Finland, Swedish, unless the pupil started learning it as the A language. In addition, pupils can take languages as optional subjects. Language options are Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Latin, French, German, Russian and Estonian.

Language studies in comprehensive schools



Early A language = a language starting in grade 1 or 2 in some schools

A language = a compulsory starting in grade 3

Voluntary A language = a voluntary language starting in grade 4

Optional A language = a voluntary language starting in grade 4, that will be titled optional A language in grades 7 to 9

B language = a common language starting in grade 7,

* B language lessons will start already in 6th grade as of 1st August 2014

B2 language = an optional language starting in grade 7 or 8

Orange box = compulsory languages, common to all

Teacher Päivi Lavonen: "S2 teaching creates opportunities for the future"

"All pupils need good Finnish skills as it is the key to learning things and to effective interaction and participation in society in Finland. Pupils that speak Finnish can apply to secondary education just like native Finnish speakers.

In both lower and upper secondary schools' final certificate, Finnish as a second language (S2) is equivalent to Finnish language and literature. Pupils continuing to an upper secondary school can even take the matriculation exam in S2.

Multilingual pupils need support in one or many linguistic areas. It is possible that a pupil can speak the language well, but their vocabulary is insufficient. Elements of Finnish language include speaking, writing, reading, understanding, vocabulary and structures.

My teaching follows the curriculum. I often talk to class teachers in the primary school and subject teachers in the lower secondary school to find out what topics they are covering in their lessons so that I can take them into account in my teaching. For example, we can learn history- or

biology-related vocabulary in the S2 lessons.

I usually teach pupils in the same age group as a small group 1 to 3 times a week. All pupils learn in different ways, so I use a variety of methods: playing cards, games, pictures, role play, puppets, etc. Compared to the lessons in Finnish language and literature, the perspective to learning Finnish can be different in the S2 lessons. For example, we can learn verb conjugation according to the way words end.

I can give you a few examples of my teaching. With third graders, we read stories that taught the pupils about dialogue. Afterwards, they wrote their own dialogues for animal puppets and performed them. With ninth graders, we went through working life vocabulary and texts.

The best feedback for my work? Definitely when the children get excited about learning and do not want to leave the classroom. I love seeing children develop their language skills."

S2 teacher Päivi Lavonen

Päivi Lavonen teaches Finnish as a second language (S2) at Kaisaniemi Comprehensive School (primary school) and Kruunuhaka Comprehensive School (lower secondary school). She is a qualified Finnish language and literature teacher who has specialised in S2 education.



Religion or Ethics

Every pupil will attend either religion or ethics lessons.

Finland has two state churches, thus Evangelical-Lutheran religion and Orthodox religion are taught in school.

Pupils can attend instruction in their own religion, such as Islamic or Catholic religion. Guardians must register for own religion lessons with a separate form.

If pupils do not belong to any religion, they will attend ethics lessons. Ethics consists of philosophy and social, religious and cultural sciences.



Every pupil will attend either Religion or Ethics lessons.

Continuous assessment

Teachers assess regularly what pupils have learnt at school. Assessment directs pupils' studies and supports their learning. Pupils learn to set objectives for their learning, work and activities with others. All this builds pupils' confidence as learners.

Different ways of showing abilities

Assessment refers to verbal and written feedback and numerical grading by the teacher, on the basis of the objectives set in the curriculum. In the first grades, the teacher will only give pupils written or verbal feedback, and often numerical grad-

ing only starts in grades 5 or 6. Numerical grading becomes more important in the lower secondary school. Every pupil receives a report card in the spring.

The amount and form of assessment varies from school to school and they are described in the curriculum. Language skills must not hinder assessment. The school must be flexible in providing pupils with opportunities to present their skills regardless of language skills. For example, pupils can show their skills by drawing and telling, if they cannot write Finnish yet.



Assessment directs pupils' studies and supports their learning.

Final certificate

The significance of studying increases in grades 7 to 9, because pupils will use their final certificate to apply to upper secondary education. The basic education certificate will show the grades obtained by the pupil in grade 9, but also grades obtained in grade 7. This is because the syllabus of certain subjects, such as music, is completed in grade 7.

National assessment criteria are used when giving grades for the basic education certificate. The criteria ensures that assessment is equal in every part of Finland.

If a pupil cannot be issued a basic education certificate or final certificate due to moving to Finland at the end of lower secondary school, the pupil can continue studying by going to another school. However, it is worth completing practical and arts subjects, such as physical education and music, in the lower secondary school.

Read more

Education paths in Finlandp. 28
Alternatives for those left without a place in upper secondary education..... p. 29
Study Counsellor Tiina Valtonen: "Study and find work"p. 30

After-school activities

After school, children have time to play, participate in hobbies, and do their homework. Many first and second graders do this as part of the school's after-school activities or organised activities at local playgrounds. All the pupils can participate in the school's clubs. Clubs and after-school activities support homes and school in bringing up the children and promote the children's growth.

Trained supervisors are responsible for the children during the after-school activities. Activities are organised daily both indoors and outdoors. In addition to structured activities, children can concentrate on independent play and taking a rest.

After-school activities at school

Schools, various organisations, parishes and private operators organise afternoon activities for groups after school subject to a charge. Children are served a snack during the afternoon. After-school activities start at the end of the school day and finish at 4 or 5 pm. Guardians must apply for places at after-school activities in the spring.

After-school activities at playgrounds

All children are welcome to the after-school activities at playgrounds free of charge. A snack is served subject to a charge. Children must register to be served the snack. Activities at playgrounds take place between 12 noon and 4 pm.

School clubs

Many schools operate supervised clubs in the afternoon. Clubs vary

from school to school. Some examples include English Club, Cooking Club, Basketball Club, Floorball Club and Computer Club. More information about clubs is available from school staff.

Read more

www.edu.hel.fi/iltapaivatoiminta

After-school activities at school

www.hel.fi/leikkipuistot

After-school activities at playgrounds





It's playtime in the after-school club.

School_{year}

Autumn term

August

Welcome to school!
Time to start school and the autumn term.

September



October

Autumn break for pupils.

November



December

Finnish Independence Day is celebrated on 6 December. It is a public holiday.

Christmas break starts in late December. The break lasts about 2 weeks.

January

Spring term starts and pupils come back to school.



Spring term

Summer holiday

February

At the end of February, pupils have a spring break for one week.

March



Easter means a few days off school.

April



May

May Day is celebrated on 1 May.

Ascension Day is 40 days after Easter.

June

The term ends and every pupil receives a school year report. Pupils are on holiday during June, July and early August. Enjoy the summer holiday!

July

Take holidays during school holidays

As a guardian, you should plan family holidays so that they coincide with school holidays. This is to make sure your children do not fall behind at school. If your child needs time off school for a special reason, you should submit a holiday application to the class teacher or the homeroom tutor. For example, a religious holiday celebrated in your family could be such a special reason. Please make sure your child learns everything he or she is missing while away from school.

School and home cooperation

Cooperation between teachers and guardians helps pupils in learning and growing. It makes easy and difficult topics manageable in open and confidential discussions.

Two-way communication is vital: guardians are responsible for the child's compulsory schooling and upbringing, and teachers support the child in the school community.

Wilma application

Regular communication between teachers and guardians takes place via the electronic Wilma application. It can be used any time with various equipment, such as computers, tablets and smartphones.

Parent-teacher meetings

The class teacher typically meets guardians briefly once or twice a year in 15-minute meetings called the parent quarter. In the meeting, the class teacher and guardians go through issues related to the pupil's learning and schooling.

Parents' evening

The class teachers and homeroom tutors usually organise a parents' night in the autumn. The teachers will talk about the curriculum, teaching and other school-related issues. It is important that the class teacher and guardians meet.

Class committee

Parents can set up a class committee to organise events and to raise money for field trips, for example.

Parents' association

Parents can participate in the activities of the school's parents' association. The association organises events such as topical discussions for parents.

School board

Every school has a school board with parent members. The school board makes decision about the school's curriculum, permanent teaching staff and budget. It also presents the school curriculum to the Helsinki Education Department for approval.



Parents and children:

"We use Wilma to discuss issues with teachers"

Conversation with Chinese-born parent Ying Hua Cai (left) and her daughter Kitty Zheng, aged 15, and Lithuanian-born parent Olga Hernesniemi and her son Hermann Hernesniemi, aged 16 (right). Hermann and Kitty go to Ressu Comprehensive School.

Olga: "Us parents, we first heard about Wilma at the Parents' evening at the school. The teachers showed us how to use it. It's easy to use."

Ying: "I like Wilma, it helps me keep up with what happens at school. I use Wilma on my smartphone several times a week. You can also use Wilma on tablets and computers where ever and no matter what time it is."

Olga: "I usually read Wilma messages on a normal computer at work. I get notifications of Wilma messages in my e-mail inbox. Teachers tell us about issues regarding the class and school, for example the coming basketball tournament, and when Hermann has done well at school, and if anything has gone wrong. I can also write messages to the teacher. For

example, I can write that Hermann will miss certain lesson tomorrow because he has to go to the dentist."

Ying: "Your child can help you and encourage you to use Wilma if you struggle with Finnish or have other difficulties."

Hermann: "Pupils use Wilma all the time. I use it to check teachers' messages about homework, upcoming tests, my grades, and other things."

Kitty: "I also use Wilma for the things Hermann mentioned. I have also arranged meetings for a project and stayed in touch with teachers using Wilma."

Olga: "You log in with your own ID and password. Discussions with teachers remain private as each Wilma user has limited access rights. Parents can only see messages and information regarding their own child. I recommend Wilma for everyone, parents and children."

Ying, Kitty and Hermann: "So do we."



Help and support for learning

Comprehensive schools in Helsinki offer diverse support for school work.

General types of support for learning include

- versatile and varied tasks and exercises
- learning in flexible groups
- remedial teaching
- club activities
- part-time special education
- student welfare services

If it is agreed with the guardians that more support is required for learning, an individual education plan can be prepared for the pupil, recording the objectives and methods for learning. A general support plan will be prepared for a pupil transferring from preparatory instruction to general instruction.

Home plays an important role in supporting the learning and growth of a child. The child's learning progress is assessed, and the level of support is discussed with the guardians.

If the pupil requires more support, it is possible to consider enhanced support or a decision to provide special needs support. Special needs support may consist of special needs edu-

cation in class, in a small group, or in a special school.

School in learning and welfare issues

Every school has a team of learning and welfare professionals. Their services are free of charge.

Student welfare team

The school welfare team works to promote wellbeing and safety at school, and usually consists of the principal, a school nurse, a school psychologist and social worker, a special needs teacher and guidance counsellor. Every school has an operating strategy for crisis and bullying.

Special needs teacher

- helps pupils with learning-related problems
- cooperates with other teachers in planning support for the pupil

School social worker

- helps pupils with problems related to going to school, friends and coping with change
- discusses home and upbringing issues with guardians

Psychologist

- steps in if a pupil has problems with learning, concentrating or mental health
- discusses home and upbringing issues with guardians

Doctor

- conducts medical examinations

School nurse

- conducts annual physical examinations

Read more

Parents and children: "We use Wilma to discuss issues with teachers" p. 25

Take your children to the health centre if they are ill.

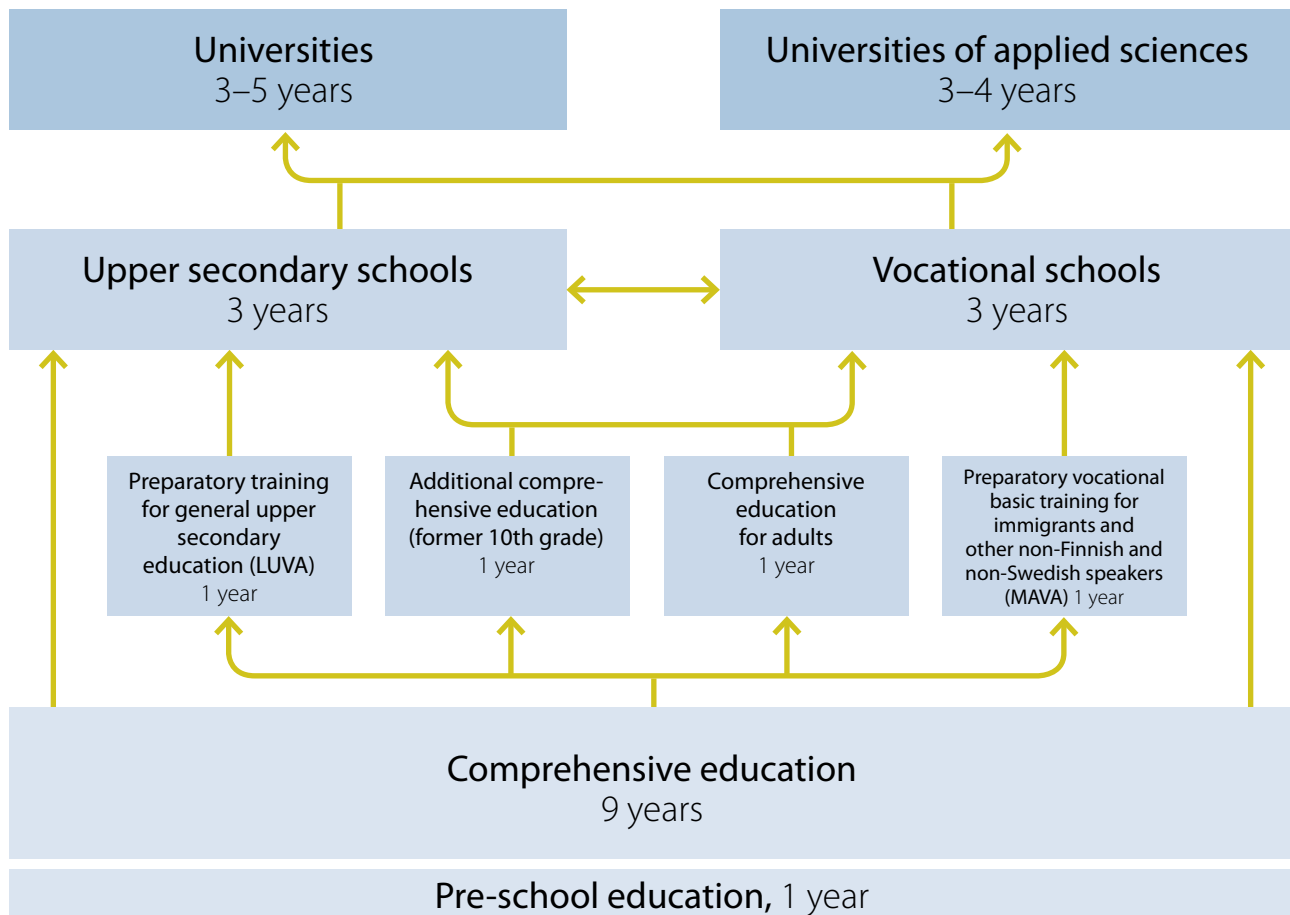
If your child has become ill and needs treatment, take him or her to the local health centre to see a nurse or a doctor. Don't forget to inform the teacher about your child's absence via the Wilma application.



The school nurse measures and weighs the children every year.

School paths in Finland

Many different school paths lead to employment. It is wise to consider different education alternatives at home and with a guidance counsellor at school. There is a good alternative for everyone!



Alternatives

for those left without a place in upper secondary education

Pupils who have moved to Finland have lots of choices if they are left without a place in a general or vocational upper secondary school.

1. Continuing studies within the comprehensive school syllabus

A. Additional comprehensive education (former 10th grade)

If a pupil has been issued a basic education certificate, he or she can improve their comprehensive education grades, thus improving their chances of gaining a place in upper secondary education.

Applying: www.opintopolku.fi

B. Comprehensive education for adults

Pupils who have not finished comprehensive school can complete the unfinished syllabi in schools providing comprehensive education for adults.

In comprehensive education for adults, pupils can study the syllabi of both primary and lower secondary schools.

Schools offering the education:

- Helsingin aikuiskoulu
- Eira High School for Adults

- Töölön yhteiskoulun aikuiskoulu
- Helsinki Diakonia College

Applying: *through schools*

2. Preparatory training for upper secondary education

A. Preparatory vocational basic training for immigrants and other non-Finnish and non-Swedish speakers (MAVA)

Pupils learn about different vocational training courses and plan their career choices.

Applying: www.opintopolku.fi

B. Preparatory training for general upper secondary education (LUVA)

Pupils improve their Finnish language skills, and study techniques and skills needed in upper secondary school. They can also take courses of upper secondary school.

Applying: www.opintopolku.fi

Read more

www.opintopolku.fi

Information about schools and universities in Finland



Study Counsellor Tiina Valtonen: "Study and find work"



"Studying is worthwhile, as it is easier to find work and make a living in Finland with qualifications. The basic education certificate is important because it is used to apply to further studies. In the joint application process, pupils apply to vocational or upper secondary education.

If a young person has moved to Finland in the late stages of comprehensive school and does not have enough time to achieve the basic education certificate, there's no need to worry. In Finland, pupils can move on to a different school with the objective of gaining the basic education certificate. It is worth noting that practical and arts subjects, like music and physical education, cannot be studied after comprehensive school, so it is worth completing those subjects in the lower secondary school.

There are lots of choices for young people after comprehensive school. There is the 10th grade and the preparatory training for vocational or general upper secondary education. They help pupils to improve their chances of gaining a place in upper secondary studies.

Pupils and guardians should seek information on careers and schools

that interest them during the lower secondary school. All pupils need help and encouragement from their guardians. Schools organise open days and parents' evenings about the joint application process.

The joint application process for places in upper secondary education takes place in the spring of the ninth grade. There are many study alternatives and they are published on the website of Helsinki Education Department.

As a guidance counsellor, I help pupils to see their own strengths, map out their study options and utilise their own resources. I also provide individual guidance, and teach small groups and whole classes.

Just today, before this interview, I had pupils in my office looking for information about summer jobs on the computer. Sometimes parents and an interpreter join in. I like to meet guardians and pupils together, so that we can all discuss the young person's school and further studies.

It always makes me happy when young people are accepted in training and stay active in society."

Guidance counsellor Tiina Valtonen

Tiina Valtonen is guidance counsellor at Myllypuro Comprehensive School, lower secondary school. Her favourite saying is "everyone will find their place". As guidance counsellor, Tiina helps young people to think about their studies and their future.



More information

on education and training

Education Department information and service desk

Personal service is available on
tel. 310 86400,
neuvonta.opetusvirasto@hel.fi
Open weekdays 8.15 am - 4 pm
Hämeentie 11 A, 3rd floor,
Helsinki 53, PL 3000,
00099 City of Helsinki
facebook.com/helsinginopetusvirasto

www.edu.hel.fi

Information about education and
training in Helsinki

See also the website of your local school:

The school's individual curriculum,
languages offered, working days
and holidays, information days,
regional information on after-school
activities, etc.

www.hel.fi/palvelukartta > Opetus ja koulutus

All education-related services on a
map of Helsinki

www.opintopolku.fi

Information about schools and uni-
versities in Finland





*Hyvää
koulupäivää!*



City of Helsinki
Education Department