Helsinki

School year 2027–2028

Welcome to school!

Brochure for parents and guardians of first graders





Contents

3 ..... Welcome to school!

4 ..... Important dates

6 ..... How to enrol in school

7 ..... The local school is in your neighbourhood

7 ..... Applying to a school other than the local school

9 ..... Applying to weighted-curriculum,
English-language and bilingual education

10 ..... Choosing language studies

10 ..... Mother tongue instruction

11 ..... Which one to choose:
S1 or S2 – Finnish as a first or second language

13 ..... Choosing religious or ethical studies

14 ..... Practical matters

Welcome to school!

Your child will start first grade in school next autumn. This is a significant moment, and school staff are looking forward to meeting their new students.

In Helsinki, we give every child a safe and inspiring start to their learning path. Learning is about doing, experimenting and discovering together. In the early years, we focus especially on core knowledge and skills, along with social and emotional skills—all of which provide a strong foundation for future learning.

All learners have the right to learn and receive support throughout their learning path. Support is provided early and proactively. The sense of safety and security come from caring adults who listen to the child, allowing the child to feel that schoolwork is a natural part of their everyday life. Cooperation between home and school plays an important role in this. Our goal is to raise healthy and well-learning Helsinki residents, together with you, the parents and guardians at home.

To all children starting school and their parents and guardians, we wish you a good school year 2027–2028!

Ville Raatikainen, Comprehensive Education Director
Education Division
City of Helsinki

To the reader

This brochure provides basic information about starting school.
For more information, visit hel.fi/welcometoschool.
For more information about all practical matters, contact your child's local school.
Find all local schools and their websites at hel.fi/schoolsearch.
This brochure is available also in Finnish, Swedish, Arabic, Somali and Russian at hel.fi/welcometoschool.

Important dates

16 November 2026 onwards

Schools may hold information events. See the dates and times on the schools' own web pages. Find all local schools at hel.fi/schoolsearch.

7 January 2027

onwards, we will send out compulsory education notes to children's home addresses by post. The note provides information on the start of your child's compulsory education.

11–24 January 2027

Online school enrolment at toschool.hel.fi. You can enrol your child in your local school or select other options, such as weighted-curriculum and bilingual education. If you do not intend to enrol your child in a municipal school, please notify us about this via the e-service toschool.hel.fi.

20 January 2027

If you need help with enrolling your child, visiting your local school on Wednesday **20 January 2027 at 8.00–10.00 am**. Please bring your child's compulsory education note with you. If you have already enrolled on the e-service, there is no need to visit the school.

24 January 2027

If you want to apply for a place for your child in a school other than the child's local school based on their home address and mother tongue, the application requires consent from each parent or guardian of the child. The parents and guardians must give their consent no later than 24 January 2027.

5 March 2027

School admission decisions are sent to parents and guardians by post.

15 March–13 April 2027

Application period for after-school activities. Learn more at hel.fi/afterschoolactivities.

21 March 2027

The period of providing additional information related to arranging education ends.

Spring 2027

Schools hold orientation events for upcoming first graders. Find more information on the schools' own web pages. Find all local school at hel.fi/schoolsearch.

11 August 2027

New first-graders start school on Wednesday 11 August 2027.

Further information:

- hel.fi/welcometoschool
- hel.fi/schoolsearch



How to enrol in school

- Enrol your child in comprehensive school on the e-service.
- Enrol your child in school at toschool.hel.fi during **11–24 January 2027**. The website will be open by 11 January 2027.

If you need help with enrolling, you can visit the local school on Wednesday **20 January 2027 at 8.00–10.00 am**. Remember to take the child's compulsory education note with you.

On the e-service, you can enrol your child in the local school or apply for a place in another school.

If you do not wish to enrol your child in education provided by the City of Helsinki (e.g. the child will attend a private school or home schooling), please notify us about this on the e-service at toschool.hel.fi. This information is important, as the City of Helsinki monitors children's participation in compulsory education.



The local school is in your neighbourhood

Every child and young person in Helsinki is automatically assigned a school place in a comprehensive school in their own neighbourhood. This is called the child's local school. Helsinki is divided into different school admission areas, which determine the local school for every child. The local school is usually within walking distance of the child's home, but it is not always the nearest one. For example, children in special educational needs classes might have a longer journey to school.

The City of Helsinki assigns the local school places according to a child's home address and mother tongue in The Finnish Population Information System. If your child's mother tongue is other than Swedish, they will get a place in a Finnish-language local school. You can check your child's local school in the compulsory education note, which was posted to the child's home address in early January 2027.

Applying to a school other than the local school

You can also apply for a place in a school other than the assigned local school. In Finnish-language schools, the other options include programmes such as the weighted-curriculum, bilingual or English-language education.

Applying for a place in a regular class in any other municipal school is also possible. As a rule, local schools admit children in the school's own admission area first. Other students can be admitted if there are places available.

If you wish to enrol your child to a school other than the assigned local school, you must have all parents' or guardians' consent for it. Consent can be given electronically at toschool.hel.fi by **24 January 2027** at the latest. If a parent or guardian is unable to give consent electronically, they must contact the school the child is being enrolled in.



Applying to weighted-curriculum, English-language and bilingual education

Some of our Finnish-language schools provide weighted-curriculum, English-language and bilingual education, which anyone can apply to.

Weighted-curriculum in music

In Helsinki, weighted-curriculum education in music starting in grade 1 is offered at Porolahti Comprehensive School in the Roihuvuori district. Students applying for weighted-curriculum education must take an aptitude test. Find more information about the aptitude tests on the Porolahti Comprehensive School's webpage.

Bilingual education

In bilingual education, students study in two languages: both in Finnish and in another language. Schools in Helsinki provide bilingual education in the following language pairs: Finnish–English, Finnish–Spanish, Finnish–Chinese, Finnish–North Sami, Finnish–Swedish, Finnish–Russian, and Finnish–Estonian. For some of these language pairs the student must take a test and for some, the students will be selected by lottery. For more information, see page hel.fi/bilingual and the schools' own web pages.

English-language education

In English-language education, all teaching is provided in English, except in the mother language and literature subject, which is taught in Finnish. English-language education is primarily intended for people living in Helsinki temporarily. The applicant must take a language test that measures their proficiency in English. Learn more at hel.fi/english-basic-education.

Choosing language studies

Your child starts studying the first foreign language in the first grade. This language is called the A1 language. The younger the child is, the easier it will be to learn a new language. In Helsinki, students can study English, Spanish, Chinese, French, Swedish, German or Russian as their first foreign language. If your child's local school does not teach the language of your choice, the child can get a place in a school that does. We ask you to state your child's A1 language preferences when enrolling them in school. The language study options of schools can be found on the schools' own web pages. Find all local schools at hel.fi/schoolsearch.

In Swedish-language schools, the A1 language is always Finnish. Please indicate your child's Finnish language level when enrolling them.

Language-themed parents' evening for new students' parents and guardians in Helsinki on 11 November 2026 at 17.00–18.30
How to choose the first foreign language (A1 language) for your first grader? What is Finnish as a second language instruction, mother tongue instruction or bilingual education? Join us for the Helsinki-wide language- themed parents' evening to learn about the language selection in Helsinki's Finnish-language schools and what to consider when making language study choices. The event will be held remotely. More information and registration: hel.fi/welcometoschool.

Mother tongue instruction

If your child's mother tongue or home language is other than the language of instruction, the child can have instruction in their own mother tongue, too. Enrolling for mother tongue classes is fully optional and classes usually take place after the school day. The child might have to go to another school for these classes.

Which one to choose: S1 or S2 – Finnish as a first or second language

When enrolling the child, the parent or guardian chooses whether the child will study Finnish at the native level (S1) or at the second language level (S2). The S1 syllabus is aimed at children who have native-level Finnish skills, regardless of what their first language is. The choice is not binding, and you can discuss it with the child's teacher. The aim is that students who start in an S2 group learn Finnish and can transfer to S1 at some point during comprehensive school. In Swedish-speaking schools, S1 and S2 studies are in Swedish.





Choosing religious or ethical studies

Children attend study religious or ethical studies classes in school – in other words they choose either religion or ethics.

There are religion classes for different religions. Helsinki currently teaches the following subjects in religion or worldview studies:

- Evangelical Lutheran
- Ethics
- Catholic
- Orthodox
- Islam
- Buddhist (in Finnish-language comprehensive schools only)
- Krishna (in Finnish-language comprehensive education only)

A parent or guardian who is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran church cannot choose any other option for the child's religious studies. If your child is not a member of the church or is a member of any other religious community, the parent or guardian will choose what religious or worldview studies the child will study in school. The available options depend on the child's religion.



Practical matters

School term dates and holidays

Going to school is the student's job. The school timetable provides a framework for the school week. It shows the start and end times of lessons, recess and the lunch break. The lessons organised in each subject vary from day to day. Families must plan their holidays to coincide with the school holidays, as an absence reduces the amount of teaching that the student receives. For a special reason, the parents or guardians can apply for exemption from schoolwork for the child. In such a case, the parents or guardians must ensure that the child does all the work assigned to them and that their absence does not hinder their studies.

School supplies and equipment

The student will be provided with all the school supplies and equipment that they need by the school. The student's family are required to provide them with a school backpack and a pencil case for supplies. In addition to this, the child must have weather-appropriate equipment suitable for indoor and outdoor physical education lessons.

School meals

Students are provided with a free meal every school day. There are two main course options to choose from every day. The meal includes a warm main course, a salad, grated vegetables or other raw food item, a beverage, bread and bread spreads.

Swimming instruction at school

Physical education also covers swimming instruction. The student must bring their own swimwear and a towel. The school will provide more detailed instructions on equipment and how to use the swimming pool. Learning how to swim takes time and regular practise. It is important for the development of swimming skills that adults take their children swimming in their free time as well.

Religious events

At the start of the school year, the school informs parents and guardians about religious events which schools may hold. The parents and guardians decide whether their child will attend these events. Alternative activities are always provided for religious events.



Insurance

The City of Helsinki has insured all students against accidents. The insurance does not cover the students' personal property. The insurance is valid at school, on journeys to and from school and during school-organised events, excursions and school camps.

Use of mobile devices

Shared ground rules on the use of mobile devices are laid down in the school rules. Comprehensive school students are not allowed to use phones, tablets, headphones, watch phones or smartwatches during lessons, except for learning purposes with the permission of the teacher. However, a mobile device can also be used as a learning aid or for health reasons, with the permission of a teacher or principal. The use of mobile devices during recess, transitions and lunches is also subject to issued instructions.

Morning activities

In comprehensive education, we provide morning activities at schools before lessons for students in first and second grade and for students in third and fourth grade who have been issued an administrative decision on learning support. The activities are voluntary and free of charge. You can enrol in the activities once school has started via your Wilma account. For more information, visit hel.fi/morningactivities.

After-school activities

In Helsinki, after-school activities are organised for students in first and second grade and for students who have been issued an administrative decision on learning support. After-school activities include playing and spending time together with friends, outdoor activities, exercise and small excursions in the local environment. After-school activities are subject to a fee and include a snack and insurance. The application period for after-school activities is 15 March–13 April 2027. More information: hel.fi/afterschoolactivities.

Helsinki

Contact us
Education Division Advisory Services
Tel. +358 9 310 44986, Monday–Friday at 10.00 am –12.00 pm noon and 13.00–15.00, email koulutusneuvonta@hel.fi

Street address: Työpajankatu 8, 00580 Helsinki
Postal address: PO Box 51300, 00099 City of Helsinki
Switchboard: +358 9 310 8600, Monday–Friday at 8.15–16.00

hel.fi/welcometoschool

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hel.fi/welcometoschool

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and on the schools' own web pages at hel.fi/schoolsearch.