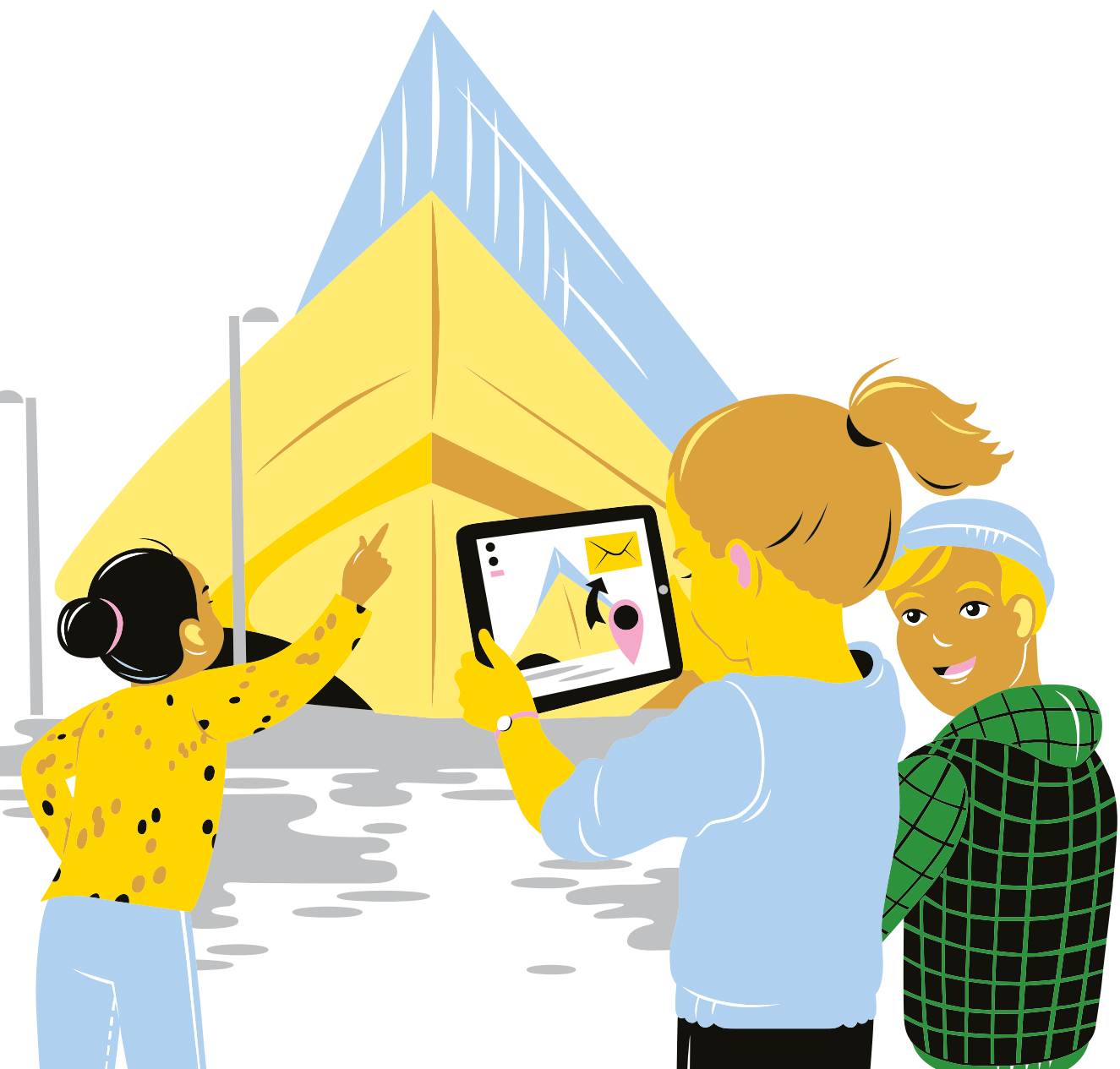


Helsinki

School year 2025–2026

Welcome to school!

A guide for guardians of first-graders





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Welcome to school!

Your child will start school in first grade next autumn. This moment is significant, and the school staff are looking forward to meeting their new pupils. It is important for all children to get to experience the joy of learning. Learning is doing, trying and discovering things together. We are raising healthy and well-learning Helsinki residents, together with their homes.

In Helsinki, we provide all children with a safe and inspiring learning path and diverse education opportunities. The learning path starts from early childhood education and continues to pre-primary education and comprehensive school, after which pupils continue their studies in general upper secondary or vocational education. The beginning of the learning path highlights key competences and skills, as well as social and

emotional skills, which, form a robust foundation for all learning.

A wide variety of support networks have been built for first-graders, and help is available for children who need special support. Safety and security come from adults caring about and listening to the child and the child feeling that schoolwork is a natural part of their everyday life. Cooperation between home and school plays an important role in this. This cooperation takes its first step at the newcomers' parents' evenings. Let us give children a good start at school together.

We wish all new schoolchildren and their families a good and safe school year 2025–2026!

To the reader

This guide provides information about starting Finnish-language comprehensive school. You can find more information about all practical matters by contacting your child's local school and visiting its website. They will also provide you with details of any information events held at the school. Schools providing weighted-curriculum, English-language and bilingual education provide information about aptitude test and language tests on their own websites. You can find more information about different options on the hel.fi/welcometoschool website. For more information about starting Swedish-language basic education, please see edu.hel.fi/valkommentillskolan.

Important dates

18 November 2024–18 January 2025

Schools may hold information events. See the dates and times on the schools' websites. Find the school webpages via hel.fi/kouluhaku.

7–26 January 2025

Online school enrolment at asti.hel.fi. In the Asti service, you can enrol at your local school or select other options, such as weighted-curriculum and bilingual education and a school other than your local school. Starting on 2 January 2025, a compulsory education note providing information about the start of the child's compulsory education will be posted to their home address.

If you apply for a place for your child at a school other than the child's local school based on their address and mother tongue (Finnish or Swedish), the application requires all guardians' consent. The guardians must give their consent no later than 26 January 2025.

If you do not enrol your child in education provided by the City (e.g. the child will attend a private school or home schooling), please submit a notification about this via Asti. This information is important, as the City monitors children's participation in compulsory education.

20–31 January 2025

The principal of the local school invites the upcoming pupil and their guardians to a hearing before a special support decision is made.

Wed 22 January 2025 at 8.00–10.00

You can also enrol your child by visiting your local school. Please bring your child's compulsory education note with you. If you have already enrolled via Asti, there is no need to visit the school.

From Mon 27 January 2025 onwards

If you move to Helsinki after the enrolment period has ended, please contact the principal of your local school. You can check what your local school is based on your home address at hel.fi/kouluhaku. If you move to Helsinki after the enrolment period and wish to apply for a place for your child in Eng-

lish-speaking or bilingual education, you can apply for any vacant places during the supplementary application round starting in May. You can find information about the supplementary application round on the schools' websites at the turn of April and May. You cannot apply during the supplementary application round if you were already living in Helsinki during the ordinary enrolment period in January.

3–14 February 2025

The principal invites the upcoming pupil and their guardians to a hearing before a special support decision is made if the aim is to provide special support at a special education school, in an extended compulsory education special needs education class or in a supported special needs education class.

7 March 2025

School admission decisions are posted to guardians. The decision on special educational needs is posted to the pupil's home.

17 March–16 April 2025

Application period for after-school activities. Applying for after-school activities is done primarily via Wilma. Guardians can create a guardian account in Wilma or add the upcoming pupil to their existing Wilma account by using suomi.fi e-identification from 17 March 2025 onwards. The after-school activity decisions will be sent to the children's homes by the beginning of July 2025.

30 March 2025

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

Spring 2025

Schools hold introduction events for upcoming first-graders. You can find more information on the schools' websites: hel.fi/kouluhaku.

7 August 2025

The first day of school in the 2025–2026 school year is Thursday 7 August 2025. You can find the term dates and holidays for the school year at hel.fi/welcometoschool.



Additional information online

hel.fi/welcometoschool

- ▶ school enrolment instructions, schedules and forms, etc.

hel.fi/servicemap

- ▶ Find the Finnish and Swedish school areas under 'Public service areas' and 'Education' Helsinki on the map.

hel.fi/kouluhaku

- ▶ Search for schools in Helsinki with the child's home address, or with the school's information.

The local school's website

- ▶ the school's curriculum, language selection, contact information of schools, etc.

asti.hel.fi

- ▶ You can enrol your child in school online via the Asti online service during the enrolment period. Asti will guide you forward in every phase of the enrolment process.

hel.fi/wilma

- ▶ The Wilma system provides you with information about your child's education and educational arrangements.

How to enrol to school

You can enrol online or by visiting the school

Enrol your child to school

- ▶ online between 7 and 26 January 2025 at asti.hel.fi or
- ▶ by visiting the school on Wednesday 22 January 2025 at 8.00–10.00

Online enrolment

Enrol your child to school between **7 and 26 January 2025** at asti.hel.fi. You can check your child's local school in the compulsory education note sent to the child's home address by post at the beginning of 2025. The City assigns the child a local school based on their home address and their mother tongue (Finnish or Swedish) listed in the population information system. The local school information can also be found in Asti.

You can use the Asti service to enrol your child at the City of Helsinki's schools and in the programmes that the schools provide. The options are:

- ▶ local school determined by the pupil's mother tongue (Finnish or Swedish)
- ▶ local school in the other national language (Swedish-language school instead of a Finnish-language school, or vice versa)
- ▶ weighted-curriculum education in music
- ▶ English-language education
- ▶ Bilingual education
- ▶ Swedish-language immersion (begun in early childhood education or pre-primary education)
- ▶ school other than the local school based on an A1 language that cannot be studied at the local school
- ▶ school other than the local school for other reasons.

If you want to enrol your child at a school other than the local school, all of the child's guardians are required to give their consent. The guardians must give their consent via Asti no later than **26 January 2025**. If the guardians are unable to give their consent via Asti, please contact the school at which you wish to enrol the child.



If you do not wish to enrol your child in education provided by the City (e.g. the child will attend a private school or home schooling), please submit a notification about this via Asti. This information is important, as the City monitors children's participation in compulsory education.

Enrolment instructions

Logging in

Open the browser on your computer, tablet or smartphone.

1. Go to asti.hel.fi.
2. Select your preferred language from the upper right corner of the website.
3. Press the 'Log in' button.
4. Identify yourself and continue to the service.
5. When you log in to Asti the first time, read about and accept the processing of personal data in Asti.

Enrolment

1. First, select basic education in Finnish or Swedish.
2. **Finnish-language basic education:** Specify the preferred A1 language at the local school. Provide this information also when applying for a school other than the local school (in case your other application preferences cannot be met).
Swedish-language basic education: Select the child's level of proficiency in Finnish and continue to the next phase.
3. Basic education in Finnish and Swedish: State whether you are applying for a school other than the local school and add your application preferences.
4. If needed, make sure that all guardians give their consent.
5. State whether the child needs special support.
6. Review the information and send.

After enrolment, provide any additional details regarding the child's school arrangements. You can provide these details immediately or later, but no later than **30 March 2025**.

Enrolment at the school on 22 January 2025

You can also enrol your child at their local school **on Wednesday 22 January 2025 at 8.00–10.00**.

If you have already enrolled your child via Asti, there is no need to visit the school. Enrolment at the school also primarily utilises the Asti online service. The school staff will help you with the enrolment process. Bring the child's compulsory education note and your means of identification (such as your Finnish online banking credentials) with you to the school.

Families moving to or within Helsinki

If you move within Helsinki after December 2024 so that your local school changes, you will not be able to receive a place at the local school determined by your address via Asti. In that case, you can enrol your child at the local school by filling out a separate online form (see hel.fi/welcometoschool) or by visiting the local school determined by your new address on **Wednesday 22 January at 8.00–10.00**. If you wish to apply for weighted-curriculum, English-language or bilingual education, you can enrol normally via Asti. If you move later during the spring or summer, please contact the principal of the local school determined by your new address.

The local school is in your own neighbourhood

Your child's compulsory education begins in the year of their seventh birthday. School starts in early August 2025 for children born in 2018.

Helsinki is divided into school admission areas. The City assigns every child a place at the comprehensive school in their own neighbourhood, and this is called a local school. The school building closest to the child's home is not necessarily their local school. The local school is usually within walking distance. The school network is designed so that almost all pupils can complete comprehensive school at the local school in their own neighbourhood. If the pupil goes to a comprehensive school providing all grades 1–9, there is no need to start the seventh grade at a different school. In addition to the City's own comprehensive schools, there are private contractual schools operating in Helsinki as part of the City's local school network. There are also private schools and state schools in Helsinki.

Your local school is determined by the child's home address. You must live in the admission area of the local school when admission decisions are made in the spring and at the start of the school year in August. If you move away from the admission area of your old local school after enrolment via Asti and would like for your child to start school at the old local school, please contact the principal of the school. If there are vacant places at the school, the principal can admit your child. In that case, you will be responsible for any school transport costs.

Grounds for admission

Decisions on the grounds for admission and how the local school is determined in the Finnish-language schools are made by the Finnish-language division of the Education Committee. Similarly, the decisions for the Swedish-language schools are made by the Swedish-language division of the Education Committee. The grounds and related decisions can be found at hel.fi/welcometoschool. The grounds for admission are also available at the schools and from the Education Division's advisory services (koulutusneuvonta@hel.fi, tel. +358 9 310 44986). If you have any questions about school admission, you can send them by email to oppilaaksiotto@hel.fi.

Pupils living in Helsinki have a priority when admitting pupils to education provided by the City of Helsinki. The pupil's address must be in Helsinki when the decision is made and when the new school year starts. The address information will be checked in the population information system. Pupils living outside Helsinki can be admitted if the school has vacant places after all applicants living in Helsinki have been admitted. The school transport of a pupil living outside Helsinki and the costs thereof will be the responsibility of the pupil's guardian. Pupils living outside Helsinki are not admitted to special educational need classes (with the exception of education for the hearing impaired at Pitäjänmäki Comprehensive School).

Special needs education in a classroom

If it has been assessed multi-professionally during your child's pre-primary education year that the child needs special needs education in a classroom, please enrol at the school designated in the compulsory education note via Asti. The manager of the daycare centre will transfer the child's pedagogical statement to the school designated in the compulsory education note or to the administration of the Education Division. The principal of the designated school will invite the upcoming pupil and their guardians to a hearing before the special support decision is made. A separate administrative decision will be made on special support and posted to the child's home.

Starting school a year earlier

A child is entitled to start basic education one year earlier than is statutory if the child has the capability to manage the studies based on psychological and, if necessary, medical reports. If you would like for your child to start school a year earlier, you must get a specialist statement commissioned in Finland before enrolment. If you would like for your child to start school a year earlier, enrolment via Asti will not be available. In that case, fill out a separate online enrolment form (see hel.fi/welcometoschool) and get the specialist's statement required before enrolment. Attach the statement to the enrolment form or submit it during the enrolment period to the principal of the school at which you would like to enrol your child.

Starting school a year later

You can apply for permission for your child to start comprehensive school a year later than is statutory (in autumn 2026). In that case, let the principal of your local school know that you are applying for starting basic education a year later. The decision is based on a psychological and, if necessary, a medical report. You must also fill out a form regarding starting basic education a year later than is statutory (see hel.fi/welcometoschool). Submit the statements required to the child's pre-primary education place or local school, from where they will be forwarded to a learning support special planning officer. You can also visit the school on the enrolment day to deliver the documents in person. The basic education district manager will make the decision concerning the start of school one year later.

If a child starts school a year later, their pre-primary education will be provided at the daycare centre. You can apply for placement in pre-primary education at the daycare centre by submitting an application to the manager of the daycare centre. Further information will be provided by the daycare centre.

If your child will start school a year later in autumn 2025, the enrolment method depends on the upcoming school:

- a) If the child will attend local school, visit the school on the enrolment day 22 January to enrol.
- b) If the child will attend a class providing special needs education as a centralised service, their pre-primary education place will submit the required documents directly to the Education Division. You will not need to visit the school to enrol.

Applying for a school other than the local school

The child can also apply for a school other than their local school. The local school primarily admits pupils living in the area, but if places are available, the school may also admit other pupils in an order determined in certain grounds for admission. In such a case, the guardians are responsible for any expenses resulting from the pupil's school transport. Decisions on the grounds for admission and how the local school is determined are made by the Finnish-language division of the Education Committee. Similarly, the decisions for the Swedish-language schools are made by the Swedish-language division of the Education Committee. The grounds for admission can be found at hel.fi/welcometoschool.

Bilingual and English-language education

In Helsinki, pupils can study entirely or partially in a language other than Finnish. See the different language options on pages 16–17 of this guide.

Weighted-curriculum education starting in first grade

Weighted-curriculum education means education that emphasises a certain subject. Pupils studying in weighted-curriculum education may have 1–2 hours longer school weeks than other pupils. Porolahti Comprehensive School provides weighted-curriculum education in music starting in first grade. The education is provided in cooperation with the East Helsinki Music Institute. The pupils are selected based on an aptitude test, and everyone interested can apply. The aptitude test measures the pupil's ability to study in the weighted-curriculum education provided.

Attending compulsory education that is not municipal

The City monitors children's compulsory education attendance. A compulsory education-aged child may attend their compulsory education provided by the City, in education provided by a private provider or in home schooling. If the child does not enrol at a school of the City, please notify the City of where they will attend their compulsory education. You can submit the notification via Asti. If the child will attend home schooling, you must also fill out a notification of moving to home schooling and submit it to the local school designated in the compulsory education note.

Notification of home schooling

A child of compulsory education age must attend comprehensive education provided in accordance with the Basic Education Act or, otherwise, obtain knowledge corresponding to the comprehensive education syllabus. The guardian will be responsible for the child completing their compulsory education. The child cannot be partly in school education and partly home schooled. If the child moves to home schooling, the guardians are asked to submit the 'Notification of moving to home schooling' form to the local school designated in the compulsory education note. The form can be found at hel.fi/welcometoschool under 'Enrolment in home schooling'. When the child moves to home schooling, a meeting will be held between the guardian, the local school and the home schooling team of Helsinki. The meeting will involve going through the practices of studying in home schooling. Home schooling requires that an inspective teacher is appointed from the home schooling team. If a child in home schooling wants a report card that equals the comprehensive school certificate, they must complete a special degree.



The comprehensive schools of Helsinki focus on learning key competences and skills

The objective of the school is to reinforce the key competences and skills that the child will need in the future, as well as social and emotional skills. In particular, the start of the school path emphasises the development of reading and writing skills, mathematical and logical thinking, language skills, and manual and motor skills. Key competences and skills are practised diversely with the pupil's age level and skills taken into consideration. The school-specific curriculum states the principles of schoolwork and the special emphases of the school. The school curricula are available on the eRequirements website at eperusteet.opintopolku.fi.

The school week follows a timetable. In Finnish-language basic education, pupils in first and second grade have at least 22 lessons per week, and in Swedish-language basic education, at least 21 lessons. The duration of lessons can vary from school to school. Another teacher may work together with the pupil's class teacher. A classroom assistant may also work in the class. The class may be divided into different and differently sized groups for some of the study time. The pupils are provided with textbooks and other learning materials by the school free of charge. Subjects that all comprehensive school pupils in first grade study are mother tongue and literature, A1 language, mathematics, environmental studies, religion or ethics, artistic and practical subjects, music, visual arts, crafts and physical education.



Choosing the religious and ethical subjects

The options for religious or ethical studies depend on the pupil's religion. You can find a more detailed description of which religious or ethical studies the pupil can or must attend in the paragraph on the right-hand side. At the moment, the schools of Helsinki teach Buddhist, Evangelical Lutheran, Catholic, Orthodox, Krishna and Islam religion and ethics. The choice of religious or ethical studies is permanent. The pupil will study their selected religious or ethical subject for the entire duration of comprehensive school. More information about the teaching of religious or ethical subjects and applying for teaching of the pupil's own religion is provided by the pupil's school.

Pupil belonging to the Evangelical Lutheran Church

- ▶ The pupil will attend Evangelical Lutheran religion studies. The guardian cannot choose other religious or ethical subjects.

Pupil belonging to the Orthodox Church

- ▶ The guardian chooses whether the pupil will attend Orthodox or Evangelical Lutheran religion studies.

Pupil belonging to a religious community registered in Finland

- ▶ The guardian chooses whether the pupil will attend studies in their own religion, ethics or the Evangelical Lutheran religion, or religious education provided by their own religious community instead of the school.
- ▶ The pupil will attend compensatory education arranged by the school if none of the aforementioned options can be arranged.

Pupil not belonging to a religious community registered in Finland

- ▶ The guardian chooses whether the pupil will attend ethics or Evangelical Lutheran religion studies.
- ▶ The guardian can also enrol the pupil in studies in their own religion provided by the City of Helsinki if the studies correspond with the pupil's upbringing and cultural background.

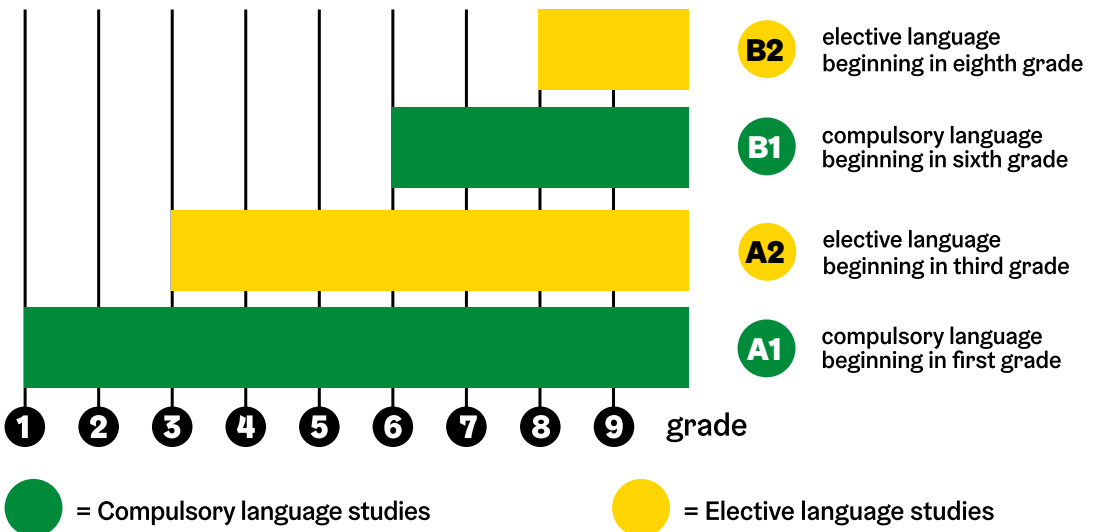




Language selection of the school

▶ The language selection of a school can be found on its website and at hel.fi/kouluhaku

Language studies at comprehensive school



Language studies begin in the first grade for all

The beginning of school also means the beginning of studies in the first foreign language or the second national language. This language is called the A1 language. During the first school years, the child will learn the language through play, songs, games and other activities. The goal is for the child to learn to speak and use the new language.

Other languages are also studied at school. The child will begin studying their second foreign language in sixth grade at the latest. This language is called the B1 language. In addition to the A1 and B1 languages, the child can start studying an A2 language from third grade onwards and/or a B2 language in eighth grade. In total, the child can study four languages if they so choose.

In Helsinki, pupils can study English, Spanish, Chinese, French, Swedish, German or Russian as their first foreign language, depending on the school. Not all of the languages listed are available at every school. At the majority of schools, there are at least two options in the A1 language selection. Some schools only have English in their selection.

You should carefully consider which first foreign language your child will study. The younger the child is, the easier it will be for them to learn a new language. With that in mind, the first foreign language to study could very well be one that the child does not hear very much. Furthermore, as your child's guardian, you are not required to already know the languages that the child studies. The best way for you to support your child in their language studies is to reinforce their home language(s) by using the language(s) diversely with them. Linguistic development is supported by activities such as reading, talking and playful use of the language.

You can find the language selection of your local school on their website. If your child's local school does not provide studies in the desired language, you can apply for a place at a school that does. State your child's A1 language wishes when enrolling in school via Asti.

You will be provided with more detailed information about language studies, teaching, the language selections of schools and language options at the schools' information events. You can find the schools' language selections on their websites, which you can find at hel.fi/kouluhaku.

English-enriched education

Some schools in Helsinki provide English-enriched education. This education is intended for all pupils in the school admission area. In English-enriched education, pupils study the subjects included in the curriculum in Finnish and English. 10–25% of the education is provided in English in grades that provide language-enriched education. In English-enriched education, the pupil develops a high level of proficiency in English. Bilingual learning also develops problem-solving skills, flexible thinking and adaptation to new situations.

Schools providing English-enriched education

- ▶ Itäkeskus Comprehensive School, grades 1–4
- ▶ Kaisaniemi Primary School, grades 1–6
- ▶ Kannelmäki Comprehensive School, grades 1–9
- ▶ Lauttasaari Primary School, grades 1–6
- ▶ Pikku Huopalahti Primary School, grades 1–6
- ▶ Taivallahti Comprehensive School, grades 1–6
- ▶ Vattuniemi Primary School, grades 1–6

Bilingual education

Bilingual education

Schools in Helsinki provide bilingual education in the following language pairs: Finnish and English, Finnish and Spanish, Finnish and Chinese, Finnish and Northern Sámi, Finnish and Swedish, Finnish and Russian, and Finnish and Estonian. In bilingual education, pupils study the subjects included in the curriculum in Finnish and another language. 25–50% of the learning and teaching takes place in the other language, depending on the grade and the school-specific weighting. You can enrol your child in bilingual education via the Asti online service. Anyone interested can enrol and take part in the education. No language test will be held in any language for first-graders applying for the education in the spring in 2025. If there are more applicants than places available in the group, the pupils will be selected by drawing lots.

Bilingual education for all

Bilingual education is intended for everyone interested in it. All children can apply for it, regardless of their language background and skills. In bilingual education, the pupil will develop strong skills in both languages. The content and objectives of bilingual education are the same as in monolingual education. Bilingual education will continue until the end of ninth grade, meaning that pupils will commit to it for the entire duration of comprehensive school. After the lower stage of comprehensive school, pupils will continue their studies in seventh grade, either at the same comprehensive school with grades 1 to 9 or a lower secondary school with grades 7 to 9 in accordance with their learning path. More information about the education is provided on the websites of schools providing bilingual education, and by their principals.

Schools providing bilingual education

Finnish and English

- ▶ Aleksis Kivi Comprehensive School (begins in 2025)
- ▶ Kulosaari Primary School
- ▶ Laajasalo Comprehensive School
- ▶ Malmi Comprehensive School
- ▶ Töölö Primary School
- ▶ Vesala Comprehensive School

Finnish and Spanish

- ▶ Käpylä Comprehensive School

Finnish and Chinese

- ▶ Meilahti Primary School

Finnish and Northern Sámi

- ▶ Pasila Comprehensive School

Finnish and Swedish

- ▶ Nordic Comprehensive School

Finnish and Russian

- ▶ Myllypuro Comprehensive School

Finnish and Estonian

- ▶ Latokartano Comprehensive School

Swedish-language immersion

The Swedish-language immersion programme starts in the year of the child's fourth birthday, or at the beginning of pre-primary education at the latest. Having begun language immersion, the child will move on to basic education in first grade at a school determined in the language immersion path. A place at a school determined in the language immersion path can be accepted in the Asti system. Children other than ones who have started language immersion in pre-primary education can also be admitted to language immersion groups if there are vacant places in the groups and the child has the required level of proficiency in Finnish and Swedish.

English-language education

In English-language education, all teaching is provided in English, apart from the school subject 'Finnish language and literature'. Children with a native-level proficiency in English are selected for the programme. English-language education is intended primarily for children living temporarily in Helsinki or planning to move abroad.

You can enrol your child in English-language education in the Asti system. The child will take a language test that measures their proficiency in English. The applicant is not required to know Finnish, and succeeding in the language test does not require reading or writing skills.

For children attending school in Finland, bilingual education in Finnish and English is a better alternative than English-language education, as the child will learn both English and Finnish. Pupils taking part in bilingual education will have more diverse options in terms of aspects such as upper secondary education than those taking part in English-language education.

Schools providing English-language education

- ▶ Maunula Primary School
- ▶ Ressu Comprehensive School (International Baccalaureate programme)

City-wide parents' evening on language choices on Tuesday 10 December 2024 at 17.00–18.30

How to select the first foreign language (A1 language) for an upcoming first-grader? Come and listen to specialists' speeches on early language learning and what aspects should be taken into account when selecting languages. You can attend the event remotely or in person at Central Library Oodi. More information and registration: hel.fi/welcometoschool.

Language studies in Swedish-language schools

In our Swedish-language schools, the A1 language is always Finnish, and it starts in the first grade. A pupil can study either the native-level Finnish syllabus or A1 Finnish syllabus. A2 language in the Swedish-language schools starts in grade 3. It is studied for 2–3 lessons per week.

Mother tongue instruction

The City of Helsinki offers studies for maintaining the pupil's mother tongue, home language or language skills obtained abroad. The language studies are organised according to the number of pupils enrolled in these studies. The studies complement the comprehensive education, increasing the pupil's weekly number of lessons by two. Pupils taking part in the programme receive a separate verbal certificate in grades 1–8 and a numeric grade in ninth grade as an attachment to their school year report.

The programme is available to:

- ▶ Finnish as a first or second language pupils whose mother tongue or home language is not Finnish or Swedish
- ▶ pupils whose home language or mother tongue is Swedish and who attend Finnish-language basic education
- ▶ pupils whose close relatives speak Roma or Sámi as their mother tongue or home language
- ▶ pupils returning to Finland who want to participate in studies maintaining the language skills they have obtained abroad.

Enrolling in the studies takes place simultaneously with school enrolment in Asti or later in Wilma. Participation in the studies is optional; however, once the pupil has enrolled in the studies, they are required to attend the lessons regularly. Instead of the pupil's own school, the teaching may be provided at another school in the form of joint lessons for pupils from several schools. The pupil may be granted a travel card if the distance to the school where the mother tongue instruction is given is over two kilometres from their own school. The school secretary of the pupil's own school will provide more information about the teaching locations and times.



Selecting the Finnish as a first or second language syllabus in mother tongue and literature

All school pupils study a subject called mother tongue and literature. During lessons in this subject, pupils work towards the goals determined in the **Finnish language and literature (S1)** syllabus or the **Finnish as a second language and literature (S2)** syllabus.

The **S1 syllabus** is usually studied by pupils who speak Finnish as their mother tongue or have native or near-native level in it.

The **S2 syllabus** can be studied by pupils whose mother tongue or home language is not Finnish or who are otherwise multilingual. Pupils studying the S2 syllabus are in the process of developing their Finnish skills but have not yet reached a level of proficiency required for studying Finnish at the level of their mother tongue. The objective of S2 education is for the pupil to develop their Finnish language proficiency enough to be able to work and learn with others equally from the perspective of language at comprehensive school and in their further studies.

The child's guardians decide whether the child will study the S1 or S2 syllabus. When you enrol your child in school, you will preliminarily choose in the spring whether the child will study the S1 or S2 syllabus. During the first weeks of school in the autumn, you will have an opportunity to talk with your child's teachers about the child's language skills and which syllabus suits them. At this point, the guardians can still change their selection if needed.

The syllabus can also be changed later during basic education. The teachers will monitor the development of the pupils' language skills and review the suitability of the selected syllabus in third and sixth grade. The goal is for every pupil to always get to study the syllabus that best suits the development of their own language skills.

Guardians can find more information about S2 studies at comprehensive school in a brochure available at hel.fi/welcometoschool.

Pupils in Helsinki's Swedish-language schools study Swedish as a mother tongue or Swedish as a second language.

Preparatory education

If the child has recently moved to Finland and does not know enough Finnish or Swedish to be able to manage everyday situations at school, the guardian can enrol the child in preparatory education for basic education. This option is available if the child has not previously attended preparatory education for a whole pre-primary education year. The goal of the preparatory education is for the child to achieve a level of proficiency in Finnish or Swedish that enables them to manage everyday and teaching situations at school.

In Finnish-language preparatory education, pupils in first and second grade study at their own local school as part of a Finnish-language class. First, enrol your child at the local school via Asti. Then contact the principal of the school and tell them that your child needs preparatory education. When the child has been in preparatory education for one year, the child will move to a Finnish-speaking class in the local school.

Swedish-language preparatory education is always provided in the child's own local school based on the home address. When the child has been in preparatory education for one year, the child will move to a Swedish-speaking class in the local school.

Support for schooling, learning and wellbeing

Each pupil is provided with the support they need to study and learn. The needs of each pupil are individual, which is why support is offered in different forms.

Support for learning and schooling is a service that must be available and accessible to all. The goal is for as many pupils as possible to receive support at their local school. The pupil is provided with the support primarily in their own class at school through various flexible arrangements, unless the pupil's best interests require transferring the pupil to a special needs education class at another school. The support measures needed by the pupil will be planned together with the guardians.

The school offers a wide range of support for learning and schooling. Every pupil is entitled to forms of support such as the following:

- ▶ diverse and varied exercises
- ▶ studying in teaching groups of different sizes
- ▶ remedial teaching
- ▶ teaching provided by a special needs teacher
- ▶ student welfare services: the school welfare officer, psychologist, nurse and doctor.

The home's role and cooperation with the school in supporting the child's learning and growth is important. The child's learning and schooling, as well as the support measures needed by the child, will be planned, implemented and assessed in cooperation with the guardians.

All adults at the school are responsible for taking care of the wellbeing of the pupils and the school community. The school features a communal student welfare group usually consisting of the principal, a special needs teacher, the psychologist, the welfare officer and the nurse.

Additionally, representatives of pupils and guardians take part in the work of the group, as do parties outside the school in certain cases. This group is tasked with monitoring and promoting the safety and wellbeing of both the pupils and the learning environment.

Pupils practise interaction skills at school, and every school has procedures for crisis and bullying situations. The school staff work actively and in many ways to prevent bullying. Children are entitled to a safe school day free of bullying, violence, racism and discrimination. If necessary, a multidisciplinary specialist group is assembled to establish the situation of an individual pupil in cooperation with the guardians and the pupil. The group can also include members from outside the school.

Adults of the school supporting the wellbeing of pupils

The school welfare officer

- ▶ will help if the pupil has problems with schooling or relations with friends, or if there have been major changes in the pupil's life
- ▶ will investigate, instruct and provide guidance in matters related to upbringing and the situation at home.

The school psychologist

- ▶ will help with any problems related to learning, concentration and mental health
- ▶ will investigate, instruct and provide guidance in matters related to upbringing and the situation at home.

The school nurse

- ▶ will meet with the pupil at annual health check-ups
- ▶ will support the pupil's health and wellbeing.

The school doctor

- ▶ will perform an extensive health check-up on all first, fifth and eighth grade pupils.

The student welfare services are provided free of charge.

Absences

Pupils have the right to receive education and the obligation to participate in teaching. A pupil may be absent from school only if they are ill or have been authorised to be absent. If your child is ill, report their absence via Wilma. Permission for other absences may only be granted for a special reason. It is the duty of the guardian to ensure that the pupil does their school assignments normally despite being absent.



Assessment of learning

Purpose of the assessment

The assessment of learning aims to direct and encourage studying and develop the pupil's self-assessment abilities, and to determine how well the pupil has achieved the goals of their grade in the subject in question. The assessment of learning is based on the objectives defined in the curriculum and descriptions of the pupil's competence. The pupil's learning, schoolwork and behaviour are assessed in varying ways while taking the pupil's individual objectives into account. The purpose of the assessment is also to strengthen the pupil's confidence in their own abilities and strengths.

Assessment during the school year

The pupil will receive evaluative feedback during the school year as a part of their daily education and schoolwork. The feedback is given naturally in different ways. The feedback helps the pupil understand what the objectives of learning are. The purpose of the assessment is to help the pupil realise how they can influence their own learning and progress. The development of the pupil's self-evaluation and peer feedback skills is an important part of the assessment at school.

Assessment at the end of the school year

Pupils receive an annual report at the end of the school year. The report assesses, descriptively or numerically, the pupil's achievement of their objectives in different subjects as defined in the curriculum. Pupils are not compared with each other. The school year assessment is an overall assessment of the pupil's learning and competence. It is based on a wide variety of competence demonstrations throughout the school year, such as work during lessons, the pupil's written and oral output, portfolios, group work or exams. The reports for grades 1–3 use verbal assessment exclusively, which focuses on the pupil's learning, progress and general studying and working skills. In grades 4–9, the assessment is numeric.

Interaction

Good assessment is interaction between teachers and pupils in a positive atmosphere. During the school year, the pupil, teacher and parents discuss the pupil's learning. The discussion utilises assessment tools such as portfolios and self and peer feedback. The guardians' confidence in the pupil's abilities influences the pupil's image of themselves as a learner significantly. The starting point for the evaluative feedback is the pupil's strengths, i.e. what is working and good.

Pupils' voices are heard at the schools of Helsinki

The City of Helsinki is committed to strengthening children's and young people's everyday participation and diversifying ways to have the voices of all children and young people be heard. The City of Helsinki's curriculum encourages pupils to actively take part in planning and developing the school's teaching, operating culture and learning environment. Participation plays a major role in commitment to school and attachment to the school community. The pupils commit to working towards a safe school together with the entire school staff and guardians. The objective at our schools is for every pupil, worker and guardian to feel that they are seen and heard as an important member of the school community.

Presence and taking others into consideration in everyday activities are at the core of our efforts to promote participation.

The experience of participation is a prerequisite for the pupil's development of confidence in themselves, their school community and their environment and ability to be inspired to influence shared matters. In Helsinki, participation is practised through students' union activities, using the Ruuti budget for pupils, students' union board and management work, and various surveys, voting processes and feedback. Pupils are encouraged to establish their own groups with the purpose of promoting things that they themselves find important.



Cooperation between home and school

Families play a key role in the promotion of pupils' participation. A working connection that facilitates genuine discussions between home and school supports the pupil's wellbeing and serves as a resource for studying. The goal of cooperation between home and school is to support the pupil's healthy growth and learning, as well as the wellbeing of the entire school community. Successful cooperation is based on open, equal and confidential interaction. The cooperation consists of elements such as everyday encounters, assessment discussions, parent-teacher conferences and collaborations with different operators. Guardians are seen at the school as an important resource in supporting the pupils' learning. The school staff talk about important themes with the guardians and use Wilma for daily communication about what is happening at the school and in the class. The principles of cooperation between the school and home are defined in the curriculum of each school. In practice, cooperation and joint activities are agreed upon by the school and guardians.

Guardians' own networks and the school board

Parents can get to know each other at events organised by the school or those of a class committee established by parents. It is recommended that parents network with other parents of the class and the school, as this will help with committing to the shared rules and supporting parenting. Schools also often have a parents' committee, which supports the activities of the entire school. Each school has a management board that consists of parent representatives

nominated jointly by the parents and a pupil representative. The management board approves the school's action plan based on the curriculum and the school rules annually, and decides on certain disciplinary matters.

Tips for the parents of first-graders

- ▶ Show interest in your child's schooling. Ask about the child's school day and friends.
- ▶ Meet the guardians of your child's classmates. You can agree with the other guardians on matters such as shared activities and rules.
- ▶ Do not hesitate to contact the school. Together, we can secure your child's wellbeing at school! Ask about opportunities to take part in the school's activities.
- ▶ Talk about and agree with your child about important wellbeing factors: a diverse diet, sufficient sleep, the importance of physical activity, the significance of play and the significance of restricting screen time.

Sources: Mannerheim League for Child Welfare's Vanhempainnetti service, etc.

Useful links

- ▶ Mannerheim League for Child Welfare mll.fi
- ▶ Finnish Parents' League vanhempainliitto.fi
- ▶ Family Federation of Finland vaestoliitto.fi
- ▶ Helsinki region parents' committee Helvary helvary.fi



Morning and after-school activities

Morning activities

In basic education, we provide morning activities at schools before lessons for pupils in first and second grade and special support pupils in third and fourth grade. The activities are voluntary and free of charge. You can enrol in the activities once school has started via your Wilma account. Participation in morning activities does not require a separate decision, simply enrolling is enough. Your school will provide you with more information on the arrangement of morning activities.

More information: hel.fi/morningactivities.

After-school activities

The City of Helsinki arranges after-school activities after the school day for pupils in first and second grade and special support pupils. The after-school activities provide the child with enjoyable activities in a safe environment at the school or in its vicinity. The activities include playing and spending time together with friends, daily outdoor activities and exercise and small trips to the local environment, etc. After-school activities are subject to a fee and include a snack and insurance. The fee is €100/month for activities ending at 16.00 and €120/month for activities ending at 17.00. You can apply for a fee reduction or exemption from the fee based on your income.

The application period for the activities is 17 March–16 April 2025. Applying for after-school activities is done primarily via Wilma. If you do not have a guardian Wilma account, you can find instructions for creating one at hel.fi/wilma.

Guardians can create a guardian account in Wilma or add the upcoming pupil to their existing Wilma account by using suomi.fi e-identification from 17 March 2025 onwards as the application period for after-school activities in the school year of 2025–2026 begins. If you are unable to fill out the application form in Wilma, you can also apply by using a paper form.

The decisions will be sent to the children's homes by the beginning of July 2025. The activities are provided at schools and playgrounds and other suitable facilities near the school. The activities are provided by the City and various after-school activity service providers that receive a grant from the City.

More information: hel.fi/afterschoolactivities.

Activities during school holidays

Playgrounds open during school holidays provide a diverse selection of activities and events for schoolchildren. More details about the events are announced on the playgrounds' websites and social media channels as the holidays draw closer.

Children with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder are provided with centralised holiday activities during school holidays and the summer holiday in school facilities. The activities are intended for pupils whose guardians are working during the holidays.

Practical matters

Schoolwork and holidays

Going to school is the pupil's job. Work and holiday times can vary slightly from school to school. Families must plan their holidays to coincide with the school holidays, as an absence reduces the amount of teaching that the pupil receives. For a special reason, the guardians can apply for exemption from schoolwork for the child. In such a case, the guardians must ensure that the child does all the work assigned to them. This will ensure that the absence does not hinder the child's learning.

School lunch and snacks

Pupils are given a free meal every school day. There are two main course options to choose from daily. The meal includes a warm main course, a salad or other raw food item, a beverage, bread and bread spreads. Many schools in Helsinki sell snacks in the afternoon. Different schools have different product selections. More information on the snacks is provided by the school and the school cafeteria.

School transport subsidy

If the journey from home to the local school of a pupil in grade 1–6 is at least two kilometres long, the pupil will receive an HSL travel card, making their school travel by public transport free of charge. Pupils can receive a travel card to a school other than their local school if at least one of the following conditions is met in addition to the length of the journey:

- ▶ The pupil has been selected for weighted-curriculum, English-language or bilingual education.
- ▶ The pupil has chosen an A language starting in the first or third grade that is taught not at

the local school, but at the nearest suitable school.

- ▶ The pupil is in a special educational needs class.
- ▶ The pupil is in a preparatory education class.
- ▶ The pupil attends mother tongue instruction at another school that is at least two kilometres away from the pupil's local school (multi-use travel card).
- ▶ The pupil studies B1 English in sixth grade, which is not taught at the local school, but at the nearest suitable school.

The guardian can apply for special transport if the pupil is unable to travel to and from school independently by public transport.

The school transport subsidy can only be granted for one address listed in the population register.

Insurance

The City of Helsinki has insured all pupils against accidents. The insurance does not cover the pupils' personal property.

Religious events

At the start of the school year, the school informs the guardians about religious events held at the school. The guardians decide whether the pupil will attend these events. Alternative activities are always provided for religious events.

Use of smart phones

Shared ground rules on using smart phones have been agreed upon at schools. Pupils are not allowed to use their smart phones at the schools of the City of Helsinki during lessons. However, pupils may use their phones at school as learning aids with instructions from their teacher, but this must always be agreed upon separately. A smart phone is not a necessary device to have for schoolwork, and the school will always provide the necessary tools for learning.

Helsinki



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Helsingin kasvatus ja koulutus



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Up-to-date information at hel.fi/welcometoschool and on the schools' websites at hel.fi/kouluhaku.

