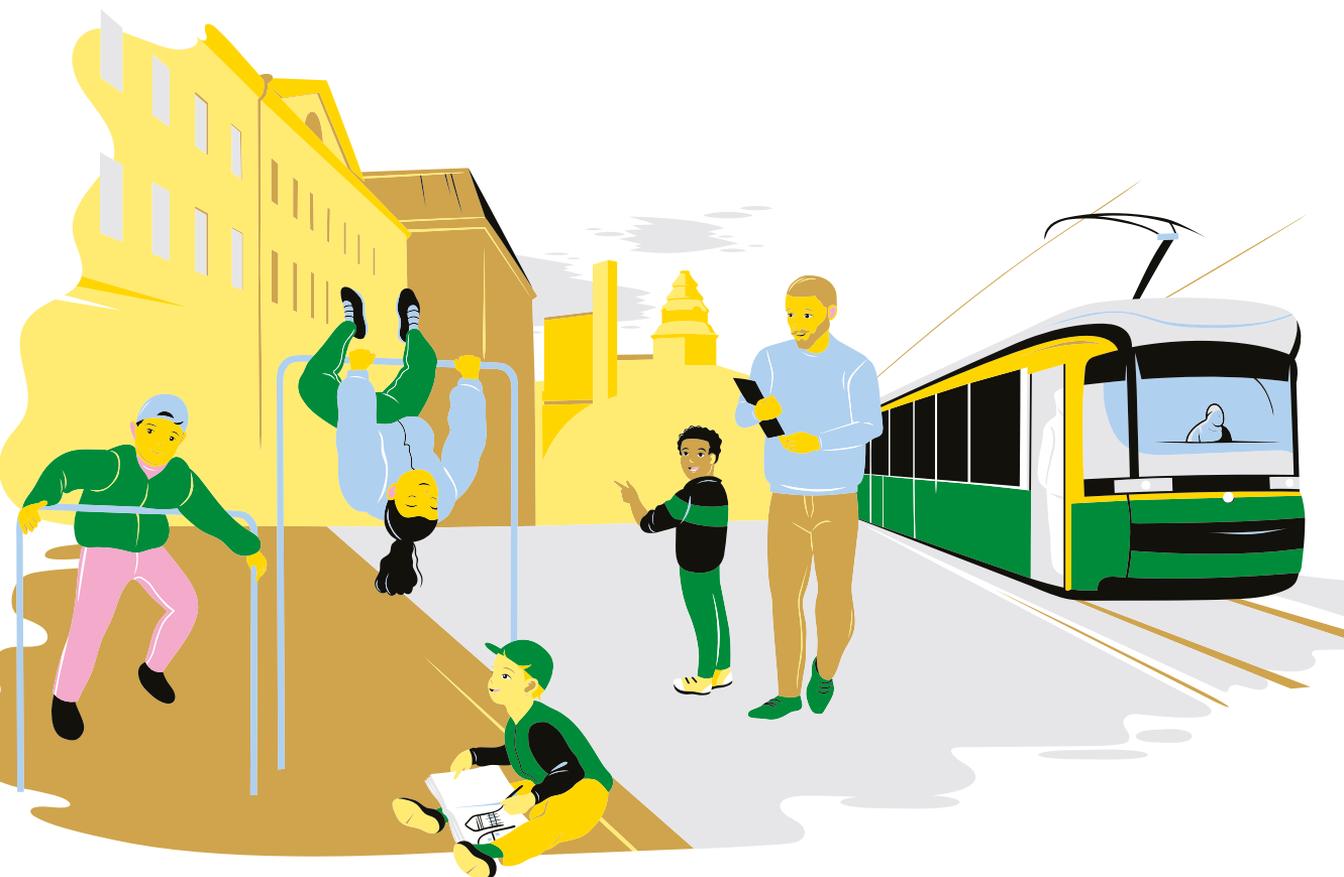


Helsinki

School year 2024–2025

Welcome to school!

A guide for first-grader's guardians





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Welcome to school!

Your child will start first grade in school in the autumn. It is a thrilling moment, and we are eagerly looking forward to meeting the new first-graders. We want all children to experience the joy of learning and want to make sure each child is acknowledged as an individual, without forgetting the importance of the group. Doing things together, experimenting and discovering new things is emphasised in the instruction.

In Helsinki, we offer all children a safe and inspiring learning path and versatile opportunities for education. The learning path starts in the early childhood education, and goes through to pre-primary and basic education. It then continues in upper secondary education as general upper secondary or vocational education. Learning is an important asset to us all, and in Helsinki, we invest in education.

A first-grader has access to a wide range of support networks, and help is available for a child who needs special support. Children's feeling of safety arises from us adults showing our support and listening to a child. It is also important that children feel that schoolwork is a natural part of their everyday life. This is where the co-operation between the home and the school is emphasised. The first step towards building that cooperation is taken in the parents' evenings aimed at the future first-graders' guardians. Let's give the children a good start to school together.

We wish all new schoolchildren and their families a good and safe school year 2024–2025!

To the reader

This guide gives you information about starting comprehensive school. You can find more information about all practical matters by contacting your child's local school and visiting its website. Schools providing weighted-curriculum education provide information about aptitude tests or language tests and their times and dates on their own websites. Learn more about weighted-curriculum education at hel.fi/welcometoschool.

Important dates 2023–2024

13 November 2023–15 January 2024

Schools may hold information events for guardians. Find more details about dates and times on the school websites at hel.fi/peruskoulut/en.

8–28 January 2024

Online enrolment to school on asti.hel.fi. Compulsory education notes will be posted to child's home address from 3 January 2024 onwards. If the application requires all guardians' consent, consent must be given by 28 January when the enrolment period ends.

15–31 January 2024

The school principal invites the future first-grader and guardians to a hearing regarding a decision for special needs education when special needs education is organised as part of mainstream education or in a special needs class at the local school.

Wednesday 24 January 2024 at 8.00–10.00

Enrolment to school at the pupil's local school. Please bring the compulsory education note with you.

Monday 29 January 2024 onwards

If your family moves to Helsinki after the enrolment period has ended, contact the principal of your local school. The local school is assigned based on the family's home address. Check your local school on the Helsinki Service Map by entering your home address in the search field at palvelukartta.hel.fi/en/.

If your family moves to Helsinki after the enrolment period has ended, and you wish to apply for a place for your child in the fully English-language or bilingual education, contact the school that offers these programmes directly.

5–16 February 2024

The school principal invites the future first-grader and guardians to a hearing before making the final decision regarding special needs education when special needs education is organised at a special needs school, in a special needs class for extended compulsory education, or in a supported special needs class.

Fri 8 March 2024

The school will send the admission decision by post to the pupil's home address. Decisions on special support in a special needs class will be posted to homes.

11 March–17 April 2024

The application period for after-school activities. Decisions on after-school activities will be posted to homes in early July 2024.

Sunday 31 March 2024

Submitting additional information on Asti for organising your child's instruction ends.

Spring 2024

Schools organise introductory events for first-graders of autumn 2024. For more information, contact the schools and visit their websites.

Comprehensive school's term dates and holidays for the school year 2024–2025 will be published by the end of year 2023 at hel.fi/welcometoschool.

Learn more online

hel.fi/welcometoschool

- ▶ Information on how to enrol, forms and frequently asked questions.

palvelukartta.hel.fi/en/

- ▶ All education-related services and their locations in Helsinki on the Service Map. Click 'Get to know the services using the Services list' and choose 'Teaching and Education' to browse all education-related services in the city.

hel.fi/peruskoulut/en

- ▶ All schools in Helsinki.

Your local school's website

- ▶ School's curriculum, language selection, term dates, holidays and more.

Forms

- ▶ Find all necessary forms at hel.fi/welcometoschool.



How to enrol to school

Enrol to school electronically either at home or at school

Two ways to enrol to school:

- ▶ online at asti.hel.fi 8–28 January 2024 or
- ▶ by visiting the school on Wednesday 24 January 2024 at 8.00–10.00.

Online enrolment

Enrol to local school at asti.hel.fi during **8–28 January 2024**. Your child's assigned local school is on the compulsory education note, which will be posted to the child's home address in early January 2024. On Asti you can enrol the child to a Finnish-language or Swedish-language local school (in Helsinki, children are always assigned a place both in a Finnish-language and in a Swedish-language local school according to their mother tongue).

On the Asti service, you can enrol to the City of Helsinki's schools and their programmes.

The options are

- ▶ Local school according to the child's mother tongue
- ▶ Local school according to second national language
- ▶ Weighted-curriculum education in music
- ▶ English-language basic education
- ▶ Extensive bilingual education
- ▶ Swedish-language immersion (starting already in daycare or in pre-primary education)
- ▶ Other than the local school due to an A1 language that isn't provided at the local school
- ▶ Other than the local school due to other reason

If you wish to enrol the child to a school other than local school according to the pupil's mother tongue, all guardians must give their consent on Asti **by 28 January 2024**.

If the child does not register for education organised by the City (but applies for a private school or participates in home education for example), report this on Asti. This important to remember because the city supervises the completion of compulsory education.

Instructions to enrol

Logging in

Open the browser on your computer, tablet or smart phone.

1. Go to asti.hel.fi
2. Choose the language in the top right corner
3. Click on the Log in button
4. Choose your preferred method for identification and identify yourself.
5. Upon logging in for the first time, accept the processing of your personal data on Asti

Enrolling to school

1. Choose basic education in Finnish or basic education in Swedish
2. **Basic education in Finnish:**
 - ▶ Select your preferred A1 language at your local school. A1 language means the first foreign language to be studied at school. Select your choice even if you are applying for other than your local school (in case you don't get a place in your preferred school).
 - ▶ You can apply for extensive bilingual Finnish-North Sami, or extensive bilingual Finnish-Swedish education. These options do not require a language test, which means anyone can sign up. If there are more applicants than there are places in the group, the pupils will be chosen at random.

Basic education in Swedish:
Choose the pupil's Finnish language skill level and continue forward
3. **Basic education in Finnish:** Declare if you are applying for other than your local school due to an aptitude test, A1 language or other reason.

Basic education in Swedish: Declare if you are applying for a school other than your local.
4. If necessary, ensure all guardians have given their consent
5. Tell us if the pupil needs support for learning
6. Preview the application and make sure that the information given is accurate. Click the 'Submit' button to send the application. Once you have enrolled the child, give the additional information for organising instruction for your child.

Enrolling at school on Wed 24 January

Enrolling at the school is primarily done electronically via the Asti online service on **Wednesday 24 January 2024 at 8.00–10.00**. Take the compulsory education note that was posted in January, which has the child's assigned local school based on the home address marked on it, and an ID and/or online banking credentials for online identification with you. If you have already enrolled your child on Asti, you don't need to visit the school.

How to enrol if you child starts school a year earlier or a year later than decreed

- ▶ If you are currently applying for a decision on starting basic education **one year earlier than decreed:**
Fill in the application and get the necessary statement. You can get more information about submitting the application from your child's daycare centre or the principal of your local school.
- ▶ If you are currently applying for a decision on starting basic education **one year later than decreed:**
Fill in the application and get the necessary statement. Tell your local school's principal that you are applying for a decision to start basic education one year later than decreed. You can get more information about submitting the application from your child's daycare centre or the principal of your local school.
- ▶ **If your child is starting school a year later, and:**
 - a) your child will go to your local school.
Please visit the school to enrol on Wednesday 24 January 2024.
 - b) if your child needs intensive and multidisciplinary special support, the child's pre-primary education provider will send the necessary documents to the basic education provider's administration, and you do not have to visit the school for the enrolment.

Local school is located in your neighbourhood

Children start compulsory education in the year of their seventh birthday. School starts at the beginning of the autumn term 2024 for children born in 2017. Helsinki is divided into school admission areas. The city assigns every child a place in a comprehensive school close to their home, and this school is called the local school. However, the local school is not always the closest one, but it is usually located within walking distance. The school network is designed so that almost all pupils can complete all their comprehensive school studies at the local school. If the pupil goes to a comprehensive school that offers all basic education grades (grades 1–9), there is no need to change schools when moving on to the next level in the seventh grade. In addition to the City's own comprehensive schools, there are private contract schools operating in Helsinki as part of the City's school network. There are also some private and state-run schools in Helsinki.

School that suits everyone

Support for learning and schoolwork is a service that has to be accessible for everyone. Organising the support for learning and schoolwork emphasises the local school philosophy. This means that support is primarily offered in the pupil's own class at the local school with a range of flexible arrangements, unless the pupil's interest necessarily requires a transfer to a special class in another school, for example to a supported special class, special class of extended compulsory education or to a special school.

Admission policies

The Education Committee and its Finnish-language division's decisions on the admission policies and grounds for admission are available as English translations at hel.fi/welcometoschool.

The admission policies are also available at schools and at the Education Division's advisory service (email: koulutusneuvonta@hel.fi, tel. 09 310 44986).

The instruction organised by the City of Helsinki primarily admits pupils living in Helsinki. A student is considered a Helsinki resident if the child's home address according to the National Population Information System is in Helsinki at the time of the decision on admission and at the beginning of the school year.

Weighted-curriculum education

Weighted-curriculum education means instruction that emphasises a certain school subject, such as music, physical education or a language. Pupils who wish to apply to weighted-curriculum education must take an aptitude test. The weighted subject is studied for 1–2 extra hours on top of the national minimum time per week. Weighted-curriculum education begins either in the 1st, 3rd or 7th grade, depending on the subject. In weighted-curriculum education, pupils can form their own class, or they can be placed in the same class with the other mainstream education pupils. In the latter case, only the lessons in the weighted subject, such as music, are held separately.

Weighted-curriculum education starting in the 1st grade

- Music: Porolahti Comprehensive School, which provides music education in co-operation with Itä-Helsingin musiikkiopisto, a local music institute.

English and bilingual education

In Helsinki, there are some schools where pupils can study in a language other than Finnish or Swedish, either partly or fully. Learn more about the options on page 18.

Applying for a school other than the local school

A child can also apply for a school other than the local school. The local school primarily admits pupils living in the admission area, but if places are available, they may also admit other pupils. In such a case, the guardians are responsible for any transportation costs for the school journey.

Special support in local school

If during the child's pre-primary education year, a multi-professional group has decided that the child needs special support amidst mainstream education (integrated with other pupils) or in a special class, you should enrol to the school stated in the compulsory education note. Day-care centre manager takes care of sending the pedagogical statement to the school stated in the compulsory education note. The school principal will invite you to a hearing before making the decision on special support. An administrative decision will be made on the child's special support.

Starting school a year earlier

A child has a right to start basic education a year earlier than what is statutory if the child has the skills and abilities to manage the studies, based on psychological and, if necessary, medical reports. The guardian obtains and pays for the necessary expert statement in good time before the school enrolment begins.

Starting school a year later

The guardian can apply for permission for the child to start basic education a year later than what is statutory. The decision will be based on psychological and, if necessary, medical reports. If the child starts school a year later, the child will stay in pre-primary education at a daycare centre for another year.

If your child has a decision on extended compulsory education, the compulsory education has started in pre-primary education at the age of six. If the child has not participated in voluntary pre-primary education at the age of five, the child can go to pre-primary education for another year. This requires you to apply for a decision on starting basic education a year later.

Notification of moving to home-schooling

According to the Basic Education Act, all compulsory education aged children must attend basic education or obtain the skills and knowledge provided by basic education syllabus in another way. It is the guardian's responsibility to make sure that the child completes the compulsory education. It is not possible to attend school and home school as part-time arrangements. If a child moves to home-schooling, the guardians are asked to submit the PDF form 'Notification of moving to home schooling' to the local school. Find the form at hel.fi/welcometoschool in the Forms section. Being home-schooled requires appointing an investigative teacher from the child's local school. If a compulsory education aged pupil in home-schooling wants a certificate corresponding to a comprehensive school certificate, the pupil must complete a special examination.

Preparatory education

Children aged 6 to 16 who do not yet speak enough Finnish or Swedish can start school in a preparatory education class, even during the school year. In preparatory education, pupils study Finnish or Swedish for one year and get to know the Finnish school. More information at hel.fi/welcometoschool.

What and how do schools teach?

“A good learning environment supports the child’s view of themselves as a good learner.”

The curriculum states the principles of school-work and the special emphases of the school. Helsinki schools’ curricula are available in electronic format at the e-Perusteet service at <https://eperusteet.opintopolku.fi/> (available in Finnish only). In the first two school years, pupils focus on learning the basic knowledge and skills in different subjects. Children are encouraged to bring up their own ideas and things that interest them.

School helps a child build a positive self-esteem to learn and to explore the world independently. A functional learning environment is an important part of this process. All school facilities and the surroundings are learning environments, and with digital technology, the entire city expands into a learning environment. The school’s goal is to support the development of the pupils’ cognitive competence as well as everyday and cooperative skills, which the child will need in the future. Each child studies at least two long-term, cross-curricular and phenomenon-based entities during the school year. Phenomenon-based studies are studies where pupils examine real-world phenomena across school subjects.

The child learns, experiences and creates things together with others. A safe and friendly environment that promotes participation and well-being is a prerequisite for learning. Interaction between the teacher, the pupil and the entire group is an important foundation for learning.



The school week follows a timetable. In grades 1 and 2, pupils receive teaching for a minimum of 21 hours per week. The duration of lessons can vary from school to school. There might be more than one teacher in the classroom; another class teacher, a special needs teacher or a teacher of Finnish or Swedish as a second language. A special needs assistant may also work in the classroom. The class may be divided into different 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 study in the 1st grade are mother tongue and literature, A1 language, mathematics, environmental studies, religion or ethics and artistic and practical subjects, which include music, visual arts, crafts and physical education.

Guardians can ask the schools for more detailed information about the teaching of ethics and enrolling for teaching of the pupil's own religion. 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 attends these events. There are always other options available for religious events.



Support for schoolwork, learning and well-being

The school offers a wide range of support for learning and schoolwork.

Support measures may include

- ▶ diverse and varied tasks and exercises
- ▶ studying in flexible teaching groups
- ▶ remedial teaching
- ▶ part-time special needs education
- ▶ student welfare services

Co-operation between the family and the school in supporting the child's learning and growth is important. The teacher and guardians assess the learning outcomes and the adequacy of the support measures regularly. Depending on the child's need for support, the child can receive general support, intensified support or special support. In order to receive special support, the child needs assessment by a multi-professional group, and an administrative decision will always be made on receiving special support.

The school staff are responsible for taking care of the well-being of the pupils and the school community together. Each school has a school welfare group, which usually consists of the principal, a special needs teacher, a school psychologist, a school social worker and a nurse. In some cases, pupils, guardians and other parties are also invited to participate. The team is responsible for monitoring and promoting the safety and well-being of both the pupils and the learning environment. Schools implement programmes that reinforce interaction skills, and every school has procedures for crises and bullying. If necessary, a multidisciplinary specialist group is assembled to help a pupil in difficult situations, and the group can include members from outside the school.

Every school has a designated:

School social worker

- ▶ Helps if the pupil has problems with schoolwork, interaction with friends or if there have been major changes in the pupil's life. Investigates, instructs and provides guidance in matters related to parenting and the situation at home.

School psychologist

- ▶ Helps with any problems related to learning, concentration and mental health. Investigates, instructs and provides guidance in matters related to parenting and the situation at home.

School nurse

- ▶ Meets with the pupil at annual health check-ups and other appointments.

School doctor

- ▶ Performs an extensive health check-up on all 1st, 5th and 8th grade pupils.

The student welfare services are available free of charge.



After-school activities

Things to do after school

The City of Helsinki arranges after-school activities after the school day for 1st and 2nd grade comprehensive school pupils and special support pupils. The activities consist of supervised and instructed free time activities for children. The children have an opportunity to play, exercise, meet with friends and relax, and participate in instructed activities both indoors and outdoors. The activities are planned together with the pupils. These activities also utilise the City's art, exercise and cultural services, as well as its diverse urban nature. Together with the pupils, the aim is to create a respectful, safe and open atmosphere. In the after-school activities, instructors take care of the children's activities and safety during the afternoon. Children receive a snack in the after-school activities. The children are also insured. A fixed monthly fee is charged for the activities, and guardians can apply for a fee reduction.

The application period for the after-school activities is **11 March–17 April 2024**. The decisions are posted to homes by the beginning of July. You can also apply during the academic year. Activities are organised at schools, playgrounds and other suitable premises near the school. The activities are organised by the city and various service providers of after-school activities receiving a grant from the city.

Information about after-school activity locations can be found at hel.fi/afterschoolactivities.

Activities during school holidays

During school holidays, pupils can attend 'Säpinää ja toimintaa' trips, day camps, events and fun activities at playgrounds. More detailed information about the events is available on the playgrounds' websites as the holidays draw closer.

Disabled children and children with autism spectrum disorder are provided with centralised holiday activities during school holidays and the summer holiday at the school's facilities. The activities are aimed at pupils whose guardians are working during the holiday season.

Morning activities

You can enrol your child to morning activities using Wilma once the school year has started in August.

Enrolling to morning activities is enough and no separate decision will be needed. The school will send you further details about the morning activities.

Learn more about morning activities at hel.fi/morningactivities



Schools' language selection

Schools' language selection

- Check the language selections at the school websites. Find the School's websites listed at: hel.fi/peruskoulut/en/schools-list/

Language studies start in the 1st grade

Start of school also means the start of language studies. The first foreign language at school is called A1 language. A1 language can also be a second national language. Pupils study the A1 language for two lessons per week. In the first years, the emphasis is on practising oral language skills. The pupils learn the language through games, play, songs and other activities. The goal of the teaching is to inspire and motivate the pupils to learn languages.

The language selection of the pupil's local school can be found on the school website. Guardians and the child choose the studied languages together, and guardians confirm the child's language choices when enrolling the child to school. More detailed information about the schools' language selections can be found at hel.fi/peruskoulut/en/schools-list/.

Language studies in Finnish-language schools

In Helsinki, the available A1 languages are Chinese, English, Estonian, French, German, North Sami, Russian, Spanish and Swedish. Please note that the language selection varies between schools, and some A1 languages listed above might not be available in your child's local school. Usually there are two A1 language options to

choose from, but at some schools, only English is available as A1 language.

Later on in basic education, other languages are also studied. Studies in another language, called the B1 language, start in the 6th grade. Additionally, the pupils have an opportunity to study an optional A2 language starting in the 3rd grade and optional B2 language the 8th grade. Every pupil in Finnish-language basic education must study the second national language, Swedish, starting in the 6th grade at the latest.

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 pupils can be 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.

Optional language studies

Pupils also have the opportunity to study optional languages. Starting studies in the optional language is voluntary, but once the studies start, the choice will be binding, and the pupil will study the selected language throughout basic education.

In our Swedish-language schools, pupils can study optional B2 language from the seventh grade onwards. The B2 language starts a year earlier than in the Finnish-language schools. In Helsinki, B2 language is studied for two hours more than what is the national minimum.

English and bilingual education

English-enriched education

Some local schools in Helsinki provide language-enriched Finnish-English instruction, also known as English-enriched education. In English-enriched education, the pupils study all school subjects in both Finnish and English. The amount of English is 10–25% of all teaching. Studying in two languages develops a pupil's problem-solving skills, creative thinking and adaptation to new situations. The content and objectives of the curriculum in English-enriched education are the same as in Finnish-only education.

There is no language test for English-enriched education. It is available in the local schools listed below for the pupils of each school's school admission area.

Schools offering English-enriched education

- ▶ Itäkeskus Comprehensive School
- ▶ Kaisaniemi Primary School
- ▶ Kannelmäki Comprehensive School
- ▶ Lauttasaari Primary School
- ▶ Merilahti Comprehensive School
- ▶ Pikku Huopalahti Primary School
- ▶ Ruoholahti Primary School
- ▶ Taivallahti Comprehensive School
- ▶ Vattuniemi Primary School

Bilingual education

Schools in Helsinki provide bilingual education in Chinese, English, Estonian, Russian, Spanish and Sweden. Additionally, Pasila Comprehensive School provides bilingual Finnish-North Sami education. Pupils are not required to speak North Sami as their first language, and all children who are interested in the language or have grown within its sphere of influence can apply.

In bilingual education, pupils study all subjects in both Finnish and the target language. 25–50% of the teaching is in the target language, depending on the grade and the school-specific curriculum. The pupil gains strong language skills in a new language. Bilingual learning also develops problem-solving skills, creative thinking and adaptation to new situations. The content and objectives of the curriculum in bilingual education are the same as in Finnish-only education.

Apply to extensive bilingual education on Asti. Some options require a language test that tests the applicant's ability to study in two languages. The applicant is not required to be able to read or write in the language test. Learn more about the language tests via hel.fi/welcometoschool.

For bilingual Finnish-North Sami education, there is no language test and everyone who is interested can enrol.

Nordiska skolan

A new bilingual Finnish-Swedish teaching group will start in Helsinki in August 2024. The group's teaching will emphasise Nordic cooperation, collaborative learning and sustainable development. First-graders of 2024 are therefore the first with the opportunity to enrol to this new bilingual Finnish-Swedish education. Learn more about Nordiska Skolan via the Yhtenäiskoulu Comprehensive School's website and the school's principal. No language test is required, and you can enrol to the group using the Asti online service.

Schools offering extensive bilingual education

Finnish-Chinese

- ▶ Meilahti primary school

Finnish-English

- ▶ Kulosaari Primary School
- ▶ Laajasalo Comprehensive School
- ▶ Malmi Comprehensive School
- ▶ Töölö Primary School
- ▶ Vesala Comprehensive School

Finnish-Estonian

- ▶ Latokartano Comprehensive School

Finnish-North Sami

- ▶ Pasila Comprehensive School

Finnish-Russian

- ▶ Myllypuro Comprehensive School

Finnish-Spanish

- ▶ Käpylä Comprehensive School

Finnish-Swedish

- ▶ Yhtenäiskoulu Comprehensive School

Swedish-language immersion

The Swedish-language immersion programme starts in early childhood education or in pre-primary education at the latest, and continues in comprehensive school. If the pupil has Swedish language skills, it is possible to start the Swedish-language immersion from the first grade in school. New schoolchildren who have started Swedish-language immersion in early childhood education or in pre-primary education go to the primary school that is in their own language immersion path. Learn more at hel.fi/language-immersion.

Basic education in English

In basic education in English, all teaching is provided in English, with the exception of Finnish language and literature. Pupils applying for the education are required to have native-level English-language skills. The applicant is not required to know Finnish. The goals and contents of basic education in English are the same as those of Finnish-language education. English-language basic education at Ressu Comprehensive School follows the International Baccalaureate framework.

Apply to English-language education on Asti. Children applying to English-language education need to take a language test that measure's the child's English language skills. The applicant is not required to be able to read or write in the language test. Learn more about the language tests via hel.fi/welcometoschool.

If the child wants to learn both Finnish and English, the extensive bilingual Finnish-English education is a good option for them. The aim of extensive bilingual education is to gain strong language skills in both languages by the end of basic education. See more information in the previous section 'Extensive bilingual education'.

Schools offering basic education in English

- ▶ Maunula Primary School
- ▶ Ressu Comprehensive School



Finnish or Swedish as a second language

A pupil can study Finnish as a second language (S2) if their mother tongue is not Finnish, Swedish or a Sami, or if the pupil is multilingual. The pupil's Finnish language skills are assessed at school, but the guardians decide whether the pupil will study Finnish as a second language. Pupils can study Finnish as a second language as long as necessary or can switch to Finnish as a first language when their competence in the Finnish language develops. Finnish as a second language teaching is not remedial or special needs teaching, nor does it increase the pupil's weekly number of study hours. Finnish as a second language teaching can be provided either in separate S2 groups or in Finnish as first language classrooms.

Mother tongue studies

The City of Helsinki offers instruction for maintaining the pupil's mother tongue, home language or language skills obtained abroad. The language studies are organised on demand if there are enough pupils enrolled. Mother tongue studies are additional studies that increase the weekly schoolwork by two hours. Participating in these studies is mentioned in the report card, but no numerical grade is given. If the journey to the mother-tongue classes is over 2 kilometres, the pupil will be granted a travel card (school transport subsidy).

The studies are available for pupils whose mother tongue or home language is not Finnish, pupils whose close relatives speak Romani or Sami as their mother tongue or home language, and pupils who want to maintain the language skills they have obtained abroad. Enrolment in the mother tongue studies can be done upon school enrolment or later by contacting the school directly. Participation in the studies is optional, but once the pupil has enrolled in the studies, attending the lessons regularly is required. Please note that the studies may not be organised at the pupil's local school, and lessons might take place at another school in a group that combines pupils from several different schools.

Assessment of learning

Purpose of assessment

Assessment of learning aims to guide and encourage the pupil to study and develop good self-assessment skills. The assessment of learning is based on the objectives and assessment descriptions of a pupil's learning in the curriculum. The pupil's learning, schoolwork and behaviour are assessed in various ways while taking the pupil's individual objectives into account. In practice, this means continuous assessment during the school year and final assessment at the end of the school year. In the past, school year reports and grades were the primary measures of assessment and the only indicators of the pupil's skills, but this is no longer the case. Assessment is used as a tool to guide and support the pupil's personal learning path instead of focusing solely on task-based performance. The purpose of assessment is to strengthen the pupils' confidence in their own abilities.

Continuous assessment

Each pupil receives regular feedback during the school year, as a natural part of everyday schoolwork. Continuous assessment and feedback help the pupil understand what the objectives of learning are. The purpose of assessment is to help pupils realise how they can influence their own learning and make progress in it. The development of the pupil's self-assessment and peer feedback skills is an important part of the assessment at school.

End of school year assessment

Each pupil receives an annual report card at the end of the school year. The report card assesses, verbally or numerically, how the pupil has achieved the objectives of each subject during the past year. Pupils are not compared to other pupils. The report cards for grades 1–3 use verbal assessment, which focuses on the pupil's learning, progress and general studying and working skills. In grades 4–9, assessment is number-based.

Assessment is dialogue

Good assessment is dialogue between teachers and pupils in a positive atmosphere. During the school year, the pupil, teacher and guardians discuss the pupil's learning together. Assessment tools, such as portfolios and self and peer feedback support the dialogue. The guardians' confidence in the pupil's abilities significantly influences the pupil's image of themselves as a learner. The pupil's strengths and skills should always be the starting point for assessment and feedback.



Practical things

Schoolwork and holidays

Going to school is the pupil's daily job. School term dates and holidays can vary slightly from school to school. Families should plan their holidays so that they coincide with the school holidays, as absences reduce 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 schoolwork assigned to them. This will ensure that the absence does not hinder the child's learning.

School lunch and snacks

Pupils get a free warm meal at school every school day. Each day, there are two main course options to choose from. The meal includes a warm main course, salad or a fresh snack, drink, bread and spread. Many schools in Helsinki sell snacks in the afternoon. The products vary between schools. More information about the snacks can be requested from the school and the school restaurant.

School transport subsidy

If the school journey from home to school of a pupil in grades 1–6 is two kilometres or longer, the pupil is entitled to a travel card from HSL (Helsinki Region Transport). Pupils may get a travel card to a school other than their local school if, in addition to the length of the journey, at least one of the following criteria is met:

- ▶ Pupil has been accepted to a weighted-curriculum, extensive bilingual or English education in a school that is other than the local school.
- ▶ Pupil has chosen an A1 language starting from the first or third grade, and it is not available at the local school, but the teaching takes place at the nearest appropriate school.
- ▶ Pupil is in a special class.
- ▶ Pupil is in preparatory education.
- ▶ Pupil participates in mother tongue or own religion instruction, and the distance between the local school and the nearest place of instruction is at least two kilometres (multi-use travel card).
- ▶ Pupil in 6th grade studies English as a B1 language, and it is not available at the local school, but the teaching takes place at the nearest appropriate school.

Guardians can apply for special transportation if the pupil is unable to manage the school journey in public transport independently.

School travel subsidy can only be granted for one home address registered in the Finnish Population Information System.

Insurances

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



Participation and sustainable development

The City of Helsinki's curriculum encourages pupils to take part in planning and developing the school's teaching, operating culture and learning environment. The pupils are actively involved in planning, implementing and assessing their own learning. Being active and committing to the school's activities improves the learning outcomes and increases happiness. Participation also plays an important role in promoting equality at schools. Together with the teachers, the pupils commit to working towards an equal and non-discriminating school. All comprehensive schools have a students' union with a board elected each year. In Helsinki, participation and influencing are practiced in many ways. Participation in everyday life can be seen in practicing conversation and negotiation skills, listening, believing in one's own abilities to act, study and examine things. Influencing is practiced in student union activities, by deciding and using the Ruuti student union grants to increase students' sense of community or developing the learning environments, in board work, and through various surveys, votes and feedback. Pupils are encouraged to set up their own groups to promote topics that are important to them. City of Helsinki is committed to increase the everyday participation of children and young people and aims at having more versatile ways of hearing children and young people's voices.

The comprehensive schools of Helsinki promote sustainable development. The schools use energy, water and materials sparingly and sort their waste. All comprehensive schools in Helsinki have included an environmental programme to their annual action plans. Almost all municipal comprehensive schools have a pupils' environmental group that develops the school's environmental work together with its pupils and teachers.





Co-operation between home and school

The goal of co-operation between home and school is to support the pupil's growth and learning, as well as the well-being of the entire school community. Successful co-operation is based on mutual trust and open dialogue. The principles of co-operation between school and home are defined in the school curriculum. The school and guardians agree on the best practices for co-operation. The co-operation should be reciprocal. The guardians have the primary responsibility for their child's upbringing and compulsory education. The school's task is to support the pupil's growth and learning as a member of the school community. The guardians must notify the school as soon as possible if their child cannot go to school.

Networks for guardians and the school board

Guardians can get to know each other at events organised by the school or parent committees. Each school has a board that consists of guardian representatives and a pupil representative. The City of Helsinki's Education Committee makes an official decision on the members for a four-year term. Pupil representatives have the right to attend and speak at the board meetings. The board approves the school's action plan and the school rules annually and decides on certain disciplinary matters.

Tips for first-graders' guardians

- ▶ Show interest in your child's schoolwork and education.
- ▶ Spend time with your child and be present.
- ▶ Make sure your child feels safe and loved.
- ▶ Support your child in developing their social skills.
- ▶ Make sure your child eats balanced and healthy meals throughout the day.
- ▶ Make sure that your child has enough physical activity and rest.
- ▶ Read with your child.
- ▶ Be a parent to your child and set limits.
- ▶ Make sure your child uses media moderately, safely and responsibly.
- ▶ Build good rapport and mutual trust with the school.

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

Useful links

- ▶ Mannerheim League for Child Welfare mll.fi
- ▶ Suomen Vanhempainliitto ry (Finnish Parents' League) vanhempainliitto.fi
- ▶ Väestöliitto (Family Federation of Finland) vaestoliitto.fi
- ▶ Helsingin vanhemmat ry HELVARY (Helsinki region parents committee Helvary) helvary.fi



Helsinki



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For up-to-date information, see hel.fi/welcometoschool and the school websites.

