

Criteria for the allocation of early childhood education places from 1 March 2026

Principles for the allocation of places in early childhood education

1. Parents or guardians choose one to three early childhood education locations from which they would like to receive a place for their child. The choices are considered in order from 1 to 3.

2. The child is allocated an appropriate place in an early childhood education location close to their home, while considering the available places at early childhood education locations and ensuring the formation of well-functioning child groups. When allocating an early childhood education place, the start date on the application is taken into account. When processing applications, the start date of the need for early childhood education is taken into account in two-week periods, while following the four-month time limit laid down by law.

3. If there are more applicants than places for an early childhood education location, the following criteria will be applied:

1. When possible, siblings are allocated a place in the same early childhood education location. A sibling of a child in pre-primary education, in Swedish-language immersion group or in integrated teaching or a special group for children with multiple disabilities cannot always be allocated a place in the same early childhood education location. Regarding early childhood education in Finnish sign language, siblings are allocated a place in the same early childhood education location when possible.

2. If the start date and the sibling rule do not differentiate between the applicants, the applicant with the shortest walking distance or public transport journey from their home to the early childhood education location will be selected.

3. If there are no available places in the early childhood education locations requested by the applicant, the applicant will be allocated a place in an early childhood education unit nearest to their home that has a place available, while considering the formation of well-functioning child groups.

If the child requires support for growth and learning, a place in a location other than the one closest to their home may be allocated to the child.

If necessary, the need for support must be proven with a statement from a specialist and attached to the application. If necessary, child-specific and weighty special reasons will also be considered when allocating places.

If the start date of early childhood education cannot be determined in advance due to a situation referred to in section 17, subsection 2 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, the place in early childhood education must be applied for as soon as possible and, at the latest, two weeks before the child needs to have a place in early childhood education. In such an event, the parent or guardian must provide a document proving that the need is due to employment, studies, training or relocation to another municipality due to work or studies.

When applying for a place in shift or evening care, documents from all parents or guardians proving that the need is due to shift work or evening studies must be attached to the application.

If there are no differences between applicants after all other grounds for allocating a place in early childhood education have been considered, the decision may be made by considering the child's best interest and any child-specific grounds.

If the family wants to change the child's current early childhood education to another location, these applications are usually processed twice a year: when allocating places to those whose desired start date is in early January and when allocating places to those whose desired start date is at the turn of July and August. However, applications based on a sibling rule, family relocations or the start or end of a need for shift care will be processed as soon as possible. If the child's current early childhood education place is more than 1.5 km from the child's home address, transfer requests will be processed as soon as possible. In transfers based on moving to a new home address, it is also required that the new home address is more than 1.5 km from the early childhood education location in question for the request to be processed as soon as possible.

If an early childhood education location is closed down, children in that location will be allocated a new place as close as possible to the closed location. The available places in the daycare centres are considered when allocating places.

If the shift care service location is closed down, a child will be allocated a new shift care place.

If there are no differences between applicants after all other grounds for allocating a place in early childhood education have been considered, the decision may be made by considering the child's best interest and any child-specific grounds.

The decision on the early childhood education place will be made at least one month before the start of the need for care. If the allocated place is not accepted, the parent or guardian must report this within one week of being informed of the decision. As a rule, if the transfer request is granted, the previous place is being cancelled and there is no reconsideration period. When a family applies for a transfer due to moving to a new home address, the family will be contacted before the decision-making to verify whether they will accept a place if the one offered is not the place they requested.

Applying for early childhood education in Finnish sign language

Hearing impaired children and children who use Finnish sign language as their home language can be assigned a place at Daycare Taneli. A certain number of places at Daycare Taneli are reserved for children with a hearing impairment and children who use Finnish sign language at home. If the number of applicants exceeds the number of reserved places, children with a hearing impairment are prioritised.

Selection criteria for Swedish-language immersion groups in early childhood education

1. All applicants will be admitted to the language immersion group if there are places available.
2. If there are more applicants than there are places available in the group, the available places will be drawn between the applicants.
3. An applicant who has a sibling in the same language immersion daycare centre or in the 1st or 2nd grade of the language immersion school of the same path will be prioritised in the language immersion group selections.

Siblings will be placed in the same location if there are available places. If there are more siblings than there are places available in the location, the places will be drawn.

Clarifications to the criteria

When determining the grounds for allocating an early childhood education place, it is justified to consider the child groups that have the places available. In such a situation, it is not appropriate to allocate a place to a 5-year-old in a group for 1–3-year-olds in the absence of an age-appropriate peer group, unless the situation can be modified at the location to allow for the child's placement in an age-appropriate group.

Special and weighty child-specific reasons will be considered when allocating places for new applicants and transfer applications. In some cases, it is in the child's best interest to be placed in a unit where the child's individual needs can be met in a special way. Special and weighty child-specific reasons may be related to the provision of support under the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care. Factors such as the location of the parent's or guardians' workplaces, transport arrangements and other similar issues related to day-to-day arrangements are not considered to be special and weighty child-specific reasons.

If a family wants to change a child's early childhood education place, they can submit a transfer application. In principle, applications will be processed twice a year; when making decisions for those who have the desired start date in early January and when making decisions for those who have the desired start date at the turn of July and August. The available places in the locations are considered when allocating places.

Transfer applications to a same location where the child already has a sibling in early childhood education will be processed as soon as possible. If the child's current early childhood education place is more than 1.5 km from the child's home address, their transfer applications will also be processed as soon as possible. The applications will be processed at all future selection

meetings until there is a place available in the desired unit. Transfer applications relating to a family's move to a new home address and the start or end of a need for shift care will also be considered at the next selection meeting. If there is no room in the locations requested by the family, the nearest available place will be allocated for applicants needing one based on the start or end of a need for shift care or based on the family moving. In the case of transfers based on the family's move to a new home address, the distance from the new home address to the early childhood education location must be more than 1.5 km.

If a child is allocated an early childhood education place within 1.5 km of their home, applications are processed as determined above, twice a year. The shortest walking distance or public transport journey from the child's home to the early childhood education location is used for the calculation. A transfer cannot be made if there is a serious or special situation in which the transfer would compromise the best interests of the child.

It is advisable to try to allocate a place as close as possible to the service user. Therefore, applications received within two weeks of the start date will be considered. They will be processed simultaneously: applicants from the 1st to the 15th of the month and then from the 16th to the 31st of the month will be processed at the same time. All applications will be processed within four months in accordance with the statutory deadline. Applications for early childhood education in Finnish sign language are processed twice a year. Children with hearing impairments and children who use sign language as their home language are eligible for early childhood education in Finnish sign language.

The journey is estimated by using the HSL Journey Planner and its shortest walking distance or public transport journey from the child's home to the early childhood education location. The decision-maker will look up the information in the HSL Journey Planner, which indicates the shortest journey according to HSL specifications.

Processing of Swedish-language immersion applications

Applications for Swedish-language immersion are submitted according to a separate schedule. A place in Swedish-language immersion is usually applied for a child in the year they are turning four, and a child can start language immersion education at the latest at the beginning of their first year in pre-primary education. The annual application deadline is announced on hel.fi.

Applications submitted during the application period will be processed simultaneously after the deadline. Applications submitted outside the application period will be processed every two weeks in the order of the service's start date.

The desired start date of language Swedish-immersion will be used as the review period for the selection criteria and sibling situation.