



# Guide for basic education



## CITY OF TAMPERE

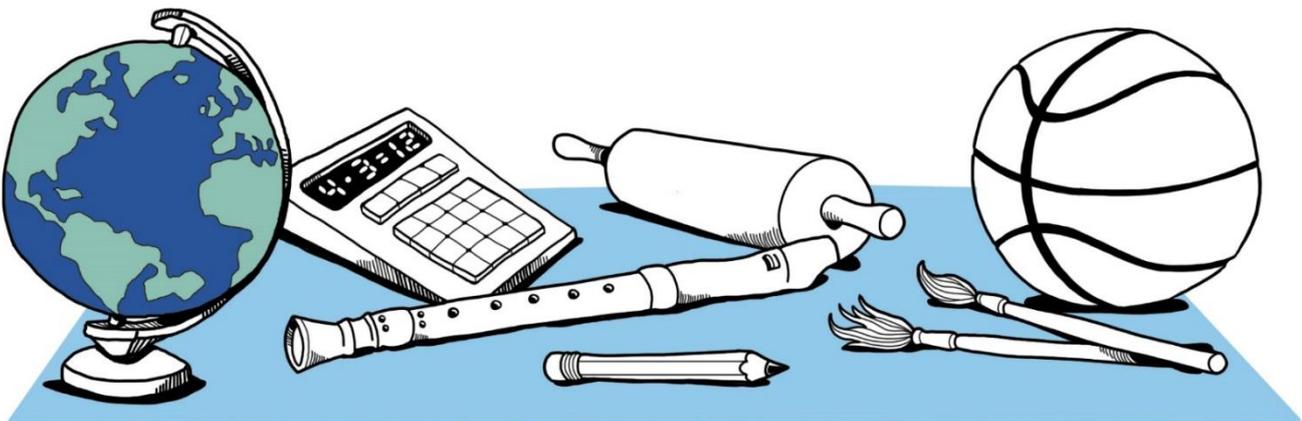
### Contents

Information about comprehensive schools.....	4
What is studied in comprehensive school?.....	5
Assessment.....	5
The role of the teacher and the student .....	6
Morning and Afternoon Activities for Schoolchildren.....	6
Teachers .....	7
Class teacher.....	7
Class tutor .....	7
Subject teacher.....	8
Support for study.....	8
Tutoring.....	9
Special needs education .....	9
School social worker .....	9
School psychologist.....	9
School health nurse .....	9
Sick children and students getting ill at school .....	10
Vaccinations.....	10
Preparatory education for basic education .....	11
Finnish language learning: Finnish as a second language.....	12
Linguistically responsive teaching of multilingual pupils (kietu).....	13

Studying your native language .....	14
Religious education .....	14
School rules and regulations .....	15
After comprehensive school.....	16
How can I support my child's education? .....	17
Useful links:.....	18

# Welcome to school!

*This guide describes what attending school is like in Finland and what kind of teaching is provided for multilingual children*



## Information about comprehensive schools

In Finland, education is compulsory for children aged 7 to 17 years old. This means that all children must complete basic education. Typically, basic education lasts for nine years. Children usually attend their local school.

The school year begins in August and ends in May or June. The academic year is divided into autumn and spring terms, with additional breaks for autumn, winter, and Easter holidays. If families want to take vacations outside of these holiday periods, they need to request permission from the school. Religious holidays can also be granted as excused absences, but they must be communicated to the school.

Finnish basic education is free of charge. Instruction, school-organized events, teaching materials, and supplies are provided at no cost. Students receive a free daily meal. Students are insured during school hours and on their way to and from school. If the school commute is over five kilometres, it is free of charge.

Typically, class periods last 45 minutes, although the duration of classes may vary across different schools.

Between classes, students have recess, which is spent outdoors, even during winter. Additionally, physical education classes often take place outdoors. During both recess and physical education, students must have appropriate clothing and gear for the sport and the weather.

Name of the school (Koulun nimi):

---

Address of the school (Koulun osoite):

---

Name and telephone number of the head teacher (Rehtorin nimi ja puhelinnumero):

---

Name and telephone number of the school secretary (Koulusihteerin nimi ja puhelinnumero):

---

## What is studied in comprehensive school?

In comprehensive schools, most subjects are common and compulsory for all students. The subjects taught to everyone include Finnish language and literature, the second national language, a foreign language, environmental studies, health education, religion or ethics, history, social studies, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, physical education, music, visual arts, crafts, and home economics.

All the content within these common subjects is mandatory for all students. Swimming is also part of the compulsory curriculum. If a student is not able to participate in swimming during regular lessons due to compelling reasons, they can make up for it by attending swimming lessons in one's own time, provided that arrangements have been made with the school and the student receives an appropriate certificate from the swimming instructor.

In addition to the common subjects, students choose elective courses at different grade levels. The specific elective subjects offered may vary across different schools.

## Assessment

In the Finnish education system, the purpose of student assessment is to guide and encourage learning while also developing the student's self-assessment skills. Students receive diverse evaluations related to their learning, work, and behaviour. From the beginning, students receive feedback that guides their learning and provides encouragement, as well as information about their progress and skills.

Student learning is assessed either verbally or numerically. Verbal assessment is possible in most cases, except for the 9th-grade final assessment. The numerical grading scale ranges from 4 to 10. A grade of 4 signifies failure, while a grade of 10 represents the highest achievement. In grades 5 to 9, students receive interim reports at the end of the autumn semester. At the end of the academic year in spring, all students receive an annual report that includes their evaluations.

Once a year, teachers invite parents and students to an assessment discussion, where they discuss the student's learning, the school situation, strengths, and weaknesses. These joint discussions among teachers, students, and guardians promote mutual trust and convey information about the student's situation. Parents have the right to request an interpreter for these meetings.

## **The role of the teacher and the student**

In Finnish schools, the role of the teacher is guiding. The teacher motivates and directs the student's learning process. Each student learns best in their own way. The teacher's most important task is, in fact, to teach the student how to learn in their own unique way.

The extent to which a student learns, depends on themselves. Learning is based on trust between the teacher and the student, as well as the student's responsibility for learning. Homework is often assigned, although not always.

Parents' role is to support their child's studies and collaborate with the teacher. The teacher informs parents about their child's and class's matters primarily through the electronic Wilma student communication system. In meetings with teachers, interpreters are used as needed. Parents must promptly inform the child's teacher if the student is absent from school. You can send a message via Wilma or, if you have arranged it with the teacher, directly from your own phone. The child's own notification of absence is not sufficient.

Students are treated as individuals. In Finland, all students are equal and have the right to a safe learning environment. Teachers are not allowed to use violence against students. Similarly, parents must not be violent towards their children, and students must not use violence against other students. Bullying is not tolerated in schools, and any incidents of bullying must be reported to the teacher.

## **Morning and Afternoon Activities for Schoolchildren**

Morning and afternoon activities are intended for 1st and 2nd grade students. These activities take place outside regular school hours. Morning and afternoon activities support a child's growth, development, and safe leisure time. For immigrant students, these activities also aid in language development and integration into Finnish society. During these sessions, children engage in outdoor play, games, physical activities, and do homework.

Afternoon activities are held on school days from 12:00 to 17:00. At all locations, children are provided with a snack around 14:00. Morning activities are only offered at select schools before the start of the school day.

Participation in morning and afternoon activities involves a fixed monthly fee, determined based on the number of club hours. Morning and afternoon activities for schoolchildren are free of charge for low-income families, who must apply for fee exemption using the city's online form

## Teachers

### Class teacher

In grades 1 to 6 studies take place in a single classroom under the supervision of the class teacher. The class teacher teaches almost all subjects. Some subjects may also be taught by subject teachers, such as the Finnish as a second language (S2) teacher. The class teacher also manages the collaboration between home and school and monitors student learning progress and absences.

Name and contact information of the class teacher (Luokanopettajan nimi ja yhteystiedot):

---

### Class tutor

In grades 7 to 9 each class has its own class tutor. The class tutor closely monitors the students' progress, attendance, and is responsible for planning and organizing support for individual students. They also communicate important school matters to parents. Typically, the class tutor teaches the students only a few class periods. Once a year, the class tutor invites parents to discuss their child's progress and other relevant matters at the school.

Name and contact information of the class tutor (Luokanohjaajan nimi ja yhteystiedot):

---



### Subject teacher

In grades 7 to 9, each class has its own subject teachers. These teachers are experts in their respective subjects and guide students' learning in their specific areas, such as mathematics. Subject teachers also provide necessary support and collaborate with special education teachers

The contact information of the subject teachers can be found on the website of your own school.

### Support for study

## Tutoring

Students or parents can request tutoring from a teacher, or a teacher can suggest tutoring for a student if they believe it would be beneficial. Tutoring is offered in short sessions, not as continuous support. It is not intended for achieving top grades but rather for assisting with learning challenges.

## Special needs education

Special needs education is provided in small groups for subjects where students face challenges. The need for educational support is determined by subject teachers, class teachers, special education teachers, or student welfare teams in collaboration with the student and, if necessary, their guardian. In Tampere, there are also regional special classes where special education is provided full-time.

In addition to academic support, students receive health care and student welfare services. The student support team includes school counsellors, school psychologists, and nurses."

## School social worker

The "school curator" is the school's social worker. They provide assistance when students encounter challenges related to school attendance, peer relationships, or life changes that may impact their schoolwork. The school social worker also supports students in matters related to their personal lives and development. Solutions to challenging situations are sought together with the student, parents, and other school staff.

## School psychologist

A school psychologist may help when the student needs support and clarification related to challenges in emotional life and development, attention and work difficulties, interpersonal relationships at home and school, or learning difficulties.

## School health nurse

A school health nurse works at the school. The school health nurse monitors the child's growth and development in collaboration with parents and the school doctor. School health care does not replace the services provided by health centres; instead, the school health nurse and school doctor conduct health check-ups to track the child's physical,

mental, and social growth and development. In cases of illness, treatment should be sought from the child's own health centre.

For the safety of the student, parents must inform the school nurse and teacher about their child's chronic illnesses and medications.



### Sick children and students getting ill at school

A sick child may not be sent to school. The school health nurse is not a nurse, but she/he can be visited in the course of the school day if a child has become ill or hurt itself at school.

For the student's own safety, the parents are advised to notify the health nurse and the teacher about the child's chronic diseases and medications.

### Vaccinations

The parents present to the school health nurse a document containing the vaccinations previously given to the child. Should the parents not have available a document on vaccinations, the school health nurse will commence the vaccination programme in use in Finland, with authorization from the parents.

## Preparatory education for basic education

Preparatory education for basic education is intended for 7–16-year-olds who do not yet know the Finnish language. In preparatory education, students are taught basic skills in Finnish and other subjects according to their age level. The goal of preparatory education is to achieve developing basic language skills, which continue to improve in general education.

Familiarising students with Finnish schools, culture, language, and teaching methods is an essential part of preparatory education. Additionally, students study key content and vocabulary in various subjects. Religion or ethics is not taught during preparatory education.

Preparatory education lasts for one year. Afterward, the student transitions to their local school. The student is placed in a class based on their skill level, either in a class corresponding to their age or one year below. The school determines the appropriate placement class for the student.

During the initial meeting for preparatory education, the student's school history and any special needs are assessed. In collaboration with parents and the student, the teacher creates a personalized study plan based on which the student's education is organized during the preparatory class. Additionally, the student's parents are met at least twice during preparatory education, with the assistance of an interpreter if needed.

Name and contact information of the teacher (Valmistavan opetuksen opettajan nimi ja yhteystiedot):

---



## **Finnish language learning: Finnish as a second language**

Finnish as a Second Language and Literature (S2) classes aim to strengthen the student's Finnish language skills. The specific task of the S2 curriculum is to support the development of the student's multilingualism. Students have the right to receive Finnish language instruction according to the S2 curriculum throughout their basic education. S2 education partially replaces Finnish language and literature instruction, and the assessment of S2 students occurs entirely within the Finnish language subject, aligned with the goals of the S2 curriculum.

Students can receive S2 education either in small S2 groups or during Finnish as a native language lessons. Once they have achieved proficiency in Finnish, students can transition fully to Finnish language and literature classes. The most suitable curriculum (S2 / S1) for the student is decided between the responsible teachers. However, the final decision regarding curriculum choices lies with the student's guardian.

Name and contact information of the teacher (S2-opettajan nimi ja yhteystiedot):

---



## **Linguistically responsive teaching of multilingual pupils (kietu)**

Linguistically responsive teaching is primarily intended for students who require substantial language support to progress in their studies, especially after completing preparatory instruction in secondary school. Elementary schools may also offer language-supported education.

Students in language-supported groups are part to regular education classes and participate in their class instruction as much as possible. The student's schedule is combined with lessons taught by a KIETU teacher based on the student's individual learning needs. Support is provided, especially in theoretical subjects, focusing on reading comprehension and learning terminology and vocabulary. KIETU education is also organized as simultaneous teaching, where the KIETU teacher is present alongside the regular education teacher during class. However, KIETU education is not available in every school.

## Studying your native language

Maintaining one's own culture strengthens a student's identity, mental well-being, adaptation to society, and appreciation of other cultures. The development of one's native language helps in learning other languages and enhances thinking skills. Participation in native language instruction is voluntary for students. When a student enrolls in these lessons, they must commit to them.

Students whose native language or one of their family languages is other than Finnish or Swedish can sign up for native language instruction. Additionally, Finnish repatriates who have acquired language proficiency equivalent to their native language while living abroad can also enroll (maintenance education for languages learned abroad). Supplementary education is also provided for Sámi-speaking and Romani-speaking students.

A teaching group is formed if there are enough students enrolled. The lessons may not necessarily take place at the student's own school. Parents are responsible for ensuring their child's transportation to native language classes, which are usually held after regular school hours.

**More information** about teaching and enrolment can be found at:

[Teaching in the pupil's native language | www.tampere.fi](http://www.tampere.fi)

## Religious education

Students have the right to receive religious education based on their own religious community if there are at least three students and parents request it. The guardians/parents can choose for their child to participate in ethics lessons instead (does not apply to Lutherans). If a student is not part of any religious community, they will automatically participate in ethics lessons.

You will find the information on your child's religious education teacher on the website of his/her own school.

During the preparatory instruction for basic education the pupil does not participate in religious education.

## **School rules and regulations**

### **1. Application of School Rules**

School hours include the scheduled school day according to the timetable, breaks, morning and afternoon activities, as well as school-organized trips and other events. The school premises encompass school buildings, playgrounds, and other spaces where instruction takes place.

### **2. Student Rights and Responsibilities**

All students have an equal and equitable position, fundamental educational and human rights, and the right to a safe learning environment. Every adult working in the school, as well as students, are obligated to report any observed bullying, harassment, or violence to an adult. Each student is responsible for participating in classes, completing tasks diligently, and behaving appropriately.

#### **3.1 Good Behaviour**

Everyone should consider others, use polite language, follow good manners, and allow fellow students a peaceful learning environment. Students must not copy text or images for their assignments without proper citation. Each student is responsible for taking good care of school property and learning materials. Touching someone else's belongings without permission is not allowed. Any damage caused should be reported to the school staff. If a student causes damage, they are obligated to compensate according to the law on damages.

#### **3.2 Staying on school property and transitions during the day**

During breaks, students should remain in designated break areas and follow the instructions of break supervisors. If needed, students can seek assistance from the supervisor. Students must arrive promptly for lessons and transition to breaks without delay. Leaving the school premises during the school day requires the teacher's permission. For safety reasons, transportation vehicles should be left in their designated spots during the school day.

### 3.3 Use of computers and mobile devices

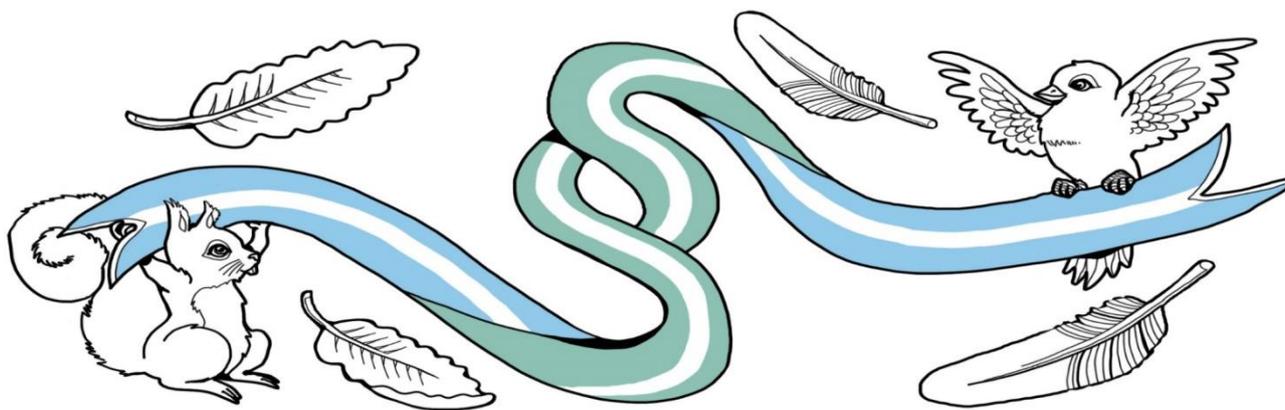
Mobile devices must not be used or displayed without permission during lessons and mealtimes. Students must make sure that mobile devices do not disrupt the school day.

### 3.4 Substances and dangerous objects

Possession and use of tobacco products, substances, and other intoxicating agents are prohibited for minors under Finnish law. Bringing sharp objects, fire-making tools, laser pointers, or other dangerous items designed for harming others or property into the school is not allowed.

### 3.5 Discipline

Failure to comply with the rules may result in discussions with teachers, communication with parents, removal from class, counselling sessions, detention, written warnings, denial of participation in classes, completing homework after school hours, cleaning duties, inspection and confiscation of prohibited items, or temporary suspension from school.



## After comprehensive school

After completing the upper grades of comprehensive school, compulsory education continues, and students must apply for secondary education. During the upper grades of comprehensive school, the school guidance counsellor informs students about various possibilities for further education. Typically, students apply to either high school or

vocational schools after comprehensive school. This is called upper secondary education. The application process occurs during the joint application period in winter, usually from February to March. High school and vocational school programs can be completed in 2 to 4 years.

At the upper secondary level, education is free. After completing high school or vocational school, students can apply to polytechnical colleges, universities of applied sciences, and universities. These have their own joint applications.

In Finland, compulsory education ends when a young person turns 17. If a student reaches the age of 17 during their basic education, they transition to adult basic education in the following academic year.

Name and contact information of the guidance counsellor (Opinto-ohjaajan nimi ja yhteystiedot):

---

## How can I support my child's education?

- I will express my appreciation for education and communicate it to my child.
- I will participate in parent meetings.
- I will make sure my child has the necessary supplies: a backpack, pencil case, and appropriate gym clothes. It's the child's responsibility to bring books, notebooks, and other necessary study materials to school, such as pens, erasers, rulers, etc.
- I will take an interest in my child's school life. Ask about their day: What did they learn? What did they do during breaks? What did they eat? Who are their friends at school?

- I will ensure my child gets enough sleep, eats regularly, and engages in physical activity. I will monitor phone usage and limit it if necessary.
- Absences: I will notify the school when my child is sick. A sick child should not attend school.
- I will make sure my child attends schools regularly. Frequent absences make learning difficult, and tasks pile up. Schools track absences, and unauthorized absences have consequences.
- I will reach out to the teacher if I have questions or concerns.
- I will make sure my child completes homework. Homework is crucial for students. I will provide a quiet environment for them to work on assignments. Homework should also be managed during days of absence.

## Useful links:

[Multilingual pupils](#)

[School attendance and support for learning in Finland](#)

[Abridged school vocabulary](#)

Text by Terhi Kuokka

Updated in February 2024 by Johanna Heikkinen, Kristiina Jokinen and Miina Sivula

Illustrations by Tussitaikurit Oy

