

Newly arrived children in Stockholm schools

For parents or guardians whose children
will start in a Swedish school



1. The fundamental values of Swedish schools

Swedish schools are based on democratic values. Schools must work to promote equality between women and men, freedom of speech and equality for all. This is stated in the Swedish Education Act.

Schools are required to provide children with knowledge on which they can rely, now and in the future. The task of schools is to support all students in developing their abilities to the greatest possible extent. While at school, both girls and boys must participate in all subjects and attend all lessons.

Schools teach children how to behave towards one another and what it means to live in a democratic society.

Lessons are secular. This means that the teacher must not attempt to sway a student in any religious direction and no individual religion is permitted to influence the content of the education.

2. What does school cost?

All schools are free of charge and are financed by tax funds.

Your child will receive the materials required for lessons, such as pens and exercise books. Students can borrow certain textbooks while they are studying the subject in question. You do not need to buy any books for your child. In compulsory school, your child will have access to a computer and/or tablet when lessons require it. In upper secondary school, students can borrow a laptop or iPad while they are registered at the school.

Your child will receive free lunch while attending compulsory and upper secondary school. A special diet can be served if your child has a medical condition such as an allergy. Special diets based on religious or ethical grounds will be offered as far as possible. For example, a special diet may be vegetarian or free of pork.

Your child must have suitable clothing and shoes for running and movement during the subject of health and physical education. These are paid for by you.

Suggestions for questions you might ask the school:

- How do I apply for a special diet for my child?
- What do they do in the subject of physical education?
- I'm wondering about swimming lessons. Can you tell me about that?



3. Compulsory attendance

Students starting in Swedish compulsory school have mandatory attendance. This means that as long as your child is healthy, they must be in attendance every school day. There are specific rules regarding leave of absence.

Students attending upper secondary school and who have a residence permit are entitled to a full-time study grant. If the student is absent too frequently, this grant may be stopped. This may also affect other allowances that your family may receive.

Suggestions for questions you might ask the school:

- How do I report that my child is ill?
- How do I apply for leave of absence?
- My child is attending upper secondary school.
How do we apply for a study grant?

The cognitive approach in Swedish schools

Different school systems reward different skills and knowledge. Swedish schools have moved from placing value on a student's ability to learn and recount facts in detail, to a cognitive approach in which the student's ability to **apply** their factual knowledge is **also** valued. This may take place through the student learning to compare, draw conclusions about and discuss things such as cause and effect. Students are also permitted to develop their ability to formulate opinions and put forward arguments.

Suggestions for questions you might ask the school:

- How do I know if my child has homework or exams?
- Can I attend a class at the school?

4. The foundation of a successful education for every student

All students shall feel secure at school and be provided with the best conditions for learning and developing. The student's chances of doing well in school increase when cooperation between school and home works well. Both school and home have an opportunity to contribute to good cooperation.

The school must:

- offer your child the opportunity to acquire good knowledge and good social skills
- help your child to understand learning goals for each subject in every year, so that your child can take responsibility for their own learning
- help your child to understand the specific areas they need to develop in order to achieve learning goals
- educate children in democratic attitudes
- work actively to promote equality by treating girls and boys as equals
- work to ensure that your child is not subjected to, and does not subject any other student to, bullying, harassment or discrimination and, if this does occur, take the necessary measures to ensure that this ceases immediately
- provide you with regular information about activities at the school and contact you if there are any concerns regarding your child's development or situation at the school
- invite you to parent-teacher conferences and developmental discussions. At **parent-teacher conferences**, you can meet your child's teacher. Among other things, parent-teacher conferences are an opportunity for you to find out what students are learning and how your child's class is functioning. In **the developmental discussion**,

the conversation is about your child. You and your child will meet their teacher to discuss your child's development in the various school subjects. You will also discuss your child's social development.

Suggestions for questions you might ask the school:

- How does the school help my child understand the goals of the subjects?
- My child complains about being teased in school. Who should I talk to?
- Who do I tell when I need an interpreter, if you want to give me important information about my child?

The parent/guardian/contact person must:

- participate in meetings at the school when invited to do so
- read any information provided by the school, such as weekly newsletters or class blogs
- if your child is ill, report this in accordance with the school's procedures
- contact the school if you have any questions or concerns regarding your child
- ensure that your child is well rested and arrives at school on time every day
- ensure that your child has the necessary school books and sportswear for the school day
- familiarise yourself with the school's rules and regulations and help your child to understand and comply with them
- show an interest in your child's school work by asking questions.

Suggestions for questions to ask your child:

- What are you working on in maths at the moment?
- Tell me three things you learnt today.
- What was most fun at school today, and what was so great about it?

- Tell me what your homework is about.
- What do you find easy/difficult about your homework?
- How can I help you?

Suggestions for questions you might ask the school:

- Where can I find the school's rules?
- Where can I find my child's timetable?
- My child needs help with homework. Can the school help?
- How can I receive weekly newsletters or similar information?
Is there any help available to get it translated?
- Where can I find contact details for my children's teachers?

You have the right to an interpreter at meetings in school

In order to offer your child the greatest possible support, it is vital that everyone at the meeting understands everything that is said. You therefore have the right to an interpreter. Notify the school of this and they will arrange an interpreter in the language you speak.

It is important that you as a parent attend meetings with the school. You must not send a relative or a friend. It is also not appropriate to bring a relative or an older sibling as an interpreter.

In a family where everyone is required to learn a new language, it is often the children who most quickly develop the new language because they go to school. This leads to many adults relying on children as interpreters in a variety of situations. Research shows that this often has negative consequences for both the child and parents. The child is given responsibility for conveying information about themselves, something they may find hard to deal with. Parents risk finding themselves becoming dependent on their children, which places a strain on relationships within the family. It may also mean that the



school and parents choose not to discuss important issues regarding the child. If both parents attend a meeting and one of you speaks good Swedish while the other does not, you should still order an interpreter from the school. It is important that everyone understands everything that is said at the meeting.

The task of the interpreter is to impartially convey information between the participants in the conversation. The interpreter may not have their own opinions about you or your child, nor may they pass on what is said at the meeting. You do not pay anything to have an interpreter present.

Suggestions for questions you might ask the school:

- How far in advance do I need to register the need for an interpreter?

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The schools's organisation

Welcome to a school in the City of Stockholm

In Stockholm, there are the city's own municipal schools and independent schools. All schools follow the same syllabus and work towards the same required knowledge. The knowledge requirements are set by the Swedish National Agency for Education.

5. Which school will my child go to?

From preschool until Year 6, students are placed in a school close to their registered address. Students in Years 7-9 may be placed further away, depending on which schools have places available.

If you want to apply for a place at another school in Stockholm, you must apply for it yourself. If so, search "Söka skola Stockholm" ("Search school Stockholm") on the Internet. Students can only start at a school if there is a place available for them.

You can apply for a place for your child in an independent school. Some independent schools can be found through "Search school Stockholm", but others you will have to find directly.

If your child is placed in a school that is a long way from your home, the school will pay for an SL Access card, so that your child can travel to and from school by public transportation. If you choose a school other than the one offered to you, the school is under no obligation to pay for an SL Access card for your child.

Suggestions for questions you might ask the school:

- Is my child allowed travel to and from school alone?
- Is my child entitled to an SL Access card?

Which school can my child attend if they have a disability?

There are special forms of school for children and young people who have an intellectual disability or a serious functional disability.

The special needs school is for students who, for example, have a severe visual or hearing impairment. The school adapts its teaching according to the needs of the students. When students are in their final year of compulsory school, they apply to upper secondary school.

Compulsory school for children with learning disabilities is for those students who do not meet the knowledge requirements for compulsory school because they have an intellectual disability. The school adapts its teaching according to the needs of the students. After compulsory school for children with learning disabilities, students can continue at special needs upper secondary school.

Special needs upper secondary school is aimed at young people with intellectual disabilities and lasts four years. There are nine vocational programs, but also individual programs for students who need a study program adapted for their own conditions.

Suggestions for questions to ask the school:

- I'm wondering if my child needs to go to a compulsory school for children with learning disabilities. Who should I talk to?
- I think my child has impaired hearing.
What kind of support is available?

Leisure-times centres and after-school clubs

During the part of the school day your child does not attend school, your child may be in a leisure-time centre or after-school club, which

can be before and after the school day. This also applies to holidays and study days. Leisure-time centres are for children in preschool class to Year 3, and after-school clubs are for children in Years 4-6.

Attending a leisure-time centre or after-school club is voluntary. You pay a monthly fee based on how much you earn.

Suggestions for questions you might ask the school:

- How do I register my child for a leisure-time centre or after-school club?
- What do they do at the leisure-time centre/after-school club?
- How much does it cost for my child to attend a leisure-time centre/after-school club?
- Can my child attend a leisure-time centre/after-school club if I am not working?

What is the difference between a preparatory class and going straight into an ordinary class?

A **preparatory class** is a teaching group for newly arrived students. The group does extra work on the Swedish language.

In Stockholm's municipal schools, newly arrived students (Years 7-9) who have been in Sweden for less than one year are often placed first of all in a preparatory class. While attending the preparatory class, the student will also participate in some lessons in an ordinary class. The more Swedish the student learns, the more subjects they will be able to study in their ordinary class.

Students from preschool to Year 6 may be placed directly in an ordinary class, known as **direct placement**, or in a preparatory class. This differs from school to school. It is the head of the school who decides on direct placement or preparatory class.

Suggestions for questions you might ask the school:

- Will my child be going into a preparatory class?
- Which subjects will my child start studying with their ordinary class?



6. Can my child attend school even if they are over the age of 16?

If your child is between 16 and 19 years of age, they can apply for upper secondary school.

At upper secondary school, you can study programs that lead to a vocational qualification/competence (vocational preparation program), such as assistant nurse, carpenter, electrician, etc. You can also study programs that are more theoretical (higher education preparation program), which lead to the opportunity to study further at an institute of higher education.

If you do not have all the grades you need to start a vocational preparation or university preparation program, you can follow an introductory program. The length of an introductory program varies, depending on the needs of each individual student.

Language introduction program

If your child has not been in a Swedish school long enough to be able to achieve grades in Swedish, your child can apply for Language Introduction. This is where students can study more Swedish and other courses needed to study further .

Even if your child arrives late in Sweden, there are many different opportunities for them to continue their studies.

Find out more about upper secondary study programs and admissions at: www.utbildningsinfo.se

Suggestions for questions you might ask the school:

- What is required to be able to apply for a vocational preparation or higher education preparation program?
- Will my child have time to get qualifications for upper secondary school?

7. What support can the school offer my child?

In order for your child to succeed as well as possible, help is available in different ways.

Student health team

Students should be happy and healthy at school. This is an important foundation for good self-confidence, social interaction and good study results. This is why the school has a student health team that is able to support individual students if necessary.

The team includes a school doctor, school nurse, psychologist, special needs teacher, study and careers advisor and counsellor. Some are at school several days a week, while others come in for booked appointments.

Student health works primarily to prevent illness and to promote health, and to support the development of students towards their educational goals.

What does the study and careers advisor do?

Study and careers advisors have knowledge of educational paths, professions and the labour market.

When your child continues their studies after compulsory or upper secondary school, it can be difficult to know what opportunities exist and which admission requirements apply for different study courses and programs. It is important that the student can gain as much knowledge as possible before making a choice.

The study and careers advisor helps your child find their way among different options and supports them in the process of choosing a course or school.

What do the counsellor and the social educationalist do?

The counsellor works both preventively and in response to urgent problems regarding the social situations of students.

Many schools have social educationalists who often work in the classes with social interaction.

Your child can choose to go and talk to a counsellor or social educationalist about how they are feeling. You can also get in touch if you are concerned about how your child is feeling or behaving.

What do the school doctor and the school psychologist do?

School doctors and school psychologists often work at several schools and are hired by the school if necessary. For example, when there needs to be investigation into whether a child has special needs.

What does the school nurse do?

The school nurse monitors the physical development of students. The school nurse will also take care of your child if they are injured or suddenly feel unwell during school hours. If your child is ill, they should go to the health centre.

What do the special needs educationalist and the special needs teacher do?

The special needs educationalist works with those students who need extra support with reading and writing, or with maths.

The special needs teacher can, together with your child, provide extra practice in reading or counting, for example.

Suggestions for questions you might ask the school:

- How often are the counsellor and the school nurse at the school?
- What do I or my child do if they need support from a counsellor?
- When should I go to the school nurse, and when should I go to the health centre with my child?
- What are the names of the different people who work in the EHT (student health team) at the school?
- In which situations and when will my child meet the different professions within the student health team, such as the school nurse or the study and careers advisor?

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8. Study guidance and mother tongue tuition

In order to ensure that your child has good opportunities to learn and develop in school, they have the right to **study guidance**. This means that your child will receive support in a school subject from a study guide who speaks the student's mother tongue or previous teaching language. Research into multilingual students shows that study guidance is a success factor for the student's development, both in the Swedish language and other subjects.

The purpose of teaching the **mother tongue** as a subject is to develop the students' knowledge in and about their mother tongue. Research shows that when a student has the opportunity to develop their verbal and writing skills in their mother tongue, this will also improve learning in Swedish and other subjects. This is a support for your child to succeed in school. Language research recommends that parents accept the offer of mother tongue tuition. Grades are awarded for the mother tongue subject. This grade counts towards any application to upper secondary school or higher education.

Suggestions for questions to ask the school:

- How do we apply for mother tongue tuition?
- My child has the right to study guidance in their mother tongue. How do you decide in which subjects my child will receive study guidance?
- At what time and where does my child receive mother tongue tuition?

9. Some terms and concepts you may encounter in contact with your child's school:

ISP (individual study plan)

All newly arrived students from Year 7 and above must receive an individual study plan. It must include the goal of the studies, i.e. what the student should be able to achieve. It must also contain which subjects the student will study. The individual study plan must be time-based.

Prioritised allocation of hours

Newly arrived students who need extra support in Swedish can be given more hours in that subject over the course of a year. But the total number of hours of tuition that the student receives must be the same. It is only the number of subjects that can be changed.

Extra school years in compulsory school

A student who has completed Year 9, when compulsory schooling normally ends, without having achieved the minimum knowledge requirements, **has the right** to complete their education over the course of another two years. A decision on extra years in compulsory school is usually best if made in consultation with the school.

Suggestions for questions to ask the school:

- Who writes the individual study plan?
Can we be involved in any way?
- Is any thought being given to a prioritised allocation of hours for my child?
- Should I apply for extra years in compulsory school for my child? How do I do that?



