

Every Pupil is important

Education and special education in Finland

WHAT MAKES EDUCATION SO SPECIAL?

Equal opportunities for everyone

- National curriculum
- No dead ends
- Education is free of charge
- Average class size: 20 students
- Students take active roles in their learning process
- Welfare professionals work in schools
- Individual support, special education is integrated
- No “good” and “bad” schools, no ranking lists, no national tests
- Highly trained teachers, motivated teachers, teacher profession is appreciated

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cx2f90eV74c>

Basic education

Basic education encompasses nine years and caters for all those between 7 and 16 years. Schools do not select their students. Every student is allocated a place in a nearby school, but they can also choose another school with some restrictions.

All schools follow a national core curriculum, which includes the objectives and core contents of different subjects. The education providers, usually the local education authorities and the schools themselves draw up their own curricula within the framework of the national core curriculum.

In Finland education is free at all levels from pre-primary to higher education.

The current thinking in Finland is that the potential of each pupil should be maximised. Guidance and counselling aims to support, help and guide pupils and students so they can all perform as well as possible in their studies and be able to make correct decisions concerning their education and careers.

The fundamental principle of Finnish education is to provide equal opportunities for learning and growth to every pupil or student. Support for learners plays a key role. This entails removing barriers to learning, physical, attitudinal or pedagogical, early intervention and support and welfare.

Support in basic education

Everyone is entitled to general support. It is a natural part of everyday teaching and the learning process. Intensified and special supports are based on careful assessment and long-span planning in multiprofessional teams and on individual learning plans for pupils.

If general support is not enough, pedagogical assessment shall be done and a plan for the intensified support handled in the pupil welfare group of the school. Following this a learning plan is drawn up for the pupil.

If intensified support is not enough, new and more extensive pedagogical statements on the pupil shall be done. The education provider collects information from teachers and the school's welfare group. Based on this information, the education provider makes an official decision concerning special support. Following this decision, an individual education plan shall be drawn for the pupil.

Being Special

THE RISK OF EXCLUSION AND THE POTENTIAL OF INCLUSION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gaSx44pEvk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTXtT05782Y>

Special needs education

The ideology is to provide special needs education primarily in mainstream education. If a pupil cannot be taught in a regular teaching group, he or she can have a place in a smaller special education group. This education is provided at regular schools wherever possible. In Finland we have some special education schools (hardly handicaps, visually impaired etc.)

Three levels of support

1. General support

All pupils have the right to have guidance and support from all education personnel (teachers, special education teachers, school assistants)

The aim is to prevent existing problems from becoming more serious or expansive

2. Intensified Support

Must be given to those pupils who need regular several forms of support at the same time

3. Special Support

Systematic help from special education teacher so the pupils can complete compulsory education and be ready for upper secondary education

A community welfare team

A community welfare team consists (for example) of the principal, special education teacher, guidance counselor (for junior high), school social worker, school psychologist and school nurse

* There can also be the student and parents representatives in this team

* Important topics are increasing students' participation in school affairs, co-operation between homes and school and collaboration with various outside parties.

A multidisciplinary team

A multidisciplinary team can be gathered for matters regarding individual students and planning their support measures

- * It's in spirit of this new law that the students' affairs are handled in even stronger co-operation between the student, guardians and school staff
- * Depending on the matter, the multidisciplinary team can include class teacher, special education teacher, guidance counselor (junior high), school nurse, school social worker and/or school psychologist
- * If the student or guardians wish, other authorities outside school may also attend the meetings.

One-on-one meetings

Students have to access to the school social worker's, school psychologist's and the school nurse's services. The new law aims to facilitate and speed up organizing the first meeting (max 7 days). In the meeting the students can discuss their matters confidentially one-on-one. Students are entitled use these student welfare services without guardians' consent.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL HELP WITH CHILDREN

THE LAW OF PUPIL AND STUDENT WELFARE

- The law of student welfare came 1.8.2014
- Student welfare includes:
 - Advancing and maintaining of good learning, good mental and physical health and good social welfare
 - Action which increases aforesaid things in schools

Student welfare is carried out:

- Primarily so that it prevents and supports the whole school community: "Communal student welfare"
- In addition "individual student welfare"
- Means the action which advances students' learning, welfare, health, social accountability, interaction and participation and in addition environment's health, safety and accessibility.
- A communal student welfare team plans the action which is done in school. -> The aim is a healthy studying community.

The communal student welfare team meets a few Times during the school year

- To team belong usually the headmaster of the school, special education teacher, school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker and school health nurse
- Based on law in this team should also be the representation of pupils, parents, municipality (for example youth leader) and different associations

COMMUNAL STUDENT WELFARE

- Examples of action of communal student welfare: different theme days, preventing school bullying, making yard nicer, safety walks etc.
- This team takes advantage of different enquiries, especially national school health enquiry, which is done every second year in every Finnish school
 - To classes 4., 5., 8. and 9. in basic education
 - Enquiry is done in school, during a lesson
 - Enquiry includes questions about family, mental and physical health, leisure time;
 - Every school can get their results (chargeable)
 - Results for one municipality (for example whole Joensuu) are free -> Communal student welfare team can plan the action in school based on this enquiry

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT WELFARE SERVICES

Includes:

- Services which are given to a single student:
 - Health care services
 - School psychologist and social worker services
 - Multiprofessional meetings
 - Social and health services which are given in special schools for the most mentally retarded children
- Health care, school psychologist and social worker services must be available for every student

THE RIGHT TO GET SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST AND SOCIAL WORKER SERVICES

- Conversation with school psychologist OR social worker must be arranged at the latest of 7 days after request
- In urgent situations a meeting or a telephone conversation must be arranged at the same day or at the latest of next day
- The urgency is estimated by a psychologist or a social worker case- by-case.

- Before this law, municipal school psychology and social worker services were arranged only in municipal comprehensive schools => Now they are provided in private, upper secondary and vocational schools too.

The work of a school psychologist and social worker

AIM OF THE WORK OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST AND SOCIAL WORKER

- To advance the welfare of school and student environments
- To advance the cooperation with students' families
- To support students' learning, skills, welfare and health

PROCESS OF CHILD'S SUPPORTING IN SCHOOL

- When a class teacher or special education teacher has a concern of child's learning, behavior or mood, they
 - => Contact to parents
 - => When needed, special education teacher estimates child's learning skills
 - => Teachers can consult school psychologist or social worker anytime
 - => Multiprofessional planning of supporting things to school (remedia teaching, special needs education, differentiation, small class, support of a school assistant)
 - => "Three steps support- system"
 - => Guidance to a school psychologist or a social worker, if already given support isn't enough

THREE STEPS SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION

- Level 1, "General support", in which all students are at first and everybody has the same aim
- Level 2, "Intensified support", when a student needs regularly more help to studying
- Level 3, "Special support", when a student needs a lot of help to his/her studying and the need of support is assumed to be continuing long time

THREE STEPS SUPPORT

- In level 2 and 3 a plan how a school supports the pupil is compulsory.
- In level 1 the plan is done only if needed.

• A child is moved from level to another based on multiprofessional appraisal. A school psychologist and social worker participate in this appraisal besides the teachers.

Small classes in Joensuu / EMO-classes/

SMALL CLASSES IN COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS IN JOENSUU

- In Joensuu there is only one special school: school in hospital and then near Joensuu in Liperi: Honkalampi-school for the most mentally retarded children
- Most of our mentally retarded children go to school in normal schools in small classes which are meant for mentally retarded children (in Utra, Nepenmäki, Pataluoto, Eno and Hammaslahti schools)
- Then we have also "basic" small classes to children who have different learning (reading, maths, etc.) problems. These kind of classes we have in almost every school.
- EMO-classes: small classes/groups to children who have socioemotional, behavior and attention problems (in Karsikko and Lyseo comprehensive schools)

"EMO-CLASSES", THE SUPPORT TO CHILDREN WHO HAVE SOCIOEMOTIONAL, BEHAVIOUR AND ATTENTION PROBLEMS

For grades 1.-6.:

- 5 groups: about 3-7 child, one special education teacher and 1-2 school assistants in one group
- 1 own social worker and 1 psychologist for five groups (They work under the authority of the city of Joensuu.)
- To children who are for example very aggressive / psychotic / who has adhd / asperger's syndrome / anxiety / depression, etc.
- These emo-classes are in Karsikko comprehensive school
- Emphasis on early support!
- Parents must adhere to work with the social worker
- The psychologist does neuropsychiatric rehabilitation with children
- These classes serve all schools in Joensuu
- A child can be moved to this group OR
- The staff of EMO goes to a child's own school and give consultative help to teachers and assistants there
- The aim: A child rehabilitates and can return to his/her own school
- Usually a child stays about 1-2 years in EMO-class

- Before returning his/her own school, the child tries studying in a bigger class in Karsikko school

For grades 7.-9.:

- 2 groups: about 5-6 youngsters, one special education teacher and 1 school assistant in one group
- These emo-classes are in Joensuu lyseo comprehensive school
- The aim: Rehabilitation and returning his/her own school
- Reality: Youngsters usually stay in this classes because of long-term and severe psychic difficulties
- So practically one aim is that a student finishes the comprehensive school