

Schooling In Mäntyharju – Information for immigrants

COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Every child residing permanently in Finland must attend compulsory education based on the law. The aim of compulsory education is to provide everyone with the basic knowledge and skills necessary in society. Compulsory education continues until the pupil turns 18.

- You can find information in many languages about the Finnish education system here: www.infofinland.fi/en/education

PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

In Finland, children must attend pre-primary education (*esiopetus*) for one year before compulsory education begins.

Pre-primary education usually begins in the year in which the child turns six. Pre-primary education is free of charge.

- In Mäntyharju, pre-primary education is provided at Mäntyharju comprehensive school (Mäntyharjun yhtenäiskoulu) and Pertunmaa comprehensive school (Pertunmaan yhtenäiskoulu).

COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION

All children residing permanently in Finland must attend comprehensive education (*perusopetus*).

Comprehensive school education, also known as primary and lower secondary education, consists of grades 1–9 and is intended for children and young people aged 7–16. During the first six years, teaching is usually provided by a class teacher who teaches several subjects. In grades 7–9, different subjects are taught by subject teachers.

Comprehensive education is free of charge for pupils. Textbooks, other learning materials and work equipment and tools are also free of charge. Pupils receive lunch at school. Pupils may also be entitled to free school transport.

- In Mäntyharju, comprehensive education is provided at Mäntyharju comprehensive school (Mäntyharjun yhtenäiskoulu) and Pertunmaa comprehensive school (Pertunmaan yhtenäiskoulu).

Assessment

Teachers assess pupils' progress at school. In comprehensive education, all grades are given by the teacher. In grades 1–3, assessment is verbal. Numerical assessment (scale of 4–10) is typically used in grades 4–9.

Subjects taught in comprehensive school

The subjects taught to all pupils are:

- Finnish language and literature / Finnish as a second language and literature
- Swedish language
- English language
- Environmental studies
- Health education
- Religion or ethics
- History
- Social studies
- Mathematics
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Biology
- Geography
- Physical education
- Music
- Visual arts
- Crafts
- Home economics

Some subjects are taught in all grades 1–9, some only in the lower grades (1–6) or the upper grades (7–9) of comprehensive school.

In addition, students receive guidance counselling. Guidance counsellors (*opinto-ohjaaja*) provide information on different ways of studying and further education. They also provide career guidance.

Schools may also offer optional subjects, which are decided by the municipalities or the schools themselves.

Mäntyharju comprehensive school has an S2 teacher who teaches Finnish to children and young people who need S2 instruction (Finnish as a second language).

PREPARATORY EDUCATION

Preparatory education (*valmistava opetus*) for comprehensive education is meant for children and young people with an immigrant background who are just starting to learn Finnish. Preparatory education usually lasts for one year. Preparatory education can be provided in a separate group or in a regular class at school. Students are not assessed during preparatory education.

The aim of preparatory education is to help pupils achieve a level of Finnish proficiency that will allow them to study the contents of the curriculum for primary and lower secondary education. In preparatory education, pupils practice the language skills they need at school and in everyday life and learn more about Finnish education, customs and culture.

AFTER COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

After comprehensive education, pupils are required to apply for upper secondary education at either a vocational school or a general upper secondary school (*lukio*). If they are not yet ready to study in either of these, they can apply for preparatory education for programmes leading to an upper secondary qualification (TUVA, in Finnish: *tutkintokoulutukseen valmentava koulutus*).

- In Mäntyharju, upper secondary education is provided by the Mäntyharju general upper secondary school (Mäntyharjun lukio).
- The nearest school that provides upper secondary vocational education and TUVA training is Esedu (South Savo Vocational College) in Mikkeli.

SUPPORT FOR LEARNING IN COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Comprehensive school pupils receive support with their schoolwork. Guardians also have an important role in supporting learning.

Children who have difficulties with learning and school attendance can receive additional support, if necessary.

Group-based support can be provided for all pupils who need it within their own teaching group. This support may be general, remedial teaching for a group, remedial teaching in the language of instruction, or teaching provided by a special education teacher in connection with other teaching.

If this group-based support is not enough, individual support is provided for the pupil. In such cases, an assessment is also made of the type of support that the pupil needs. This individual support may be simultaneous teaching by a special education teacher in the pupil's own group or in a smaller group, or it may be teaching by a special class teacher in a special class. Special classes are smaller than regular classes.

Pupils may also receive support in the form of various learning aids, assistant services or interpretation services.

School psychologist

Schools also have school psychologists and school social workers. School psychologists help pupils thrive and succeed in school. They can help children with various problems, for example if the child finds it hard to concentrate, is struggling with a difficult family situation or is being bullied.

School psychologists support pupils in many different ways:

1. **Discussions and counselling:** The school psychologist talks to pupils about their concerns and helps them find solutions to their problems.
2. **Support for learning:** If a pupil is having difficulty learning, the school psychologist tries to identify the reasons for this and suggests ways to make learning easier.
3. **Cooperation with parents and teachers:** The school psychologist works together with parents and teachers to make sure that the pupil receives the best possible support.
4. **Promoting well-being:** The school psychologist works with teachers to develop ways to support the well-being of all pupils at the school.

The school psychologist aims to ensure that every pupil feels safe and that every pupil can learn as well as possible.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's schooling, the school psychologist can help you. You can contact the school psychologist even if you do not speak Finnish. If the

parent and/or the child speaks English, the school psychologist will work in English. Otherwise, an interpretation service will be used when working with the parents and the child.

Contact information for school psychologists:

Psychologist Maritta Kauppinen

- Pre-school to grade 6 and general upper secondary school
- Tel. +358 40 660 8492, e-mail: maritta.kauppinen@etelasavonha.fi
- You can best reach me via Wilma

Psychologist Elina Karhu

- Grades 7–9
- Tel. +358 40 7239515, e-mail: elina.karhu@etelasavonha.fi

School healthcare

School healthcare is a health service for comprehensive school pupils and their families, which is available during school hours. In Mäntyharju, school healthcare is provided at the health centre in the maternity and child health clinic and at the Pertunmaa health centre or the school.

School healthcare is free of charge. School healthcare is provided by a school nurse and a school doctor, and school dental care by a dental hygienist and a dentist.

The purpose of school healthcare is to monitor the health of pupils and help to identify health problems that may affect learning. The school nurse provides health information and also takes care of vaccinations. School healthcare does not include medical care, but the school doctor will refer the child for further examinations and treatment to the regional medical care services, if necessary. School healthcare also ensures that the learning environment is healthy.

School healthcare conducts a health check for every pupil once a year. The health checks in grades 1, 5 and 8 are more comprehensive than usual, and parents are also asked to attend these examinations. The school nurse will send out invitations to these health checks.

Communication with school healthcare is also possible in English, in addition to Finnish. If necessary, an interpreter can be used with children and parents who speak other languages.

How do I book an appointment?

You can book an appointment with the school nurse via Wilma.

You can also call or send a message to the nurse's phone number: +358 40 730 3481 (Mäntyharju) or +358 44 794 5110 (Pertunmaa). Appointments with the school doctor are booked through the nurse.

If you need any help with illnesses or accidents that occur outside school hours or you need to renew a prescription, please do not contact the school healthcare, but instead contact the Mäntyharju healthcare consultancy service by calling +358 15 211 411 or use the chat service on the Eloisa website at etelasavonha.fi/asiakkaan-opas/chat/

If your child is ill, please inform their teacher directly about their absence.

Dental care

Pupils have their teeth checked at least three times during their comprehensive school years and treatment is provided as needed. Pupils receive an invitation to an oral and dental check-up in grades 1, 3, 5 and 8. Children who need special support and those at high risk of illness receive invitations based on their individual needs. You can also contact the oral healthcare appointment service at other times by calling +358 151 944 410.

WILMA - MESSAGES BETWEEN THE HOME AND SCHOOL

The school uses the Wilma online service to communicate important matters. The school gives the child's parents a username and password for the service. Through Wilma, you can stay in touch with your child's teachers and receive information about your child's learning, exams and absences as well as school events and holidays. If your child must be absent from school, for example due to illness, inform the school through Wilma in the morning of the absence.

It is important to check Wilma regularly. If you need help with using Wilma, ask the school for guidance.

PARENTS' EVENINGS

In Finland, schools organise joint parents' evenings for the parents of pupils. They are meant for all parents. At parents' evenings, you will get to know your child's school, teacher and other parents. You will also obtain information about your child's schooling and what is happening at school. When you are familiar with your child's studies and school matters, you will be able to help and support your child better.

When you receive an invitation to a parents' evening, do your best to attend!