



Information

for parents about compulsory schools in Reykjavík

Compulsory education

Compulsory school is for all children from the age of 6 – 16 years of age. After that students can apply for education in upper secondary school and thereafter in university. Almost all children in Reykjavik have spent 3-4 years in pre-school before they start compulsory school.

School hours

The school year starts around the 20th of August and ends in the middle of June, totalling 180 days of teaching. The schools publish a calendar each spring where the school schedule for the year can be seen.

Not all schools start at the same time in the morning but generally they start between the hours of 08–09. The school day usually ends around 14.00-16.00.

Students in 1-4th grade spend an average of 20 class hours at school per week, 5-7th grade spend about 23 hours, but 8-10th grade are almost 25 hours at school. The teaching is according to the reference timetable of The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools.

Food/snacks

Parents can buy a hot meal for lunch at a fair price for their children. Additionally, the schools often recommend that children bring a healthy snack to school, such as fruit to have between meals.

Which school should the child attend?

Children have priority to education in their school district. Parents can also apply for schooling in other districts of the City or at independently run schools.

Leisure activities

After school hours and during school vacations, 6-9 year old children have the option of participating in activities at leisure centres. After-school programs are either located in the school premises or nearby and are open weekdays until 17:15. The role of the leisure centres is to offer meaningful free time where children have the opportunity to engage in diverse projects. Parents pay a fee for these services.

Children and adolescents aged 10-16 years old can participate in the activities of youth centres. There they are offered facilities for leisure and time with their peers in a safe environment. At youth- and leisure centres an emphasis is placed on enabling children and youth in active participation and working on the projects, strengthening social skills and their identities.

Youth- and leisure centres make an effort to coordinate their work with other leisure activities which are run by independent associations in the city. At the leisure website, www.fristund.is you may find further information.



Compulsory school enrolment

Reykjavík runs 39 compulsory schools but additionally there are 7 private compulsory schools in the City. Enrolling a child in to compulsory school or leisure centres is carried out through Electronic Reykjavík ([Rafræn Reykjavík](#)). If children have not been domiciled in the City or have not been registered with an ID number (kennitala), the registration takes place at the compulsory school. Further information may be obtained from sfs@reykjavik.is or by calling 411 1111.

If children are enrolled into private school, a special school or if they leave the country it is requested to inform it by e-mail; sfs@reykjavik.is.

If a child with a legal residence in Reykjavík attend school in another municipality parents have to fill out a special request for schooling. A form for such request can be found on the [Reykjavík web](#)

When children of foreign origin are enrolled to school a welcoming plan for language support is used. The school has a very important social role for all children. Most parents choose the local school and with that the children is more likely to make friends and acquaintances in its local community, also the school would be closer to the child's home.

Pupils with different needs

Compulsory schools in Reykjavík base their work on the ideology that the school is without discrimination. Inclusive education is a continuous process that aims at offering good education for everyone. Respect is shown for the diversity and different needs, abilities and characteristics of the pupils and an effort is made to eliminate all forms of discrimination and disintegration at school (The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools: General Section

Parent cooperation

Every school emphasises on good cooperation with all parents focusing on the well-being of the child. Research has shown that no single factor has as great effect on academic achievement and well-being as interest and support from the parents. Therefore the school uses every opportunity to involve parents in their children's education based on individual conditions.

The well-being of the child is guaranteed by good cooperation between parents and schools which is based on mutual trust and respect. School staff must always have the child's well-being in mind and make an effort to ensure the pupil's safety, well-being and a peaceful study environment so that the pupil may enjoy its schooling. School staff should promote positive school spirit and morale in all school activities and good conduct.

The Parent page ([Foreldravefurinn](#)) has more information and useful advice for parents.

Rights and obligations

Parents are responsible for the enrolment of their children to compulsory school and for their school attendance.

Parents are responsible for the upbringing of their children. Therefore parents, as well as the child, is responsible for the child's behaviour and conduct towards their fellow pupils and school staff and are to react to the consequences of their children's behaviour at school.

Parents look out for the interests of their children and engage in their studies. Education is a team-work between the child, parents and teachers. Parents have the opportunity to advice and cooperate with the child's head teacher and school administration.

Parents are to inform the school of any factors which may affect the school performance, attendance and behaviour of the child, i.e. of the child's malaise and trauma which may affect the child's schooling, as well as if there are any changes to the child's circumstances and conditions.

Parents are obligated to work toward a solution of problems in cooperation with the school, special services and educational authorities of the municipalities when any negative shifts happen in the behaviour and conduct of their child.

The parents and the child are to participate in the proceedings, but if the parents or school administrators believe that the confidentiality or trust in regards to a child's case is not complete it is recommended that assistance is requested from an independent party.

(5th. Article. Regulation on responsibilities and duties of members of the school community in compulsory schools).

Information

It is common for information regarding the child and the school work is conveyed through a communication website, e-mail, phone calls or meetings, which are held at least twice per year. Here is some useful information for parents for such meetings. Parents are encouraged to share important information regarding the child and its well-being with the school.

It is common that parents are invited for introductions and gatherings at the school, often in coordination with the parents counsel. They are also encouraged to familiarize themselves with the child's education and with the school work and to visit the school in cooperation with the teachers. Interpreters are used at the request of the parents. It is best when parents and the school agree on which methods should be used for communicating.

School personnel should observe confidentiality in regard to the situation of children and their parents, regarding matters of which they gain knowledge in their work and shall be kept confident according to law, instructions from superiors and the nature of the case. It is also kindly asked of the parents that they respect the confidentiality which is at the school and that they do not discuss information about the situation of other children which they might learn about at the school.

Parent council and school council

All compulsory schools have parent- and school councils. All parents in the school are members of the parent's council which elect a board. In the pamphlet *Stoðir í skólustarfi* (Pillars of education) information may be found on the role and responsibilities of parent- and school councils. Parents from each grade or student group also choose a class representative. Their job is first and foremost to be a leader in the parent group, front runners among their peers.

Representatives from the parent's council organisation in Reykjavík SAMFOK attends meetings with the Reykjavik School and Leisure Council.

Reykjavik School and Leisure Council

The School and Leisure Council forms a policy regarding education- and recreation commissioned by the City of Reykjavík, makes decisions and recommendations to the City Council in terms of its role. Furthermore, the Council makes sure that the conventions and policies regarding educational- and recreational matters are followed through and monitor the quality of school and leisure work. The Council also performs any other projects which the City Council decides on. The School and Leisure Council also preforms the duties of the school council according to the Compulsory school laws no. 66/1995.

Subjects and fields of study	1. – 4. grade	5. – 7. grade	8. – 10. grade	Weekly classes	Weekly classes
	Total time in Grades 1-5. Minutes per week.	Total time in Grades 5-7. Minutes per week.	Total time in Grades 8-10. Minutes per week.	Total time in Grades 1-10. Minutes per week.	Proportion
Icelandic, Icelandic as a second language and Icelandic Sign language.	1.120	680	630	2.430	18,08%
Foreign languages: English, Danish and other Nordic languages	80	460	840	1.380	10,27%
Art and crafts	900	840	340	2.080	15,48%
Natural sciences	420	340	360	1.120	8,33%
Physical education	480	360	360	1.200	8,93%
Social sciences, religious studies, life skills, equal rights, ethics	580	600	360	1.540	11,46%
Mathematics	800	600	600	2.000	14,88%
Information and communication technology	120	160	80	360	2,68%
School electives	300	160	870	1.330	9,90%
Total	4.800	4.200	4.400	13.440	100%

Native language and Icelandic

Good proficiency in the native language as well as Icelandic is enriching for the individual and the community, riches which are to cultivate and cherish. Scholars point out that the native language proficiency of children is a strong factor which contributes to their education and development, a good base in the native language can have fundamental effects on the second language acquisition. Then, scholars have shown that respect for the native language and attitudes towards it can greatly affect the development of a child's identity and belief in its own competence. Research has shown that active bilingualism is prosperous for the education and lives of children. It involves adding a language to the native language, not replacing it.

Active bilingualism strengthens and has positive effects on academic achievement while language replacement has negative effects. Proficiency in the native language is the key to learning another language, being more likely to support cognitive development in other areas. See further in *Heimurinn er hér* (The World is Here).