

Information for newly arrived parents and guardians: The education system in Norway

Information in several languages.

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Early childhood education and care (ages 0–6)

Most children in Norway attend early childhood education and care, often referred to as kindergarten, until they start school the year they turn 6.

In kindergarten children are cared for by qualified personnel who facilitate learning, play and various social and cultural activities. In kindergarten the children spend time both indoors and outdoors. Kindergarten is important for children's language, social and physical development.

Cooperation and dialogue between the parents or guardians and the kindergarten is essential. The kindergarten will need information about the child's background, such as native and other spoken languages, interests and possible challenges, to effectively cater for the needs of the child. The kindergarten will also provide information to the parents/guardians about the everyday-activities and development of the child.

All children have the right to a safe and healthy environment in kindergarten. The

kindergarten promotes an inclusive community and prevents bullying and other harmful behaviours. If a child is subjected to bullying or other harmful behaviours from other children or adults, the kindergarten has a duty to take measures in response.

Children with special needs may have the right to special educational support and guidance. This also applies to children who are not enrolled in kindergarten. The assistance offered is adapted to the child's needs.

There are both public and private kindergartens. You may contact your municipality for more detailed information on rights, application, parental fee and the options in your community.

Primary and lower secondary education (ages 6–16)

Children and youth ages 6–16 have the right and obligation to attend primary and lower secondary education. The municipality provides free, public primary and lower secondary education available for all children. Private schools usually charge a fee.

Children normally start school the year they turn 6. Primary school lasts for seven years from 1st through 7th grade. Lower secondary school lasts for three years, from 8th through 10th grade.

The school year usually begins in mid-August and ends in mid-June. Children and youth who arrive in Norway during the school year, will be enrolled in school as soon as possible.

Right and obligation to attend primary and lower secondary school

Children and youth who arrive in Norway have the right to attend primary and lower secondary school if it is likely that they will be staying in the country for more than three months. The municipality is obliged to enrol the child in school as soon as possible and no later than one month after arrival to the country.

Once children and youth have lived in Norway for three months, they have an obligation to attend a public primary or lower secondary school or a comparable educational institution.

Assessments and grading

In primary school, pupils receive assessments without grades. In lower secondary school, pupils receive assessments both with and without grades.

Grades from lower secondary school are used when pupils apply for upper secondary school. The grade scale runs from 1 to 6, with 6 being the highest attainable grade.

Before and after-school programmes (abbreviated as SFO in Norwegian)

SFO is offered both before and after school and facilitates play and cultural and recreational activities under the supervision of qualified personnel. SFO most often takes place in or in connection to the premises of the school.

Most municipalities offer SFO to all children in grades 1–4 and for children with special needs in grades 1–7.

Before and after-school programmes facilitate play, learning and various social and cultural activities according to the children's age and functional level. The programme promotes belongingness and friendship, and is important for children's social, cultural and language development.

Participation in before and after-school programmes is voluntary. You may contact your municipality for more detailed information on attending SFO and the parental fee.

Upper secondary education for youth (ages 16–24)

Youth who have completed lower secondary school in Norway or a comparable education in another country, have the right to upper secondary education.

This also applies to those who have completed upper secondary education in another country that is not recognised as general university and college admissions certification or a vocational qualification in Norway.

Most pupils enrol in upper secondary school the year they turn 16. Adult applicants (25 years of age and older) may be entitled to an upper secondary education

organised especially for adults.

The right to enrol in upper secondary school, requires legal residency in Norway. Youth who stay in the country while their residence permit application is processed, have a right to upper secondary education when they are under the age of 18, and it is likely they will stay in the country for more than three months. Youth who stay in the country while waiting for the residence permit to be decided and who turn 18 during the year, have the right to finish the academic year.

Applying for upper secondary school

Upper secondary education is divided into programmes for general studies and vocational education. The first year is referred to as “vg1” and the applicant indicates the first three preferences of different programmes and has the right to be accepted into one of them. The pupil will have to apply for each year (vg1, vg2 and vg3).

As a rule, youth apply for upper secondary school in the county they live. The county authorities are responsible for offering free, public upper secondary education. There are also independent schools who usually charge a fee.

The application deadline for admission to upper secondary school is February 1 or March 1 each year. The February 1 application deadline applies amongst others to pupils who have recently arrived in Norway, lack grades from lower secondary school due to special language training or are entitled to an individual assessment of their application.

For more information about upper secondary education, the application process and admission, please contact your county authorities or go to www.vilbli.no, which provides information in various languages.

Programmes for general studies

The programmes for general studies provide general or specific university and college admissions certification. Grades from upper secondary school are used when pupils apply for higher education in colleges and universities.

The programmes for general studies have a normal duration of three academic years.

Applicants may choose among the following programmes for general studies:

- Specialization in general studies
- Art, design and architecture
- Sports and physical education
- Music, dance and drama
- Media and communication

Vocational education programmes

The vocational education programmes provide a vocational qualification, with or without a trade certificate or journeyman's certificate. A vocational qualification provides the individual with the credentials to practice a profession.

The vocational education programmes have a normal duration of three years of classroom instruction or two years of classroom instruction and two years of apprenticeship in a company. It is also possible to enrol in a supplementary programme for general university and college admissions certification.

Applicants may choose among the following vocational education programmes:

- Building and construction
- Electrical engineering and computer technology
- Hairdresser, floral, interior and retail design
- Healthcare, childhood and youth development
- Crafts, design and product development
- Information technology and media production
- Agriculture, fishing and forestry
- Restaurant and food processing
- Sales, service and tourism
- Technological and industrial production

Rights for all pupils

These rights apply to pupils in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools.

Special language training

Pupils with another mother tongue than Norwegian or Sami, who do not speak Norwegian or have poor Norwegian language skills, have the right to special language training. The right applies until their Norwegian is good enough for them to attend and benefit from regular education.

Special language training consists of additional training in Norwegian, and may also consist of

- instruction in the pupil's mother tongue
- bilingual education – which combines instruction in one or more subjects in Norwegian and a language the pupil masters

The school is required to assess the pupil's skills in Norwegian to determine what kind of special language education is appropriate for the pupil.

Introductory support in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools

Children and youth who have newly arrived in Norway, may receive all or some education in separate groups, classes or schools for a period of up to two years. The aim is to learn the Norwegian language quickly, before entering regular schools or classes.

The child/youth and his or her parents or guardians, should be well informed about the content of the introductory program, and consent to entering such a program. The child/youth and his/her parents or guardians, may choose instead to enter the regular school or classes.

Special education

Pupils who do not or cannot benefit sufficiently from regular education, may have the right to special education. Special education may mean that the pupil works on individually tailored learning objectives, that a teacher or assistant monitors and assists the pupil in the classroom or that the pupil is provided with specially adapted equipment. Special education is adapted to the specific needs of the pupil.

Safe and positive learning environment

All pupils have the right to a safe and positive learning environment that promotes good health, well-being and learning. It is the pupil's own experience of the school environment that matters. All pupils should experience a sense of belonging. It is

the school's responsibility to prevent bullying and other harmful behaviour. The school is required to monitor the situation and implement measures if a pupil does not feel a sense of safety or well-being at school.

Cooperation between the school and home

Cooperation between the school, pupil and parents or guardians is important. This helps the school to best support the pupil and contributes to good academic and social development.

Parents or guardians are obligated to attend development talks with the school and child, and parent meetings for all the parents in the class or group the child belongs to.

Parents or guardians are always welcome to get in touch with the school with any questions or concerns about their child's education and development.

Hand-outs in several languages

Information in other languages will be published shortly.

- [English: The education system in Norway \(pdf\)](#)
- [Norwegian \(bokmål\): The education system in Norway \(pdf\)](#)
- [Ukrainian: The education system in Norway \(pdf\)](#)
- [Russian: The education system in Norway \(pdf\)](#)
- [Spanish: The education system in Norway \(pdf\)](#)
- [German: The education system in Norway \(pdf\)](#)
- [French: The education system in Norway \(pdf\)](#)
- [Lithuanian: The education system in Norway \(pdf\)](#)
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