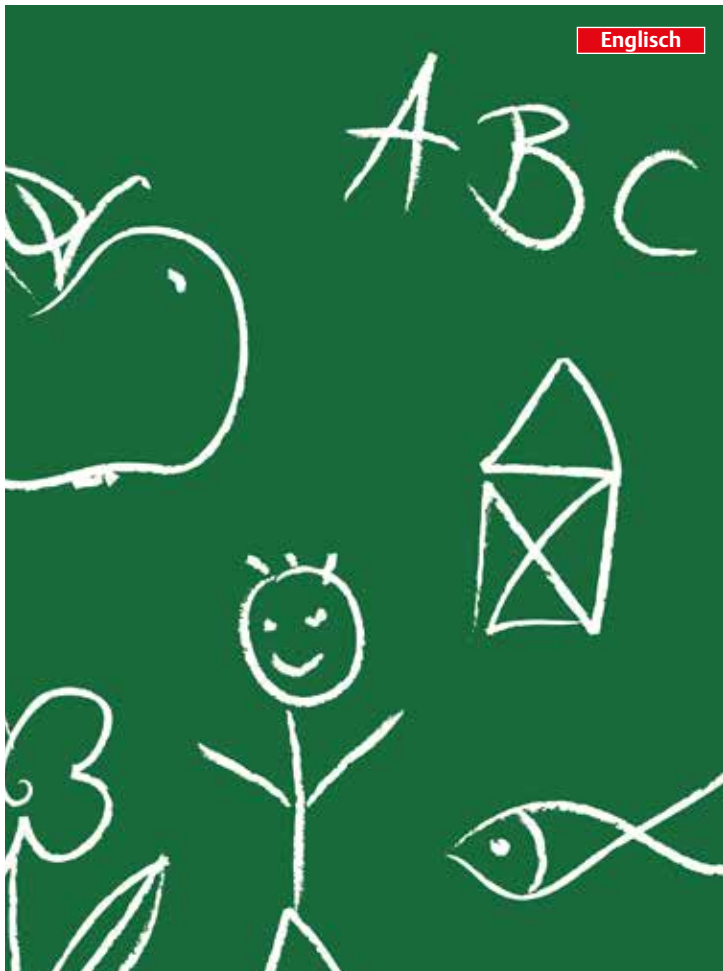


Information for parents of pupils attending elementary school

Englisch



Information for parents of  
pupils attending  
elementary school

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## Information for parents of pupils attending elementary school

**Dear parents, dear legal guardians,**

this flyer will inform you about the school system and your child's time at the elementary school.

Hopefully it will answer most of your questions, - for more information please contact the teachers of your child.



## Compulsory school attendance

### School registration

#### Compulsory school attendance

Law requires all children to start school at the age of 6 and then attend school for at least 10 more years. At the age of 6 your child will start elementary school. After completing elementary school your child will transfer to a secondary school providing a general education.

In general a child will attend elementary school for 4 years, however in certain cases dependent upon the child's achievement level the attendance may be for 3 or 5 years. After the completion of the elementary school your child must attend a secondary school for at least 6 years and until his/her 18th year of life a vocational school (berufsbildende Schule) or a Gymnasium (UK: grammar school, USA: academic highschool). The time spent in both elementary school and grammar school results in an education lasting 12 or 13 years.

#### School registration

School always starts in summer. Up to November 15th of the year before they start school, all children who will reach the age of 6 by the September 30th of the year of they are to start school must have been enrolled at an elementary school. The parents of all children required to attend school will be informed in writing by the agency for the development of school (Amt für Schulentwicklung) about the application procedure.

Children with considerable health problems may be exempted from school for a year. This decision will be made by the school's principal/ head teacher after a medical check.

## School registration

#### The following information may be helpful to you regarding your child's application at an elementary school:

##### | Integrated elementary school

In integrated elementary schools, children with different religious backgrounds will be taught and educated together. Only the lessons in Religion will be taught separately.

##### | Faith-oriented school

In faith oriented schools, children will be taught and educated based on one religion, for example catholic or protestant.

##### | Officially recognized private school and self-financed private school

Officially recognized private schools are not state-run but are largely financed through government funds.

Self-financed private schools are financed through private funding, for example from school fees paid by the parents and from donations. In Germany there exist mainly state-run and state-sponsored schools.

##### | Open all-day school

In open all-day schools children generally stay at school from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. In the morning, there are lessons. In the afternoons, help is available with homework, additional classes to help improve or develop your child's learning, and working groups. Children can be registered for the open full-day scheme at the start of the school year.

## School registration

### | Bilingual teaching and learning

Currently in Cologne there exists one elementary school with a German-French class, one elementary school with a German-Turkish class and three elementary schools with a German-Italian class.

### | Coordinated literacy in the Turkish and German languages (KOALA)

Currently there are eleven elementary schools in Cologne in which Turkish children learn the Turkish alongside the German alphabet. All children in the class are taught by a German and a Turkish teacher for several hours per week.

### | „Rucksack“ in the elementary school

Rucksack” is a programme to encourage parents’ education and to develop the native language skills of their children. Currently in Cologne this programme exists in 10 elementary schools, and it is planned to establish “Rucksack” in more elementary schools.

### | Support for children with special needs

Handicapped students or students with learning difficulties require a very high level of individual supervision. If a child’s impairments and disabilities are so severe as to necessitate special needs support, the child can be taught in a collaborative learning environment or in schools for children with special needs (Förderschulen) in shared classes and in integrated learning groups. Schoolchildren who need special educational support should always be offered a place at a general school that offers a collaborative learning environment. However, parents can also choose a special needs school for their child.

## School Entry Period

### Class teacher

### School Entry Period

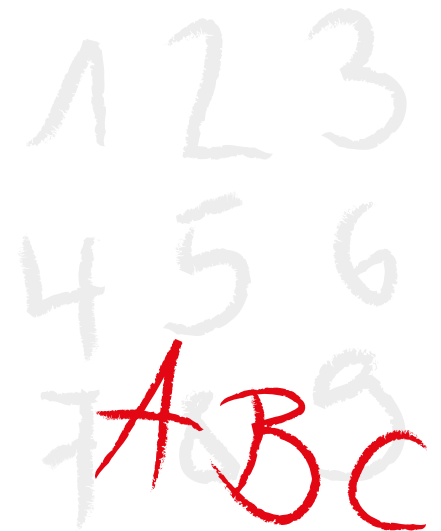
The first two classes of elementary school create the so-called school entry period, which will last until the pupil’s transition into class 3.

Your child may complete the school entry period in one, two or three years depending on his/her achievement and development level.

### Class teacher

The class teacher is the most important person for the pupils in the elementary school. He/she will teach most of the lessons and be with the class every day.

The class teacher will always be the first person to contact should questions or problems arise.



## Lesson subjects

### Lesson subjects

The timetable covers the subjects German, General Sciences, Mathematics, Special Needs Tuition, Art, Music, English, Religion and Physical Education.

The following information about the different lesson subjects should also be known:

#### | Native language lessons

It is important for your child to learn the language spoken in your family's native country. If you wish that your child attend an additional native language class, please contact the principal's/head teacher's office. The school will then organise a placement for your child. Currently native language classes are being taught in 13 languages. A good grade received in this class may compensate for a bad grade in a foreign language class in secondary school. The attendance in a native language class is voluntarily.

#### | Religious education

In most schools, both Protestant and Catholic religious education is offered as a regular lesson and religious education (Catholic or Protestant) is actually obligatory at faith schools. If you desire Islamic religious education for your child, you can make inquiries of your local education authority to see which schools offer this. Additionally some schools teach Islamic religion in the German language as a separate class.

Within the confines of the native language lessons, there is a school in Cologne which offers Greek-Orthodox religious education.

## Lesson subjects

### | Encountering other languages

"Encountering other languages" deals with a theme that is not taught as an individual lesson, rather aspects of other languages are playfully integrated into other lessons. The schools themselves choose which of the world's spoken languages will be used.

### | German lessons

In their German lessons, the children will learn how to read and write, first in block letters. This is the style of writing, that the children will most often encounter in their immediate surroundings, and as such will simplify the process of learning how to read and write. Later the pupils will develop their own personal handwriting style. Besides learning how to read and write the focus is also on learning how to speak, for example how to talk in bigger groups or how to listen to each other.

### | English lessons

English is a compulsory subject that is taught in class 1 starting in the second half of the school year. Children, who have been actively developing their native language and German, generally have no problems to learn English in addition.

### | Special needs tuition

Special needs tuition is integrated into the lesson plan and supports every child's individual learning process, so developmental and learning difficulties can be prevented. At the same time, the elementary schools pay careful attention that pupils with high achievement levels receive appropriate tuition to further develop their abilities.

## Homework · Class trips

### School books and learning aids · Tests

#### Homework

Homework should be done without the help of the parents. In this way, children will learn to work and practise on their own and prepare themselves for lessons.

#### Class trips

Class trips or hiking trips lasting several days give children a chance to discover and share common interests and goals outside of their usual school lessons. The focus of these trips is social learning. Sometimes working on an educational project can also be part of a class trip.

#### School books and learning aids

Parents are required to pay part of the cost of their child's school books and learning material. You will be exempted from these costs should you receive financial aid from social welfare, Hartz 4, in accordance with the German social welfare law for asylum seekers (Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz) or economic aid for young people (wirtschaftliche Jugendhilfe). In this case, you can obtain a certificate from the Social Services exempting your child from the learning resources. This should be submitted to the school.

#### Tests

In the elementary school, children will gradually be made aware, that their school performance will be assessed. This process begins in class 1 and 2 with short written exercises, which can be awarded grades in class 2. In class 3 and 4, written tests are only given in the subjects of German and Mathematics, and these tests will be subsequently graded.

## School report/Report cards

### Recommendation for a secondary school

#### School report/Report cards

There is a difference between a school report with grades and one written in a descriptive form. The descriptive school report gives an account of the pupil's learning development, his/her achievement level, as well as his/her working behaviour and social competence in words. During the school entry period, pupils receive their school report at the end of the school year written in a descriptive form.

The recommendation to move up to class 3 (Versetzungszeugnis) and the school report of class 3 include a description of the pupil's learning development, his/her achievement level, as well as his/her working behaviour and social competence. Additionally, grades are reported for each learnt subject as well as a grade for the pupil's working behaviour and his/her social competence.

The school reports given in class 4 are no longer descriptive, but rather contain grades. The grades awarded for working behaviour and social competence may be complimented with a written description.

#### Recommendation for a secondary school

At the beginning of class 3, the children write tests in German and Mathematics. These tests are evaluated by the subject teacher. In this way, the teachers receive feedback about each individual child's understanding of what they have been taught so far in German and Mathematics. The knowledge level appraisal will not be graded or included in the recommendation for the secondary school. The appraisal is used as the basis for which, if any, individual tuition measures are required.

## Recommendation for a secondary school

### Recommendation for a secondary school

In Germany, the following forms of secondary school exist: Hauptschule (secondary modern school), Realschule (junior high school for ages 10 to 16, or secondary school leading to intermediate qualification), Gymnasium (academic high-school or grammar school) and Gesamtschule (comprehensive school).

Elementary school teachers will advise you in the mid-year report of class 4 on choosing a secondary school for your child. If you disagree with this recommendation, you can decide for your child which school he or she should attend.



## School rules and regulations

### School rules and regulations

When many children and adults come together on a daily basis, it makes sense, that certain rules are applied to ensure that school life runs calmly and to everybody's satisfaction. To this end, many schools have established their own specific regulations, worked out and agreed by the teachers, children and parents.

In any case, you should be aware of the following points:

#### | Rights and obligations

Students are entitled to school lessons, to information about their achievement level and to counseling. They have a right to freedom of expression, their need to be listened to on controversial questions, and they are entitled to their own personal school identity card.

Students must attend classes regularly and punctually and follow the rules of the school.

#### | Written excuse

If your child gets sick and cannot come to school, you must contact the school immediately.

On your child's return to school you must submit a written excuse explaining your child's absence.

#### | Requests for a leave of absence

In foreseeable and good reasoned cases, your child may take a 2-day leave within a half year period.

A leave of absence immediately preceding or following a vacation is not possible.

## Parent Teacher Meetings and Teacher Consultations

### Parent participation

#### Parent Teacher Meetings and Teacher Consultations

At least once a year class teachers will offer a parent-teacher meeting in the evening.

This meeting will give you a chance to get to know the teacher and to ask any questions you might have regarding school lessons and the class situation.

At least once every 6 months-period the school invites parents to attend a teacher's consultation period. You will be able to have a private one to one discussion with your child's teacher.

#### Parent participation

As parents or legal guardians you are able to actively participate in making decisions concerning school matters, if you get involved in the following school committees:

##### | Class conference

Members of the class conference are the school teachers who teach the respective class. Two representatives chosen from the parents of the pupils in the class (Klassenpflegschaftvorsitzende and a second nominated parent) take part regularly in the class conference in an advisory function.

##### | Class parent committee

Members of this association are the parents of the students of a class. They discuss and decide on all class issues. They elect the chairpersons and their substitutes, who in the class conference and meetings of the parents' association will represent the interests of the class. In addition, their representatives will also be sent to participate in subject conferences (Fachkonferenz).

## Parent participation

All parents, whose children attend the same class, meet every six months at the parents' association to discuss class concerns.

At the first class parent committee meeting of the school year, two chairpersons will be elected, who function is to represent class concerns within the school and act in an advisory function at class conferences.

##### | School conference

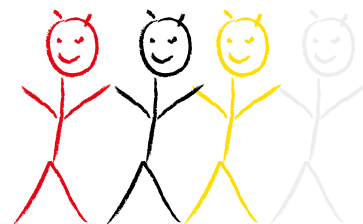
At the school conference, the highest committee of the school, parents and teachers are represented. The school conference makes decisions over a number of issues concerning the school, for example also whether lessons will be distributed over 5 or 6 days of the week.

##### | Parent-teacher association

The parent-teacher association is represented by all chairpersons of the class parent committee (Klassenpflegschaft). The parent-teacher association elects parent representatives for the school conference and gives advice to parents on matters concerning the school.

##### | Fundraising committee

In many schools parents have founded a committee for fundraising. Members of this club pay a membership fee and are entitled to accept donations. This money helps to finance school events such as excursions and festivities.



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