

The Swedish education system

Pre-school

- Pre-schools, like childcare for schoolchildren, have twin tasks. They are to help provide an environment that stimulates children's development and learning, and enable parents to combine parenthood with work or studies.
- Municipalities are obliged to provide pre-school or family day-care homes to children aged from one year and up
- when their parents are working or pursuing studies
- when their parents are unemployed or on parental leave. A place is to be made available to each child for at least 3 hours a day or 15 hours a week.

Pre-school class

- From the age of 6 children have the right to start in the preschool class. The preschool class is a school form in its own right with a large element of creative work and play.
- The preschool class is a voluntary school form, which the majority of six-year-olds in Sweden attend. The municipalities are obliged to offer and arrange the preschool class.



How is the pre-school class organised?

- The preschool class should function as a transitional arrangement between the preschool and the compulsory school. The preschool class should combine the methods and working approaches of both the preschool and the school.
- The aim of the preschool class is that it should stimulate the development of learning of each pupil, and prepare pupils for future education as well as promote their harmonious development. Play and creativity are essential components. The education should be based on an overall view of pupils and their needs.
- Attendance is approximately 3 hours a day. During the rest of the day, the pupils are either in the leisure-time centre or in pedagogical care.
- The municipalities are responsible for providing preschooling and that pupils are offered this. Activities arranged by independent schools are an alternative to municipal activities.
- Attending the preschool class is free of charge.

Compulsory school

- The compulsory school, or the compulsory school for learning disabilities, Sami school or the special school are compulsory in Sweden. The compulsory school and the compulsory school for learning disabilities consists of nine years of schooling. The Sami school consists of 6 years of schooling. The Special school consists of 10 years of schooling. Each school year is divided into two terms, one in the autumn and one in the spring.
- School attendance is compulsory for all children resident in Sweden. Children are required to attend school from the autumn term in the year they reach the age of 7, and the main rule is that compulsory school attendance ceases at the end of the spring term in the 9th year (10th year in the special school).
- In Sweden most children begin their first year at school in the autumn term when they reach the age of 7. It is also possible that children start when they reach the age of 6 and in special cases 8. Education should be equivalent irrespective of where pupils attend school.

How is the school organised?

- Compulsory schools may be either municipal or independent. The majority of compulsory schools in Sweden are municipally run, and the most common situation is that pupils attend a municipal school close to their home.
- Each municipal school can develop its own profile, have different orientations, such as Montessori, English classes or cultural and sports profiles.
- Independent compulsory schools are open to all and the education should correspond to that provided in municipal compulsory schools.
- Independent compulsory schools have a different organiser/owner compared to municipal schools. The organiser may be a company, a foundation or an association.
- Independent compulsory schools are approved and inspected by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate.

How does assessment take place?

- Grades are given in years 6,7,8 and 9. A new grading scale A-F has been introduced in school year 2011/2012. In year 6-8, a term grade is given at the end of the autumn and spring terms. In the 9th year, a term grade is given at the end of the autumn term and a final grade at the end of the spring term. The final grade is the basis for applying to upper secondary school. Pupils attending the 9th year in school year 2011/2012 will be the last group to receive a grade based on the former grading scale (Pass, Pass with distinction, Pass with special distinction).
- The grading scale has six levels A, B, C, D, E and F. A-E covers pass results, and F is the non-pass result. If the pupil has often been absent and a grade can not be awarded as it is not possible to assess the pupil's knowledge, then the symbol (-) is inserted in the grade records. However, grade F and (-) should not be used in the compulsory school for learning disabilities, nor in its equivalent upper secondary school.

Development dialogue

- At least once a term, the pupil, teacher and the pupil's guardian meet to discuss progress in school and how the pupil is feeling. This is called a development dialogue. The dialogue should give an all-round view of the pupil's learning and social development.
- During the dialogue, discussion can cover how the school can support and stimulate the pupil's development. The dialogue gives the pupil and guardian the opportunity to influence and take responsibility for the pupil's schooling.
- In the development dialogue, an individual development plan is drawn up and documented in writing. The individual development plan should contain written assessments.

What rules govern compulsory school?

- The Education Act
- Ordinances
- Curriculum
- School plans



Upper secondary education

- All youth in Sweden who have completed compulsory school are entitled to a three-year upper secondary school education free of charge. Upper secondary education provides a good foundation for vocational activities and further studies, and for personal development and active participation in the life of society.
- Upper secondary education covers the upper secondary school, and the upper secondary school for learning disabilities. The latter is intended for young people with learning disabilities.
- The upper secondary school consists of different types of programmes:
- 18 national programmes each lasting three years. They are divided into upper secondary foundation subjects, subjects common to a programme, orientations, programme specialisations and a diploma project.
- Five introductory programmes for pupils who are not eligible for a national programme.
- Education that deviates from the national programme structures; special variants, programmes based on national recruitment and nationally approved sports programmes (NIU).

Adult education

- Formal adult education should function as a system for adults to continuously develop and reorient their education on the basis of varying individual needs.

Swedish adult education is organised in many different forms. The school system for adults covers:

- Municipal adult education at both compulsory and upper secondary school levels
- Special education for adults with development disabilities or brain impairments
- Swedish tuition for immigrants

Folk high schools

- There are 148 folk high schools - independent adult education colleges - in Sweden. Each folk high school decides independently what courses it provides, and freely designs its teaching. This means that courses can be quite different from each other.
- There are several types of course: year-long courses, short courses, summer courses or distance courses. Long courses are of the following types:
- 1. General courses, which are an alternative to municipal adult education. They correspond to, and provide the same eligibility as, compulsory comprehensive school or upper secondary school.
- 2. Special courses can be oriented towards:
 - specific areas of interest (such as music, art, the environment, international)
 - professions (such as youth recreation leader, treatment assistant, sign language interpreter)
 - groups (e.g. people with various disabilities, immigrants)

Higher vocational educational colleges

- A higher vocational educational college provides post-secondary school education. The courses are designed in consultation with employees and are tailored to meet the manpower needs of the labour market and lead to jobs. The content and direction of the courses may vary over time depending on the needs of the labour market. There are both higher vocational education courses (HVECs) and qualified vocational courses (KY courses).
- About a third of the training is workplace experience known as Learning in Work. Advanced vocational education and training is counted in credit points, where one week's full-time study corresponds to 1 credit point. An advanced vocational education or training course can be between 40 and 120 credit points. Most however last for 80 credit points (2 years).

Universities and university colleges

- Swedish universities and university colleges offer many study programmes and single-subject courses .
- The training is divided into three levels based on each other:
- Basic level (three years)
- Advanced level (one to two years)
- Research level (two to four years)
- The scope of a course or a training program is counted in higher education credits. One semester's full-time studies correspond to 30 higher education credits. A full-time academic year comprises 60 higher education credits.

All training within the college is compounded by courses. A course usually covers between 7.5 and 30 higher education credits.