

Finnish National Board of Education

**National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education  
2010**



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UTBILDNINGSTYRELSEN

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Providers of pre-primary education	Validity:	From 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan. 2011 until further notice
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## NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM FOR PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

The Finnish National Board of Education has adopted the National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education 2010 as per the Annex.

The new Regulation contains several amendments to the current Core Curriculum for Pre-school Education and, as a result, the curriculum document will be reformed in its entirety.

The National Core Curriculum is no longer divided into legal sections. Chapters and their sections are marked with numbers as per the Annex. As per the Annex, amendments have been made to the following chapters and sections in particular:

Chapter 1: 1.1 Roles

Chapter 2: 2.1 Provision of pre-primary education

Chapters 4 and 5

Chapter 7

Chapter 8: 8.2 Details included in the curriculum

The Regulation requires pre-primary education providers to amend their curricula. Pre-primary education providers may adopt curricula drawn up in accordance with the annexed National Core Curriculum as from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011. Pre-primary education providers shall adopt new curricula no later than 1<sup>st</sup> August 2011.

Pre-primary education providers may neither fail to comply with nor deviate from this Regulation.

Director General                      Timo Lankinen

Director                                      Jorma Kauppinen

ANNEXE

National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education 2010

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This National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education uses the terms ‘child’ to refer to a pupil, ‘support for growth and learning’ to indicate support for learning and schooling and ‘a child’s pre-primary learning plan’ to refer to a learning plan as more appropriate expressions for pre-primary education. Where direct quotations from legislation appear, however, the expressions used in the relevant legal text will be applied.

## **1 PURPOSE AND GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION**

### **1.1 PURPOSE**

Pre-primary education builds on the basic values of society. These have been enshrined in national legislation and international declarations, recommendations or conventions, which endeavour to nurture human rights and the viability of the globe. According to the Constitution of Finland, no one shall, without an acceptable reason, be treated differently from other persons on the grounds of gender, age, origin, language, religion, conviction, opinion, health, disability or any other reason that concerns his or her self<sup>1</sup>. Finland has also committed to international agreements, programmes and declarations which require provision of common education so as to safeguard all children’s growth and learning in the best possible way<sup>2</sup>.

The purpose of pre-primary education is to promote children’s growth into humane individuals and ethically responsible members of society by guiding them towards responsible action and compliance with generally accepted rules and towards appreciation for other people.

The core task of pre-primary education is to promote children’s favourable growth, development and learning opportunities. It involves supporting and monitoring physical, psychological, social, cognitive and emotional development and preventing any difficulties that may arise. It is important to strengthen children’s healthy sense of self-esteem with the aid of positive learning experiences and to provide opportunities for diverse interaction with other people. Children’s experiences will be enriched and they will be assisted as they seek to discover new areas of interest. Pre-primary education shall also take special gender-specific needs into account. Pre-primary education guarantees equal opportunities for children to learn and start school.

Early childhood education and care, pre-primary education as part of it, and basic education form an integrated whole progressing consistently in terms of a child’s development. Provision of pre-primary education should thus allow for the objectives and contents of other forms of early childhood

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<sup>1</sup> The Constitution of Finland (731/1999; *Suomen perustuslaki*), section 6(2)

<sup>2</sup> The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, the Salamanca Statement of 1994, the Charter of Luxembourg of 1996, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006

education and care, on the one hand, and those of basic education, on the other. Irrespective of whether pre-primary education is provided in a separate group or integrated with other age groups, its objectives and distinctive characteristics shall, however, always be taken into account.

In order to achieve the objectives set, it is important that the teachers and guardians as well as staff participating in the implementation of pre-primary education take joint responsibility for children's regular participation in pre-primary education.

## **1.2 GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF EDUCATION AND LEARNING**

The objectives of pre-primary education are determined by each child's individual development opportunities and learning potential, on the one hand, and by the needs of society, on the other. The objectives of pre-primary education are as follows:

Children's positive self-concept will strengthen and their learning-to-learn skills will develop. They will adopt basic skills, knowledge and capabilities from different areas of learning in accordance with their age and abilities. Learning through play is essential. They will learn to understand the significance of a peer group in learning. They will retain the joy of and enthusiasm for learning and face new learning challenges with confidence and creativity.

Children will learn how to reflect on what is right and wrong. Their actions as responsible members of the community will strengthen. They will practise the rules of co-existence and commitment to these rules. They will internalise the good manners of our society and understand their significance as part of everyday life. They will learn to control themselves better and learn how to cope with everyday situations. They will learn to understand equality and to accept the diversity of people. They will learn to understand how to maintain health and well-being in accordance with their age level.

Children's linguistic and cultural identity and their ability to express themselves diversely will strengthen and develop. They will familiarise themselves with different forms of art, local and national culture and also, as far as possible, with other cultures.

Children will become interested in nature and form an idea of their own dependence on and responsibility for both natural and built-up environments. They will learn how to diversely observe and analyse their environment, enjoy the beauty and diversity of the environment and will become aware of the effects of their own actions.

## 2 IMPLEMENTATION OF PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

### 2.1 PROVISION OF PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

According to the Basic Education Act, education shall be provided according to the pupils' age and capabilities and so as to promote their healthy growth and development. Those providing education shall co-operate with pupils' homes and pupils participating in education are entitled to a safe learning environment.<sup>3</sup> Pre-primary education shall comply with the National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education confirmed by the Finnish National Board of Education, irrespective of where pre-primary education is implemented<sup>4</sup>. The Act further states that children in pre-primary education are also entitled to teaching according to the curriculum, guidance counselling and sufficient support for growth and learning immediately when the need for support becomes apparent. Children in pre-primary education are also entitled to free pupil welfare to enable them to participate in education and to social benefits and services for pupils as defined in the Act.<sup>5</sup> Pre-primary education should be provided allowing for the opportunity for children participating in pre-primary education to use day-care services and day-care should correspondingly be provided allowing for the opportunity for children in day-care to participate in pre-primary education<sup>6</sup>.

The starting point for the provision of pre-primary education, guidance and support is attendance to a good and safe day. Pre-primary education should be organised so as to create the most favourable conditions possible for the child's well-being, development and learning. The pre-primary community should be safe and the atmosphere friendly and respectful. Any risks to health or safety in the learning environment should be addressed immediately. The structure, contents and working methods of a child's day in pre-primary education should create opportunities for peaceful work, play and other activities, learning and doing together, peace and quiet, as well as for experiencing the joy and meaningfulness of learning. If a child participating in pre-primary education additionally uses other early childhood education and care services, the child's day should be designed to form an integrated whole, with due consideration for the objectives of pre-primary education and other forms of early childhood education and care.

Pre-primary education promotes encouraging interaction, co-operation, joint responsibility and involvement. Special attention is given to children's opportunities to influence their personal and

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<sup>3</sup> Basic Education Act (628/1998; *perusopetuslaki*), section 3(2) (as amended by Act 477/2003), section 3(3), and section 29(1)

<sup>4</sup> Basic Education Act, section 3(1)

<sup>5</sup> Basic Education Act, sections 30(1) (as amended by Act 642/2010), 31(1) and 31 a(1) (as amended by Act 477/2003)

<sup>6</sup> Basic Education Act, section 6(1) (as amended by Act 1288/1999); Act on Children's Day Care (36/1973; *laki lasten päivähoidosta*), section 11b (as amended by Act 1290/1999)

joint work and the operating environment. Involvement is used to support children's development, learning and well-being, and growth as responsible human beings and members of society.

Collaborative pre-primary education that supports children appreciates the role of children, teachers, other members of the community, as well as experts and family members in its operations. Pre-primary education involves co-operation with other forms of early childhood education and care, basic education, and initial education in particular, health care and social services, as well as other parties involved in supporting children's growth and development.

## **2.2 CONCEPTION OF LEARNING**

Learning in pre-primary education is an active and goal-oriented process, which is based on previous knowledge structures and often involves solving problems. Knowledge cannot thus be transferred directly to children through teaching, but children themselves will construct new ideas on the basis of previously adopted ideas and new information. Learning is based on previous knowledge and learning experiences. Learning occurs through interaction between the learning material, previously formed knowledge structures and thinking. In interactive peer group situations, children will learn together with and from each other by giving stimuli for the development of each other's thinking and imagination.

## **2.3 LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

The learning environment in pre-primary education refers to the physical, psychological, social, cognitive and emotional environment in which activities are carried out. The essential factors of the learning environment include interaction between the teacher and each child and between the children, different operating methods and learning assignments. The child-centred approach in pre-primary education entails guiding education, where adults set limits, expectations and demands for children.

A good learning environment guides children's curiosity, interest and learning motivation and promotes their active involvement and self-direction. It provides diverse support for children's growth and learning and assessment of their own actions. It provides children with opportunities for play, other activities as well as peace and quiet. It also constitutes a stimulating linguistic environment and enables organisation of activities to support children's linguistic development.

The prevailing atmosphere in the learning environment should be joyful, open, encouraging and unhurried. Tools and working materials should be readily available to children. Equipment available in the learning environment also supports children's development as members of the modern

information society. A good learning environment is healthy and diversely supports children's safety and security. The learning environment should also be aesthetically pleasing.

Working in co-operation with staff participating in the implementation of pre-primary education, guardians and children, the teacher will plan, implement and assess activities, which lead to the development of children's emotions, skills and knowledge and expand the interests of individual children and, as a result, of the whole group.

## **2.4 WORKING APPROACHES**

The teacher should support learning and guide children to become conscious of their own learning and to perceive that they can influence their own success in learning themselves. The teacher will guide children in learning, concrete experimentation, exploration, active participation and other information acquisition and problem-solving efforts in interaction with adults and other children. The starting points of children's own investigations include phenomena and events closely connected with children's living environments and experiences gained through these. Children will practise reflecting on causal relationships and drawing conclusions. For the children, the activities should be purposeful and challenging.

Work in pre-primary education is based on playful activities stemming from children's individual development level, which will also promote children's linguistic development and their potential to learn new things. Children's need to learn through imagination and play are taken into account in the activities. Drama-based approaches combine different art subjects, children's experiences and knowledge, which are processed together on the basis of a current topic, a fairy tale or a story.

### **3 DETAILED OBJECTIVES AND CONTENTS OF PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION**

#### **3.1 INTEGRATION**

Pre-primary education is based on integration of education. Integrative education is composed of themes related to children's sphere of life, on the one hand, and to contents expanding and structuring children's views of the world, on the other. The objectives of integrative education will be negotiated together and they will be acknowledged in the community in which the children live.

The diversity of integration should be visible in that different branches of knowledge are taken into account in planning and implementation and that they are examined as part of the theme chosen each time. Selection of themes aims to identify issues that are significant for children by involving them in planning the themes.

The integrated themes and the learning process are more important than individual contents. Processing experiences and information in interaction with adults and children in many different ways forms a central part of learning. The working approaches are determined by the objectives and purposes of education. The aim of diverse use of working approaches is to create different experiences and skills from different branches of knowledge. Through the contents of the branches of knowledge in pre-primary education, children will expand their views of the world and learn about themselves as learners. The division of pre-primary education into subject fields is intended to guide the teacher's work.

#### **3.2 CORE CONTENT AREAS**

##### **3.2.1 LANGUAGE AND INTERACTION**

Language is a medium of thought and expression. With the aid of the concepts that they have learnt, children will analyse their environment and build their own views of the world. Pre-primary education should support the development of children's thinking, sociability, emotions and interaction skills and their learning processes with the aid of language in particular. This will strengthen children's emotional life, creativity and self-esteem. Children will be encouraged and guided to enable them to gradually become active speakers and listeners in diverse interactive situations, both in everyday communication situations and in learning situations. Children will become accustomed to talking about and discussing their own feelings, hopes, opinions and thoughts and to expressing their observations and conclusions verbally. Children will learn to listen and narrate. As members of groups, they will become accustomed to listening to the speech of both children and adults, participating in conversations and waiting for their turn when necessary.

Children will be read and told fairy tales, stories, narrative factual texts, poems, rhymes, etc. to provide an opportunity for them to enjoy what they hear. Children will relate to what they hear,

obtaining elements for their thinking, and their ability to understand their own and other people's lives will strengthen. They will start to understand the significance of reading. They will become interested in asking questions, drawing conclusions and evaluating what they have heard.

Pre-primary education creates a foundation for literacy. The basis for emerging literacy is that children have heard and listened, they have been heard, they have spoken and been spoken to, people have discussed things with them, and that they have asked questions and received answers. In such an environment, children will subconsciously develop their vocabulary and literacy. Children's earlier experiences and skills form the basis for the process of learning to read and write in pre-primary education. These different skills and knowledge, including possible literacy skills already learnt before pre-primary education, will be taken into account by providing an open learning environment, which allows each child to grasp written language in accordance with his or her own abilities. The material should consist of diverse texts, which provide opportunities to read alone and together with other children or adults.

The objective is to inspire and increase children's interest in observing and exploring spoken and written language. Targets of exploration may include various texts, expressions, individual words, letters and sounds in a context that is meaningful to children. Development of linguistic awareness will be supported through playing with language, talking nonsense and rhyming as well as through exploring the written forms of language diversely. Children will gain experiences of how to convert speech into written language and writing into spoken language both through examples set by adults and through their own attempts to read and write.

### 3.2.2 MATHEMATICS

Pre-primary education creates and consolidates a foundation for learning mathematics. Children will be guided to pay attention to mathematical phenomena that can be seen in everyday situations. Children play an active role in learning situations. Natural ways to expand children's understanding of mathematics include inducement mainly by means of play, stories, songs, physical exercise, small tasks, discussions and games and ample use of illustrative examples. Children's positive attitude towards mathematics should be supported. They should perceive learning mathematics to be an interesting and challenging activity, which is significant and meaningful.

Learning mathematics requires understanding of concepts. Children should be provided with diverse experiences of the different manifestations of a concept. Carefully considered and consistent teaching methods, aids and language play a key role in the concept formation process. With the aid of classification, comparison and sorting, children will explore and analyse objects, organisms, bodies, figures, materials and phenomena in their environment on the basis of shapes, quantities and other properties.

In pre-primary education, it is important to develop children's concentration, listening, communication and thinking skills. In terms of the development of mathematical thinking, it is important for children also to learn to observe their own thinking. Children shall be encouraged to talk about what they are thinking or how they were thinking. The role of adults is to build a learning environment which will support and promote the development of each child's individual mathematical thinking.

### 3.2.3 ETHICS AND RELIGION

Freedom of religion and conscience is a right guaranteed by section 11 of the Constitution, which is exercised by guardians on behalf of children of pre-primary age. Pre-primary education includes general ethical education and education in cultural philosophy. Within the framework of the provisions of section 6 of the Constitution, pre-primary education also includes religious education and, as an alternative, education in ethics. Depending on choices made by guardians, children will thus participate in either religious education or ethical education, or in other instruction.

Due to a small number of children belonging to a certain denomination or being unaffiliated to any denomination, or for some other specific and acceptable reason related to provision of education, a provider of pre-primary education may decide not to provide religious education according to the beliefs of the denomination concerned or secular ethical education.

General ethical education in pre-primary education is included in all activities and is common to the whole group. Ethical education starts with the development of self-esteem and expands to embrace interpersonal social skills and to the living environment beyond. Ethical education is integrated into different situations in pre-primary education and it is dealt with in discussions with children or by means of role-play, thus developing children's ethical thinking.

Education in cultural philosophy is to be provided for all children. The objective of education in cultural philosophy is the development of philosophical thinking. This involves children's opportunities to be heard on philosophical questions of life, to accumulate general philosophical learning through familiarisation with the conventions of one's own world view and with those of other cultures and convictions represented in the child group, as well as the opportunity to learn to know and appreciate the cultural and natural heritage of their own local area.

The objective of religious education in turn is to provide an opportunity to deal with issues related to religion and to learn about religious festivals and why and how they are celebrated. A further objective is to provide children with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the core contents of their own religion.

The objective of education in secular ethics is to develop abilities to deal with issues of conviction related to human relationships, cultural identity, relationship between people and nature and to the community. Instruction deals with tolerance and moderation, justice and fairness, courage and one's own identity, as well as benevolence and care.

#### 3.2.4 ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL STUDIES

Environmental and natural studies help children understand their environment, support development of thinking and learning-to-learn skills and consolidate the recreational, experiential and emotional relationship with nature and other environments. The starting points for learning are children's diverse living environments, knowledge of which will create a foundation for a broader understanding of the world around them.

The objective of pre-primary education in environmental and natural studies is for children to learn to understand and appreciate natural and built-up environments, different people and cultures and to recognise the effects of their own actions on their immediate environment. Children will learn to take biodiversity and the pleasantness and beauty of the environment into account in their actions and to act so as to preserve and care for the environment. A prerequisite for developing a positive relationship with the environment is that children will also perceive their living environment to be a safe and interesting place for exploration and play.

Children's environmental studies are based on a problem-oriented exploratory approach, which stems from issues, phenomena and events related to the environment. Although studies take place in social interaction with others, each child plays an active role in the acquisition of information and builds his or her own understanding through many different means. Children will be encouraged to formulate questions and seek answers to them. Through observations and by using all of their senses, they receive information about the surrounding world and therefore they will also be guided in making observations using different aids, such as measurements. Children will learn to describe, compare, classify and sort information and results obtained through observations and measurements and to present arguments for these measures. On the basis of these, they will likewise learn to form concepts, draw conclusions and find causal explanations. They will practise taking notes of their observations and research results and presenting them through drawing, telling or acting, for example. They will learn to adopt a critical approach towards information obtained through experiments, vision or hearing.

Themes may be chosen from the following subject fields of natural sciences, for example: people and their relationship with the environment, organisms and their habitats, the Earth and space, substances and materials in the environment and topics related to energy. Exploiting the concepts of natural sciences, instruction may be planned to form integrated themes, which are related to children's sphere of life. Nevertheless, the themes are to be planned so as to provide children with

the opportunity to build their own views of the world and to obtain skills, knowledge and capabilities to promote understanding of everyday life.

### 3.2.5 HEALTH

Pre-primary education promotes children's physical, psychological and social health, growth and development. Children will be helped to become conscious of themselves in relation to other people and the environment by providing them with positive experiences and opportunities to participate. Children's capabilities to understand and take responsibility for their own health and safety will be promoted in everyday situations. Children will be guided to move safely in and around their immediate environment.

Children will be guided to take care of their health and daily personal hygiene. Children's healthy eating habits will be supported and they will be guided in good table manners. Through activities and teaching of manners, children will be guided towards good personal relationships and emotional health and to avoid use of violence. Children's growth and development will be supported by ensuring the correct balance between work, rest and recreation.

### 3.2.6 PHYSICAL AND MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Diverse daily physical exercise is essential for children's balanced growth, development and health. Children's physical and motor condition, movement control and basic motor skills will be trained through exercise and play. Children's fine motor functions, manual skills and hand-eye co-ordination will develop in everyday activities. In addition to guided exercise, children will be provided with opportunities for self-motivated physical activities and play. Children will be supported in acting independently, proactively and co-operatively in a group and in being confident in all physical exercise situations. Children will be guided to understand the significance of physical exercise to human health and well-being.

### 3.2.7 ARTS AND CULTURE

In pre-primary education, musical and other artistic experiences form a significant part of children's emotional, practical and cognitive development. Children's creativity, imagination and self-expression will be developed through making pictures, music and objects by hand, drama, dance and movement. Children will be provided with opportunities for artistic experiences and enjoyment and to discuss them. With the aid of play and exploratory and experimental artistic activities, children will search for information about themselves and the phenomena of the surrounding world. Children will be guided in persistent artistic work and to appreciate their own work and that of other people. Development of children's sensitivity, perception and spatial orientation will be supported. Thus, children's learning

processes will become deeper and they will learn life skills as well as thinking and problem-solving skills.

Children will be offered opportunities to familiarise themselves with communications media and to practise using them. Teachers will examine pictures and discuss their semantic content and visual expression with children. Children will be guided to explore the world of sounds and the effects of music in communication. Children will be encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings through words and by means of drama, through stresses and tones of voice, expressions, gestures and motions.

The strengthening of children's cultural identities will be supported, together with their understanding of their own cultural heritage and cultural diversity. Children will be guided to appreciate and treasure the aesthetic and cultural values of natural and built-up environments and the material environment.

Children will be encouraged to express themselves diversely in connection with different theme modules.

#### **4 SUPPORT FOR GROWTH AND LEARNING IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION**

This chapter describes the key objectives and provision of support for growth and learning and the structure of support. The levels of support for growth and learning, i.e. general, intensified and special support, are detailed in Sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3, respectively. Chapter 5 outlines different forms of support and how they are used at different support levels in more detail. As a whole, Chapters 4 and 5 form the basis for the formulation of the local curriculum and practical implementation of support for growth and learning.

##### *Guiding principles for provision of support*

The objectives that sustain basic security and support children's holistic growth form the foundation of daily work and support in pre-primary education. These objectives are agreed together with children's homes. The primary concern is to support development of each child's positive self-concept and healthy self-esteem and to ensure equal membership of the group. Schoolwork should be playful and involve action-based group and individual guidance stemming from children's development level. It should promote children's cognitive, in particular linguistic, as well as socio-emotional development and their ability to learn new things and also prevent learning difficulties.

The starting points for the provision of pre-primary education and support are the strengths and learning and development needs of both the pre-primary group and each individual child. Support for growth and learning means solutions based on community spirit and the learning environment, as well as meeting the children's individual needs. When planning pre-primary education and support, it is imperative to bear in mind that a child's support needs may vary from temporary to continuous, from minor to major, or from one to several forms of support.

Every child shall be given an opportunity to receive support for his or her growth and learning and to develop his or her learning abilities on his or her own terms. Diverse learners, different learning styles and starting points for learning as well as children's cultural backgrounds shall be taken into account in pre-primary education. Special attention shall be paid to the assessment of support needs with regard to those children whose basic education has been deferred until one year later.

Children should be encouraged to take initiative and responsibility, they should be offered challenges and also be provided with guidance and support to promote development. A child's healthy self-esteem will be strengthened with the aid of positive learning experiences and encouraging feedback, while also providing opportunities for diverse interaction. Attention shall be paid to the early identification of learning barriers and difficulties. It is necessary to recognise factors relating both to individual children and to the implementation and operating environment of pre-primary education.

Those participating in education are entitled to receive sufficient support for learning and schooling immediately when the need for support becomes apparent<sup>7</sup>. The education provider shall ensure that children's right to receive support can be implemented in practice for example by defining the responsibilities and division of work related to the determination of support needs and implementation of support measures. Early identification of support needs requires continuous assessment of children's growth and learning and provision of support shall be initiated at a sufficiently early stage. This will prevent aggravation and long-term effects of problems. Provision of the right support measures at the right time and level is the key to safeguarding growth and learning. The support received by children shall be flexible, planned with a long-term view in mind and it shall change in line with support needs. Different forms of support are used both individually and in combination to complement each other. Support will be provided as long as necessary and at the appropriate level.

Support needs may be assessed by making use of the results of physical examinations and any other possible evaluations conducted on the child in question<sup>8</sup>. If a child uses other early childhood education and care services in addition to pre-primary education, co-operation between pre-primary education and other early childhood education and care staff is important in order to identify the child's needs for support for growth and learning and to implement support measures.

Support measures shall form a systematic continuum. The management of each pre-primary education unit is responsible for making decisions relating to provision and implementation of support. Pedagogical expertise and co-operation between teachers play an important role in identifying support needs and in planning and implementing support. Where necessary, support is planned and implemented as part of multidisciplinary pupil welfare work. Children's guardians shall be provided with information about support measures and shall be given an opportunity to express their views on the provision of support. Each child is provided with support in his or her own pre-primary group, unless its provision inevitably requires the child to be transferred to another pre-primary group or some other appropriate place providing pre-primary education. The physical and social learning environment and the necessary support services in pre-primary education shall be organised so as to enable children to participate in pre-primary group activities as fully as possible. Support is provided through various flexible arrangements, such as team teaching or working in small groups and individually.

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<sup>7</sup> Basic Education Act, section 30(1) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>8</sup> Government Decree on Child Health Clinic Activities, School and Student Health Care, and Preventive Dental Care for Children and Young People (380/2009; *valtioneuvoston asetus neuvolatoiminnasta, koulu- ja opiskeluterveydenhuollosta sekä lasten ja nuorten ehkäisevästä suun terveydenhuollosta*), section 9 (hereinafter referred to as the Government Decree governing school and student health care)

Particular care is taken to ensure continuing support as a child moves from other forms of early childhood education and care to pre-primary education and from pre-primary to basic education.

### *Support in special circumstances*

Children may need support in special circumstances, such as in connection with an illness. The local authority in whose area a hospital is located is responsible for arranging pre-primary education for a child who is a patient to the extent that his or her health and other circumstances allow<sup>9</sup>.

Responsibility for instruction for children placed outside home rests with each child's municipality of residence<sup>10</sup>.

## **4.1 GENERAL SUPPORT IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION**

Every child has a right to high-quality pre-primary education as well as an opportunity to receive guidance and support for growth and learning on all pre-primary working days. All children's abilities and needs shall be taken into account in pre-primary education. Work communities are to develop their practices and operational culture so as to make it possible to make use of co-operation and learning together and to deal with the diversity of children as well as possible. Caring, concern and a positive atmosphere in a pre-primary community promote children's growth and learning.

Each teacher is responsible for taking the pre-primary group and the different abilities and needs of each of its children into account in pre-primary education. Co-operation with guardians, other teachers, other staff in early childhood education and care, and different experts contributes to success in this respect. The teacher's task is to guide the group to function in such a way that internal interaction promotes growth and learning. The teacher guides children to recognise their own strengths and resources. Special attention shall be paid to reinforcing pupils' learning abilities, positive self-concept and enjoyment of doing things in all working situations.

Teaching work also involves tasks relating to guidance, counselling and pupil welfare. Assessing support needs and offering the necessary support form an integral part of a teacher's work and all pre-primary education situations. Support is constructed in co-operation between teachers, and when necessary, other experts, and in interaction with the child and his or her guardian.

Any support needs in terms of growth and learning are met by differentiating instruction, through co-operation between teachers and by modifying pre-primary groups in a flexible manner. In the beginning of pre-primary education, the teacher may also draw up a child's pre-primary learning plan

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<sup>9</sup> Basic Education Act, section 4(3)

<sup>10</sup> Basic Education Act, section 4(1) (as amended by Act 1288/1999)

in co-operation with the guardian and the child. The plan aims to guarantee the child the best opportunities to grow and learn. Also special needs teachers or special kindergarten teachers and assistants can be used as means to meet the support needs of pre-primary groups or individual children even before transition to the intensified support stage.

## **4.2 INTENSIFIED SUPPORT IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION**

A child who needs regular support in learning or schooling or needs several forms of support at the same time shall be provided with intensified support based on a pedagogical assessment in accordance with a learning plan prepared for him or her<sup>11</sup>. Intensified support is provided when general support is not sufficient.

Intensified support is planned as a whole for each individual child. It is by nature more intense and persistent than general support. Intensified support is used to support the child's growth and learning systematically and is designed to prevent problems from escalating, diversifying and accumulating.

It is possible to make use of all forms of support available in pre-primary education during intensified support, with the exception of special needs education provided on the basis of a decision on special support, which is described in Section 5.1.1. During intensified support, the support given by a special needs teacher or a special kindergarten teacher, the child's individual guidance, flexible group arrangements and co-operation with the child's guardian play a more prominent role. In addition, pupil welfare services play a more substantial role in promoting and maintaining the child's well-being. The quantity and quality of support shall be organised in accordance with each child's developmental level and individual needs. It is important to ensure that the children will have opportunities to gain experiences of success in learning and as group members and to support their positive perception of themselves.

During a period of intensified support, each child's growth and learning shall be monitored and assessed regularly. In the event that a child's situation changes, the child's pre-primary learning plan will be revised to match his or her need for support.

### *Pedagogical assessment for intensified support*

Intensified support measures are initiated on the basis of a pedagogical assessment, which describes:

- the status of the child's growth and learning as a whole;
- general support provided for the child and an assessment of its effects;
- the child's learning abilities and special needs relating to growth and learning;

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<sup>11</sup> Basic Education Act, section 16 a(1) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

- an assessment of the types of pedagogical, learning environment, pupil welfare or other solutions to be made in order to support the child.

The written pedagogical assessment is drawn up by the child's pre-primary teacher or teachers together. Where necessary, and especially in cases concerning problems relating to the child's well-being and overall development, other experts will also get involved to help draw up the assessment. Co-operation with the child and his or her guardian is important in terms of both determining needs and planning and successful implementation of support measures. Any pre-primary learning plan already in place for the child as part of general support will be utilised when drawing up the pedagogical assessment, as well as any rehabilitation and early childhood education and care plans that may have been drawn up for the child, subject to permission from the guardian.

Initiating and organising intensified support and, where necessary, the child's transition back to general support will be dealt with on the basis of the pedagogical assessment in multiprofessional pupil welfare work in accordance with provisions on dealing with the case of an individual pupil<sup>12</sup>. After this process, intensified support measures to be provided for the child will be recorded in the child's pre-primary learning plan. Learning plans are discussed in more detail in Section 4.5.1.

### **4.3 SPECIAL SUPPORT IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION**

Special support is provided for those children whose pre-primary education cannot be organised in another way due to growth and learning difficulties. A child's abilities may have diminished for reasons such as disability, illness, a functional impairment, or risk factors related to the growth environment. When assessing a child's special support needs, the opinions of pre-primary teaching staff, those responsible for pupil welfare services and the child's guardian on risk factors related to the child's development and learning are taken into account.

Special support may be provided as part of either general or extended compulsory education. Special support consists of special needs education based on a decision on special support and of other forms of support available in pre-primary education<sup>13</sup>. The whole range of support measures available in pre-primary education can be used.

The purpose of special support in pre-primary education is to provide children with holistic and systematic support for growth and learning and to promote their prerequisites for learning. Children's self-esteem and learning motivation will be reinforced.

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<sup>12</sup> Basic Education Act, section 31 a(4) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>13</sup> Basic Education Act, section 17(1) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

Provision of special support requires education providers to make a written decision, which will be revised at least after the second grade and before transfer to the seventh grade<sup>14</sup>. The decision is to be made in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act<sup>15</sup>. Any matters that are significant in terms of the child's legal protection and provision of pre-primary education are determined in the decision on special support. The decision on special support shall determine the pupil's primary teaching group, any possible interpretation and assistance services and other necessary services and, if needed, divergent teaching arrangements for the pupil<sup>16</sup>.

A decision on special support may be made before the start or during pre-primary or basic education without a prior pedagogical statement and provision of intensified support, if a psychological or medical evaluation indicates that the pupil in question cannot otherwise be provided with education due to disability, illness, delayed development or an emotional disorder, or for other corresponding special reason<sup>17</sup>. If a decision on special support is made during pre-primary education without providing intensified support, it shall be based on a reassessment of the child's situation as a result of an accident or serious illness, for example.

#### *Pedagogical statement for special support*

Before making a decision on special support, the education provider shall hear the pupil and his or her guardian or legal representative and prepare a pedagogical statement on the pupil<sup>18</sup>.

For the purposes of drawing up a pedagogical statement, a body, an official or an employee appointed by the pre-primary education provider will obtain:

- a report on the child's progress in learning from the teachers responsible for the child's pre-primary education;
- an account on the intensified support measures given to the child and the child's overall situation prepared in multiprofessional pupil welfare co-operation.

Based on these, the pre-primary education provider makes an assessment of the child's special support needs. The combination of these two documents and the subsequent assessment is known as a 'pedagogical statement'.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Basic Education Act, section 17(2) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>15</sup> Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003; *hallintolaki*)

<sup>16</sup> Basic Education Act, section 17(2) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>17</sup> Basic Education Act, section 17(4) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>18</sup> Basic Education Act, section 17(3) (as amended by Act 642/2010); Administrative Procedure Act, sections 34, 35, and 36

<sup>19</sup> Basic Education Act, section 17(3) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

A written pedagogical statement outlines:

- the status of the child's growth and learning as a whole;
- intensified support provided for the child and an assessment of its effects;
- the child's learning abilities and special needs relating to growth and learning;
- an assessment of the types of pedagogical, learning environment, pupil welfare or other arrangements to be made in order to support the child.

Support arrangements may include factors relating to teaching staff, pupil welfare services, assistants and other necessary services, teaching methods and working approaches, as well as materials and equipment. In addition to the pedagogical statement, other statements, such as a psychological or medical statement or an equivalent social statement, shall also be obtained, where necessary, in order to prepare a decision on special support. The pedagogical assessment previously drawn up for a child and the child's pre-primary learning plan will be utilised when drawing up the pedagogical statement. Also any rehabilitation and early childhood education and care plans that may have been drawn up for the child will be utilised subject to permission from the guardian.

The necessity of special support shall be reviewed during pre-primary education whenever the child's support needs change. For this purpose, a new pedagogical statement will be prepared for the child. If the child is considered not to need further special support, a decision shall be taken to terminate special support measures. In this case, the child starts to receive intensified support. As the effects of support cannot usually be verified in a short period of time, termination of special support during pre-primary education is rare.

#### **4.4 SUPPORT FOR GROWTH AND LEARNING IN THE LOCAL CURRICULUM**

This section specifies how support for growth and learning is to be described as a whole in the local curriculum. Further provisions concerning formulation of the curriculum are included in Section 4.5 and in Chapter 5 that deal with individual plans and different forms of support, respectively.

Drawing up a curriculum for pre-primary education involves co-operation with other forms of early childhood education and care and with basic education. The curriculum for pre-primary education shall be drawn up in co-operation with the authorities dealing with implementation of local health care and social services<sup>20</sup>.

The local curriculum describes support for growth and learning, the structure and provision of support, general objectives and practical implementation of different forms of support. The curriculum specifies the ways in which co-operation relating to the provision of support is to be

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<sup>20</sup> Basic Education Act, section 15(2) (as amended by Act 477/2003)

carried out with children and their guardians. The curriculum also describes co-operation among staff and co-operation with experts responsible for pupil welfare services and other necessary experts in terms of assessment of support needs, planning and provision of support and its practical implementation.

The curriculum determines the objectives, provision and working approaches of general support, and co-operation among different actors and with children and their guardians.

The curriculum determines the objectives of intensified support, initiation of support and transition back to general support. The curriculum further determines the provision and working approaches of intensified support, co-operation, responsibilities and division of work among different actors and co-operation with children and their guardians.

The curriculum determines the objectives of special support, the process of making a decision on special support, initiation of support and transition back to intensified support. The curriculum further determines the provision and working approaches of special support, co-operation, responsibilities and division of work among different actors, co-operation with children and their guardians, and the procedure for hearing children and their guardians.

The curriculum describes the way in which co-operation and disclosure of information between different administrative sectors is to be carried out.

The actors responsible for making administrative decisions relating to children's support are determined in the education provider's rules of procedure<sup>21</sup>.

## **4.5 INDIVIDUAL PLANS IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION**

### **4.5.1 CHILD'S PRE-PRIMARY LEARNING PLAN**

A child's pre-primary learning plan is a plan for the progress of a child's growth and learning and for arrangements required in pre-primary education, as well as for the support needed by the child. It is a written pedagogical document based on the approved curriculum. It may be used as part of general support and it shall be used during intensified support.<sup>22</sup>

The aim of the learning plan is to guarantee good preconditions for the child's growth and learning. The plan increases teachers' awareness of each child's situation, thus making it easier for each

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<sup>21</sup> Local Government Act (365/1995; *kuntalaki*), Section 14

<sup>22</sup> Basic Education Act, section 16 a (as amended by Act 642/2010)

teacher to plan their own work. It also facilitates co-operation among teachers and with the child's home. The child's pre-primary learning plan helps to keep guardians informed, so that they can better support their child. The plan also provides a basis for assessing the progress of the child's growth and learning process.

A child's pre-primary learning plan drawn up for the purposes of intensified support is based on information produced in the pedagogical assessment. This type of plan is drawn up by teachers working in co-operation with the guardian and the child concerned. When necessary, other experts may also be involved in this process.

A child's pre-primary learning plan drawn up for the purposes of intensified support shall include the following details as required for arranging pre-primary education and support measures for the child concerned:

- the child's learning abilities and special needs relating to growth and learning;
- objectives relating to the child's learning abilities, work and interaction skills, and socio-emotional skills;
- pedagogical solutions, such as flexible group arrangements, team teaching, teaching methods and working approaches, communication methods, special aids, learning materials, and other support;
- solutions relating to the physical, psychological and social learning environment, pupil welfare services, or other aspects;
- a description of multiprofessional co-operation and the responsibilities of the different parties involved;
- implementation of co-operation with the child and the guardian; support provided by the guardian;
- the child's possible participation in other early childhood education and care activities and a description of co-operation with the organiser of these activities;
- monitoring and assessment of the child's progress, assessment methods and times, and the child's self-assessment;
- individuals involved in preparing the plan.

Any pre-primary learning plan already in place for the child as part of general support will be utilised when drawing up the plan, as well as the pedagogical assessment and information collected as part of the assessment, and any rehabilitation and early childhood education and care plans that may have been drawn up for the child, subject to permission from the parents or guardians.

A learning plan does not describe the child's personal characteristics. Children's pre-primary learning plans are not subject to appeal or any other mode of seeking reconsideration.

### *The child's pre-primary learning plan as part of general support*

It is possible to draw up a child's pre-primary learning plan for every child. Formulation of learning plans is specified in the local curriculum. Where applicable, this type of learning plan includes the same sections as a child's pre-primary learning plan drawn up for intensified support. The objectives and support measures devised for an individual child will benefit the child's growth and learning. A learning plan may also be used to deepen and broaden a child's pre-primary education, when this is justified in terms of the child's potential.

### *The child's pre-primary learning plan during intensified support*

Pupils in need of regular support for their growth and learning or in need of several forms of support at the same time shall be provided with intensified support in accordance with a learning plan prepared for them. The support measures to be provided for the pupil are recorded in the learning plan.<sup>23</sup> A child's pre-primary learning plan is always drawn up for a child receiving intensified support. The learning plan shall, unless there is an evident obstacle to doing so, be drawn up in co-operation with the pupil and his or her parents or guardians and, where necessary, with any other legal representative of the pupil<sup>24</sup>. During a period of intensified support, systematic planning of support measures will support the child's growth and learning.

### *Special support*

Children who have received a decision on special support are provided with an individual educational plan (IEP) instead of a learning plan.

### *Formulation of the local curriculum*

The local curriculum determines how a child's pre-primary learning plan is to be used as part of general support. The curriculum describes the use of a learning plan as part of intensified support. The curriculum determines preparation and monitoring of the child's pre-primary learning plan, working approaches, co-operation, responsibilities and division of work among different parties, as well as procedures for co-operation with the child and his or her parents or guardians. The contents of learning plans are described separately for general and intensified support.

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<sup>23</sup> Basic Education Act, section 16 a (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>24</sup> Basic Education Act, section 16 a(1) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

#### 4.5.2 INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PLAN

In order to implement a decision on special support issued for a pupil, the pupil shall be provided with an individual educational plan (IEP). The plan shall indicate provision of education and other support in accordance with the decision on special support issued for the pupil.<sup>25</sup>

An individual educational plan is a written pedagogical document based on the approved curriculum for pre-primary education. The plan is drawn up by the child's teachers working in co-operation with the child concerned and his or her parents or guardians, unless there is an evident obstacle to doing so. To the extent required, it is prepared in multidisciplinary pupil welfare co-operation.

The purpose of an individual educational plan is to provide persistent support for the child's individual growth and learning process. The plan is a target plan relating to the child's growth and learning and covering pre-primary educational contents, pedagogical methods and other necessary support measures.

An individual educational plan shall include the following details as required for arranging pre-primary education and support measures for the child concerned:

- the child's learning abilities and special needs relating to growth and learning;
- objectives relating to the child's learning abilities and work, socio-emotional and motor skills;
- monitoring and assessment of progress, assessment methods and times, and the child's self-assessment;
- pedagogical solutions, such as flexible group arrangements, team teaching, teaching methods, working approaches, communication methods, special aids, learning materials, and other support;
- solutions relating to the physical, psychological and social learning environment, pupil welfare services, or other aspects;
- provision of interpretation and assistance services in accordance with the decision on special support, other teaching services and support and rehabilitation services, and the responsibilities of the different parties involved;
- a description of how the child's pre-primary education is provided in connection with other pre-primary education and/or in a special group;
- a description of how a child receiving pre-primary education in a special group is integrated into other pre-primary education;
- a description of multidisciplinary co-operation and the responsibilities of the different parties involved;
- a description of the child's transport arrangements and responsibilities in pre-primary education, and of supervision and guidance of the child waiting for transport;

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<sup>25</sup> Basic Education Act, section 17 a (as amended by Act 642/2010)

- the child's possible participation in other early childhood education and care activities and a description of co-operation with the organiser;
- implementation of co-operation with the child and parents or guardians; support provided by parents or guardians;
- individuals involved in preparing the plan.

If a child has received intensified support, the pre-primary learning plan drawn up for the child as part of intensified support will be utilised when drawing up the individual educational plan. Other documents utilised for this purpose include any possible rehabilitation and early childhood education and care plans that may have been drawn up for the child, subject to permission from the parents or guardians, while also taking details established as part of preparing any possible pedagogical statement into account.

The individual educational plan does not describe the child's personal characteristics. It is also possible to attach any individual permissions to transfer information given by the child's parents or guardians to the IEP document. Individual educational plans are not subject to appeal or any other mode of seeking reconsideration.

The plan shall be revised as required, however, at least once per school year, to correspond to the child's needs<sup>26</sup>. The individual educational plan is revised whenever the child's support needs or objectives change. Experiences of the pre-primary education arrangements, operating methods and support services applied may be recorded in the plan and this information may be utilised when assessing implementation of the plan.

#### *Formulation of the local curriculum*

The curriculum determines preparation and monitoring of the individual educational plan, operating methods, co-operation, responsibilities and division of work among different parties, as well as procedures for co-operation with the child and his or her parents or guardians.

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<sup>26</sup> Basic Education Act, section 17 a (as amended by Act 642/2010)

## **5 FORMS OF SUPPORT FOR GROWTH AND LEARNING IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION**

Chapter 5 describes different forms of support for growth and learning. The chapter also outlines pupil welfare and promotion of safety and security in pre-primary education.

### **5.1 SUPPORT RELATING TO TEACHING ARRANGEMENTS IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION**

#### **5.1.1 SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION**

Special support comprises special needs education and any other support needed by individual children and provided under the Basic Education Act<sup>27</sup>. Special needs education is a key pedagogical area of special support and its purpose is to support children's learning. A child who has received a decision on special support is provided with pre-primary education and other forms of support in accordance with the individual educational plan.

The individual educational plan is a pedagogical document governing systematic implementation of the decision on special support. The plan determines aspects relating to provision of special needs education, the key objectives and contents of instruction, as well as factors relating to the learning environment and teaching methods, as instructed in Section 4.5.2 about drawing up individual educational plans.

Special needs education may be provided in connection with regular pre-primary education, considering the child's best interests and the prerequisites for arranging instruction, or fully or partially in a special group or some other suitable environment<sup>28</sup>. Teaching groups shall be formed so as to ensure that all pupils will be able to achieve the objectives set in the curriculum<sup>29</sup>. Further provisions on the formation of teaching groups are issued in the Basic Education Decree<sup>30</sup>.

Pre-primary teachers need to be skilled in using pedagogical methods and working approaches that support children's diverse needs. In addition, special needs teachers and special kindergarten teachers have the expertise required during special needs education.

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<sup>27</sup> Basic Education Act, section 17(1) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>28</sup> Basic Education Act, section 17(1) and (2) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>29</sup> Basic Education Act, section 30(2)

<sup>30</sup> Basic Education Decree, section 2 (as amended by Government Decree 893/2010)

### *Formulation of the local curriculum*

Special needs education is decided as part of making a decision on special support, which is detailed in Section 4.3 above. The curriculum determines the ways in which special needs education is to be provided in pre-primary education, as well as co-operation, responsibilities and division of work among different parties and co-operation with children and their parents or guardians.

#### 5.1.2 EXTENDED COMPULSORY EDUCATION

If it is evident, owing to a child's disability or illness, that the objectives set for basic education cannot be achieved in nine years, compulsory education begins one year earlier than provided in the Basic Education Act and lasts 11 years<sup>31</sup>. The duration of pre-primary education provided for pupils falling within extended compulsory education may be one or two years<sup>32</sup>. The purpose is to strengthen these children's abilities to help them cope with their studies in basic education as effectively as possible.

Extended compulsory education is intended for children with severe disabilities, including those with visual and hearing impairments as well as those with other severe physical or intellectual disabilities or developmental delays. A serious illness may also be a reason for extended compulsory education.<sup>33</sup> As a general rule, a decision on extended compulsory education is made before compulsory education starts. In such cases, a decision on special support is also made for the child concerned. Children have the right to pre-primary education during the year preceding the beginning of compulsory education.<sup>34</sup> For children within extended education, this right begins at the start of September in the year of their fifth birthday. A decision on the extension of compulsory education needs to be made before pre-primary education starts in order for this right to become valid.

Guiding a child to support services at a sufficiently early stage requires co-operation between different administrative sectors. Parents or guardians of children are to be given sufficient advance warning of the different alternatives available in extended compulsory education and the effects of this option. Parents or guardians decide whether their child will participate in pre-primary education prior to compulsory education. The duration of pre-primary education and commencement of basic education should be planned on the basis of the child's progress, support needs and overall circumstances.

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<sup>31</sup> Basic Education Act, section 25(2).

<sup>32</sup> Basic Education Act, section 9(2)

<sup>33</sup> Government Proposal to Parliament for legislation governing education (86/1997)

<sup>34</sup> Basic Education Act, section 17(4) (as amended by Act 642/2010) and section 26 a(1) (as amended by Act 1288/1999)

Instruction for children within extended compulsory education may be provided in the following alternative ways:

- A child may start pre-primary education preceding compulsory education in the year of their fifth birthday, then continue in pre-primary education as part of compulsory education for another year and then start basic education.
- A child may start pre-primary education as part of extended compulsory education in the year of their sixth birthday, participate in pre-primary education for one year and then start basic education.
- A child may start pre-primary education as part of extended compulsory education in the year of their sixth birthday and then participate in pre-primary education for two years. This means that the child will start basic education one year later than enacted<sup>35</sup>, i.e. in the year of their eighth birthday. Starting basic education at a later date is subject to a separate administrative decision.

Each child within extended compulsory education and receiving special support will always be provided with an individual educational plan at the beginning of pre-primary education. Any rehabilitation and early childhood education and care plans that may have been drawn up for the child will be utilised when drawing up the individual educational plan, subject to permission from the guardians.

If a child no longer falls within extended compulsory education, a decision on the termination of extended compulsory education shall be made, in which case the child will be transferred into general compulsory education.

#### *Formulation of the local curriculum*

The curriculum determines provision of pre-primary instruction for children within extended compulsory education, working approaches, co-operation with other forms of early childhood education and care and with basic education, other co-operation and the responsibilities of and division of work between different parties, co-operation with children and their guardians, and the procedure for consulting children and their guardians.

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<sup>35</sup> Basic Education Act, section 27

## 5.2 OTHER SUPPORT IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

### 5.2.1 CO-OPERATION WITH HOME

Education providers are required to co-operate with pupils' homes<sup>36</sup>. Instruction and education shall be provided in co-operation with guardians, so that each pupil receives instruction, guidance and support according to his or her own needs and development level<sup>37</sup>. Children live and are influenced by both home, pre-primary education and any other forms of early childhood education and care that they may attend. This requires that these educational communities co-operate and interact to support children's positive growth, development and learning in a holistic way. Interaction with the home adds to the teacher's knowledge of the children and helps the teacher plan and implement instruction.<sup>38</sup>

Guardians have primary responsibility for bringing up their children and they know their own children best<sup>39</sup>. Pre-primary education staff supports the homes' educational tasks and takes responsibility for children's education during pre-primary education<sup>40</sup>.

The objective of this educational partnership is to advance children's growth, development and learning, their feelings of safety and security and well-being within pre-primary education. In terms of children's satisfaction, growth and learning, it is important to create a trusting relationship between pre-primary staff and guardians.

It is important to provide guardians with opportunities to participate in setting objectives for and planning and evaluating educational work within pre-primary education in co-operation with teachers and children. Pre-primary staff shall co-operate with guardians so that they can, for their part, support their children's growth and learning within pre-primary education. Co-operation with home is implemented both within the community and at individual level.

Responsibility for the development of co-operation with homes rests with each pre-primary education provider. Co-operation requires initiative and active involvement from pre-primary staff and discussions and provision of information about the rights and responsibilities of guardians,

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<sup>36</sup> Basic Education Act, section 3(3)

<sup>37</sup> Basic Education Act 3(2); Government Decree on the General National Objectives and Distribution of Lesson Hours in Basic Education Referred to in the Basic Education Act (1435/2001; *valtioneuvoston asetus perusopetuslaissa tarkoitettun opetuksen valtakunnallisista tavoitteista ja perusopetuksen tuntijaosta*), sections 4(1) and 5(1) (hereinafter referred to as the Decree on Distribution of Lesson Hours)

<sup>38</sup> Basic Education Act, section 3(2); Decree on Distribution of Lesson Hours, sections 2, 3 and 4

<sup>39</sup> Child Welfare Act (417/2007; *lastensuojelulaki*), section 2(1)

<sup>40</sup> Child Welfare Act, section 2(2)

teachers and children. The starting point for co-operation is the mutual respect between different parties. The diversity, individual needs and linguistic and cultural backgrounds of families are to be taken into account in co-operation with home.

Guardians need to be provided with information about the curriculum for pre-primary education, provision of pre-primary education, children's support needs and possibilities for receiving support, and about their own opportunities to participate in co-operation between home and pre-primary education and in promotion of well-being and safety. The pre-primary education unit shall inform guardians of the activities of pupil welfare services in pre-primary education<sup>41</sup> and of the pre-primary education unit's working approaches and communication practices in various problem, accident and crisis situations.

When dealing with a matter involving support for an individual child, the child's guardians shall be informed of issues relating to processing of, access to, disclosure and secrecy of data concerning the child. It is necessary to go through various issues with guardians, such as the meaning of a legal guardian's specific written consent in dealing with a matter concerning the child and the role of co-operation in support of the child's growth, development and learning<sup>42</sup>. At the final stage of pre-primary education, the guardians shall be given information about and an opportunity to discuss any questions and possible special needs associated with the child's school start with the child's teachers and various pupil welfare experts<sup>43</sup>.

Co-operation carried out with guardians in other forms of early childhood education and care is continued during pre-primary education, while also creating a foundation for interaction among guardians and subsequent co-operation between home and school. Different forms of co-operation in support of dialogue between home and pre-primary education are developed throughout pre-primary education, and especially when the child moves from day-care to pre-primary education or from pre-primary education to initial basic education. Information and communication technology may be used to improve and diversify the flow of information and contacts between home and pre-primary education. Co-operation is organised so as to make it possible to support children's growth, learning and well-being with the aid of pupil welfare services and the multiprofessional co-operation network.

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<sup>41</sup> Basic Education Act, sections 31 a(3) (as amended by Act 642/2010) and 3(3); Government Decree governing school and student health care, sections 4(2), 9 and 13; Child Welfare Act, sections 9 and 12

<sup>42</sup> Basic Education Act, sections 31 a(3) and (4) (as amended by Act 642/2010), 40, 41(4) (as amended by Act 642/2010) and 41(1), (2) and (3)

<sup>43</sup> Basic Education Act, section 3(2) and (3); Government Decree governing school and student health care, sections 13 and 15(3)

### *Formulation of the local curriculum*

The curriculum for pre-primary education is to be drawn up in co-operation with the authorities dealing with the implementation of local health care and social services<sup>44</sup>. This also entails taking into account the fluent flow of information and participation in co-operation of other key educational parties, such as staff working in other forms of early childhood education and care.

The objectives, operating methods and responsibilities of co-operation with home, and the division of work between different parties are to be determined in the local curriculum. When determining working approaches, co-operation with homes is to be considered at the level of the whole community, at a pre-primary group level and in terms of individual children. The curriculum should also describe the principles relating to parents' and guardians' involvement and provision of information for parents and guardians. The curriculum shall further include procedures relating to monitoring and evaluating implementation of co-operation as well as a description of procedures in problem situations relating to co-operation.

#### 5.2.2 PROVISION OF INTERPRETATION AND ASSISTANCE SERVICES

Disabled pupils and other pupils with special educational needs are entitled to access to the interpretation and assistance services specified in the Basic Education Act that they need in order to participate in education free of charge<sup>45</sup>. The purpose of interpretation and assistance services is to guarantee children the basic prerequisites for growth and learning in pre-primary education and a learning environment, which is as accessible as possible.

A child may need interpretation services due to conditions such as a hearing impairment or a special linguistic difficulty. He or she may also need to use augmentative and alternative communication methods, such as various symbol systems, due to deficient communication skills. Daily opportunities for linguistic interaction and support in pre-primary education will promote the child's development, social growth and involvement in the pre-primary community. The aim is for other children and those adults working with the child to become familiar with the child's way of communicating. Developing the child's own communication skills enables interaction with others on an equal footing. Language is a key medium for learning and linguistic development has a bearing on development of thinking and emotions and on formation of the child's own identity.

Those working with the child should co-operate in planning communication support in different learning situations, making use of various experts when necessary. In addition, other support

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<sup>44</sup> Basic Education Act, section 15(2) (as amended by Act 477/2003)

<sup>45</sup> Basic Education Act, section 31(1) (as amended by Act 477/2003)

measures should also be planned, such as the child's placement in the pre-primary classroom, individual learning and teaching materials and any special aids that the child may require. The person assisting with interpretation may support one or more children in learning situations at the same time. The teacher may also support children in pre-primary education with communication by means of signs or other symbols.

The support provided by an assistant should promote children's independent coping and their own initiative, as well as positive development of self-esteem. The objective of assistance services is to support individual children to enable them to assume more and more personal responsibility for their own work.

An assistant may provide support for an individual child or for the entire pre-primary group. Individual support may be on a part- or full-time basis. A teacher's task is to plan, teach and assess the growth and learning both of individual children and of the group as a whole. The assistant supports the child in performing tasks relating to growth and learning and to rehabilitation aiming to support these in accordance with instructions from the teacher or therapists and participates in planning support, where required. The assistant guides the child in everyday situations in pre-primary education.

The education provider decides on the provision of interpretation and assistance services. A child's need for interpretation and assistance services, their scope and types are to be assessed in co-operation between the child's teachers and pupil welfare staff, making use of information provided by the child's parents or guardians and any possible statements by external experts.

#### *Interpretation and assistance as part of general support*

A child may need interpretation or assistance services without requiring any other type of support. The need for assistance services, in particular, may also be short-term.

Adequate interpretation services provided at the right time and access to augmentative and alternative communication devices will support the child's growth and learning and prevent learning difficulties from emerging and making them worse. Support provided by an assistant will improve conditions for growth and learning for an individual child or for the entire pre-primary group. In some cases, it may completely prevent the need for intensified or special support.

#### *Interpretation and assistance during intensified support*

Prior to starting intensified support measures, a child's needs for interpretation and assistance services should be assessed as part of the pedagogical assessment. If the child has received interpretation and assistance services during general support, the adequacy and impact of these will also be assessed. The child's pre-primary learning plan to be prepared when initiating intensified

support should include the interpretation and assistance services that the child needs, their objectives, provision and monitoring. The need for interpretation and assistance services may increase or the forms of support provided may require reassessment during intensified support. Any necessary changes will be recorded in the child's pre-primary learning plan.

#### *Interpretation and assistance during special support*

The adequacy and impact of the interpretation and assistance services provided for the child during intensified support and further needs for such services are assessed as part of preparing the pedagogical statement. The pupil's interpretation and assistance services are specified in the decision on special support.<sup>46</sup> When the decision on special support has been made, an individual educational plan will be drawn up for the child, describing the support services to be provided for the child and people involved in the provision of support services, their responsibilities, and monitoring of implementation of these services. The scope and quality of interpretation and assistance is to be defined individually together with other support measures. During special support, children often require individually targeted support services.

#### *Formulation of the local curriculum*

The objectives, operating methods and administrative practices of interpretation and assistance services, as well as co-operation, responsibilities and division of work among different parties are to be determined in the local curriculum.

### **5.3 PUPIL WELFARE AND PROMOTION OF SAFETY AND SECURITY IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION**

#### **5.3.1 PUPIL WELFARE**

Pupil welfare means action promoting and maintaining good learning, good mental and physical health and social well-being, and conditions conducive to these. Pupil welfare shall encompass pupil welfare determined in the curriculum adopted by the education provider and pupil welfare services comprising school health care referred to in the Primary Health Care Act and support for schooling referred to in the Child Welfare Act.<sup>47</sup> Individual health checks and health advice for children in pre-primary education are provided as child health clinic services under the Primary Health Care Act.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Basic Education Act, section 17(2) and (3) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>47</sup> Basic Education Act, section 31 a(1) (as amended by Act 477/2003) and (2) (as amended by Act 642/2010); Child Welfare Act, section 9

<sup>48</sup> Primary Health Care Act (66/1972; *kansanterveyslaki*), section 14(1)(1)

Pupil welfare in pre-primary education is part of the continuum of other early childhood education and care, pre-primary education and basic education. Pupil welfare in pre-primary education is the responsibility of everyone working in the pre-primary education unit as well as the authorities responsible for pupil welfare services. It is implemented in co-operation with the child and his or her guardian.<sup>49</sup> Pupil welfare in pre-primary education is both social and individual support. Pupil welfare promotes the balanced and healthy growth and development of children and supports learning.

The purpose of pupil welfare is to develop a learning environment that supports a culture of well-being and to strengthen collaboration as part of the community's operational culture. Community spirit is nurtured by promoting the participation of children and their parents or guardians in the development of well-being in the pre-primary community. Children's participation is supported with consideration for their age, development and other abilities and needs. Pupil welfare in pre-primary education fosters positive interaction and an atmosphere of mutual caring, while also addressing problems when needed. The aim is to create a safe and healthy growth and learning environment, to protect mental health and prevent exclusion, and to promote well-being in the pre-primary community.

Pupil welfare in pre-primary education involves developing, monitoring and assessing the well-being of the entire community and pre-primary groups. The child's individual needs relating to growth, development and health are taken into account as part of the daily routines of pre-primary education.<sup>50</sup>

Pupil welfare aims to prevent, identify, diminish and remove barriers to growth and learning, learning difficulties and other problems at the earliest possible stage. Preventive child welfare and annual health checks as well as health advice as part of health promotion reinforce prevention of problems, their early identification and provision of support.<sup>51</sup> The purpose of pupil welfare is to monitor and support each child's holistic well-being and, when necessary, support the child and intervene in changes in well-being in co-operation with the child's guardians. Co-operation within pupil welfare involves agreeing on procedures for preventive child welfare work and special support as part of health care. Co-operation and operating guidelines shall take into account any possible

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<sup>49</sup> Basic Education Act, section 31 a(1) (as amended by Act 477/2003) and (2) (as amended by Act 642/2010); Primary Health Care Act, section 14(1)(1); Child Welfare Act, section 9

<sup>50</sup> Basic Education Act, sections 3(2) (as amended by Act 477/2003); Government Decree governing school and student health care, sections 12, 13 and 15(3) and (4); Child Welfare Act, section 9

<sup>51</sup> Basic Education Act, sections 16, 16 a, 17 and 17 a (as amended by Act 642/2010) ; Child Welfare Act, sections 3 and 3 a (as amended by Act 88/2010), 8, 9 and 12; Government Decree governing school and student health care, sections 4, 7(2) and (3), and 13

endangerment of a child's growth and development due to risks in the growth environment and the duty to notify specified in the Child Welfare Act in order to investigate the need for child welfare.<sup>52</sup>

The guiding principles of pupil welfare work are confidentiality, respect for the child and his or her guardian, as well as support for their participation. It is imperative to guarantee that the views of children and their guardians are heard. Guardians shall be informed of pupil welfare work and its procedures in pre-primary education. Guardians shall be provided with information on how pupil welfare matters concerning an individual child are instituted and prepared.<sup>53</sup>

Pupil welfare in pre-primary education is co-ordinated and developed in multiprofessional pupil welfare co-operation, such as in a pupil welfare team. The general principles and structures of co-operation, organisation of activities in practice, division of work and responsibilities are to be agreed in co-operation with the authorities dealing with the implementation of local health care and social services<sup>54</sup>. In addition, co-operation with other authorities or partners in issues relating to health and safety and security is also taken into account when organising co-operation.

The principles and procedures relating to the organisation of pupil welfare in pre-primary education, collaborative promotion of health and well-being, and supporting individual children and dealing with their matters are to be agreed when planning pupil welfare work. Activities promoting overall health and well-being in the community may be developed through broad multiprofessional co-operation. In this respect, different actors may take part in pupil welfare co-operation notwithstanding secrecy, unlike in matters concerning individual pupils<sup>55</sup>. The latter is described in Section 5.3.3.

### *Meals in pre-primary education*

Those participating in education shall be provided with a balanced and appropriately organised and supervised meal free of charge every working day<sup>56</sup>. The lunch break is important for children and it supports children's healthy growth and development as part of pre-primary education. The health-related and social role of meals, the objectives of health and nutritional education and learning of manners as well as the recreational aspect of lunch breaks will be taken into account when arranging and supervising meals. Children will be provided with the opportunity to participate in planning and implementing meals, which fosters participation and community spirit.

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<sup>52</sup> Child Welfare Act, sections 3 and 3 a (as amended by Act 88/2010) and 25(1); Government Decree governing school and student health care, sections 13 and 18

<sup>53</sup> Basic Education Act, section 31 a(3) and (4) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>54</sup> Basic Education Act, section 15(2) (as amended by Act 477/2003)

<sup>55</sup> Basic Education Act, section 31 a(3) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>56</sup> Basic Education Act, section 31(2)

Organisation of meals requires co-operation between pre-primary staff and personnel responsible for meals. Support needs and monitoring concerning children's individual nutritional and health issues or treatment of an illness are to be agreed in co-operation with the children concerned, their guardians and health care personnel.<sup>57</sup>

### 5.3.2 PROMOTION OF SAFETY AND SECURITY

Those participating in education are entitled to a safe learning environment<sup>58</sup>. This comprises physical, mental and social safety and security. The starting point for provision of education is ensuring the safety of children and pre-primary staff in all situations. Promotion of safety in the learning environment is part of the community's operational culture, which needs to be taken into account in all activities.

Pupil welfare also aims to help maintain functional capacity in situations threatening physical and psychological safety. Psychosocial support required by individual children and the entire community will be ensured in various problem, accident and crisis situations as well as in aftercare as required by these.

As part of curriculum design, it is imperative to draw up a plan for safeguarding pupils against violence, bullying and harassment, to execute the plan and to supervise adherence to it and its implementation.<sup>59</sup>

Prevention of and intervention in violence, bullying and harassment is assigned to everyone working within pre-primary education<sup>60</sup>. Violence, bullying or harassment may be direct or indirect verbal or physical use of force or social manipulation, which violates a person's physical, mental or social integrity. The perpetrator may be a child, an adult or a person from outside the pre-primary community.

Bullying means systematic, intentional and repeated verbal or physical negative action targeted at the same individual or group. An imbalance of power between the bully and the bullied is characteristic of bullying. It is also common for bullying to take place in a group. Harassment may manifest itself as inappropriate treatment and language, which may involve gender-related insinuating facial expressions, gestures or double entendres, or unwanted physical contact. In

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<sup>57</sup> Basic Education Act, sections 3(2) and 31 a(1); Government Decree governing school and student health care, section 13

<sup>58</sup> Basic Education Act, section 29(1)

<sup>59</sup> Basic Education Act, section 29 (2), (3) and (4)

<sup>60</sup> Basic Education Act, section (29); Government Decree governing school and student health care, sections 12 and 15(4)

addition to bullying and harassment, other undesirable or aggressive and violent forms of behaviour may also occur within a community. Violence refers to threats or acts of intentional use of physical force or power targeted at oneself, another individual, a group or a community. It may result in injury, mental handicap or developmental difficulty. All such cases shall be addressed.

Children, their parents or guardians and pre-primary staff shall also be informed of the various manifestations and prevention of bullying, violence and harassment, and the procedures for dealing with such situations in pre-primary education.

Physical safety and security is promoted by attending to relevant factors relating to the building, teaching facilities, equipment, teaching arrangements, teaching situations, as well as pre-primary education carried out outside the pre-primary community<sup>61</sup>. Promotion of safety and security also includes factors relating to pre-primary transport, accident prevention and information security.

Supervision and guided activities during periods spent waiting for transport and safety during transport are to be ensured by agreeing on joint procedures<sup>62</sup>. Children and their parents or guardians are to be provided with information about these and about transport arrangements.

National policies for accident prevention and co-operation required by these actions should be taken into account in guidelines relating to accident prevention. Procedures relating to accident prevention, first aid, referral for treatment and incident monitoring should be agreed through pupil welfare co-operation and made known to children and their parents or guardians.

Promotion of safety and prevention of situations involving safety risks are to comply with legislation governing safety, safety guidelines drawn up for pre-primary education and other local safety-related policies. These guidelines should be co-ordinated in the local curriculum.

Safety in pre-primary education is also governed by the Occupational Safety and Health Act and the occupational safety and health policy drawn up according to the Act<sup>63</sup>. Other provisions governing safety include the up-to-date rescue plan required by the Rescue Act and Decree<sup>64</sup>. Information about the rescue plan shall be made available to the entire pre-primary staff.

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<sup>61</sup> Basic Education Act, section 29(1); Occupational Safety and Health Act (738/2002; *työturvallisuuslaki*), sections 9 and 10; Health Protection Act (763/1994; *terveydensuojelulaki*), sections 26 and 27

<sup>62</sup> Basic Education Act, section 32(1) (as amended by Act 1139/2003) and (4); Government Decree governing school and student health care, section 12

<sup>63</sup> Occupational Safety and Health Act, sections 8, 9 and 10

<sup>64</sup> Rescue Act (468/2003; *pelastuslaki*), section 9(3); Government Decree on Rescue Services (787/2003; *valtionevoston asetus pelastustoimesta*), sections 9 and 10

The pre-primary education provider is responsible for ensuring that pre-primary education is covered by operating guidelines concerning safety and security. The health and safety of the pre-primary community and implementation of guidelines are to be monitored and assessed systematically in co-operation with health care and other authorities as required<sup>65</sup>. Local co-operation with other forms of early childhood education and care, different actors within the local education authority and other authorities supports purposeful action in situations involving safety risks and in their prevention<sup>66</sup>.

### 5.3.3 PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA, SECRECY AND DISCLOSURE OF DATA

The starting point for processing personal data is confidentiality and co-operation with children's parents or guardians.

When a matter concerning an individual pupil is processed in pupil welfare work, it may only be processed by those individuals directly involved in the provision of instruction and pupil welfare for the pupil<sup>67</sup>. These individuals may include the principal or head teacher, the class tutor or the pupil's teacher, a school public health nurse, a special needs teacher, a special needs assistant working with the pupil, a school psychologist, a school social worker and, in upper grades, a guidance counsellor and, where necessary, a school physician and a social worker from child welfare services<sup>68</sup>. In addition, processing a child's matter in pre-primary education may also be considered to directly involve the day-care centre's manager, a pre-primary teacher and a special kindergarten teacher. Decisions on those involved in processing the matter will be made separately on the basis of each matter and topic to be discussed. With written consent from the pupil's parents or guardians or some other legal representative, or as separately provided by law, other necessary parties may also participate in processing a matter concerning the pupil<sup>69</sup>.

When processing a matter concerning an individual pupil in pupil welfare work, the initiator of the matter, the topic, any further actions decided and their justifications and the parties involved in processing will be documented, complete with details of what information has been disclosed about

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<sup>65</sup> Basic Education Act, section 29(2) (as amended by Act 477/2003); Government Decree governing school and student health care, section 12; Occupational Safety and Health Act, sections 9 and 10

<sup>66</sup> Basic Education Act, sections 29 and 32; Rescue Act, section 9(3); Government Decree on Rescue Services, sections 9 and 10; Police Act (493/1995; *poliisilaki*), section 1(1) and (2) (as amended by Act 21/2001); Occupational Safety and Health Act, section 8

<sup>67</sup> Basic Education Act, section 31 a(3) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>68</sup> Parliamentary Education and Culture Committee Report 4/2010

<sup>69</sup> Basic Education Act, section 31 a(3) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

the pupil and to whom. Responsibility for processing personal data rests with the education provider as a personal data file registrar.<sup>70</sup>

Pupil welfare work involves processing several types of data concerning individual children and their families, all of which are to be kept confidential under law<sup>71</sup>. Secrecy refers to keeping a document confidential and prohibition against disclosure of information orally, i.e. non-disclosure obligation, and prohibition against the use of confidential information for personal benefit or to the detriment of another.

Confidential information includes information on the personal circumstances of children and their family members, such as lifestyle, interests, family life, political convictions, privately expressed views and participation in voluntary associations, as well as information on their financial status, state of health and disability.

Confidential information also covers information about the provision of intensified and special support, as well as any other data relating to provision of such support. Furthermore, documents on pupil welfare and information included in such documents, and information on a psychological test or aptitude test on a pupil shall also be kept confidential. Certificates of attendance awarded to children at the end of pre-primary education are public.<sup>72</sup>

Individuals bound by professional secrecy include the principal or the manager of the day-care centre responsible for pre-primary education, teachers, student teachers, special needs assistants, representatives of health care, school social workers, school psychologists and members of bodies responsible for provision of pre-primary education<sup>73</sup>. Furthermore, no other individuals employed by the pre-primary education provider, such as day-care staff, may disclose any confidential information obtained by them to third parties, or hand over any documents containing confidential information.

Notwithstanding the secrecy provisions, those participating in pupil welfare work are entitled to receive information that is indispensable for the appropriate provision of a pupil's instruction from each other and hand such information over to each other and to a pupil's teacher and to the authorities responsible for pre-primary education and activities under the Basic Education Act within pre-primary education as well<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> Basic Education Act, section 31 a(4) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>71</sup> Basic Education Act, section 40 (as amended by Act 642/2010) ; Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999; *laki viranomaisten toiminnan julkisuudesta*), section 24(1)(30)

<sup>72</sup> Act on the Openness of Government Activities, section 24(1)(25), (29) and (30)

<sup>73</sup> Basic Education Act, section 40(1) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>74</sup> Basic Education Act, section 40(2) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

An individual disclosing information needs to consider issues such as whether the information is of such nature that it is indispensable in order to ensure the safety of the child concerned or other children. Information to be disclosed may concern, among other things, a child's illness that needs to be taken into account in teaching situations. Even though an aforementioned statutory reason for the disclosure of information exists, it is always advisable first and foremost to aim to obtain consent from a parent or guardian for disclosure of confidential information in order to build and safeguard co-operation and trust.

With the detailed written consent of a parent or guardian, confidential information indispensable in terms of provision of education may also be requested from other parties<sup>75</sup>. Notwithstanding secrecy provisions, the pre-primary education provider is entitled to obtain information indispensable for the provision of a child's education free of charge from health care and social services authorities, other providers of social services or health care services and health care professionals<sup>76</sup>.

If a pupil is transferred to education, including pre-primary education, provided under the Basic Education Act by another education provider, the previous education provider shall, notwithstanding secrecy provisions, submit the information indispensable for provision of the pupil's education to the new education provider without delay. The new education provider is also entitled to receive equivalent information upon request.<sup>77</sup>

#### 5.3.4 PUPIL WELFARE AND PROMOTION OF SAFETY AND SECURITY IN THE LOCAL CURRICULUM

The local curriculum for pre-primary education is to be drawn up in co-operation with local health care and social services authorities as a whole, including pupil welfare, promotion of safety and security and co-operation with home<sup>78</sup>. Where necessary, drawing up the curriculum may also involve co-operation with other authorities and partners. Municipal and other policies concerning the safety and well-being of children and young people are to be taken into account when drawing up the curriculum.

The local curriculum shall describe organisation of co-operation in pupil welfare and its structure, objectives and operating methods. The curriculum describes individual and community support and co-operation. In this context, children's age and support needs should be taken into account in

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<sup>75</sup> Basic Education Act, section 40(3) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>76</sup> Basic Education Act, section 40(4) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>77</sup> Basic Education Act, section 40(4) (as amended by Act 642/2010)

<sup>78</sup> Basic Education Act, section 15(2) (as amended by Act 477/2003)

situations that may put their healthy growth and development at risk. The curriculum shall include procedures concerning prevention of problems and child protection to promote safety and well-being and a description of action to be taken in the school community in the event of acute crisis, threat and risk situations. The curriculum shall include a plan for safeguarding pupils against violence, bullying and harassment<sup>79</sup>.

The local curriculum shall describe:

1. Organisation of pupil welfare co-operation, its structure, objectives and operating methods

- provision of pre-primary pupil welfare services in the municipality, and co-operation, responsibilities and division of work among different actors;
- organisation of pupil welfare work;
- pupil welfare as a collaborative activity and strengthening involvement;
- co-operation with children's homes, staff working in other forms of early childhood education and care, experts in pupil welfare services, other experts and local support networks;
- pupil welfare support and, where necessary, co-operation with child welfare authorities or the police in situations where a child's growth and development may be at risk due to factors in the growth environment;
- promotion, monitoring and assessment of health, safety and well-being in the growth and learning environment within pre-primary education;
- general recording practices in pupil welfare; instituting and processing a matter concerning an individual child;
- pupil welfare support in pre-primary education and in support for children's physical, psychological and social growth and development;
- pupil welfare as part of support for children in need of intensified and special support;
- pupil welfare support in various difficulties relating to a child's development or circumstances, such as domestic violence or substance abuse or mental health problems in the family;
- pupil welfare co-operation at different transition points in pre-primary education and co-operation with other early childhood education and care services where a child uses these;
- provision of support and monitoring required for a child's health care or treatment;
- accident prevention, first aid, referral for treatment, and monitoring;
- organisation of meals;
- guidelines concerning the safety of transport in pre-primary education and organisation and safety of waiting periods;
- orientation of staff, children and parents or guardians, and partners to the plan concerning organisation of pupil welfare;

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<sup>79</sup> Basic Education Act, section 29(2)

- updating operating guidelines; monitoring and assessment of implementation.

## 2. Procedures for acute crisis, threat and risk situations

Procedures for acute crisis, threat and risk situations are to be determined as part of the curriculum. This section may be called a crisis plan. Preparation of the crisis plan involves co-operation with the relevant authorities while also taking other plans and guidelines concerning threat and risk situations and crisis situations into account.

The curriculum will describe:

- prevention of and preparation for crisis situations;
- co-operation and mutual division of work and responsibilities in preparing for and dealing with crisis situations;
- co-ordination of the rescue plan and other safety guidelines;
- operating guidelines for various acute crisis situations;
- principles for management, internal and external information and communication, and information and communication between pre-primary education units and the pre-primary education provider in acute crisis situations and in various threat and risk situations;
- organisation of psychosocial support and aftercare;
- provision of information about the crisis plan, orientation to the plan and rehearsing operational readiness;
- updating and review of the crisis plan.

## 3. Plan for safeguarding children against violence, bullying and harassment

The education provider shall draw up, in connection with curriculum design, a plan for safeguarding pupils against violence, bullying and harassment, execute the plan and supervise adherence to it and its implementation<sup>80</sup>. This should take both interactive relationships between children and those between children and adults into account. The plan will describe:

- prevention of and intervention in bullying;
- prevention of and intervention in violence and aggressive behaviour;
- prevention of and intervention in harassment;
- dealing with the issue at individual, group and community levels, individual support for children, the necessary treatment and follow-up both in terms of the perpetrator and the victim as part of operating guidelines;
- methods of contacting children's homes and co-operation with guardians;
- co-operation with authorities;

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<sup>80</sup> Basic Education Act, section 29(2)

- provision of information about the plan and orientation of pre-primary staff, children and parents or guardians, and partners to the guidelines;
- updating the plan; monitoring of implementation and documentation and assessment relating to monitoring.

## **6 PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION FOR DIFFERENT LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL GROUPS, PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH A SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL TASK, FOREIGN-LANGUAGE PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE IMMERSION IN THE NATIONAL LANGUAGES**

### **6.1 SAAMI-SPEAKING CHILDREN**

Pre-primary education may be provided in one of the three Saami (Lappish) languages spoken in Finland: Inari Saami, Skolt Saami and North Saami.

The linguistic objectives of pre-primary education provided in a Saami language are as for other pre-primary education. In addition, the objective of Saami-language pre-primary education is to consolidate knowledge of the Saami language and, in particular, to encourage its use. Instruction shall support the preservation and consolidation of oral traditions. A further objective is to increase children's capabilities to function in a Saami-speaking environment and to learn the Saami language and to learn in the language.

Schools and day-care centres in the Saami area are part of a multicultural society. The objective of pre-primary education is to educate children into multilingualism and multiculturalism and to teach them to respect the languages and cultures of their area. It is important to emphasise the affinity of Saami-speaking people as the indigenous people of the area across national borders.

Pre-primary education should consolidate and promote children's Saami identity and cultural awareness. Children should be given an opportunity to embrace the Saami cultural heritage through education and instruction. The priorities of instruction include Saami culture, in particular Lappish *joik* chants and handicraft, livelihoods, way of living and local nature. The continuance of linguistic and cultural traditions is to be promoted in co-operation with the local community.

### **6.2 ROMANY-SPEAKING CHILDREN**

Pre-primary education for Romany children takes into account the special needs arising from Romany culture and provides instruction in the Romany language, as far as possible.

The purpose of instruction in the Romany language is to consolidate the identity and cultural awareness of Romany children and to provide them with the opportunity to form a functional bilingual cultural identity.

The objectives of Romany instruction are to familiarise children with the Romany language through play and rhymes, to enlarge their vocabulary, to promote the sense of sentence structure and to encourage them to use their own language in interaction with each other. Instruction should

promote the preservation and consolidation of oral traditions and describe Romany culture, way of life, occupations and history.

Romany children shall, in particular, receive instruction in the Finnish/Swedish language and manual skills in pre-primary education.

### **6.3 SIGN LANGUAGE CHILDREN**

The linguistic background of children in sign language education may be one of the following: sign language as the mother tongue, the first language or a second language. Sign language pre-primary education is primarily carried out in a sign language group or in a mixed group composed of children using sign language and spoken language. The linguistic objectives and pedagogical solutions of instruction are closely linked to children's linguistic backgrounds, which will be given special attention when preparing the child's pre-primary learning plan or individual educational plan. Children are to be provided with the opportunity to embrace the sign language cultural heritage through education and instruction.

The linguistic objectives of sign language pre-primary education are as for other pre-primary education. The objective of pre-primary education is to consolidate sign language expression, sense of sentence structure and sign vocabulary and to encourage children to use the language, thus increasing their capabilities to function in a sign language environment. A further objective is to familiarise children with differences between the mainstream culture and sign language culture, such as phenomena of the world of sounds and spoken language as well as the use of interpreting services.

The objectives of pre-primary education will be achieved in sign language interaction between adults and children. This will take into account the fact that communication with the child will primarily involve the visual medium. Pre-primary education in a mixed group is implemented so as to enable sign language children to participate as fully as possible. Interpretation may be used in order to guarantee sign language instruction and education.

### **6.4 IMMIGRANT CHILDREN**

It is possible to organise education for immigrant children of pre-primary age in conjunction with other pre-primary education, in the form of instruction preparing for basic education or as a combination of these. Immigrant children participating in pre-primary education are distinguished from each other by language and culture, the reason for immigration and the duration of residence. Children's backgrounds will be taken into account, although instruction will comply with the general educational and learning objectives of pre-primary education. In addition, there are specific objectives for immigrant education, which will be pursued within the limits of local resources and

different approaches. Instruction will support development of the Finnish/Swedish language and, where possible, also that of the children's own native language and the opportunity to grow into two cultures. In terms of formation of children's identities, it is significant that aspects of their own culture are also appreciated and that these are visible in everyday activities in pre-primary education.

The objective of instruction of Finnish/Swedish as a second language is for children to achieve functional skills in the Finnish/Swedish language as far as possible in all areas of the language during basic education. The key prerequisites for good command of the Finnish/Swedish language include command of the native language and focused learning. In pre-primary education, children have the opportunity to study Finnish/Swedish both under guidance and in natural communication situations with Finnish/Swedish-speaking adults and children. The core subject fields of pre-primary education provide practice in the different functions of language use, integrate children into Finnish culture and compare Finnish culture with other cultures. This instruction and the learning processes of children's native language will be interwoven with all areas of pre-primary education.

The objectives of children's native language instruction, in turn, include development of thinking, the sound growth of self-esteem and personality and consolidation of practical language skills. Children's increasing wealth and courage of linguistic expression and the expression of their own views and opinions will play a prominent role in this respect. Key material includes either narrated or written fairy tale and story traditions, depending on the cultural group concerned.

The objective of support for children's own culture is for children to become aware of the cultural heritage of their own ethnic group and learn to appreciate it. The goal of culturally supportive pre-primary education is a self-respecting, bilingual and bicultural adult, who is proud of his or her culture, background and language, integrated into society and able to pass his or her own cultural heritage down to his or her children.

## **6.5 PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION BASED ON A SPECIFIC PHILOSOPHICAL OR PEDAGOGICAL SYSTEM**

### *Premises of the National Core Curriculum*

According to Section 7 of the Basic Education Act (628/1998), the Government may authorise a registered association or a foundation to provide education referred to in the Basic Education Act, including pre-primary education. Authorisation to provide education may impose on an education provider a special educational task based on a specific philosophical or pedagogical system.

Education provided in accordance with a specific philosophical educational task may be based on a certain religious or cultural world view, for example. Education based on a pedagogical system, in turn, may stem from a specific theory of pedagogy.

Pre-primary education based on a specific philosophical or pedagogical system shall comply with this National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education.

This Regulation is premised on Section 3 of the Basic Education Act, which states that education shall be governed by a unified national core curriculum in accordance with the Act. Further premises include the national educational objectives determined in Sections 2–4 of the Government Decree on the General National Objectives and Distribution of Lesson Hours in Basic Education Referred to in the Basic Education Act (1435/2001); the special objectives for pre-primary education determined in Section 5(1) of the Decree; and the provision of Section 3(3) of the same, which states that instruction based on a specific pedagogical or philosophical system shall also provide pupils with knowledge, skills and capabilities based on the specific world view or pedagogical system underpinning instruction.

The curriculum followed in pre-primary education based on a special educational task may be distinctive as determined in the above-mentioned legal provisions and the authorisation to provide education.

#### *Starting points for provision of education*

Education and instruction shall support achievement of the national objectives determined for pre-primary education referred to in the Basic Education Act in Sections 2–4 of Government Decree 1435/2001 and the special objectives determined for pre-primary education in Section 5(1) of the same Government Decree. The specific philosophical or pedagogical system according to the special educational task may manifest itself in the values, educational objectives, mission and operational culture of pre-primary education. In addition, a specific pedagogical task may be visible in pedagogical solutions that frame its conception of learning in concrete terms through teaching arrangements and methods and by means of working approaches and learning environments.

However, the activities, education and instruction may not conflict with the general educational objectives set for pre-primary education and the objectives specified for instruction. Furthermore, they may not be based on premises that aim to persuade children in pre-primary education to commit themselves to the world view in question or to membership of a community representing the world view, or to the axiological or educational-philosophical outlook underlying the pedagogical system concerned or to membership of a community representing the system.

The curriculum for pre-primary education shall describe the general values underlying education and those based on the specific world view, the mission based on the specific philosophical and pedagogical system, the educational objectives and operational culture, and the educational-philosophical premises and pedagogical solutions (in pre-primary education based on a specific pedagogical system) and their manifestation in pre-primary activities.

### *Pre-primary education based on a specific philosophical system*

Education based on a specific philosophical system shall comply with the provisions of Sections 11(4) and 14 of the Basic Education Act on the contents of pre-primary education, unless the authorisation to provide education entitles the provider to deviate from these.

The objectives and contents of any philosophical material included in pre-primary education may not conflict with the general objectives and core subject fields determined in the above-mentioned Government Decree and in the National Core Curriculum.

Any philosophical material complementary to the general objectives of pre-primary education shall be clearly indicated in the pre-primary education provider's curriculum.

### *Co-operation with homes*

The education provider shall explain the philosophical premises and emphases of activities, education and instruction provided in pre-primary education to children's parents or guardians.

### *Pre-primary education based on a specific pedagogical system*

Education based on a specific pedagogical system shall comply with the provisions of Sections 11(4) and 14 of the Basic Education Act on the contents of pre-primary education, unless the authorisation to provide education entitles the provider to deviate from these.

The special pedagogical task may manifest itself in pre-primary education as various pedagogical solutions emphasising personal development through art or practical activities, or on a cross-curricular basis as material that complements the objectives and core subject fields of pre-primary education set out in the National Core Curriculum without changing them.

Any material included in pre-primary education may not conflict with the general objectives and core subject fields determined in the above-mentioned Government Decree and in the National Core Curriculum in terms of objectives, contents or implementation method.

Any instruction based on a special pedagogical task and any material complementary to the general objectives shall be clearly indicated in the curriculum for pre-primary education.

### *Co-operation with homes*

The education provider shall explain the educational-philosophical and pedagogical premises of pre-primary education to children's parents or guardians.

## **6.6 FOREIGN-LANGUAGE PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE IMMERSION IN THE NATIONAL LANGUAGES**

Provision of pre-primary education may be based on various pedagogical solutions that emphasise language. These include instruction in a foreign language and language immersion in the national languages. When these solutions are applied, it is of particular importance that children's guardians are provided with sufficient information on the operating philosophy applied and the specific objectives of education. Provisions on the language of instruction in pre-primary education have been laid down in the Basic Education Act.

Pre-primary education provided in the language of instruction of pre-primary education and in some other language form an integrated whole. In addition to the general objectives, such pre-primary education pursues specific objectives. In the narrowest terms, the objective is to inspire children's interest in the language. In the broadest terms, the aim is to create capabilities for children to function in a bilingual environment and to learn in some other language in addition to the language of instruction. The long-term objective in such cases may be that once they move on to basic education, children will be able to study both in the language of instruction of pre-primary education and in the other language concerned. Where a group includes children from different linguistic backgrounds, their linguistic objectives are also different. Their achievement will be supported, where necessary, by differentiating instruction. The broader the use of the other language in pre-primary education, the higher the demands it sets for the learning environment.

## **7 ASSESSMENT**

Assessment in pre-primary education is based on the extent to which the general objectives of pre-primary education and the individual child's objectives set out in the child's possible pre-primary learning plan or in some other form are achieved. Assessment is carried out on a continuous basis in interaction between the teacher and the child in the course of schoolwork and the learning process. Feedback is provided in regular discussions between the teacher and the guardians and possibly also with the children. The teacher shall, in co-operation with other staff, promote children's capabilities for self-assessment, which will support the development of children's self-concept and structuring of their own work in particular. The focus of assessment is the child's growth and learning rather than mere achievement of objectives.

A certificate of attendance may be awarded at the end of pre-primary education. Such a certificate may be supplemented with a description of the pre-primary education provided.

## **8 FORMULATION OF THE CURRICULUM FOR PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION**

### **8.1 ARRANGEMENTS FOR FORMULATION OF THE CURRICULUM**

The National Core Curriculum is a legal norm, which functions as the national framework for formulation of the curriculum. The local curricula specify the objectives and contents determined in the National Core Curriculum, which form a basis for creation of functional modules.

Accordingly, the curriculum shall be drawn up on the basis of the National Core Curriculum, while also taking account of the distinctive characteristics of the municipality and other municipal decisions concerning children and young people. The curriculum for pre-primary education shall be drawn up in co-operation with the authorities dealing with the implementation of local health care and social services.

The curriculum for pre-primary education shall also indicate the operating environment of the day-care centre or school and the opportunities it provides and outline a description of implementation of instruction. The curriculum shall guide the planning work of teachers and function as their tool.

A curriculum may be drawn up for an entire municipality, its area, day-care centre or school, as decided by the education provider. Where there are private providers of pre-primary education operating in the municipality, from which the local authority purchases pre-primary education services, it shall also decide on the formulation and approval of their curricula.

Every effort shall be made to involve as many people implementing education as possible in the formulation of the curriculum, in order to ensure commitment to compliance with it. Children's guardians shall also be able to influence the work, in particular in terms of planning the educational objectives of the curriculum.

Practical arrangements are to be laid down in the plan referred to in section 9 of the Basic Education Decree, which will be drawn up annually.

### **8.2 DETAILS INCLUDED IN THE CURRICULUM**

The following details shall be indicated in the pre-primary education curriculum as required for provision of education:

- 1) the mission of pre-primary education;
- 2) a description of the learning environment in pre-primary education;
- 3) any possible emphases of pre-primary education;
- 4) the specified educational and learning objectives to be observed in pre-primary education;
- 5) the pedagogical implementation of pre-primary education;

- 6) support for growth and learning and forms of support in accordance with guidelines specified in Chapters 4 and 5;
- 7) provision of pre-primary education for children from different language and cultural groups;
- 8) co-operation with other forms of early childhood education and care and with basic education;
- 9) co-operation among staff participating in the implementation of pre-primary education;
- 10) co-operation with other parties involved;
- 11) provision of pre-primary education in combined groups, such as 3–6-year-olds in day-care or pre-primary education in combined classes with basic education;
- 12) monitoring and assessment of a child's development and learning;
- 13) the certificate awarded for participation in pre-primary education;
- 14) continuous evaluation of implementation of the activities.