

NURSERY SCHOOL BEGINS

Welcome!

GUIDE FOR THE PARENTS
OF CHILDREN ENTERING
EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION AND CARE



FACT FILE

WHAT IS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?

- Early childhood education and care consists of systematic and goal-oriented activities, which are intended to promote the growth, development, and learning of a child. The activities focus on pedagogy.
- Early childhood education and care is based on the Finnish Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018) and the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (2018), which regulate the operation of a nursery school.
- In addition to the manager, nursery schools also employ early childhood education teachers, Bachelors of Social Services, and child nurses. A nursery school may also employ early childhood special education teachers, language and culture teachers, assistants, trainees, students in the field, a person in charge of catering services, and a custodian.



DEAR PARENT

You and your child are beginning a new and interesting episode in your lives!

Beginning nursery school introduces many changes into your everyday lives, but it also brings new acquaintances, both children and adults. Particularly with your first child, the change may seem quite significant. Nursery schools normally begin in the fall or at the start of the year, but sometimes the situation may arise more suddenly when a new job or study place becomes available. However, it is usually possible to prepare for the change. As your child faces the largest change, you should always prioritize their wellbeing.

The new daily routines of the nursery school require coordination between work or studies and the domestic life. Beginning nursery school changes the schedule of your family, which may at first feel exhausting. It will take some time to settle into the new routine. After the first few weeks, things will usually fall nicely into place.

You can help your child settle into their new nursery school by being interested in their day, talking about things, and discussing how your child is doing with the staff of the nursery school. Major domestic changes should be avoided during the early stage of nursery school. Familiar routines at home bring security to the child's day. For example, pacifier weaning or changing sleeping arrangements should be avoided at this time.

Make beginning nursery school a shared experience for the whole family where you encourage each other and which you talk about with a positive tone. Taking a positive attitude toward nursery school will help your child settle in.

NURSERY SCHOOLS TODAY

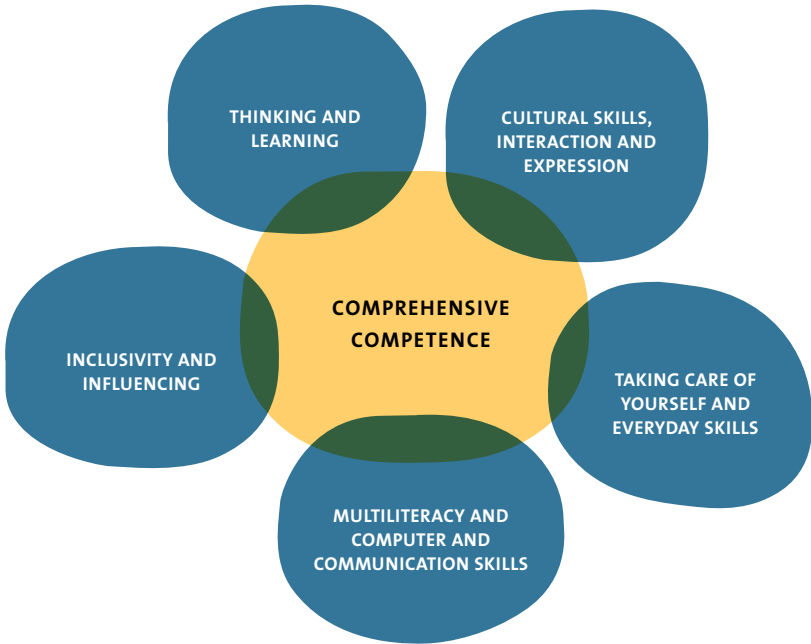
- The focus is on playing.
- All daily situations have significance for learning.
- The involvement of the children and parents is emphasized.
- Cooperation between the parents and the staff is an important part of early childhood education and care.

Nursery schools come in various forms. In some, the children spend most of their time outside, while others serve only organic foods. However, all Finnish nursery schools share the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care. For the first time, the curriculum for early childhood education and care that took effect in 2018 is binding, whereas the previous curriculums have been guidelines.

The nursery school ensures that a child has the opportunity to participate in various games. Playing is important for the growth, development, wellbeing, and learning of a child. It also promotes the child's communication skills and, most importantly, brings the child joy!

At nursery school, children learn skills they will require in the future. At the school, each daily situation has significance for learning. Within their teaching, a nursery school can also take the children's interests into account in a flexible manner. The thoughts and opinions of children are listened to in the nursery school. The children must be provided the opportunity to affect the matters related to their everyday lives and to feel that they are accepted as they are.

As the parent, we recommend that you review the local early childhood education and care curriculum. This will explain the objectives and methods of the nursery school and help you to understand what to expect from the early childhood education and care of your child, as well as what is expected from you as the parent. As the parent you have the opportunity to participate in the planning and evaluation of the nursery school’s activities as well as the discussion of values. To ensure that the parents’ voice is heard in the nursery school, these opportunities should be appreciated and utilized during parent nights, for example.



A SMOOTH BEGINNING



- Reserve enough time to let your child get acquainted with the staff of the nursery school and the environment at their own pace.
- Get to know the staff and talk to them and ask questions about the operation of the nursery school.
- Try to avoid other major changes in your daily lives as nursery school begins. Protect your daily routines.





Beginning nursery school means that both you and your child have to get used to many new things. As the parent, you now share the responsibility for your child with other adults. Yet, you as the parents are still the most important people in the life of your child.

As beginning nursery school is a major change for your child, it is very important that the adults in their lives listen to them and consider their feelings and moods. The child should be given enough time to get acquainted with the staff and the new environment. Therefore, it is important to visit the nursery school and play with your child outside of the nursery school in good time before the nursery school begins.

You as the parent also have the opportunity to get to know the staff and to build trust between the home and the nursery school. This will provide the basis for successful cooperation, which is an important factor in ensuring that your child feels comfortable at the nursery school. Some nursery schools offer home visits before school begins. The home provides a good environment for the child to meet the teacher or a child nurse for the first time, as the meeting takes place in an environment that is safe for the child. From the perspective of the teacher or child nurse, a home visit provides a good opportunity to get acquainted with the child in a familiar environment that is free of other distractions.

Home visits support the creation of a bond between the child and new adults. In practice this means that the child will see the child nurse as a safe adult who can be trusted. In a safe relationship, the child is also able to express anger.

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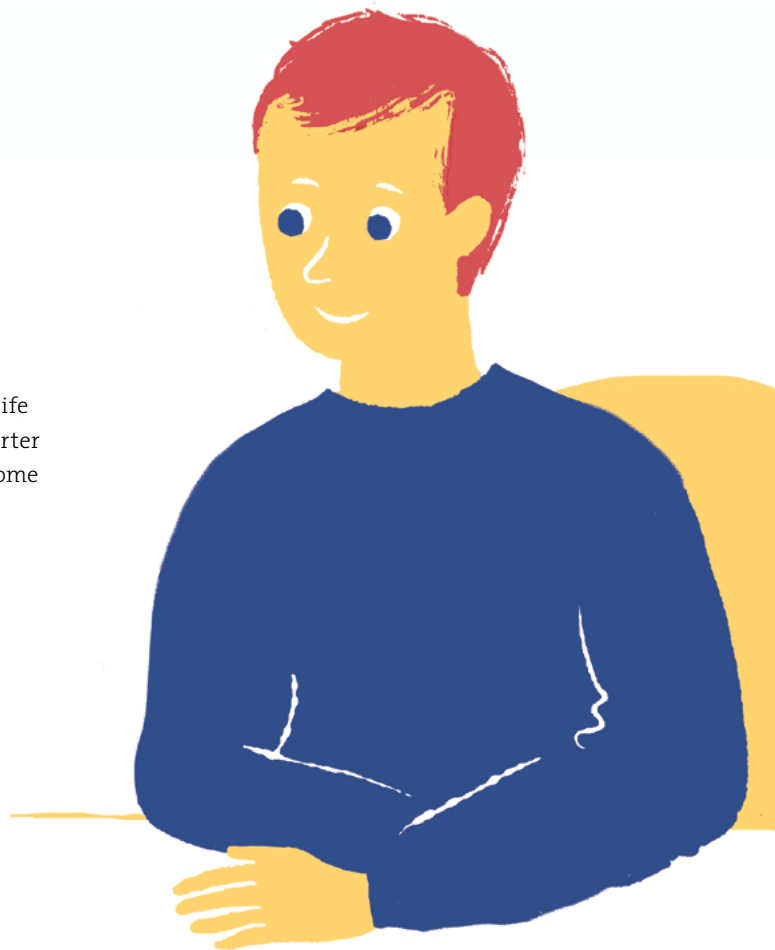
- Provide a good start for the child's early childhood education and care.
- Familiarize the child and parents with the operation of the nursery school.
- Create a solid and confidential basis for cooperation between the nursery school and the home.



Before the nursery school actually begins, you should reserve time for a soft landing, or familiarization period, which gives the child the opportunity to practice life at the nursery school. A period of 1–2 weeks is usually sufficient. It will be easier for you to prepare for beginning nursery school if the school gives you clear instructions on what is going to happen during the familiarization and what your role in it is. Discuss your mutual expectations with the staff. Nursery schools often have established practices, according to which the familiarization will progress. Accompanying your child to the nursery school at first also allows you to become familiarized with the location, the daily structure, and the adults at the nursery school and particularly in your child's group.

It is recommended that children get acquainted with daily life at the nursery school incrementally so that the days are shorter at first. Children adapt to the nursery school individually. Some children will find it easy, while others may need longer to settle in. In addition to the age of the child, their individual characteristics will also affect their adaptation. Adjust the familiarization process to ensure that your child is able to cope with it. If the child becomes tired, it is best to stop for the day. The most important thing is that the experience is positive for the child. Openly discuss the progress of the familiarization with the staff.

During familiarization, sit down and let your child explore the environment independently. It is your job to let the child practice spending time at the nursery school together with the staff and the other children and to provide a shelter for your child when they need it. This will also allow your child to practice increasing the distance between you. The staff is there to show your child around, play with them, introduce them to other children, and to build a relationship with the child.



BEING APART MAY BE UNSETTLING

- Being apart from the parents should be practiced gradually.
- The child can be given photographs of their family that they can look at at the nursery school with a teacher or child nurse when they feel homesick.
- A bedtime toy can be very important to a child.

It is natural that beginning nursery school can cause separation anxiety for both you and your child. This will usually pass in a couple of weeks. When the parent maintains a calm, positive, and encouraging attitude, the child will find it easier to adjust to their new environment.

“IF POSSIBLE, TRY TO FIND A DUPLICATE OF A BEDTIME TOY THAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR CHILD, WHICH YOU CAN LEAVE AT THE NURSERY SCHOOL. THIS WAY YOU WON’T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT LEAVING THE TOY AT HOME OR THE SCHOOL.”

Teach your child that even if a parent goes away, they will always return. You can practice being apart before the nursery school begins, but you should also do it during the familiarization period. You should develop a routine for leaving and returning that is repeated each time, using a certain phrase for example. When you take your child to the nursery school in the morning, do not delay the situation, and instead just wish your child a good day, kiss and hug them

goodbye, and leave. Even if the child cries or is cranky, they will usually settle down quickly once the parent leaves. The child may find it difficult to seek comfort from another adult as long as you are around. Therefore, they may be unable to settle down before you leave.

A personal bedtime toy or a photograph of the family can help the child adjust in the beginning. You and the adults at the nursery school can also go through the day with your child using photographs for example, to help them picture the day as a whole.

The child has the right to feel sad and miss you, but they also have the right to be comforted. Both you and the staff should validate the child's emotions. You can tell your child that you know that they are sad when mom/dad leaves, but that you will be back to pick them up in the afternoon. Talking about longing is important and all emotions are allowed.

You should discuss separation anxiety with the staff. They have plenty of experience of this and are able to advise you on how you can resolve the situation. You can also ask the staff to send you a photo or a message when your child is happy. This will allow you to focus on your own day.

Separation anxiety will usually pass in a few weeks, but it may also later reappear momentarily. At that point it is important to calm things down at the home and ensure that the child has plenty of family time.



COPING WITH THE DAILY GRIND

The everyday life of a family with children can get quite hectic. Therefore, it is good to find routines that make your family's daily life easier. Go easy on yourself, there is no such thing as a perfect parent. For your child, daily chores provide practice for life, so allow your child to participate and help.

Mornings are a great opportunity to learn about sticking to agreements and keeping schedules. Sometimes your schedule may stretch a bit, but that is a part of life. It is more important to show your child how to manage challenging situations than to ensure that their socks match.

Meeting your child after a day at the nursery school is the most important moment of the day. Give your child plenty of attention when you pick them up; they deserve a happy reunion. You should also create a routine for picking up your child, which will help them transition from a nursery school child back to a family member. Catch up with the teacher or the child nurse to better understand your child's day.



"FOR MANY YEARS, I BOUGHT FRESHLY BAKED BREAD FROM A STORE NEAR MY WORKPLACE ON MY LUNCH BREAK FOR THE CHILDREN TO EAT AFTER THEY GOT HOME, WHICH TOOK CARE OF THEIR IMMEDIATE HUNGER AND GAVE ME TIME TO COOK DINNER."

"IN THE EVENING, WE PICK THE CLOTHES FOR THE NEXT DAY, WHICH WILL NOT BE CHANGED DURING THE MORNING RUSH. YOU SHOULD PACK UP THE TOYS AND OTHER THINGS YOUR CHILD WILL NEED THE NEXT DAY IN THE EVENING."

Depending on the day, you may be met by a happy, hungry, or cranky child. The child may also react as if they do not want to go home. The nursery school staff have experience of all types of reactions, and all emotional states are allowed. As the parent, it is important that you stick to the routines of going home.

When your child is young, make sure that your evenings are calm and give your child plenty of attention immediately after their day at the nursery school. Undivided attention given to the child by catching up, for example, will help you settle down for the evening. When the child is acknowledged, you are also able to better focus on your chores, such as cooking.



WHEN YOUR CHILD FALLS ILL

"I USED TO THINK THAT LICE AND PINWORMS WERE THE WORST THINGS THAT COULD HAPPEN TO OUR FAMILY. NOW THAT WE HAVE BEEN THROUGH THEM, I KNOW THAT YOU CAN GET USED TO ANYTHING. THE OTHER PARENTS GAVE THE BEST TIPS."

When children begin nursery school, they are exposed to many new illnesses and you should be prepared to accumulate sick days. You should follow the nursery school's recommendations for days of absence. When your child is unwell, they are more exposed to other illnesses, which will feed the cycle. Parents have the right to stay home and take care of a sick child.



DISCUSSIONS AS THE NURSERY SCHOOL BEGINS

As the nursery school begins, the parents are invited to an initial discussion, where various matters related to early childhood education and care, the nursery school, and the child are discussed. In the beginning you will receive a lot of information. Talk to the adults at the nursery school and ask questions if anything is unclear to you.

Discuss ways to ensure the best possible cooperation between you and the staff. Also let them know of your wishes regarding the early childhood education and care of your child. Tell them about your child's strengths and also the areas where they need more support.

A personal early childhood education and care plan will be created for each child together with the early childhood education teacher and the parents. This plan is updated at least once every year, or more often where necessary.

The early childhood education and care plan will be discussed after the child has been at the nursery school for 2–3 months. As the parent, you can prepare for the discussion by thinking about your child's strengths and interests. The forms related to the discussion are usually specific to your municipality. Generally, you will be given a parents' form to fill in at home before the discussion.

A child in early childhood education and care has the right to systematic and goal-oriented upbringing, education, and care ensured by the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care. To implement these rights, a personal early childhood education and care plan will be prepared for each child in center-based early education or family-based daycare. The early childhood education and care plan must be based on the interests and needs of the child. The goals stated in the plan are provided for pedagogic activities.

(NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE,
2018: 9–10)

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE HOME AND THE NURSERY SCHOOL



"IT WAS STRANGE TO NOTICE HOW YOUR CHILD ACTS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT AT THE NURSERY SCHOOL THAN THEY DO AT HOME. FOR EXAMPLE, AT HOME THEY WILL ONLY EAT MACARONI, BUT AT THE SCHOOL THEY WILL TASTE ANYTHING THAT IS PUT IN FRONT OF THEM."

- Cooperation between the home and the nursery school promotes the child's growth, comfort, learning, and safety at the nursery school.
- The cooperation is based on trust.
- Trust is increased when the parents and the staff of the nursery school become acquainted with each other, meet each other, and respect each other's opinions.
- It is important that you do not criticize the nursery school or its staff in front of your child. This will erode your child's trust in the nursery school.

The goal of the cooperation between the home and the nursery school is to ensure a safe and stable daily life at the nursery school for your child. The child's interests always come first. It is important that the parents and the staff of the nursery school take some time to catch up each day. Your child may act differently at the nursery school than they do at home. Mutual discussions provide a comprehensive picture of the child and increases understanding on each side. It is important to inform your child's teacher or child nurse if things that may affect the child's coping or mood are happening at home.

If you as the parent have concerns related to your child or their early childhood education and care, don't hesitate to discuss the matter with the staff of the nursery school as soon as possible.

Inclusion of the parents is emphasized in early childhood education and care. Be active, ask questions about the methods and pedagogy of the nursery school, and participate in events and parent nights at the school. Also provide positive feedback to the staff, as that will reinforce your partnership. Similarly, positive feedback about your child given by the staff is important to you.

FRIENDS ARE SUPER IMPORTANT

SOME TIPS FOR SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S FRIENDSHIPS:

- Learn the names of the children in your child's group and greet each child as you meet them.
- Let your child play with all children, instead of directing them to play with certain children. The child's interpersonal skills are developed most through various friendships.
- Think about the way you talk about the other children and their parents in front of your child. Prejudices are often easily transferred from a parent to the child.
- Get to know the other parents of the group at parent nights and other events. Openly discuss such matters as how to handle birthdays and your shared responsibility in supporting the wellbeing of the group. Ensure that no child is left outside of the group.

The nursery school is often the first time that your child builds relationships with children of the same age. The child becomes a part of the group, and as they play, they can practice interacting with other people. To feel comfortable at the nursery school, the child must feel safe in their relationships with other children.

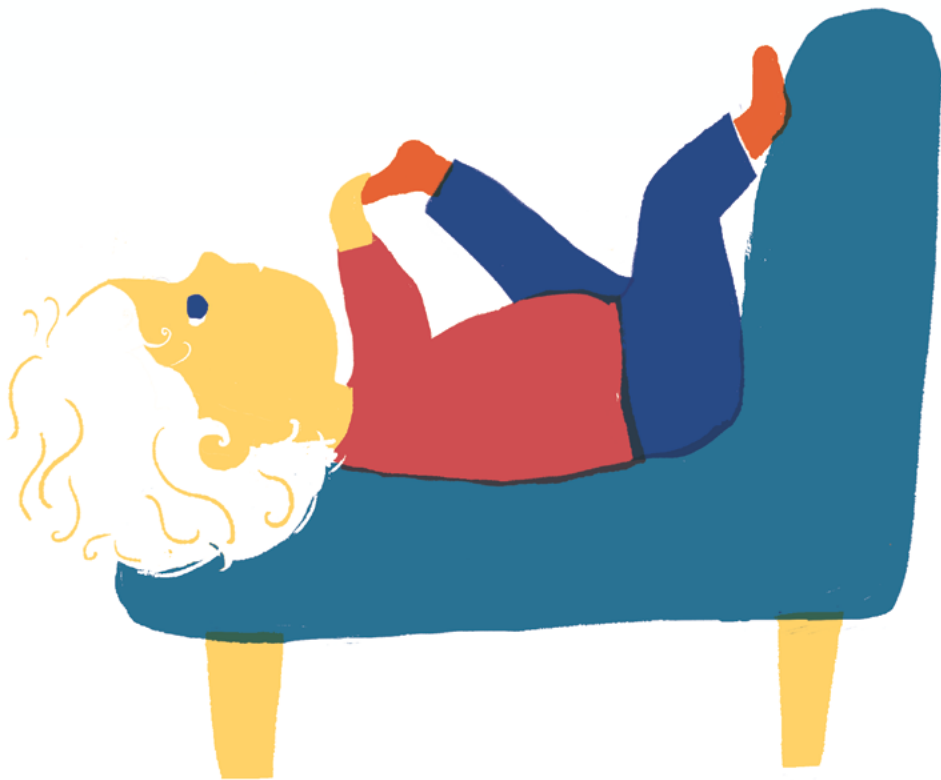
As the parent, you can support your child's friendships. If the parents of a group of children all know each other, the comfort and safety of the group is increased significantly. This makes it easier to support the children in less pleasant situations as well, such as resolving arguments between the children.

Openly and calmly discuss both the nice and unpleasant matters at the nursery school with your child. This will teach your child to trust you and gives them the courage to tell you if, for example, there is bullying in the group. Children trust adults. That is why it is important to show your child that you take the things they tell you seriously.

Learning to resolve conflicts is also a part of friendships. However, you should never leave your child alone with conflicts. Raise issues related to arguments at the nursery school. It is the parents' responsibility to support the children in resolving conflicts and to teach them how to respect the opinions of others.

When a child is being bullied or bullies others, it provokes strong feelings in the parents of the child. Remember that you are the most important role model for your child. Lead by example and show your child how they should treat other people and respect them despite disagreements.





SIT DOWN WITH YOUR CHILD AND A BOOK

- Reading books develops the vocabulary, imagination, and sense of empathy of a child. Reading is also a great source of help as your child begins school.
- Make reading a shared daily occasion that calms the child right after nursery school or in the evening before going to bed.
- The library can help you find the most interesting and most suitable books for your child – free of charge .

It is never too early or late to begin reading to your child. Reading is always valuable, and you are exactly the right person to read to your child. The language you read in does not matter. A child benefits from close family members reading to them in their mother tongue.

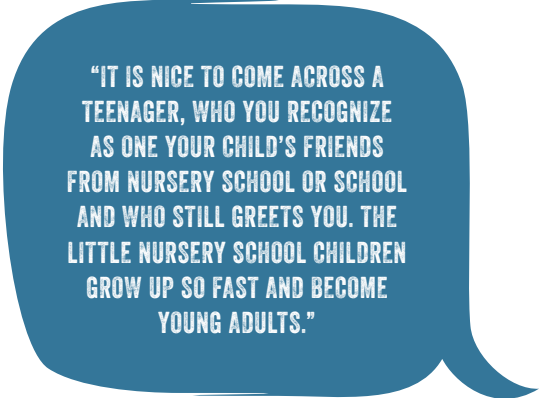
The same books can be read over and over again. Especially for younger children, a familiar book may be the one they enjoy the most.

Take pleasure in reading together. Switch off the television and put away your phones, sit together and talk about the book. When you read together, you can talk about what is happening in the book with your child, explain difficult words and try to guess what might happen next, talk about what is right or wrong, and how you or your child would have resolved a situation presented in the book.

PARENTAL COMMUNITY

You should get to know the parents of the other children. There is a lot you can do to help the nursery school through various events, occasions, and trips. There is power in a group and working together brings joy. The children from a nursery school often move on to the same school, so it is good to get to know your child's friends and their parents at this stage.

Ask the staff of the nursery school if there is a parents' association or committee at the school or if, perhaps, the parents are otherwise active in arranging communal events. If the nursery school does not yet have parental activities, you can take the initiative and raise the issue during a parent night, for example.



**"IT IS NICE TO COME ACROSS A
TEENAGER, WHO YOU RECOGNIZE
AS ONE YOUR CHILD'S FRIENDS
FROM NURSERY SCHOOL OR SCHOOL
AND WHO STILL GREETES YOU. THE
LITTLE NURSERY SCHOOL CHILDREN
GROW UP SO FAST AND BECOME
YOUNG ADULTS."**

BASIC VALUES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF CHILDHOOD

Each child is unique and valuable just as they are, and they have the right to be heard, seen, considered, and understood.

HUMAN GROWTH

The staff supports the children's human growth, which is characterized by the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty, as well as justice and peace.

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The child has the right to good education, care, and encouraging feedback. The child has the right to play and to belong to a group.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, EQUALITY, AND DIVERSITY

The child must have the opportunity to develop their skills and make choices regardless of their gender, origin, cultural background or other personal reasons.

FAMILY DIVERSITY

The family identity and familial relationships of a child are supported in such a manner that each child feels that their family is valuable.

HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

Early childhood education and care is intended to guide the children towards lifestyles that promote their health and wellbeing. Children are provided with opportunities to develop their emotional skills and aesthetic thinking.

(SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE, 2018: 20–21)

**THIS GUIDE IS AIMED AT
PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN ARE
BEGINNING NURSERY SCHOOL.**

Make beginning nursery school a shared experience for the whole family, where you encourage each other and which you talk about in a positive tone. Taking a positive attitude toward nursery school will help your child settle in.

Cooperation between the home and the nursery school promotes the child's growth, comfort, learning, and safety at the nursery school.



HEM OCH SKOLA



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