



**TWO-YEAR PRE-PRIMARY
EDUCATION TRIAL**

**2021
—
2024**

English



TWO-YEAR PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION TRIAL BEGINS IN AUGUST 2021

Congratulations! Your child is among those who have been selected for the test group for a two-year pre-primary education trial. Your child has been selected for this trial because he or she is either attending an early education centre that is organising the trial or living near such a place. Provisions on the trial are laid down in the Act on a Two-Year Pre-primary Education Trial (1046/2020).

The two-year pre-primary education trial will be launched in Finland in August 2021. Altogether approximately 10,000 five-year-olds can participate in the trial. Half of the participating children will start in 2021 and half in 2022. The purpose of the trial is to make education more equitable by encouraging more children to participate in pre-primary education as part of early childhood education and care. The trial will develop the quality and effectiveness of pre-primary education from different angles, examine the continuity of early childhood education and care, pre-primary education and initial teaching, examine what choices for services parents and guardians have and collect information on what effects

two-year pre-primary education has on children's capabilities to develop and learn, and on their social skills and how healthy self-esteem is built.

The children who are chosen for the trial group are obliged to attend the two-year pre-primary education programme. This means that the child's parents or guardians must make sure that their child participates either in pre-primary education organised at a two-year trial site or in other activities that achieve the objectives set for two-year pre-primary education. Such other activities include attending other early childhood education and care activities, club activities or child home care.

How to apply for pre-primary education organised at a trial site

To participate in the trial at a trial site, you need to submit an application. You can apply for two-year pre-primary education at a trial site as instructed by your municipality. Based on the applications, the municipality that is offering the trial makes a decision on which applicants qualify for the trial. Children born in 2016 and chosen for the trial will start their two-year pre-primary education trial in August 2021 and children born in 2017 in August 2022.

Pre-primary education programme free of charge and school travel benefit

The two-year pre-primary education programme is free of charge. It is usually organised 4 hours a day, and observes the same school hours and holidays as in primary and lower secondary school (basic education). If your child participates in supplementary early childhood education and care in addition to the two-year pre-primary education pro-

gramme, a fee may be charged for the hours spent in early childhood education and care.

Pupils whose journey from home to pre-primary education is longer than five kilometres are entitled, under the Basic Education Act (section 32), to a subsidy or free transport directly from home to pre-primary education. Pupils in pre-primary education are also entitled to a subsidy or free transport if, due to the pupil's age and other circumstances, the journey would be too difficult, demanding or hazardous for the pupil. Pupils travel to pre-primary education primarily by transport arranged by their family, which the municipality supports. Transport organised by the municipality is a secondary alternative.

The trial uses a pilot curriculum

The two-year pre-primary education programme follows a new pilot curriculum. Children in pre-primary education become familiar with things that they express an interest in by playing and exploring and in other ways that are suitable for little children. Every child is given space to learn at their own pace. Two years offer the children and pre-primary education

staff plenty of time to get to know one another, work together and focus on things for which the children show a genuine interest. In addition to diverse activities, the pre-primary education programme offers rest periods, tasty food and care for the children. Parents and guardians are a key resource in pre-primary education, so there is close cooperation with them. The two-year pre-primary education programme strengthens the children's ability to work together and learn, and builds a solid foundation for moving to year one of primary school in due course.

Support for growth and learning during the trial

The two-year pre-primary education trial provides robust support for children's growth and learning. Children participating in the trial have the right to receive support for their development, learning and wellbeing. Thanks to the trial, support for growth and learning under the Basic Education Act (three-step support) and student support under the Student Welfare Act will apply to five-year-olds too. The support measures are planned in collaboration with the parents and guardians.

Children who live in alternating residences
The child's place of residence is based on the child's official home address. If the child lives alternately in different municipalities, this does not prevent the child from participating in the pre-primary education trial in his or her municipality of residence.

During the two-year pre-primary education trial, it is not possible to participate in education preparing for comprehensive school education. Some municipalities provide preparatory education for comprehensive school education. Since the education that prepares children for comprehensive school education is full-time education focused on language development, those taking part in the two-year pre-primary education programme cannot attend such preparatory education. If, during the two-year pre-primary education trial, it becomes apparent that your child would benefit more from education preparing for comprehensive school education, your child's participation in the two-year pre-primary education programme may be discontinued and your child may switch to education preparing for comprehensive school education.

Trial follow-up study and trial register

The research project will monitor and evaluate the two-year pre-primary education trial. By studying how well the objective of the trial is met, the areas that will be examined include the organisation of the trial in the municipalities, the effects of two-year pre-primary education on children, and the experiences of staff members as well as children and their parents and guardians. In the follow-up study, the children take part in the assessments, and parents and guardians may be interviewed. The researchers will be in contact with parents and guardians later about the follow-up study.

Based on legislation governing experiments and trials, data on your child's participation in the two-year pre-primary education programme will be recorded in a register for the trial maintained by the Finnish National Agency for Education. Even if your child does not participate in the two-year pre-primary education programme at a trial site, information on your child is recorded in the register. The purpose of the follow-up study is to evaluate the trial activities by comparing the trial

group and a control group. The impact assessments of individual children and the results of surveys on the children's parents and guardians will not be reported in the follow-up study and the respondents cannot be identified in any way.

Impact of the two-year pre-primary education trial on child care allowances

In the context of benefits granted by the Social Insurance Institution (Kela), children who take part in the trial are classified in the same category as children who attend pre-primary education at the age of six.

With regard to child home care allowance, this means that if a sibling of a child under the age of three who is entitled to a child home care allowance participates in the pre-primary education trial, the child is paid the full allowance (EUR 65.97 per month). However, if the child participates in supplementary municipal early childhood education and care in addition to the pre-primary education trial, no child home care allowance is paid for him or her.



Examples

Matias Aaltonen, who is 5 years old, is taking part in the pre-primary education trial. After the pre-primary hours (roughly 4 hours a day), his father looks after him at home with 2-year-old Anna. The family receives a home child care allowance and an increment for the sibling. Participation in the pre-primary education trial does not affect the benefit paid to the family.

Sonja Mäkinen, aged 5, is taking part in the in the pre-primary education trial, and she attends supplementary municipal early childhood education and care after the pre-primary education hours. Her mother is at home taking care of one-year-old Maisa. The family receives a child home care allowance for Maisa and an increment for the sibling. Since Sonja attends supplementary early childhood education care after the pre-primary education hours, the family stops receiving the increment.

With regard to financial support for private care, this means that if a child participates in supplementary private early childhood education and care in addition to the pre-primary education trial, the child's private care allowance is lower (EUR 64.24 per month) and the care supplement; if any, is reduced by a half. If a child participates only in the pre-primary education trial in a private early education centre (excluding supplementary early childhood education and care), no financial support for private care is paid.

The trial does not affect flexible or partial child care allowances.

Participation in the two-year pre-primary education programme may also affect the size of a possible municipal supplement, depending on the terms of the municipal supplement agreement or the municipal supplements implemented by the municipality itself.

If the child is paid a child home care allowance or private child care allowance, the family must inform Kela of their participation in the trial. The easiest way to do so is by using the e-services.



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Ministry of Education and Culture

**Ministry of Education
and Culture**

P.O. Box 29, FI-00023 Government
+358 (0)295 16001 (Switchboard)
kirjaamo@minedu.fi

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