

INFORMATION FOR GUARDIANS ON FINNISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (S2) CLASSES IN BASIC EDUCATION

Classes in the subject “Finnish as a second language” (usually abbreviated S2 or sometimes STK) are intended for all pupils who speak another language besides Finnish at home. Teaching in this curriculum is based on the National Core Curriculum with municipality-specific modifications. S2 classes are not remedial classes.

Fluency in a language is made up of many components. The most crucial of these are the ability to speak the language, the ability to read the language, the ability to write the language, and the ability to understand the language as spoken. If a pupil cannot meet the standard of a native Finnish speaker in at least one of these components, they will be enrolled in S2 classes.

In City of Turku basic education, every multilingual pupil is entitled to take S2 classes if this is in their best interest. The pupil’s record in the Population Information System serves as a basis, but even in cases where the pupil is listed with Finnish as their native language, they may be eligible for S2 status if their actual home language is another language.

A pupil must be enrolled in a Finnish language subject as their basic education begins.

1. If they transfer to basic education from preschool, their Finnish curriculum will be selected in collaboration between the preschool educators and the guardians. The preschool educators recommend a curriculum, with the final decision up to the guardian. The early childhood education and care services make use of the Kielipeda tool to monitor a pupil’s language skills. The objective is to employ Kielipeda in a consistent and systematic fashion for all pupils. Pre-primary education will transfer all data gathered on the pupil’s language skills to basic education.
2. If a multilingual pupil has not previously attended pre-primary education, or their Finnish skills cannot otherwise be ascertained, they will be selected for Finnish as a second language classes. The pupil’s teachers will get to know them and assess their Finnish skills. The choice of curriculum will be discussed with the guardian over the autumn term of the first grade. Based on their knowledge of the pupil, the school will recommend either the S2 curriculum or the Finnish as a native language curriculum be adopted as befits the pupil’s best interest. The choice of curriculum is up to the guardian.
3. If the pupil enters school in the middle of basic education, the need for S2 classes is assessed based on the report of the previous school.
4. If the pupil transfers to basic education from preparatory education, the S2 curriculum will be selected.

A pupil’s language skills are constantly evolving. The chosen curriculum can be changed as necessary. Because it is recommended the correct curriculum be selected for the long term, this decision should always be made with great care. Discussions on the choice of curriculum should take place particularly at the beginning of basic education, when transferring from initial education to the third grade, and during the changeover from primary school to lower secondary school. Changing the

curriculum during the ninth grade is no longer recommended. The objective is always for the pupil to participate in the curriculum that best supports their learning.

The purpose of Finnish as a second language classes is to support the upbringing of the multilingual child and enable them to develop their skills in academic Finnish. Teaching in the S2 classes encourages pupils to make use of the other languages they know when learning Finnish and other subjects. The objective is for the pupil to acquire adequate language skills to fully participate in learning in a variety of subjects. The classes provide pupils with the necessary tools to keep working on their language skills throughout their later life. The S2 classes reinforce a positive self-image for the pupil as a communicator and help them discover their strengths and be bold about making use of their language skills.

The pupil will not miss anything going on in their own class; rather, they will experience more, tailored especially for them. The S2 curriculum is available throughout basic education if it is needed. It is easy to make necessary changes in the arrangements. However, the choice of the S2 curriculum is strictly an advantage to the pupil; it also enables teachers in other subjects to help them more easily. Assessments will also take into account the fact that Finnish is not the pupil's primary language.

Finnish as a second language can also be studied in general upper secondary school (lukio) and vocational education. Applying for further education on the basis of the S2 curriculum is also possible. The Finnish National Agency for Education recommends those applying for higher education institutions be treated equally. The goal is for the Finnish language curriculum of the applicant to have no impact on their eligibility. The Universities of Turku and Helsinki, for example, have adopted this policy.

For more information, refer to your school's S2 teacher and your own teacher.