



# EDUCATION LIES AT THE HEART OF FINNISH SOCIETY

Photo: Atte Tanner,  
Ministry of Education  
and Culture

Finland has reinvented itself in just one short century – and we're still at it. Our national character and Northern heritage have boosted us to the top of many kinds of country rankings. The Finnish people highly value education. In Finland, the teaching profession is highly respected and most people consider the comprehensive school as one of the most noteworthy factors in Finnish history.

The welfare of Finnish society is based on knowledge and expertise – citizens need equal learning opportunities in order to secure and improve their know-how. Student performance in Finland is among the world's best and excellent learning outcomes are achieved with just average expenditure.

# EXCELLENCE BASED ON EQUALITY, TRUST AND FLEXIBILITY



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As there are so few of us, we can't afford to leave anyone behind. Finland's education system offers all of its citizens equal opportunities for learning, irrespective of their domicile, gender, socio-economic status or linguistic and cultural background.

Education is free at all levels, from pre-primary to tertiary education. School meals are offered free of charge all the way from pre-primary to upper secondary level. Most education is publicly funded. In order to maximise the potential of every individual, learning and welfare are extensively supported and tailored to individual needs.

Finland has a flexible education model. Children are not expected to make binding decisions at an early stage. Instead, the road is left open all the way up to higher education, with no paths leading to a dead end. Year after year, the international PISA assessments have ranked Finnish students among the world's best in proficiency in reading, mathematics and science.

The average class size in basic education is 20 pupils and pupils and students spend much less time than their international peers in the classroom. Finland's educational administration is firmly grounded in the idea of providing schools with autonomy and support. Schools and teachers have a great deal of freedom to choose how they will go about their vital work.

**Finnish students are among the world's best in proficiency in reading, mathematics and science.**

There are no school ranking lists or inspection systems and the first national examination is held only at the end of general upper secondary education. Teachers are required to have a Master's degree, including pedagogical studies and teaching practice. Teacher education is research-based and the teaching profession is very popular and highly respected in Finnish society.

## FACTS & FIGURES

Almost 90 percent of Finnish people between the ages of 25 and 64 hold at least an upper secondary education certificate, while more than 40 percent hold higher education degrees. More than 90 percent of the age group begin general or vocational upper secondary studies immediately after basic education.

Vocational education and training (VET) have been steadily growing in popularity. Today, around 50 per cent of the relevant age group applies for vocational upper secondary studies immediately after basic education, compared to around 40 per cent ten years ago. According to Eurobarometer surveys, nine out of ten Finns believe that VET offers high-quality learning.

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