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School Registration in Germany — Process, Deadlines and Tips

How to register your child at a school in Germany: compulsory education, deadlines, required documents, and language support.

Deutsche Begriffe: Schulanmeldung | Schulpflicht | Einschulung | Grundschule | Sprachförderung | Schulbezirk

Compulsory Education in Germany

In Germany, **compulsory education** applies. This means: Every child living in Germany **must attend school** — regardless of nationality or residence status. Compulsory education begins at age **6** and lasts **9 to 10 years** (depending on the state).

From when is my child subject to compulsory education?

The **cut-off date** varies by state:

State	Cut-off Date
Bavaria	September 30
NRW	September 30
Baden-Württemberg	June 30
Berlin	September 30
Hamburg	July 1
Hesse	June 30

Children born **after the cut-off date** can be admitted early on request (**Kann-Kinder**). Children not yet school-ready can be **deferred** by one year.

When and where do I register my child?

Grundschule (Grade 1)

- Registration takes place **1 to 1.5 years before Einschulung** (usually October–February of the previous year)
- You typically receive a **letter from the school office** with the registration deadline
- Your child is assigned to the **appropriate Grundschule** (district school)
- A **school change request** to another school is possible but not guaranteed

Secondary School (Grade 5 onwards)

- Registration takes place **in February/March** of the final Grundschule year
- You choose the school type: **Hauptschule, Realschule, Gymnasium** or **Gesamtschule**
- The Grundschule provides a **recommendation** (binding in some states)

Mid-year entry (new to Germany)

If your child moves to Germany **mid-school year**:

- 1.** Go to the **school office** (Amt für Bildung) in your city
- 2.** They will assign an **appropriate school**
- 3.** Often there are **welcome classes** or **preparatory classes** (DaZ-Klassen) for children without German skills

What documents do I need?

For Schulanmeldung you need:

- **Birth certificate** of the child (original or certified copy)
- **ID card/passport** of child and parents
- **Registration confirmation** (registration at local residents' office)
- **Residence permit** (if not EU citizen)
- **Vaccination proof** (measles vaccination required since 2020!)
- **Custody documentation** (if parents live separately)
- Possibly **school certificates** from country of origin (translated and certified if needed)

Pre-enrolment Medical Examination

Before Einschulung, a **pre-enrolment medical examination** (SEU) takes place. A health department doctor checks:

- **Vision and hearing**
- **Speech development** (especially important for non-German-speaking children)
- **Motor skills** (fine motor skills, coordination)
- **Overall health status**

The examination is **free and mandatory**. The result provides a **recommendation** on school readiness or need for support.

Language Support for Foreign Children

Pre-school language support

Many states offer **language support programs**:

- **Vorkurse Deutsch** (Bavaria) — 240 hours of German language support in the final kindergarten year
- **Sprachstandfeststellung** (NRW) — assessment 2 years before Einschulung, language course if needed
- **Vorschulklassen** — special preparatory classes

At school

- **DaZ instruction** (German as a second language) — additional German lessons
- **Willkommensklassen / Vorbereitungsklassen** — intensive German courses for newcomers (6-12 months)
- **Herkunftssprachlicher Unterricht** — in many states, native language taught as a subject (Turkish, Arabic, Polish, Russian, etc.)

Costs

School education in Germany at public schools is **free**. However, you should expect these costs:

Item	Costs (approx.)
Textbooks	€0-100/year (varies by state, often rental available)
School supplies	€50-150/year (notebooks, pens, backpacks)
Lunch (full-day school)	€50-80/month
School trips	€20-50/trip
Tutoring (if needed)	€15-30/hour

Financial assistance

- **Bildung und Teilhabe (BuT)** — subsidies for school materials, lunches, trips and tutoring. Eligible are families receiving citizen allowance, housing benefit or child allowance.
- **School starter package** — many municipalities and organizations distribute free school supplies
- **Free tutoring** — through BuT or volunteer organizations (e.g., Caritas, AWO)

Tips for Foreign Parents

- 1. Attend parent meetings** — You'll learn all important information about school life. If you face language barriers: ask for an interpreter or bring someone with you.
- 2. Maintain contact with teachers** — Regular conversations help identify problems early.
- 3. Support homework** — Even if you don't speak German, show interest.
- 4. Use clubs and activities** — Sports, music or art clubs help your child make friends and learn German.
- 5. Become a parent representative** — You have the right to engage in the **parent council**, even as a foreign parent.

Important Terms

- **Grundschule** — grades 1-4 (in Berlin/Brandenburg: 1-6)
- **Hauptschule** — grades 5-9, practically oriented
- **Realschule** — grades 5-10, intermediate qualification
- **Gymnasium** — grades 5-12/13, Abitur (German A-level)
- **Gesamtschule** — all qualifications possible

- **Förderschule** — for children with special support needs
- **Ganztagschule** — care until afternoon (often with lunch)

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