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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
- **Ganztagsschule** — care until afternoon (often with lunch)