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Schule — School System in Germany

Germany's mandatory education system starts at age 6 and lasts 9-10 years, divided into primary school and specialized secondary schools. Public education is free, though parents cover costs for materials and extracurricular activities.

Deutsche Begriffe: Schule | Grundschule | Gymnasium | Realschule | Hauptschule | Schulpflicht | Schulbezirk | Einschulung | Willkommensklasse | Gesamtschule

Schulpflicht — Compulsory Education

In Germany, **Schulpflicht** (compulsory education) begins at age **6 years old** and lasts 9–10 years in full-time education, after which some young people complete their education in vocational school. The Stichtag (cut-off date) varies by state — often September 30th. Sending your child to school is mandatory; failure to do so is subject to penalties.

School Registration (Schulanmeldung)

You register your child at the **Grundschule** in your district (**Schulbezirk**) — the municipality assigns a specific school based on your registered address, so first register your address. **Schulanmeldung** for children starting school in autumn typically takes place in autumn/winter of the previous year (registrations for 2026 were already in autumn 2025). In summer 2026, approximately **730,000 children** will start school.

School Levels and Types

Level	Age	School Type
Grundschule	6–10 (Berlin/BB up to 12)	primary school

Level	Age	School Type
Level II	from 10–12	Gymnasium / Realschule / Hauptschule / Gesamtschule

Gesamtschule combines educational tracks and allows students to choose their specialization later. Children without German language skills initially attend **Willkommensklasse** (welcome class) with intensive German instruction, and parents can study the language through Integrationskurs. Public schools are free of charge, and families receive Kindergeld for school-age children. For earlier childcare, see Kita.

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