

Schooling and childcare

Planning your departure

SCHOOLING IN FRANCE

The education system in France is organised in 4 main levels - nursery school, elementary school, secondary school ("collège & lycée") and higher education. Read [this document](#) designed by the CASNAV (academic centres for the education of new arrivals and travellers' children) to find out more. The French school system includes three types of schools:

- **Public / State institutions run by the government**

Public/state schools are entirely free. The French education system has been based on the principle of secularism since the 19th century. Education is compulsory from the ages of 3 to 16.

For more information on the key principles of the French education system, [click here](#).

- **Public/State schools under contract and subject to government control**

- **Private non-contractual schools, subject to inspection by the government**

Within the private schooling system, there are a variety of schools – for example, faith-based, bilingual, international, offering alternative teaching methods (Montessori or others).

To find out about all the educational institutions in your region, *département* or town, go to:

<https://www.education.gouv.fr/annuaire>

THE SCHOOL YEAR

The school year starts in September and finishes at the end of June/start of July. A standard school week runs Monday through Friday from 8.30 am to 11.30 am and from 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm. In some schools, children may attend school on Wednesday mornings. Outside school hours, childcare facilities are provided: morning and evening care, canteens (for lunch) and supervised study (after classes in primary schools).

There are 5 periods of holiday in the year. Metropolitan France is divided into 3 zones - A, B and C - which group together the different educational regions. A [calendar of the current school year](#) will give you the precise breakdown of the holiday periods.

EDUCATION FOR NON-FRENCH SPEAKING CHILDREN

In order to accommodate as best as possible children who do not speak French (known as 'allophones'), educational units for newcomer allophone pupils (UPE2A) have been established. Through these units, pupils can be enrolled in a class corresponding to their age and level, while benefiting from additional teaching in French depending on their needs.

The child's level of proficiency in French is assessed upon arrival in order to organize a coaching programme.

Upon arrival

ENROLLING YOUR CHILD IN SCHOOL

To get support when enrolling your child in a school, you can contact [the CASNAV of your département](#).

Look at the public service pages for more information about enrolling non-French speaking children [in a nursery, primary or secondary school \(collège or lycée\)](#).

CHILDCARE OPTIONS

Your child is too young to go to school before the age of 3. There are different childcare options for children aged 2 months to 3 years.

To find a childcare facility, contact your town hall or check the [dedicated site of the Caisse d'Allocations Familiales](#).

- **Community childcare: public crèche, the micro-crèche or the parental crèche**

The cost of public crèches is calculated according to your income. Ask for information about fees when you register your child.

- **Kindergartens**

Kindergartens welcome children aged two to six. They are somewhere in between a crèche and a nursery school.

- **A childminder or home-based childminder**

Childminders have a professional qualification and look after children (a maximum of 4 children) in their own home or in 'childminder centres' (Maison d'assistantes maternelles - MAM).

For further information on home-based childcare and recruiting a professional, go to pajemploi.urssaf.fr

EXTRA-CURRICULAR AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

- **The leisure centre: for children and teenagers**

The leisure centre welcomes children during extracurricular periods (school holidays or a full day without school except at weekends) and school periods (morning or evening childcare before or after classes).

Specialist childcare staff offer leisure activities such as arts and crafts, indoor and outdoor games, cultural and sports activities, etc.

Contact your town hall to enrol your child at a leisure centre. A financial contribution will be requested. It is calculated according to the family income.

For further information on leisure centres, [click here](#).

Terminology

CASNAV: Academic centres for the education of newly arrived non-French speaking children and children from itinerant and travelling families