



Schools in Geneva

Have you just arrived in Geneva and have questions about your children's schooling and education?

This document provides you with answers to the following points:

1. Schooling in Geneva
2. Primary education: school and provision for non-French-speaking children
3. Secondary teaching I: orientation stage and provision for non-French-speaking children
4. After the orientation stage: secondary teaching II
5. Provision for non-French-speaking pupils (ACCESS II), vocational training
6. Learning network, assistance and support with learning outside school





1. Schooling in Geneva

In Geneva, schooling is public, secular and free, and education is compulsory for young people up to the age of 18. It is divided into three stages, based on pupils' age:

- 4-12 years: primary school
- 12-15 years: secondary education I: orientation stage
- 15-18 years: secondary education II: general or vocational training.

The aim of state schooling is to provide teaching enabling all pupils to acquire the best possible knowledge and skills to prepare them for their future. Each child is given specific attention, to ensure they are offered the educational environment most suited to their individual needs. Whatever the pupil's needs, disability, origin and living conditions, the pupil must be able to pursue his education in the best possible conditions.

2. Primary education

Primary school is the first step in compulsory schooling. It is provided to pupils aged between four and twelve and takes place over eight years:

- the elementary stage, from the first to fourth primary year (1P-4P) for pupils aged between four and eight,
- the middle stage, from the fifth to eighth primary year (5P-8P) for pupils aged between eight and twelve.

School year:

The school year starts at the end of August and finishes at the end of June or at the beginning of July. A pupil can be enrolled at school at any time during the school year, usually within three days following the family's application.

Enrollment:

You should contact the nearest primary school to obtain the necessary information. You and your child will then be invited to a meeting by the school's leadership at the school you live closest to, for the child to be enrolled.

Daily timetable: from 8 am to 11.30 am and from 1.30 pm to 4.00 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and also from 8 am to 11.30 am on Wednesday from the middle stage.

- Person to contact:
- At primary school, your child will have a **class teacher** who you can contact if you have any questions.



School/family relations:

The school will collaborate with families in order to give pupils as much support as possible and build an atmosphere of trust.

During the year, you will attend regular meetings with teachers, arranged individually or at **parents' evenings**.

Your child's teachers are also available at any time, by appointment, to talk to you and answer the various questions you may have concerning your child's education.

For meetings with the school, you can ask for a **community interpreter**. It is the teacher's job to arrange for the interpreter to attend.

Primary induction classes:

Pupils from 4P to 8P (seven to twelve years) who have just arrived in Geneva and cannot yet speak or write enough French to follow the lessons are enrolled part-time in their ordinary class and part-time in an induction class.

The aim is to enable the pupil to learn French quickly and integrate into school in Geneva. The induction class will take place at the pupil's school or at a nearby school. In principle, pupils will spend four half-days per week in the induction class and the rest of the time in their ordinary class. They will usually attend the induction class for a maximum of twelve months. It is the level of French which determines when the pupil becomes fully integrated into their ordinary class. The **induction class teacher** will collaborate closely with the ordinary class teacher.

Pupil's booklet:

Your child will receive a pupil's booklet containing lots of information about school (timetable, teachers' names, telephone numbers, useful addresses, holiday dates, etc.). This is used as a means of communication between the school and the family. From class 3P, pupils will write down their homework in it. Parents can write a message in the book or ask for a meeting, and must sign it every week.

Equipment:

Educational equipment is provided free of charge at the beginning of term; only certain personal belongings (slippers, apron, school bag, etc.) are requested, based on a list provided at the start of the year.

Absence:

If your child is ill, they must stay at home. You should notify the school immediately. A written explanation from you is needed upon return to school, stating the precise reason for and length of the absence. A medical certificate may be requested for an extended absence.

**Teaching, assessment and moving up to the following year:**

The teaching program is determined by a Curriculum for French-speaking Switzerland (PER) and it is followed in an identical manner by all schools in the canton.

No marked assessment takes place from class 1P to 4P, or in induction class: assessment is based on written evaluation. From class 5P, the highest assessment mark is 6; 4 is the pass mark.

Pupils' progress, educational ability and behavior are regularly assessed. The results of assessments made throughout the year determine whether the pupil moves up from one school year to the next.

A **school report** is sent to you three times a year. This shows your child's results in their learning at school and in the various subjects. By signing this report, you are confirming that you have read the information.

Help with homework:

Supervised homework sessions are offered by the school after the afternoon lessons. The arrangements are explained at the start of the year.

Extra-curricular support:

During the lunchtime break and after lessons, children who have registered can receive extra-curricular support provided by an organization known as GIAP (inter-municipal extra-curricular support group). GIAP offers assistance as well as lunch and a snack and activities from 4 pm to 6 pm.

Please note that there is a charge for these services!

School holidays and bank holidays:

You will be informed of the official dates at the start of term, but there are a total of five holiday periods during the year: autumn half-term, Christmas and New Year holiday, February half-term, Easter holiday and the summer holidays.

This information can be found in the pupil's booklet and on the official ge.ch website.



3.Secondary education I: orientation stage

Between the ages of twelve and fifteen, children are enrolled in the orientation stage. This is an important step which determines their future educational or vocational orientation.

The 3 years of the orientation stage are referred to as: 9th, 10th and 11th (or 9CO, 10CO, 11CO).

School year:

The school year starts at the end of August and finishes at the end of June (or at the beginning of July). A pupil can be enrolled at school at any time during the school year, usually within three days following the family's arrival in the canton.

Enrollment:

The procedure and registration form for the orientation stage are found on the ge.ch website under "Enroll my child in the orientation stage: non-French-speaking child". You and your child will then be invited to the school the child will attend, for enrollment.

Daily timetable: Your child will receive his timetable on the first day of school.

Person to contact:

At the orientation stage, your child will have a main teacher called the "**form teacher**" who you may contact if you have any questions about your child's education.

Your child will have a different teacher for each subject (French, Maths, PE, etc.).

School/family relations:

The school will collaborate with families in order to give pupils as much support as possible and build an atmosphere of trust.

During the year, you will attend regular meetings with teachers, arranged individually or at **parents' evenings**.

Your child's teachers are available at any time, by appointment, to talk to you and answer the various questions you may have concerning your child's education.

For these meetings with the school, a **community interpreter** can be requested, and the teacher will arrange this.

Induction/integration classes:

Pupils who have just arrived in Geneva and cannot yet speak or write enough French to follow the lessons are initially enrolled full-time in an induction class. The aim is to enable pupils to learn French quickly and integrate into school in Geneva, so that they can move as quickly as possible into an ordinary class.

Pupil's booklet:



Your child will receive a pupil's booklet containing lots of information about school (timetable, teachers' names, telephone numbers, useful addresses, holiday dates, etc.). This is used as a means of communication between the school and the family. Parents must check regularly to see if teachers have made any comments and can write a message for a teacher in the booklet. Parents must sign the booklet every two weeks.

Equipment:

Educational equipment is provided free of charge at the beginning of term; only certain personal belongings (PE shoes, school bag, etc.) will be requested, based on a list provided at the start of the year.

Absence:

If your child is ill, they must stay at home. You should notify the school immediately. A written explanation in the pupil's booklet is needed from you upon return to school, stating the precise reason for and length of the absence. A medical certificate may be requested for an extended absence.

Moving into an ordinary class:

It is the level of French which determines when your child becomes fully integrated into their ordinary class.

Teaching, assessment and moving up to the following year:

The teaching program is determined by a Curriculum for French-speaking Switzerland (PER) and it is followed in an identical manner by all schools in the canton.

The highest assessment mark is 6; 4 is the pass mark. In the integration class, assessments can be made without marks, by means of written evaluations.

The results of assessments made throughout the year determine whether the pupil moves up from one school year to the next.

A **school report** is sent to you three times a year showing the results of your child's learning at school and in the various subjects. By signing this report, you are confirming that you have read the information.

Help with homework:

Supervised homework sessions are arranged in school after afternoon lessons, in accordance with a schedule distributed at the start of the year.

Lunch:

At the orientation stage, there is no school canteen as at primary school. Each orientation stage institution will offer various arrangements in relation to the lunch break.

To find out about these arrangements, you should contact your child's orientation stage institution directly.



School medical team:

Each institution benefits from the assistance of at least two psychologists, two welfare officers and a nurse. These staff will see pupils or their parents by appointment. You can contact them by telephoning the school office who will forward your call or you can ask the form teacher.

School holidays and bank holidays:

You will be informed of the official dates at the start of term, but there are a total of five holiday periods during the year: autumn half-term, Christmas and New Year holiday, February half-term, Easter holiday and the summer holidays.

This information can be found in the pupil's booklet and on the official ge.ch website.



4. After the orientation stage: Secondary education II

At the end of the orientation stage, your child has two main pathways to choose from:

General education

Secondary education II offers general education which enables your child to extend and expand the knowledge and skills acquired during the compulsory education stage. Your child can choose from two study routes:

- *Collège de Genève*: to obtain a school-leaving diploma (*maturité gymnasiale*) (four years)
- *Ecole de culture générale*: to obtain the ECG certificate (in three years) and a specialized school-leaving diploma (*maturité spécialisée*) (in four years).

All the general training programs lead to a qualification which gives pupils the option of pursuing studies at university or universities of applied sciences (*hautes écoles spécialisées*) or vocational higher education colleges (*écoles professionnelles supérieures*).

Vocational training [Federal vocational education & training (VET) diploma (*Certificat fédéral de capacité* - CFC), Federal VET certificate (*Attestation fédérale de formation professionnelle* - AFP), vocational school-leaving certificate (*certificat de maturité professionnelle* - MP)].

Vocational training is aimed at pupils who, when they leave the orientation stage, wish to pursue a course of study enabling them to enter a profession as soon as they complete the training (art, commerce, construction, health and social care, hotel, catering, building trades, etc.).

There are two types, lasting three to four years:

- 1) Company-based learning (sandwich course)
- 2) School-based learning (full-time course)

The professional pathway can be broken down into several routes:

- 1) the *Attestation fédérale de formation professionnelle (AFP)*: 2 years' training enabling the pupil to work in a profession and enter the job market. It can also be continued, to obtain the *Certificat fédéral de capacité (CFC)*;
- 2) the *Certificat fédéral de capacité (CFC)*: three to four years' training, either as a sandwich course (working for an employer plus theory lessons at a vocational college,



one or two days a week), or on the full-time pathway (practical and theory training at college with, generally, training periods with a company);

- 3) the Maturité professionnelle (MP) is an additional qualification in general culture disciplines which is acquired during or after CFC-level initial vocational training. It provides access to Bachelor's degree-level study at universities of applied sciences [*hautes écoles spécialisées* (HES)], in the fields of engineering, health, social work, arts and economics.



5. Department for integration into secondary education II (*Service de l'Accueil de l'Enseignement secondaire II* (ACCES II))

The *Service de l'Accueil de l'Enseignement secondaire II* (ACCES II) receives pupils aged between fifteen and nineteen **who do not speak French** and provides two to three years of support. This department offers arrangements enabling pupils to improve their knowledge so that they can join an academic or vocational training program.

There are **five** pathways in ACCESS II:

- Integration classes:

The integration classes welcome migrant non-French-speaking pupils aged between fifteen and nineteen who have recently arrived in Geneva and wish to pursue educational training enabling them to either continue their studies or enter a vocational pathway. There are no educational prerequisites for this class and it can vary from improving literacy to preparing for a Year 12 exam.

The aim of integration classes is for pupils to learn French and sometimes to learn about how to be a pupil (how school life works), as well as catching up on general knowledge.

- Vocational integration classes:

Vocational integration classes are aimed at young non-French-speaking people, who are past compulsory school age but no more than nineteen years old, who have not yet acquired the level of education and autonomy required to enter a working environment. The majority of pupils come from orientation stage integration classes and secondary education II integration classes. Among other things, pupils receive help with their French and undertake workshop activities. This year allows them to improve their level of education, find out about the reality of the working environment, through visits or training courses, and develop their manual skills.

- Vocational integration classes (CIP):

Vocational integration classes allow young people, who are past compulsory school age but no more than nineteen years old, to plan a vocational training route while being at school full-time. This sector includes classes of non-French-speaking pupils receiving support lessons in French. The majority of pupils come from orientation stage integration classes and secondary education II integration classes. During the school year, pupils are required to search for and undertake training periods with a company of one to two weeks, which are unpaid, in order to make a career plan and learn to meet the expectations of the working environment.

- Educational catch-up classes (CIS):

Educational catch-up classes welcome non-French-speaking pupils aged between fifteen and nineteen who have come from integration classes or recently arrived in Geneva and who do



not have a sufficient level of education, particularly in French, to be able to integrate directly into a school of their choice.

This scheme prepares them to enter secondary education II schools. Pupils are grouped depending on their level of education and on their plans.

- Educational integration:

Educational integration is a scheme offered part-time to young French-speaking (only until the October half-term) and non-French-speaking people aged between fifteen and nineteen, who have usually recently arrived in Geneva and, for various reasons, cannot immediately be integrated into a class.

Educational integration evaluates and guides these young people through French and Maths teaching primarily, and social/educational activities under the responsibility of leaders from *Fondation pour l'animation socioculturelle* (FASe).

6. Learning network, assistance and support with learning outside school

A network of professionals offers educational support outside school to support your child throughout their schooling. Here are a few examples:

Croix-Rouge Jeunesse offers homework help sessions to primary school children and unaccompanied minors living in collective living centers for asylum seekers (often Tuesdays, except during school holidays).

Reliance offers educational support for children living in the municipalities of Onex, Confignon, Lancy or Vernier.

Ara/Ajeta offers individual support lessons for pupils and apprentices having educational difficulties. These lessons are given by students.

Please note that there is a charge for these services!

Community centers and recreation centers also offer homework help, plus all sorts of free activities for children and teenagers.

(<https://fclr.ch/membres/>) or <https://bonjourgeneve.ch/tag/fase/>

Sports, cultural and leisure activities are also very important. Don't hesitate to have a look at the leaflet on childhood to find out more information and visit *Bonjour Genève* for useful addresses.



Useful websites

Each school has a website including lots of information.

The website ge.ch also provides general, practical information about schools:

<https://www.ge.ch/contacter-trouver-ecole-primaire>

<https://www.ge.ch/bienvenue-ecole-primaire>

<https://www.ge.ch/parcourir/ecoles-formations/cycle-orientation>

<https://www.ge.ch/inscrire-mon-enfant-au-cycle-orientation/eleve-non-francophone>

<https://www.ge.ch/vacances-scolaires-jours-feries/vacances-scolaires>

<https://www.ge.ch/cours-francais-parents-non-francophones>

<https://www.ge.ch/cours-langue-culture-origine-eleves-enseignement-obligatoire>

<https://www.ge.ch/parcourir/ecoles-formations/enseignement-secondaire-ii>

The Curriculum for French-speaking Switzerland (PER):

<https://www.plandetudes.ch/per>