



# Information for parents about primary schools in Kópavogur

## **Compulsory education**

Compulsory education is for all children from the age of 6 – 16 years of age. After that the students can apply for education in upper secondary school and thereafter in university. Almost all children in Kópavogur have spent 3-4 years in preschool before they start primary school.

## **School hours**

The school year starts around the 20<sup>th</sup> of August and ends in the middle of June, totalling 180 days of teaching. The schools publish a calendar each spring where the schedule for the year can be seen.

Not all school start at the same time in the morning but generally they start between the hours of 08-09. The school day usually ends around 13:30–16:00.

Students in 1-4<sup>th</sup> grade spend an average of 20 hours at school per week, 5-7<sup>th</sup> grade spend about 23 hours, and 8-10<sup>th</sup> grade spend almost 25 hours at school per week. The teaching is according to the reference timetable of The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools.

## **The role of primary schools**

The role of primary schools is to prepare students for life and work in an ever changing democratic society. Emphasis is placed on initiative, independence and self-discipline of students.

Primary schools aim to ensure an environment suited to the individual needs and talents of each student.

Emphasis is placed on the well-being and safety of students and on non-discrimination policy regarding origin, sex, residence, class, religion or handicaps.

All children have their supervisory teacher who keeps track of the child's welfare and conveys information to parents. If a problem arises, parents should first turn to supervisory teacher, but may also turn to the head of department, the vice-principal or the principal.

Most schools require children to spend their breaks outdoor and it is expected that they are dressed according to the weather.

## **Food/snacks**

Parents can subscribe to a hot meal for lunch at a fair price for their children on Kópavogur's service portal (Þjónustugátt). You can cancel a subscription before the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month and the termination will take effect the following month. Additionally, the schools often recommend that children bring a healthy snack to school, such as fruits.

## **Which school should the child attend?**

Children have priority to education in their school district. Parents can also apply for schooling in other district of Kópavogur or at independently run schools.

## Leisure activities

After school hours and during school vacations, 6-9 year old children have the option of participating in activities at recreation centres/*Frístund*. *Frístund* is open on weekdays until 17:00. *Frístund* is an optional offer where children stay and play and engage in creative activities under the care of staff after school hours. Parents pay a fee for these services and apply for it on Kópavogur's service portal (*Þjónustugátt*). Recreation centres close for summer holiday at the end of the last week of school in June and open again on the first day of school in August.

Children and adolescents aged 10-16 years old can participate in the activities of youth centres. There they are offered facilities for leisure and time with their peers in a safe environment. At youth- and leisure centres an emphasis is placed on enabling children and youth in active participation and working on the projects, strengthening social skills and their identities.

## Leisure activity grant

In Kópavogur there is a variety of sports and leisure activities. It is important that parents support their children in these activities which help them develop their language abilities, cultural understanding and social integration.

Every child and adolescent in Kópavogur have a right to a leisure activity grant for participation in organised sports and recreational activities. Further information can be found on Kópavogur's website, [www.kopavogur.is](http://www.kopavogur.is)

## Sports clubs in Kópavogur

**Breiðablik** offers training in football, athletics, karate, basketball, chess, swimming, skiing, taekwondo and triathlon. [www.breidablik.is](http://www.breidablik.is)

**HK** offers training in football, handball, volleyball, bandy, dancing and table-tennis.

[www.hk.is](http://www.hk.is)

**Gerpla** offers training in various gymnastics and parkour

[www.gerpla.is](http://www.gerpla.is)

The Horse club **Sprettur** offers various courses in riding

[www.sprettarar.is](http://www.sprettarar.is)

**GKG** is a golf club and offers golf courses for children and teenagers.

[www.gkg.is](http://www.gkg.is)

**Hvönn**, dance school offers a number of courses in children dancing and ballroom dancing.

[www.hvonn.is](http://www.hvonn.is)

**TFK** is a tennis club. They offer various tennis courses for all ages.

[www.tennishollin.is](http://www.tennishollin.is)

## Compulsory school enrolment

Kópavogur runs 9 primary schools and additionally there is one private school in the town. Enrolling a child to a primary school is carried out through Kópavogur's service portal (*Þjónustugátt*). If children have not been domiciled in Kópavogur or have not been registered with an ID number (*kennitala*), the registration takes place at the primary school.

If children are enrolled into private school, a special school or if they leave the country it is requested to the nearest primary school.

If a child with a domicile in Kópavogur attend school in another municipality parents have to fill out a special request for schooling on Kópavogur's service portal (*Þjónustugátt*).

When children of foreign origin are enrolled to school a welcoming plan for language support is used. The school has a very important social role for all children.

Most parents choose the local school and with that the child is more likely to make friends and acquaintances in its local community, also the school would be closer to the child's home.

### **Pupils with different needs**

Primary schools in Kópavogur, base their work that the school is without discrimination. Inclusive education is a continuous process that aims at offering good education for everyone. Respect is shown for the diversity and different needs, abilities and characteristics of the pupils and an effort is made to eliminate all forms of discrimination and disintegration at school (The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools: General Section).

### **Parent cooperation**

Every school emphasises on good cooperation with all parents focusing on the well-being of the child. Research has shown that no single factor has as great effect on academic achievement and well-being as interest and support from the parents. Therefore the school uses every opportunity to involve parents in their children's education based on individual conditions.

The well-being of the child is guaranteed by good cooperation between parents and schools which is based on mutual trust and respect. School staff must always have the child's well-being in mind and make an effort to ensure the pupil's safety, well-being and a peaceful study environment so that the pupil may enjoy its schooling. School staff should promote a positive school spirit and morale in all school activities and good conduct.

### **Rights and obligations**

Parents are responsible for the enrolment of their children to primary school and for their school attendance.

Parents are responsible for the upbringing of their children. Therefore parents, as well as the child, are responsible for the child's behaviour and conduct towards their fellow pupils and school staff and are to react to the consequences of their children's behaviour at school.

Parents look out for the interests of their children and engage in their studies. Education is a team-work between the child, parents and teachers. Parents have the opportunity to advise and cooperate with the child's main teacher and school administration.

Parents are to inform the school of any factors which may affect the school performance, attendance and behaviour of the child, i.e. of the child's malaise and trauma which may affect the child's schooling, as well as if there are any changes to the child's circumstances and conditions.

Parents are obligated to work toward a solution of problems in cooperation with the school, special services and educational authorities of the municipalities when any negative shift happens in the behaviour and conduct of their child.

Parents and the child are to participate in the proceedings, but if the parents or school administrators believe that the confidentiality or trust regards to a child's case is not complete it is recommended that assistance is requested from an independent party.

(Regulation on responsibilities and duties of members of the school community in compulsory schools. Article 5).

## **Information**

It is common for the information regarding the child and the school work is conveyed through e-mail, phone calls or meetings, which are held at least twice a year.

Parents who do not speak Icelandic are provided with an interpreter in meetings. Here are some useful information for parents regarding such meetings. Parents are encouraged to share important information regarding the child and its well-being with the school.

It is common that parents are invited for introductions and gatherings at the school, often in coordination with the parent council. They are also encouraged to familiarize themselves with the child's education and with the school work and to visit the school in cooperation with the teachers. Interpreters are used at the request of the parents. It is best when parents and the school agree on which methods should be used for communicating.

School personnel should observe confidentiality in regard to the situation of children and their parents, regarding matters of which they gain knowledge in their work and shall be kept confident according to law, instructions from superiors and the nature of the case. It is also kindly asked of parents that they respect the confidentiality which is at the school and that they do not discuss information about the situation of other children which they might learn about at the school.

## **Parent council and School council**

All primary schools have parent- and school councils. All parents in the school are members of the parent council which elect a board.

Parents for each grade or student group also choose a class representative. Their job is first and foremost to be a leader in the parent group, front runners among their

peers.

Representative from the parent's council organisation in Kópavogur, SAMKÓP, also attends meetings with Kópavogur's Educational Council.

## **Kópavogur's Educational Council**

Kópavogur's Educational Council forms a policy regarding the education commissioned by the municipality of Kópavogur, makes decisions and recommendations to the Town Council in terms of its role. Furthermore the Council makes sure that the conventions and policies regarding educational matters are followed through and monitor the quality of the education that the schools provide.

## **Native language and Icelandic**

Good proficiency in the native language as well as Icelandic is enriching for the individual and the community, riches which are to cultivate and cherish. Scholars point out that the native language proficiency of children is a strong factor which contributes to their education and development, a good base in the native language can have fundamental effects on the second language acquisition. Then, scholars have shown that respect for the native language and attitudes towards it can greatly affect the development of child's identity and belief in its own competence. Research has shown that active bilingualism is prosperous for the education and lives of children. It involves adding a language to the native language, not replacing it.

Active bilingualism strengthens and has positive effects on academic achievement while language replacement has negative effects. Proficiency in the native language is the key to learning another language, being more likely to support cognitive development in other areas.