



DVD „Schools in the county of Zurich – information for parents“

Summary and supplementary information

Primary school

Timetable

In the first three years of primary school, children have between 22 and 26 lessons a week and, in the following three years, from 26 to 31 lessons¹. Pupils learn to do math, to write and to read. Sport, music and design as well as man and the environment (Mensch und Umwelt) are also part of the timetable. In addition, pupils learn English from year two and French from year five.

How parents can encourage their child's learning

For a child to be able to do their homework without being disturbed, they need a quiet workplace. Parents regularly check if they have done their homework. Both mum and dad should be interested in how their child is getting on at school – and actively demonstrate this interest by being in contact with the school. They should encourage their child's self-confidence – especially when things are not going particularly well. This can be done by focusing on the child's strengths. Praise your child for what they can do and achieve.

Cooperation between school and parents

Maintaining a good relationship with your child's teacher through one-to-one talks is essential. You should find out how your child is doing at school on a regular basis. A positive attitude towards school on the parents' part helps a child to learn. Parents can also show their child how important school is by taking part in parents' evenings and other school events. You may want to sign up for any voluntary parental involvement the school offers, for example, a parents' council. The range of parental involvement opportunities differs from local council to local council.

Language – and a child's native language – a key competence

Learning requires language. This is why good language skills are very important for all subjects and for the time spent at school. To be competent in the language the lesson is taught in and in foreign languages, a child's native language – be it Swiss-German or another language – must be well developed. Parents encourage language development when they speak with their child in their native language as much as possible. The child's vocabulary increases automatically as a result.

¹ The dvd states that from primary year four to primary year six, there are between 26 and 28 lessons. In the meantime, „religion & culture“ und „crafts“ have been added.

Reading is important

Children learn to read and write in primary year one. If a child can read well, they will find studying most subjects is easier. Reading a lot furthers linguistic competence generally.

Encouraging reading at home

Parents can encourage their child to learn to read well. Introducing your child to stories is particularly beneficial – even at preschool age. You can do this by saying rhymes, telling stories, looking at picture books, reading out loud – always in your own (German or non-German) language. You can provide your child with reading material – from comics to books. You can go to the library with them on a regular basis to borrow books. Of course children should also have enough time to be able to read those books at home.

Following primary year three: Change of teacher (and class)

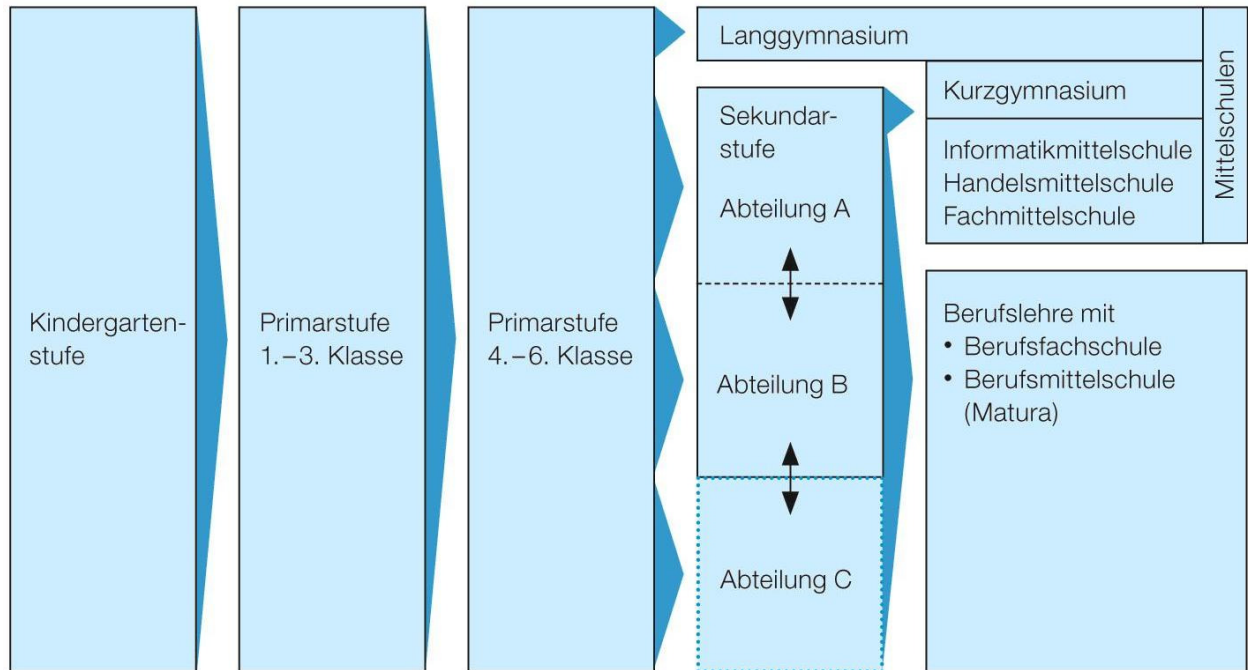
Children usually change teachers after primary year three. The make-up of most classes changes at this point, too. A lot changes: The learning pace increases; the subject matter becomes more wide-ranging. Children often think that lessons have become tougher and the number of exams has increased.

Approaches

There are different ways of learning at school: Didactic teaching means that children are in their seats and the teacher is teaching the class as a whole. Often children extend their knowledge of a particular topic by working in pairs. Children also learn in small groups. Alternatively, they solve tasks by themselves at different points in the classroom. Each approach has its advantages – a varied lesson facilitates learning.

Transfer to secondary school: Children follow different routes depending on their capability

Pupils transfer to secondary school after primary year six. Depending on your local council, the secondary school in your area is either made up of two levels (Abteilungen): A and B, or three levels: A, B and C. Secondary level A (Sek A) is the most challenging for learners. Strong students can take an examination after primary year six to enter academic high school (Langgymnasium). Parents have to register their child to take the entrance examination for the academic high school of their choice by 15 March. Compared with secondary school, lessons at academic high school are more theoretical and the learning pace is faster. Students also have a higher number of teachers; practically a different one for each subject.



Primary to secondary school transfer: Placement procedure

The transfer to secondary school strongly influences your child's future school career, and their future career in the world of work. As a result, it is important that all those involved consider the options available early on – not just in primary year six. The teacher discusses the transfer to secondary school level with the child and their parents in good time. The teacher submits a transfer recommendation in writing by mid-March. If parents do not agree, a second round of discussions take place, and include the primary school management (Schulleitung) and a secondary school teacher. The school governing board (Schulpflege) make the final decision.

Transfer to secondary school: Placement criteria

An overall assessment of the child is the basis for the placement decision (not the average grades in German and math). When making an overall assessment, the teacher evaluates a child's learning potential and performance in all subjects and forecasts their development. On the one hand, the teacher considers the child's performance in classes as a whole. For a child to enter secondary level A or academic high school, they have to have demonstrated a good performance in the preceding years. The teacher also considers the child's attitude to work and learning, their talents and interests, their stage of development, and possible multilingualism.

For further information, go to: www.vsa.zh.ch/dvdeltern

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