2019

Children’s rights to preschool and other pedagogical activities in national minority languages

On January 1 2019 changes in several laws and ordinances regarding national minorities rights entered into force. The objective is to strengthen the basic protection of the languages and cultures of the national minorities and to strengthen the extended rights that exist in the administrative areas for Finnish, Meänkieli and Sami. Through changes in the Education Act (Skollagen SFS 2010:800 [1]) the right to preschool and other pedagogical activities in national minority languages is strengthened throughout larger parts of the preschool organisation. In addition, it is required to ask the guardian if they want a place for the child in preschool in the minority language.

School head is introduced into the preschool

From July 1 2019, all preschool heads will be called school head (rektor [2]). Through changes in the Education Act (Skollagen SFS 2010:800 [1]) it will be mandatory for all newly recruited school heads in the preschool to attend the school head training (rektorsprogrammet [2]). The school head at the preschool unit must enroll in the school head training as soon as possible after they have begun their employment and complete it within five years after the first day of employment. School heads who are already employed as preschool heads on July 1 2019 do not have to attend the training. The changes are a part of the Government Proposal regarding a strengthening of the quality in preschool and leisure-time-centres (2017/18:194). The Government emphasises several similarities with school heads and preschool heads which warrant the same term. For example, the preschool is a curriculum-driven school form and has the same overall goals and regulations as the other school forms. In addition, both preschool heads and school heads have management responsibility for school/preschool units.

Fore more information in Swedish please see: (2017/18:194) Fler nyanlända ska uppnå behörighet till gymnasieskolan och kvaliteten i förskola och fritidshem ska stärkas. [3]

Revised maximum preschool fee

The income ceiling relating to the maximum preschool fee increased from 1 January 2019. The maximum preschool fee thereby increased from SEK1362 to SEK 1425 per month for the first child. The maximum monthly fee for the second child is SEK 950 and SEK 475 for the third child.

For more information about childcare fees in Swedish please see Statsbidrag för maxtaxa 2019 [4] and The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket [5]).
2018

Assignment to allocate funding and follow up support to youth recreation centres and and open leisure-time activities

The government (regeringen [6]) has assigned The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällsfrågor [7]) to allocate funds and follow up on support given to youth recreation centres and open leisure-time activities (reference number U2018/02972/UF). For the execution of the assignment the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society will receive SEK 50 million (approximately EURO 4.5 million/1 SEK = 0.0970565 EURO). In addition to internal costs (maximum SEK 400 000/approximately EURO 38 822) the funds are to be allocated to municipalities which plan to increase the accessibility and quality in youth recreation centres and open leisure-time activities for youth between the ages 13 and 20. The objective is that the youth get the opportunity to participate to a larger extent in these activities.

Accessibility can be increased in the form of for example increased opening hours or distribution of information to different groups of youth. The quality of the activities can be increased by for example stimulating informal learning.

The assignment is to be reported to the Ministry of Education and Research (Utbildningsdepartementet [8]) by 6 May 2019.

Strengthened quality and equivalence in leisure-time centres and pedagogical care

The government has appointed a comission of inquiry which will map and analyse the development areas in the leisure-time centre and if necessary, propose measures to increase the quality and equivalence and strengthen the leisure-time centres compensatory missions (reference number 2018:102). In addition, the care form pedagogical care (pedagogisk omsorg [9]) will be mapped and analysed to find out whether it stimulates children's development and learning. If necessary, the inquiry will suggest ways to improve equal opportunities for children to transition into the preschool class.

The inquiry is to be reported to the government by 30 September 2019.

Teaching license requirement

As of July 2019, a teaching registration (lärarlegitimation [10]) will be required for working at a leisure-time centre (fritidshem [11]), as well as in the preschool. Up until now, those teaching at a leisure-time centre are qualified as long as they have a Swedish or foreign university education in leisure time education. Next summer this exception is being taken away and leisure-time centre staff will need a teaching registration (lärarlegitimation [10]).

Early guarantee of support

As of July 2019, the government will institute a guarantee of early support for children in preschool (förskola [11]) and primary school (grundskola [12]). Today, most support initiatives are taken in the later years of primary school or in upper secondary school, and the purpose of the new guarantee is to intervene earlier in the child’s educational journey. The legal change allows support to be given to children already in preschool. Beginning in preschool, the student's linguistic awareness and mathematical thinking shall be mapped out using national mapping material. If, on the basis of the
survey material, there is an indication that a child in preschool or primary school will not reach the necessary knowledge requirements in Swedish, Swedish as a second language or mathematics, responsible teachers will determine whether the student is in need of adjustments to the ordinary instruction or special support, in order to achieve the necessary knowledge requirements. The purpose of the guarantee is that a student in need of support will receive it early on based on his/her needs. Read more here [13].

Revised preschool curriculum

The National Agency for Education (Skolverket [14]) has revised the preschool curriculum (läroplan för förskola [15]) to further clarify the purpose of the preschool. The revised curriculum includes a clarification of the notion of education in the preschool context and the responsibility of the preschool teacher. The intention is to make it even clearer what the preschool shall give children and for the curriculum to contribute to a high and even quality of preschool education for all children, regardless of where they live.

More information [16].

2017

Review of preschool curriculum

The National Agency for Education (Skolverket [14]) has been instructed by the government to review the preschool curriculum (läroplan för förskola [15]). The review includes, among other things, the follow-up and evaluation of children's right to security, integrity and gender equality. In addition, the agency is tasked with clarifying what is meant by education in preschool. The review will be ready on 23 March 2018. For more information see the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket [14]).

Changes to the Discrimination Act

As of 1 January 2017 new regulations apply regarding active measures against discrimination. These regulations will apply to preschool, primary and lower secondary school and are regulated by the Education Act [17] and part of the Discrimination Act [17]. For more information see the Swedish National Agency for Education's (Skolverket [14]) new regulations here [18].

Cooperation for Better Schools includes the preschool and the preschool class

The Cooperation for Better Schools (Samverkan för bästa skola [19]) aims to improve quality and increase equality within the Swedish school system. The initiative has been extended to also include the preschool and the preschool class. There will be a particular focus on preschools and preschool classes operating in challenging conditions. Participation in the programme will be based on an assessment by the responsible authority, the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket [14]). For more information see the official Swedish government webpage here [20].

Revised maximum preschool fee

The income ceiling relating to the maximum preschool fee increased from 1 January 2017. The maximum preschool fee thereby increased from SEK1313 to SEK1362 per month for the first child. The maximum monthly fee for the second child is SEK 908 and SEK 454 for the third child. For more
information about childcare fees, in Swedish only, see The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket [14]).

**Funding for smaller group sizes in the preschool class**

Preschool education providers can apply for a government grant to enable smaller groups of children. The intention is to raise the quality of the preschool class by reducing group sizes and increasing the number of staff. Particular focus will be on group sizes for the youngest children. Performance-based support will be introduced and available to those heads who have small groups of children or reduce the size of large groups of children. SEK 970 million is allocated for this purpose in the academic year 2016/17.

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