

CHILDREN, SCHOOL AND EDUCATION

This section contains information about the school system on the Faroe Islands. In addition, it provides information about benefits you are entitled to as a parent, and who to contact for advice or help regarding difficult family issues.

A group of eight children are standing outdoors in front of a dense line of evergreen trees. They are all wearing bright, colorful rain jackets and hoods. The jackets are primarily yellow and green, with some having blue and red accents. The children are smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a park or forest setting. The overall atmosphere is bright and cheerful.

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PARENTAL LEAVE FUND

Benefits related to pregnancy are provided as financial compensation for loss of income when you are absent from work as a result of pregnancy, birth or adoption. The Parental Leave Fund, *Barsilsskipanin*, has as its main task to provide these benefits to those who are entitled to them. Additionally, as an employee, you may have the right to receive a normal wage from your employer, through the union's collective agreement with your employer, for the whole period or part of the period.

The main conditions for receiving the allowance from the Fund are that you live in the Faroe Islands, that you are liable to pay full tax in the Faroes and that you are the one who is caring for the child during the relevant period. Additionally, you need to have had an income (A-Income) in the last 12 months before the parental leave starts (those who are self-employed or receive unemployment benefit can be included). If you do not meet the conditions for receiving pregnancy benefit from the Parental Leave Fund it is possible to apply for parental allowance

from The Department of Social Services, *Almannaverkið*.

If you are in doubt, you can contact The Parental Leave Fund for further information, www.barsil.fo, tel. 352600.

PREGNANCY ALLOWANCE

You may be entitled to this allowance from the day that there are 4 weeks left until your due date. Or, from the day that you have a doctor's certificate confirming that you or your child's health may be at risk because of the character of your work, though no earlier than 8 weeks before your due date.

Examples can be: work with chemical substances, stress, hard physical labour, psychosomatic conditions.

Depending on which collective agreement applies to your employment, your entitlement may vary.

PARENTAL LEAVE INSURANCE – PATERNITY AND MATERNITY

After birth the following applies:

Parents are entitled to 52 weeks' leave after childbirth; however, they are not entitled to salary/pay from the Parental Leave Fund for the entire leave. If you are a wage-earner then you may be entitled to paid leave for a given period from your employer, you can check with your union or the Parental Leave Fund regarding this matter.

A mother has the right to 40 weeks within 44 weeks after birth. The father has a right to four weeks together with the mother within the period of 44 weeks after birth.

Within the first 14 weeks, it is only the mother who can claim parental leave insurance. The last 26 weeks of the 40 weeks, either the mother or the father can claim the parental leave insurance, but not both parents.

The benefit from the Parental Leave Fund is based on the average salary received over the last 12 months before the leave up to a ceiling of DKK 25,000 per month. After the paid leave, the mother or the father has the right to unpaid leave until

52 weeks after the birth of the child.

In case of adoption, the parents have a right to parental leave insurance for 48 weeks after receiving the child. For four of these 48 weeks the parents can receive benefits at the same time.

For more information concerning maternity/paternity and adoption benefits contact the Parental Leave Fund, Barsilsskipanin, www.barsil.fo

WHAT ALLOWANCES DOES MY CHILD RECEIVE?

Child allowance is paid for all children below the age of 18 living in the Faroe Islands. The allowance, *barnafrádráttur*, is tax-free and independent of the parents' income and is paid as a tax deduction. The allowance is initially paid to the mother. Since the child allowance is paid partly by the local authority, the size of the allowance varies by a small amount.

For more information on child allowance contact your municipality.

GOOD ADVICE FOR PARENTS

Day care centres

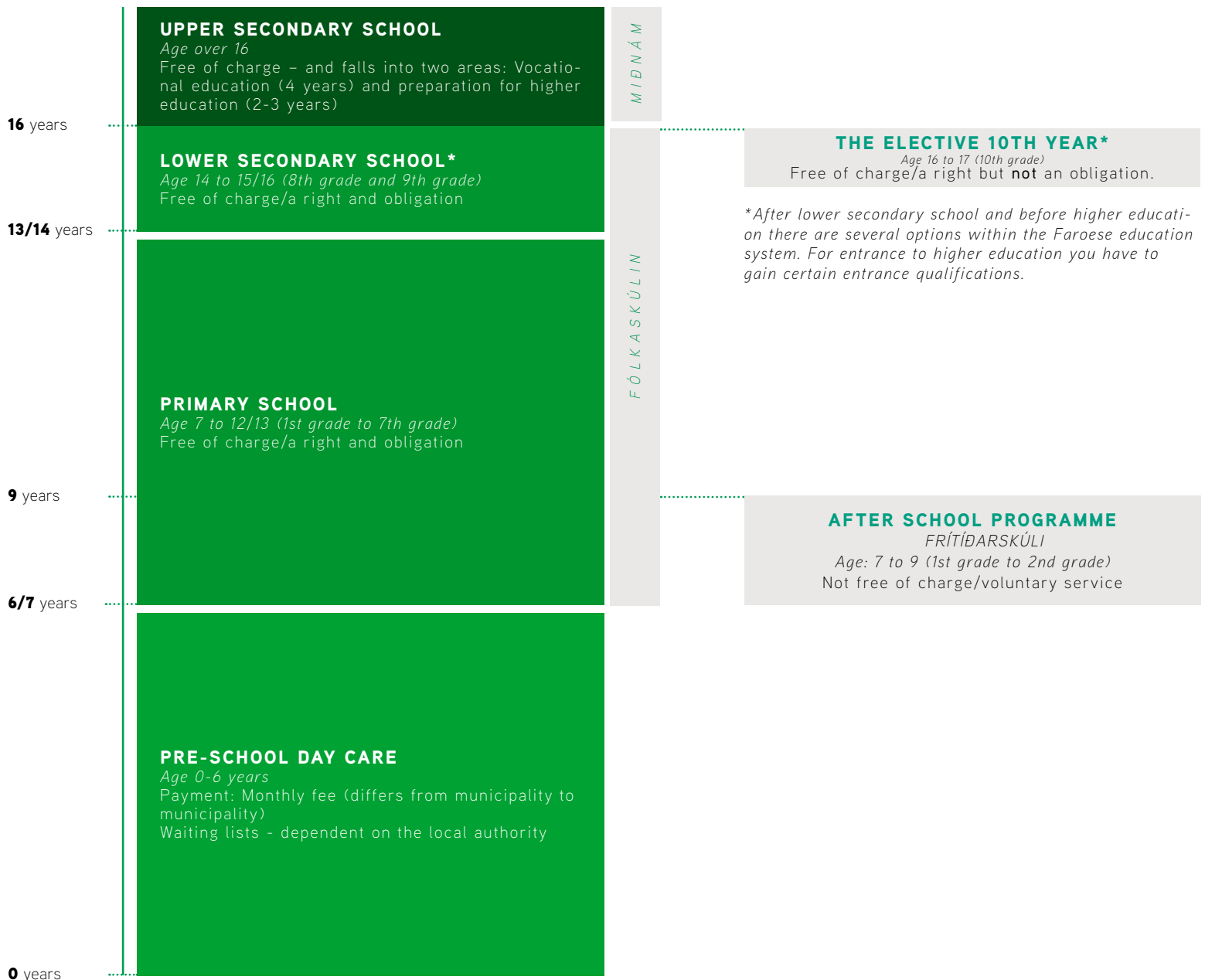
1. Accompany the child to the day care centre and talk to the staff. When a child starts in day care there is special attention given to the child as the surroundings are new. The parent must be ready to take time the first couple of days to be with the child at the day care centre for whole or half working days.
2. You can also ask whether you can spend a day at the day care centre, if you think it is necessary.
3. Notify the staff if anything special happens in the family.
4. Remember clothes for all kinds of weather.
5. Get to know the other parents.

Public school

1. Notify the school if something happens that may affect the child's life or health.
2. Help your children to be on time for school and accompany them if necessary.
3. The children must take part in all types of tuition whatever the weather, so remember suitable clothes.
4. Attend meetings and events at school.
5. Get to know the neighbourhood of the school.

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM:

PRE-SCHOOL DAY CARE - PUBLIC SCHOOL - SECONDARY SCHOOL



PRE-SCHOOL DAY CARE

The municipalities provide day care for children up to school age. Day care can be provided in private homes or in day care centres. Children with special needs can receive specialised pedagogical assistance in the day care centres.

Parents can register their children for day care up to six months before they move to the Faroe Islands.

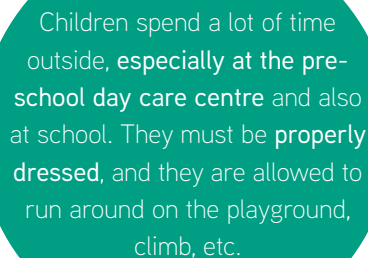
As a parent you have the right to apply for a reduction in day care fee. This reduction scheme is called *fripláss* in Faroese and correlates with parents' income. Most parents make use of this right.

If you are the parent of a child of school age, you must contact your municipality or local school office to register your child for school.

Registration usually takes place in January and the venue and date are usually announced on the radio. The school year starts in August.

After-school programmes are available in most municipalities for children in first and second grade.

If you live in Tórshavn where there are several schools it is possible to apply to a specific school. But it cannot be guaranteed that a place is available, as there can be too many children living in the area around the chosen school. When registering your children at a day care centre or for school you should always contact the local municipality.



Children spend a lot of time outside, especially at the pre-school day care centre and also at school. They must be **properly dressed**, and they are allowed to run around on the playground, climb, etc.

PUBLIC SCHOOL IN THE FAROE ISLANDS, FÓLKASKÚLIN

All children must attend school for 9 years, usually from the age of 7 and until the age of 15.

The public elementary school can be divided into two main parts – an elementary school and a lower secondary school.

If you are the parent of a child of school age, you must contact the municipality or the school office to register your child at the school.

The schools offer 9 years of compulsory basic education and an elective 10th year.

Some public elementary schools also offer pre-school classes for six-year-old children.

Pupils who do not, or are unable to because of a disability benefit satisfactorily from ordinary tuition are entitled to special education.

Pupils who do not have Faroese as a first language may be entitled to additional lessons in Faroese. This is assessed at the local school by the teacher and the school administration office.

PARENT-TEACHER COOPERATION

In the public school system, from 1st to 9th/10th grade, parents are expected to cooperate with school to further their child's learning. Therefore, dialogue between parents and school is considered vital.

Usually the parents and teachers of a class get together once or twice a year. In addition, the contact teacher invites each pupil's parents to a parent-teacher talk once or twice a year. At such meetings the teacher usually informs the parents about how their child is learning and about their progress at school and the parents are asked about their view on the child's development.

The school expects parents to attend such talks. Parents receive a notice in advance. If you need an interpreter, please contact the school in advance.



UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL, *MIDNÁM*

There are several types of secondary schools in the Faroe Islands building on the education received in elementary school.

Secondary schools can be divided into three groups: technical, business, and general education. Secondary education is available at five locations in the islands. Secondary school, Miðnám, is usually intended for at young students between the ages of 16 and 19. But preparatory education for adults is also a part of Miðnám.

The diplomas awarded by the Faroese secondary schools are equivalent to those awarded in the Danish education system.

Diplomas from the general upper secondary school and diplomas after three-years' study at technical and business schools give access to higher education.

For more general information about education: The Faroese Youth Association's website on education in the Faroes: www.les.fo
The International Office at the University of the Faroe Islands: www.setur.fo/ask
- tel. 292513

MARITIME EDUCATION

The maritime education programmes in the Faroe Islands are based on international standards and are IMO-approved. There are two agencies that provide tuition.

Centre of Maritime Studies & Engineering, Vinnuháskúlin, www.vh.fo
– tel. 350250
Sjónám, www.sjonam.fo – tel. 665888

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is offered at the University of the Faroe Islands. The university has two faculties and offers bachelor's and master's degrees in several subjects.

Vocational academic education is offered at the Business College.

The University of the Faroe Islands:
www.setur.fo

The Business College: www.fh.fo (part of the upper secondary education centre, Glasir, www.glasir.fo)

EDUCATION AS AN ADULT

At the evening schools it is possible to receive tuition and complete diplomas in the obligatory courses that make up public primary and lower secondary education, such as Faroese, Danish, mathematics, and also English.

Completing these diplomas may give you the qualifications to proceed to further education, e.g. upper secondary school level.

Some courses at secondary school level are also available through the evening school administration.

These courses are not free.

LEARNING SERVICES

Homework assistance services may be available in your municipality at the local library.

In Tórshavn this service is available for pupils in the lower secondary classes in The Public School, *Framhaldsdeildin*, and pupils in upper secondary school, Miðnám.

In Fuglafjørður there is a homework-assistance drop-in service at the local library, two days a week to help all young students, primary or secondary. Students receive help with a specific assignment or general homework and parents are also welcome to join in. This offer is for all people in the municipality and is also intended for, and used by, pupils with immigrant background.

DISABILITY AND LEARNING CHALLENGES

If your child has a disability or if you are concerned about the development of your child, the services of *Sernám* are available; for parents, youths and professionals in the day care services and education system as well. *Sernám* works to ensure that children and youths between 0 and 18 are able to develop and improve their skills. Special competences that fall under *Sernám*'s four departments are related to speech and hearing impairments; physio- and occupational therapy; pedagogics; and psychology.

Parents can contact *Sernám* directly. You will have to submit a form, or get referral from your primary doctor to *Sernám*, if longer-lasting contact with *Sernám* is needed.

More information: www.sernam.fo, tel. 360200

COUNSELLING SERVICES

The Child Health Service, *Gigni*, provides children, youths and parents with advice and help on a range of issues related to health and the wellbeing of children until they leave the public school system.

School nurses represent *Gigni* at every school and, in addition to giving pupils annual health checks, they teach subjects related to health and welfare in class sessions. The activities of *Gigni* at schools aim to prevent a negative outturn for the wellbeing of a child or youth. All pupils are offered a personal interview with the school nurse at least once a year.

Gigni's health personnel can be contacted through the local school or you can contact *Gigni* by calling or sending an e-mail to their main office in Tórshavn. Counselling is free and can be arranged at the health personnel's office, at the local school, or in the family home.

Children, youth and families may be entitled to a more extensive counselling service if special needs arise. Examples of such cases could be: children and youths with low self-esteem, disability,

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICE

behaviour difficulties, where the parents go through separation or divorce, when alcohol abuse is in the home, when a crisis affects the child's surroundings, disease, death, or financial problems that affect the child or youth.

It can be added that if there are family problems or a mother is a victim of domestic violence and is thinking about going to a woman's shelter, she can always turn to Gigni for guidance and counselling.

For further information: Gigni, www.gigni.fo, tel. 562300

The law concerning child protection states that the authorities must always find solutions that are best for the child – first and foremost – when the health and the wellbeing of a child are endangered.

The Child Protection Service in the Faroe Islands, *Barnaverndartænastan*, is divided into 8 areas each with an office and a Child Welfare Service Board.

A main task of The Child Protection Service on the Faroe Islands is to assist parents with giving their children the best possible upbringing.

Child service workers support and assist children and families in different ways. Most Child Protection Service cases are worked out in good cooperation with parents or guardians. The Faroese Child Protection Service has helped around 850 children every year.

Everyone is required by law to report any suspected violence, physical, mental or sexual, against children to the local office of the Child Protection Service.

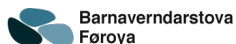
It is also the task of the Child Protection Service to help children in more difficult situations.

The Child Protection Service assesses each case individually to see if the child needs help. Getting help from the services is not a universal right. The Faroese law states that the Child Protection Service can take action if it suspects that a child is suffering at home. In a few cases, for example if the child's health and welfare is endangered, the Child Protection Service may move the child out of the home, usually to a foster family or to an institution for children and youth. If the parents do not agree to the child being taken from the home, they are entitled to legal aid. The case must then be settled by the main Child Protection Committee.

**Further information:
Barnaverndartænastan, www.bvs.fo,
tel. 302480.**

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

LOCAL OFFICES AROUND THE FAROE ISLANDS



- THE NORTHERN ISLANDS, KLAKSVÍK**
Office hours: 10.00-16.00 ☎ 410000
☎ **HOTLINE - OUTSIDE BUSINESS HOURS: 219181**
- THE MUNICIPALITY OF EYSTURKOMMUNA AND FUGLAFJØRÐUR**
Office hours: 9.00-15.00 ☎ 238055
☎ **HOTLINE - OUTSIDE BUSINESS HOURS: 238059**
- AREA AROUND SKÁLAFJØRÐUR**
Office hours: 9.00-15.00 ☎ 417000
☎ **HOTLINE - OUTSIDE BUSINESS HOURS: 237090**
- NORTHERN PART OF STREYMOY AND THE NORTHERN PART OF EYSTUROY**
Office hours: 9.00-16.00 ☎ 667271
☎ **HOTLINE - OUTSIDE BUSINESS HOURS: 297200**
- TÓRSHAVN AND VICINITY**
Office hours: 9.00-15.00 ☎ 302060
☎ **HOTLINE - OUTSIDE BUSINESS HOURS: 216012**
- VÁGOY**
Office hours: 10.00-15.00 ☎ 344430
☎ **HOTLINE - OUTSIDE BUSINESS HOURS: 344430**
- SANDØY, SKÚVOY AND STÓRA DÍMUN**
Office hours: 8.00-12.00 ☎ 361024/288024
☎ **HOTLINE - OUTSIDE BUSINESS HOURS: 281024**
- SUBUROY**
Office hours: 10.00-16.00 ☎ 611090
☎ **HOTLINE - OUTSIDE BUSINESS HOURS: 283033**

OTHER RELEVANT AGENCIES

Other relevant agencies looking out for children's rights and wellbeing are the Children's Ombudsman, *Barnanna Umboðsmaður*, and Barnabati. The Children's Ombudsman is an institution adults and children can turn to if they think a public agency or another authority has not treated a child adequately. For example, you can file a complaint regarding a school that has not been willing to help you or your child. You cannot file a complaint to the ombudsman regarding a court decision, or about your parents or friends, etc. The office of the Children's Ombudsman will most likely be able to direct you to the right place if they cannot help you.

Barnabati operates a helpline for children called *Tú-og-eg Ráðgevingin* or You and Me Support and Guidance. This service is available as a phone line, text messages and private chat-sessions. As a child you can use this service concerning any problems you may experience as a child. It is free and you can write and call anonymously, the helpline is open two nights a week.

For more information on the helpline and Barnabati go to www.barnabati.fo or regarding The Children's Ombudsman, visit www.bum.fo.

MEDIATION IN CASE OF SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

In cases of separation or breakdown of relationships between parents The Danish High Commissioner in The Faroe Islands, *Ríkisumboðið*, is the relevant authority to approach. A mediation process can be initiated in relation to parental responsibilities, the child's situation in the time ahead, where the child is to live, and how much time the child will spend with the parent they do not live with. The High Commissioner can offer child welfare counselling and conflict mediation in disagreements over child custody or similar.

In cases of separation or/and divorce parents can get free counselling from Gigni.

WOMEN'S SHELTER

The Women's Shelter in Tórshavn helps women who are subject to domestic violence. They also provide temporary accommodation for women/children in crisis situations.

A women's shelter is a place you can contact if you are a victim of violence, or if you know somebody who is. The shelter offers advice and guidance to victims of violence, abuse, threats, etc.

The Women's Shelter in Tórshavn is open weekdays from 10:00 to 17:00 PM. Anyone who contacts a women's shelter is guaranteed full anonymity. The shelter has access to interpreting services.

Further information is available at www.kvinnuhusid.fo, hotline: 317200