

Your child's leisure time is important

INFORMATION ABOUT LEISURE-TIME CENTRES





The leisure-time centre is meant to serve your child

As a parent, you know your child better than anyone. That is why it is so important that you communicate with staff and the head teacher at your child's leisure-time centre. Talk to them about things like the activities at the centre, the size and composition of the children's groups, and how your child is treated. If staff and the head teacher know what you think, it will be much easier for them to meet your child's needs.

You need to know how the leisure-time centre is meant to work, so that you can be involved and make a difference.



How are leisure-time centres regulated?

Leisure-time centres are covered by the Swedish Education Act. The Act stipulates that children's groups must be of appropriate size and composition and that premises must be suitable for the purpose, meaning they must be of adequate size for the children's group and the specific activities. Programmes should be based on the needs of each child, and the staff must have the necessary qualifications to meet your child's needs for care and good teaching activities.

Leisure-time centres must apply the national curriculum set by the Government – the same curriculum as for the pre-school class and compulsory school. It explains the fundamental values of our society and the goals and tasks of Swedish schools and leisure-time centres. You can read the curriculum to find out what may be expected and required of you as a parent.

Swedish municipalities are required by law to provide childcare for school-age children up to the age of 12. For school children aged 10–12, this can be in the form of open leisure-time activities in which the children are not formally enrolled. Open leisure-time activities are a voluntary alternative for children who do not need the care and supervision provided at leisure-time centres.



The provider of childcare for children of school-age (either the municipality or the owner, if the leisure-time centre is privately run) is responsible for ensuring that leisure-time centre staff plan, follow up and evaluate the activities. Contact your child's leisure-time centre to find out how you and your child can participate in these evaluations.





Meaningful recreation that supports child development

Under the Education Act, leisure-time centres must offer children meaningful recreation and activities that support all-round development. To do that, the environment must be safe, fun and stimulating, with the main focus on play, creativity and physical activity. All activities should be designed according to the children's ages, maturity, needs, interests and experiences. As a result, programmes at leisure-time centres will vary depending on the needs of the children who are enrolled there.

The leisure-time centre plays a key role in your child's learning, because children learn in every context and every situation all day long. Staff have the task of combining childcare and learning. For instance, they are meant to help your child learn social skills and independence, respect diversity and differences of opinion and understand that compromise is sometimes necessary.



A complement to school

School and leisure-time centre staff often work closely together to give your child an opportunity to expand his or her skills and knowledge throughout the day. Like school, the leisure-time centre is a group educational activity that is meant to be fun, stimulating, and make the most of your child's interests and joy in learning.

The leisure-time centre complements the school in two ways:

IN TERMS OF TIME, by welcoming children outside school hours and during school holidays. School-age childcare must be organised so that parents are able to combine parenthood with work or study.

IN TERMS OF CONTENT, by giving the children experiences and knowledge that are somewhat different to what they get in school.





Empowering children

Your child has the right to voice opinions about activities and programmes at his or her leisure-time centre. By expressing their thoughts and views in various ways, children can gain an understanding of how democracy works. It is good to let children participate in planning and be heard in the context of meetings and evaluations, for instance. You are welcome to talk to the staff about this, and to encourage your child to put his or her opinions and ideas into words.



You can make a difference

Close cooperation between parents and staff is crucial to making sure your child feels safe and secure at the leisure-time centre. The national curriculum says that everyone who works at schools and leisure-time centres must work with parents to develop activities together. Please feel free to take the opportunity to talk to staff when you pick up or drop off your child or in other contexts, such as parents' meetings or personal development discussions.

You are also welcome to contact the municipality or board of directors if you would like to share your opinions about the quality of your child's leisure-time centre.



For more information about what governs quality in leisure-time centres, please refer to the National Agency for Education's publication "General guidelines and comments: Quality in leisure-time centres," which is available from any leisure-time centre. If you would like your own copy, you can order one from Fritzes kundservice or download one from the National Agency for Education's website at www.skolverket.se.

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