



Bulletin for parents and custodians about a survey on the two-year pre-primary education trial

To parents and other custodians,

Your child's preschool is participating in a research about the two-year pre-primary education trial being carried out between 2021 and 2024, either as part of the treatment group offering two-year pre-primary education, or in the control group offering normal one-year pre-primary education. In August 2021, Finland launched a trial in which some children participate in two-year pre-primary education instead of the normal one-year pre-primary education programme. The survey will examine the effects that a longer pre-primary education programme has on how these children's learning skills develop.

The study kicked off with the first assessment of the learning skills of children born in 2017 in the early education centres in autumn 2022. It will now continue with the second assessment of the learning skills of children born in 2017 during September—October 2023. We hope that all children born 2017 who belong to the target group of the study are interested in participating in the assessment.

What happens in the assessment

A staff member of the preschool that the children know performs different tasks with the children individually for about 30 minutes. This involves asking the children about words, letters, numbers and simple arithmetic. The teacher will also ask the children what they think about themselves. If any of the tasks are too challenging for your child for one reason or another, then they move on to the next task. The purpose is to make the children feel comfortable and safe in the company of an adult that they already know. In addition to completing the assigned tasks with the children, the teachers complete a separate questionnaire themselves.

At the national level, the collected data will be supplemented with information available from registers. The register data will be used for purposes such as long-term follow-up studies. The children's development will also be monitored in the course of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education.

Voluntary nature of the study

The assessment is based on sections 3, 4 and 10 of the Act on a Two-year pre-primary Education Trial (1046/2020). The Act contains provisions on conducting assessments on children in a given target group, among other things. Children born in 2016 or 2017 in the municipalities selected for the trial belong to the target group.

Participation in the survey is voluntary. Since the study is based on law, the parents and other custodians of the children taking part do not need to separately sign up their child for the study. However, the children's parents or other custodians have the right to suspend their child's participation or withdraw their

consent at any time during the study. You can do so without giving any reason and it does not bear in any consequences. All you have to do is inform the preschool that you have decided your child will no longer be taking part in the survey. Participation is also voluntary for the children.

Confidentiality

The teacher and the children do the tasks together using a tablet computer. Your child's answers are sent directly from the tablet to the Research Institute for Learning Analytics at the University of Turku. This means that no information on the children's replies is retained in the preschool. The teachers' questionnaires are also carried out in the same way.

All the information collected on your child is handled confidentially and used solely for research purposes. Only specific persons, who are bound by the non-disclosure obligation, have access to your child's data. The research material is processed in a protected environment and only accessible to researchers with a research permit. Moreover, your child cannot be identified from the research results.

The survey was designed by experts in pedagogy and psychology. It is being carried out in cooperation between researchers from Aalto University, the University of Turku, the University of Jyväskylä, the University of Helsinki and the VATT Institute for Economic Research.

Data protection and risks

The risks associated with data protection are minimised by storing the data in a secure information environment, by separating direct identification data from other data sets and by publishing the results in a form that does not make it possible to identify individual respondents.

The website of the Ministry of Education and Culture (<https://okm.fi/tietosuoja-ja-henkilotietojen-kasittely>) contains a data protection statement from the controller for the parents and other custodians (Ministry of Education and Culture). The data protection statement describes in more detail the data that will be collected in the study and the processing of the data. The research project has received a favourable research ethics statement from the Research Ethics Committee of Aalto University.

Feel free to contact us should you have any questions about the research project. We will be more than happy to answer them. You can contact the research team by sending an email to eskarikokeilu@vatt.fi or by calling +358 29 551 9556.

Best regards,
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