

Disability compensation – what parents need to know

The Grundgesetz (German basic law) says: “All people are equal before the law”. This means that all people are treated equally according to the law. The principle of equality before the law also means that it can be legally appropriate to compensate the disadvantages of pupils who have particular need for support or who have disabilities.

Pupils who have a particular need for support can therefore receive disability compensation (known as “Nachteilsausgleich”) at their school. This means that they receive special help in order to compensate for mental or physical disadvantages. This does not mean that the requirements made of them are lower. The children and adolescents have to try to attain the same level as the other pupils in their class, but with additional support.

How does disability compensation work?

Disability compensation always relates to the reason why the pupil has a disadvantage. The type and manner of the help depends on the individual circumstances. For example:

- A pupil receives a special seat in the class because she is extremely sensitive to light. This means that she can follow the lessons more easily.
- A pupil receives more time to work on tasks because he can only read slowly.
- To work on a task, a pupil is allowed to use a PC because he cannot do it by writing.
- The oral grade of a pupil is marked less strictly because she has a speech impediment.

There are many ways to compensate for a disadvantage.

Who decides?

The school decides whether a child or adolescent receives disability compensation and if so, what form it will take. The school can consult with experts if required. The school can require the parents to submit a medical certificate that confirms the impairment. The child or adolescent affected and the parents are involved in the decision at an early stage.

How long is disability compensation valid?

Disability compensation always refers to a specific situation. This means that if disability compensation is given for German lessons in the Grundschule, then it only applies there. If the child moves to another school, disability compensation has to be examined again and adjusted if necessary.

Can disability compensation be a disadvantage for the pupil?

Disability compensation does not reduce the requirements made of the child. This means that all pupils fulfil the same requirements and their final certificates are assessed equally. Any disability compensation measures are not recorded in the school leaving certificate (school report). However, when changing school, it can be helpful to inform new teachers about any disability compensation measures.