

The education system in Baden-Württemberg - pathways and opportunities

Information for parents



Dear parents, dear readers

We are delighted to be able to provide you with this brochure about the education system in Baden-Württemberg. We hope that it will help you to understand the Baden-Württemberg education system.

The education system in Baden-Württemberg is complex. As parents, you naturally want to support your children in the best possible way. But you may have many questions about how best to do this: How does the transition from nursery to primary school work? Which secondary school is right for my child? How can I support my child in choosing his/her career? What school leaving qualifications can my child get, and how does the grading system work? What can we expect during the school holidays? And finally: How can we, as parents, actively shape the education system?

This brochure is designed to give you an overview and help answer these questions. We give you information about the different education phases – from nursery via primary school to vocational training and higher education studies – as well as an insight into important topics such as preparatory classes, safety in traffic, rules for the school holidays or opportunities to participate. We believe that it is particularly important for us to show you that there is not only one right way, but that there are many different opportunities open to you and your child.

The Elternstiftung Baden-Württemberg, which is a charitable organisation, strengthens parents in their role as partners in the education system of the federal state by informing, educating and advising parents. In particular, we hope that you, as parents, will be able to take on an active role, because your participation and support are decisive for your children's successful educational biography. We want to encourage you to get involved in the education institutions and contribute your ideas and concerns. We would be delighted to support you in this and invite you to take a look at our programmes and offers.



Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'S. Hagenmüller-Gehring'.

Sabine Hagenmüller-Gehring
Chairperson of the Executive Board of Elternstiftung BW

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Baden-Württemberg

MINISTERIUM FÜR SOZIALES, GESUNDHEIT UND INTEGRATION

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THE NURSERY (KITA)

A good, first step in Baden-Württemberg's education system is for your child to attend a KiTa (short for Kindertageseinrichtung – preschool daycare) before starting school. Here children learn, in a playful way, important skills for their further school career and can make their first friends. Even if attending a KiTa isn't compulsory, it is a good preparation for school.

All children in the KiTa are supported in learning the German language. The children will receive intensive support there if they do not yet speak German. This offer is known as language promotion.

A KiTa for children between 3 and 6 years is often also known as a Kindergarten and as a Krippe when it is for children under 3 years.

You have a legal right to a KiTa place for children from the age of one. Attending KiTa is not compulsory for children. It is voluntary.

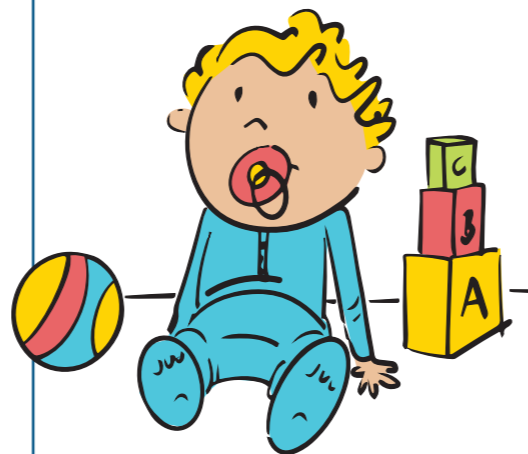
Parents need to look for a free KiTa place themselves. They normally get in touch with the local council. A place in the KiTa usually costs something.

The opening times of Kitas vary. There is a planned daily routine in the KiTa from the welcome to collection of the children. It includes: Activities, time for independent play, lunch and time to rest.

SETTLING IN

The process of settling in describes the step-by-step introduction of everyday KiTa life to the new children. It is a phase in which the children have the opportunity to get to know their new environment, the pre-school educators and the other children, and be accompanied by a person they know and trust. This process enables the child to develop a bond with the pre-school educators, to feel safe and secure. The settling in period is important to make starting KiTa easier and a positive experience for your child.

The settling in period usually lasts two to four weeks. The time frame during which the children remain in the KiTa without their parent/guardian gradually becomes longer and their independence grows. It's important that they have enough time to feel safe and secure before they stay in the KiTa without their parent/guardian.



The pre-school educators and parents/guardians need to work together so that the children are supported in the best way possible, right from the beginning. The parents are regularly invited to discuss the child's development and progress. The pre-school educators tell the parents where the strengths of their children lie and where it would be helpful for them to receive support.



Parents' evenings take place regularly in which the parents are told about organisational matters and special events in the KiTa which are relevant to all of the children. During parents' evenings, the parents of a KiTa group elect two parents as parent representatives. The parent representatives help to ensure good collaboration between the parents and the pre-school educators.

In the KiTa there are also many events and celebrations. The pre-school educators or the parent representatives invite the parents to the parents' evening. There are many ways for parents to participate in the KiTa and to enrich everyday life with ideas.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

School attendance is compulsory in Baden-Württemberg. According to the Education Act of the federal state of Baden-Württemberg, parents must register their children for school and ensure that they regularly participate in lessons.

This means that children must attend school from the age of 6 years. The obligation to be present at school is known as Anwesenheitspflicht. If a child is ill or otherwise absent, the parents must excuse them in writing. Compulsory school attendance ends when a child is 18 years old. This also applies to children and adolescents who are staying in Baden-Württemberg owing to an application for asylum or who have tolerated status ("Duldung"). Paragraph 72 of the Education Act of Baden-Württemberg regulates this.

As well as participating in regular lessons, compulsory school attendance means also attending all other compulsory events of the school as well as keeping the school rules.

Parents who break the school attendance rule must expect to pay a fine or have other legal consequences.

The rule on compulsory school attendance in Baden-Württemberg is an important element of the education system and helps to ensure that all children and adolescents have the chance for a good education.





TRANSITION FROM KINDERGARTEN TO SCHOOL

In their final year at kindergarten, the children get to know their future school and also attend lessons with their pre-school educators. This makes starting school easier for them.

Sometimes it is recommended for a child to start school at the age of 7 instead of 6. This can be a good idea if children find it difficult to concentrate, are very shy or still very immature for their age.

The parents then have two possibilities: Their child stays for a further year in the kindergarten and is supported there. Or they register their child for a Grundschulförderklasse (remedial class for the Grundschule). In this class, the children are prepared for attending school in an even more targeted way.

The parents have to register the child at the Grundschule (primary school), so that he/she can start school. Parents usually receive an invitation sent by the school that is nearest to their home. The invitation tells the parents when and where they can register their child.

A parents' evening is often held, even before the children start school. The parents get to know the school and can ask any questions about things they would like to know.

THE SCHOOL ENROLMENT EXAMINATION (ESU) IN BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG

To ensure that all children get as good a start in school as possible, they undergo an examination by the health office (Gesundheitsamt). In German this school enrolment examination is known as the Einschulungsuntersuchung or ESU for short. In the ESU, the medical personnel look to see if the child is healthy and how it is developing. The ESU takes place 2 years before the child starts school. This means that parents and kindergarten teachers have enough time to help children who need support.

ESU

You can find further details here:



SCHOOL IN BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG

School normally begins with the Grundschule (primary school). In Baden-Württemberg, children usually attend the Grundschule for 4 years. From year 5, the children normally attend a weiterführende Schule (secondary school).

Children who have special educational needs can attend special schools (SBBZ) or regular schools. If they attend regular schools, this is known as "inclusion". Inclusion means that children with and without entitlement to special pedagogic support can learn together in one class or school.

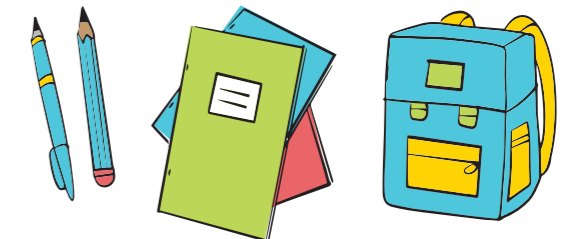
SBBZ

SBBZ is the abbreviation for Sonderpädagogischen Bildungs- und Beratungszentren (special pedagogic educational and advice centres). They offer a comprehensive special pedagogic educational programme for pupils. This is tailored to the support that the pupil needs. The individual needs of the pupils are defined with the help of special pedagogic diagnostics. Some SBBZ schools focus on giving specific types of support, such as learning support, language development, emotional and social development, sight, hearing and motoric development.

The state-funded schools in Baden-Württemberg are fundamentally free of charge. This means that the parents do not have to pay any school fees. There may be charges for certain activities, however, such as school trips or excursions, that the parents have to pay.

The pupils receive their school textbooks from the school free of charge and must return them at the end of the school year.

But parents often have to pay for certain materials such as exercise books, pens or a school bag (Schulranzen). You can receive financial support for this if you need it. As a parent, you can ask in the Sekretariat of your child's school for more information about this.



The pupils are divided into classes. Each class has a class teacher, sometimes two class teachers. This teacher is the contact person for the children in the class and the parents.

All pupils receive a timetable with their lessons.

A school lesson usually lasts 45 minutes. There is usually one break every morning with time for the children to eat, drink, exercise and play. This break usually takes place in the school playground, known as the Pausenhof.

The pupils receive homework so that they can repeat and practice the subject material by themselves.

The child's performance can be evaluated either in writing or verbally. For example through in-class tests known as Klassenarbeit, examinations, homework, presentations, solving of tasks in front of the class, participation in the lesson, etc.

Pupils receive two written assessments of their overall performance per school year: a Halbjahresinformation (also known as Halbjahreszeugnis) at the beginning of February and a Jahreszeugnis or Abschlusszeugnis in July at the end of the school year. The end-of-year assessment also includes grades for behaviour and participation. At the Gemeinschaftsschulen, the pupils receive a learning development report known as a Lernentwicklungsbericht. The reports are written documents which the parents sign and then must give back to the school.

At many schools, the assessments in the end-of-year Jahreszeugnis or Abschlusszeugnis are the basis for deciding if the child can move to the next higher class (in German: the child is "versetzt").

If a child has not achieved the class targets, he/she has to repeat the year. In this case, the school asks for a meeting with the parents well in advance.

The pupils are expected to keep the school rules: for example, to arrive on time, actively participate in lessons, have the necessary school materials with them, keep to the school regulations, keep appointments or cancel them in good time.

Here is the glossary of all important terms in the education system



HOW STARTING SCHOOL IS CELEBRATED IN BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG

In Germany, starting school is celebrated as an important day in your child's life. The children leave kindergarten and become school pupils. This transition means changes for all children and also for their parents. The process of starting school is known as "Einschulung" in German.

On the first day, the school organises a celebration to which all children who are starting in year 1 and their parents (and often other relatives) are invited. The children bring their school bags with them – and a "Schultüte" (cardboard cone).

SCHULTÜTE

The "Schultüte" is a very popular German custom. It signifies a new start and is usually given to the child by the parents. It can be homemade, sewn or bought. The parents put sweets, small presents or school supplies (like coloured pencils or erasers) in the cone. The contents don't need to be expensive – the fact that it's a surprise for the children is more important.

THE CELEBRATION

During the celebration in the school, the older pupils often perform something such as a short theatre piece. The head teacher welcomes the parents and children. The children go with their teacher into their new classroom. There they usually have their first school lesson. While the children are having the lesson, the parents have the chance to get to know one another.

CHRISTIAN CHURCH SERVICE

Some schools organise Christian service to celebrate the "Einschulung". Parents who are not Christians are also invited and are welcome to attend – they do not need to actively take part.

Regular lessons then start on the first school day after the "Einschulung". Parents receive detailed information about the course of the day from the school.



PRIMARY SCHOOL (GRUNDSCHULE)

Fundamental knowledge is taught in the Grundschule. The pupils learn reading, writing and arithmetic. Physical exercise, singing, painting, doing handcrafts and activities together are also important. The secondary schools can build upon these skills after the Grundschule period is over. In the Grundschule, the pupils also learn how to learn. They learn different ways of absorbing and processing information. In the Grundschule, the children learn both individually and in a group. In the Grundschule it is also possible for children to have religious education. The parents make this decision for their child. They can ask in the school about the religions that are taught. In some schools, classes are held only in the mornings. At Ganztagschulen (all-day schools) the children are in school until at least 3pm. Therefore, the children also have lunch, which is paid for by the parents (financial help may be available in cases of need). The number of lessons that the children receive is the same for both regular schools and all-day schools. At all-day schools, the pupils spend the extra time doing homework, eating a meal together, or other activities are offered.

CHOICE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL

In Baden-Württemberg, parents have different ways to select a Grundschule (primary school) for their child. Registration for the Grundschule normally takes place during the year before the child starts school, in other words, at the age of five.

One possibility is to register at the local Grundschule in the catchment area of your home. The parents can find out which Grundschule is responsible for their child from the local school administration department (Schulverwaltung or Schulamt). The school is usually easy to reach and offers a familiar environment for your child.

Another possibility is to choose a different Grundschule that is not in your catchment area. Parents can find out about the different schools in the area and select a school that corresponds to their ideas and needs. For example, they can bear in mind particular educational concepts, foreign language offers or schools with an all-day model. If the school is privately funded, the parents will need to pay school fees.

It's important to bear in mind that the final decision about whether a child can be accepted at the desired Grundschule depends on different factors, such as the number of available places and the acceptance criteria of the school. In some cases, it can happen that not all children can be accepted at their desired school.

TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY SCHOOL TO SECONDARY SCHOOL



After attending the Grundschule (primary school), the children attend a secondary school, known in German as a weiterführende Schule. During the transition from the Grundschule to the secondary school, the child requires the support of its parents.

In Baden-Württemberg there are different types of secondary school: Hauptschule/Werkrealschule, Realschule, Gemeinschaftsschule, Gymnasium.

At the beginning of year 4 the parents receive information about the transition from the primary to the secondary school. The parents receive this information at the Grundschule. It is important that you as parents use this opportunity to get information about the transition. During year 4, the parents make the decision about which secondary school the child will attend from year 5 onwards.

THE ADVISORY MEETING / THE SCHOOL RECOMMENDATION

All parents are offered a personal information and advisory meeting with the class teacher, who writes the recommendation after the meeting. The recommendation states the type of school that is most suitable for the child from the teacher's point of view. This is known as the Grundschulempfehlung. Parents receive the Grundschulempfehlung in writing from the school by 1st March at the latest, in the year that the child completes year 4.

Then, the parents register their child at one of the secondary schools. There are fixed dates for registering your child. When you register your child at a school in Baden-Württemberg, you hand in the Grundschulempfehlung.

The parents decide which kind of secondary school the child will attend. The secondary schools offer many information events. Parents and their children can ask questions and get to know the school.

The decision should be made in the interest of the children. After attending a Grundschule, the final educational path of the children is not definitively set in stone. It is still possible to change between the different types of school and to catch up on the next higher educational qualification at any time. For example, after gaining the intermediate secondary school leaving certificate, it is possible to attend the Gymnasium and gain the Abitur (higher education entrance qualification).

Here you can find the video about transitioning to year 5



THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

At the secondary school pupils can get the following school leaving qualifications: Hauptschulabschluss (basic school leaving certificate), Mittlerer Bildungsabschluss (intermediate school leaving certificate), Fachhochschulreife (advanced technical college diploma), Abitur/Allgemeine Hochschulreife (general higher education entrance qualification).

More subjects are taught at the secondary school than in the primary school. Pupils can choose between some of the subjects.

These are the school types that follow on from the Grundschule:

HAUPTSCHULE/WERKREALSCHULE

The Hauptschule/Werkrealschule is the right type of school for pupils who like doing practical things.

The **Hauptschule** offers school years 5-9. It ends with the Hauptschulabschluss (basic school leaving certificate) examination at the end of year 9.

The **Werkrealschule** offers school years 5-10. Pupils can take the Hauptschulabschluss (basic school leaving certificate) at the end of year 9. At the end of year 10, the pupils can also take the Mittlerer Bildungsabschluss (intermediate school leaving certificate).

The pupils, together with their parents and in consultation with the teachers, decide which educational qualification they will aim for.

Pupils are able to do work experience in businesses and companies so that they can learn about different occupations and prepare for working life. In school, the pupils practice not only the process of applying for a job but also how to behave during the work experience.

There are various possibilities after attending a Hauptschule/Werkrealschule:

- They can start an apprenticeship and learn a vocational occupation.
- Pupils who achieve good marks can then attend a further school and gain a higher educational qualification.
- Pupils who are not able to get any kind of educational qualification (Schulabschluss) can go to special schools that offer training courses to prepare them for working life.

REALSCHULE

The Realschule prepares pupils for a transition to working life or a vocational Gymnasium (academic high school).

The Realschule is the right type of school for pupils who like learning and doing practical things. The Realschule offers school years 5-10. At the end of year 9, pupils have the opportunity to achieve the **Hauptschulabschluss** (basic school leaving certificate). At the end of year 10, pupils can take the **Mittlerer Bildungsabschluss** (intermediate school leaving certificate).

Pupils can learn at two levels: the basic level or the intermediate level.



Career guidance is an important topic during all school years. In this way, the pupils are prepared for starting a career.

After the Realschule, pupils have various possibilities:

- They can start an apprenticeship and learn a vocational occupation.
- Pupils who achieve good marks can attend a further school and gain a higher educational qualification.

GEMEINSCHAFTSSCHULE

The Gemeinschaftsschule supports all pupils according to their individual abilities. Everyone learns together. Pupils can get different school leaving qualifications.

The Gemeinschaftsschule is the right school for children who can organise themselves and who have different abilities in different subjects. It can lead to all types of school leaving qualification. The decision about which school leaving qualification to aim for does not need to be taken until year 8 or 9. Pupils can learn in different subjects at different levels: basic level, intermediate level and advanced level.

The Gemeinschaftsschule offers school years 5-10. It can also include an upper level (years 11-13) which is equivalent to a Gymnasium.

The Gemeinschaftsschule can be completed with the Hauptschulabschluss (basic school leaving certificate) or the Mittlerer Bildungsabschluss (intermediate school leaving certificate). Pupils who want to do the Abitur can either stay at the Gemeinschaftsschule up to year 13, if the school offers this upper level, or change after year 10 to a regular or vocational Gymnasium (academic high school).

To prepare pupils for working life or university studies, pupils gather work experience known as Praktika. Pupils go into companies and learn about different jobs and the different qualifications they require.



After the Gemeinschaftsschule, pupils have various possibilities:

- Those with a Hauptschulabschluss, Realschulabschluss or Hochschulreife can start an apprenticeship and learn a vocational occupation. During the so-called “duale Ausbildung” (“dual apprenticeship”), they learn the practical skills in their training company and attend Berufsschule (apprenticeship college) at the same time.
- Adolescents who have gained the Hochschulreife (higher education entrance qualification such as the Abitur), can go to a university or other higher educational institution.
- Those without any school leaving qualification can attend a berufliche Schule (vocational college) that will prepare them for a job.

GYMNASIUM

At the Gymnasium (academic high school), pupils are prepared for the Abitur (higher education entrance qualification) and less emphasis is placed on practical skills. The number of subjects is larger and the pupils learn several languages. Children who are able to learn independently and who understand contexts quickly are suitable for the Gymnasium.

The Gymnasium offers school years 5-12. It is known as “G8”.

Some Gymnasien offer years 5-13, which gives pupils an extra year at school before they take the Abitur examination. This is known as “G9”.

It ends with the **Allgemeine Hochschulreife** examination, also known as the **Abitur**.

If pupils pass year 10, they have automatically passed the Mittlerer Bildungsabschluss (intermediate school leaving certificate), without taking a special examination.

The pupils at a Gymnasium also do a Praktika.

After the Gymnasium, pupils have various possibilities:

- They can study at a higher education institution such as a university.
- They can start an apprenticeship and learn a vocational occupation. During the so-called “duale Ausbildung” (“dual apprenticeship”), they learn the practical skills in their training company and attend Berufsschule (apprenticeship college) at the same time. If pupils have gained their Abitur, the apprenticeship may be shorter, for example only 2 years instead of 3 years.

THE PREPARATORY CLASS (VKL)

What is a preparatory class?

Children who come from another country to Baden-Württemberg and cannot speak German usually attend a preparatory class (abbreviation: VKL). It is also known as the welcome class. There they learn German so that they can soon attend the tuition in the regular classes. There is also a preparation course for adolescents who would like to begin vocational training. It is known as the VABO (Vorbereitung Arbeit und Beruf - Preparation for Work and Job). There, too, the emphasis is on developing German language skills.

In some schools, the preparatory class does not take place before, but in parallel to normal lessons. Each week the children or young people meet for a few hours in small groups. They spend the rest of the time in regular lessons, mostly in subjects such as mathematics, sport or art.

What is the advantage of the preparatory class?

In the preparatory class, pupils who do not speak German can be helped very well according to their needs. The content of the lessons can be adapted better than in the normal classes. Their

improvement in the German language will be closely observed. The pupils practice writing, reading and speaking in German.

Do children have advantages through the preparatory class?

Attending the preparatory class helps children and adolescents to learn German as quickly as possible. Without knowledge in speaking, reading and writing, they would find it difficult to attend a regular class. They would understand less than other pupils.

By visiting the preparatory class, they can concentrate completely on learning German. This is very important for the regular lessons. The teachers of the preparatory class will know when a pupil can change to the regular class. This may be possible after only a few months. To make the change easier, the teachers in the preparatory class also talk about the topics that are explored in regular lessons.

There are VKL classes for the Grundschule, and also for the secondary school. Not every school has its own VKL class.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND SCHOOL

PARTNERSHIP TO BRING UP AND EDUCATE CHILDREN

Parents and teachers work in partnership to bring up and educate children.

This means: Parents and teachers are jointly responsible for supporting the child. They are also responsible for making sure that the child is able to learn well and have different tasks here.

It is important that they speak to one another regularly.

Parents can ask the teacher for a meeting. The parents then go into the school for the meeting.

If a teacher wants to speak to the parents, they will either write to them or telephone them.

Sometimes, the child is also present during the meeting with the parents.

Some schools have a parent-teacher meeting day known as an Elternsprechtag. This means:

You can speak with many of your child's teachers at the school on one specific day. The parents can register with the different teachers of their child for a specific time.



PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS

The partnership between the school and the parents is an important element of the education system in Baden-Württemberg. The parents are also part of the school community. The partnership and participation of the parents means that the needs of the pupils can be taken into consideration more easily, and a positive learning environment can be created.

There are different possibilities for parents to get involved in the school. An important form of participation is the parent representatives that are selected in every school. They take part in decision-making processes in the school. Further school committees such as the school council and school parents' committee offer opportunities to participate in shaping the school and incorporating the ideas of the parents.

Dear Mrs. / Mr ,
(teacher's name)

I would like to speak to you.

My daughter's / my son's name is

and she/he is in class

I understand German (tick where applicable)

well a little bit badly not at all

I will be accompanied by someone who can translate:

yes no

I'd like to propose the following dates:

.....
.....
.....

You can reach me by phone:
(phone number)

Or by email:
(email address)

Thank you and best regards

.....
(parents' signature)



THE CYCLING PROFICIENCY TEST

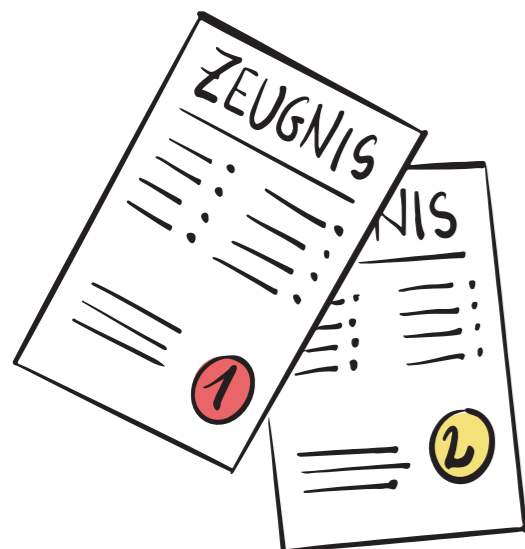
The Cycling Proficiency Test is an important element in traffic safety education at schools in Baden-Württemberg. It is usually carried out in year 4 of the Grundschule (primary school) and aims to give pupils the basic knowledge and skills they need to participate in road traffic.

The Cycling Proficiency Test is made up of a theoretical and a practical part. In the theoretical part, the pupils learn the traffic rules and traffic signs. They learn how to behave correctly in street traffic and the condition that their bicycle needs to be in, if they are to ride it safely in traffic.

In the practical part, the pupils negotiate a parcours on which they need to cope with different traffic situations. The test is carried out by specially trained teachers or police officers.

After successfully completing the Cycling Proficiency Test, the pupils receive a certificate or a bicycle licence (Fahrradführerschein). This serves as proof that they have learned the required knowledge and skills to participate in street traffic.

MARKING AND THE POINTS SYSTEM



There are two different marking systems in Baden-Württemberg. In the Grundschule and secondary level 1 (years 5 to 10), the system of marks from 1 to 6 applies, where 1 indicates excellent and 6 indicates inadequate. To pass an exam, you must get a mark of at least 4 (adequate). The same system is also used in colleges and universities.

No marks are given in years 1 and 2 of primary school and years 5 to 7 of comprehensive school. Instead, teachers describe in words what the child can do.

There is a different system in secondary level 2. This consists of 0 to 15 points and is also used in the Abitur. The points correspond to the marks from 1 to 6.

Note	Mark	Points system	University
very good	1+	15	0,7
	1	14	1,0
	1-	13	1,3
good	2+	12	1,7
	2	11	2,0
	2-	10	2,3
satisfactory	3+	9	2,7
	3	8	3,0
	3-	7	3,3
adequate	4+	6	3,7
	4	5	4,0
	4-	4	4,3
unsatisfactory	5+	3	4,7
	5	2	5,0
	5-	1	5,3
inadequate	6	0	6



ABSENT FROM SCHOOL – HOW TO EXCUSE YOUR CHILD CORRECTLY

In Germany, school attendance is compulsory. Every child between the ages of 6 and 18 is obliged to attend school. This also means that the child has to attend the lessons in school. If the child cannot attend the lessons for any reason, the parents have to excuse the child or apply for a leave of absence (“beurlauben”) in advance.

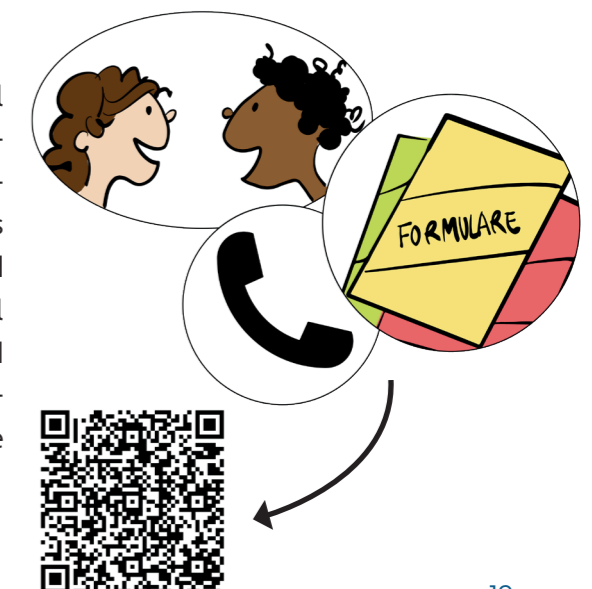
SICK NOTE IN THE CASE OF ILLNESS

If your child is ill, you as the parent have to tell the school immediately (e.g. by telephone or email) – if possible, before lessons begin. Then the teacher is informed and does not need to wonder where your child is. Following this, you have to send the school a sick note (Entschuldigungsschreiben) with your signature within 3 days of the child being absent from school. This note has to explain why your child could not come to school. Adolescents who are already 18 years old can write and sign their own sick note.

If your child is ill for a longer period of time, it’s best to speak with the teacher. The teacher may require you to provide a doctor’s note (ärztliches Attest). The teacher is allowed to require you to provide a doctor’s note, even if your child is absent for single days.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A child can also be excused from lessons in exceptional circumstances. These could be important religious festivals or funerals. As parents, you have to request permission for your child to be excused in advance. This means that you must write to the teacher to explain when and why your child cannot come to school. The teacher will then write back to you, telling you if it okay for your child to be absent from lessons for this period. Your child is allowed to miss school only when you get the okay from the teacher.



EXCUSE

date:

Dear Mrs. / Mr. ,
(teacher's name)

I hereby ask you to excuse the absence of my child on these days:

.....

My daughter's / my son's name is

Reason for the absence
(f.e. disease, death in the family)

Thanks and best regards

.....
(parents' signature)

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

date:

Dear Mrs. / Mr. ,
(teacher's name)

I hereby ask you to release my child from classes on the following days:

.....

My daughter's / my son's name is

Reason for the absence
(f.e. burial, religious festival)

Thanks and best regards

.....
(parents' signature)

THE SCHOOL CANTEEN

The school canteen in Baden-Württemberg is a facility that offers the pupils the opportunity to eat during school.

The pupils are often able to choose between different dishes, offering both a vegetarian and a meat option.

Payment in the school canteen usually takes place via a cashless system in which the pupils use a chipcard or similar method of payment. The parents load money on the card in advance to ensure that their child can pay for the food.

It is important to bear in mind that the use of the school canteen is usually voluntary and the pupils also have the possibility to bring their own food from home.

OBSERVATION SHEET FOR SAFETY IN TRAFFIC

How can parents find out what children can cope with in road traffic and what they still need to learn? An observation sheet can be a useful tool here. Observe your child for a while when you go for a walk with them and on everyday routes. See how your child is doing by ticking the observation sheet. If you tick "rarely", you should practice this activity with your child.

	always	often	rarely
Does your child walk along the pavement, staying as far away as possible from the road?			
Does your child stop at the kerb?			
Does your child stop at the kerb, even if it is distracted?			
Does your child check sufficiently in both directions before crossing the street?			
Does your child wait until there are no more cars approaching before crossing the street?			
Does your child walk directly across the street without running?			
Does your child first look right and left for turning traffic by a "green" light before crossing at the traffic lights?			
Does your child continue to walk promptly to the other side, if already on the road and the traffic light turns "red".			
Does your child maintain the sightline when crossing the road between parked cars?			
Is your child capable of signalling to car drivers (with hand signs, for example) when on a zebra crossing?			
Does your child wait until all vehicles have stopped before setting off on a zebra crossing?			

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

In Baden-Württemberg there are different types of school holidays divided across the entire school year.

School children have the following holidays:

- The summer holidays last around six weeks and begin at the end of July and last until the beginning of September.
- The autumn holidays last a week and take place over the 1st November public holiday known as Allerheiligen (Feast of All Saints).
- The Christmas holidays take place over the Christmas and New Year celebrations. They start before 24th December and end after 6th January.
- The Winter holidays, also known as the Faschingsferien (carnival or Shrovetide holidays) usually start on Rosenmontag (Shrove Monday) and last a week.
- The Easter holidays are a further break in the school year and take place in spring over the Easter public holidays.
- The Whitsun holidays take place in May or June during the Pentecost public holidays. They last for two weeks.

There are also moveable one-day holidays known as bewegliche Ferientage. It is important to bear in mind that the exact dates of the school holidays and the moveable one-day holidays are determined on a yearly basis and can lightly vary. It is a good idea to find out the exact dates of the holidays well in advance, so that you can plan accordingly.

! The school is closed for lessons during the school holidays. Nevertheless, many schools, associations or municipalities offer services to look after children in the holidays – if parents need to work, for example. These are voluntary and often cost money. If parents cannot pay the regular fee, they can request financial support.



THE VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG

After attending a general educational school, pupils can continue learning at a vocational college (“berufliche Schule”) or do an apprenticeship.

Types of vocational college include: Berufsschule, Berufsfachschule, Berufskolleg, Berufsoberschule, Berufliche Gymnasium and Fachschule.

The vocational colleges support the transition from a general educational school to working life. They offer many opportunities to gain further qualifications either before or during an apprenticeship, and to take further school leaving examinations.

In a vocational college, adolescents can learn about the basics of an occupation, or do an apprenticeship for an occupation and improve their overall educational level. They can also study for one of the general school leaving qualifications.

School leaving qualifications can also be gained:

1. Hauptschulabschluss
2. Fachschulreife / mittlerer Bildungsabschluss (for example at a Berufsfachschule)
3. Fachhochschulreife (for example at a Berufskolleg, Berufsschule or Fachschule)
4. Fachgebundene Hochschulreife (at a Berufsoberschule)
5. General university entrance qualification (at a Berufliche Gymnasium, a Berufsoberschule)

In Germany, school attendance is compulsory. It normally lasts until the child is eighteen years old (of legal age). The compulsory school attendance can take place either in a general educational school or a vocational college.

It can be a good idea to attend prevocational courses before starting an apprenticeship for a job. These offer adolescents a good way to transition to a vocational college or a job.

Adolescents can attend these prevocational courses:

- Ausbildungsvorbereitung dual (AVdual)
- Ausbildungsvorbereitung (AV)
- Vorqualifizierungsjahr Arbeit/Beruf (VAB)

Adolescents who have recently arrived in Germany and who have minimal knowledge of German can do a pre-qualification work/job year with a focus on improving their German skills (VABO).

BERUFSSCHULE

In Germany, there is dual vocational training, meaning that the pupils train for a job that is suited to them. To do this they attend a berufliche Schule (vocational college). But they also work in a company and are trained there.

In the Berufsschule, a college for apprentices doing an “Ausbildung” (apprenticeship), the pupils acquire theoretical knowledge and also learn the practical skills, they will need later in their profession. The aim is to achieve the final qualification in a recognised skilled profession.

BERUFSFACHSCHULE

Berufsfachschule teach knowledge and skills in a profession. The aim is to get a basic training for a job, to prepare for starting an apprenticeship or to attain an occupational qualification and to deepen the general educational level.

It is also possible to study for the Mittlerer Bildungsabschluss (intermediate school-leaving certificate). This is known as the Fachschulreife. Attending a Berufsfachschule can last 1 year, 2 years or several years. It depends on the job/profession that the person wants to train for. There are Berufsfachschulen that specialise in different fields such as commerce-technical, administration, home economics, agriculture, social-paedagogy, social-nursing, etc.

FACHSCHULE

Adolescents and young adults attend the Fachschule if they want to prepare themselves for an activity in middle management after vocational training or want to qualify for occupational self-employment. Fachschulen also include the Meisterschulen.

BERUFSKOLLEG

The Berufskolleg teach an occupational qualification and an expanded general educational level. Young people with the Mittlerer Bildungsabschluss (intermediate school-leaving certificate) or with the Fachschulreife attend the Berufskolleg.

At a Berufskolleg, it is possible to attain the Fachhochschulreife and also an occupational qualification. With the Fachhochschulreife, pupils can start a study course at a higher education institution.

You do not need a vocational training contract to attend a Berufskolleg.

Some types of Berufskolleg specialise in certain fields: technical, commercial and home economics, nursing-social pedagogical, etc.

BERUFSOBERSCHULE

A Berufsoberschule offers pupils the opportunity, after completing vocational training/an apprenticeship or with comparable job experience, to deepen their subject-specific knowledge and obtain further educational qualifications. This is known as the "zweiter Bildungsweg" or "second educational path".

The Berufsoberschule is divided into the one-year Mittelstufe Berufsaufbauschule BAS (intermediate level) and the two-year Oberstufe BOS (advanced level).

After the one-year Mittelstufe, pupils can take the Mittlerer Bildungsabschluss (intermediate school-leaving certificate). The Oberstufe can be completed by obtaining the fachgebundene Hochschulreife (subject-specific university entrance qualification). If the pupils learn a second foreign language, they can leave the Berufsoberschule with the Allgemeine Hochschulreife (Abitur - general university entrance qualification).

The Berufsoberschule is divided into the following directions: Berufsoberschule für Sozialwesen (SO), Technische Oberschule (TO), Wirtschaftsoberschule (WO).

BERUFLICHES GYMNASIUM

The Berufliches Gymnasium and its 3-year course are intended for pupils who want to achieve the Allgemeine Hochschulreife (general university entrance qualification) after their Mittlerer Bildungsabschluss (intermediate school-leaving certificate).

There are also Berufliche Gymnasien that offer 6-year courses that pupils can attend from year 8, if they fulfil the requirements.

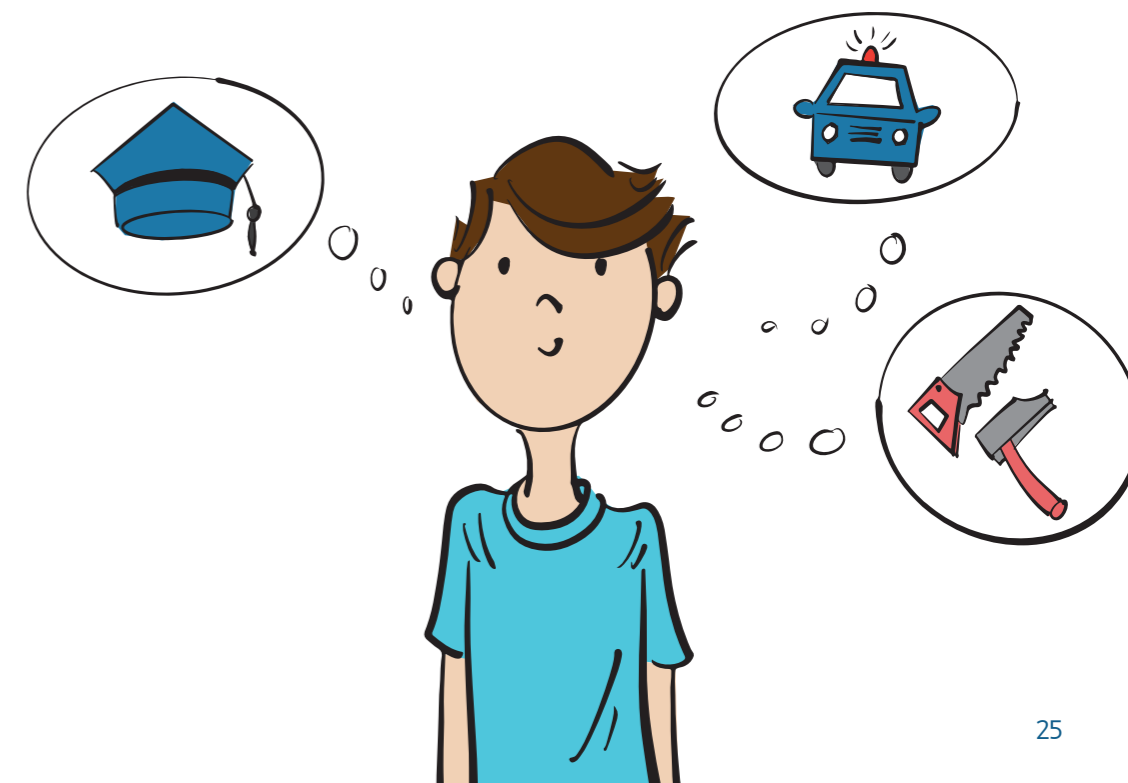
The knowledge acquired provides a special preparation for working life or studies at a higher education institution. However, pupils cannot obtain an occupational qualification there.

Parents can support their child in the search and selection of the right vocational college.

For example, parents can

- talk to their child about the topic at an early stage. It's a good idea to start thinking about this when the child leaves Grundschule.
- support their child, find out what he/she can do and wants to do.
- help your child to get to know different jobs and filter out potential careers.
- attend information events and open days at vocational colleges and in companies.
- attend career advice centres with your child.
- encourage your child to do internships/work placements or speak with people working in different careers. This can help the child gain a better understanding of the career.

More information about the vocational colleges in Baden Württemberg:



DUAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING

In Germany, there is a special form of apprenticeship: dual vocational training. Dual vocational training includes practical learning in a company and theoretical learning in the Berufsschule, which takes place in parallel. When the vocational training is completed, the adolescents have excellent opportunities, as qualified skilled workers, when transitioning to working life and many career and development opportunities.

In Germany, the dual vocational training system is highly regarded. In many occupational fields, there is an urgent need for apprentices. With a completed apprenticeship and three years of practical work experience, it is also possible to study at a higher education institution (without needing to do the Abitur).

To start an apprenticeship, also known as vocational training, it is generally necessary to have a school leaving qualification.

The school leaving examination has a big influence on which vocational training you can do. Getting good grades will increase your child's chances of finding the training place they want. In vocational training young people learn the knowledge and skills they require to work in a specific occupation.

Dual vocational training takes place at two learning locations in alternation.

If you want to begin dual vocational training, you need to find a company that is prepared to take on the practical part of the training.

It is important to apply for dual vocational training in good time.

If the training company accepts the application, the young person signs an *Ausbildungsvertrag* (vocational training contract).

During the dual vocational training, the young person receives a monthly salary. This is known as the *Ausbildungsvergütung*. The amount depends on the job the young person is training for, and is written in the *Berufsausbildungsvertrag*. The amount increases during every training year.

The theoretical part of the dual vocational training takes place in the Berufsschule. It also aims to deepen the general educational level of the students. The job that the adolescents want to learn decides which Berufsschule (apprenticeship college) they will attend.

The vocational colleges focus on different occupational fields. There are, for example, industrial, commercial, home economics or agricultural vocational colleges. Many Berufsschulen are state-funded. But there are also private vocational colleges where tuition fees are usually charged. Lessons at the Berufsschule take place at various times. Lessons can take place weekly on specific weekdays. They can also take place in blocks of several months. If this is the case, then the practical part of the training at a company also takes place in blocks.

The vocational training usually takes 2, 3 or 3½ years. The duration depends on the school leaving qualification and the chosen occupation.

At the end of the apprenticeship, the apprentices have to pass examinations.

There are written and practical examinations. The students only receive the occupational qualification if they pass the examinations.

Adolescents with an occupational qualification in a handicraft trade are known as "gesellen" ("journeymen"). They can continue to attend a college. But they can also continue to train in their occupation. For example, they can study to become a "Meister" ("master") in their profession. This entitles them to run their own company and train other people.

There are over 300 different occupations that you can learn in the dual vocational training system.

Scan the QR code
for the Video Training
in the dual system:



THE STUDIENKOLLEG

The Studienkolleg prepares students for higher education studies at a German higher education institution (university, technical college etc.). It is particularly aimed at international students who do not fulfil the necessary requirements for direct admission to higher education studies in Germany.

The Studienkolleg offers different courses that are tailored to the individual needs of the students. These courses usually include language tuition, in order to improve the students' German skills, as well as subject-specific courses that prepare students for the subject they would like to study.

The duration of the Studienkolleg can vary according to the requirements and prior knowledge of the students. Courses usually last a year, but can also be shorter or longer.

After successfully completing the Studienkolleg, the students take an assessment test known as a *Feststellungsprüfung* that enables them to apply for higher education studies at a German higher education institution. If they pass the assessment test, they fulfil the requirements for direct admission to higher education studies in Germany.

HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES (STUDIUM)

In Germany, higher education studies are possible at various institutions. For example: Higher education colleges, university, art colleges and music colleges.

You are allowed to study at a Fachhochschule when you have passed the Fachhochschulreife (advanced technical college certificate) examination. With the university entrance qualification (Abitur), you can also study at a higher education institution.

Higher education studies involve a lot of independent learning. The students have to actively shape the route to their career.

During higher education studies, the students must explore intensively the topics of their chosen subject(s) at an academic level.



For subjects with restricted admission, you need particularly good grades in your Abitur in order to get a place. Sometimes you have to take an entrance examination. For most subjects, you need to apply. You use the platform hochschulstart.de for this. For certain courses of study, you need to apply directly to the university or higher education institution.

The information and application portal:



For most study courses you need excellent knowledge of German. If you have the Allgemeine Hochschule Hochschulreife (general university entrance qualification), you automatically prove that you have good German skills. Alternatively, you can do a separate examination as proof. For some subject, excellent knowledge of English or other languages is sufficient. You may need knowledge of other languages such as English or Latin for some subjects.

Some higher education institutions focus on specific subjects. For example: technical universities, teacher training colleges, art colleges, music colleges or administrative colleges. There are state-funded, private and ecclesiastic higher education institutions.

There are also higher education institutions that offer distance learning. Distance learning requires a high degree of independent learning. This means: You are learning without supervision and need to make sure yourself that you pass examinations at the right time, for example.

QUALIFICATIONS THAT CAN BE GAINED AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG

The state-run and state-approved higher education institutions in Baden-Württemberg offer bachelor's (BA) and master's (MA) as well as state examination courses. The standard period of study in bachelor's degree courses is six to eight semesters, followed by two to four semesters for a subsequent master's degree course.

The state examination is awarded in subjects that come under state supervision, and their examinations are approved by a state examining board. In this case, the higher education studies are completed with a "Staatsprüfung" (state examination).

To be admitted to postdoctoral studies (known in German as "Promotion"), it is usually necessary to have successfully completed a master's degree course. Universities are the only type of higher education institution that have the right to award doctorates in all subject areas.

Hochschulreife (higher education entrance qualification) is an umbrella term which includes different qualifications that enable study at a higher education institution.

There are three types of higher education entrance qualification in the German school system with which students can be admitted to a higher education institution (university, technical college etc.).

ALLGEMEINE HOCHSCHULREIFE

The Allgemeine Hochschulreife (general higher education entrance qualification), also known as Abitur, enables students fundamentally to access all subjects at universities or colleges as well as to do an occupational apprenticeship.

FACHHOCHSCHULREIFE

The Fachhochschulreife enables students to access higher education studies in all study subjects at any Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften (College of Applied Sciences).

FACHGEBUNDENE HOCHSCHULREIFE

The fachgebundene Hochschulreife (subject-specific university entrance qualification) is a higher education entrance qualification that enables students to study certain subjects and fields at universities and all study subjects at higher education colleges. However you can only start these kinds of courses if they come from the same field that you have acquired the fachgebundene Hochschulreife in.

ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES FOR STUDENTS

It is a good idea to begin looking for suitable accommodation at an early stage, because the housing in some cities in Baden-Württemberg is hard to find.

The respective higher education institutions and Studierendengeräte (student social associations) are there to help students find suitable accommodation. As well as providing accommodation in their own housing complexes, they also support in finding accommodation on the private housing market. The student hostels are usually the cheapest form of accommodation for students, apart from living with their parents.

There are also other providers who operate student hostels. These may be managed private companies, charities, church organisations or cooperatives.

Who is exactly responsible can vary, depending on the higher education institution, city or provider. It is, therefore, a good idea to ask the respective higher education institution or the local Studierendengerät, in order to find information about the right contact persons and responsibilities.

