



# ALLiES eGuide

## Child Welfare Work in Schools in Finland

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Child welfare work in schools in Finland is a supportive structure that takes care of children's physical, psychological and social wellbeing. Its aim is to create a healthy and safe environment for learning and growing, protect mental health, prevent social exclusion and promote the wellbeing of the school community. It is the task of child welfare work to prevent, recognize, moderate and remove learning barriers, learning difficulties and other problems related to school as early as possible.

Child welfare work supports children on the communal, group and individual levels. It is targeted at promoting caring and positive interaction in the community and it aims to provide new models of action and find solutions for supporting children's wellbeing in school. Child welfare work includes the child welfare work defined in the curriculum, school health care, as well as care and education defined in the Child Welfare Act. Child welfare work is the duty of the whole staff and also belongs to the authorities in charge. Child welfare work in schools is conducted by the principal of the school. Child welfare work is done in collaboration with homes.

The Child Welfare Team (CWT) is a multi-professional group established in each school to support child welfare work. The CWT assembles in regular meetings, the frequency of which varies according to the size of the school. In big schools the CWT gathers together in a two-hour meeting once a week. The members of this group typically include the principal, school nurse, a school counsellor, a psychologist, a social worker, a special education teacher as well as a teacher and one of the parents of the child in question. The CWT has an important role in finding solutions to everyday problems, coordinating children's and their families' processes and in organizing services. When planning supportive measures for an individual child, the child and her/his parents are involved. Child welfare work is confidential and one of its guiding principles is to respect children and their parents. It is guided by statutes concerning sharing of information and privacy protection.

The social, physical and psychological wellbeing of children can be achieved through preventive work and by arranging school's everyday work, environment and culture in such a way that they promote wellbeing. Preventive measures can include, among others:

- flexible planning of the grouping of children by considering their different abilities and learning styles
- collaboration across administrative boundaries
- the teacher can support an individual child and differentiate learning considering the needs and abilities of each child
- a child suffering from minor learning difficulties can be supported through collaboration between teachers, the special education teacher and school assistants, the staff of afternoon clubs or youth workers

