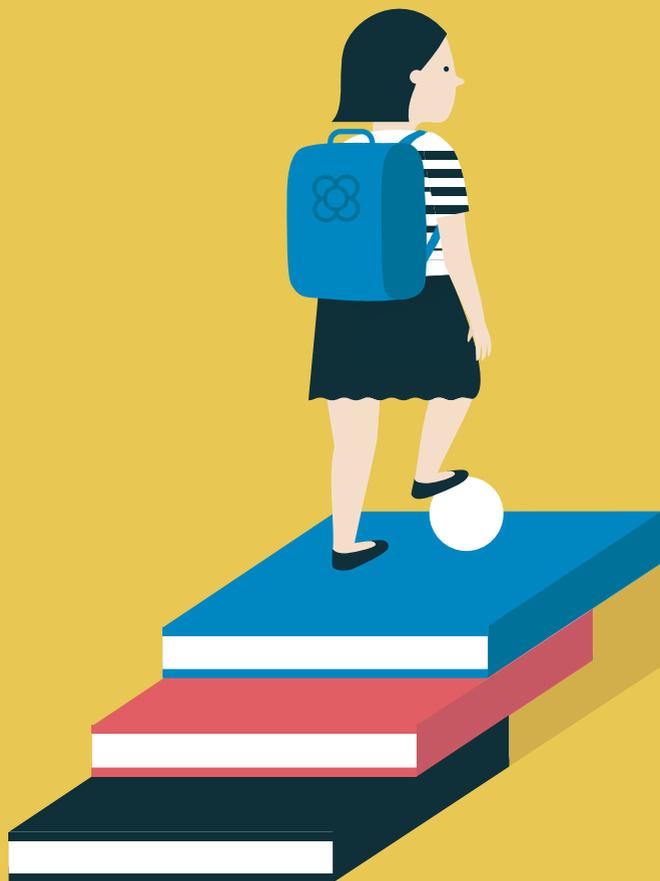


# Choosing a school in Barcelona

---

PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR  
INTERNATIONAL FAMILIES

---





Choosing a school in  
**Barcelona**

---

**PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR  
INTERNATIONAL FAMILIES**

---



**Ajuntament  
de Barcelona**

## BARCELONA, A WELCOMING TALENT DESTINATION

Barcelona is a great place to live, thanks to all the business, leisure and cultural opportunities here, as well as the local lifestyle and the captivating Mediterranean character. It is an open and diverse city that attracts peoples from all over the world and is among the top European cities chosen by international companies.

Some of the people who decide to make Barcelona their home come with their family and those with children are faced with the challenge of finding the right school. As each family is different, each one will make choices reflecting its own priorities and preferences, depending on many other factors too, such as the age of the child, languages spoken or how long they plan to live in Barcelona.

This guide is for **international families** that are searching for pre- and compulsory schooling for their children **in Barcelona or its surrounding area**.

The contents of the guide provide **key and practical information** in order to make this decision-making process as simple as possible. It gives you optimum opportunities for understanding and navigating your way in the complex field of the many and quality educational options that you will find in Barcelona.

There is also a more general purpose for this guide: to welcome and assist in the personal and professional landing of foreign people from different backgrounds

and cultures who have chosen to come and live in Barcelona. They are people who contribute a lot to the city, socially and economically, and they bring an important human capital of talent.

Barcelona has a strategy to make these people feel welcome, rooted and integrated with the rest of the population, so they will feel proud to be “new Barcelonians”.

The **City Council** launched the **Barcelona International Welcome** service with practical information for anyone moving to our city, the priority formalities to be carried out and a broad range of free activities to make new contacts and enjoy to the full everything the city offers to newcomers and long-term residents alike.

In addition, the **Barcelona International Community Day** is organised in October every year as a major annual meeting point for international talent. It is an event packed with talks, workshops, roundtables, cultural and entertainment activities, as well as a fair to make contacts with organisations and professionals, and to share and exchange experiences.

All these services and activities are open to foreign families arriving in our city.  
Welcome to Barcelona!



For more  
information:

**Barcelona  
International  
Welcome**  
[barcelona.cat/  
internationalwelcome](http://barcelona.cat/internationalwelcome)

**Barcelona  
International  
Community Day**  
[barcelona.cat/international  
communityday](http://barcelona.cat/internationalcommunityday)



# CONTENTS

## 1

### Understanding the Catalan school system

- 7 - EDUCATION ORGANISATION AND GOVERNANCE
- 8 - SCHOOLING
- 8 - TYPES OF SCHOOLS
  - Public schools (*escoles públiques*)
  - State-subsidised private schools (*escoles concertades*)
  - Private schools (*escoles privades*)
- 9 - STAGES OF EDUCATION
  - Preschool
  - Compulsory Schooling
  - Upper Secondary Education
  - Higher Education
- 16 - LANGUAGE AND CURRICULUM
- 17 - SCHOOL LIFE
  - The school day
  - The school calendar

## 2

### School provision for international families

- 19 - LOCAL SCHOOLS
  - Aula d'acollida*
- 19 - INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION
  - International Schools
  - International Baccalaureate
  - Batxibac
  - Dual Diploma

## 3

### Be inspired: International families share their experience

- 34 - KEVIN'S FAMILY: ON LANGUAGE AND ACADEMIC SKILLS
- 36 - ANOUK'S FAMILY: ON CLASSES AND CULTURE
- 38 - JOY'S FAMILY: ON INTEGRATION AND WELL-BEING
- 40 - HARRY'S FAMILY: ON ENROLMENT AND BEGINNING AT A NEW SCHOOL

## 4

### How to choose the best school for your child

- 43 - SELECTION PROCESS: STEP BY STEP
  - 1<sup>st</sup> step: Consider the needs of your child and you family
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> step: Gather information about any relevant schools
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> step: Visit relevant schools
- 44 - ENROLMENT PROCESS: STEP BY STEP
  - 1<sup>st</sup> step: Prioritise your options
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> step: Submit your application (pre-enrolment)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> step: Confirm by registering (enrolment)
- 48 - OVERVIEW OF THE ENROLMENT PROCESS AND WHEN YOU NEED HELP

## 5

### Family networks and communities

- 51 - CULTURE OF COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION
  - Barcelona International Schools Association (BISA)
- 52 - GETTING INVOLVED
  - Parents' associations: AFA is the new AMPA
  - Family Spaces, toy libraries and open schoolyards programme
  - Centre for families with teenagers
  - International and niche community groups
- 54 - AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES
- 57 - BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

### Checklists

- 58 - [THREE STEPS IN SELECTING A SCHOOL](#)
- 62 - [THREE STEPS TO ENROLLING YOUR CHILD](#)

# 1

## Understanding the Catalan school system

If you arrive in Barcelona with children, you need to understand the education system. This can be a daunting task, which can feel even more difficult if there's a language barrier.

So in this chapter we give you a brief introduction to the Catalan School System. The aim is to present the general structures to help you get an overview of how the system is organised and the different options you have when choosing the best school for your child.



## EDUCATION ORGANISATION AND GOVERNANCE

One of the main characteristics of the education system administration is **decentralisation**, as educational powers are shared between all levels of government in Spain:

- the **State**, through the Spanish Ministry of Education, works to ensure there is a uniform education system that guarantees equal access for everyone exercising their basic right to education.
- the **Autonomous Communities** (or regional governments), through Departments of Education, which are responsible for implementing and developing state laws and aspects of the education system
- the **local authorities**, focused on educational management
- the **education centres or schools**

As this guide is focussed on Barcelona and its area of influence, we will refer to the **Catalan school system**. This system falls under the framework of the Spanish Education Act (*Llei orgànica d'Educació*) and other education regulations and laws approved by the **Government of Catalonia** (*Generalitat de Catalunya*).

But to understand the governance of the local education system, you should also be aware that **Barcelona City Council** has been involved in education renewal and innovation for decades and committed to dignifying and improving public education, by building and managing schools and implementing educational projects.

As a result of this determination and long tradition, the **Barcelona Municipal Education Institute** (*Institut Municipal d'Educació de Barcelona*) was set up in 1993 to manage all the schools and education centres owned by the city.

Later, taking into account Barcelona's importance and in line with the vision of improving educational management to make it closer to ordinary citizens, the **Barcelona Education Consortium** (*Consorci d'Educació*

*de Barcelona*) was created in 2002. This consortium is a public body jointly promoted by the **Government of Catalonia** and **Barcelona City Council** as an instrument for co-management and decentralisation.

The Barcelona Education Consortium is, therefore, the sole body for education in the city of Barcelona, while for the rest of Catalonia it is the Department of Education of the Government of Catalonia.



For more information:

### Barcelona Municipal Education Institute

(*Institut Municipal d'Educació de Barcelona*) – Barcelona City Council  
[ajuntament.barcelona.cat/educacio](http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/educacio)  
(only in Catalan and Spanish)  
[barcelona.cat/en/living-in-bcn/studying](http://barcelona.cat/en/living-in-bcn/studying)

### Barcelona Education Consortium

(*Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona*)  
[edubcn.cat](http://edubcn.cat) (only in Catalan)

### Department of Education

(*Departament d'Educació*) – Government of Catalonia  
[ensenyament.gencat.cat](http://ensenyament.gencat.cat)  
(only in Catalan)  
[web.gencat.cat/ca/temes/educacio](http://web.gencat.cat/ca/temes/educacio)

### Ministry of Education and Vocational Training

(*Ministeri d'Educació i Formació Professional*) Government of Spain  
[educacionyfp.gob.es/en/](http://educacionyfp.gob.es/en/)



## SCHOOLING

All children living in Barcelona and in the rest of the country are entitled to a place in the public education system that guarantees them a free education.

**Compulsory education** spans ten years from 6 to 16 years of age. It is the **child's year of birth** that will indicate which school year/class they will attend, with the cut-off date being 31 December.

Although compulsory education is from 6 to 16 years of age, most children start in September of the year they turn 3, which is quite young compared to most countries.

The public education system is based on the principles of **equity, quality and excellence**.

It offers quality teaching that ensures **equal opportunities** for girls and boys, promotes **inclusion** and attention to **diversity** and encourages an education in **skills for life**. It promotes **integration** and is based on **multilingualism**, with Catalan as the language of instruction.

The purpose of compulsory education is to facilitate the pupils' acquisition of "**basic competences**" in different knowledge areas. Competence is defined as the ability to solve real problems, applying and linking knowledge, skills and attitudes in diverse contexts.

The Catalan education system today is implementing numerous educational innovation programmes in several fields: teacher training with new methods, the use of learning and knowledge technologies, artistic and environmental education, foreign languages, and so on. Work is also being carried out to give schools greater autonomy and boost their networking.

**Home-schooling** is very common in many countries and families choose this option for many cultural, religious or logistical reasons. In Spain, it is not legal, and this fact creates controversy. The official line is that each region must regulate home-schooling in its own way. In Catalonia, the regulations recognise a new category of education defined as "compulsory non-attendance

education". Families who practice home-schooling refer to this article, but as it has not been developed, it is unclear whether it includes them or not.

## TYPES OF SCHOOLS

In Barcelona's education system there are schools owned by public authorities and schools owned by private institutions.

Some private schools are financed with public funds through an **educational agreement** (*concert educatiu*), providing that they meet the requirements set by the education regulations. Therefore, education authorities do not allocate public funds only to public education, but also to the private sector, mainly in the compulsory education stages.

Taking into account both the ownership of the schools and how are they financed, there are three main types of schools to become familiar with when moving to Barcelona.

### Public schools (*escoles públiques*)

They are fully state-funded, tuition-free and secular. All schools are owned by the public authorities; in Barcelona this means either the regional government of Catalonia or Barcelona City Council and they are run by the *Barcelona Education Consortium*.

The curriculum is approved by the Catalan local authorities in accordance with the Spanish Education Act and they follow a specific enrolment process.



Be aware that publicly-owned schools may be free, but extra services and activities, such as lunch-break services (including or excluding a meal), excursions, and some books can imply some extra costs.

## State-subsidised private schools (*escoles concertades*)

These schools are privately owned and managed and may or may not be secular. They voluntarily participate in the subsidy programme (*concert educatiu*) of the Catalan Government by complying with established requirements to receive subsidies that cover the cost of basic educational needs.

These schools do not charge for tuition but any other expenses beyond the scope of compulsory education are paid for by the families on a voluntary basis. In practice, this means a monthly cost of between €80 and €500, depending on the school.

The curriculum of these schools is approved by the Catalan Department of Education, in accordance with the Spanish Education Act. Likewise, they follow the same enrolment process, as they are governed by the same legislation.

## Private schools (*escoles privades*)

Private schools do not receive government subsidies, so the cost of schooling is mainly covered by families, although they may also receive support from private institutions such as foundations and religious orders.

Opening and running a private school requires Catalan Department of Education authorisation to ensure they meet the necessary quality standards. The curriculum must also be approved by the education authority, in accordance with the Spanish Education Act.

Purely private schools use their own, separate enrolment criteria and procedures which you will need to learn about on a case-by-case basis.

## STAGES OF EDUCATION

The education system is broken down into stages, levels and years. This is illustrated in **Figure 1** (page 10).

Below, in **Figure 2** (pages 12-13), you can see a comparative chart showing the **equivalences** between the local Catalan system and selected foreign school systems.

Since this guide is mainly focused on the preschool and compulsory education system, you will only find a little information on non-compulsory secondary education and higher education. To make sure you get all the information you are looking for, we offer you the basics and a recommendation for further research in the following overview.

### Preschool

Preschool education is split into two levels: **Nursery School** (*Escola Bressol*), 0-3 years old, and **Pre-Primary School** (*Educació Infantil*), 3-6 years old.

While not compulsory, the vast majority of local children attend preschool from the school year they turn 3 until they are 6. This means that most nursery schools only cater for children up to this age, although there are a few exceptions.

**Barcelona City Council** owns **101 nursery schools** (*escoles bressol*), which take children aged between 4 months and 3 years old. The Government of Catalonia owns **5 additional nursery schools** (*llars d'infants*). In fact, Barcelona is the city with the most public owned nursery schools in Spain and the number will increase in the coming years.

The costs of public nurseries are publicly subsidised and the fees that must be paid are calculated by means of a **social pricing system**, according to the income and number of members of the family unit the child belongs to. Places are assigned according to a **points system**, where points are given for various concepts such as address, family income and other circumstances. The enrolment process takes place in spring.

Figure 1

## CATALAN SCHOOL SYSTEM: SIMPLIFIED CHART

→ Conditional access    → Access test required

### Higher education

UNIVERSITY DEGREE  
(*Estudis de grau*)

HIGHER VOCATIONAL TRAINING  
(*Cicles formatius de grau superior*)

### Upper secondary education

PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION  
(*Batxillerat*)  
16-18 years

BASIC VOCATIONAL TRAINING  
(*Cicles formatius de grau mitjà*)

### Secondary education (compulsory)

COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION  
(*Educació secundària obligatòria, ESO*)  
12-16 years

### Primary education (compulsory)

PRIMARY SCHOOL  
(*Educació primària*)  
6-12 years

### Preschool

PRE-PRIMARY  
(*Educació infantil*)  
3-6 years

NURSERY SCHOOL  
(*Escola Bressol*)  
0-3 years

Source: Compiled internally based on information from the Catalan Department of Education.



For further information on public nursery schools:

**Escoles Bressol - Ajuntament de Barcelona**  
[ajuntament.barcelona.cat/escolesbressol](http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/escolesbressol)  
 (only in Catalan and Spanish)

In Barcelona you will also find a big number of **private nursery schools** and **kindergartens**. What they offer and the cost varies, so we suggest you visit their official homepages and get in touch with them to find out more about the different projects available.

**Public pre-primary education** is free and universal, from 3 years old, which means children are guaranteed a place (though not necessarily at the parent's first choice of school). It is most commonly located in the same building as the Primary School. Children who have attended Pre-Primary are also registered for Primary School before the enrolment process begins. This is important to take into account if you want your child to attend the compulsory school system when they reach the age of 6.

## Compulsory Schooling

Compulsory schooling is from the **ages of 6 to 16** and divided into **Primary School** (*escola primària*) and **Compulsory Secondary Education** (*educació secundària obligatòria, ESO*). With this scheme, successful completion of primary school is followed by the lower secondary level where students follow the same general common core curriculum.

This organisation is very common in Southern European countries, but if you don't have any previous experience in this part of the world it may come as a surprise to you that your child will, in most cases, have to change school after finishing primary education. However, each public primary school has an assigned or affiliated secondary school, which ensures educational continuity. The affiliated primary and secondary schools

make a huge effort to coordinate projects, methods and educational content to facilitate students' transition.

## Primary School (*Escola Primària*)

This runs from *primer de Primària* (5-6 years old) to *sisè de Primària* (11-12 years old). There are three two-year stages or cycles making up the total of six academic years.

### Subjects and knowledge areas in Primary School

#### Language area

- Catalan language and literature
- Spanish language and literature
- First foreign language

#### Maths area

- Maths

#### Environmental knowledge area

- Knowledge of the natural environment
- Knowledge of the social and cultural environment

#### Artistic area

- Artistic education (visual and plastic, music and dance)

#### Physical education area

- Physical education

#### Education in values area

- Education in civic and social values or religious education

In all subjects, cross-cutting work is done in reading comprehension, oral and written expression, audio-visual communication, information and communication technologies, entrepreneurship and civic and constitutional education.

Figure 2

**SCHOOL SYSTEM EQUIVALENCES**

Years old	Catalan		British		French			German	
0 - 3	Escola bressol		Preschool		Crèche			Krippe	
3 - 4	Educació infantil	P3	Early Years	Nursery	École Maternelle	Petite Section	Kindergarten	1. Jahr	
4 - 5		P4		Reception		Moyenne Section		2. Jahr	
5 - 6		P5	Year 1	Grande Section		3. Jahr			
6 - 7	Educació primària	1r primària	Primary Education	Year 2	École primaire	CP	Grundschule	1. Klasse	
7 - 8		2n primària		Year 3		CE1		2. Klasse	
8 - 9		3r primària		Year 4		CE2		3. Klasse	
9 - 10		4t primària		Year 5		CM1		4. Klasse	
10 - 11		5è primària		Year 6		CM2		5. Klasse	
11 - 12		6è primària		Year 7				6. Klasse	
12 - 13	Educació secundària obligatòria (ESO)	1r ESO	Secondary Education	Year 8	Collège	Cinquième	Gymnasium	7. Klasse	
13 - 14		2n ESO		Year 9		Quatrième		8. Klasse	
14 - 15		3r ESO		Year 10		Troisième		9. Klasse	
15 - 16		4t ESO		Year 11		Seconde		10. Klasse	
16 - 17	Batxillerat	1r batxillerat	Sixth Form	Year 12	Lycée	Première		11. Klasse	
17 - 18		2n batxillerat		Year 13		Terminale		12. Klasse	

Source: Compiled internally through internet research



Italian		Japanese		Swiss		US		Years old
Nido d'infanzia								0 - 3
Scuola dell'infanzia	Sezione 3 anni	Yochien	1st year	Kindergarten	1. Jahr	Early Childhood	Preschool (PK3)	3 - 4
	Sezione 4 anni		2nd year		2. Jahr		Pre-Kindergarten (PK4)	4 - 5
	Sezione 5 anni		3rd year		3. Jahr		Kindergarten (K5)	5 - 6
Scuola primaria	1° Elementare	Shogakko	1st year	Primarstufe	1. Klasse	Elementary School	Grade 1	6 - 7
	2° Elementare		2nd year		2. Klasse		Grade 2	7 - 8
	3° Elementare		3rd year		3. Klasse		Grade 3	8 - 9
	4° Elementare		4th year		4. Klasse		Grade 4	9 - 10
	5° Elementare		5th year		5. Klasse		Grade 5	10 - 11
Scuola secondaria di 1° grado	1° Media	Chugakko	6th year	Sekundarstufe I	6. Klasse	Middle School	Grade 6	11 - 12
	2° Media		1st year		7. Klasse		Grade 7	12 - 13
	3° Media		2nd year		8. Klasse		Grade 8	13 - 14
Liceo	1° Liceo	Kotogakko	3rd year	Sekundarstufe II	9. Klasse	High School	Grade 9	14 - 15
	2° Liceo		1st year		10. Klasse		Grade 10	15 - 16
	3° Liceo		2nd year		11. Klasse		Grade 11	16 - 17
	4° Liceo		3rd year		12. Klasse		Grade 12	17 - 18

There is no **streaming** in primary education and students in the same class are not separated into different levels. This means that all classes are mixed ability. This is not only a strength for the learning community but also for the long-term ambition of preparing all students for a good and successful life, social as well as professional.

Most schools in Barcelona and Catalonia have a strong culture of close collaboration between parents and teachers. All schools have **parent consultations** during the school year, and as a parent you are always allowed to contact the relevant teacher if you need to discuss the progress and/or possible challenges of your child.

**Homework** can be given from the first year, and **examinations** can start from around the third year of primary school.

Pupil **evaluation** takes the form of continuous and global assessment, taking into account their overall progress in the different subjects and degree of achievement in the basic competences in each knowledge area.

### Evaluation

The marks are not reflected in numbers in Primary Education but in the following terms:

- **Excellent achievement**  
(*assoliment excel·lent, AE*)
- **Notable achievement**  
(*assoliment notable, AN*)
- **Satisfactory achievement**  
(*assoliment satisfactori, AS*)
- **“Non-achievement”**  
(*no assoliment, NA*)

If pupils have not attained a satisfactory level of education, they may have **to repeat a year** before moving onto the next stage, but only if the teaching team consider that repetition could be a positive measure for the student’s academic and personal development. Before repeating a year, an **individualised support plan** may also be drawn up to allow students to catch up.



### Compulsory Secondary Education (*Educació Secundària Obligatòria, ESO*)

This runs from *primer d’ESO* (12-13 years old) to *quart d’ESO* (15-16 years old). It is a four-year course of compulsory secondary education.

ESO is divided into two cycles: one from 12 to 14 and the other from 14 to 16 years old. However, students have the right to stay on at school until they are 18.

In both cycles, there are core compulsory subjects and optional subjects. There are also **curricular diversification programmes**, from the third year on, geared towards obtaining the ESO certificate.

**Homework** and **examinations** can start from the first year of ESO, and families are expected to motivate their children and help them become more independent.

Students are **regularly assessed** and **from an overall perspective**. As happens in the case of Primary Education, a few students may have **to repeat a year** if they don’t reach the expected level of attainment. But, if necessary, an **individualised support plan** can be drawn up to allow the students to reach the corresponding level of competences for that academic year.

If students complete the four years and pass the expected standards, they will get a **Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate** (*Graduat en Educació Secundària Obligatòria, GESO*). With this certificate they can then move onto the next level of upper secondary education.

## Upper Secondary Education

Students who finish Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) can go on to Upper Secondary Education. At this level they can choose **Pre-university Education** or **Vocational Education and Training**. Either way, it is not compulsory and there are different modalities: day, evening and online.

In Catalonia it is common for young people to go on to **Upper Secondary Education** but some may choose to leave the education system at this level.

### Pre-university Education (*Batxillerat*)

This prepares students for university and is for those who wish to continue their academic schooling and get a higher education. It takes two years to get the *Batxillerat Certificate*, after which students have to sit an entrance exam to get into university.



Public *Batxillerat* programmes do not charge for tuition.

### Basic Vocational Training (*Cicles Formatius de Grau Mitjà*)

**Basic Vocational Training** is intended to provide knowledge, skills and competences required for jobs such as a video technician, sound technician, data technician, electrician, nurse, hairdresser and so on.

Course hours vary but one part is devoted to training in education centres and another to practical training in workplaces. **Basic Vocational Training** (*Cicles Formatius de Grau Mitjà*) only lasts two years and, as its name suggests, only provides a basic level of training.

## Higher Education

In Catalonia **higher education** is classified according to whether the institutions provide university or non-university education. A university degree requires students to do an access test, while access to higher vocational training is conditional on other qualifications.

### Higher Vocational Training (*Cicles Formatius de Grau Superior*)

This lasts a further two years and students must have turned 18 to start. It is open to direct entry from students who have passed their *Batxillerat*. If students pass their *Cicles Formatiu de Grau Superior* they obtain access to the university system.

### University degree (*Estudis de grau*)

Students must pass an entrance exam (PAU, which stands for *Proves d'Accés a la Universitat*) to access these studies. Either that or have a vocational qualification or equivalent academic level. If students come from another educational system, they should familiarise themselves with the process of having their certificate or diploma recognised by the government (*homologació*).



For more information on university studies:

**Study in Catalonia - Generalitat de Catalunya**  
[studycatalonia.gencat.cat/en](http://studycatalonia.gencat.cat/en)

For support in the process of recognition of foreign university qualifications, check at:

**University Qualifications Mentoring Service (SARU)**

## ▶ LANGUAGE AND CURRICULUM

Catalan and Spanish are the two official languages of Catalonia. Catalan is mostly used as the language of instruction for learning in the region's education system, in both public and state-subsidised private schools.

After completing compulsory schooling, students are fluent in both official languages (Spanish and Catalan) and have adequate knowledge of at least one foreign language. This language is generally English but, in some schools, it may be French or German.

Taking into consideration the curriculum and the language of instruction, three options are available:

### Local Curriculum – Local Language

Public schools in Catalonia follow a curriculum that must be approved by the Catalan Department of Education in accordance with the Spanish Education Act (LOE). In school the spoken language is mainly Catalan since this is the co-official language of the region along with Spanish. Students joining the public education system who don't speak either of the official languages have the right to receive special language support. Schools must provide newly arrived students with a personalised welcome and, specifically, language services that allow them to begin learning Catalan.

### Local Curriculum – Foreign Language

We also define these schools as multilingual schools. They follow the local curriculum, school calendar and holidays but use a foreign language of instruction, either in whole or in part. These schools are generally private, but may be state-subsidised, which will greatly affect the fees. Students at these schools include local children looking for an intercultural environment and a foreign language focus as well as children of expats.

### Foreign Curriculum – Foreign Language

Schools that teach a foreign curriculum also use a foreign language of instruction. Some schools are sponsored by foreign governments and give preference to citizens of that country or students who have previously studied there but they are open to anyone. Others are not associated with any government but simply follow the curriculum of a different country and have been certified by the appropriate body. Some schools have negotiated agreements with local authorities to offer students double certificates when they graduate. Barcelona currently has schools that follow, among others, the British, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Swiss and US education systems. Some of these opt to send students to the local secondary education system to facilitate acceptance at Catalan and Spanish universities. Others continue with the foreign curriculum and their students apply to universities in their home country.



## SCHOOL LIFE

In line with the development of Catalan culture and the local lifestyle, you will find that Catalan schools are very diverse with each adapting to local needs and opportunities. This means that all schools – public as well as state-subsidised and private schools – have different educational projects and may also differ in their educational approach and methodologies. In general, you will find many innovative schools with the flair, creativity and capacity to absorb different influences while promoting tolerance and respect.

We suggest you visit a selection of schools at the end of the academic year before you plan to take your child to school.

### The school day

The **daily timetable** varies depending on the type of school and the level of schooling.

In primary education most children go to school from early morning until midday, with a long lunch break before going back to school in the afternoon. Both private and public primary schools normally look after a child from the beginning to the end of the school day (8-9am to 4-5pm). School lunch may be available, although some children take a packed lunch or go home. Lunch is considered the main meal of the Spanish day, and if your children eat the school lunch, they will be encouraged to eat the substantial meal alongside other children.

In secondary education some schools start around 8–8.30 am and finish around 2.30–5.30 pm, depending on the day of the week. In some cases, secondary schools might not provide supervision during the lunch break, and your child will either have to go home or you will need to pick them up.



Be aware that homework may take up some of your child's daily schedule.

## The school calendar

Spain has some of the longest **school holidays** anywhere in Europe. Half-terms do not really exist, though this is compensated by the numerous **local festival days** and **non-teaching days** that give children and teachers more breaks in the school year.

There are usually two week' holiday over **Christmas**, one week over **Easter** and a long **summer holiday** of around 10–11 weeks. Children moving up from primary to secondary school will sometimes get an extra week or two of summer holiday, which may even include an optional end-of-school trip abroad.

The school year will vary depending on the type of school and the level of schooling. Most of Catalonia's schools are governed by a school calendar that runs from September to June, divided into three terms:

- **Autumn term** – runs from the second week of September to the Christmas holidays (a few days before 25 December), which last approximately 15 days.
- **Winter term** – begins two days after Epiphany (6 January) and lasts until the Easter holidays (which vary between March and April, depending on the year). The Easter Week holidays last for around 10 days.
- **Spring term** – starts after Easter and finishes towards the end of June, before the Sant Joan festival (24 June).

The summer holidays last until the second week of September.



Be aware that some international private schools may vary slightly from this general calendar.

Baccalaureate students finish their studies in May and have a month to prepare for their university entrance exams.

# 2

## School provision for international families

In this chapter we give you a brief overview of what pre- and compulsory schools offer and the international education you will find in Barcelona and the Barcelona area that might be of special interest to international families.

We know that one of the main decisions you must consider when choosing a school is whether you prefer a local and/or an international education for your child. The following sections will guide you in making the best decision based on your specific needs and circumstances.



## ▶ LOCAL SCHOOLS

In this guide, local schools are defined as public and state-subsidised private schools that are following a local curriculum using the local languages as languages of instruction.

If you are planning on staying for a longer period in Catalonia, then a local school may be a good option for your child. The local schools in the Catalan Education System are of good quality and a local choice will make it easier for you and your family to **integrate into Catalan society**. Teachers in Catalan public schools are highly qualified and care about their teaching. They are keen to innovate and introduce new methodologies to improve results.

There are many advantages to a local school. First, the **lower costs** are not only good economically, they also ensure a **diverse and versatile learning environment** where students interact in a social community that reflects the surrounding local society. (This diversity is naturally greater if you choose a public school over a state-subsidised private school). The possibility of socialising with different kinds of people with different perspectives on life will make your child highly reflective and, often, more confident in a variety of social situations.

Another advantage is the fact that your child will be **fully bilingual** (if not multilingual, depending on your private situation and whether the school offers a second language other than English). This will not only make it easier for your child to find local Catalan friends but also help the whole family to a better, long-term **integration into the local community**. A further benefit of choosing a local school is that, in most cases, it will be **close to your home**, which will enable your child to walk to and from school without being dependent on a lift.

Furthermore, public schools are **more accessible and inclusive** for children with learning disabilities or other special circumstances. Each of Barcelona's districts has a psychoeducational advisory and guidance team known as an **EAP** (*equip d'assessorament i orientació psicopedagògica*) which specialises in supporting families that have children with specific educational needs.



Many of the State-subsidised private schools and a few public schools are multilingual and offer different kinds of international certificates. In this guide, these schools are considered multilingual schools.

## *Aula d'acollida*

Local public schools have a support initiative called an **aula d'acollida** or 'welcoming classroom' for **newly arrived students** who don't speak Catalan and therefore have the right to receive special language support. The general aim is to strengthen and consolidate social cohesion, intercultural education and the Catalan language in a multilingual framework.

This means that Catalan schools must implement measures to welcome students and their families, providing an integration itinerary that enables them to learn Catalan. The structure of the *aula d'acollida* is flexible and adapts to the individual needs of the participants. It is intended that students will be able to interact with the students of their corresponding class and follow ordinary classes in the language of instruction.

## ▶ INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

**International education, or international schooling, is defined in this guide as schooling that uses a curriculum or language of instruction other than the official language of the local community. This includes foreign schools, but also multilingual or local schools that offer an international certificate.**

If you are planning a short-term stay in Catalonia, you may feel it is worth prioritising an easy transition for your child, although the immersion will be beneficial in future years. International education in Barcelona and the Barcelona area is a great option for expat families but you need to do some research to see what best suits the needs of your child.

There are many advantages to choosing an international education for your child. First, it is an **easy way for your family to pass through** if you are only likely to spend a few years living in Catalonia. Your children may be able to follow their native curriculum or choose an international education that gives them the option of continuing their studies in other countries. In general, international students will have better options of remaining proficient at reading and writing in their **native language**, while becoming fluent in a second or third one. For example, it is worth taking into account that local schools in Catalonia are taught primarily in Catalan, while a foreign or bilingual school will place more emphasis on Spanish or English.

Another advantage to consider is that international students are **exposed to a diverse range of cultures** in a multinational environment. In particular, if you choose a subsidised private school that follows a bilingual (English/Catalan) curriculum, your child will meet both Spanish and foreign pupils.

Finally, many expat families prioritise a private international school because these are more likely to boast **better facilities** and a more “campus-like” feeling due to private sector funding and the (often pricey) fees.

**!** Be aware that the field of international education is very varied, so the promoter of this guide will not be held liable for the information contained in the guide. Interested parties must verify the information regarding any school they wish to contact.

In the following pages of this chapter we help you to get an overview of the international schools as well as the schools that are following the Catalan curriculum but, at the same time, offering different kinds of international certificates. These schools are not considered as international schools but are still described under the umbrella of international education.

The descriptions are followed by alphabetical lists of relevant schools. Listed schools are selected by means of systematic online research. In other words, all data is collected from the internet and the information shared in official webpages. Some schools will appear in more than one list.

## International Schools

In Barcelona and its metropolitan area there are **about 40 schools that offer an international education**.

The international schools in the city of Barcelona are mainly located in the districts of Sarrià-Sant Gervasi and Les Corts. But there are also quite a few international options in the surrounding metropolitan area with significant expat communities in cities such as Sant Cugat, Sitges, Gavà, Esplugues de Llobregat and La Garriga, to name but a few.

Many of the schools that offer an international education in the metropolitan area follow a **foreign curriculum**. In fact, there are schools that follow the **British, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Swiss and US** education systems. Other schools teach the **national curriculum** in a foreign language.

In this guide we consider international schools to include foreign schools that teach a foreign curriculum and local schools that teach a local curriculum in a foreign language. **Table 1** (pages 22-23) comprises an alphabetical list of those schools and is followed by **Figure 3** (pages 24-25) which features a map with their location.



## International Baccalaureate

In 1968 a Geneva-based non-profit organisation created a diploma for students who travelled internationally during their teenage years. This International Baccalaureate (IB) offers a continuum of international education. The programmes encourage both personal and academic achievement, challenging students to excel in their studies and in their personal development.

Today, the programme has four top-quality, highly demanding educational programmes for students aged 3 to 19 all over the world. For more than 50 years now, these IB programmes have been renowned for their first-class academic level and rigour. There are currently more than one million IB students at around 5,000 schools in 150 countries.

Students that successfully finish the IB programme are eligible to apply to many universities all over the world.

There are currently 20 schools in the Barcelona area that offer the IB, one of which is a public secondary school. See **Table 2** (pages 26-27). The language of instruction at IB schools varies, meaning that the International Baccalaureate can be studied in several languages (including Spanish, English and French).



Many state-subsidised private schools offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum. Be aware that several schools in Barcelona teach the IB with Spanish as the language of instruction.



For more information:

**International Baccalaureate**  
**ibo.org**



## Batxibac

In 2010 the Catalan Department of Education and the French Ministry of Education created the Batxibac (Catalan Batxillerat plus French Baccalauréat) programme.

This programme follows a mixed curriculum with one-third of class hours taught in French, following the French curriculum, plus classes in French language, literature and history.

In order to be accepted on the Batxibac programme, students must prove they have a basic level of French, equivalent to B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Students that successfully complete this curriculum obtain the Catalan Batxillerat certificate and then, upon passing an additional external exam in French, the French Baccalauréat.

This option is widely available at both public and private schools. Have a look at **Table 3** (pages 28-29).



Further information:

**Batxibac**  
**[xtec.gencat.cat/ca/curriculum/  
batxillerat/baccalaureat/](http://xtec.gencat.cat/ca/curriculum/batxillerat/baccalaureat/)**  
(only in Catalan)

Table 1

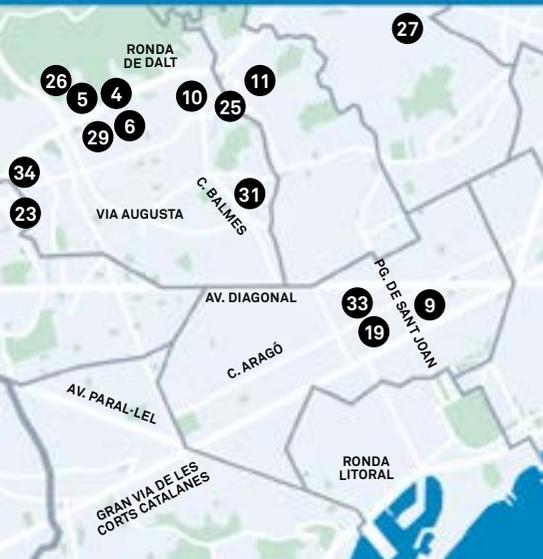
**INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS IN THE BARCELONA AREA**

School	Location	Age of enrollment		
		0-5	6-9	10-12
Akua School	Santa Coloma de Cervelló		x	x
American School of Barcelona	Esplugues de Llobregat		x	x
Anne Sullivan International School	Pallejà		x	x
Barcelona Montessori School	Barcelona	1	x	9
Benjamin Franklin International School	Barcelona		x	x
Col·legi John Talabot	Barcelona		x	x
Colegio Hatikva	Sant Cugat del Vallès	1	x	x
Deutsche Schule Barcelona	Esplugues de Llobregat		x	x
École Française Ferdinand de Lesseps	Barcelona		x	11
English Academy Santa Claus	Barcelona		x	x
English School Barcelona	Barcelona		x	x
ES International School	El Prat de Llobregat			x
Escoles Betlem	Premià de Dalt	x	x	x
European International School of Barcelona	Sant Cugat del Vallès	x	x	x
Gresol International - American School	Terrassa	x	x	x
Hamelin Laie International School	Montgat	x	x	x
Highlands School Barcelona	Esplugues de Llobregat	1	x	x
International Rural School	Llinars del Vallès		x	x
Istituto Italiano Statale Comprensivo di Barcellona	Barcelona		x	x
Japanese School in Barcelona	Sant Cugat del Vallès		5	x
Kensington School	Barcelona		x	x
Lycée Français Bel Air	Sant Pere de Ribes		x	x
Lycée Français de Barcelone	Barcelona		x	x
Lycée Français de Gavà - Bon Soleil	Gavà		x	x
Moderato Montessori Barcelona	Barcelona	1	x	x
Oak House School	Barcelona		x	x
Princess Margaret School	Barcelona		x	x
Richmond International School	Sant Pere de Ribes		x	x
Santa Clara International School	Barcelona	x	x	x
Santa Maria del Pino	Alella		x	x
Schweizerschule Barcelona	Barcelona		x	x
SEK Catalunya International School	La Garriga	x	x	x
St. Nicholas School	Barcelona		x	x
St. George's School	Barcelona	2	x	x
St. Patrick's International School	Sant Joan Despí	x	x	x
St. Paul's School	Barcelona		x	x
St. Peter's School	Barcelona	1	x	x
The British College of Gavà	Gavà		x	x
The British School of Barcelona	Castelldefels / Sitges		x	x
The International School of Catalunya (ISCAT)	La Garriga		x	x
The Olive Tree School	Sant Pere de Ribes		x	x
Zürich Schule	Barcelona	2	x	x



		Language of instruction							Origin of curriculum	
12-16	16-18	SPANISH	CATALAN	ENGLISH	FRENCH	GERMAN	ITALIAN	JAPANESE	HEBREW	FOREIGN ORIGIN
		x	x	x						American
		x	x	x						British
x	x			x						American
x		x	x	x						
x		x	x	x					x	
x	x					x				German
					x					French
		x	x	x						English
x		x	x	x						
x	x			x						American
x	x	x	x	x						
x	x	x	x	x						American
x	x	x	x	x						
x	x	x		x						American
x				x						British
x	x						x			Italian
15								x		Japanese
x	x			x						British
x	x				x					French
x	x				x					French
x	x				x					French
x	x	x	x	x						British (Primary)
x		x	x	x						
x	x			x						British
x	x	x	x	x						
x	x	x	x	x						
x	x	x	x	x						
x	x					x				Swiss
x	x	x	x	x						
x	x	x	x	x						
x	x			x						British
x	x			x						British
x	x			x						British
x	x			x						British
x		x	x	x						British
x		x	x	x		x				British





**Figure 3**  
**INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS**  
**IN THE BARCELONA AREA**

- 1 Akua School
- 2 American School of Barcelona
- 3 Anne Sullivan International School
- 4 Barcelona Montessori School
- 5 Benjamin Franklin International School
- 6 Col·legi John Talabot
- 7 Colegio Hatikva
- 8 Deutsche Schule Barcelona
- 9 École Française Ferdinand de Lesseps
- 10 English Academy Santa Claus
- 11 English School Barcelona
- 12 ES International School
- 13 Escoles Betlem
- 14 European International School of Barcelona
- 15 Gresol International - American School
- 16 Hamelin Laie International School
- 17 Highlands School Barcelona
- 18 International Rural School
- 19 Istituto Italiano Statale Comprensivo di Barcellona
- 20 Japanese School in Barcelona
- 21 Kensington School
- 22 Lycée Français Bel Air
- 23 Lycée Français de Barcelone
- 24 Lycée Français de Gavà - Bon Soleil
- 25 Moderato Montessori Barcelona
- 26 Oak House School
- 27 Princess Margaret School
- 28 Richmond International School
- 29 Santa Clara International School
- 30 Santa Maria del Pino
- 31 Schweizerschule Barcelona
- 32 SEK Catalunya International School
- 33 St. Nicholas School
- 34 St. George's School
- 35 St. Patrick's International School
- 36 St. Paul's School
- 37 St. Peter's School
- 38 The British College of Gavà
- 39 The British School of Barcelona
- 40 The International School of Catalunya (ISCAT)
- 41 The Olive Tree School
- 42 Zürich Schule

Table 2

## SCHOOLS OFFERING INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE (IB) IN

School	Location	Age of enrollment		
		0-5	6-12	13-18
<b>Agora International School Barcelona</b>	Sant Esteve Ses Rovires	1	x	x
<b>Agora Sant Cugat International School</b>	Sant Cugat del Vallès	x	x	x
<b>American School of Barcelona</b>	Esplugues de Llobregat	x	x	x
<b>Aula Escola Europea</b>	Barcelona		x	x
<b>Benjamin Franklin International School</b>	Barcelona		x	x
<b>Col·legi Montserrat</b>	Barcelona	x	x	x
<b>Col·legi Sant Miquel dels Sants</b>	Vic		x	x
<b>Col·legi Xaloc</b>	L'Hospitalet de Llobregat	x	x	x
<b>Escola Voramar</b>	Barcelona	x	x	x
<b>Gresol International - American School</b>	Terrassa	x	x	x
<b>Hamelin Laie International School</b>	Montgat	x	x	x
<b>Institut Moisès Broggi</b>	Barcelona			
<b>La Salle Bonanova</b>	Barcelona		x	x
<b>Lycée Français de Gavà - Bon Soleil</b>	Gavà		x	x
<b>Oak House School</b>	Barcelona		x	x
<b>Princess Margaret School</b>	Barcelona		x	x
<b>Salesians de Sarrià</b>	Barcelona			
<b>SEK Catalunya International School</b>	La Garriga		x	x
<b>St. Peter's School</b>	Barcelona	1	x	x
<b>The British School of Barcelona</b>	Castelldefels / Sitges		x	x

# THE BARCELONA AREA

		Language of instruction				Origin of curriculum
12-16	16-18	SPANISH	CATALAN	ENGLISH	FRENCH	FOREIGN ORIGIN
X	X	X	X	X		
X	X	X	X	X		
X	X			X		American
X	X	X	X	X	X	
X	X	X	X	X		American
X	X	X	X	X		
X	X		X	X		
X	X	X	X			
X	X	X	X	X	X	
X	X	X	X	X		American
X	X	X	X	X		
X	X	X	X			
X	X				X	French
X	X	X	X	X		British (Primary)
X		X	X	X		
	X	X	X			
X	X	X	X	X		
X	X			X		
X	X			X		
X	X			X		British

Table 3

**SCHOOLS OFFERING BATXIBAC IN THE BARCELONA AREA**

School	Location	Age of enrollment	Language of instruction
Anna Ravell	Barcelona	3-18	<b>C</b> <b>E</b> <b>F</b> Secondary
Escola Pia de Terrassa	Terrassa	3-18	<b>C</b>
Escola Pia d'Igualada	Igualada	3-18	<b>C</b>
Frederic Mistral-Tècnic Eulàlia	Barcelona	3-18	<b>C</b>
Institució Cultural del CIC	Barcelona	16-18	<b>C</b>
Institut Alexandre Satorras	Mataró	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut Angeleta Ferrer i Sensat	Sant Cugat del Vallès	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut Arquitecte Manuel Raspall	Cardedeu	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut Celestí Bellera	Granollers	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut d'Argentona	Argentona	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut de Lliçà d'Amunt	Lliçà d'Amunt	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut de Sant Quirze del Vallès	Sant Quirze del Vallès	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut de Terrassa	Terrassa	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut de Vic	Vic	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut de Viladecavalls	Viladecavalls	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut Egara	Terrassa	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut Eugeni d'Ors	Vilafranca del Penedès	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut Forat del Vent	Cerdanyola del Vallès	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut Gerbert d'Aurillac	Sant Fruitós de Bages	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut Guillem de Berguedà	Berga	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut Icària	Barcelona	12-18	<b>C</b> <b>E</b>
Institut Jaume Balmes	Barcelona	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut Jaume Callís	Vic	12-18	<b>C</b>
Institut Joan Fuster	Barcelona	12-18	<b>C</b>

**C** Catalan

**E** English

**F** French



School	Location	Age of enrollment	Language of instruction
Institut Josep Lluís Sert	Castelldefels	12-18	C
Institut La Llauna	Badalona	12-18	C
Institut La Serreta	Rubí	12-18	C
Institut La Vall de Tenes	Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana	12-18	C
Institut Lluís de Peguera	Manresa	12-18	C
Institut Lluís Domènech i Montaner	Canet de Mar	12-18	C
Institut Manuel de Cabanyes	Vilanova i la Geltrú	12-18	C
Institut Mediterrània	Castelldefels	12-18	C
Institut Menéndez y Pelayo	Barcelona	12-18	C
Institut Milà i Fontanals	Igualada	16-18	C
Institut Miquel Martí i Pol	Cornellà de Llobregat	12-18	C
Institut Moisès Broggi	Barcelona	12-18	C
Institut Molí de la Vila	Capellades	12-18	C
Institut Montserrat	Barcelona	12-18	C
Institut Montserrat Colomer	Sant Esteve Sesrovires	12-18	C
Institut Pau Vila	Sabadell	12-18	C
Institut Torras i Bages	L'Hospitalet de Llobregat	12-18	C
Institut Vicenç Plantada	Mollet del vallès	12-18	C
Institut Vinyes Velles	Montornès del Vallès	12-18	C
La Salle Bonanova	Barcelona	3-18	C
Lycée Français de Gavà - Bon Soleil	Gavà	3-18	F
Santa Teresa – Ganduxer	Barcelona	0-18	C
Vedruna – Gràcia	Barcelona	3-18	C
Vedruna Vall	Terrassa	3-18	C

## Dual Diploma

The Dual Diploma was created and developed by Academica in 2001 and is the official programme for the international recognition of school-leaving qualifications that allows students to obtain two qualifications at the same time: that of their **own country** and the **American High School Diploma**.

In 2009, Academica chose Spain as the base for its internationalisation project involving the creation of a structure with its own specialist personnel and implementation of the Dual Diploma. There are currently more than 450 schools in Spain that subscribe to the programme and offer the Dual Diploma to their students.

The Dual Diploma can be started in the 2nd, 3rd or 4th year of compulsory secondary education (ESO) or in the first of the final two years of pre-university education (*Batxillerat*). Students receive the same qualification as American students when they finish high school, recognised in all US states and most universities in the world.



Further information:

**Dual Diploma**  
[academica.school/?lang=en](http://academica.school/?lang=en)

Check the schools that offer a Dual Diploma in your area here:  
[academica.school/los300mejores](http://academica.school/los300mejores)





# 3

## Be inspired: International families share their experience



Decisions about schooling for your child are very personal and can be difficult. It's common and normal for parents to feel anxious about getting this decision right.

We have talked to four international families who have been through the process of choosing a school for their children in Barcelona and the Barcelona area.

In the following pages we highlight the main points from our conversations. Our intention is to share the different experiences of these families to inspire and help other international families that are looking for the best school for their children.



You can watch the videos of the interviews with the families at:  
**[barcelona.cat/choosing-a-school-testimonials](https://barcelona.cat/choosing-a-school-testimonials)**

**▶ KEVIN'S FAMILY:  
ON LANGUAGE AND  
ACADEMIC SKILLS**

Pg. 34



**▶ JOY'S FAMILY:  
ON INTEGRATION  
AND WELL-BEING**

Pg. 38



**▶ ANOUK'S FAMILY:  
ON CLASSES AND  
CULTURE**

Pg. 36



**▶ HARRY'S FAMILY:  
ON ENROLMENT AND BEGINNING  
AT A NEW SCHOOL**

Pg. 40



**KEVIN'S FAMILY:**

# On language and academic skills



*Kevin, 11, with his parents*

**Student:** Kevin (11)

**Mother:** Mireya (from Ecuador)

**Father:** Andree (from Germany)

**Type of school:** Private international school

**Name of the school:** Deutsche Schule Barcelona

We met Kevin and his family in Barcelona. Normally they spend most of their time in Cubelles where they live close to the beach and the town's cultural life.

What is not so close is Kevin's school. As with many other international families, it was a priority for Kevin and his parents for him to attend a school that offered an international language other than Catalan or Spanish. Previous contact with the public school system showed them how the local language, Catalan, has a big influence that the family were not interested in. So Kevin is now going to the German School of Barcelona, which is more than 40 kilometres from their house in Cubelles.

Kevin explains that in the future he would like to study at a German university. Furthermore, the family has relatives in Germany, which motivates Kevin to improve his German language skills.

The German School is a private school that offers a lot of academic and extracurricular activities that enable students to develop many competences. Kevin and his parents have been very happy with the welcome they have received at the school and with the links they have already established with other families and the school network.



Andree, his father, tells us about the enrolment process, saying it was a big help for them to visit different schools with Kevin. He advises other parents to listen to their children and involve them in the process of choosing their school, including giving them time to reflect on their own needs and personal preferences.

As regards the distance, Andree and Mireya both agree that location matters and that a school closer to their home would be preferable. However, the best school for Kevin is in another area which does not afford them this privilege.



On language and academic skills:

“For me languages are really important for his future and here he can learn three or four languages”

**Andree**, German entrepreneur and Kevin's father.

ANOUK'S FAMILY:

# On classes and culture



*Anouk, 17, with her mother*

**Student:** Anouk (17)

**Mother:** Marie (from France)

**Type of school:** State-subsidised private school

**Name of the school:** Escola Frederic Mistral-Tècnic Eulàlia

Anouk is the middle sister of three. She returned to Barcelona with her family seven years ago after a long period abroad.

Anouk's father is Catalan and her mother is French. This might be one of the reasons why she and her sisters have all chosen to study at a state-subsidised private school that offers the Batxibac along with other international education. However, Anouk and her mother have a lot of confidence in the local schools in Barcelona. They explain how the education system has pleasantly surprised them in terms of the enrolment process and, later, integrating and establishing social networks.

Referring to enrolment, Marie emphasizes how the system is geographically based, which ensures that you have access to one of the district schools in your area. On the other hand, she warns about the difficulty of accessing a public school if you prefer one outside your own neighbourhood.

She also shares their experience of the Catalan school system, which they both find ambitious and highly trustworthy.

The family chose a local school because they didn't want to live like expats in Barcelona. On the contrary, Marie and her partner wanted their children to be well integrated and familiar with the Catalan language and culture, as it is part of their heritage as well.

Moving back to Barcelona has helped the family realise how most teaching in Catalan schools is bilingual, practically trilingual, seeing that kids start studying Catalan, Spanish and English from a very young age. Anouk and her mother agree that it as a big plus that students learn more languages and see it as an advantage worth considering when you prioritise what is important for you and your child.

Before ending the interview, Anouk and Marie shared some advice for international families that wish to settle down in Barcelona or the surrounding metropolitan area in the future. First, they strongly recommend reflecting on what kind of education you want in the long run. Are you planning to stay in Catalonia or should you prepare for studies abroad in the future?

Another tip is related to the enrolment process. Marie suggests that you talk with all the schools you are considering, that you read all the official information and that you follow the enrolment calendar closely. She says the district education office and, above all, the school have helped them a lot with the process.



On classes and culture:

“In the Catalan (education) system contact with the teachers is close and not so much based on authority as trust”

**Marie**, French hospital nurse and Anouk's mother.



JOY'S FAMILY:

# On integration and well-being



*Joy, 4, with her little sister and parents*

**Student:** Joy (4)

**Mother:** Krystal (from England)

**Father:** Paul (born in Catalonia)

**Type of school:** Public school

**Name of the school:** Escola Pere Villa



When we asked Krystal if she had any suggestions about where would be a great place for an interview with her and her daughter Joy, she quickly invited us to a beautiful little oasis in the middle of the family neighbourhood. It was open and welcoming, so we decided to talk with the whole family.

Krystal is the mother of Joy and her little sister Ebony. She came to Barcelona looking for a vibrant, cosmopolitan city close to the beach and not far from London where she has her family. It was here she met her partner Paul, who is also the father of Joy and Ebony.

Krystal explains she was surprised by how early school begins in Catalonia. On the other hand she sees it as a great opportunity for international families, considering the benefits you get from a school network as a newcomer.

Both Krystal and Paul consider the local public school to be the best tool to integrate and for the family to learn the local language. Krystal shares her concerns about not being able to follow the communication in the local school system and how, as a mother, not being able to communicate from the beginning has made her feel disconnected from Joy's school experience. On the other hand, she sees the fact her two girls learn Catalan as a really big bonus for them. What's more, she explained that a teacher settled her anxiety when she took action and invited herself to a parent consultation.

For Joy and her family the enrolment process proved quite easy. They had some strong preferences from the beginning and knew they wanted a school with cultural diversity and a great local school project. In their experience the guidelines were quite well explained, with clear steps and open days to visit the schools they were interested in.

The family advise using the international community and talking to other international families that have gone through the process of settling down in the city before you. Learn and take all the advice you can get but you have to prioritise what is best for your family.



On integration and well-being:

“Putting your children into a local school you have to accept that they are going to learn a language that maybe you don't know but they will be well integrated”

**Krystal**, British co-founder and director of Social Fam and Joy's mother.

HARRY'S FAMILY:

# On enrolment and beginning at a new school

40



*Harry, 10, with his mother*

**Student:** Harry (10)

**Mother:** ChunYu (from China)

**Type of the school:** Private school

**Name of the school:** American School of Barcelona

Harry and his family are a great example of an expat family coming to live in Barcelona without any local networks. The family have made a huge effort to establish themselves from scratch and deal with the process of understanding the education system.

Harry came to Barcelona with his mother ChunYu in the middle of his primary education. The company that ChunYu was working for in China was opening an office in Barcelona, so she saw a great opportunity for herself to get an international career as an expat here and for Harry to get an international education. Her husband and father of the family travels between China and Spain.

When Harry and his mother first moved to Catalonia it was already decided that Harry should attend the American School of Barcelona. Today ChunYu tells us how this private international school has made the transfer to a new education system easier in terms of language, network and culture. The family highly recommend other international newcomers to follow their path and choose a private school with an international origin.

Harry highlights how everyone has been very helpful and supportive in his process of learning English. He was already a fast learner but the support from colleagues and teachers has been really appreciated.

Another thing that Harry values is the amount of homework. Compared to his old school, it is not very much and that leaves him more time to play soccer, spend time with his friends and have time for himself. He enjoys the beautiful natural surroundings, the beach and the food in Barcelona and the Mediterranean area.

Harry and his mother agree that Barcelona is a great place to live in. ChunYu describes how the city became their first choice because of its good location, the growing economy and the good investment environment. And they both continue to be happy with the expat life that they have managed to establish in the multicultural city of Barcelona.



On enrolment and beginning at a new school

“I recommend other international families choose an International School. The schools are very nice and open, and the kids fit in more easily. I advise you to apply for a school as early as possible because there are limited places available”

**ChunYu**, Chinese executive at China Construction Bank CCB Spain and Harry's mother.



# 4

## How to choose the best school for your child

How do you choose the best school for your child? Whether you are choosing a public, state-subsidised private or private school, or whether you are paying for tuition or not, careful planning is a must. In this chapter we give you a few guidelines on how to systematise your planning.



## ▶ SELECTION PROCESS: STEP BY STEP

As each family is different, each family will make choices reflecting its own priorities and preferences when deciding which school is the best for their children.

We have drawn up the following guidelines to provide the information and key questions you may consider in order to make the selection process as simple as possible. The guidelines are divided into three steps.

! Before you begin the selection process, we recommend you consider the extent to which you want to involve your child in the process. Depending on their age and personality, it may be a motivation to take part and be listened to in the reflections and final decision-making.

Remember that we all have different experiences of the school system. Be open-minded and avoid prejudices in your selection process.

### 1<sup>st</sup> | Consider the needs STEP | of your child and you family

Start your process by thinking about what kind of school you want for your child. Which **values** are important for your family and what are your expectations of an excellent learning environment? Think about your child's **personal and educational needs**. After all, the new school and neighbourhood network will accompany them through a stage of relating, living and growing that might last for several years.

How do you weigh the importance of **proximity**? Having the school close to your home might foster your child's or children's independence by going to school on their own and building up a circle of friends. But maybe the ideal school project is not in your neighbourhood. What do you regard as the best option for your child if you have to choose?

Also take the **timeframe** of you stay into account and the possible beneficial criteria of **allocation** that may provide some of your interests. See, for example, how primary and secondary schools make a huge effort to coordinate projects, methods and educational content. This enables students to connect one educational level to another and ensures educational continuity from primary to secondary school.

You may also wish to write down four or five things that are most important to you when you consider the choice of a school. And as you go through the selection process, you may want to add to and revise your notes.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> | Gather information STEP | about any relevant schools

A household's **proximity** to the school is one of the general criteria for establishing the priority order to gain access to a *local (public or state-subsidised) school*. For the purpose of applying this criterion, **catchment areas** (*àrees d'influència*) are delimited using the home address the families have used in the municipal register of residents (*empadronament*).

Consequently, your next step will be to find out which schools are in your catchment area. You will have some public schools and some state-subsidised private schools to choose from. You can also apply for a school outside of your *catchment* area but with fewer points than most other applicants, it might be more difficult to get in.

If you are going to follow the procedure of enrolling your child in a local school, you can list up to **ten schools** when you do the official application. We suggest you do an extensive study on the schools in your neighbourhood so you can finally prioritise your list.

Should you and your child prefer to apply for a private school, the application and enrolment process may not follow the same guidelines.



You will find information about how to apply on the official websites of the private schools or by contacting the relevant schools directly.

When you begin to gather information about the schools that you have considered the most relevant, we suggest you concentrate on the following: **curriculum and language of instruction, approach to learning, academic performance, school policy, special provision and facilities and services.**

In order to find the necessary information, we suggest you consult the **websites** of the schools and the Barcelona Education Consortium (in the case of Barcelona) or the Catalan Department of Education in the case of other Catalan cities.

A supplementary strategy might be to ask other families about their experience through **the school associations**, for example, the AMPA (Student Parents' Association) or AFA (Student Families' Association).

### 3<sup>rd</sup> STEP | Visit relevant schools

Visit, experience and explore as many schools as you can and meet their teams in person. That is the most reliable way for getting information and taking a decision.

We suggest you think ahead and prepare any questions or queries you would like to raise at each of your visits or meetings. You might, for example, be interested in discovering different kinds of learning environments and knowing more about a school's **culture** and educational projects from the **principals** or **head teachers**. You may also be keen to listen to the experience of **teachers, students** and other **parents**.



Be aware that most schools offer **open house** sessions in February or March for incoming families. There you will be able to tour the buildings, speak to teachers and administrators and ask any pertinent questions. To find out more details you can phone the schools you wish to visit, take a look at their websites or check the school noticeboards.

## D ENROLMENT PROCESS: STEP BY STEP

Pre-enrolment for public and state-subsidised private schools begins in early spring (March-April) for the school year starting in September but always check the official dates as they vary each year.



Be aware that the information which follows is relevant for public and state-subsidised private schools. For completely private schools, you should contact each one for more information. Also bear in mind that is very important to submit your applications and documents within the established deadline!

Enrolment is necessary at the start of each education cycle (at the ages of 3, 6, 12 and 16) or upon moving. Barcelona does not have school districts, as the whole city is considered one district, but your home address is used to indicate which schools fall into your catchment area. When enrolling children in the Catalan Education System, families may select the school of their choice.

We have drawn up the following guidelines to provide the information and key questions you may consider in order to make the enrolment process as simple as possible. The guidelines are divided into three steps.

## 1<sup>st</sup> STEP | Prioritise your options

On the application form, you will be asked to fill in your preferences, ranking the public and state-subsidised private schools you have selected. You may choose up to ten schools.

There is no guarantee your child will get into your first choice, or in fact any of the schools you have initially chosen, although in practice most children secure a place at a school on their list. The pre-enrolment form should be submitted to the school you have listed as your first preference. We suggest you fill all the spaces in case other families have a higher priority due to the points system for allocation.

**!** We strongly recommend you request a dated, stamped copy of the application for your own records.

If you have been following the guidelines in the previous section (Selection process: Step by Step) you might have already considered the priority in which you wish to order your schooling options.

However, your next step is to prioritise your school selection according to the **points system for allocation**. If a school receives more applications than its available places, the priority criteria establish which child takes precedence. Access to a school place is determined solely by the application of general criteria and, where appropriate, complementary criteria. These criteria give **eligibility scores** to families depending on various circumstances.

**!** Be aware that the priority criteria are not fixed and can vary from year to year. Interested parties must verify the information regarding the official procedures.

## Priority criteria

### General criteria

#### Proximity

Catchment area is an important factor in scores. Based on your home address, you can find out at which state schools you can get the highest scores for proximity.

- If the student's usual place of residence is in the school's catchment area
- If the workplace of the father, mother or a guardian is in the school's catchment area
- If the student's usual place of residence is in the same municipal district as the school, but not in its catchment area (only in the city of Barcelona)
- If the student's usual place of residence is in the same municipality as the school applied for in the first place but not in its catchment area

Although there is more than one option, you cannot accumulate more than one score under the proximity criterion.

#### Family benefits

- Siblings that attend the same school
- Parents or legal guardians who work at the school

#### Minimum Income

- If the mother, father or guardian is a beneficiary of income support, calculated according to children under their care

#### Disability

- Where a student or their parent, guardian or sibling has an accredited disability equal to or more than 33%

### Specific criteria

#### Affiliation

Every public primary school has an affiliated or assigned secondary school to facilitate a student's move from one educational level to another, ensuring pedagogical continuity.

- In general, affiliation is considered when a place is requested at a secondary school and it is a beneficial factor if the student applies for the affiliated school
- If you are enrolling your child in a Catalan school for the first time, this priority criterion is not relevant in your situation

### Supplementary criteria

#### Family conditions

If the student is a member of a large or single-parent family.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> STEP | Submit your application (pre-enrolment)

Once you have decided your priorities, you must fill in a **pre-enrolment form** (*sol·licitud de preinscripció*) which can be found online as well as at all schools. Pre-enrolment is essential for securing a place for your child at one of the schools in Catalonia's education system supported by public funds.

The pre-enrolment form consists of 8 sections depending on the student's family and personal situation:

1. Student's data
2. School data
3. Place applied for
4. Specific criteria
5. General criteria
6. Supplementary criteria
7. Voluntary choice on religion
8. Signed declaration

**!** The application and supporting documents must be submitted within the established time limit. Order of allocation does not imply priority or reservation of places.



## Documentation

To fill in the forms correctly, you will need to ensure that you have all the required documents. If not, you might find yourself in a rush to get hold of them before the established deadlines.

The following documents must be submitted with the pre-enrolment form. The original documentation will be returned once it has been compared with the copy submitted.

- Original and photocopy of the *Family Record Book - Llibre de Família* or other documents proving family membership
- Original and photocopy of DNI, NIE (identity number for foreign nationals), passport or other form of identification for parents or guardian, including EU citizens' state ID
- Original and photocopy of the child's DNI or alternative document if over 14 years old
- Proof of family residence (*certificat d'empadronament*)
- Original and photocopy of the child's health card (*TSI-Targeta Sanitària Individual*)

Supporting documentation for classification criteria if applicable for points (i.e. business address, financial circumstances, disability certificate, medical report)

 Identification or affiliation data of foreign students can also be credited with alternative documentation that the person can provide.

The application form and the documentation must be submitted to the school you have chosen as your first priority. This school will be your main source of information and you will receive information by email or phone when all applications are processed for reasons of equality, objectivity and personal data security.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> STEP | Confirm by registering (enrolment)

School places are distributed first through the **points system** of allocation and, then, by a draw where demand exceeds the number of places at the school.

Once the schools have finished the allocation process, a list of applicants by points will be published on the noticeboard of the school you have been assigned to. At this stage you may want to check that the assigned point score is correct and fill in an appeal if necessary.

The final **admission lists** will also appear on the school noticeboards and you will receive a direct message with your allocated school. So it is important that the contact data you notified in your pre-enrolment application are correct.



Get more information about important deadlines to keep here:  
<http://queestudiar.gencat.cat/>  
(only in Catalan and Spanish)

If necessary, a **waiting list** will be created for those not admitted directly, and in the event of **oversubscription**, you will be assigned a place at another school.

When the pre-enrolment process has ended and your child has been given a place in a school, you must confirm your registration by **enrolling** your child at the new school within the established period. Otherwise, the school will understand the student has rejected the place.



If you and your family arrive in Barcelona or the metropolitan area in the middle of the school year, you must immediately go to the Education Consortium, to find out which schools have places available for your children. For other cities in the metropolitan area, your local city council will direct you to the right office.

## **D OVERVIEW OF THE ENROLMENT PROCESS AND WHEN YOU NEED HELP**

We have done our best to explain the enrolment process (in a public or state-subsidised private school) as easily and intuitively as possible for you to get through it. **Figure 4** (page 49) provides you with a summary so you have a temporal overview of the process but bear in mind that you should check the exact dates.

However, in spite of all the guidelines, the fact is, that for many newcomers, as well as locals, enrolment can seem both stressful and frustrating. Don't hesitate to ask for assistance if you have any questions regarding your child's enrolment.

You have a number of different options, depending on whether you live in or outside Barcelona. The following information services are based in Barcelona city. If you live in the metropolitan area, your local city council will direct you to the right office.

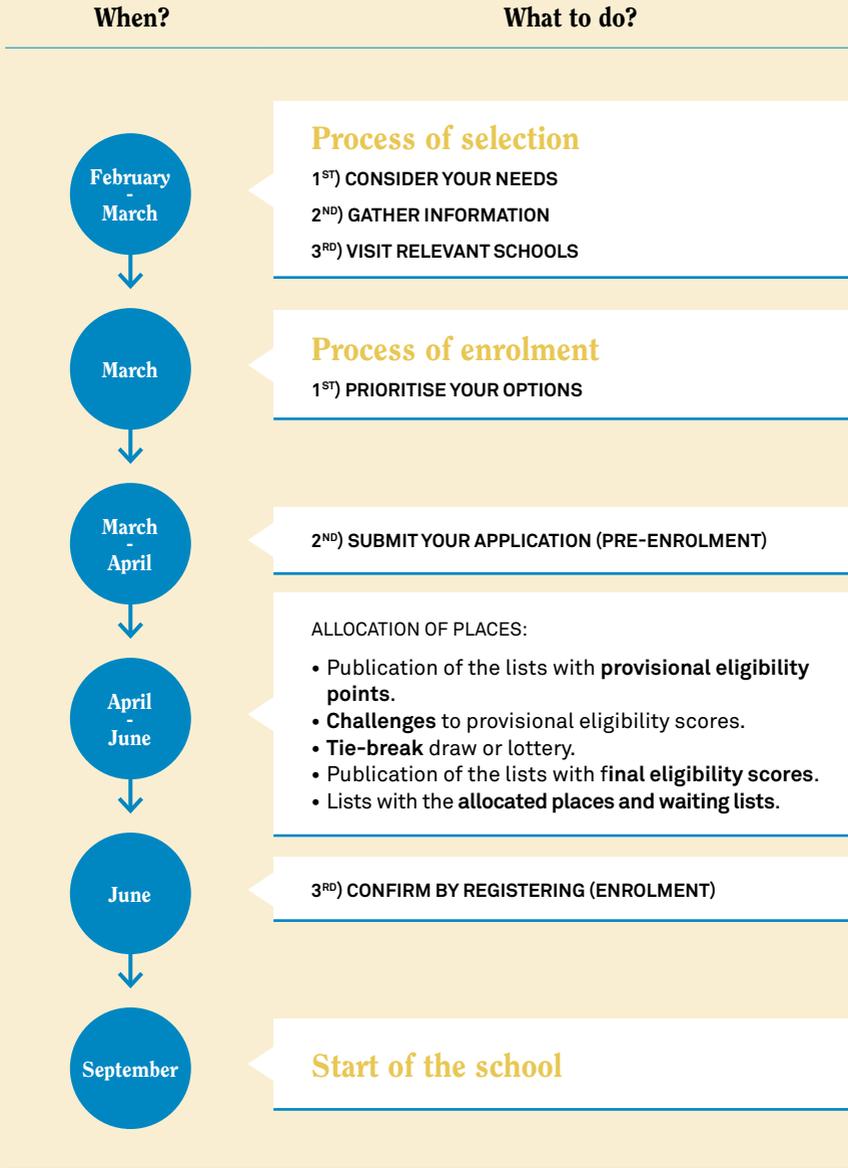


Help and Information Office in the city of Barcelona

**Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona**  
Plaça Urquinaona, 6, Barcelona

Figure 4

## OVERVIEW OF THE ENROLMENT PROCESS



# 5

## Family networks and communities

In this chapter we give you a brief introduction to the many networks and communities, as well as many facilities and services, that you will be in contact with as a parent of a child of school age. You will see that your child's community will be an excellent way for you and your family to meet new people and get involved in civil society.



## ► CULTURE OF COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

Catalonia has a great tradition of straightening out civil society by forming associations. There are recreational associations, associations that advocate human and social rights, as well as cultural, political or sports associations. And, last but not least, educational associations.

In your research of finding the best educational provision for your child, you may have already noticed how Catalan schools offer many interesting projects and are part of a large network of professionals, facilities and resources. In fact, Catalonia's entire education system is committed to offering creative and innovative projects that invite civil society involvement and the empowerment of democratic citizens.

In getting to know the culture of communication and collaboration between school, family and the surrounding network, you will experience how these communities invite discussions about all kinds of topics. You may be surprised by the amount of information and sharing you will find in different channels such as social media, school intranets or applications, email groups or face-to-face meetings. But you may also be amazed by the energy that associations put into thinking about educational issues such as gender equality, perseverance, consumption, responsibility, respect, socio-emotional education, food waste and so on.



Read more about the commitments and values or the educational system here: [familiaiescola.gencat.cat/ca/educar-creixer-en-familia/educacio-valors/](http://familiaiescola.gencat.cat/ca/educar-creixer-en-familia/educacio-valors/) (only in Catalan)

## Barcelona International Schools Association (BISA)

BISA was formed in 2012 so that the international education community could benefit from sharing information, collaborating on projects and engaging in on-going conversations with each other and leaders in the Barcelona community. BISA's approach is to help its members evaluate and meet the varying educational needs which result from providing an international education in Barcelona. BISA members meet periodically to provide opportunities for them to connect and share.



For more information:

**Barcelona International Schools Association (BISA)**  
[bisa.info](http://bisa.info)



## GETTING INVOLVED

If you move to Barcelona or the surrounding metropolitan area, you will find many options to engage you and your family in civil society. There are many ways to get in touch with local as well as other expat families. Here are a few useful resources for families planning to settle down in Barcelona.

### Parents' associations: AFA is the new AMPA

One of the ways to participate in the life of the educational community is through its associations. Most schools have strong and active parents' associations, which are a good source of information on school life, often with their own websites. Furthermore, it is an excellent resource for getting involved in your children's education process and everyday life in a new community with new impressions and learnings.

The parents' associations are typically called **AMPA** (*Association of Student's Mothers and Fathers - Associació de Mares i Pares d'Alumnes*) or **AFA** (*Association of Students Families - Associació de Families d'Alumnes*). AFA is just the new and more up-to-date name for an association that includes all kinds of family constructions.

The parents' associations are legally recognised non-profit associations of **volunteer parents** at a school, which have their own rules of procedure and articles of association regulated by law.

The main purpose of these associations is to work, together with the schools, on the education of all children, promoting communication and parents' participation. Likewise, the parents' association is generally responsible for the school's educational activities, planning and managing the extracurricular activities, the morning reception of children, the dining room, parental training, and so on.



For more information:

**Familia i Escola - Generalitat de Catalunya**  
[familiaiescola.gencat.cat/ca/escolaritat/participacio-compromis/participacio-coreponsabilitzacio/participacio-funcionament-centre/ampa](http://familiaiescola.gencat.cat/ca/escolaritat/participacio-compromis/participacio-coreponsabilitzacio/participacio-funcionament-centre/ampa)  
 (only in Catalan)

### Family Spaces, toy libraries and open schoolyards programme

Support in a new place is key to smooth integration. Meeting other families that share similar experiences can be very useful while navigating and finding your feet in the city. Sharing such experiences and advice will be helpful for both you and your family.

Throughout the city, there are spaces designed to encourage families to connect, particularly for those with children under the age of 3. In the city of Barcelona, you can find a network of public facilities such as the **Family Spaces** (*Espais familiars*) and **toy libraries** (*ludoteques*) with recreation and educational activities, where children can play, explore and interact and families can share their experience of educating and raising their children.

Another interesting initiative is the **open schoolyards** (*patis oberts*) programme, to create spaces for public use for families and children outside school hours, at weekends or during school holidays. This programme offers a monitoring service that opens and closes the schoolyard within the planned hours, oversees the proper use of the facilities and seeks to establish relationship dynamics between participating children and families.



For more information:

**Family Spaces – Barcelona City Council**  
[barcelona.cat/infancia](http://barcelona.cat/infancia)  
 (only in Catalan and Spanish)

## Centre for families with teenagers

The **Centre for Families with Teenagers** is a service provided by Barcelona City Council for people who exercise parental roles (parents or guardians). The centre offers information, training and guidance on topics such as self-knowledge, reviewing and recognising parental function, empathy, assertiveness and communicative skills

Furthermore, the service provides tools and resources for boys and girls to develop their personal and social skills and encourages their personal growth through individual attention and group activities. The centre's work team is formed by social educators, psychologists and administrative personnel, in order to offer a comprehensive service to meet the needs that are contemplated.



For more information:

**Centre per a famílies amb adolescents**  
[ajuntament.barcelona.cat/familia/ca/centre-families-adolescents](http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/familia/ca/centre-families-adolescents)  
(only in Catalan)



## International and niche community groups

Barcelona has a big international community and there are several associations, groups and initiatives to support families in Barcelona and those that are international. Some of these include niche community groups based on your native language or that want to dedicate time to family-related issues - many of which are available in various neighbourhoods. There follows a list you might want to check out:



### **Barcelona Babies and Kids**

Group of parents and parents-to-be to share resources and information:  
[facebook.com/groups/barcelonababiesandkids](https://facebook.com/groups/barcelonababiesandkids)

### **Barcelona Family Life**

Useful information for international families living in Barcelona:  
[barcelonafamilylife.com](http://barcelonafamilylife.com)

### **English Language Association of Catalonia**

An Educational Advocacy Group which provides a forum for parents of native and heritage speakers of English attending Catalan schools:  
[facebook.com/groups/ESCPAC](https://facebook.com/groups/ESCPAC)

### **Kids in Barcelona**

Information in English for families:  
[facebook.com/KidsInBarcelona](https://facebook.com/KidsInBarcelona)

### **Mama Proof Barcelona**

A platform to transform cities into more friendly and inclusive spaces for families:  
[mamaproof.org/barcelona](http://mamaproof.org/barcelona)  
(only in Spanish)

### **Mamans à Barcelone**

Community of French-speaking families:  
[mamansbarcelone.com](http://mamansbarcelone.com)



### Mum Abroad Spain

Offers recommendations, tips and advice from local mums on life in Spain with kids: [mumabroad.com/mumabroad\\_spain/barcelona](http://mumabroad.com/mumabroad_spain/barcelona)

### Oh Mother!

Barcelona-based podcast about life as a parent: [ohmotherbarcelona.com](http://ohmotherbarcelona.com)

### Social Fam

Connection and support for international families coming to Barcelona with children of school age: [wesocialfam.com](http://wesocialfam.com)



## AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

The everyday for a child studying in a Catalan school might be longer than you have expected, and you may be surprised how much time children spend outside their homes.

Taking into account that the school begins relatively late compared to other countries and includes a rather long lunch break with classes in the afternoon, you may think that your child's programme ends here. But the fact is that it is very normal for children in Catalonia to do at least one after-school activity during the week.

### After-school activities (*extraexcolars*)

This refers to those activities organised by educational centres that are held outside school hours: during lunchtime breaks or after the afternoon classes on an ordinary school day. In many centres, they are organised jointly with the parents' association (AMPA or AFA).

The after-school activities not only provide support to families by extending the time during which their children are under adult supervision, they also provide learning time for pupils outside basic school. Socialising and interacting with children of the same age helps your child to integrate and also build a network other than the pre-defined one of the classrooms. This is just one reason why you might wish to consider the after-school programmes of your school district, such as languages, sports, music, etc.

### Children's centres and *Esplais*

There are **children's centres** (*casals infantils*) which provide a meeting place where children have the opportunity to share their leisure. Some of them are public while others are run by private non-profit foundations and offer services with specialist professionals who organise a programme of activities such as workshops, group games, play areas and outdoor stays.

Furthermore, in Catalonia there is an extended civic movement called **esplais**, which is similar to the scouts but based on a less hierarchical system and more focused on leisure. The **esplais** are non-profit associations based on volunteering and have a pedagogical aim. Through games, recreational activities, excursions, workshops, outdoors activities and other ways of enjoying free time, children are trained with a holistic perspective, and have the opportunity for personal and interpersonal development. The Catalan government ensures that leisure education is of high quality and regulates the training of **monitors** (volunteer educators) and youth facilities. **Esplais** organise activities about 2 or 3 hours long every weekend but they might also organise summer camps or other activities during school holidays.

### Summer schools (*casals d'estiu*)

Taking your children to holiday activities is very normal in Catalonia, especially in summer but also at Christmas or Easter.

Summer schools are educational activities that take place during the morning and/or afternoon, usually from Monday to Friday, during summer holidays. The activities vary in content and are normally held in the same environment as the children and teenagers go to school in. So it is common for participants to be from the town or neighbourhood where the summer schools are held.

As a general rule there will be no accommodation, unless there is an excursion that lasts more than one day.

The cost of participating in official summer schools can vary from €50 - €100 per week, depending on the content and if lunch and afternoon activities are included in the price.



### Summer camps (*campaments d'estiu*)

Summer camps include a variety of educational activities, usually non-thematic or specialised, that are held outside the participants' place of residence for 1-2 weeks (depending on the age group). All camps include daily activities such as cooking, eating, playing, etc. as well as overnight facilities.

The cost of participating in official summer camps can vary but an estimated price is around €500 for 10-15 days including all activities, meals and other facilities.



Be aware that there are many private and other non-governmental organisations that offer activities for children and teenagers during the summer.



For more information:

**Leisure activities –  
Barcelona City Council**  
[vacances.barcelona.cat/ca/activitats-de-lleure](http://vacances.barcelona.cat/ca/activitats-de-lleure) (only in Catalan and Spanish)

**Holidays and leisure activities –  
Government of Catalonia**  
[jovecat.gencat.cat/ca/temes/vacances\\_i\\_estades](http://jovecat.gencat.cat/ca/temes/vacances_i_estades) (only in Catalan)



## BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

The prevalence of social media and digital forums has given schools an extra challenge, because they now have an educational influence over how students learn to interact in cyberspace, respecting the same norms of behaviour, democratic rights and protection of our private sphere that rule our real and physical world.

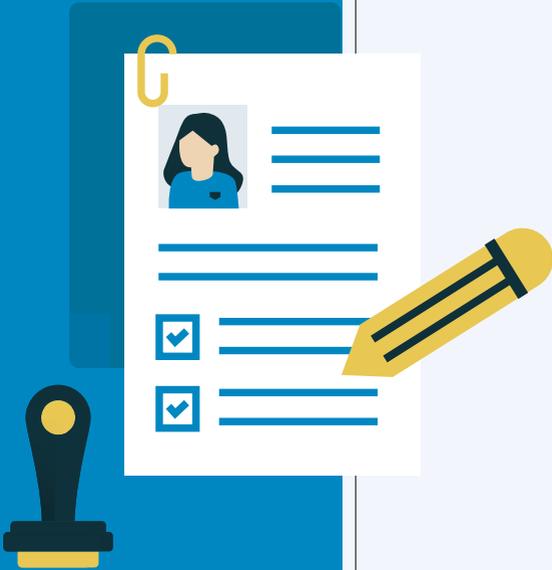
To improve school harmony and intervene against bullying and harassment in cyberspace and in real life, the Catalan Government has introduced a framework of protocols that schools must follow. The aim is to ensure that schools continue to be safe places for socialising and learning, and to make sure that teachers have effective tools for helping students.

Families play an important role in preventing, detecting and intervening to stop bullying that is key in cyberbullying situations, which are usually outside school. This is one of the reasons why the school policy against bullying and harassment is often drawn up by the parents' association in collaboration with the school board and the student council.



# Checklists

## ▶ THREE STEPS IN SELECTING A SCHOOL



# 1<sup>st</sup> STEP

## Consider the needs of your child and your family

### Personal and educational needs

- Does your child have any special learning needs?
- Does your child need more challenging work?
- Does your child need more individual attention?
- Does your child need an English language acquisition programme?
- Does your child have any special learning style to take into consideration?

### Proximity

- Do you want your child to go to a school within walking distance of your home?
- How far are you willing to drive your child to school? And what are the options for other transport?
- Is it important for the integration of your child to have school friends in the local environment?
- Do you want your child to go to a school near after-school care? Near where you work? Near a close relative?
- Do you have the economic means to consider a state-subsidised private or fully private school?

### Timeframe and allocation

- How long are you planning to stay in Catalonia? And how may the timeframe influence your choice of schooling?
- How old is your child? Will your child have to move to another education level while living in your present neighbourhood?
- Do you have more than one child to enrol now or in the future?

# 2<sup>nd</sup> STEP

## Gather information about any relevant schools



List of relevant schools for your family

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

### Curriculum and language of instruction

- Is the curriculum officially approved by the Catalan Department of Education in accordance with the Spanish Education Act (LOE) or does it follow another educational approach?
- Does the school have a strong programme of core academic subjects such as English, history, maths, science, arts and other foreign languages?
- Does the school have a special focus or theme for the curriculum?
- Does the school offer relevant international certificates such as the International Baccalaureate, Batxibac, Diploma Dual or any other?
- Does the school have extracurricular activities that support what is taught and is there an effective language acquisition programme for children who need it, e.g. an *Aula d'acollida*?



### Approach to learning

- Does the school have a particular approach to teaching and learning (e.g. project-based, individual vs. group performance, frequent testing)?
- Is the school staff able to communicate in a language that your child understands?
- What is the homework policy? Does it match your expectations for how much homework your child should do?

### Academic performance

- How do the school's test scores compare to those of other schools?
- In the past few years, have test scores risen or declined, and how does the school explain the rise or decline?

### School Policy

- What does the school do to help personal development and citizenship in the school?
- What is the discipline policy? How does the school handle and help students who misbehave?
- Does the school have a policy against bullying and harassment?
- Does the school have a uniform or dress code?

### Special provision

- Does the school offer extracurricular activities after school, at weekends or during holidays, and do all students have the opportunity to participate?
- Are publications for parents available in the relevant languages?

### Facilities and services

- Do students have access to computers and to the internet in class and in the library?
- Are there any costs related to the purchase of the relevant books and other learning materials?
- Is there a cafeteria, and does the school offer a nutritionally well-balanced lunch programme?
- Is supervised midday and after-school care offered and does it include extra costs?



### Culture

- Do the students appear to be courteous, happy and motivated?
- Do the teachers appear to be helpful and friendly?
- Is there a welcoming attitude towards all students and families?
- How are students with diverse learning needs helped?

### Principal or head teacher

- What is the principal's philosophy about education?
- What is the principal's attitude towards motivating the students?
- What does the school do to keep good teachers and improve teacher performance?

### Teachers

- Are the teachers highly qualified to teach in their subject areas?
- Are the teachers highly qualified to motivate the students to learn?
- How do teachers evaluate student work?
- Do teachers share the course content and objectives with students and parents?
- When and how frequently are teachers available for student and parent conferences?
- Do teachers assign homework?

### Students

- What is the attendance rate for students?
- What do students say about their school?
- What do students say about their classroom?
- Are students involved in developing school policies?

### Parents

- How does the school encourage parental involvement?
- Does the school have an active parent-teacher organisation?
- Are families expected to be involved with homework?
- How frequently does the school communicate with parents?
- Are parents involved in the development of school policies?



## ▶ THREE STEPS TO ENROLLING YOUR CHILD

### 1<sup>st</sup> STEP | Prioritise your options: list of preferred schools

List of the preferred schools

1<sup>st</sup>

2<sup>nd</sup>

3<sup>rd</sup>

4<sup>th</sup>

5<sup>th</sup>

6<sup>th</sup>

7<sup>th</sup>

8<sup>th</sup>

9<sup>th</sup>

10<sup>th</sup>



### Be aware...

... that the information which follows relates to public and state-subsidised private schools. For completely private schools, you should contact each one for more information.

... that there is no guarantee your child will get into your first choice, although most of the applications get the first option and all children get a place in the education system.

... that the pre-enrolment form must be submitted to the school you have listed as your first preference.

... that if a school receives more applications than its available places, the priority criteria establish which child takes precedence.

... that access to a school place is determined solely by the application of general criteria and, where appropriate, supplementary criteria.

... that catchment area is the most important factor in scores unless you have some special family benefits.

... that there is a supplementary criterion if you are a single parent or have a large family.



The priority criteria are not fixed and can vary from year to year. Get more information and verify the data here: <http://queestudiar.gencat.cat/ca/preinscripcio/estudis/obligatoris/documentacio> (only in Catalan and Spanish)



## 2nd STEP | Submit your application (pre-enrolment)

### Remember...

... to pay attention to the pre-enrolment calendar (edubcn.cat , only in Catalan).

... to make sure you write everything clearly and correctly.

... to provide an email address and a mobile phone number.

... to think hard about your first option: it must be the one you prefer and the one that the criteria scores will mark.

... to fill in the 10 options: all schools have quality projects and you will have more possibilities to secure a place in one of the schools you prefer.

... that you cannot change the order of your options once you have submitted them.

... to include supporting priority-criteria documents.

... to hand in your application in person, if possible.

... to ask for a dated and stamped copy of the application.

**!** Applications (or receipts for applications sent online) and documents must be sent within the established deadline.

## 3rd STEP | Confirm by registering (enrolment)

### Don't forget...

... to check information on the noticeboard of the school you have been assigned to.

... to check that the assigned score given on the school noticeboard is correct. Fill in an appeal if necessary.

... It is important that the contact data you have notified in your pre-enrolment application are correct. You will receive a direct message from your allocated school.

... to confirm your registration by enrolling your child at the new school within the established period. Otherwise, the school will understand the student has rejected the place.

**!** You can always contact the school that you are assigned to in order to keep track of your child's application status.



PROMOTED BY:  
Barcelona City Council  
City Promotion  
[barcelona.cat/internationalwelcome](http://barcelona.cat/internationalwelcome)

WITH THE COLLABORATION OF:  
Sanne Bruun Hansen (consultant)  
Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona  
(CEB)  
Departament d'Educació de la  
Generalitat de Catalunya  
Institut Municipal d'Educació de  
Barcelona (IMEB)

LANGUAGE CORRECTION BY:  
Linguaserve Internacionalización  
de Servicios

DESIGNED BY:  
Doctor Magenta

PRINTED BY:  
Grafiques Cuscó

Legal deposit: B.6979-2020  
Barcelona, March 2020



Ajuntament  
de Barcelona