

# Primary school (Volksschule) in the Canton of Aargau



Information for parents (Englisch)

**DEPARTEMENT  
BILDUNG, KULTUR UND SPORT**  
Abteilung Volksschule

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# Dear Parents,

This brochure provides information to parents about the public education system in the Canton of Aargau. Following an overview of the school system in Aargau, we provide a description of the system's main components. You will find general information about primary schools (Volksschulen), various school levels and profiles, additional special education measures and further tips as well as services provided at the primary school (Volksschule) level.

Close cooperation between schools and parents plays an important role for the students' school performance. We have therefore dedicated a separate chapter to this subject.

Internet links have been added for further reference at the end of each section. Relevant information will also be provided at information events for parents. As soon as your child has been assigned to a kindergarten / a school, you can contact the relevant teachers or school management for any questions you may have.

We wish your child a successful school career in the Canton of Aargau!

Department of Education, Culture and Sport, Primary School Section (Departement Bildung, Kultur und Sport, Abteilung Volksschule)

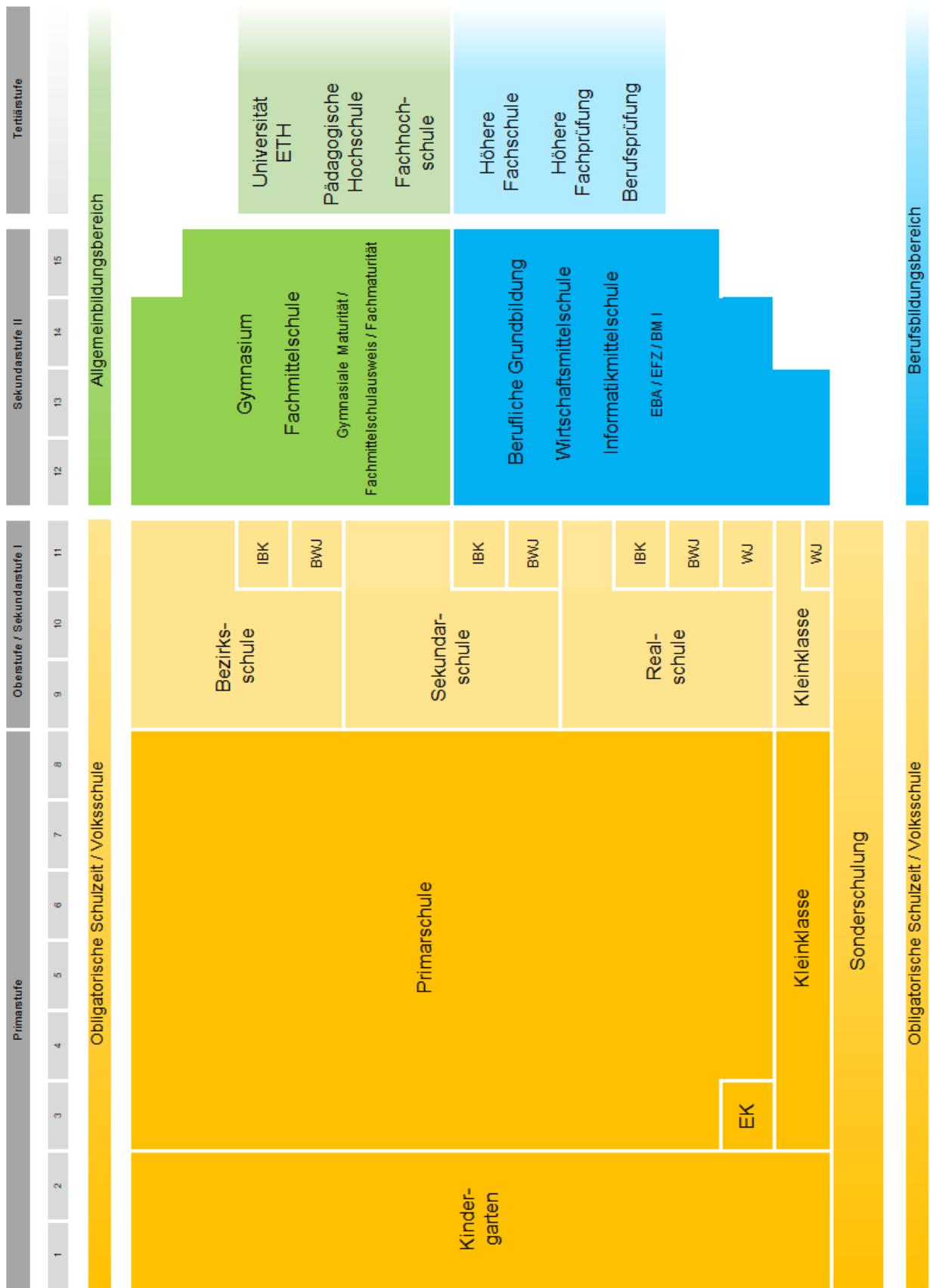
# Overview of the school system in Aargau

Compulsory education in the Canton of Aargau lasts for eleven years.

The first eight years of school consist of **two years of kindergarten** and **six years of primary school (Primarschule)**. This is followed by **three years of upper school (Oberstufe)** (lower secondary, Sekundarstufe I). Upper school is divided into three school profiles: secondary modern school (Realschule), secondary school (Sekundarschule) and advanced secondary school (Bezirksschule). On top of this, the Canton offers special school profiles that cater for children with special needs.

After completing compulsory schooling, graduates usually train for a **profession** or attend **upper secondary school (Mittelschule)** (upper secondary, Sekundarstufe II).

Further information: [www.ag.ch/bks](http://www.ag.ch/bks)



Primarschule: EK: Einschulungsklasse

Spezielle Abschlussklassen: WJ: Werkjahr – BWJ: Berufswahljahr – IBK: Integrations- und Berufsfindungsklasse

Berufsbildungsbereich: EBA: Eidgenössischer Berufsattest – EFZ: Eidgenössisches Fähigkeitszeugnis –

BM I: Berufsmaturität

# Primary school (Volksschule) – the school for everyone

**All children and adolescents living in the Canton of Aargau have the right and obligation to attend school for a period of eleven years. Every child is entitled to an education that meets his/her abilities. Children attend the type of public school at their place of residence that matches their abilities and whose requirements they fulfil.**

Public schools are free of charge. Children commence compulsory schooling in the year they turn 4, with the new school year beginning on the second Monday in August.

All teachers and pedagogical staff are committed to helping each child develop according to his/her abilities. At the end of compulsory schooling, graduates should have the knowledge and abilities necessary to pursue their career aims and their goals in life.

## Special needs classes and special education

Students with special needs (for instance particular talents, learning difficulties or behavioural issues) may be offered special needs classes. These classes can either take place during, or in coordination with, normal lessons or in the form of extra classes.

Support for students with disabilities or impairments is tailored to their specific needs (special education). This support is either provided in regular classes or in small classes (Kleinklassen); under certain circumstances, students attend special schools.

Further information about primary school: [www.ag.ch/volksschule](http://www.ag.ch/volksschule)

Further information about special education and special needs classes:  
[www.ag.ch/volksschule](http://www.ag.ch/volksschule) > Sonderpädagogik & Förderangebote

## Intercultural matters

Primary schools (Volksschulen) play an important role when it comes to integrating students from different social, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In Switzerland, over one quarter of all school children speak a language other than German at home. Specific German language support and special services for those who have newly arrived in Switzerland create the conditions necessary for successful integration at school and help children make up any language-related deficits.

Courses in **native language and culture (heimatliche Sprache und Kultur, HSK)** promote students' first languages.

The courses are run by different organisations, such as consulates, embassies or parent associations.

## Evaluation, report cards and transfers

In kindergarten, evaluation sheets are used to record the development stage of each child. From the 1st grade of primary school (Primarschule) onwards, students receive a mid-term report card at the end of the first semester and a progress report (1<sup>st</sup> grade of primary school) or year-end report card (as of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade of primary school) at the end of the school year. Evaluations are based on an evaluation file containing relevant performance records. The grades on the year-end report card determine whether students advance to the next grade (promotion). Transition to secondary modern (Realschule), secondary (Sekundarschule) or advanced secondary school (Bezirksschule) depend on the recommendation of the class teacher. This recommendation is based on the mid-term report card in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, or on the evaluation file.

Further information about intercultural matters:

[www.ag.ch/volksschule](http://www.ag.ch/volksschule) > Unterricht & Schulbetrieb > Schule & Interkulturelles

Further information about evaluation / transfers and leaflets in eleven languages:

[www.ag.ch/leistungsbeurteilung-volksschule](http://www.ag.ch/leistungsbeurteilung-volksschule)

# General information

## School holidays and closure dates

School holidays and closure dates may vary from municipality to municipality. The dates are specified on the school website.

## Absences

Parents must notify teachers of their child's absence without delay and provide a reason for the absence. Valid reasons include sickness, accidents and other unpredictable reasons for instance, deaths in the family). In upper school (Oberstufe) (advanced secondary, secondary and secondary modern school) (Bezirksschule, Sekundarschule und Realschule), unexcused absences will be listed in the year-end report card.

## Leave of absence

Parents must submit a written application for any expected leave of absence to the school in advance. Valid reasons for a leave of absence include: active participation in major sport events, important religious holidays, trial apprenticeships or similar.

## School medial service and school dental care

The school medial officers in the Canton of Aargau support the schools in the fields of healthcare and prevention. Check-ups during pre-school age and adolescence serve to prevent health problems. As a rule, they are carried out by the child's paediatrician or GP.

At the annual dental check-up, students receive a dental check-up certificate (voucher booklet). On top of this, dental care experts pay regular visits to all classes from 1<sup>st</sup> year of kindergarten until and including 6<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school (Primarschule). The children are shown how to brush their teeth properly and learn about healthy nutrition.

Further information about schools and education in Aargau translated into eleven languages: [www.hallo-aargau.ch](http://www.hallo-aargau.ch)



## School authorities

The authority responsible for the school and education system in the Canton of Aargau is the Department of Education, Culture and Sport (Departement Bildung, Kultur und Sport).

Schools are managed by the municipal council and the school management.

## Support and advice

Primary school (Volksschule) children and their parents have access to a range of free support and advisory services:

### **School psychology service (Schulpsychologischer Dienst)**

The school psychology service is a specialist cantonal unit for students from pre-school age to the last year of primary school. Reasons for a consultation include special learning or performance needs as well as psychological or social problems that become apparent in kindergarten or at school.

### **School supervisory board (Schulaufsicht)**

Parents who have school-related concerns can contact the school supervisory board. The board will listen to the parents' concerns, clarify the matter and offer support as well as advice on how to proceed. As a first step, the board makes sure that there have been direct talks between the parents and the school (cf. "Schule und Eltern" > "Zuständigkeiten").

### **School social service (Schulsozialarbeit)**

Many schools also have a school social service which offers support for students of all grades as well as parents, teachers and the overall school. The school social service supports students during the process of growing up and becoming adults.

### **Career advice**

Educational and vocational guidance services (ask!) offer advice in all matters regarding career entry, professional career and advanced education.

Further information about schools and education in Aargau translated into eleven languages: [www.hallo-aargau.ch](http://www.hallo-aargau.ch)  
Further information about support and advisory services: [www.ag.ch/volksschule](http://www.ag.ch/volksschule) > Unterstützung & Beratung

# School and parents

**Close cooperation between schools and parents plays an important role for the students' school performance.**

## Responsibilities

Parents can contact the child's teacher and the school management for any questions or information they may need regarding the school.

## Cooperation

### **Regular information provided by the school**

Schools are obliged to supply parents with regular information regarding school life and their child's school performance. This information is provided during parent-teacher meetings and parents' evenings.

### **Parents' responsibilities and rights**

Parents must ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis and arrives at school in time and well rested. They are entitled to attend their child's lessons. Furthermore, parents are required to attend parent events to which they have been invited by the municipal council (Gemeinderat) or the school (school management, teachers).

Parents have the right to be heard and to inspect the relevant files before important decisions are taken. The municipal council (Gemeinderat) or school management must notify the parents in writing of any final decision and provide relevant reasons. If parents do not agree with this decision, they can submit an objection to the District School Board (Bezirksschulrat) in most cases. Examples of important decisions that entail the right to be heard and inspect documents include:

- Admission to the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of primary school (Primarschule)
- Assignment to special education measures, or to the preparatory class (Einschulungsklasse) or small class (Kleinklasse)
- Transfer to upper school (Oberstufe)
- Promotion, change of school profile in upper school (Oberstufe)
- Assignment to a special school

Further information about school and parents: [www.ag.ch/volksschule](http://www.ag.ch/volksschule)> Schule & Eltern

Further information about District School Boards:

[www.ag.ch/bks](http://www.ag.ch/bks) > Über uns > Organisation > Vertretungen & Kommissionen > Bildung > Schulräte der Bezirke

# Kindergarten

**Children attend kindergarten for a period of two years. All children who turn four before 31 July will start Kindergarten at the beginning of the next school year.**

Attendance of kindergarten helps the children to develop together. Kindergarten offers children the opportunity to develop their interests and talents in a new environment. The children learn by playing and receive the necessary foundation to develop the linguistic, mathematical, motor, social and emotional skills they need in school.

While children who are interested in reading, writing and working with numbers will receive support, there are no systematic reading, writing or maths lessons. Children who show particular talents may transfer to primary school (Primarschule) early.

The language of instruction in kindergarten is the local dialect. Children who do not speak German at home receive German language support at the kindergarten.

Further information about kindergarten: [www.ag.ch/schulstufen](http://www.ag.ch/schulstufen) > Kindergarten  
Further information about the curriculum: [www.ag.ch/lehrplan](http://www.ag.ch/lehrplan)

# Primary school (Primarschule)

**Primary school runs from 1<sup>st</sup> grade to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The language of instruction at primary school is German.**

In the first few years, children acquire reading, writing, maths and foreign language skills. Science, social, history, cultural and economic subjects are addressed on an age-appropriate level. Music, art, exercise and sport are further integral components of the lessons.

A key objective at primary school level is the promotion of self-reliance, personal responsibility and social learning. Lessons take account of the different levels of learning abilities and needs of the children. Learning in a class community promotes a spirit of teamwork and strengthens the children's personalities.

Further information about primary school: [www.ag.ch/schulstufen](http://www.ag.ch/schulstufen) > Primarschule  
Further information about the curriculum: [www.ag.ch/lehrplan](http://www.ag.ch/lehrplan)

## Upper school (Oberstufe)

**Upper school (lower secondary, Sekundarstufe I) is divided into three school profiles: secondary modern school (Realschule), secondary school (Sekundarschule) and advanced secondary school (Bezirksschule). These schools differ in terms of their performance requirements. All three school profiles run for three years.**

### Secondary modern school (Realschule)

Secondary modern school has basic performance requirements. Students receive a broad general education and acquire the basis for subsequent vocational training. On completing secondary modern school, most graduates go on to train for a profession in the trades, industry, or health and social welfare. Those who achieve good results in their vocational training and vocational school have access to numerous advanced training opportunities as well as opportunities for career advancement.

### Secondary school (Sekundarschule)

Secondary school has higher performance requirements. Students receive a broad general education and acquire the basis for higher-level vocational training. On graduating from secondary school, some students transfer to upper secondary specialised school (Fachmittelschule), upper secondary business school (Wirtschaftsmittelschule) or upper secondary computer science school (Informatikmittelschule).

### Advanced secondary school (Bezirksschule)

Advanced secondary schools have the highest performance requirements. They prepare students both for higher-level vocational training as well as admission to upper secondary school (Mittelschule) (grammar school (Gymnasium) / upper secondary specialised school (Fachmittelschule) / upper secondary business school (Wirtschaftsmittelschule) / upper secondary computer science school (Informatikmittelschule). Well over half of the advanced secondary school graduates commence vocational training in the trades, industry or services, while the rest transfer to upper secondary specialised school.

## Special graduation classes

A small number of towns and municipalities offer special graduation classes in the final school year. These classes specifically prepare future graduates for their transition into the labour market. The following classes are offered:

- Orientation year (Berufswahljahr)
- Work experience year (Werkjahr)
- Integration and orientation class (Integrations- und Berufsfindungsklasse)

Further information about upper school: [www.ag.ch/schulstufen](http://www.ag.ch/schulstufen) > Oberstufe

Further information about curricula: [www.ag.ch/lehrplan](http://www.ag.ch/lehrplan)

# Transition from primary school (Volksschule)

**At the end of compulsory schooling, the overwhelming majority of graduates start vocational education and training or transfer to a higher education school.**

## Vocational education and training

**Basic vocational training (Berufliche Grundbildung)** is the main initial educational and training level in Switzerland. Graduates are prepared for entry into the labour market and receive a solid vocational basis. Aside from practical training in a business, trainees also attend a specialised vocational school (Berufsfachschule) on one or two days a week. Depending on the apprenticeship, training courses last between two and four years: A three- or four-year basic vocational training course leads to a Federal Diploma of Vocational Education and Training (eidgenössisches Fähigkeitszeugnis EFZ), while a two-year basic vocational training course leads to an Federal Certificate of Vocational Education and Training (eidgenössisches Berufsattest EBA).

A completed vocational training course is an important requirement for succeeding on the labour market. It opens up a range of career prospects and provides access to attractive further education opportunities.

Talented achievers gaining a vocational training qualification have the option of attending extra lessons beside the compulsory lessons at the specialised vocation school and obtain the **Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (Berufsmaturität)**. This allows them to study at a university of applied sciences (Fachhochschule).

## Upper secondary schools (Mittelschulen)

Upper secondary schools are higher education schools that follow on from the eleven years of compulsory schooling. Depending on the particular profile, they confer different types of baccalaureates and hence facilitate admission to colleges of higher education (höhere Fachschulen), universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen) or universities (Universitäten).

The Canton of Aargau offers the following upper secondary school profiles:

- grammar school (Gymnasium)
- upper secondary specialised school (Fachmittelschule)
- upper secondary business school (Wirtschaftsmittelschule )
- upper secondary computer science school (Informatikmittelschule)

Further information about vocational education and training: [www.ag.ch/berufsbildung](http://www.ag.ch/berufsbildung) > Lehre

Further information about upper secondary schools and their admission requirements: [www.ag.ch/mittelschulen](http://www.ag.ch/mittelschulen)

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