

# Swedish children to start school a year earlier in move away from play <sup>[1]</sup>

Compulsory preschool year for six-year-olds to be replaced with extra year in primary school from 2028

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## Excerpt

Children in Sweden are to start school at six years old from 2028, a year earlier than at present, in an overhaul of the country's education system that signals a switch from play-based teaching for younger children.

The government has announced plans to replace a compulsory preschool year for six-year-olds known as förskoleklass with an additional year in grundskola (primary school).

The centre-right coalition government, led by the Moderates and backed by the far-right Sweden Democrats, announced the plan before the presentation of the 2025 budget, due on Thursday. The plan dates back to the previous government and is also backed by the left-leaning Social Democrats.

The education minister, Johan Pehrson, said "school must go back to the basics" and added that there would be a stronger focus on early learning to read and write, as well as mathematics. "This should lead to students having a better opportunity to develop basic skills such as reading, writing and counting and to reach the goals in school," he said.

Critics say the plan goes against research that shows children's development is best supported by play-based learning environments, encouraging them to explore, create and develop through play, curiosity and guided discovery. Union leaders fear the move could put many specialised preschool teachers out of work.

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