

# Cultural education plan of the City of Helsinki for early childhood education, basic education and upper secondary education



Helsinki

## To the reader

Childhood and youth are a special time on a person's life path. It is often easier for children to immerse themselves in play and use their imagination than for us adults set in our ways. Trying new things and creativity are an integral part of childhood and youth.

People also form the basis for adulthood, which creativity is also part of, in their childhood and youth. When we become enthusiastic about something in childhood, that enthusiasm often lasts our entire lifetime. Helsinki wants to ensure that every child and young person has equal access to culture and art. The cultural education plan in front of you is one tool used in this pursuit.

Culture and art play an important role in a child's wellbeing and growth. Methods of arts and cultural education can be used to support self-expression, as well as the development of emotional and interaction skills. Experiencing and making art helps us perceive the world around us and understand other people and organisms. Art can be used to explore even difficult topics in a manner that suits children.

Culture is an invisible, connecting glue between people. At its best, it gives us joy, enriches our lives and brings together people from different backgrounds. Culture and art can be used to reinforce a growing young person's attachment to their community and build a future in which no one is left behind.

We want to encourage all early childhood educators and teachers in Helsinki, as well as other education professionals, to throw themselves into cultural education. Our hope is that this plan will provide you with inspiration and its measures will provide concrete support that you can comfortably rely on in your work.

Cultural education is not just about artistic and practical subjects; it can be part of all activities at day-care centres, schools and educational institutions. All of Helsinki serves as an operating environment for cultural education, which means that the sky is the limit in activities and experiences.

*Paavo Arhinmäki, Deputy Mayor of the Culture and Leisure Division*  
*Shawn Huff, Deputy Mayor of the Education Division*



## Children's and young people's right to culture and art is secured through many laws and agreements

Every child and young person is entitled to culture and art. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is a human rights treaty applied to everyone under the age of 18, article 31 of which states that children have the right to participate in cultural life and the arts. According to the convention, every child must be able to participate in cultural services regardless of their place of residence or socio-economic background.

The legal basis for cultural education is the Act on Cultural Activities in Local Government. The Act governs activities through which municipalities promote the creation of culture and art, people's engagement in it and its availability and use, as well as cultural and arts education and cultural heritage. The objective of the Act is to support people's opportunities for creative expression and activities, as well as making and experiencing culture and art. The Act also aims to promote all population groups' equal opportunities for and participation in culture, art and education.

The education and cultural policy reports of the Finnish Government outline operating conditions and target states for education, research, culture and the creative industries, as well as measures to achieve them, all the way to the 2040s. The objective is to strengthen the wellbeing, cultural foundation and educational equality of learners.



# Culture and art in the lives of children and young people in Helsinki

The objective of cultural education is to promote the creation of a personal relationship with culture and art among children and young people, develop their life skills and understanding of life, as well as emotional and interaction

## Equality in experiences and activities

Cultural education is needed to make art and culture equally part of every child's and young person's everyday life. In Helsinki, every child and young person must have equal opportunities to experience and make art and culture, regardless of their place of residence or socio-economic background.

## Lifelong connection with culture and art

Every child and young person living in Helsinki must have a connection with art and culture throughout their lives. The cultural education plan is needed in the pursuit of establishing a good basis for the creation of this connection among children and young people in Helsinki early on. At its best, cultural education lights a spark that grows into a lifelong interest in culture and art. Having a connection with culture and art can enrich a person's life, give meaning and provide a strong source of joy, as well as steer the person's interest and engagement in culture and art in life.

## Wellbeing from culture and art

Culture and art strengthen children's and young people's overall wellbeing. All learners are supported in finding an enjoyable way to make and experience culture and art and, by extension, benefit from the wellbeing effects of culture and art.

## Strengthening future skills

Experiencing and making culture and art strengthen skills that enable us to face the future with hope. Culture and art provide means to perceive the changing world around us, help us understand its different phenomena and provide tools for building a sustainable future and solving challenges of the future. Culture and art evoke curiosity,

skills, and to strengthen their creativity, transversal education, participation and active citizenship. The implementation of cultural education and the City's cultural education plan are steered by the following principles.

compassion and the ability to see things from a different perspective in children and young people and reinforce their courage and faith in the future.

## Participation and active citizenship

Empathy, critical and constructive dialogue and the self-knowledge of individuals and communities can develop and grow through means of culture and art. Culture and art reinforce community spirit, active citizenship and participation. Participation is realised particularly through self-expression and being heard by means of culture and art. Cultural education supports the emotional and interaction skills of children and young people, as well as their attachment to their community. Culture and art can provide opportunities to relate to other people and have experiences of unity. All of Helsinki serves as an operating environment for cultural education, whereby the activities engaged in strengthen children's and young people's ownership of their home city and its neighbourhoods.

## Freedom of self-expression

Culture and art must be an essential part of every child's and young person's growth and development. Cultural education can help us learn many skills useful in different areas of life. Cultural and art-related experiences evoke emotions, provide new perspectives on things that we are already familiar with, and encourage children and young people to express themselves. Culture and art provide a channel for expression, creating something new and having experiences.

# The cultural education plan supports the Helsinki City Strategy

The City's cultural education plan supports the Helsinki City Strategy for 2025–2029, entitled *A Helsinki we can be proud of*. The City's cultural education objectives during the strategy period are as follows.

## The significance of art and culture for wellbeing and education

We will strengthen the wellbeing of children and young people in a comprehensive manner. We acknowledge the significance of art and culture for the wellbeing, growth and education of children and young people. Our objective is to make Helsinki the capital city of literacy.

## Equal opportunities

We will secure equal access to art and culture for all children and young people. During the strategy period, we will establish Culture Kids activities through which every child will have opportunities to take part in cultural events for children.

## Regional accessibility

We will ensure the regional comprehensiveness and diversity of cultural services.

## Collaboration and operating conditions

The cultural activities provided to children in Helsinki are created in close collaboration with the diverse cultural field of the city. We will support the operating conditions of both well-established and new cultural operators.



## Measures of the City's cultural education plan

The City of Helsinki's cultural education plan strengthens children's and young people's equal opportunities to experience and make culture and art during early childhood education, pre-primary education and basic education, as well as upper secondary education.

The City of Helsinki's cultural education plan serves as a guideline for the Culture and Leisure Division, the Education Division and the field of art and culture. The purpose of the collaboration of both divisions and the field of art and culture is to develop and maintain modes of operation, communications and networks that contribute to the provision of high-quality cultural education from early childhood education to upper secondary education.

The measures of the cultural education plan include means to implement cultural, arts and cultural heritage education as part of municipal early childhood education, pre-primary education, basic education and upper secondary education. The plan steers operators towards goal-oriented and equal implementation of cultural and arts education.

Cultural education in Helsinki is implemented and promoted particularly through **the following measures** and in **the following networks**.



**Culture Kids** activities provide all children in Helsinki with an opportunity to take part in two cultural events per year until the child starts school. The cultural events are free of charge and designed to support children's development and wellbeing.

**Cultural paths** facilitate equal opportunities for all children and young people in Helsinki to experience and make art and culture. They ensure that during early childhood education, pre-primary education and basic education, as well as upper secondary education, children and young people are provided with diverse opportunities to familiarise themselves with various cultural contents and events, as well as library services, throughout their learning path.

The cultural paths provided contain a wide range of forms of culture and art, library services and events and activities established in the city for the entire age group. The City of Helsinki's cultural paths are based on the cultural and art-related services provided in Helsinki, as well as the city's cultural heritage. The implementation of cultural paths is the minimum objective of cultural education from early childhood education to upper secondary education.

The implementation of a cultural path is not tied to any one area of learning or school subject. Daycare centres, schools and educational institutions specify in their action and school year plans in more detail how their cultural path is implemented in accordance with the cultural path determined by the City. Where possible, children and young people are involved in the implementation and planning of the activities.

**5x2 art courses** provide basic education pupils with opportunities to familiarise themselves with the creation of different types of art, such as theatre, video art, music or visual art, as part of their school day. The art course consists of five sessions, each lasting a couple of hours. The City's cultural coordinators for basic education support schools in reserving 5x2 art courses.

**Kultus.hel.fi online service** compiles learning experiences in culture, art and physical activity for the needs of early childhood education, comprehensive schools and upper secondary education. The service enables educators and

teachers to look into and reserve excursions, workshops, performances and exhibitions for learners across the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Kultus publishes targeted newsletters featuring highlights of its content, as well as other current matters related to cultural education for early childhood education, pre-primary education and basic education, as well as upper secondary education.

**The cultural and library coordinator networks** of Helsinki consist of educators and teachers who serve as contact persons, take part in operational development where necessary and forward current information about cultural education collegially.

**Helsinki's cultural education forum** is an established event held twice per year, bringing together education professionals and art-related and cultural operators in Helsinki. Every event has a changing topical theme that is discussed and processed through participatory methods and specialist speeches.

**Steering and working groups for cultural education** promote long-term and systematic work between the Culture and Leisure Division and the Education Division, the objective being to implement cultural education in Helsinki in an equal and accessible manner.



## Key terms

**Culture** can be understood in a broad sense, referring to knowledge, skills, language, art, sports, beliefs, livelihoods and how communities have formed. In its narrow meaning, culture can also refer to art and meanings related to it within communities.

**Cultural education** refers to cultural and art-related contents, places, methods and activities that are part of children's and young people's early childhood education, schooling or studies. Guided cultural education supports children's and young people's opportunities for creative expression and for experiencing and participating in culture and the arts. It also develops children's and young people's creativity, multiliteracy and capacity to learn. Cultural education concerns all activities at daycare centres, schools and educational institutions, not just artistic and practical subjects. Cultural education binds together different school subjects and themes.

**Arts education** is a multisensory immersion into phenomena of life through different methods of art. The learning is based on experiences, experimentation and the learners doing things themselves. Arts education sharpens the learners' skills and senses. It entails learning both about art and through different types of art. One essential part of arts education is the children's and young people's activity and self-expression.

**Cultural heritage education** supports the development of children's and young people's knowledge, skills and individual cultural identity. It helps people understand and accept not only their own roots, but also other cultures. Cultural heritage education can be provided in places such as museums, libraries or various cultural environments.

**The cultural education plan** is a plan that determines how cultural, arts and cultural heritage education is implemented in the municipality as part of early childhood education, basic education and upper secondary education. It is

drawn up and implemented in collaboration between early childhood education providers, schools, educational institutions and operators in the field of culture and art. The cultural education plan makes the cultural education provided by daycare centres, schools and educational institutions goal-oriented. At the same time, the plan guarantees equal opportunities for all children and young people to participate in experiencing and making culture and art.

**The cultural path** determines what kind of cultural education is provided in early childhood education, basic education and upper secondary education, making it concretely visible. It is based on the cultural services and heritage of the municipality. It contains cultural and art-related content, activities established in the municipality and events for different age groups. The municipality's early childhood education plan, as well as its curricula for basic education and general upper secondary school, serves as the basis for the implementation of cultural education. The involvement of children and young people in the planning and implementation of the activities is taken into account in cultural paths.





## Sources

[The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (in Finnish)

[Act on Cultural Activities in Local Government 166/2019](#) (in Finnish)

[Education Policy Report of the Finnish Government 2021](#)

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[A Helsinki we can be proud of – City Strategy 2025–2029](#)

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[Art and Culture in Helsinki in 2030](#)

[Cultural path in early childhood education and pre-primary education in Helsinki](#) (in Finnish)

[Cultural path in basic education in Helsinki](#) (in Finnish)

[Cultural path in upper secondary education in Helsinki](#) (in Finnish)

[Kultus.hel.fi online service](#)