



Netherlands

Education Guide

Prepared by Crown World Mobility & PIR Group
2019-2020

How the world works better

CROWN 
WORLD MOBILITY

Education Overview

Pre School Education/Childcare

Daycare centres are professionally run and employ fully qualified childcare staff. They are usually open from 7:30 to 18:00 on weekdays and offer care for babies as young as 3 months to children up to 4 years. The ratio of children per staff member ranges from 1:3 to 1:8, depending on the age groups.

Home daycares are run by a self-employed caregiver who legally can take care of a maximum of five children, either in his/her own home or in the house of the parents. If the home daycare is registered with a childcare bureau/agency (gastouderbureau), parents will be eligible to receive the childcare allowance.

Finding a suitable day care centre depends on the individual needs of the expat and the area they live. Most common is finding a day care close to home or work. Ask your Relocation Consultant for daycare options in your area.

Schooling

The Netherlands is committed to choice in education, and you will find a range of schools to choose from when considering your child(ren)'s education in the Netherlands. Compulsory education under Dutch law applies to children of all nationalities from 5 to 18 years who are residing in the Netherlands. Children are under a learning obligation at five years old for 12 years full-time education, and one or two years part-time (until the attainment of a diploma).

The Netherlands is among the world's top countries for equity in education opportunities, and there's a commitment to educational choice. Schools following particular religious or pedagogic principles have had equal state funding as public schools since 1917 and the number of privately run schools more than doubles public ones, with one in five primary schools comprising less than 100 pupils. International education is available at both Dutch and private schools throughout the country.

Deciding on a Local or International School

Your finances, location, nationality, the age of your children, and how long you are likely to stay in the Netherlands are the main factors you should consider when selecting a school. While teenagers might appreciate the educational and social continuity provided by an international school, younger children might get a greater sense of belonging by attending a local school if you plan to stay for a while. By learning good Dutch, they will connect to their new world more easily. You certainly won't be the only non-Dutch parent at the playground.

For an international school in your area, visit the website for the Foundation of International Education: www.sio.nl. For local schools you can have a look at the website www.scholenlijst.nl (it is in Dutch). Your Consultant can also assist you.

Applying for a School

Register your child as soon as possible at the school of your choice. Public schools technically are not allowed to refuse admission, unless full. Popular schools have waiting lists and the municipality can assign catchment areas based on postcodes – you should register as young as the school allows. All schools have brochures and websites where they announce ‘open days’ when you can visit the school.

Almost 90 percent of children attend early education at the age of three, and most children are enrolled by the age of four (when children are invited for orientation). Compulsory education starts at the age of five. Schools can arrange early childhood education programs for children aged two to six whose first language is not Dutch.

School inspection reports can be viewed online (this applies to state schools and Dutch international schools only) at www.owinsp.nl under Zoek Scholen, enter the name of the school and/or town. The visual representation of green (good) and red (weak) will give some idea of performance.

Types of Schools

Public schools

State-run schools (non-denominational) provide secular education, but they can also offer teaching around specific philosophic or pedagogic principles (Montessori, Steiner etc.). Public schools are governed by the municipal council or a public legal entity or foundation set up by the council.

Private schools

Most private schools are denominational (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, Hindu) or follow specific philosophic principles, as above. Private schools are governed by a board or the foundation that set them up. Financially, they have the same status as public schools and are basically free, although all schools ask for a contribution for things such as school trips.

International schools

These schools provide education for global nomad students of any nationality. Dutch International Primary Schools (DIPS) and Dutch International Secondary Schools (DISS) provide international education at reasonable fees because of subsidies from the Dutch government. They are designed for non-Dutch families living in the Netherlands for a limited time, and Dutch families returning from, or preparing for, an overseas assignment. These schools offer the International Primary Curriculum (4 to 11 years), the IGCSE (11 to 16 years), or the International Baccalaureate programs at primary (4 to 11 years) and middle years’ level (11 to 16 years). All DISS teach the IB-Diploma program (16 to 19 years). A new curriculum, IBCC, offers an alternative to the IB-DP in the final years (www.ibo.org/ibcc).

Private international schools

These schools teach either an international curriculum (as above) or a specific country's national curriculum (eg. American, British, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, Polish), sometimes in the native language. Facilities (swimming pools, football pitches) are often spectacular compared to the Dutch schools.

Special schools

In 2014, all schools were required to cater to any child's needs under the 'All Inclusive Act', although participation in mainstream schools has been encouraged through other policies for several years.

Additionally, there are schools for children with special needs, plus special needs teachers at Dutch schools. Lighthouse Special Education caters to the international community with special needs children providing extensive assistance in English. Entry is by referral.

Costs

Primary and secondary state education is free, with parents being asked to contribute a 'voluntary' nominal amount, which varies from school to school. Additional payments include lengthier school trips, lunchtime supervision (tussenschoolse opvang) and after-school care (naschoolse opvang), which the school is supposed to provide or sub-contract. The fees for international schools differ per school and can be found on the website of the school.

Years and Levels

Dutch Primary Education (basisonderwijs)

There are eight years of primary schooling. Children are placed in group one upon entry and move up a group every year; different age groups may therefore be in the same class depending on when each child started. In their last year, 'Group 8' children in 85 percent of primary schools (basisscholen) sit the CITO test (www.cito.nl) in February, which advises their next level of education. As of spring 2015, all children in Group 8 will be required to sit a test to assess numeracy and language skills. The government sets attainment targets in six curriculum areas: Dutch, English, arithmetic and mathematics, social and environmental studies, creative expression and sports and movement.

Dutch Secondary Education (voortgezet onderwijs)

From 12 years, pupils choose from vocational or pre-university diplomas based on their ability. In the first years all pupils study the same subjects (to different academic levels), known as the basisvorming, followed by a second stage (tweede fase) in which specialist profiles are selected.

VMBO (a further four years of school): Prep school for vocational secondary education; those who achieve the highest level (theoretische leerweg) can enter HAVO studies. VMBO graduates must continue studying until age 18 or until they obtain a basic qualification (minimum MBO level 2).

How the world works better

HAVO (five years): Senior general secondary education. Provides entrance to higher professional education (hoger beroepsonderwijs HBO) at 'vocational universities'.

VWO (six years): Pre-university education. Prepares students for academic studies at a research university (Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs WO) VWO schools can be atheneum, gymnasium or lyceum (a combination of the first two), a difference being that Greek and Latin are core subjects in gymnasium programs.

Just under a third of all secondary schools are run by the public authority. English is a compulsory subject. VMBO pupils study one modern language and HAVO/VWO pupils at least two. Other core areas include mathematics, history, humanities, arts and sciences.

School Holidays in the Netherlands

Major holidays for state schools are set nationally with staggered start/finish times between three regions. Private international school holidays can be different. For school holidays per region, visit:

www.government.nl/topics/school-holidays.

Bilingual Education (tweetalig onderwijs; TTO)

There are 130 schools with a VWO bilingual stream, plus 45 HAVO and 24 VMBO schools have bilingual departments. Only students that master the Dutch language at an appropriate level will be admitted

(www.europeesplatform.nl/tto).