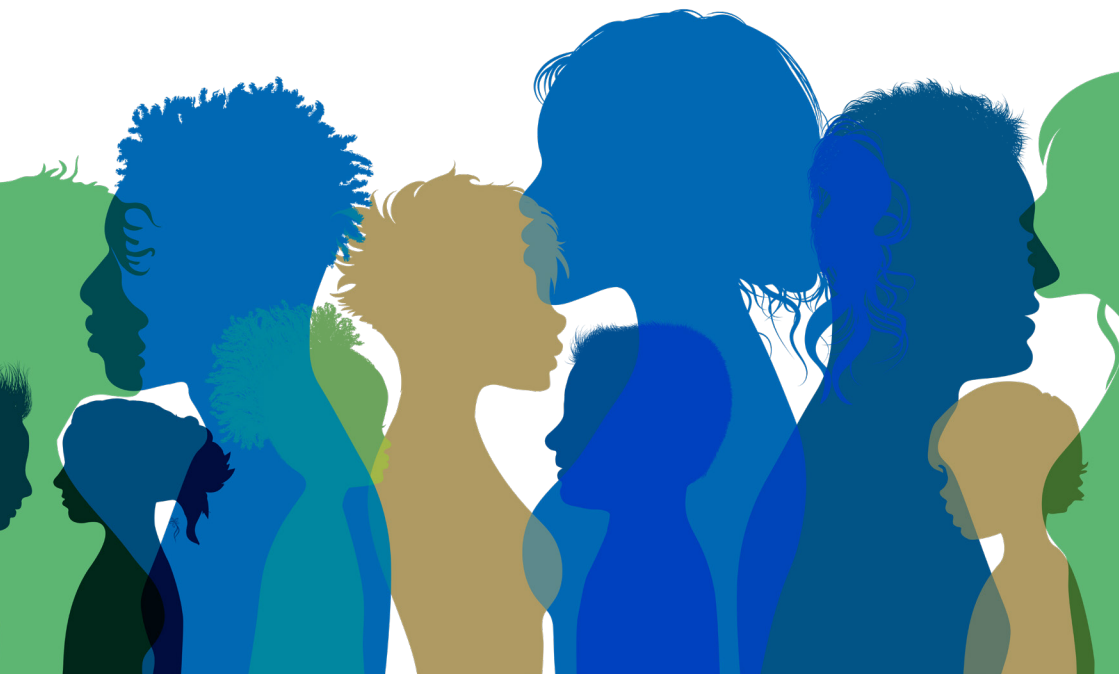


Swedish as a Second Language

Information for guardians of children at compulsory school and compulsory school for pupils with intellectual disabilities

The school has conducted assessments of all pupils' knowledge of the Swedish language. On the basis of this assessment, we have decided that your child needs instruction in Swedish as a Second Language (SSL).

In this booklet you can find out more about what this means.



At compulsory school and compulsory school for pupils with intellectual disabilities, there are two Swedish subjects: Swedish and Swedish as a Second Language. Swedish as a Second Language is a separate subject with its own course syllabus.

School pupils study either Swedish or Swedish as a Second Language. Both subjects involve an equal amount of teaching time.

From Chapter 5, Section 14 of the School Ordinance.

Swedish as a Second Language

Teaching in Swedish as a Second Language shall, if necessary, be arranged for

1. pupils whose mother tongue is not Swedish,
2. pupils whose mother tongue is Swedish and who have been brought in from schools abroad, and
3. immigrated pupils who have Swedish as their main language of communication with a guardian.

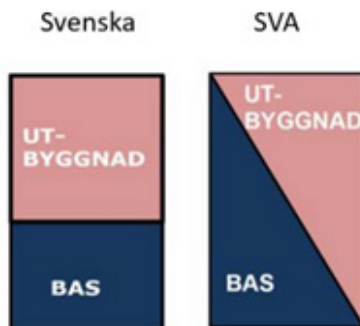
It is the head teacher who decides whether a pupil shall study Swedish as a Second Language.

Why do some children need instruction in Swedish as a Second Language?

The teaching of Swedish as a subject assumes that the child has a linguistic foundation in Swedish that can be built upon in school. This means that the child has mastered the sounds of the Swedish language and basic grammar, and has a vocabulary of between 8,000 and 10,000 words when they start school. The expansion of their language begins to

develop as they learn to read and write. This allows the child to expand their vocabulary, learn to write different types of texts, and develop a more formal and subject-specific use of language in both speech and writing.

Children who have grown up with different languages have not always had the same opportunities to develop this linguistic foundation in Swedish before starting school. The teaching of Swedish as a Second Language takes this into account, and assumes that the child may need to develop the linguistic foundation in Swedish at the same time as learning the school language (see picture). Multilingual pupils may have gaps in their basic Swedish and need to study Swedish as a Second Language, even if they were born in Sweden.





How do you know that my child needs to study Swedish as a Second Language?

The school assesses all pupils' language development. There is a range of different materials that we use for this. If we notice that a pupil's use of the Swedish language shows traits of being a second language (e.g., the pupil has a smaller vocabulary in Swedish, pronounces words incorrectly or makes grammatical errors), we conduct a language development analysis. This means, for example, that we:

- observe the pupil in class and during breaks.
- read books together with the pupil and discuss the content.
- talk to the pupil about pictures or events.
- analyse the pupil's writing ability (if the child can write).
- perform various vocabulary or reading comprehension tests.

The information that we collect forms the basis for our assessment of whether or not the child requires instruction in Swedish as a Second Language. You can always ask to see the information that forms the basis for the decision.

Differences between Swedish and Swedish as a Second Language

The course syllabus for Swedish as a Second Language (SSL) is based on language learning with a second language perspective, which means that the teaching is structured differently than the teaching of Swedish. This does not, however, mean that SSL is an easier subject than Swedish. The teaching is different for Swedish and for SSL because the pupils have different needs. Pupils for whom Swedish is a second language need to focus on different elements of the language than pupils whose mother tongue is Swedish, such as pronunciation and grammatical structures.

Another important difference between Swedish and Swedish as a Second Language is that pupils studying Swedish as a Second Language are given ample opportunities to communicate in Swedish according to their level of knowledge without the school making premature demands for linguistic correctness. This means that pupils are able to get plenty of practice at speaking and writing in Swedish, even if they sometimes get it wrong. The linguistic errors that pupils may make are not necessarily regarded as something negative. Teachers of Swedish as a Second Language know that linguistic errors can be a sign of development. When a pupil tries to express something that is mentally challenging, their knowledge of the Swedish language may not always be able to keep up. You could say that their thoughts run ahead of their language. Teachers of Swedish as a Second Language take this into account when making assessments and setting grades.

What about grades?

A grade in Swedish as a Second Language has the same value as a grade in Swedish. A passing grade in Swedish as a Second Language confers eligibility for applications to all upper secondary school programmes.



How is the teaching of SSL organised?

The teaching of Swedish as a Second Language can be organised in different ways, both within the same school and between different schools. Some children who study Swedish as a Second Language will be learning Swedish as a new language. Others may have been born in Sweden and already have a well-developed understanding of the Swedish language. The subject of Swedish as a Second Language is both for beginners and for children with a more advanced Swedish language development. The teaching therefore needs to be conducted in different ways for these pupil groups.

Here are a few examples of how head teachers may choose to organise the teaching of Swedish as a Second Language based on the different needs of the students:

- Swedish as a Second Language for newly arrived pupils in a preparatory class.
- Swedish as a Second Language and Swedish in different teaching groups.
- Swedish as a Second Language and Swedish in the same teaching group.

Who decides whether my child is to study Swedish as a Second Language?

It is the head teacher who decides whether a pupil shall study Swedish as a Second Language. The head teacher makes this decision on the basis of the assessment of the child's language development conducted by the teachers.

For how long will my child study Swedish as a Second Language?

Teaching in Swedish as a Second Language replaces teaching in Swedish for as long as the pupil needs teaching in Swedish as a Second Language. Some pupils need tuition in Swedish as a Second Language throughout their time at compulsory school, whilst others study it for a shorter period.

At all parent/teacher meetings, we talk about your child's knowledge development, and this also includes discussing the child's language development and the subject of Swedish as a Second Language.

Ask your child's teacher if you would like more information.

The information in this booklet is based on work by Anna Kaya of the National Centre for Swedish as a Second Language at Stockholm University.

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