

Pre Schools (Nursery Schools) Act (No. 78 of 1994)

The Prime Minister, the Speaker of the General Assembly of the Althing, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court,
CUSTODIANS OF THE POWER OF THE PRESIDENT OF ICELAND
under Article 8 of the Constitution,

make known: The Althing has passed this Act and we have ratified it with our approval:

CHAPTER I

Scope.

Article 1

This Act shall apply to pre schools. Pre schools constitute the first level of school in the school system, and are intended for children under the compulsory schooling age, which is based on 1st September in the year in which the child turns 6. Under this Act, pre schools are to undertake, at the request of parents, the nurturing and education of children of pre school age under the direction of people with special training in pre-school teaching.

CHAPTER II

Aims.

Article 2

Under this Act, the main aims of the nurturing work of the pre schools shall be:

- to provide the children with care, provide a good environment for their development and safe facilities for playing;
- to give the children the opportunity of participating in games and activities and to benefit from the varied developmental stimuli of a group of children under the guidance of pre-school teachers;
- to strive, in collaboration with the home, to stimulate the children's all-round development in accordance with the nature and needs of each, and to give them mental and physical attention so that they can enjoy their childhood;
- to encourage tolerance and broad-mindedness on the part of the children and to give them equal opportunities for development in all respects;
- to instil Christian moral values in the children and lay the foundations necessary for the children to become independent, thinking, active and responsible participants in a democratic society which is undergoing rapid and continuous development, and
- to cultivate the children's expressive and creative powers, with the aim of strengthening their self-esteem, security and ability to solve their disagreements peacefully.

CHAPTER III

Supervision.

Article 3

Overall supervision of the matters covered by this Act shall rest with the Ministry of Education. It shall ensure compliance with the provisions of this Act and of regulations issued under it (cf. Article 6).

Article 4

The Ministry of Education shall formulate an educational policy for the pre schools, conduct developmental and experimental work, evaluate the educational work of the pre schools and act in advisory capacity to the pre school directors. Educational policy shall be formulated in a professional manner. It shall define the nurturing and educational role of the pre schools, the value of play and the main points of policy regarding working procedures and internal evaluation. The Ministry of Education shall keep the educational policy of the pre schools under constant review, and be in charge of publishing and amending it as necessary.

Article 5

The Ministry of Education shall promote developmental and experimental activities in the pre schools. For this purpose, funding shall be granted each year to a development fund under the national budget as approved by the Althing (parliament). The Ministry of Education shall determine how these funds are to be divided.

Article 6

The Ministry of Education shall, after receiving the proposals of a working group representing the ministry and the Union of Local Authorities, issue regulations on the functioning of the pre schools. The regulations shall contain provisions on, i.a., supervision by the ministry of the quality of the work of the pre schools, plans for the development of the pre schools, collaboration between the pre schools, parents and the primary schools,

health care, children's safety, minimum requirements regarding school premises and facilities for the children and staff of the pre schools (in so far as these matters are not covered by wages and terms agreements), the length of time spent each day by children in the pre schools, assistance and training for the children under Article 16, the Pre Schools' Counselling and Psychological Service and the scope of its operations, and on the functioning, premises and personnel management of the pre schools, with particular reference to disabled children who attend pre schools.

CHAPTER IV

The Role of the Local Authorities. Establishment and Running of Pre Schools.

Article 7

The local authorities shall supervise the building and running of pre schools and bear the expenses involved, each in its own local government area. They shall be obliged to take the initiative in ensuring places for children in good pre schools. Other parties may run pre schools after receiving the approval of the relevant local authority. The Ministry of Education shall be notified of the establishment of new pre schools. Each year, the local authorities shall submit an annual report to the Ministry of Education on the operations of the pre schools.

Article 8

At intervals of not more than two years, the local authorities shall assess the need for pre school places. On the basis of this assessment, three-year plans are to be drawn up for the development of pre schools in the relevant local government area, taking into account the overall interests of the local government area. These plans shall be reviewed at two- yearly intervals. Plans for the development of pre schools shall be submitted to the Ministry of Education.

Article 9

A pre school committee elected by the local authority shall be in charge of matters concerning pre schools on behalf of the local authority. One representative of the pre school staff and one parents' representative shall have the right to attend pre school committee meetings, with the right to address the meeting and make proposals. The local authority may merge committees so that a single committee handles matters in more than one field (cf. Article 58 of the Local Government Act, No. 8 of 1986). In cases where local authorities co-operate on the running of pre schools, they shall all have representatives on the committee handling the affairs of the pre schools.

Article 10

The local authority/educational offices shall promote normal contact and collaboration between the pre schools and the primary schools and act as their forum for collaboration within the relevant local government area.

Article 11

In the local government areas, there shall normally be pre school officers who shall be local authority employees. Each pre school officer shall, acting on the authority of the pre school committee and in collaboration with the pre school directors, undertake counselling and inspection of the pre schools in the local government area and promote collaboration between them. Local authorities may engage joint pre school officers, irrespective of whether or not they run joint pre schools. Pre school officers shall hold qualifications as pre-school teachers.

CHAPTER V

Pre School Employees. Collaboration with Parents.

Article 12

At each pre school, there shall be a pre school director who shall direct the functioning of the pre school, acting on the authority of its operating body in accordance with the further provisions of this Act and regulations to be issued under it. Pre school directors, and the staff engaged in the nurturing and education of the children, shall hold qualifications as pre-school teachers.

Pre school directors shall be responsible for drawing up plans covering the educational and nurturing work of the pre schools in accordance with this Act. Each year, pre school directors shall submit reports to the operating bodies on the operation of the pre schools.

The local authority shall issue the staff of the pre schools with letters of appointment in accordance with this Act and regulations issued under it.

Article 13

Pre school directors shall hold regular meetings with the staff concerning the functioning of the pre schools and the welfare of each child attending them.

Article 14

Pre school directors shall be obliged to promote collaboration between the parents of the children attending the schools and the staff of the pre schools, with the welfare of the children as the guiding principle. If the desire is expressed to establish a parents' society, the pre school director shall assist with its establishment.

CHAPTER VI

The Right of Pre School Children to Special Assistance and Training.

The Counselling Service.

Article 15

Children of pre school age who, due to disabilities or emotional or social difficulties, need special assistance and training, shall have the right to receive these in the pre schools under the guidance of specialists.

Article 16

The Pre Schools' Counselling and Psychological Service shall provide parents of the children at the schools, and the staff of the pre schools, with the necessary counselling and services in accordance with the further provisions of the regulations on the scope of the service. The Pre Schools' Counselling and Psychological Service may be operated jointly with the Primary Schools' Counselling and Psychological Service.

Article 17

Pre schools shall be designed and run in such a way as to be able to cater for disabled children.

CHAPTER VII

Commencement.

Article 18

This Act comes into force immediately, and at the same time, the Act No. 48 of 1991 shall be rescinded. This Act shall not interfere with the provisions of the Act No. 112 of 1976 regarding day-care centres for children of school age.

Interim Provision.

For the purpose of this Act, the professional designation "pre-school teacher" refers to those who have completed a recognized course of training for pre-school teachers.

Reykjavík, 19th May 1994.

Davíð Oddsson. Valgerður Sverrisdóttir. Hrafn Bragason.
(L.S.)

Ólafur G. Einarsson.

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