

Fundamental values and tasks of the school

From the Swedish "Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and school-age educare"

Fundamental values

The national school system is based on democratic foundations. The Education Act (2010:800) stipulates that education in the school system aims at pupils acquiring and developing knowledge and values. It should promote the development and learning of all pupils, and a lifelong desire to learn. Education should impart and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values on which Swedish society is based. Each and everyone working in the school should also encourage respect for the intrinsic value of each person and the environment we all share.

The inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men, and solidarity between people are the values that the school should represent and impart. In accordance with the ethics borne by a Christian tradition and Western humanism, this is achieved by fostering in the individual a sense of justice, generosity, tolerance and responsibility. Teaching in school must be non-denominational.

The task of the school is to encourage all pupils to discover their own uniqueness as individuals and thereby be able to participate in the life of society by giving of their best in responsible freedom.

Understanding and compassion for others

The school should promote understanding of other people and the ability to empathise. Concern for the well-being and development of the individual should permeate all school activities. No one should be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnic affiliation, religion or other belief system, transgender identity or its expression, sexual orientation, age or functional impairment or other degrading treatment. All such tendencies should be actively combated. Xenophobia and intolerance must be confronted with knowledge, open discussion and active measures.

The internationalisation of Swedish society and increasing cross-border mobility place high demands on the ability of people to live with and appreciate the values inherent in cultural diversity. Awareness of one's own cultural origins and sharing in a common cultural heritage provides a secure identity which it is important to develop, together with the ability to understand and empathise with the values and conditions of others. The school is a social and cultural meeting place with both the opportunity and the responsibility to strengthen this ability among all who work there.

Objectivity and open approaches

The school should be open to different ideas and encourage their expression. It should emphasise the importance of forming personal standpoints and provide opportunities for doing this. Teaching should be objective and encompass a range of different approaches. All parents should be able to send their children to school, fully confident

that their children will not be prejudiced in favour of any particular view.

All who work in the school should uphold the fundamental values that are set out in the Education Act and in this curriculum, and clearly dissociate themselves from anything that conflicts with these values.

An equivalent education

Teaching should be adapted to each pupil's circumstances and needs. It should promote the pupils' further learning and acquisition of knowledge based on pupils' backgrounds, earlier experience, language and knowledge.

The Education Act stipulates that the education provided in each school form and in school-age educare should be equivalent, regardless of where in the country it is provided. National goals specify the norms for equivalence. However, equivalent education does not mean that the education should be the same everywhere or that the resources of the school are to be allocated equally. Account should be taken of the varying circumstances and needs of pupils. There are also different ways of attaining these goals. The school has a special responsibility for those pupils who for different reasons experience difficulties in attaining the goals that have been set up for the education. For this reason education can never be the same for all.

The school should actively and consciously promote the equal rights and opportunities of pupils, regardless of gender. The school also has a responsibility to combat gender patterns that limit the pupils' learning, choices and development. How the school organises education, how pupils are treated and what demands and expectations are made of them all contribute to shaping their perceptions of what is female and what is male. The school should therefore organise education so that pupils meet and work together, and test and develop their abilities and interests, with the same opportunities and on equal terms, regardless of gender.

Rights and obligations

The school should make it clear to pupils and parents what the goals of the education are, what requirements the school imposes, and what rights and obligations pupils and guardians have. A prerequisite for pupils and their guardians to be able to use their right to exercise influence is that the individual school is clear in specifying its goals, content and working forms. This is important not least as a basis for the individual to make choices in school.

It is not in itself sufficient that teaching only imparts knowledge about fundamental democratic values. Democratic working forms should also be applied in practice and prepare pupils for active participation in the life of society. This should develop their ability to take personal responsibility. By taking part in the planning and evaluation of their daily teaching, and being able to choose courses, subjects, themes and activities, pupils will develop their ability to exercise influence and take responsibility.

Tasks of the school

The task of the school is to promote learning by stimulating the individual to acquire and develop knowledge and values. In partnership with the home, the school should

promote the all-round personal development of pupils into active, creative, competent and responsible individuals and citizens. The school should be permeated by concern for the individual, consideration and generosity. In a deeper sense education and upbringing involve developing and passing on a cultural heritage – values, traditions, language, knowledge – from one generation to the next. The school should support families in their role of being responsible for the upbringing and development of their children. As a result there must be close co-operation between the home and school.

The school has a mandate to convey and embed fundamental values and to promote the pupils' learning in order to prepare them to live and work in society. The school should convey the more enduring knowledge that constitutes the common reference framework that everyone in society needs. Pupils should be able to find their way around and act in a complex reality with a vast information flow, increased digitalisation and a rapid pace of change. It is therefore important to have the ability to study and methods to acquire and use new knowledge. It is also necessary for pupils to develop their ability to critically review information, facts and relationships, and to be aware of the consequences of different alternatives.

The school should strive to promote equality. In doing so, the school should represent and impart equal rights, opportunities and obligations for all people, regardless of gender. In accordance with fundamental values, the school should also promote interaction between pupils regardless of gender. Through education, the pupils should develop an understanding of how different perceptions of what is female and what is male can affect people's opportunities. The school should thus contribute to pupils developing their ability to critically examine gender patterns and how they can restrict people's life choices and living conditions.

Language, learning, and the development of a personal identity are all closely related. By providing a wealth of opportunities for discussion, reading and writing, all pupils should be able to develop their ability to communicate and thus enhance confidence in their own language abilities.

Creative and investigative activities and play are essential components of active learning. In the early years of schooling, play in particular is of great importance in helping pupils to acquire knowledge. The school should also strive to provide all pupils with daily physical activity within the framework of the entire school day.

The school should stimulate pupils' creativity, curiosity and self-confidence, as well as their desire to translate ideas into action and solve problems. Pupils should have the opportunity to take initiatives and assume responsibility, and to develop their ability to work both independently and together with others. The school should contribute to pupils developing an understanding of how digitalisation is affecting the individual and the development of society. All pupils should be given the opportunity to develop their ability to use digital technology. They should also be given the opportunity to develop a critical, responsible attitude towards digital technology, so that they can see opportunities and understand risks, and also be able to evaluate information. The educational programme should thus provide pupils with conditions to develop digital competence and an attitude that promotes entrepreneurship.

An important task for the school is to provide overview and context. In all education, it is important that overall, well-balanced perspectives are established. An historical perspective enables pupils to develop an understanding of the present, and a preparedness for the future, and develop their ability to think in dynamic terms.

An environmental perspective provides opportunities not only to take responsibility for the environment in areas where they themselves can exercise direct influence, but also to form a personal position with respect to overarching and global environmental issues. Teaching should illuminate how the functions of society and our ways of living and working can best be adapted to create sustainable development.

It is important to have an international perspective, to be able to understand one's own reality in a global context and to create international solidarity, as well as prepare for a society with close contacts across cultural and national borders. Having an international perspective also involves developing an understanding of cultural diversity within the country.

An ethical perspective is of importance for many of the issues that are taken up in the school. This perspective should permeate schooling in order to provide a foundation and support pupils in developing their ability to form personal standpoints and to act responsibly towards themselves and others.

The school's task of promoting learning presupposes that there is an active discussion in the individual school about concepts of knowledge, and about what constitutes important knowledge today and in the future, as well as how learning and the acquisition of knowledge take place. Different aspects of knowledge and learning are natural starting points for such a discussion. Knowledge is a complex concept, which can be expressed in a variety of forms – as facts, understanding, skills, familiarity and accumulated experience – all of which presuppose and interact with each other. The work of the school must therefore focus on providing scope for expressing these different forms of knowledge, as well as creating a learning process where these forms are balanced to form a meaningful whole.

The school should promote the harmonious development of pupils. This should be achieved by means of a varied and balanced combination of content and working methods. Shared experiences and the social and cultural world that make up the school provide scope as well as the preconditions for learning and development where different forms of knowledge make up a meaningful whole. Reciprocal exchange between the pedagogical approaches of the preschool class, the school and school-age educare can together help to enrich the pupils' development and learning.

The school should stimulate each pupil towards self-development and personal growth. It should focus not only on intellectual but also practical, sensual and aesthetic aspects. Health and lifestyle issues should also receive attention.

Pupils should have the opportunity of experiencing knowledge in different ways. They should also be encouraged to try out and develop different modes of expression and experience emotions and moods. Drama, rhythm, dance, music and creativity

in art, writing and design should all form part of the school's activities. Harmonious development and educational activity provide opportunities for exploring, researching, acquiring and communicating different forms of knowledge and experiences. Creative ability is a part of what the pupils should acquire.

Good environment for development and learning

The pupils should meet respect for their person and work in school. The school should strive to be a living social community that provides security and generates the will and desire to learn. The school works in settings where there are many different sources of knowledge. The aim should be to create the best conditions for the pupils' all-round development, thinking and acquisition of knowledge. The foundations for a sense of security, and self-esteem are established in the home, but the school also has an important role to play in this context. Every pupil has the right to develop in school, to feel the joy of growth and experience the satisfaction that comes from making progress and overcoming difficulties.

Each school's development

School activities must be developed so that they match up to the national goals. The principal organiser has a clear responsibility for ensuring that this takes place. Both the daily pedagogical leadership of the school, as well as the professional responsibility of the teachers are necessary conditions for the qualitative development of the school. This necessitates continuous review, following up and evaluating results, as well as assessing and developing new methods. Such work has to be carried out in active cooperation between school staff and pupils, and in close contact with the home and the local community.