

## Q&A:

### **Why is Garðabær implementing these changes?**

Garðabær's goal with changes to the organization and working environment of the Preschools is to create more stability in the Preschools work and ensure the well-being of children and staff in the town's preschools.

It is important to further improve the working environment and attract more teachers and staff with education and experience.

These proposals are important, because without action, services will be further reduced and disrupted with school closures.

### **What are the proposals?**

The proposals are fifteen in total and will be implemented in two phases. They are as follows:

1. Preschools in Garðabær will be open Monday to Thursday from 07.30-16.30 and on Fridays from 07.30-16.00.
2. Children will be offered flexible placement hours, a minimum of 20 hours and a maximum of 40 hours per week.
3. Preschools in Garðabær will offer increased flexibility for parents and children by who chose to take more weeks off on an annual basis
4. Preschools in Garðabær will be closed on the Friday before Easter (Easter week).
5. Preschool fees in Garðabær are waived during the winter holidays and between Christmas and New Year if children are not registered for childcare
6. The number of preparation days in Preschools in Garðabær will be increased from four to five
7. Staff-members in preschools with legal domicile in Garðabær will be offered priority for a certain number of preschool places
8. Staff-members in preschools with legal domicile in Garðabær will be offered a discount on preschool fees
9. In Preschools in Garðabær, each class will be guaranteed the same minimal preparation time
10. Emphasis will be placed on the further education and seminar work of staff members.
11. A comprehensive plan will be set up to deal with high absenteeism and costs incurred due to staff illness.
12. More job titles will be defined within the schools
13. One uniform job title will be offered for staff in preschools, elementary schools and after-school centers
14. The criteria for basic staffing will be changed and increased in the oldest groups within the schools.
15. The working environment (housing) of preschools will be examined in terms of the number of square meters in children's play space inside and outside, staff facilities and other spaces.

### **What does flexible stay mean?**

The schools are open from 07.30-16.30 four days a week and until 16.00 on Fridays.

- The minimum length of stay for a child is 20 hours per week.
- The maximum length of stay is 40 hours per week, or approximately 160 hours per month.
- The length of stay can vary between days and within the month. You must register the length of stay or change it before the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month.
- Before the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month, a child must be registered specifically if the stay is to be used between 2-4pm on Fridays.

### **Example of flexibility (but not exhaustive):**

- If a child stays 37 hours in the school, this can be divided as such:  
*7 hours on Mondays, 8 hours on Tuesdays, 8 hours on Wednesdays, 8 hours on Thursdays and 6 hours on Fridays.*
- If a child stays 38 hours per week in the school, this can be divided as such:  
*8 hours for four days and 6 hours for one day.*
- If a child stays 38 hours per week in the school this can be divided as such:  
*8 hours for 2 days, 9 hours for two days and 4 hours for one day.*
- If a child stays 40 hours per week in the school this can be divided as such:  
*9 hours for four days and four hours on the fifth day of the week.*

### **Why is the length of stay being shortened?**

Garðabær is a child-friendly community, and it is important to support family time and as such shorten the time children stay in preschools. The length of stay of children in Icelandic preschools is the longest in the Nordic countries. With a shorter length of stay, there is also an opportunity to fully shorten the working week of nursery school staff in accordance with collective agreements.

With the changed opening hours of the schools and a shorter length of stay for children, there will be less distribution of staff during the day, which will facilitate the organization of working hours and accommodate the shortening of the working week (betri vinnutími) and/or the organization of preparation times.

Shortening the opening hours of preschools will therefore improve services for most children who stay in preschools, as staffing will be easier and there will be less chance of resorting to an understaffing rule that reduces preschool services significantly.

### **How do I request a change of stay / adjust the hours of stay?**

Parents/guardians register their requests for stay in Garðabær's service portal. You can register a full hour's stay. As always, it is ideal that the length of stay remains unchanged for at least 2-3 months, but you have the flexibility to change the length of stay before the 20<sup>th</sup> **of each month**. The principal must approve the requests.

### **What effect does shorter stay for children have on the working environment?**

These changes have a positive effect on the schoolwork. It reduces stress, strengthens professionalism and facilitates staffing. A shorter length of stay has a positive effect on children as well as the organization and the activities within the school. Better staffing at preschools will mean that children will have more continuity during their stay at the preschool.

#### **Do I have to take six weeks off for holidays?**

According to the regulation on the working environment of preschools no. 655/2009 stipulates that children receive at least four weeks of continuous summer leave.

In addition to the four weeks that are mandated to be taken during the summer months (June – August), two optional weeks (5/10 days) will be added which can be taken at any time of the year. This is an option but not an obligation for parents and guardians in addition to the statutory holidays for preschool children.

This is a family-friendly way to increase the flexibility of children's time spent in schools with the possibility of an extended vacation. As in the summer vacation weeks, school fees will be waived for these 1-2 weeks **if parents choose to use them.**

#### **Why is the number of preparation days increased?**

With the increase in the number of planning days, emphasis is being given to the development of internal evaluation, the creation of career plans and the school curriculum. Adding this one working day also reduces the requirement of staff meetings during after school hours.

All preschool organization days are at the same time as elementary school organization days and will continue to be so.

#### **Why will discounts on school fees and priority be given to staff?**

A discount on school fees is an incentive for people to work and live in Garðabær. A condition for priority placement of children of staff members would be that the relevant employee is qualified to work in the school and that he or she is employed for at least a year for 70-100% job percentage.

#### **How is Garðabær going to deal with increased staff absence and illness?**

The sickness rate in preschools is high compared to other workplaces in Garðabær and has been increasing in recent years. Absence of staff puts a strain on the schools and increases the likelihood of staff turnover.

The proposals discussed here are part of strengthening the staffing of schools and thus reducing the burden placed on other staff. Health promotion, targeted training for staff and the use of the Bradford scale to support preschool managers will also be utilized.

How does the tariff change/ How will the fees change?



Garðabær is currently working on a new budget for the next year. A new budget will be presented finally on December 7<sup>th</sup> 2023.

The town's fees for preschools will also change, but it will be determined together with the town's budget.

The facts are:

- The schools will not be free of charge and food fees will continue to be charged.
- It can be expected that a significant discount will be granted for hours from 37 hours per week down to 20 hours.
- Sibling discounts and income-related discounts for parents and guardians will continue to be granted.
- There will be a discount on kindergarten fees if parents choose to take a longer holiday than four weeks in the summer with their children (two extra weeks) and there will be a special registration for children in the schools during the winter and Christmas holidays. Fees will be waived if children are absent during these holidays.
- When calculating school fees, the average number of hours per day is taken into account. If parents shorten the length of stay as much as possible, school fees will be reduced accordingly.

### **When will these proposals take effect?**

From the beginning of the next year, but they will be implemented over a period of time. The first part of the proposals take effect on January 1. 2024 and will be implemented during the spring semester. The second action plan will be launched in the fall semester.

### **How was the administrative process?**

In the spring of 2023, Garðabær began a review of the working environment of the town's preschools to find ways to strengthen the schools and ensure that children enjoy being in the schools. Staff absences were increasing, and it was becoming more difficult to fill positions in the schools.

A working group was appointed in the spring months, which consisted of managers in preschools, staff representatives and the department heads of the education and culture department. The group met in the spring months and submitted draft proposals in May. To hear staff opinions a survey was submitted in June. The results of that survey also shaped the proposals.

The proposals were discussed by the preschool committee in September and October, and the committee met a total of five times about them. All stakeholders are represented in that committee, elected committee members from the majority and minority, parents, preschool managers, and preschool staff.

The proposals were presented to representatives from the parents' councils and school staff. Subsequently, reviews were submitted to the preschool committee from each preschool individually, from parents and from staff members.



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At the meeting of the school committee on October 18, 2023, the attached proposals were approved by all committee members and referred to the town's executive council.

At the meeting of the town's executive council on October 24, 2023, the council referred the proposals to the education and culture department for further elaboration of the financial aspects and for processing at the executive council meeting on November 7, 2023. Subsequently, the executive council agreed to propose to the town council to approve the proposals.

The proposals will be considered at the town council meeting on November 16