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Parents shopping for "good" schools

In the capital region, parents are becoming increasingly competitive regarding where to send their children to school.



Concerned parents are asking to observe teachers in class. Image: YLE Etelä-Karjala

"Parents may ask how many immigrant pupils there are in a class or children with disabilities," says principal Ritva Tyyskä.

In Finland's urban centres parents are able to enrol children in elementary schools outside of their geographic district. Today school administrators say they're receiving more phone calls from parents asking about classroom size and lessons available.

Previously nearly unheard of in Finland, parents have started requesting pre-enrolment visits to schools to see teachers in action.

"Many parents feel unnecessary pressure to decide where their child should go to school," says executive director Tuomas Kurttila of the Finnish Parents' League.

In Helsinki, specialised schools are in the highest demand, and with so many parents having their heart set on these programmes, the city is now considering upping their number. Critics, however, fear that the school specialisation trend will lead to division of have and have nots that will erode Finland's public local school system.

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