

# Going to school in Antwerp for the first time



**INFORMATION  
GUIDE** for foreign  
language speaking,  
minor newcomers  
and their parents



# Dear parents

Is your child a newcomer to Belgium? Has your child never been to school in Flanders before? In that case, **Atlas**, integratie & inburgering Antwerpen (*Atlas, Antwerp Integration Office*) may be of help.

- ➔ Atlas will help you find a **first school** for your child.
- ➔ This guide also exists in **Spanish, French, English, Polish, Serbocroatian, Arabic, Turkish, Russian, Portuguese, Bulgarian, Persian (Farsi) and Rumanian.**
- ➔ Atlas is **also here for parents** who have recently arrived in Flanders. Do you do want to learn to speak Dutch? To find a job? To find your way around Flanders better? Then Atlas may be able to help you.
- ➔ **Do you have any more questions?** Or do you want information on leisure activities for your child? Contact Atlas:

**atlas**, integratie & inburgering Antwerpen  
Carnotstraat 110, 2060 Antwerpen  
**from 09:00 till 16:00 or by appointment**  
03 338 70 11  
atlas minderjarigen@stad.antwerpen.be



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# To school for the first time?

## When can my child start going to school?

- In Belgium every child is **entitled to education**. Even children without valid residence documents.
- Your child can go to nursery school as soon as it is 2 years and 6 months old. A toddler who has turned 2 years and 6 months can start school:
  - after the summer holiday (September)
  - after the autumn holiday (November)
  - after the Christmas holidays (January)
  - on the first school day of February
  - after the spring holiday (February - March)
  - after the Easter holiday (April)
  - after Ascension Day (May)
- Children aged 3 or over can start school right away. They do not have to wait.
- **Please note** that for nursery school, you can enrol your child up to a year in advance. Ask for information as soon as your child is 1 year old.

## Does my child have to go to school?

Nursery school is not compulsory, but it is very important. Your child will be learning Dutch and has the opportunity to play with other children. Ask Atlas or the school for more information.

## When does my child have to start going to school?

Compulsory education starts on 1 September of the year your child has its 6th birthday. From that day forward, your child has to attend school every day. Compulsory education ends when the child turns 18.



## Will my child be learning Dutch at school?

### • **Is your child younger than 12?**

Then your child can attend any school that has vacancies. Your child will be assigned to a class with children of the same age. In many cases, your child will be given extra support in learning Dutch.

### • **Is your child older than 12?**

Then your child can go to a school that organises separate classes for children who do not speak Dutch yet. These are called Reception classes for foreign language speaking newcomers (OKAN - *OnthaalKlas Anderstalige Nieuwkomers*). They work very hard on improving your child's Dutch. It will also be taking other classes. As soon as possible, your child will be attending regular classes.

### • **Learning to speak Dutch better?**

In order to learn Dutch well, it is important for your child to always attend school. But your child can also practice Dutch by taking part in extra-curricular activities. For information on sports and leisure activities, you can contact the city youth service or Atlas.

# Finding a school

## Can I choose a school myself?

- You are free to choose your child's school. Even if your child is not yet registered in the municipality or has no residence documents, it can still attend school.  
If the school has vacancies they are obliged to enrol your child.
- You must also agree to the school's house rules and educational project. Ask for the house rules and read them carefully. The school will ask you to sign the school's house rules.
- In secondary education, there are specific admission requirements your child must meet in order to step into a study programme and grade.
- **Need help? Contact Atlas.**

## How do I choose a school?

- Every school in Flanders is obliged to provide quality education. Nevertheless, every school is different. Every school has its own approach. Every school has its own emphasis. Think carefully about what you consider important for your child. And find a school that fits this best.
- Children up to the age of 12 who do not speak Dutch yet, can attend any school.
- Children between 12 and 18 can attend a school that provides OKAN classes. You can ask Atlas for a list of such schools.
- **Need help? Contact Atlas.**

## Where can I find information on schools?

- To get acquainted with a school you can go for a visit and ask the principal for more information.
- You can also ask friends, family or neighbours whether they know a school. And what they think of that school.
- Many schools have an Internet site where you can find a lot of information.
- The most important rules, agreements and information can be found in the school's house rules. Ask for the house rules and read them carefully.  
When enrolling your child in a school, you must agree to these rules. The school will therefore ask you to sign the school's house rules.
- **Information on the Antwerp schools can be found here:**
  - [onderwijskiezer.be](http://onderwijskiezer.be)
  - [ond.vlaanderen.be](http://ond.vlaanderen.be)
  - [www.meldjeaan.antwerpen.be/scholenzoeker](http://www.meldjeaan.antwerpen.be/scholenzoeker) (nursery and primary schools)



## How do I enrol my child

### IN A NURSERY OR PRIMARY SCHOOL?

- **Looking for a school for the current school year?**

Go by the school of your choice. If the school has a vacancy, you can enrol your child.

If the school has no vacancies, they cannot enrol your child. In that case, the school must always give you a refusal certificate: a statement of declined enrolment. That document guarantees a fair application of the procedure.

You cannot find a place in a school near you? Come to Atlas.

- **Looking for a school for next school year?**

Register your child on [www.meldjeaan.antwerpen.be](http://www.meldjeaan.antwerpen.be). Registering your child means you let us know in advance in which schools you would like to enrol your child.

**You need help? Contact Atlas.**

- **Once you have registered your child, you will receive a letter or an e-mail:**

- Do we have a place for your child? You will see in which school you can register your child and when you should do so.
- Is there no place for your child at the present time? You will be informed and can read what to do to find yet another place.

- **Please note** that while your child is registered, it is not yet enrolled! You will still have to go to the school to enrol your child.

## How do I enrol my child

### IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL?

- **Looking for a school for the current school year?**

You can enrol your child if the school has vacancies. It is best to make an appointment with the school to enrol your child.

If the school has no vacancies, they cannot enrol your child. In that case, the school must always give you a refusal certificate: a statement of declined enrolment (see page 12). That document guarantees a fair application of the procedure.

You cannot find a place in a school near you? Come to Atlas.

- **Looking for a school for next school year?**

Secondary education in Antwerp does not make use of a registration system. However, common enrolment periods are agreed upon by all schools. It is therefore important to know when you can enrol your child in a secondary school.

You want to know when to enrol? Ask Atlas for more information.



## Mededeling van een niet-gerealiseerde inschrijving of van de ontbinding van een inschrijving in het basisonderwijs binnen een werkingsgebied van een lokaal overlegplatform

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MD085

Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten **Afdeling Basisonderwijs, Deeltijds Kunstonderwijs en CLB**  
Koning Albert II-laan 15, 1210 BRUSSEL

### Waarvoor dient dit formulier?

Dit formulier dient als bewijs dat een leerling in een school of vestigingsplaats niet kan worden ingeschreven, of dat de inschrijving van een leerling met een verslag dat toegang geeft tot het buitengewoon onderwijs, wordt ontbonden.

### Wat kunnen ouders doen bij een niet-gerealiseerde inschrijving of bij een ontbinding van inschrijving?

Ouders kunnen binnen dertig kalenderdagen na de vaststelling van de betwiste feiten klacht indienen bij de Commissie inzake Leerlingenrechten op het bovenstaande adres (kamer 4A23). Klachten die na dertig dagen aankomen, zijn niet meer ontvankelijk en kunnen dus niet worden behandeld. Bij de berekening van die termijn worden zaterdagen, zondagen, wettelijke en reglementaire feestdagen, de schoolvakanties en facultatieve vakantiedagen niet meegerekend. Als ouders vragen hebben over de niet-gerealiseerde inschrijving van hun kind, bemiddelingshulp willen of verduidelijking over de reglementering zoeken, kunnen ze contact opnemen met de deskundige van het lokaal overlegplatform (LOP): Dimitri De Rijck/ Evelien Lombaert, tel. 0490 58 99 60 / 0492 34 3614, e-mailadres: LOP.antwerpen@vlaanderen.be.

### Gegevens van de school

1 Voor welk schooljaar geldt de niet-gerealiseerde inschrijving?

.....

2 Vul de datum en het tijdstip van de niet-gerealiseerde inschrijving in.

datum dag ..... maand ..... jaar .....  
tijdstip ..... uur

3 Vul de gegevens van de school of vestigingsplaats in.

naam .....  
instellingsnummer .....  
volgnummer vestigingsplaats .....  
straat en nummer .....  
postnummer en gemeente .....  
telefoonnummer .....

4 Kruis aan voor welk onderwijs de leerling zich wil inschrijven.

gewoon onderwijs

kleuteronderwijs. Vul het geboortjaar in. ....

lager onderwijs. Kruis het leerjaar aan.  1e  2e  3e  4e  5e  6e

buitengewoon onderwijs

kleuteronderwijs. Kruis het type aan.  T2  T3  T4  T5  T6  T7  T9

lager onderwijs. Kruis het type aan.  basisaanbod  T2  T3  T4

T5  T6  T7  T9

### Gegevens van de leerling

5 Vul de gegevens van de leerling in.

voor- en achternaam ..... telefoonnummer .....

geslacht  mannelijk  vrouwelijk geboortedatum dag ..... maand ..... jaar .....

straat en nummer ..... postnummer en gemeente .....

# Education in Flanders

## Nursery school

- Nursery schools are for children aged 2.5 to 5. Nursery school is not compulsory, but it is **very important**.
- In nursery school your child learns many new things by colouring, painting or doing craft work. It will also learn Dutch by singing, listening to stories and playing with other children. This way children develop faster, discovering new things as they play.

## Primary school

- Children aged between 6 and 11 years have to attend primary school. Primary education is **compulsory**.
- In primary school children learn to read, write and count. They are being taught history, world studies and 'learning to learn'. They start learning French as a second language and learn how to interact with each other properly.
- A school that incorporates a primary school and a nursery school is called 'basisschool' (*school for basic education*).
- Occasionally a child can have start primary school early or stay in nursery or primary school longer. Do you have any questions about this subject? Ask the school for more information.

## Secondary school

- Children aged 12 to 18 attend secondary school. Secondary education is also compulsory.
- The first two years of secondary education are general education years.
- For the next 4 years, the pupils have to make a choice:
  - **ASO** (*Algemeen Secundair Onderwijs*): general secondary education will prepare your child for a wide range of degrees in higher education.
  - **KSO** (*Kunst Secundair Onderwijs*): artistic secondary education will prepare your child for a job or further studies in creative or artistic domains.
  - **TSO** (*Technisch Secundair Onderwijs*): technical secondary education prepares your child for a job or further studies in technical domains.
  - **BSO** (*Beroeps Secundair Onderwijs*): vocational secondary education is very practically oriented. At the end, your child is ready to start working. In order to obtain a secondary education diploma, your child will have to do a 7th year.

## Part-time learning and part-time work

- From of 15 or 16, a student can switch to part-time education. There are 3 possibilities to enter into a part-time learning/part-time work programme.
  - Through part-time vocational secondary education
  - By an apprenticeship organised by Syntra Flanders
  - By part-time trainings
- In part-time education your child must spend at least 28 hours per week studying and working.

## Education for children with specific educational needs

- Children and youngsters with disabilities, learning difficulties or behavioural disorders, can attend class in regular schools. In this case the school will discuss with the parents and the pupil guidance centre (CLB) what is needed to allow the child to attend class and whether the school can provide what is needed. In collaboration with the CLB, implementation of a supplementary support programme may be considered.
- If attending class in a regular school is not feasible, your child can attend a school for **special needs education**. For that you need a recommendation by the CLB. There are several types of schools for special needs education, providing education in accordance with the care needs of the children who attend class there.



## Which class can my child join?

### PRE-SCHOOL DAY CARE AND TODDLERS

- 0 till 2.5 years > **pre-school day care**
- 2.5 years > **toddler class**
- 3 years > **1<sup>st</sup> nursery class**
- 4 years > **2<sup>nd</sup> nursery class**
- 5 years > **3<sup>rd</sup> nursery class**



### PRIMARY SCHOOL

- 6 years > **1<sup>st</sup> grade**
- 7 years > **2<sup>nd</sup> grade**
- 8 years > **3<sup>rd</sup> grade**
- 9 years > **4<sup>th</sup> grade**
- 10 years > **5<sup>th</sup> grade**
- 11 years > **6<sup>th</sup> grade**



### SECONDARY SCHOOL

(general, arts, technical, vocational, part-time, OKAN)

- 1<sup>st</sup> cycle**
- 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle**
- 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle**
- (4<sup>th</sup> cycle BSO)



**ADULT EDUCATION**  
**HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**WORK**

# Good to know

## When is school open?

- The school year starts on **1 September** and ends on **30 June**.
- Your child **must** attend school:
  - All day on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.
  - Wednesday mornings
- Your child should not go to school:
  - Wednesday afternoons, Saturdays and Sundays
  - During the school holidays
  - On school staff training daysThey differ from school to school.
- Make sure your child arrives on time. Arriving late is not pleasant for your child and it disturbs the other children.

## When are the school holidays?

- At the time of enrolment, ask the school for a year calendar. It will show all holidays and other days off.
- All schools are closed for holidays on these dates:
  - Autumn holiday
  - Christmas holiday
  - Spring holiday
  - Easter holiday
  - Summer holiday

## What if my child is not able to attend school?

- Your child must attend school every day so it does not miss classes. Skipping class is only allowed if there is **good reason** to do so:
  - Your child is ill;
  - Your child has an appointment;
  - Some religious festivities.
- What if your child is not able to attend school for one day? Discuss it in advance with the principal.
- Is your child sick? Please call the school.
- The school will always ask for **proof**. This may be a doctor's certificate or in some cases a note from the parents. Ask the school what kind of proof is needed.

## How much does school cost?

- In Belgium, access to school is free. You do not have to pay anything to enrol your child. The school has to provide all the utensils you need to obtain your certificate.
- Nevertheless you will have some expenses for school:
  - Food and drinks
  - Lunch break supervision
  - Supervised care before and after school hours
  - Excursions
  - Swimming
  - ...For these extras you will have to pay a contribution.
- These additional costs vary from school to school. Take this into account when selecting a school. The school will provide you in advance with an expense list. Thus you know how much you will have to pay for the whole year. Ask for the list at enrolment!
- You cannot pay the invoice? Discuss it with the school.

## Who can help with the expenses for school?

### • **Education allowance or student grant**

In some cases the Flemish government will help bear part of the school or training costs. For nursery school, primary school and secondary school you can apply for an education allowance. Do so each school year before 1 June.

For higher education you can apply for a student grant.

Whether you are eligible for a grant depends from the composition of your family, your residence status and your financial income. If your income is too high, you are not eligible for a grant.

For the application form or for answers to your questions you can:

- Ask your child's school
- Call the toll free phone number 1700
- Visit [www.studietoelagen.be](http://www.studietoelagen.be)
- Call on to the Antwerp Province Council, Study Grants Department  
Address: VAC Anna Bijns, Lange Kievitstraat 111-113, bus 90, 2018 Antwerpen  
Every Monday and Wednesday afternoon from 13:30 through 16:30

### • **OCMW Grant**

You receive a social integration income (*leefloon*)? The Antwerp OCMW can help you out with some school costs. Ask your social worker for more information.



## **Is child care available before and after school hours?**

- Most schools provide supervised care before and after school hours.
- Enquire carefully at your school when supervised care is provided:
  - In the morning before school starts?
  - In the afternoon when school is out?
  - Wednesday afternoons?
- During the holidays there usually is no supervised care. Ask that too at your school.
- This child care is not free of charge. You will have to pay a contribution. Ask the school in advance how much it will cost you. You can enter the costs as a tax deduction. The school will provide you with the appropriate certificate.

## **Can my child have lunch at school?**

- Your child can stay in school to eat its lunch.
- The children have to bring their own lunch. They eat together and must stay in school.
- Only those children who go home for lunch can leave the school premises. The parents have to authorise it.
- Supervision is provided before, during and after lunch. Most schools charge a fee for this.

## **Does my child have to visit the school doctor?**

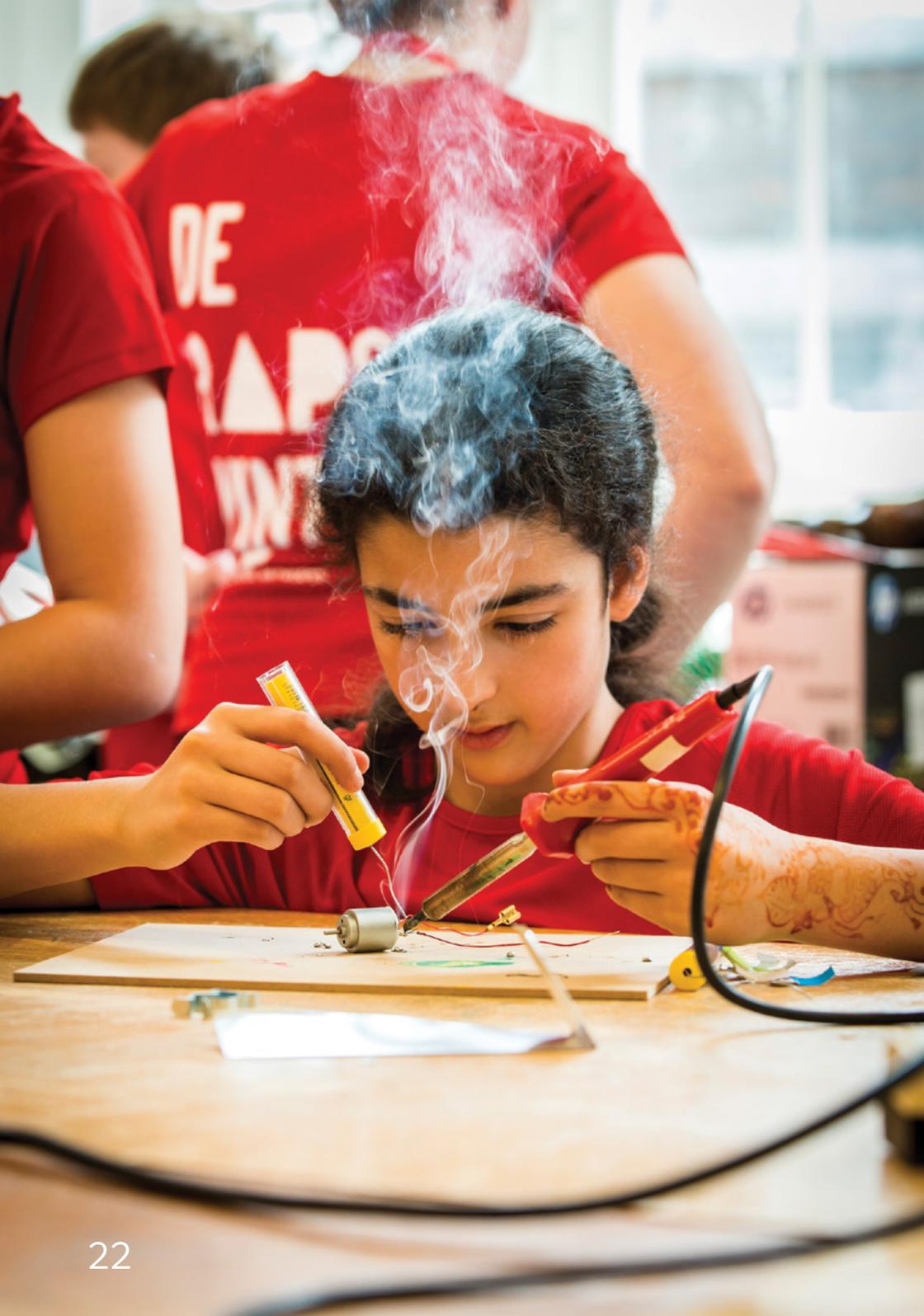
- All children at the school have to see the CLB physician every couple of years.
- The doctor will examine your child's health. The doctor also administers vaccinations. For this, your authorisation will be asked beforehand.
- Your child is aged 14 or over? Then the visits with the CLB physician are not compulsory any more. You do have to inform the CLB (pupil guidance centre).

## **What if my child has problems at school?**

- Some children have problems at school. They do not feel happy in class, they do not understand what is being taught, they are being bullied or are bullying others.
- When you notice a problem with your child, you can turn to:
  - The school management;
  - The teachers. During the class council they discuss the students, their results and their behaviour.
  - The CLB (pupil guidance centre);

## **What does the CLB (pupil guidance centre) do?**

- In order to learn well, your child should feel comfortable at school. The CLB helps to achieve this. Every school is linked to a CLB.
- The CLB listens, consults, informs and gives advice. Whenever there is a problem the CLB will help to find a solution.
- With the CLB you can discuss study choices, behaviour at school, skipping classes, concentration issues, marks, making appointments, learning to choose, self-confidence, participation, opportunities and much more.
- The CLB employs educationalists, psychologists, psychological assistants, social workers, doctors and nurses. Sometimes they also have a speech therapist or a physiotherapist. All these people collaborate to help your child as best as possible.
- All students, parents, teachers and school managements can submit questions to the CLB. Everything always revolves around the child. No information is shared without authorisation. Privacy is always respected.



# How can I help my child?

## How can I stay informed of what is happening at school?

- **Diary**

In the diary you can see what your child did at school. The teacher occasionally notes something you need to know or read in the diary. Therefore, check your child's diary every day. Is there something you want the school to know? Then make a note of it in the diary or call the school.

You do not understand Dutch well? Ask to mark in green what is good and in red what is not good.

- **Parent-teacher contact**

Parent - teacher contacts are organised a couple of times a year. It is very important that you attend. The teacher then tells you how your child is doing. If you do not speak Dutch, the school can provide an interpreter.

- **Help out at school**

Schools like it when parents help out at school. For instance: parents can give a hand at festivities. Or bake cookies for the school party. Sometimes parents come along on excursions. You can also join the parents' council or attend a parent group. Do you want to help out at school? Or do you have questions? Talk to the teacher or the principal.

## Can I help at home?

### • Homework

Your child must do his homework himself. You can help your child a little bit, for example by showing interest. Or you can ask questions about what he has learned.

Is there something your child does not understand? Have him ask additional questions to the teacher. Problems can be discussed during the parent - teacher contact.

### • Speak your own language

Your child will learn Dutch at school. Speak your own language at home. That too is very good for your child.

### • More Dutch

You can provide your child with extra opportunities to learn Dutch. Have him watch Dutch programmes on TV. When there is no school, your child can join other children in a sports club or a youth organisation. That way he can practise his Dutch.

### • DocAtlas for children aged 16 and over.

At Atlas you can find a library filled with Dutch practice material. Drop in on Atlas, or call 03 338 71 60. More information can be found on [www.docatlas.be](http://www.docatlas.be).

### • The library

Wherever you live, there is always a library nearby. Come in, register your child for free and you can choose right away what you want to take home ... The library is also a good place to look up information for your child's homework.

More information can be found on [www.antwerpen.be/bibliotheek](http://www.antwerpen.be/bibliotheek).

### • Questions about education?

Raising a child is not always easy. Do you have a question or do you need more information? You can call on

- **Het Huis van het Kind** (*the house of the child*) near you:

[www.antwerpen.be/huisvanhetkind](http://www.antwerpen.be/huisvanhetkind)  
[huisenvanhetkind@stad.antwerpen.be](mailto:huisenvanhetkind@stad.antwerpen.be)

- **De opvoedingswinkel** (*the education shop*):

Kerkstraat 159, 2060 Antwerpen  
03 236 29 39 · [opvoedingswinkel@stad.antwerpen.be](mailto:opvoedingswinkel@stad.antwerpen.be)



## What can my child do outside school hours?

- Your child can do many things when there is no school. For example, your child do sports, take art classes, learn to play a musical instrument or visit the library. He can do so both throughout the school year and during the holidays.
- During the school holidays there are playgrounds and holiday camps. There your child can play with other children. Adults are present to supervise the children and organise activities.
- Looking for something near you? Or do you have questions? You can call on:
  - **atlas**  
We can help you if you have any questions on leisure activities. More information: atlas, Carnotstraat 110, 2060 Antwerp, telephone. 03 338 70 11, [www.atlas-antwerpen.be](http://www.atlas-antwerpen.be).
  - **Jeugddienst Antwerpen** (*Antwerp youth service*)  
Several districts have a youth service where you can get more information about activities in your neighbourhood. Enquire at your District Hall or visit [www. antwerpen.be/kinderen](http://www.antwerpen.be/kinderen) or [www.antwerpen.be/jongeren](http://www.antwerpen.be/jongeren)
  - **Buurtsport** (*Neighbourhood sports*)  
Does your child like to do sports? You can ask buurtsport for more information: More information: Damplein 31, 2060 Antwerpen, 03 270 31 30, [www.antwerpen.be/buurtsport](http://www.antwerpen.be/buurtsport).

# List of useful Internet sites:

- [www.ond.vlaanderen.be](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be)
- [www.onderwijskiezer.be](http://www.onderwijskiezer.be)
- [www.studietoelagen.be](http://www.studietoelagen.be)
- [www.oudersvoorinclusie.be](http://www.oudersvoorinclusie.be)
- [www.klasse.be](http://www.klasse.be)
- [www.meldjeaan.antwerpen.be](http://www.meldjeaan.antwerpen.be)
- [www.meldpuntonderwijs.be](http://www.meldpuntonderwijs.be)
- [www.atlas-antwerpen.be](http://www.atlas-antwerpen.be)

## CLBs in Antwerp:

- CLB gemeenschapsonderwijs GO! Antwerpen:  
[www.clb-antwerpen.be](http://www.clb-antwerpen.be)
- CLB vrij onderwijs:  
[www.vclbdewisselantwerpen.be](http://www.vclbdewisselantwerpen.be)
- CLB stedelijk onderwijs:  
[www.stedelijkonderwijs.be/clb](http://www.stedelijkonderwijs.be/clb)
- CLB provinciaal onderwijs:  
[www.provincieantwerpen.be/aanbod/doe/leerlingenbegeleiding.html](http://www.provincieantwerpen.be/aanbod/doe/leerlingenbegeleiding.html)

## Colofon

This guide was created by  
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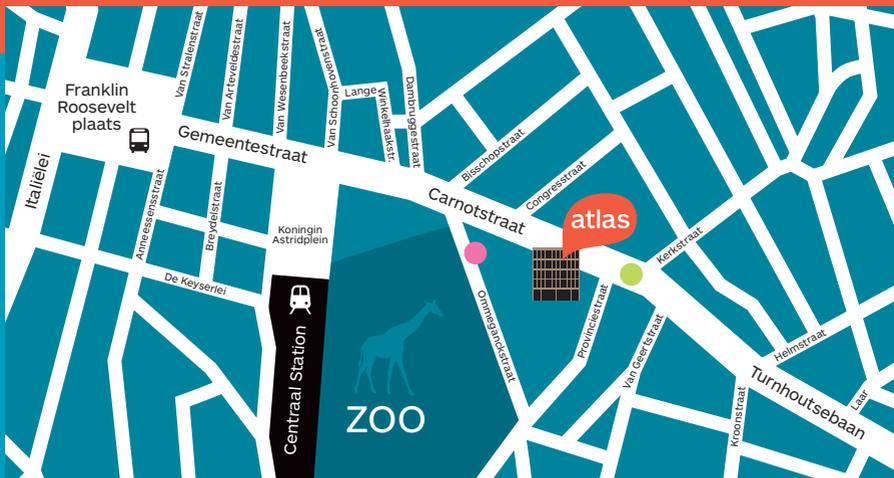
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www.atlas-antwerpen.be



● = HALTE OMMEGANCK: TRAM 11

● = HALTE KERKSTRAAT: TRAM 10, 24

BUS 19, 23, 31, 410, 411, 412, 414, 416, 417, 418, 427, 429