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navigating the netherlands

Checklist International Schools



Leiden region

ORIENTATION PHASE

1. Many municipalities near to Leiden are home to **several international schools**:

Leiderdorp

- Elckerlyc International Primary School

Voorschoten

- The British School in the Netherlands (BSN)

Wassenaar

- The Indonesian Embassy School in the Netherlands
- The American School of The Hague (ASH)

Oegstgeest

- Het Rijnlands Lyceum International Secondary

The Hague

- The International School of The Hague (ISH)
- European School of The Hague (ESH)
- International department of the Haagsche Schoolvereniging (HSV)
- Lighthouse Special Education
- Deutsche Schule (German school)
- Le Lycée Français Vincent van Gogh (French school)

2. On this website you can find most of the international schools in the Netherlands: www.iamexpat.nl/education/main/international-schools-in-the-netherlands.
3. Some of these schools are **subsidized by the Dutch government**. Their fees are lower, but usually they have longer waiting lists than private international schools. You can find the subsidized schools here: www.dutchinternationalschools.nl. Dutch nationals can only attend these schools under special circumstances.
4. How high are their **fees**? How does their payment structure work? Please note: some companies are willing to contribute towards the school fees

for the children of their employees. Furthermore, you can sometimes deduct school fees from your income tax.

5. What **extras** would you have to pay for?
6. How do you **apply** for the school? The application procedure varies per school. Most international schools have a long waiting list. Some schools require you to pay a **registration or application fee** before they will tell you how long the waiting list is. Sometimes this registration fee is refundable, and sometimes it isn't. Try to find this out well in advance.
7. Do they give **priority** to certain pupils, for example siblings, children from their nursery, or children who have just moved from abroad?
8. Which date would your child **start school**? Please note that most international schools use October 1st as their cut-off date. This means that they don't follow the Dutch system of starting school the day after the child's fourth birthday.
9. Do they offer **preschool/nursery**? If yes, from what age?
10. What is the **main language** spoken at school? At most international schools the official language is English, but you'll also find some schools where the main language is French, German, Japanese, or Indonesian. Do all children have to be **fluent** in this language before they start school?
11. Do they also teach **other languages**? If yes, do they offer lessons taught by native speakers? How many hours per week?
12. Do they also teach **Dutch**? If yes, up to which level? How many hours per week? Is it only meant for children whose native language is the same as the school's language, or for everyone?
13. What **accreditations** does the school have?
14. What **program** do they follow? For example, the International Baccalaureate (IB), International Primary Curriculum (IPC), or British/French/German curriculum.
15. **How many teachers** do they have per class? Do they have an assistant teacher? What happens when the teacher is sick?
16. Do they work with a **stable** group of teachers?

17. How many **male and female teachers** do they have? What is the average age of the teachers?
18. Are the teachers **native speakers** of the language they are teaching in?
19. **Teaching style**: do they mainly use classroom instruction, or learning by discovery? How do they apply these philosophies in daily practice?
20. **How many pupils** does the school have? How many classes in total? And how many pupils per class?
21. Do they **combine pupils** of different age groups in one class?
22. How **diverse** are the pupils? What about the teachers?
23. What **kind of children** attend the school? Tip: Go to the school at the end of the school day to observe what kind of parents and children you see and how they behave and interact with each other. Maybe you would like to talk to some of the parents about their experiences with the school. Would they recommend this school to your family?
24. Do they have an **anti-bullying policy**?
25. How do they **discipline** (reward/punish) the children?
26. **How many years**, on average, do the pupils usually stay at the school?
27. Who are the members of the **school board**?
28. What role do **parents** play in day-to-day decision-making? Do they have an active parents/teacher association (PTA)?
29. Is the school sited over **multiple locations**? If yes, which building would your child go to? What are the differences between the locations?
30. Will the school stay in the same building for a while, or do they have plans to **move**?
31. In which areas do most of their pupils **live**?
32. Do they provide a **school bus service**? If yes, what are the costs? Do they pick up your child from home, or from a designated pick-up place?

33. Are there facilities for pupils with **special needs**? For example, for children with educational or physical difficulties, extra language lessons for non-native speakers, or advanced lessons for gifted children?
34. Do the pupils wear **uniforms**? If yes, from what age?
35. What **assessments** of the children are done? Are they graded or do they get descriptive reports? Do they take tests? If yes, from which year?
36. What are the **average grades** of their pupils, and how does the school explain these grades?
37. Do the pupils get **homework**? How much and from what age?
38. What type of school do most pupils go to after the **last year** of elementary school?
39. Do they also have a **high school** department? If yes, what program do they follow? How do the pupils perform there? What type of higher education do pupils go onto afterwards?
40. How often do they teach **art, sport, drama, culture, IT, and science**? Do they work with dedicated teachers for these subjects?
41. Do they have a **lunch break**? How long? What does your child need to bring for lunch?
42. How often do the children play **outside**? What happens when it is raining? Do they have an enclosed and safe playground? Do the smaller children have their own area where they can play?
43. Do they often go on **excursions**? What type of excursions do they offer? From what age?
44. What **extra-curricular activities** do they offer?
45. Which **sports activities** are offered?
46. How is the **after-school care** arranged? It is important to remember that if you need after-school care, you have to sign up with one of the external after school care organizations (BSOs) connected to the school separately, and also pay separately.
47. Do you like the **atmosphere** in the school?
48. Does the school look **well-maintained**, organized, clean and tidy?

49. Do they regularly get **inspected**? Have they published an inspection report on their website? If yes, what does it say? If not, is there any other way you can learn about the outcome of the inspections? Has the quality changed in recent years?
50. If you are moving, or want to change schools, how much **notice** do you have to give?

ONCE YOU HAVE A PLACE (Congratulations!):

1. What will be the **exact day** your child will **start** school?
2. Will your child go to school **full-time** from the beginning?
3. What are the **school hours**? Do they have the same schedule every day?
4. Where do you **say goodbye** to your child in the morning? For example, outside, in the hallway, or in the classroom?
5. Where do you **pick up** your child at the end of the school day?
6. What should you do if you have arranged for your child to be **picked up from school by someone else** (not by a parent/guardian)?
7. When are the school **vacations**? What other days is the school closed? Usually the external BSO is open all day when the school is closed. Some international schools follow the vacation schedule of the country they are related to (e.g. the British School has the same vacations as schools in Britain). Note that the Dutch national school vacations can be found here: www.minocw.nl/schoolvakanties.
8. Are you allowed to **take days off** outside of the school vacations? If yes, how does that work?
9. How do you inform the school if your child is **sick** or **late**?
10. How does the teacher **inform** you about your child's **progress**?
11. What should you do if you think your child is performing **above or below average**?
12. Do they have '**class parents**'? Do they have a mailing list? If yes, how do you get your details on it?
13. What items does your child need to **bring to school**? For example, school bag, sandwiches, fruit, milk, sports clothes, flip-flops, slippers, toys from home on Friday afternoons, and objects related to the current theme of the lessons. Don't forget to mark everything with your child's name.

14. How do they inform the parents about possible issues and changes?
Do they have an **online communication portal and/or newsletter**?
15. What else do they **expect from the parents**? For example, to assist with excursions, story reading, library help, ‘lunch teacher’, traffic controller, or gardening?
16. What should you do if you have a **question or complaint**?
17. How does their **formal complaint procedure** work?
18. Ask for a recent copy of the school guide that contains all the rules and regulations (usually also available online).

Do you need more information on the Dutch education system?

Check <http://new2nl.com/events> for the next seminar on the Dutch education system. Please also inquire about our individual, **personalized Dutch education assistance services** (including local options for international schools), <http://new2nl.com/education-services>, and **Company Packages**, <http://new2nl.com/education-services/#company>.

You can purchase the following documents via the New2nl website, <http://new2nl.com/education-services/#info>:

- Checklist Basisschool for various cities (e.g., Amsterdam, Amstelveen, The Hague, Leiden, Utrecht)
- Checklist international schools
- Summary of the Dutch education system
- Glossary for the Dutch Education System

Or read the following articles, listen to a podcast or watch a video:

- This is a newspaper article published in The Telegraph (U.K.) on the **high scores of Dutch high schools in the OECD education report**. You'll find a familiar name in there too ;-)
www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/netherlands/10489496/OECD-education-report-Dutch-system-puts-premium-on-quality-standards.html
- Two articles on **current developments in Amsterdam schools**:
www.iamexpat.nl/read-and-discuss/education/articles/exciting-new-developments-in-amsterdams-schools and www.expatica.com/nl/education/schools/Exciting-developments-in-Amsterdams-schools_558345.html.
- I am very proud to present the education **podcast** by Amsterdam Mamas where they interview me about education in Amsterdam: www.amsterdam-mamas.nl/stories/education-amsterdam-part-1-school-faqs-and-swap-20-season-2-episode-12
- Figuring out **how the Dutch education system works** can be a very time-consuming and frustrating task. I wrote this article for Amsterdam Mamas to make people's lives a little easier! www.amsterdam-mamas.nl/stories/understanding-dutch-education-system
- My article on the **Dutch school attendance law** for AABC (the Amsterdam American business club): <https://aabc.nl/the-dutch-school-attendance-law>
- Podcast on how to **choose a secondary school** in the Netherlands: <http://www.amsterdam-mamas.nl/articles/choose-your-own-adventure-navigating-dutch-secondary-school-system>
- All **Dutch universities** score reasonably well in the **Times Higher Education World University Rankings** study. Also keep in mind that the Dutch universities are state-funded and that students pay about 1500 euros per year. They might also qualify for a study grant, based on their parents' income and their performances. You get high-quality education without much of a student debt:
www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2017/

world-ranking#! You can find more info on Dutch universities on www.studyinholland.nl

- World Economic Forum: **the Netherlands is the third-most educated country in the world:** <http://nordic.businessinsider.com/wef-global-competitiveness-report-most-educated-countries-in-the-world-2016-10>
- New2nl at Million Female Founders: Insightful interviews with **female entrepreneurs:** http://bit.ly/Sonder_interview.
- Special Needs Education Support in the Netherlands: www.amsterdam-mamas.nl/articles/special-needs-education-support-netherlands.