

4 Costs and support



State schools in Lower Saxony do not charge school fees; **education is free**. However, parents must meet certain costs, including those for:

- › school textbooks;
- › consumable items such as exercise books and pencils;
- › outings and residential class trips.

If the child eats in the school canteen, meal costs must also be paid. In some schools and classes, there may be further costs.

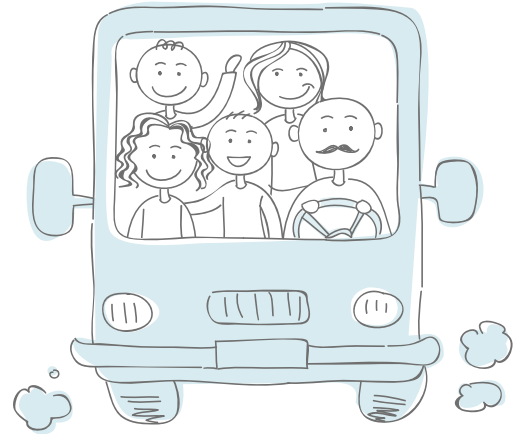
School textbooks: buy or borrow?

In many subjects, teachers use a textbook during lessons. These explain the relevant subject matter and include questions or tasks as aids to understanding and to consolidate learning. A list is issued stating which specific books are needed for a given class. Here is the schoolbook list for Year 5 at a comprehensive school:

Subject	Title (simplified)	ISBN	Price
To borrow			
German	German book		Approx. €25
English	Textbook		Approx. €23
Mathematics	<i>Mathe Ausg. N</i>		Approx. €21
Social studies	Project		Approx. €26
Science	<i>NatWiss 1 – D-Ausg.</i>		Approx. €28
Religious education	<i>Religion Elementar (5/6)</i>		Approx. €23
The following school-related items must be bought			
German	Workbook/Exercise book		Approx. €10
English	Workbook		Approx. €10
Mathematics	Workbook or educational software		Approx. €8 / €10
Social studies	World atlas		Approx. €20
Physical education	Table tennis bat		

These books can be bought. Alternatively, to save money, parents can join a school book-lending scheme. This involves paying **fees** considerably lower than the purchase price.

The disadvantage of this scheme is that books may not be written in or marked. Each book must be returned in good condition at the end of the school year.



Consumable items

The consumable items required in a given class are usually stated in a list that the pupils receive from the school. There is no lending option for these materials, as exercise books, pads, pencils, etc. are 'consumed' or used up during use.

Outings

Sometimes the pupils, accompanied by their teacher, go to a museum to visit a particular exhibition. Or they may attend a theatrical performance.

Costs are incurred here for admission and perhaps also for travel to the venue. **These outings are compulsory as they are part of the teaching provided.** The costs must generally be paid by the parents.

Financial assistance

School-related costs may be a problem for parents on very low incomes. Financial assistance is available in such cases. The best-known form of assistance is known as the **Education and Participation Package** (*Bildungs- und Teilhabepaket*) and is for recipients of unemployment benefit II (*Arbeitslosengeld II*), welfare (*Sozialhilfe*), housing benefit (*Wohngeld*), child benefit (*Kinderzuschlag*) or asylum seeker's benefit (*Asylbewerberleistungen*), as well as low-income families. The parents can request financial assistance for their child to help with specific school-related costs. Application forms are available from the school office: the completed application can be handed in at any local job centre or town hall.

Below is an extract from an application form for financial assistance under the Education and Participation package.

The following payments for Education and Participation are requested under Sec. 28 of the Code of Social Law book II (SGB II):	
<input type="checkbox"/>	for one-day field trips organized by the school / child daycare facility
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	for trips of several days' duration
<input type="checkbox"/>	for school supplies
<input type="checkbox"/>	for school transport
<input type="checkbox"/>	for appropriate supplementary learning support
<input type="checkbox"/>	for communal lunches at the school or child daycare facility
<input type="checkbox"/>	for participation in social and cultural life

In this sample form, the box 'for trips of several days' duration' is selected. The child would like to take part in a class trip to the Harz mountains. However, the parents are unable to meet the costs of outward travel by rail, youth hostel accommodation and the activity programme. In order that

their child can still go, the parents can request funding from the job centre or municipal authority. At some schools, the Friends of the School association (*Förderverein*) provides help when there are insufficient resources to pay for the child.