

Evelin Ilves today visited the Finnish-Estonian Basic School in Helsinki and the first Estonian kindergarten, Anni, in Helsinki.

Latokartano Basic School is a Finnish school in the Viikki area of Helsinki. Approximately 700 children attend classes 1 to 9, 180 of whom speak Estonian language as their mother tongue and most of whom use bilingual teaching to obtain their education. Finnish-Estonian studies are for children who speak Estonian as their mother tongue, who speak Estonian and Finnish at home, and who live in Helsinki. The purpose of bilingual education is to develop the Estonian and Finnish language skills of the children at an equal level. Five Estonian teachers are currently employed at the school. Children have to pass tests to be admitted to Estonian-Finnish classes; to date, two classes of Estonian children have graduated from the basic school.

Evelin Ilves also inspected the catering of the children and sampled the school lunch; she also gave the school some books as the patron of the Estonian Children's Literature Centre.

"It is good that children can continue their studies in the Estonian language at Latokartano Basic School and are able to continue in both Finnish and Estonian speaking schools once they graduate from 9th class. This means that they have a choice," told Evelin Ilves.

As for the school lunch at the school, the children said that while Finnish food is healthy, Estonian cuisine is better and closer to their heart.

Evelin Ilves today also visited the first Estonian kindergarten in Helsinki, Anni, which opened its doors last month. The kindergarten employs five teachers, and 25 children, aged from 2 to 6 years, attend the kindergarten.

Additional information about Latokartano Basic School: <http://eestiklass.wordpress.com/>

Additional information about Anni kindergarten: <http://www.annilastentarha.fi/moodul.php?moodul=CMS&Komponent=NewsFront&f=viewNews&id=1>

Office of the President
Public Relations Department
Phone +372 631 6229