

## General information on social work in schools (SSA)

In addition to teaching staff, many schools in Switzerland employ social workers. Not everyone is familiar with this specialised field of work; the job of a school social worker is sometimes confused with other school-related occupations.

In Switzerland, the acronym 'SSA' is often used to designate school social work (the German term is Schulsozialarbeit). As a rule, all school social workers have completed graduate studies in the field of social work. Like teaching staff, they work in schools with classes, with smaller groups of students or with individuals. Parents and teachers are also welcome to seek advice from the school social workers.

School social workers are specially trained to help deal with difficult situations. For example, if children are being bullied or are unable to integrate in their class. Obviously, if a problem should arise, the first person to contact is usually the class teacher. Some issues, however, require a more in-depth approach, need more time to resolve, and should hence be dealt with by a trained and experienced specialist. These are the cases in which the support of the school social services should be used.

Consultations are free of charge and voluntary on the part of the student or parents. The school social workers are bound to professional discretion; private matters will be kept confidential.

At some schools, the school social workers also give classes on specific topics. For example, to help students strengthen the team spirit within their class, or to give them tips on how to minimise the risks of their web activities.

The objective of the school social services is to help ensure that all students have a positive and successful school experience.

This information text is available in several languages.