

In international tests of maths, science and reading, students in Finland do well. This is good news! But when you look more carefully at the schools, it's not easy to explain. Finnish students don't start school until they are seven years old. The school day is short, about five hours, and there are only three or four classes a day. Students don't have much homework and there are no exams. So, why don't they do badly in tests? Perhaps something else can explain it.

- What do students do well in Finland?**
- When do Finnish students start school?**
- How long do they stay in school?**
- How many classes do they have?**
- Do they have exams?**

There is another unusual feature of schools in Finland. For most of us, the school timetable is a list of subjects, for example ICT, history, foreign languages, geography, with one lesson following another. But some experts believe our brains work in a different way. They say our brains don't divide our learning into subjects. Our brains learn better when they get new information in context. This is why some Finnish schools don't teach subjects separately. Instead, they give students a project, such as 'the weather', and then bring school subjects into the project.

What do experts say about our brain?
How do Finnish school teach subjects?

So how do some experts believe we learn most easily? Here's an example of a project with a class of 12-year-olds. Students watch a video re-enactment of the end of the city of Pompeii. Then on their laptops they compare ancient Italy under the Romans with modern Finland. Groups look at different parts of the topic and then share their ideas. They also use 3-D printers to make a tiny Roman building. Later, they use the pieces of the building for a game. This project includes history, ICT, and design and technology.

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2 Read the article about schools in Finland and choose the best title.

- A** Starting young
- B** New ways of learning
- C** Time for homework

3 Read the text again and answer the questions.

- 1** At what age do Finnish students go to school?
- 2** How long are they at school every day?
- 3** Do students have any homework?
- 4** Do subject words appear on all school timetables?
- 5** How do some experts think our brains work?
- 6** In Finland, do students
 - a** complete a project at the same time as they learn school subjects, or
 - b** study school subjects and then complete a project?
- 7** What subjects do students learn when they do the project on Pompeii?