DENMARK IS A FAMILY-FRIENDLY COUNTRY. CHILDREN ARE TREATED RESPECTFULLY AND ARE ENCOURAGED TO PLAY FREELY. DANES UNDERSTAND THAT CHILDHOOD IS A CRUCIAL STAGE OF LIFE, DURING WHICH PERSONALITY IS SHAPED AND SOCIAL SKILLS ARE DEVELOPED, SO PARENTAL ATTITUDES TEND TO BE LIBERAL AND TOLERANT. SINCE IN THE TYPICAL DANISH FAMILY, BOTH PARENTS WORK, CHILDREN CAN BE ENROLLED IN A PUBLIC CHILD CARE INSTITUTION FROM THE AGE OF SIX MONTHS, THOUGH THE NORM IS AFTER 9-12 MONTHS. IN ADDITION, DANISH PARENTS WITH CHILDREN BELOW 18 YEARS OF AGE RECEIVE A FAMILY ALLOWANCE, REGARDLESS OF THEIR INCOME.

A CHILD-FRIENDLY COUNTRY
Newcomers to Denmark might be under the impression, that Danes have an unusually high number of children. However, this is simply because children are shown consideration in every aspect of Danish society: playgrounds on trains, in shops and restaurants, parents taking their children to the workplace or the gym, and even special cinema sessions for mothers with babies are all part of daily life in Denmark. It is also not inconceivable that young parents who study at university bring their infants to the classroom. The birth rate in Denmark is now on the lowest ever recorded, which in part explains Denmark’s need for highly skilled internationals in the future.

ADULT PERSPECTIVES ON CHILDREN’S BEHAVIOUR
Teaching methods in Denmark prioritise children’s social integration over academic results. Children are viewed as individuals who need to be respected and listened to. School teachers promote games and group activities in the classroom, aiming to help children gain confidence and increase their interest in learning. The school environment might be considered less competitive than in some other countries, but tests and parent-teacher meetings ensure that the child is developing and learning according to the school curriculum.

TYPES OF DAY CARE INSTITUTIONS
Most Danish mothers return to work when their toddlers turn one. Infants until the age of three can attend public or private “vuggestue” (nursery), where educated teachers look after the children. In vuggestue, children do exercises, have a hot
meal and play. Most 3-6 year old children go to “børnehave” (kindergarten). “Børnehaveklasse” (pre-school) prepares children for school, and the first grade starts at 6-7 years old. Au pairs are becoming increasingly popular, taking care of the child while participating in Danish family life.

AFTER-SCHOOL CARE AND YOUTH CLUBS
When children are off from school, many of them attend either after-school care (“SFOs”) or youth clubs (“fritidshjem”), which are often located at or near the school. Both places act as a second home for children, where they can stay active, do sports and socialise with their classmates. Indeed, these centres enhance children’s creativity and team play under teachers’ supervision. Clubs are also a very popular way for children to enjoy free time, so practically all children in Denmark are members of sports and hobby associations. After school, children like playing outside; this is considered safe in Denmark, since crime rates are very low compared to most other countries. There are also plenty of playgrounds and parks available for children.

ASSUMING EARLY RESPONSIBILITIES
Danish children are raised to be independent and self-sufficient, so they learn to take responsibilities from an early age. Many teenagers in Denmark get a part-time job while still at school, mainly within the service sector, typically working in shops or supermarkets after school and in weekends. Thus, they come to appreciate the value of money and learn the responsibilities that come with work. Furthermore, Danish students receive an allowance from the state when they go to university or other educational institutions, so most of them move away from their parents’ home when they start tertiary education.

Facts about children in Denmark:
- Children up to the age of 14 account for 17.4% of the Danish population
- More than 90% of infants in Denmark currently attend day care services
- Pre-school spending is over 0.7% of GDP in Denmark, one of the highest percentages in the world
- 87% of children aged 6-8 and 54% of children aged 9-11 are enrolled in after-school care
