

My child is going to kindergarten

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Dear Parents,

When a child enters kindergarten, this is an exciting time for the whole family. This brochure is intended to provide you as parents with information about kindergarten and to support you and your child in preparing for this big step.

The well-being of our children and the compatibility of family and career is a subject that is close to our hearts in Lower Austria. Being able to send children as of 2.5 years of age to a Lower Austrian kindergarten free of charge and the possibility of our afternoon day care facilities should support families in the best possible way. What is of the utmost importance is the cooperation between families and kindergartens. The kindergarten is there to support you as parents and to prepare children well for their future path in life.

Kindergarten offers children a stimulating learning environment. The children are well looked after and cared for and are able to experience and learn many things. The kindergarten is there to support the family, discover the talents of the children as well as develop and foster them, and to give the children roots as well as wings. Roots should facilitate stability, security and a sense of home, and wings should open up a world of opportunities where children can develop their curiosity and pursue their interests.

On that note, I would like to wish all parents, and especially all children, a wonderful time in kindergarten.

DR. ERWIN PRÖLL

Governor of Lower Austria

Dear Parents,

Kindergarten is an important educational institute that supports the upbringing and care of your child. Aware of their responsibility, our kindergarten team accompanies your child with the utmost commitment and dedication as well as sensitivity and love through those first impressionable years.

Lower Austria's free morning kindergarten offers your child many impulses for learning by accompanying your child's development with pedagogical initiatives such as the kindergarten portfolio, the language offensive in English and, in bordering regions, Czech, Slovakian and Hungarian as well as intercultural pedagogy.

At the center of all these efforts is the individual and best possible development of your child, who will be supported and nurtured through a variety of pedagogical endeavours, experiences and encounters in social as well as emotional areas. You as parents can take an active role in the development of your child's strengths, talents and skills by jointly contributing to your child's portfolio: "My Kindergarten Portfolio", which will accompany your child throughout his/her time in kindergarten.

This brochure should provide you with information as well as show you all the opportunities that our kindergartens can offer.

At this point, I would like to kindly thank all the people involved for their active participation and for their commitment to the interests of our children. I wish your child a happy, prosperous and carefree time in kindergarten!

MAG.^a BARBARA SCHWARZ

Member of State Council

Welcome to kindergarten

“And every beginning magic is inherent...” (Hermann Hesse)

Entering kindergarten is the start of a new phase in life that involves new experiences and adventures and also opens up a variety of new environments for your child to get to know. The transition from the family environment to the new kindergarten world requires your child to take big steps in learning and adapting. Your child will need some time to get used to the new situation, the unfamiliar rooms and the different daily routine. Your child will be temporarily separated from his/her primary caregivers, will meet new children and adults, and create new relationships. Your child will conquer this new, unknown environment and will seek greater autonomy in his/her actions. This is an important step in your child’s independence.

As a first step for the first contact to the new environment, you can arrange short “taster” visits for your child with the kindergarten team leader. That way you and your child can get a first impression together and become familiar with the kindergarten.

Every child is different and will need to adapt in his/her own way at first. Talk to the kindergarten teachers about the acclimatization phase and the pick-up situations so your child can build confidence and security, and also so you can have peace of mind and know that your child is fine and feels comfortable.

Kindergarten as a place of learning and experiencing

Kindergarten is an educational institute for 2.5 to 6 year old children, which supports you as parents in the education and promotion of your child's development.

What is important for us is to support and foster each child and his/her individual competences, skills, talents, and learning in the best possible way. A playful format with pedagogical guidance is the foundation of the educational plan in Lower Austria. A stimulating environment with a variety of pedagogical impulses and learning opportunities in the area of emotions and social relationships, ethics and society, language and communication, physical education and health, aesthetics and design, nature and technology; all this will secure a high educational standard for all children.

By means of high-quality games, educational materials and a variety of input, children will be motivated to actively take part in many subject areas so that their interest is stimulated and engaged. It is a matter of great concern for us to support our children in their activities so that they experience and learn many new things, that they can actively and independently accomplish new tasks, that they can be proud of what they have achieved as well as what they are already capable of, and that they are motivated to learn more: being curious helps.

Together with their playmates, children will be supported in their motivation and learning. Paying attention, concentrating, social contact, expressing interests, and considering others are central topics in our educational work in kindergarten. The children's individual talents and needs are at the center of our teaching resources. The children's strengths and developmental steps will be made transparent for you and your child by means of systematic involvement with the portfolios.

Through the mutual cooperation between children from different cultures, an understanding for a multicultural society is awakened as well as the knowledge of other languages. What we consider important is that your child feels safe and comfortable in kindergarten and that he/she encounters optimal conditions for the development of their individual talents.

How children learn

“The great art is to make a game out of everything children do or learn”. (John Locke)

Learning processes are the basis of education: curiosity, experimentation, and self-directed learning, learning by discovery, learning from models, learning from games; children are constantly acquiring new knowledge about themselves and their environment while gaining valuable experience. This leads to the further development of their worldview and the expansion of their range of skills.

The focus of early childhood education is the development of skills; the learning processes in early childhood are a priority, and play is the most important form of learning.

A secure and sustainable relationship to adult caregivers is an important foundation for the favourable progression of learning processes. This is the prerequisite for a child’s ability to be open to new things; this enables them to openly engage with the world around them.

- **Learning is an active process.** To ensure that a child can learn and store new content, a link must be created to something that is familiar or known to them.
- **Learning requires inner involvement.** Learning content must be oriented around the interests of the child.
- **Learning requires focus.** The more intensively we focus on something, the more attentive we are, and the better new content can be internalised.
- **Learning requires motivation.** We learn when learning is associated with a sense of novelty for the learner.

Competencies

The development of competencies is the foundation for being able to manage all of our responsibilities in life.

By competence, we mean a network of knowledge, abilities, skills, and strategies that every person needs in addition to a motivation to learn in order to be able to act in different situations.

Children develop competencies as a result of a stimulating reciprocal relationship with their environment with regard to **self-competence**, **social competence** and **expertise**.

By **self-competence**, we mean a positive self-concept, independence, self-initiative and the ability to take responsibility for one's own actions.

Social competence means being able to assess and act appropriately in social and societal situations. The basis for that is, among other things, feeling acknowledged, belonging to a group, and carrying shared responsibility. Empathy for others, cooperation, and dealing with rules constructively are further elements of social competence.

Expertise includes assessing and acting appropriately in various specialised areas. Handling objects and materials as well as the linguistic-conceptual comprehension of characteristics and contexts is what creates the basis for this ability.

By **methodological learning competence**, we mean, above all, developing an awareness of one's own learning processes and beneficial learning strategies.

Meta-competence means the ability to evaluate learnability and the level of development of one's own competence and being able to apply this relevantly. This self-knowledge makes it possible to handle especially difficult tasks.

Educational plan for kindergartens in Lower Austria

The educational plan

- makes a significant contribution to the transparency of education and of educational processes in kindergarten
- provides a specialized framework for pedagogical work with children
- includes pedagogical and methodological ideas and suggestions for everyday practice
- creates a bridge from kindergarten to school

With reference to the education plan's listed areas of learning, descriptions, ideas, and examples of how children can be encouraged and supported in their development can be found on the following pages.

Area of learning

Emotions and social relationships

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Area of learning

Ethics, religion, and society

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Portfolio in kindergarten

“The great art is to make a game out of everything children do or learn”. (John Locke)

What is meant by portfolio?

The portfolio makes your child’s individual talents, strengths and developmental steps transparent.

What is in the portfolio?

The portfolio consists of the **Development Portfolio**, the **Transition Portfolio**, and the **“Treasure Chest”**.

The Development Portfolio

- documents your child’s skills, talents, and developmental processes
- encourages new ways of thinking and learning
- makes your child’s learning progression visible
- is kept up to date by your child and the kindergarten teacher together

In the folder **“My Kindergarten Portfolio”**, there is space for drawings, photographs, descriptions of experiences that are important to your child, for things your child has said, and discoveries that he/she has made. Your child will be proud of what he/she has learned and is capable of.

When looking at your child’s folder together with him/her, you will get insight into what they like and what is important to them. Share in your child’s joy over what he/she has accomplished; what he/she is capable of; what he/she is proud of. If you like, you are more than welcome to take active part in adding things to your child’s portfolio: with photographs, family pages, or other shared activities that your child would like to show at kindergarten.

In the final kindergarten year before starting primary school, your child receives the **“Kindergarten Portfolio for School”**. The **Transition Portfolio** accompanies your child through the transition from kindergarten to primary school and should serve as a way to document this preparation together. This folder can be a valuable resource when talking to your child’s future teacher. You as a parent decide what information about your child’s development should be made available to the school.

Portfolio in kindergarten

Why create a portfolio?

For your child

- Your child's various stages of development will be taken into careful consideration and your child's immediate needs will be addressed appropriately.
- Your child can show his/her interests and strengths.
- Cognitive processes will be fostered that open up new opportunities for development.
- Your child will be encouraged to put their thoughts and experiences into words and to express him/herself.

For you as parents

- You will receive even more insight into your child's daily routine and into your child's learning processes in kindergarten.
- You will receive more information about the educational work done in kindergarten.
- As parents, you can actively take part in designing your child's portfolio.
- The portfolio can play a valuable role as a shared basis for discussion in development talks.

Area of learning: emotions and social relationships

“What supports children?”

According to developmental psychology, early childhood is a crucial time for teaching and developing basic human competencies. Kindergarten offers children the opportunity to participate in a larger community outside the family and to learn to interact with other children. In playful and/or everyday situations, children develop behaviour strategies for dealing with their emotions and impulses.

Children talk, laugh and fight in order to learn how to create a shared basis for their interaction – that is how they develop conflict strategies, they gain insight about themselves and others, and about how they are perceived by others.

Basic socio-emotional competencies include:

the ability to connect with others, self-control, consideration for others, self-assertion and a desire to explore and discover. Kindergarten offers an environment that helps children master the challenging task of social learning in a protected space.

Social learning is a significant factor regarding your child’s emotional well-being and is, therefore, a prerequisite for developing motivation to learn and achieve as well as for the success of cognitive learning too.

Area of learning: emotions and social relationships

Learning from experience in emotional-social areas

- Becoming aware of one's feeling
- learning to regulate one's impulses and feelings
- being empathic
- developing trust in one's own abilities to impact something
- developing autonomy and self-confidence
- learning to set limits and say "no"
- offering and accept help
- learning to deal with conflict
- learning to compromise
- negotiating rules and norms for living together and follow them
- learning to actively overcome difficult situations independently
- managing transition phases

Area of learning: ethics, religion, and society

“Everybody is a little like everybody else, a tiny bit like some, and a piece of uniqueness like none.”

There are many things that make people different, such as origin, religion and/or individual abilities. In kindergarten, children are able to experience a deeper understanding of the values and norms of society by being exposed to these differences.

Values create the foundation for norms and behaviour. In kindergarten, children experience a value system that might be different from that of their family’s. As a result, they are confronted with new and different behavioural norms. When children feel acknowledged and accepted as they are with the family value system they have, they are more likely to be able to reflect critically on the value system of others. In this way, they can develop a basic understanding of ethical concepts.

Integration, with regard to inclusive pedagogy, enables all children to experience being a member of a group: an equally valuable member with all their differences and varying talents. In this climate of respect and appreciation of differences, a feeling of belonging and security can be developed.

By testing and practicing various forms of shared decision making, children can take on responsibility appropriate for their stage of development and to take part in the co-creation of their living environment. They learn to develop their own opinions, to accept the opinions of others and to stand up for their rights as well as the rights of others.

Area of learning: ethics, religion, and society

Learning from experience in the area of ethics, religion and society

- Developing a basic understanding that every person is equal
- Considering diversity an enrichment
- Experiencing differentiated and multiple images of potential male and female roles
- Becoming acquainted with democratic attitudes and behaviours
- Taking an active part in community decisions
- Accepting the decisions of the majority and developing a sense of minority protection
- Experiencing religious celebrations and becoming acquainted with biblical stories
- Being open to different cultures and religions, being aware of differences

Area of learning: languages and communication

“Language is the dress of thought.” Samuel Johnson

Language is the key to communication and education. Kindergarten teachers create targeted learning opportunities to expand children’s language abilities and utilize everyday situations for the continuous support of language development.

In this context, the dialogue between adults and children receives a special meaning: it creates the foundation for understanding children’s interests and needs as well as being able to accompany their individual development. Positive social relationships to children and to adults as well as emotional security form the basis for successful language acquisition. The best way to support language development is active participation in spoken interaction in as many natural everyday situations as possible.

The term “Literacy” covers all experience and basic skills surrounding children’s contact with book, narrative and literary culture before actually learning to read and write. Kindergarten offers an environment that encourages literary engagement and enables an exploration of age-appropriate texts and children's literature.

The reading and writing process is based on being able to grasp structural aspects of language (phonological awareness). Language support includes: recognising sounds (e.g. in which name can you hear an A: Anna, Anton, Lisa?), recognising rhymes (e.g. wall, ball, tall), being able to divide words into syllables (e.g. Sa-bi-ne).

Multilingualism: A child’s first language will always have a special status. The family language deserves respects because language and identity are closely related. Successful language acquisition builds on first language skills and, therefore, it is important to continuously develop the first language as well. In addition to that, coming into contact with different language as early as possible is an essential resource for life.

Area of learning: language and communication

Learning through experience in language acquisition

- acquiring a second language naturally through playful, experience oriented support
- acknowledgement and respect for multilingualism in realistic terms
- becoming acquainted with books and literary culture
- expanding vocabulary and narrative skills
- fostering a joy for reading
- understanding meaning in texts
- developing an interest in writing and script
- promoting acoustic differentiation
- being able to grasp the structure of language – phonological awareness, recognising rhymes, etc.
- media literacy

Area of learning: physical education and health

“Movement is a basic form of thinking.” Gerd E. Schäfer

Movement is a basic form of expression for children. It plays a key role in the development of cognitive, emotional, social and communication skills. Learning takes place through movement and perception. Kindergarten offers children a wide range of opportunities for physical activity, stimulation and planned exercise programmes.

Children perceive the world around them via their bodies. Perceiving means selecting some of the sensations from the abundance around them, and interpreting and processing them. That is how children strengthen their skills and abilities to orient themselves and to express themselves, which creates the means for structured thinking and action.

Through movement, children differentiate their skills and stamina, their coordination and their spatial visualisation capacity. By testing fine and gross motor skills, children continuously further develop a feeling for their bodies as well their physical awareness.

Health education in kindergarten includes various physical activities as well as a healthy diet in addition to becoming aware of what is good for the body and how to stay healthy and fit.

Area of learning: physical education and health

Learning through experience in physical education

- developing a feeling for the body and physical awareness
- enjoying movement and exercise
- getting to know one's own limits
- training physical dexterity and coordination skills (gross and fine motor skills, reaction and spatial orientation, rhythm, balance, etc.)
- developing a positive attitude towards one's own body
- knowing what is good for the body

Area of learning: aesthetic and design

“Children are the architects of the future.”

Aesthetic activities enable children to express their thoughts, ideas and imagination. Kindergarten offers a stimulating environment where children can express themselves creatively with pictures, music, movement, language or role plays.

Every artistic expression is a piece of self-discovery and personal development. Art opens up communication beyond language; art arises out of questions about the world, out of self-reflection, out of experimentation with material and form.

Children receive the opportunity in kindergarten to come into contact with pieces of art, artists and cultural artefacts from their own as well as other cultures.

Through creative processes, children experience self-efficacy, which contributes significantly to the development of their identity.

Architecture and interior design

People need an environment that is stimulating for the senses and for their feelings. Architecture and pedagogy can contribute a lot to this. In rooms full of diversity and meeting spaces, children can move freely as soon as they have internalised the rules and regulations of the kindergarten. The room is the “third nurturer”.

Area of learning: aesthetic and design

Learning through experience in the area of aesthetic and design

- becoming aware of one's own ability to express oneself
- discovering one's own talents
- giving children room for imagination and creativity
- experiencing artistic design as a community process
- developing a sense of aesthetic sensitivity in children
- providing the first access to music and visual arts

Area of learning: nature and technology

“Children explore their environment.”

Children are curious: they want to explore, experiment, discover, and find and construct answers to their questions. The concern of kindergartens is to foster a sense of curiosity for numbers, nature and technology, to engage with physical and chemical processes and so stimulate early learning.

Many “why” questions asked by children relate to natural science and technological phenomena.

“Why do we have rainbows?”, “Why do some things stick to the magnet?” - children want to understand every day phenomena while being dependent on tangible experience, which means on their senses. Through experimentation and observations of phenomena of animate and inanimate nature, a child will gain access to topics of natural science. It gets to know the laws and properties of biological, chemical, physical and technical phenomena.

If the child does not receive any hasty answers, but is given the opportunity to discover answers themselves, the discovered answers, i.e. the learning content is remembered for a lifetime. The spirit of research for further questions and observations is awakened.

Through experiencing and being exposed to the environment and natural occurrences, children develop a feeling for the importance and fragility of ecology’s equilibrium. Children experience that nature and the environment should be protected and everyone can make a contribution to sustain it for future generations.

Area of learning: nature and technology

Learning through experience in the area of nature and technology

- experiencing nature
- learning to understand natural occurrences
- understanding that nature and the environment is worth protecting
- getting playful insight into the laws and properties of biological, chemical, physical and technical phenomena
- first grasp of mathematical laws:
 - quantity and length comparison
 - grasping of spatial relations
 - linking: quantity - number word - digit

The Kindergarten Team

The **Kindergarten Head** is responsible for managing the team from a pedagogical as well as administrative perspective and is accountable for the all procedures in the kindergarten.

The **Kindergarten Teachers** leading the groups offer lots of opportunities to your children for learning and movement that address their needs and abilities. Through targeted pedagogical activities, your child will be accompanied through its personal development in a safe environment and supportive atmosphere.

The **Kindergarten Assistants** offer support and help when learning activities are carried out by the **Kindergarten Teachers**.

The **Kindergarten Teachers for Special Needs** work together with the **Kindergarten Teachers** to support and children with special needs with the aim of fostering their development.

The **Intercultural Specialist** works together with the **Kindergarten Teachers** to foster the natural acquisition of language for children from other cultures. The child learns that through multilingualism it has become an integral part of the group and so the language competence of all the children is fostered.

Responsibilities of the Municipality

The municipality maintains and runs the kindergarten and is responsible for:

- registration of your child
- hiring of the child minders and other supportive roles
- construction, furnishing and equipping of the kindergarten
- setting of opening times, which are based on your needs
- holiday care
- organisation of lunch
- fixing and levying all additional costs
- arrangement of integration

Questions about Kindergarten

Your child's kindergarten is the first point of contact for information and questions for you as a parent. The Kindergarten Teacher leading your child's group and the Kindergarten Head are happy to discuss your concerns.

For further questions and concerns, please contact the person responsible for your district kindergarten inspection:

District	Address	Telephone
AMSTETTEN	3300 Amstetten, Preinsbacherstraße 11	07472/9025/10530
BADEN (without Ebreichsdorf*)	2500 Baden, Schwarzstraße 50	02252/9025/11610
BRUCK/LEITHA (with Ebreichsdorf*)	2460 Bruck/Leitha, Fischamender Straße 10	02162/9025/11207
GÄNSERNDORF	2230 Gänserndorf, Schönkirchner Straße 1	02282/9025/10226
GMÜND	3910 Zwettl, Am Statzenberg 1	02822/9025/11438
HOLLABRUNN	3580 Horn, Frauenhofner Straße 2	02982/9025/11317
HORN	3580 Horn, Frauenhofner Straße 2	02982/9025/11317
KORNEUBURG	2100 Korneuburg, Bankmannring 5	02262/9025/11217
KREMS, KREMS-STADT	3500 Krems, Drinkweldergasse 15	02732/9025/11381
LIILENFELD	3270 Scheibbs, Rathausplatz 5	07482/9025/11246
MELK	3390 Melk, Abt Karl-Straße 23	02752/9025/11405
MISTELBACH	2130 Mistelbach, Hauptplatz 4/5	02572/9025/11245
MÖDLING	2340 Mödling, Bahnstraße 2	02236/9025/11495
NEUNKIRCHEN	2620 Neunkirchen, Peischinger Straße 17	02635/9025/10310
SCHEIBBS	3270 Scheibbs, Rathausplatz 5	07482/9025/11246
ST. PÖLTEN	3109 St. Pölten, Am Bischofteich 1	02742/9025/37840
ST. PÖLTEN-STADT	3270 Scheibbs, Rathausplatz 5	07482/9025/11246
TULLN	3430 Tulln, Hauptplatz 33	02262/9025/11299
Waidhofen/YBBS	3270 Scheibbs, Rathausplatz 5	07482/9025/11246
Waidhofen/Thaya	3910 Zwettl, Am Statzenberg 1	02822/9025/11438
WR. NEUSTADT	2700 Wr. Neustadt, Ungargasse 33	02622/9025/11307
WR. NEUSTADT-STADT	2700 Wr. Neustadt, Ungargasse 33	02622/9025/11307
WIEN UMGEBUNG	3400 Klosterneuburg, Leopoldstraße 21	02243/9025/10309
ZWETTL	3910 Zwettl, Am Statzenberg 1	02822/9025/11438

Amt der NÖ Landesregierung, Abteilung Kindergärten, Wiener Straße 54, Stiege B, Tor zum Landhaus, 3109 St. Pölten, Tel: 02742/9005/13238, Fax: 02742/9005/13595, E-Mail: post.k5@noel.gv.at,
Internet: <http://www.noel.gv.at/Kindergarten>

*The municipalities of the former district court of Ebreichsdorf are called Ebreichsdorf, Günselsdorf, Oberwaltersdorf, Pottendorf, Reisenberg, Seibersdorf, Teesdorf, Trumau, Blumau-Neurißhof, Mitterndorf an der Fischa and Tattendorf

Literature

Educational plan for kindergartens in Lower Austria

www.noel.gv.at/kindergarten

NÖ Kindergarten Law 2006

LGBl. 5060 in the current version

www.noel.gv.at/kindergarten Section: Kindergarten Law in NÖ/Lower Austria

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