

Dear Parents,

With this letter we would like to welcome you as a family and in particular your child dearly to our day care centre. Being part of the day care centre is a great opportunity for your child to settle down in Germany. Here it can experience some normality, gather positive impulses, play with other children, and learn a lot - amongst other things, of course, the German language. At this age children are able to pick this up very quickly by being together with other children.

A Legal Claim for a Place in a Kindergarten and being exempt from paying Contributions

In Germany, every one-year-old child is legally entitled to a place of care. As soon as they reach their second birthday, care in kindergartens in Rhineland-Palatine is free of charge for parents. The kindergartens offer so-called part-time care places and day care places. In respect of a part-time care place, the children attend the kindergarten in the mornings and return there following a lunch break. In case of a day care place, the children remain at the kindergarten the whole day continuously and receive a cooked lunch every day.

Objectives of a day care centre and settling in

The objective of day care centres is to educate, teach and care for the children. They are obliged to look after the well-being of each child. It is their aim to educate the children to become responsible individuals within the society and to further their interest in and inquisitiveness of the world. To this end, e.g., the rooms are designed in a way that the children can use and try out the offered playing materials themselves. The pre-school teachers watch your child and find out, what it is most interested in and then try to offer exactly what it needs. At the same time your child has the opportunity to play with other children, to learn from them and together with them.

So that your child feels comfortable, it is important that it learns to trust the teachers and therefore your child will be settled down slowly. The parents accompany their child to the day care centre during the first few days and weeks. The time spent without parents in the day care centre is slowly increased such that in the end the child is able to remain at the centre on its own. This period lasts about four weeks. You are able to discuss this in more detail with the teachers.

A Partnership of Teaching and Education

You as parents are a very important partner for the day care centre as you know your child best. You know, for example, what your child prefers to eat, how it calms down and what it likes to play. Day care centres want to work together with you as parents. There are different forms of working together: Chats when the child is taken to or picked up from the centre, parents' meeting with a pre-arranged appointment, parents' evening meetings, parents' café, etc.

The basis for cooperation is mostly set out in an education contract, which you sign with the sponsor¹ of the day care centre. We will inform you about this in detail in due course.

Ask the day care centre about their educational work and let them know as well what you consider important in educating your child. It is vital that educational concepts are discussed. At the beginning try to make use of a translator with the help of the day care centre to communicate with the

¹ Sponsors of a day care centres are usually municipal authorities, the protestant or catholic church or parents' initiatives.

teachers. Also use the opportunity of cooperating. This helps you to make contact in the day care centre.

Religious Education

In day care centres children and adults of various social backgrounds, nationality, culture, and religion come together unbiased. A religious education is a subject in all day care centres. In Rhineland-Palatine there are municipal bodies and parents' initiatives as well as confessional sponsors of day care centres, e.g. the Protestant or Catholic church; everyday life is here influenced by the Christian belief. You and your child are warmly welcome to join these institutions with your belief and your religion. Ideally you should get information about how the religious education and teaching is realised and lived in the day care centre during your initial application for a place.

Mother Tongue, Learning and Promoting the Language

Language is designed to build up a communication between people and their environment to be able to understand. Therefore, it is very important that your child learns to speak German. Contrary to adults, children are able to pick up a foreign language very fast. In contact with children of the same age in a day care centre your child will succeed very well. This means, however, that your child should also be proud of its own mother tongue. Only if your child speaks its own language well and this fact is accepted in its social environment, it will relax and become curious to let itself in for another language to learn it well. The teachers are very aware of this and will support your child all the time.

Many day care centres with a high percentage of children with a migration background support this process with additional measures for promoting the language and so-called experts for intercultural work. These persons may themselves have a migration background and have experienced what it means to find your place in a foreign world.

The Day Care Centre as a Place for other Supportive Services and Offers

Germany offers a multitude of supporting services for young families. Day care centres are mostly well connected in the area and are aware of other offers which you as a family may want to make use of. Also other parents know what is on offer in their part of town as, e.g., advisory centres, language courses for you as parents, offers of joining clubs. Use the offered chances to learn the German language to be able to find your way around Germany much better. There are many clubs, e.g. sports clubs, which help you as a family to make contact. But you can also get support for educational questions or how to cope with extremely bad experiences, e.g. fleeing your country and being driven away from your home. Do not be discouraged. Ask questions and contact the teachers and also other parents. It is always worthwhile!

Our utmost best wishes accompany you in settling down for a new life in Germany.