

Konzept der Kindertagesstätte „Stralauer Allee 6“

(Stand 10/2017)

> english translation <



Konzept der Kindertagesstätte „Stralauer Allee 6“ / oXxymoron GmbH

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1 The Kindergarten

Kita „Stralauer Allee 6“ is located in the local area of Friedrichshain, part of the larger district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. The centre stretches 240m² and is located on the ground floor of the MTV Networks GmbH building. The Daycare Centre itself boasts an indoor space of 160m² and offers very good public transport links.

U-Bahn: U 1 Warschauer Str.

S-Bahn: S3, S5, S7, S75 Warschauer Str.

Tram: Lines M10, M13

Bus: Line 347

Kita „Stralauer Allee 6“

Stralauer Allee 6

10245 Berlin

Email: stralauer@oxymoron.de

The Daycare is owned and operated by oXymoron GmbH, a non- profit organization.

oXymoron GmbH

Colbestraße 9

10247 Berlin

Telefon: 030 20050926

Fax: 030 20050927

Email: verwaltung@oxymoron.de

www.oxymoron.de

1.1 Opening Hours

Kita Stralauer Alle 6 is open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm.

1.2 Closing Days

During the Summer Holidays, we close the Kita for a period of two weeks and for a period of one week at Easter. For parents who are unable to take holidays during the summer closing period we offer holiday care program in cooperation with our other Kitas. In order to secure a place at our summer Kita, requests must be made by the 31st of March, along with a certificate from your Employer.

Additional closing days between Christmas and New Year, adjacent to public holidays and team training days are determined at the start of each Kita year.

Parents will be informed of all closing dates in due course.

1.3 Groups of Children

Our Kita can accommodate up to 35 children ranging in age from 6 months to school entry age.

We are currently working with two groups:

- The group of children aged 6 months to 3 years (The Bumblebees)
- The group of children aged 3 years to school entry (The Flying Squirrels)

In the early morning and afternoon hours (8:00am to 9:30am and 16:00pm to 18:00pm) the groups generally merge and the children are cared for together. The point at which a child graduates from one group to the other is normally based on their level of development and is not solely dependent on their age.

1.4 The Team

The director of our Kita is Ms Triona Cummins. Deputy director is Ms Stefanie Bönke.

The team consists of educational professionals from various backgrounds and walks of life, (teachers, graduate teachers, rehabilitation professionals), native English speaking teachers from artistic, managerial and musical backgrounds as well as trainees and students of various educational disciplines.

2 The Organization

The non-profit oXymoron GmbH was grounded in 2009 after the division and reorganization of Menschenskind e.V., which was founded in 1996. The objective of the non-profit oXymoron GmbH is the promotion of teaching and education, child and youth welfare as well as art and culture. oXymoron GmbH views itself as a provider of high quality social services for a democratic, united and non-violent society and a contributor towards the preservation of these values. The realization of these social-political concerns can only succeed through an organization whose business concept is built and developed around these specific concerns (the concept of the non-profit oXymoron GmbH).

3 Surrounding Area

The area surrounding the Kita is characterized through the 'Media Spree' which is one of the biggest investment projects in Berlin. This encompasses the growth of media and communication businesses along a part of the banks of the Spree. Many of these new structures have emerged in disused or only partially used properties, and include office buildings, lofts, hotels and other new-builds.

Kita Stralauer 6 is situated in the local area of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, in social sector VIII.

Almost 50 % of the population of this area is between the ages of 18 and 35 years old (2007). The proportion of young people has grown significantly in recent years and is found to be over the average for Berlin (23.4%).

The social make-up of the population is heterogeneous and spans from people who receive 'ALG II' (jobseeker's allowance) and suffer from poverty, to immigrants with varying nationalities, to those who have acquired modern, renovated properties in the area.

4 Bilingualism as a Core Educational Focus

The importance of foreign languages in all spheres of life is indisputable. Increasing globalization and global interdependence in economic, political and cultural fields shape the imagination of modern societies. We experience and learn to develop these abilities through communication, media, travel and changing career perspectives. People with different norms, values and cultural development paths share their living and working spaces with each other. A first step to embracing change and viewing it as an opportunity is to open oneself up to new cultures through the learning of foreign languages.

The foundations for the design of our German-English Kita are developed through the immersion concept of language education.

The immersion concept ensures that the children are immersed in a second language and experience two coinciding languages as part of everyday life in their Kita environment.

Objects and actions become associated with words, sentences and phrases in specific contexts and grow into more complex units of speech; enforcing the rules of grammar and vocabulary is unnecessary. The children learn the language subconsciously and are introduced to the language in everyday life.

This process does not promise that the children will speak fluent English at the end of their time in the Kita, but that they will develop a feel for the language which can help them conquer the world in several languages in later years. Immersion requires no special talent on the child's behalf and it allows children of all social layers to actively participate and reap the benefits. Parents need not speak the language themselves at home as the children will be exposed to enough of the second language throughout their day to day life in the Kita.

It is essential for the successful implementation of the immersion concept that both German and English native speakers are working within both age groups daily. The educators will work through the 'one person, one language' policy, speaking only their native language with the children and their co-workers. On this basis, the children encounter both languages in all situations of daily life within the Kita. They will be cared for in both German and English through song and play and will be encouraged and comforted by their teachers in their native language. This experience builds on the natural language acquisition of children, and has nothing to do with language teaching or specific learning programs, which are applied in later schooling.

Language is a major component of one's culture, and the two are often very closely connected.

Experiencing culture hands on, allows us to learn a language in all of its various colors, facets and forms. Our native speakers come from various English speaking countries (England, Ireland and America), and along with bringing their country's native language to the Kita they also bring various different cultural backgrounds. This allows the children to experience language in all of its varying forms and intricacies.

5 Educational Concepts and Goals

5.1 Our Educational and Developmental Philosophies

Children have absolute priority in our work. They have the right to be treated with respect and understanding. They must receive the attention of, and be able to rely on their key caregivers. According to the guidelines set by oXymoron, we accept each child as a complete and autonomous individual with their strengths, weaknesses and special characteristics. We see children as active learners who competently initiate and govern their own learning. From birth onwards, children explore their world with curiosity; they make it their own, modify it and adopt their own view of it. These processes are always a part of social and cultural environments. Learning takes place during processes co-created by children themselves or between children and adults.

We consider it our duty to create an inspiring environment in which the children can use their own initiative, thus increasing their independent learning potential. We appreciate that children design their learning and personal development. Therefore, as key caregivers we support the child's desire for exploring and discovery, along with providing stimulation for new experiences and encouraging sensory exploration. For this we provide the children the time they need, as well as creating a framework in which a feeling of safety and appreciation can support positive learning experiences.

We see secure emotional attachments as a basis for children to explore their worlds. Children experience fundamental attachment in their families – particularly with their parents. Caregivers must be sensitive to these when building an emotional attachment with the child. We find that the cooperation between parents and the Kita team is essential in the child's personal development.

A child's learning does not occur independently of social contexts. The individual living environments of the children (outside of Kita life) are observed and taken into account and integrated into our educational concept. This includes cultural (for e.g. ethnic origin, religion, gender) and social conditions (for e.g. poverty, changing family structures or geographic mobility), which largely influence the child's situation.

Our Kita helps children to find orientation in their world and with us to actively create their environments. Aside from supporting the children to act on their own initiative, the children get to know social and societal conditions. This provides skills and strategies needed in order to cope with the demands of everyday life.

We see it as our duty in our Kita to support each child to develop and shape their own identity; to acquire tools for self expression; to strengthen their self-esteem; to recognize one's own needs and feelings and to distinguish these from those of others; and to be a comfortable member of a social community.

5.2 Educational Goals

Our Educational work is based on the core concepts of the Berlin Educational Program (B.E.P). The main goal of the B.E.P is to support the development of core personal, social, functional and learning skills through the setting of certain targets and benchmarks. The educational program describes which skills pre-school teachers should foster in day to day activities so that children can be successful in their own lives and actions not only today but also in later years.

These skills can be broken down into four key areas:

Personal Skills

We strive to support our children's personal skills by creating a positive emotional climate in the Kita, in which we as educators can positively respond to the broad spectrum of emotions our children will go through on a daily basis (e.g. happiness, joy, anger, sadness, fear). In this way, children can learn to be aware of their own feelings and develop a stronger concept of self. Through supporting the development of our children's own personal life skills we encourage them to trust their own initiative and to strengthen their self confidence. The children learn to live as confident individuals with their own life story, allowing them to face situations of change and to assist them in dealing with stress and everyday life challenges. We encourage them to create and foster their own inherent coping strategies.

The development of these key personal skills will help the children not only in their early years, but will guide them through the many obstacles they may face in later life.

Social Skills

Social skills can be defined as having the ability to listen to others, to empathize with others, to be able to negotiate and comply with rules and standards of coexistence, to resolve conflict and make compromises. In the Kita we offer the children a safe and welcoming social community where they can share these experiences with children and adults alike. We don't perceive social competence as something fixed, but as an open and ongoing development in which both the children and their caregivers are actively involved. Children begin to develop their own social competencies at birth. In order for these competencies to be nurtured and adequately develop, children also need the support of a sensitive and accessible adult who appreciates their needs and can meet their required needs with a respectful and genuinely interested approach.

Demands are always high when setting an appropriate environment for the development of social skills, and therefore we also ensure the continuous training and development of our educators and teachers.

In order to ensure our staff is adequately equipped to deal with the high level of demands society can place on us, we actively encourage and support their continuous training in these fields.

Practical Skills

Children have an innate curiosity and possess the urge to explore their environment, and to playfully discover new ways to communicate and learn from others. We give children the opportunity to make

these discoveries in a holistic manner. The children learn through experiencing 'real world' situations in a series of self directed activities. Our kindergarten is not developed in any artificial or superficial form; it is specially designed to provide a suitable living space to allow the children to learn from both their external and internal environments. This environment allows the children to learn and discover colors and shapes, numbers and letters and symbols through the context of meaning.

Language competence also falls under the umbrella title of Practical Skills and refers to one's ability to communicate and be understood. In our Kita, the children are actively supported and encouraged to find joy in communicating with their peers in natural situations. Situations such as morning circle, group meals and educational offerings allow and encourage the children to experience the joy of communicating and to develop their experience in verbal communication.

Learning Skills

Our rapidly changing world is constantly placing demands on children to be flexible to regularly and quickly adjust to changes in their environment. Such changes also affect our thoughts about education on an international level. The focus of education has changed and is now seen as a lifelong learning process and no longer confined to traditional defined periods of learning and academia. A greater emphasis and level of attention is now placed on the area of early childhood education, as a result.

Children must begin to learn how to learn at an increasingly early age. In addition to what our children are learning, the process in which they are learning is becoming increasingly important. This means that in our educational work, we draw the child's attention towards the question 'How did I learn that'. This encourages them to reflect on the learning process, allowing them to think about the specific ways in which things work, how to find alternative solutions to specific tasks and why something works in a certain way.

Our Kita creates a trusting environment for the development of learning methodological expertise and offers ideal conditions that foster a joyful learning environment for children and adults alike.

5.3 Creativity as part of everyday Kita Life

In order to support the development of the children's creativity, we provide at the "Kita Stralauer Allee 6" an environment which allows the needs and abilities of the children to be met through multifaceted offerings and materials that allow for open experimentation and purposeful exploration. We encourage "our" children to ask questions and to reflect upon the questions that they bring to the surface. We give them the space and the time to find their own solutions and we support childhood curiosity as an essential aspect of development. The children are encouraged to seek out the ordinary objects all around them and are accompanied by the teachers in an attentive, trustworthy and interested way. Children are allowed to fail. Failure is fundamentally understood by us as an opportunity and is seen as part of learning by means of trial and error. Children and adults interact as equal partners in the learning process.

The term creativity derives from the Latin words *creare* and *crescere*. *Creare* means "something new created, something invented, something produced, established", but it also can mean "to

choose". Crescere means "becoming, growing and letting grow". From these meanings it is clear that at its core, creativity possesses both active and passive elements.

In addition to weekly offerings, which directly support creative activity, we give the children in our Kita the necessary space to lose themselves in their own thoughts or to simply dream, both of which are important to the development of the imagination. The children's needs are taken seriously by letting them move through and experience their own world. This speaks to our organization's concept of the holistic development of a young person to become responsible for themselves and to learn how to effectively communicate with others, creating a connectedness between inner life and outward (social) experience.

Creativity for us is not limited to artistic development; rather, it is something that spills into all areas of the children's life and learning. The unfolding of creativity is seen as a holistic process in which children are encouraged and supported to try things out, find their own solutions and to choose their own individual paths.

5.4 Observation and Documentation

Continual observation and documentation play a significant role in our pedagogical framework and provide the groundwork to produce a strategy for our educational offerings. Observation and documentation include the following:

- Collection of themes and questions from the children brought in relation to the goals of the strategic content of the offerings in order to establish a stimulating educational environment.
- Compilation of educational and developmental phases of an individual child as the template for developmental meetings with the child and her/his parents as well as for development reports.
- Comparison of current competencies, strengths and special capabilities to past ones in order to detect any problem areas and to develop a plan of how to productively address any such issues.

It is understood by us that the nature of observation is always subjective and selective; everyone perceives something different in the same scenario. At the same time however, the act of looking is rooted by specific standards of knowledge which thoroughly inform the observation. Therefore, our observations, along with their multifaceted outgrowths and sometimes various viewpoints, are frequently reflected upon and discussed in team meetings, where they are given special priority and significance.

In addition to standardized observational tools, for example, the "milestones of development", or the "Kuno-Beller-development table" that the teachers have available for use, we are also engaged with documentation through educational and learning stories as well as open observational methods (i.e. Infans-Observation sheet). The results of the observation are documented in the "speech-learning-book (Sprachlerntagebuch)" as well as in the child's development folder.

At least one time per year, a developmental meeting with the parents of each individual child is scheduled.

Through the acts of observation and documentation, an idea is formed of the child as an active and competent being. This idea is then utilized as the basis of our work. In this sense, we accompany the

entrusted children along their development path and help them reach their individual goals through support, stimulation and challenge.

All written documentation and all creations that we keep from each child are a part of the life story of the child. These things belong to the child and her/his family. As teachers, we are allowed to take a gentle look into this life story and to merge it together with our pedagogical thoughts. Should it become necessary for any part of the documentation to be transferred to another organization, this may only occur with respect to the data protection laws, and in each and every instance can only occur with written permission from the parents.

6 Pedagogical Work

6.1 Fundamentals

In our Kita, the children live, play and learn at all different ages and at various developmental stages. They come from a variety of different familial relationships as well as from different cultures. The children's life in the Kita provides an opportunity to practice social learning. Children and adults are equally active in sharing their experiences, planning things together and making compromises. Through daily interaction with one another, this exchange strengthens behavioral patterns and moral ideals. Rules, values and boundaries are communicated and then internalized.

The entire daily routine with all of its continually recurring situations, such as arrival time in the mornings, morning circle, shared mealtimes, free-play and saying goodbye at the end of the day, are already complete learning opportunities and are essential to the children's needs. Each child's abilities and skills allow them to find their own unique role and to determine and shape their daily life in the Kita. They also learn how to enter into and function as part of a group, and in so doing, acquire the skills of tolerance towards their own frustrations.

Every child brings their own, individual experiences, knowledge, affinities, interests and questions into the Kita group. We see the Kita as a place of exchanges and encounters in which the children are given multifaceted sources of stimulation which excite and challenge them in their activities, strengthen their curiosity and support them in building their own worldview.

The strategy of our pedagogical work respects the interests of the children. It is flexible enough to incorporate the individual needs and wishes of the children. We provide learning incentives that include all of the educational areas of the Berlin Educational Program and bring these learning experiences to the children through clear and concrete activities. Included in these activities are overlapping group projects, some of which the children have chosen and voted on, some of which are offerings divided by age group, and some involving the preparation of resources based on individual explorations within the realm of free play. In addition to offerings and activities, the children also simply need time in order to check what they have learned and in so doing to gain a sense of safety and stability. Children want to be self-sufficient. They want to learn on their own, walk on their own, dress themselves without help, choose what food to eat and decide with whom and when they want to play. The more children are allowed to make their own choices and have their own initiatives awoken, the more experiences and competencies they are able to gain.

Children are naturally geared towards experimentation and can easily act with spontaneity towards new activities and ideas. They frequently create their own meaning and purpose out of the functional attributes of things (i.e. rooms, toys, open areas, etc.). Children live predominantly in the "here and now"; they aspire towards immediate satisfaction from their needs and impulses. Deferment and calculation of needs are atypical in childhood development. This understanding of an attitude that insists on fair treatment of children is widely mirrored in our pedagogical work.

Rooms, materials and offerings orient themselves around the themes, interests and developmental needs of the children and specifically cater to these areas. This means that the children should be provided with basic materials in appropriate amounts and variations independent of any specific single idea or project. Our rooms are therefore, in addition to the "nest room" for the 1-3 year olds, subdivided into various function-rooms. These are variable and can be changed according to the needs of the children. In our Kita, we provide with awareness a limited and well-chosen number of toys which are periodically traded out with different toys throughout the year. Children should be stimulated by play materials. They should develop and implement their own play ideas. A surplus of toys can frequently be overwhelming for children, and having too many toys to choose from can shut down the possibility of a more intensive engagement. As a result, the development of fantasy and creativity will then become restricted.

6.2 Morning Circle

A key element of our educational concept is the morning circle. Children gather each day in groups, in order to begin the day together. Morning circle is a place for community, meeting one another, settling in and exploring and experiencing together. Listening, storytelling, singing, playing, counting, and observing the weather are just some of the elements of morning circle. In the circle, children sit equally far apart from one another – symbolically supporting the feeling of a community. Children notice who is present and who is absent. The circle has a centre, which can be used for demonstrations and performance. The circle also changes in size – it can be intimate or with all children at once. Through this, children have the chance to experience themselves in varying group constellations. This strengthens the children's sense of belonging to the group. In morning circle we celebrate birthdays, develop themes for projects, and plan day trips, among other things.

6.3 Project Work

Project work is an important component of our pedagogical job. Projects are carried out on a continual basis and are formed around the current interests and themes of the children or are pulled from the peripheries of their environment. The projects are brought back from year to year and are always refreshed with new ideas, stimulants and contents. Some favorite project themes are the body, animals, water, colors, shapes, native Americans, fairy tales, and much more.

Project work offers a viable method of introducing knowledge as well as examining the daily life of the children. The children have the opportunity to collect their existing knowledge, to check it, to grow it, and eventually to change it. Projects are ideally suited to active, daily, and situational learning and set forth specific scenarios that enable and promote a desire for learning in the

children. The projects are guided by a "red thread of strategy", which leaves plenty of space for the children's own ideas, does not include preconceived answers or results, and is not understood as a fixed, unchangeable plan. Concrete ideas are collected together with the children, and space is left for the unfolding of the children's curiosities and interests and how this may change the direction of the project.

This approach allows the project to develop and become a learning experience full of examination and discovery for both children and adults.

The intensive phase of project work is marked by a variety of different activities and the input of various methods so that the children will be able to experience a particular theme from different perspectives as well as in all of the educational areas. The children are embedded in a multifaceted, holistic learning experience that incorporates the entire range of necessary skills (motor skills, cognitive skills, sensory perception, emotional awareness, social awareness).

An important aspect of project work is also making use of the many contacts and offerings that the city provides, such as visiting museums and libraries, or inviting parents, grandparents, experts, and volunteers to the Kita. Through this opening up of the Kita, the project work can be further enriched. We use many forms to document each project, such as photos, videos, drawings, collected and found materials. The questions and answers from the children open the project even further and flow into the reflective phase. Reflective phases are important for gauging the status of the project by making sure the strategy matches with the goals and then preparing the next steps. Only in this manner can the working process eventually be fit to new circumstances while remaining clear and purposeful. At the end of every project, the results are presented in a child-friendly form, such as through a closing party, an exhibition, or the presentation or layout of a project map. This way, the parents also are able to view how a theme has been worked out and what the results were.

7 Areas of Focus

We do not see the Berlin Education Program as a model made up of separate and distinctly different sections, rather a model of intertwining and connecting realms. Children explore and discover their environment in their own unique way. Our key areas of focus are outlined below.

7.1 Body, Movement and Health

We regard childhood development as a process through which children develop their own independence through active involvement and self determination. Mobility and body awareness are the first in a number of steps on the path to independence. The literal meaning of being able to stand alone applies. The concept of Health Education in our Kita does not only apply to issues such as healthy eating, washing your hands, brushing your teeth and education in hygiene; it also applies to the development of one's individual sense of 'self'.

In order for smaller children to be able to develop their own self image they must first be allowed to ascertain what they like, what they can achieve, what they feel comfortable doing and what is simply 'not for them'. Children need to learn self determination and to rely on their own will. It is important

that we understand the background of our feelings and needs in order to be able to say yes or no with confidence. Trust will be developed through experiencing their individual abilities and setting their own boundaries. The early development of this sense of self will awaken a natural need in each child, a desire for self-determination. A clear sign that children have developed this need can often be witnessed through a phase of tantrums. At this point children need us as adults to take their needs and emotions seriously but also to set sensible and reasonable limits. Through interaction with adults and other children, children learn to set their own limits and to also become aware of the limits of others. This process of interaction is designed to help support the child to stand alone and to become an independent individual. It also provides the opportunity and to learn what social cues affect how we relate to each other as a people and what impact our actions might have.

The development of one's sexual identity and the associated definition of gender roles are an integral part of the process of developing a sense of self.

The theme of sexuality is never made taboo in our Kita. Instead we see human sexuality as a natural part of one's development. Recurring topics include body exploration, sensory experiences, feelings, setting of boundaries, pregnancy, birth and family. The children receive in consultation with parents, appropriate, clear and situational responses to any questions that may arise in these subject matters.

We consider toilet-training as a fundamental stage in a child's development one which we encourage actively. Our caregivers will strive to offer the children all of the support they need when they themselves decide the time is right. We consider active parent-teacher involvement and co-operation as an important component in this important stage in a child's life.

When it comes to mealtimes in our Kita, our main goal is to provide the children with a fresh and balanced diet. Providing a diet that gives children the essential vitamins and minerals required for their healthy development through the provision of wholly organic ingredients is one of our core values. We also refrain from using of monosodium glutamate and other artificial flavor enhancers in our cooking techniques.

For the purposes of creating an environmentally conscious Kita and in order to promote the resource-efficient handling of fresh foods we use mainly seasonal and regional products. Our kitchen staff works closely with our educators to promote a healthy eating environment where food is enjoyed and hygienically prepared. We aim to introduce our children to balanced diets and also help to lay the foundations of nutritional education, learning about food culture, table manners and training of the senses (taste and smell). We encourage our children to learn their own bodily cues and trust that they can themselves determine their individual levels of hunger and thirst.

At meals we create a casual, relaxed and communicative atmosphere to give the children the opportunity to express their own needs and to find the courage to try something new.

7.2 Social and Cultural Environment

A secure attachment makes it possible for children to experience being part of a community. A secure attachment is vital in the development of the child's sense of self, and is made possible when key caregivers are open and attentive to a child's needs. Through this, a child can become 13

emotionally secure, have a positive attitude, approach others with curiosity and dynamism, explore the world and develop confidence in personal skills. Attentive and reliable key caregivers that accompany the children with respect and appreciation provide the children with a secure emotional basis from which they can actively discover the world, along with others.

Nursery and Kindergarten are important environments where the acquisition of social, emotional and cultural experiences is encouraged. Children experience themselves in the group with other children. They get to know different family structures and cultural backgrounds. We see the Kita as a meeting place that is enriched by diversity, where children develop social relationships through interaction with other children and adults. Parents from varying cultural backgrounds are invited to take part in projects at the Kita. Children also experience cultural diversity at museums and exhibitions, where they make discoveries regarding a specific theme, thus developing historical competences, along with openness for what is new or perceived as alien, or even irritating.

In order to empathize with others, children first need to get to know their own feelings and needs, as well as finding ways to express themselves. They are constantly learning to distinguish between feelings, along with realizing that feelings are very personal, and that not every person experiences the same emotions in the same situations. We endeavor to convey to the children that all feelings are allowed, but at the same time there are limits to acting upon these feelings. Children should feel they have a partner to help shape their feelings. Through this, they can learn to tolerate frustration and practice resilience. In the Kita children realize that they make an impact on others, and they find new ways to solve problems and conflicts.

7.3 Communication: Language, Literacy and Media

Language is a unique way in which people communicate and distinguishes humans from other animals. Language is seen as a key component in learning processes. Speaking abilities go hand in hand with the ability to interact with others. The function of speech is much more than repeating words and sentences one has memorized without taking into account meaning or coherence. Language is a means of expression which supports understanding and agency; makes sharing ideas and making agreements possible and forms a basis for self-reflection.

Children can develop their language skills through interaction with others. The same goes for promoting speech development. A key part of the daily routine is that children experience the use and necessity of language, and realize the many possibilities it offers.

Our team members act as conversational partners to the children – attentive listeners who take an interest in what the children have to say because they want to understand them. Activities that stimulate speech are equally important and are integrated into the daily routine. This includes the space to share thoughts, the ability to listen to one another and invent stories, reading books and visiting the library and creating opportunities to talk and discuss. These activities take place especially in morning circle, on day trips and in the time where we gather around after lunch.

The child's innate interest is furthered through rhymes, songs, word games and linguistic games. This further promotes the child's speech development. Vocabulary and modes of expression develop

progressively and therefore contribute to the child's growing understanding of themselves, of others and of the world around them.

As soon as the joy and interest in language is aroused, children explore and discover the world of words. The teachers accompany, stimulate and encourage the children in their exploration. They discover similarities between sounds and words, become aware of phonetic nuances and take increasing interest in writing through symbols, marks and letters of the alphabet. The natural thirst for discovery that the children display is matched through the provision of materials, offerings and projects, thus creating diverse opportunities for learning.

7.4 Artistic Practices

For children, drawing, painting or modeling are natural forms of expression. These acts are unselfconsciously developed and established directly in parallel to spoken language. In many instances, children's drawings can display an advantage over the more discursive nature of spoken language. Contradictions and changes in development can be expressed with ease in a picture, whereas the expression of such complexities through words may only come with great difficulty or perhaps are not able to be expressed at all. Through the exploration of artistic materials, children are able to produce a picture from their own world. They are free to change it, to expand upon it, and sometimes to destroy it and create a new one. In the same way that a child's physical development moves from laying down, then to crawling, and eventually to walking, children's drawings develop in stages from scribbling, to drawing cross and circular forms, to making stick figures, and on to more complex, detailed and varied pictorial content.

In particular, the moment that a very young child realizes she has left her own mark carries a great deal of meaning. During the act of painting, young children frequently feel that the paintbrush ultimately creates a barrier between themselves and the paint, with a more direct contact to the material being desired. The paintbrush will be set aside in order for the hands to be used as the work tool. Feeling the boundaries of their own bodies and leaving their own marks in the process makes for a very special experience. Making a handprint on a piece of paper and realizing "this is my print, this is a symbol of me - evidence of my existence" is a meaningful experience for children. Through artistic activities, children realize their capacity as creators of their own individual works.

In our creative room, we offer a range of materials to spark the creative realm of the children and to support them in their exploration of creative possibilities. A multifaceted offering of materials (various pencils, markers, brushes, paper, clay, wood, beads, natural materials and much more) gives the children inspiration and opens the path for them to give shape to their own ideas, fantasies and dreams. The children are inspired to experiment and try things out and to explore and uncover their environment. The teachers accompany the children along the way and use the children's work in order to gain an insight into the way the children think, understand things and make correlations within their world.

7.5 Music

Music is a form of communication. It is a medium that can be used to express feelings, even without the need for words, or a way of telling stories. Music allows us to relax; to use our bodies creatively; and to facilitate situations in which children can connect in a natural way. Music is a tool for communication – a universal language that reaches beyond the spoken word. In a bilingual Kita in particular, music acts as a binding element for the two languages.

Music therefore plays a key role in our work with the children. Music is not just applied during birthdays and seasonal celebrations, but has an intrinsic place in the everyday routine. Musical rituals are built into each day, to provide the children with a playful and child-friendly frame in which to navigate. This is demonstrated in our daily morning circle, where the children greet one another through song and dance. Chores such as cleaning up and brushing teeth take on a more playful character when accompanied with song.

We as a team endeavor to spark a genuine interest for music and to create enjoyable musical experiences through the use of songs, simple dances, movement and clapping games. Through focused offerings such as rhythm practice, children come closer to music. They have the opportunity to experiment with tones, sounds or rhythms, and to try out different ways of making music. Along with getting to know the rudiments of music, the children also get to apply their sensory perception, imagination and creativity. Making music together requires listening to one another and adapting to one another and to change. Musical activity requires concentration and commitment as new challenges emerge.

7.6 Fundamental Mathematics

Children want to comprehend the world and find their orientation within it. Through doing so, they gain at a very early age their first mathematical experiences. As they move their bodies in space and experience recurring routines in the Kita, the children discover and grasp concepts of space and time. The children learn to understand the meaning of ideas such as in front of, behind and in between and also learn to recognize the differences between before, after, later and earlier.

Out of their own impulses, children frequently sort objects according to size or color, and will also use sorting as a way to compare objects. They discover geometric forms, such as circles, triangles and squares. These naturally occurring interests are supported in the Kita through stimulating materials and specific offerings.

The teachers promote mathematical interest in daily situations by asking the children questions. In morning circle each day, the number of children present is counted, as well as the number of girls and boys sitting in the circle. At lunchtime, the children set the table with plates, cups and silverware. They check beforehand if there is enough of each item and when not, they decide how many more are needed. It is important to us to help the children realize how many possibilities there are for using numbers in their daily life. Numbers can be used to describe a quantity, a sequencing (first, second, third, etc.) or can be used as a measurement for distances, weights or prices. Through such experiences, the children encounter numbers in relation to recurring situations (once, twice, etc.) and also as a way to differentiate things (telephone numbers, zip codes, house addresses). The

children discover numbers and amounts everywhere - through field trips, shopping, baking a cake, cleaning up or 'writing' a letter. Through attempting different tasks, checking for correctness and asking questions, the children explore the relationships between things and develop their logical-mathematical awareness and their problem solving abilities.

7.7 Fundamental Experiences in Natural Science

Children naturally observe their environment, ask questions, explore, organize, compare and try things out for themselves. These attributes make up the fundamental conditions for experiencing and discovering the natural sciences and technology.

The teachers provide varying materials for experimentation and encourage discussion among the children, based on observations of the children's current interests. Arising questions are addressed, with the aim that the children search for the answers themselves, with the support of the teachers, thus intensifying the learning process.

In a major city like Berlin children often lack experiences in the countryside. Therefore it is important to us to make experiences of the natural world possible within the Kita environment. The children have daily access to a garden which neighbors the Kita building. The children experience all weather – be it stormy, snowy or sunny.

The garden allows for experiences with fundamental elements including sand, soil, air and water. The children can explore to their heart's content and also take part in offerings led by teachers.

The children learn the changing of the seasons and the cycles of life and death, growing and withering away. Creatures such as snails, spiders, worms and creepy-crawlies can be observed. Information about creatures can be found with the teachers' help in order to deepen knowledge. It is important to us that children develop respect for nature and its animal life, and that they learn to explore without hurting creatures or damaging plant life through tearing at branches. In the offerings within the garden environment, children have the chance to plant, care for and harvest flowers and herbs, along with raking together leaves, pulling out weeds and much more.

In a major city, we find it important that children on the one hand experience nature, while on the other hand get to explore the various possibilities the city has to offer, such as museums, exhibitions, or local service providers. When looking into businesses and services children learn manufacturing methods such as: How is chocolate made? How does a printer function? What do the police do? And so on. On top of this, children learn to travel around safely in the city, through crossing roads, learning basic road safety, using public transport, and using maps.

Each week the children take part in a field trip. This could be a trip to the woods which allows the children to discover nature and develop a conscience for the environment. The children enjoy the freedom which results from having no tables, chairs or toys. The children's imagination is stimulated through play with natural materials, where these objects have a function and add meaning to games. Motor skills are supported through moving across various surfaces.

8 Parents as Partners in Education

The parents and educators in our Kita form a cooperative educational partnership. Parents are welcomed into the Kita and can find a place where they will not only be supported and advised but also where they can actively participate in the Kita's design. The basis for our parent/teacher relationships are built on foundations of mutual respect, appreciation, trust and understanding.

For most children and parents, the Kita is the first point of entry into the education system and understandably parents often find it difficult to entrust their young child into the care of new people. A number of contributing factors will affect your decision to send your child to daycare and the election of which specific Kita you will ultimately choose. In this new phase of orientation parents need detailed information and continued support in order to ensure that they feel they have made the best decision possible for their child. We want to support and encourage the active involvement of parents in our Kita and the first step in facilitating this is to present the Kita as an organization where active parent involvement is both welcomed and encouraged.

When choosing a Kindergarten, we believe it is very important for parents to feel actively involved in all stages of the decision-making process.

In order to aid parents in this decision-making process, further information can be provided on the following areas in person:

- Atmosphere
- Interior Design and Facilities
- Settling In Period
- Educational Concept
- Berlin Educational Program
- Health Promotion and Nutrition
- Opportunities for active participation of Parents and Children
- Quality Development and Assurance

Parents are considered partners in our Kita and are also considered experts in their own child's development. Huge importance is given to the active involvement of our parents, particularly during the settling in period. Parents are informed and actively involved in the early stages of settling in and together with the teachers they hold a shared responsibility in their child's progress and future development.

Active participation encourages contact with other parents and supports the formation of social networks.

Teachers will use bring and drop off situations as an opportunity for a short exchange of information with parents. Should an instance call for a more detailed conversation or should a major problem arise, a date for an official meeting will be arranged.

An annual parent-teacher meeting will also take place where parents will be given a detailed update on their child's current state and their future prospects within their respective groups. This meeting will be presented in the form of a pre-written developmental report.

Significant life situations and events from the world outside will often affect a child's experiences in the Kita. This can include issues such as parental separation, which can be a very stressful life experience for a child. We strive to provide a place of support for parents who are sharing custody of their children, while also understanding how difficult such transitions can be.

The Kindergarten does not involve itself in the conflicts of the parents themselves, the view of the child is always considered of paramount importance. The opinions and observations of both parents are considered equally important, particularly when dealing with difficult situations and this often proves to be helpful for all parties involved. Through open discussion between parties, we can work together to find tried and tested solutions to any problems which might arise.

Detailed information and advice about not only general educational topics but also detailed information relating to case sensitive issues, is made available to parents at all times.

We can also assist in providing expert external services and meetings with specialist organizations e.g. Children's Advice Centers. This opens up significant opportunities for the assistance of children with individual special cases and can help to prevent possible future difficulties.

Regular bi-annual parent-teacher conferences are used for the exchange of organizational and content based information and provide parents with an insight into everyday daycare activities. At the beginning of each Kindergarten year, a new parent's board is elected from the parent body. They will act as a representative body communicating with management on behalf of the parent's and they will assist in the planning and development processes of the Kita.

In addition to these meetings, a number of specially themed parent's evenings, discussion evenings and interest groups are held throughout the year. Through such methods of co-operation and information sharing, we can foster an active and fruitful exchange between our educators and parents.

Finally, we conduct an annual evaluation of the organization through the distribution of a parent's survey. All results from these surveys are formulated and chronicled and full feedback is provided to parents.

9 Settling In Period

Starting in daycare is an important new phase of life for the children and their parents/respective caregivers. Children must learn how to slowly stand on their own feet and let go of some of the dependence they have on their parents. They develop new bonds and connect with new people, new environments and often a new daily rhythm. The time frame for settling in varies from child to child

and is dependent on a number of factors. A detailed exchange of information between parents and educators at the beginning of your child's time in our Kita is essential in order for us to ensure that your child settles in well and feels happy and secure in their new environment.

The settling in period is an important time for new parents as it provides them with the opportunity to gain a valuable insight into everyday Kita life, and into the work of our team of educators.

In order for parents to feel fully prepared for this new phase in their child's life, we have prepared an additional booklet which focuses on the theme of Settling In.

10 Transition to Primary School

From the first day in the Kita, the child begins to acquire skills that are necessary to develop an interest in school, to have a thirst for learning and be willing to work hard. In the final year before school, children are supported through projects specifically geared to prepare them for school. That is not to say that the teachers offer explicit lessons. The promotion of learning and gaining skills is integral to our daily work and begins from day one and not just in the final Kita year.

Through observing the children systematically, we can deduct if they require support in certain areas, in order for them to cope with school life. We see it as our fundamental responsibility to recognize the child's individual needs, and to work together with the parents to find ways to offer the child further support.

The transition from Kita to school is a big event in the child's life. Something is ending and something is about to begin. In order for the children to better grasp what is happening, they take part in various rituals, such as going on a special day trip for just the school kids, visiting a school, and having a farewell party. This ensures that the children make the transition to school with confidence, a sense of independence and motivation.

11 Integration

Our daycare offers an integrative care for children with disabilities and special needs. It is our belief that these children have the right to develop in the same manner as all people. However, they must also overcome greater obstacles in their development than other children and often require assistance under special conditions in order to fully realize their needs. Our employees strive to support the social integration of all children while simultaneously supporting the development of the individual child. Each child will be encouraged by us to be active, independent and to fully explore their own environments.

We have a policy of inclusion in our Kita and this means that while your own child's individual developmental needs will be fully taken into account; they will also be welcomed as a valued member of our Kita community. Therefore, all of the children will experience diversity as a part of everyday life. They will play together and learn not only with one another, but from one another through their daily activities.

12 Quality Assurance

Our teaching team meets every Wednesday from 4:00pm to 6:00pm to discuss current and reoccurring issues and themes.

The main points of focus include:

- Reflection on the current educational practice and building upon our concept
- Exchange of ideas and knowledge
- The review and development of observational tools and methods
- Individual case reviews
- Discussing upcoming transitions – the transition of children from one group to another, or to other institutions
- Planning our exchange with the parents
- Review of quality standards
- Conducting regular internal evaluations by Berlin Education Program.

In writing our concept, we adhere to current scientific findings. All members of the team take part in further learning courses within and outside of the Kita. Managers receive regular mentoring as well as regular additional management training.