

## Concept

# „Kinzigstraße 18“

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## **1 The day care center**

The day care center "Kinzigstraße 18" is located in the district Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. It covers 404 square meters of a one-story building in the interior of a residential building complex. The daycare center has very good transport connections.

Subway: U 5 Samariterstraße

S-Bahn: S 8, 9, 41, 42 Frankfurter Allee Streetcar: lines 21, M1; Bus: line 240

### **Daycare center "Kinzigstraße 18"**

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The day care center is run by the non-profit organization oXxymoron GmbH.

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Our daycare center can accommodate up to 50 children from the age of six months until they start school. There is a crèche area with 20 places and functional rooms for the children over three years. We work according to a partially open concept. The children are cared for in reference groups. For activities and projects, interest or age-specific groups are formed. Early and late services are organized across groups.

### **1.1 Opening hours**

The daycare center "Kinzigstraße 18" is open from Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

### **1.2 Closing times**

During the summer vacations, our daycare center is closed for two and a half weeks. For parents who cannot take a vacation during this time, we offer care during this time in cooperation with our other daycare centers upon request. Applications must be submitted to the daycare provider with a certificate from the employer by March 31 of the respective year. Other closing days are determined annually in advance. All closing times will be announced to parents in good time.

### **1.3 The Team**

The team includes pedagogical specialists with various degrees as well as in-service trainees and interns.

## **2 The organization**

The non-profit oXxymoron GmbH was founded in 2009 by splitting and transforming an association founded in 1996.

The purpose of the non-profit oXxymoron GmbH is the promotion of education, child and youth welfare as well as art and culture. The oXxymoron GmbH sees itself as a provider of high-quality social services for a democratic, solidary and non-violent society, for whose cohesion it makes a contribution. The realization of this socio-political concern takes place through business operations that are oriented towards a binding mission statement (cf. mission statement of the non-profit oXxymoron GmbH).

## **3 Social environment**

The socio-spatial environment of the daycare center is characterized by the inner-city old building area of the district Friedrichshain, whose "building gaps" have been mostly closed in recent years in the context of urban development and densification of the inner-city area. The daycare center is located on Kinzigstraße, in the Traveplatz planning area (02050801). The surrounding area between Traveplatz and Boxhagener Platz is characterized by predominantly residential development. In the commercial areas (first floor areas of the residential buildings) there are various gastronomically used areas or retail stores. The green and open spaces at Traveplatz and Boxhagener Platz are subject to high usage pressure.

The social composition of the population is heterogeneous and strongly characterized by displacement due to rising rents, redevelopment and construction of condominiums. The migration volume of residents is just under 40%. With an almost equal balance, there are migration tendencies (about 6%) among children, which suggests a displacement of families with children.

Despite all the difficulties, the social area has developed into a diverse, lively neighborhood in recent years, which also offers children many opportunities for discovery. The children of our daycare center regularly use the various playgrounds in the area and the library of the neighborhood.

## **4 Pedagogical guidelines**

### **4.1 Our understanding of education and upbringing**

Children are the focus of our work. They have a right to respect, consideration, understanding and reliability from their caregivers. In accordance with our mission statement, we accept each child as a holistic, independent individual with all his or her strengths, weaknesses and special characteristics.

We understand children as active learners who competently initiate and control educational processes, who discover their world from birth full of curiosity, acquire it, change it and form an image of it. These processes are always embedded in social and cultural environments. Education takes place in co-constructive processes among children and between children and adults.

We see it as our task to create a stimulating learning environment that encourages children in their own activity, takes them seriously as constructors of their education and development, and thus enables the development of self-education potential. As caregivers, we support the children in their urge to explore and discover, encourage them to have new experiences, and encourage them to explore the world with all their senses. We give them time to do this and create a framework that offers safety and security as a prerequisite for positive learning experiences.

We see a secure emotional bond as the basis for children to discover their world. Children experience basic bonding experiences in their families, especially with their parents. Educators must take this into account when building their own relationships with the child. We consider cooperation between families and the daycare center in the sense of an educational partnership to be essential. However, since children's learning does not take place independently of social contexts, the individual living environments of children outside the daycare center are perceived, taken into account and included in the pedagogical work. This includes cultural (e.g. origin, religion, gender) and social conditions (e.g. poverty, changes in the family system, geographical mobility of parents), which have a significant influence on the life situation of children. Our day care center helps children to find their way in their world and to actively participate in shaping their environment. In addition to supporting their own activities, the children are also familiarized with social and societal realities. In doing so, they acquire skills and strategies that enable them to cope with their individual life challenges.

We support the children entrusted to us in establishing and expanding their personal identity, developing a variety of ways of expressing themselves, strengthening their self-esteem, recognizing their own feelings and needs, distinguishing them from those of others, and becoming involved in a social community.

## 4.2 Educational goals

The Berlin educational program, which forms the basis of our pedagogical work, describes I-competencies, social competencies, subject competencies and learning method competencies as guideline goals for the promotion and support of the children.

### *Ego-competence*

For us, promoting ego competence means supporting the development of self-awareness, self-confidence and self-esteem. Educators create a positive emotional climate in the daycare center by responding to the variety of children's feelings (e.g., happiness, joy, envy, anger, sadness, fear), mirroring them through facial expressions and gestures, for example, and thus establishing a resonance with the child's emotional world. In addition, feelings and relationships are actively addressed in activities and projects. In this way, children learn to become aware of their feelings, to differentiate them more strongly, and to develop a positive self-concept.

Ego-competence expresses itself in confidence in one's own abilities, in creative action and independence. Children experience themselves as persons with an individual life story. They learn to deal with contradictions and changes. They experience partings or breaks. Sensitive accompaniment of such stresses enables them to develop or expand coping strategies. The development of control beliefs and self-efficacy are resources that strengthen children on their way through life.

### *Social competence*

By social competence we mean the willingness and ability to perceive the needs, wishes, interests and expectations of others, to understand them and to take them into account appropriately in one's own behavior. Social competence also means cooperating with others. The daycare center as a place of a social community offers the children many opportunities to get in touch with other children and adults, to get to know different points of view, to exchange ideas, to perceive different expectations, to deal with conflicts and to observe rules and boundaries.

We understand social competence not as something fixed, but as an open development process in which children and caregivers are involved. Every child is born with a predisposition for social competence. In order to develop this predisposition, sensitive and accessible adults are needed who treat the child with appreciation, respect and honest interest and respond appropriately to his or her signals. The development of social competencies in the day care center therefore continuously places high demands on the educators' ability to relate and act.



### *Factual competence*

Children have an innate curiosity and an urge to explore their environment through play, to communicate with it and to gain their own experiences.

Children learn on topics of their own choosing and in 'real' life. For us, the daycare center is not a secluded, artificial world, but a space for experience and adventure that provides children with learning opportunities. In this way, children grasp meaningful connections, find commonalities, differences, associations and abstractions, discover colors and shapes, numbers and letters as well as symbols and much more.

Factual competence also means language competence and describes the ability to communicate and understand verbally. In the daycare center, the children are actively supported in their natural interest in communication and the joy of speaking. On various occasions - for example, in the morning circle, at mealtimes and in educational activities - the children are encouraged to communicate verbally about their experiences. We use sign-assisted communication (GUK) to support children with language acquisition difficulties and to provide them with alternative ways of communicating.

### *Learning Methodology Competence*

Our rapidly changing world requires children to constantly adapt to changing conditions and challenges, flexibly and in the shortest possible time. This circumstance has led the international education discussion to focus on lifelong learning processes that are not limited to school periods. As a foundational area for learning competence, increasing attention is being paid to early childhood education.

Children should learn how to learn from an early age. In addition to the content of what is learned, the learning process itself is therefore becoming increasingly important. For educational work in the daycare center, this means also focusing the children's attention on the question 'How did I learn that? '. For this reason, educators systematically encourage children to reflect. This includes thinking about how something can be figured out, why something works a certain way, or if there are other ways to accomplish a task besides a solution found. Our day care center creates an environment for the development of learning methodological competence and offers optimal conditions that promote the desire and joy of children and adults to learn.

## **4.3 Bilingualism as a pedagogical focus of our daycare center**

The great importance of foreign languages in all areas of life is undisputed. Increasing globalization and worldwide interdependencies in economic, political and cultural areas shape the image of modern societies. We experience and learn about these developments through communication media, travel opportunities and changing professional perspectives. People with different norms, values and cultural development paths share their living and working

spaces with each other. A first step in seeing change as an opportunity and opening up to other cultures is learning foreign languages.

The basis for the design of our bilingual, German-English speaking daycare center is the immersion concept. Immersion means that the children are 'immersed' in a second language and experience two languages as a natural part of everyday life in the daycare center. Objects and actions are related to words, phrases, and sentences, and connected to form increasingly complex units. Rules and vocabulary are not made an issue. The children learn unconsciously and are introduced to the language in everyday life. The aim is not for the children to speak perfect English by the end of their time in the kindergarten, but for them to develop a feeling for the language and discover that it is possible to conquer the world in several languages. Immersion requires no special talent and is suitable for children of all social backgrounds. Parents do not need to speak the language themselves.

A prerequisite for the bilingual organization of everyday pedagogical life is that both German and English native speakers work in each group. The principle of 'one person - one language' applies. This means that there are reference persons in the daycare center who speak either only German or only English with the children and among themselves. On this basis, the children encounter both languages in all situations of normal life within the daycare center. They are played with and sung to in two languages, they are comforted or encouraged in two languages. This experience is linked to the children's natural language acquisition and has nothing to do with language lessons or special learning programs as they are used in later school lessons.

Language is a cultural component and as such always remains closely connected to culture. Experiencing the culture makes language come alive in all its colors, facets and sounds. Our native speakers come from different countries (Australia, Germany, England, Ireland and America) and bring not only their language but also their different cultural backgrounds to the daycare center. This opens up further possibilities for shaping the diversity of cultural life for the children and with the children. In this way, language can be experienced by the children with all their senses.



#### 4.4 Observation and documentation

Continuous observation and documentation are central to our pedagogical work and form the basis for planning and differentiating our educational programs. Observation and documentation serve to

- Recording topics and questions of the children's group with the aim of planning the content of offers and creating a stimulating learning environment,
- to draw up educational and developmental histories of the individual child as a basis for developmental discussions with the child and his or her parents as well as for developmental reports,
- comparative recording of competencies, abilities, strengths and special features for early recognition of abnormalities and in order to be able to develop individual support options.

In our observations, we are aware that perception is always subjective and selective. Norms and values shape our view and influence our observations. For this reason, regular reflection on our observations and the diverse and sometimes different perspectives in team discussions is particularly important.

In addition to standardized observation tools, such as the "developmental milestones" or the "Kuno-Beller developmental table", which are available to the teachers, we also deal with documentation through learning stories and with the help of open observations (e.g. Infans observation sheet). Results of the observations are documented in the language learning diary or in the child's development folder.

Developmental discussions with parents take place at least once a year.

Also with regard to observation and documentation, a conception of the active and competent child forms the basis of our work. In this sense, we accompany the children entrusted to us on their developmental path and in achieving the goals they have set for themselves by supporting, stimulating and challenging them.

All written documentation, all creations and creations of the child that we keep are part of the child's life story. They belong to him and his family. As educators, we are allowed to have a careful look at this life story and to include it in our pedagogical considerations. Should it be necessary to pass on parts of the documentation, this is always done in accordance with the data protection guidelines and requires the written consent of the parents in each individual case.

## **5 Planning and Design of the Pedagogical Work**

### **5.1 Basic principles of planning and designing our pedagogical work**

Children of different ages and developmental levels live, play and learn in our daycare center. They come from different family backgrounds and cultures. Life in the daycare center is a training ground for social learning. Children and adults are active together, sharing their experiences, planning together and negotiating compromises. In this way, behavioral habits and moral concepts are consolidated in daily interaction. In the process, norms and values, rules and boundaries are taught and internalized.

Even everyday and regularly recurring situations such as arrivals, morning circle, shared meals, free play and goodbyes are full of learning stimuli and challenges for the children. They come to grips with their abilities and skills, help determine and shape everyday life in the daycare center, but also learn to integrate and subordinate themselves in a group and in this way develop frustration tolerance.

Each child brings his or her own individual experiences, knowledge, inclinations, interests and questions to the group of children. We see the daycare center as a place of exchange and encounter, where children are exposed to a variety of stimuli that stimulate and challenge them in their activities, encourage their curiosity and support them in developing their own view of the world.

The planning of our pedagogical work takes into account the interests of the children. It is flexible in order to respond to individual needs and wishes. We create learning incentives that encompass all educational areas of the Berlin educational program and that offer the children learning experiences in concrete and manageable contexts of action. This includes projects and activities that the children can choose, as well as providing resources for their own explorations during free play. Children want to be independent. They want to learn on their own, they want to be able to walk on their own, they want to dress themselves, eat on their own and decide with whom they want to play what and when. The more self-determination and initiative are encouraged and allowed, the more experiences and skills children can acquire. In addition to offers and incentives, children especially need time in which they can repeatedly review and consolidate what they have learned and thereby experience security and stability. We create an appropriate framework for this.

Children are eager to experiment and spontaneous in dealing with currently felt needs and ideas for action. They transform things independently of their actual function and give them their own meaning and shape. Thus the spoon becomes a doll or the shovel a guitar. Children live predominantly in the "here and now", i.e. they strive for immediate satisfaction of needs and impulses for action. Postponement and calculation of needs are developmentally atypical. This understanding of child-oriented behavior is reflected in our pedagogical work with children.

Rooms, materials and offers are oriented to the topics, interests and developmental needs of the children and are tailored to them. Our rooms are divided into different functional areas. These are variable and can be changed according to the needs of the children. In our daycare center, we deliberately use few and clearly arranged toys, which are replaced at regular intervals. Children should be stimulated by play materials. They should develop and implement their own play ideas. An oversupply of toys often leads to children being overtaxed. If the children have too many toys to choose from, there is a danger that they will no longer be able to deal with them intensively. The development of imagination and creativity is restricted.

## **5.2 The morning circle**

An important element of our pedagogical work is the morning circle. Every day, the children meet in their groups to start the day together. The morning circle is a place of community, of meeting, of arriving, of discovering and experiencing together. As a ritual, it gives the children orientation in the daily routine. Telling stories, singing together, playing, counting, observing the weather and much more are elements of the morning circle. The children learn to listen, to wait and to speak in front of a group. In the circle, everyone is equidistant from each other. Thus, the morning circle already symbolically promotes a sense of community. The children see who is in the circle with them and who is missing. Each circle has a center point that can be used to show or demonstrate something. The circle can change its size as the group moves further apart or comes closer together. Through these experiences, the children continually re-experience themselves and also as part of the group, which leads to a strengthening of the sense of belonging. Here, for example, birthdays are celebrated, project themes are developed and excursions are planned.

## **5.3 Project work**

Project work is an important part of our pedagogical work. Projects take place regularly and are based on the children's current interests and topics or on their environment or world. Some projects are also repeated from year to year and are always carried out with new ideas, suggestions and content. Popular topics include the body, relationships, feelings, water, colors, shapes and much more.

Project work offers a practical method of imparting knowledge and engaging with the children's everyday lives. Projects are ideally suited for action-, everyday- and situation-oriented learning and thus presuppose conditions that enable children to enjoy learning. The projects have a "red thread of planning" that leaves plenty of room for the children's ideas, does not provide ready-made answers or results, and is not to be understood as a rigid schedule. Concrete ideas are collected together with the children and space is provided for the development of the children's curiosity and interests. In this way, the project can develop in its course and become a discovering and exploring learning experience for children and

adults.

The intensive phase of the project work is characterized by different activities and the use of a variety of methods, with which the children can work on their topic from different perspectives and from all educational areas. In the process, the children are provided with holistic (motor, cognitive, sensory, emotional, social) learning experiences among a variety of impressions.

An important part of the project work is also the use of contacts and offers that the city environment provides, such as visits to museums, libraries, invitations from parents or grandparents, professionals, volunteers, etc. The project work can be enriched by such an opening of the Kita. The processes that develop during the projects are observed, documented and evaluated. For the documentation we use e.g. photos, videos, drawings, collected, found or found things. The questions and answers of the children can be further processed and flow into the reflection. Reflection phases are important in order to compare the status of the project with the planning and goals and to be able to prepare the next step. Only in this way can the course of the project be adapted to any new circumstances and disorientation avoided. At the end of each project, the results are presented in a form appropriate for children, e.g., by means of a closing party, an exhibition, a presentation or the display of project folders. This also gives parents an insight into the topics worked on and the results.

#### **5.4 Creativity as the foundation of development**

The term creativity has its conceptual origin in the Latin words *creare* and *crescere*. *Creare* means "to create something new, to invent something, to generate something, to produce", but also has the secondary meaning of "to select". *Crescere* denotes "to become, to grow, to cause to grow." From these derivations, it is clear that creativity at its core contains active as well as passive elements.

For us, creativity is not exclusively related to an artistic development but concerns all areas of life and learning of children. Thus, we understand the development of creativity as a holistic process in which children are supported to try things out, to find their own solutions and to go their own ways.

Our world is characterized by fast pace and rapid changes in technology and society. This places high demands on the development of young people. They are expected both to be able to adapt to changes on a regular basis and to provide orientation services independently under the conditions of permanent change. We recognize a major influence on the developmental conditions of children in the current educational discussion, which often places predefined knowledge and skills at the center of educational concepts. However, educational and social psychological research shows that intelligence and skills without creative freedom and without creative ways of dealing with things limit the development of the individual into a self-confident and responsibly acting personality. A one-sided education that emphasizes the

accumulation of cognitive knowledge neglects the growth resources of the individual and community that can only emerge through creative processes. The development of feelings and imagination is also fostered by creative processes and can be considered an important basic prerequisite for learning.

In order to support children in the development of their creativity, we design a living space in the daycare center "Kinzigstraße 18" in which the children receive a variety of offers and materials for free experimentation and design according to their needs and abilities. We encourage 'our' children to ask questions and stimulate them to think through their own questions. We give them the space and time to find their own solutions and support children's curiosity as an essential driving factor of development. We encourage the children to get to the bottom of things and accompany them attentively, trustingly and with interest. Children are allowed to make mistakes. We see mistakes as an opportunity and as part of learning by trial and error. Children and adults are equal partners in the learning process.

In addition to activities that support activity, we also give the children in our daycare center the necessary space to 'indulge' their thoughts, to 'sink' into them or simply to dream, because this is important for the development of imagination and takes seriously the needs of children to move in 'their world'. This corresponds to the guiding principle of the organization in that the holistic development of young people into independent and communicative personalities requires the exciting combination of 'inner experience' and 'outer (social) experience'.

## **6 The educational areas**

We do not understand the educational areas of the Berlin educational program as completely separate areas of experience. Rather, they merge into one another and are interconnected. Children discover and explore the environment in their own way. The development of learning competencies and their strengthening is particularly important to us.

The following separate consideration of the individual educational areas therefore serves primarily as a theoretical discussion and conceptual foundation.

### **6.1 Body, Movement, Health**

We understand child development as a process in which children gain ever greater independence and autonomy through their own experiences and active self-activity. The ability to move and body awareness are the first experiences on the way to "independence", the meaning of which can be traced back to "being able to stand on one's own".

The Kita "Kinzigstraße" has a large movement room with different materials for building and transporting, climbing and jumping, driving, sliding and rolling. These are intended to motivate

movement, activate sensory perception and promote social interaction. The rooms offer a variety of opportunities for both open movement and guided movement activities.

Health education in the daycare center does not only concern topics such as healthy nutrition, washing hands, brushing teeth and "cleanliness education". It is also about acquiring a self-concept - that is, 'designing' an image of one's own self. Younger children in particular first have to find out what they like, what they can do, what they are confident about and what they actually don't like. Through experience, confidence in one's own abilities and awareness of limits develop. Children should learn to make their own decisions. It is important that they can consciously say no and yes against the background of their feelings and needs.

As children develop their self-image, their natural desire for self-determination grows. Phases of defiance often make this desire very clear. During these phases, children need adults who take their wishes and needs seriously, but who also set reasonable and understandable limits. Through interaction with adults and other children, children get to know their own limits and those of others better. They are encouraged to articulate and accept them. These processes support the child in experiencing itself as an independent and self-determined individual, which has an influence on and helps to determine social interaction in the group.

The development of gender identity and the associated role identification are part of this identification process. A gender-conscious pedagogy is the basis of our work. We promote both an unbiased approach to one's own gender and the opposite gender, as well as equal and equal treatment between girls and boys. Children recognize differences and accept them. It is important to us that the children value differences and individual personality aspects and experience them as enrichment in the group. At the same time, children's own interests and preferences should not be seen as dependent on their gender. Movement play situations in particular often provide an opportunity to critically question traditional and culturally influenced role models and expectations and to discuss them with the children.

The topic of sexuality is not made taboo. Instead, the aim is to provide a sex-friendly education that promotes the senses. Themes that recur include body exploration, sensory experiences, feelings, setting boundaries, pregnancy, birth and family. In consultation with parents, the children receive appropriate, clear and situational answers to all these questions.

In feeding our children, the main focus is on a fresh and balanced diet. Preparation techniques that preserve ingredients as well as the use of organic products are central to this. Providing a diet that provides the children with essential vitamins and minerals for their development is as much a part of our cuisine as avoiding monosodium glutamates and other artificial flavor enhancers. The consideration of food allergies and intolerances is a matter of course for us. In the sense of an environmentally conscious and resource-saving handling of fresh food, we mainly use seasonal and regional products.

Our kitchen staff work closely with the pedagogical staff to promote healthy behavior among the children. In doing so, the field of action nutrition is anchored in as many areas of the pedagogical everyday life as possible with the aim of introducing the children to a balanced



nutritional behavior and to lay the foundations for a self-determined and self-responsible handling of food and drink. In addition, our nutrition education includes learning about food culture, table manners and eating habits, but also the responsible use of food and kitchen utensils, the training of smell, taste and sensory perception, as well as the perception of hunger and satiety as signals of the body. At mealtimes, we create an informal, relaxed and communicative atmosphere to give the children the opportunity to feel their own needs and find the courage to try new things.

Our "cleanliness education" is basically based on the developmental stage of each individual child. The pedagogical staff offer all children the necessary support in "becoming dry". However, the child sets the time and pace. Especially in this important developmental phase for children and parents, the staff attaches great importance to intensive cooperation with parents.

## **6.2 Social and cultural environment**

A secure attachment enables children to experience themselves as part of a social community. Secure attachment is expressed in the accessibility and availability of caregivers and is one of the most important basic prerequisites for the personality development of children. This gives the child its positive basic attitude and emotional security, enables it to turn to others with curiosity and a thirst for action, allows it to explore the world and develops confidence in its own abilities. Sensitive and reliable caregivers who accompany the children in an appreciative and respectful manner give them a secure emotional basis from which they can actively explore their world and interact with others.

The nursery and kindergarten are important experiential spaces in which social, emotional and cultural learning are promoted. Children experience themselves in the group with other children. They discover different family structures and cultural backgrounds. We see the daycare center as a meeting place where diversity becomes enrichment and children develop their social relationships through interaction with other children and adults. Parents from different cultures are invited to participate in projects at the daycare center. In museums and exhibitions, children experience the diversity of cultural life, make topic-specific discoveries, develop historical competence and openness to new and supposedly foreign or irritating things.

In order to be able to empathize with others later on, children must first learn about their own feelings and needs and be able to express them. They learn to differentiate feelings more and more and learn that feelings are something very personal, that different people can have different feelings in the same situations. It is important for us to convey to the children that all feelings and sensations are justified, but that there are limits to how much they can be expressed. Children should learn that they can help shape their emotional experience. On this basis, frustration tolerance and resilience can develop. Children experience self-efficacy in the

daycare center and learn various problem and conflict-solving strategies.

### **6.3 Communication: languages, written culture and media**

Language is man's unique means of communication, which distinguishes him from other living beings. It is considered an essential key to educational processes. In this context, language competence is always related to action competence. An empty repetition of learned words or sentences without a context of meaning, significance or action does not do justice to the function of language.

Language is a means of expression, it serves communication and coordination, enables communication, coordination and is the basis of reflection. Language cannot be taught to children independently of its function, because it develops in interaction. The same applies to language promotion. It is important for everyday life in the daycare center that children experience the meaning, necessity and possibilities of language. Our professionals are conversation partners for the children, who listen to them attentively, who care about what they have to say, who listen and who want to understand them. Equally important for children are language-stimulating activities that are integrated into the day-to-day life of the daycare center: Space to tell, listen and make up stories, time to read aloud and visit the library, opportunities to talk and discuss. Special occasions for this are found in the morning circle, on excursions and in the lunchtime rounds. The children's natural interest is supported by finger plays, songs, word and language games. This promotes the development of language. The children's vocabulary and ability to express themselves develop as they experience the possibilities that arise and grow in this way. In this sense, language contributes to the development and expansion of understanding for oneself, for others and for the world.

Once the love of language and the joy of speaking have been awakened, children use this as a basis for discovering and exploring the great treasure of language in ever greater detail. They are also accompanied, encouraged and supported by the teachers on this path. They discover similarities between sounds and words, gain phonetic awareness and become increasingly interested in the written forms of language in symbols, signs and letters. Here, too, the daycare center responds to the children's natural urge to discover through materials, activities, and projects, thus creating a variety of learning opportunities.

### **6.4 Artistic design**

For children, drawing, painting or modeling are natural forms of expression. They are used - without thinking about it - parallel to spoken language. In this context, many children's pictures reflect the advantage over the discursiveness of language. Contradictions and developments can be depicted in a picture in a way that can be expressed and explained only awkwardly or often not at all with words. In dealing with artistic materials, children are able

to form a picture of their world, to change it, to expand it, sometimes to destroy it, and later to build a new one. Just as physical movement develops from lying down to crawling to walking, children's drawings reveal developmental steps from doodling to cross and circular shapes to cephalopods and complex pictorial content.

Especially for smaller children, the moment when they realize that they are leaving a mark is significant. Often the extension of the brush is not enough and it is a matter of direct material contact. Brushes or modeling sticks are put aside and the hands become the "tool". Feeling the limits of one's own body, and leaving a trace in the process, becomes an experience. The imprint of a hand on paper and the realization "this is my trace - this is a sign of me - a confirmation of my being" is a meaningful experience for children. Through artistic activity, children become the originator, the creator of their own work.

In the creative area, we provide the children with a wide variety of materials that enable them to creatively conquer the world and support them in expanding their creative possibilities. A wide range of unstructured materials (different pens, paints, brushes, paper, clay, wood, beads, natural materials and much more) gives the children stimulation and opens up ways for them to give shape to their own ideas, fantasies and dreams. The children are encouraged to experiment and try things out, they engage with their environment, explore and discover it. The adults accompany them in this process and use the children's works to also enter into the children's world, into their understanding of things and contexts.

## **6.5 Music**

Music is a form of communication. It offers possibilities to express oneself, to express feelings without words or to tell stories. Music makes it possible to relax, to develop creative movements and creates situations in which people can get closer to each other in a very natural and informal way. Music is a means of communication, a common language beyond the spoken word.

Music is therefore an important element in our work with children. This is not only true for birthdays and other day care center celebrations. Musical rituals are created in the day-to-day life of the daycare center, which frame the daily routine in a playful and child-friendly way. This is already evident in the morning circle, where the children greet each other through various musical methods and sing and make music together. Accompanied by singing and rhythm, even activities such as cleaning up and brushing teeth often lose their compulsory character. It is especially important to the teachers to awaken the children's curiosity and to make them enjoy music through songs, simple dances, movement and clapping games. Targeted activities such as rhythm exercises enable the children to experience music. They are given the opportunity to try out their musical skills and experiment with tones, sounds and rhythms. This not only familiarizes the children with musical basics. Their perception, imagination and creativity are also stimulated. Making music together also means learning to listen, adapt and adjust to each other. Music is challenging and always presents new tasks.

The targeted musical activities in the daycare center are prepared thematically and are often very closely linked to elements from the theater. Contents are conveyed playfully and with many opportunities for movement. The corresponding topics arise in everyday life.

## **6.6 Basic mathematical experiences**

Children want to understand the world, they want to orient themselves and thus make their first mathematical experiences at a very early age. They move in space, experience recurring processes in the daycare center and, on this basis, discover concepts of spatial and temporal orientation. In this way, the children learn to understand what means before, behind or in between, and they recognize the differences between before, after, later and earlier.

On their own initiative, children often begin to sort objects, arrange them by size or color, and compare them with one another. They discover geometric shapes, circles, triangles, rectangles. This natural interest is supported in the daycare center by stimulating materials and learning opportunities.

The teachers encourage the children's mathematical interest in everyday situations by asking questions. In the morning circle, for example, they regularly count how many children are present and how many girls and boys are sitting in the circle. During table service, the children set the dishes and cutlery and check whether there are enough plates or cups for everyone or how many are still missing. It is important for us to enable children to discover the different functions of numbers in their everyday lives. For example, numbers can describe a number, determine an order or ranking (first, second, third, etc.) and be used as measures of distances, weights or prices. In addition, children encounter numbers in the context of recurring actions (twice, three times, etc.) or to distinguish something from another (e.g., telephone numbers, postal codes, house numbers). During joint excursions, shopping, baking cakes, cleaning up or "writing" letters - everywhere the children discover and explore numbers and quantities. By trying things out, checking things, asking questions, and sharing, they explore the relationships between things, developing their logical-mathematical awareness and problem-solving skills.

## **6.7 Basic scientific and technical experiences**

Children observe their environment, they ask questions, they try things out, they investigate, sort and compare. These are all basic prerequisites for scientific and technical discoveries. Based on their observations, the pedagogical staff provides the children with a wide variety of materials for experimentation and encourages discussion among the children. Questions are taken up and the children's self-activity is stimulated. In this way, the children are supported in their search for their own solutions and learning processes are deepened.

Especially in the big city, children often lack experience in the "great outdoors". Therefore, it is important to us to enable the children to experience the environment and nature at the

daycare center. Our daycare center has a large outdoor area, which it shares with the daycare centers Colbestraße and Scharnweberstraße. The children experience play and movement outside and in all weather conditions, whether it is storming, snowing or the sun is shining.

The outdoor area is divided into different areas, which invite to different possibilities of experience, discovery and movement. The basic elements of sand, earth, air and water can be explored. Ball and movement games are possible on a large square, or a traffic garden for tricycles and bobby cars can be set up. A wheelchair accessible path with different surfaces allows testing of different surfaces. Raised beds allow children to experience the passing of the seasons and the all-encompassing cycle of living and dying, growing and decaying. Animals such as snails, spiders, reptiles, beetles, etc. can be observed and information about them can be gathered. It is important to us that the children develop respect for nature and its inhabitants and learn, for example, to explore animals without torturing them and not to tear branches off trees and bushes. The children can follow their urge to explore in any way they wish or take part in guided activities. There are fixed points, which are occupied by pedagogues, in order to be available as contact person for the children and for the granting of the supervision duty. For the crèche children, there is a protected area that is adapted to their special needs.

It is important to us that children experience natural spaces in the big city on the one hand and on the other hand conquer the variety of urban opportunities offered by museums, exhibitions or companies and service providers located in the area. At entrepreneurs and service providers, children learn about modes of operation and production. For example: How is chocolate made? How does a print shop work? What does the police do?

In addition, the children learn how to navigate city traffic. They learn elementary traffic rules, how to use public transportation, and initial orientation on a city map. In the forest, the children learn to discover the natural environment in their own way and develop environmental awareness. The children enjoy the free space, because in the forest there are no tables and chairs and no toys. Imagination and motor skills are thus encouraged, the children move on different surfaces, play with materials that are not prefabricated and give them meaning and function in their play.

## **7 Parents as educational partners**

Parents and educators form a cooperative educational partnership. Parents are welcome in the daycare center and find here a place where they are advised and supported and in whose organization they can actively participate. The basis of the encounter between parents and educators is mutual respect, appreciation, trust and understanding.

The daycare center is usually the first instance of public education. It is not uncommon for parents to find it difficult to place their child in the care of strangers. The decision to place the child and the choice of daycare center are made with different intentions. In this phase of

orientation, parents are dependent on information and support so that they can find the right daycare center for them and their child. Since we want to support and encourage the active involvement of parents, the possibility of parental participation begins at this point. When parents express interest in a kindergarten place, we consider it a matter of course to advise parents and offer them help in making a decision.

In order to support parents in their decision-making process, we discuss the following aspects with them in the sense of a 'checklist for parents':

- Atmosphere
- Room design and equipment
- settling in
- Pedagogical concept
- Berlin educational program
- Health promotion and nutrition
- Opportunities for parents and children to participate
- Quality development and assurance.

Parents are partners in the daycare center and become active co-creators as experts for their children. There is great potential in parental participation, to which importance is attached as early as the child's settling-in period. Parents are consciously involved here and, together with the educators, assume joint responsibility for this process and the child's future development. Active participation promotes contact with other parents and supports the formation of social networks. Encounters, for example in drop-off or pick-up situations, are used by the educators for brief exchanges. If there is a need for more detailed discussion or if there are major problems, an appointment is made for a meeting with the parents. At least once a year, a detailed developmental discussion takes place about the status and perspectives of your child's development.

Significant life situations or events from the world outside the daycare center often put the children's behavior in a different light. In this way, ideas for solutions to problems can be developed, supported and tested together. Parents can also receive advice and information on general and specific questions concerning the educational process. If necessary, the use of other specialized services, such as educational counseling centers, can be considered. This opens up significant opportunities for prevention and networking with specialized services.

Regular parents' evenings serve to exchange organizational and content-related information and give parents an insight into the day-to-day life at the daycare center. At the beginning of each year, parent representatives are elected, who regularly exchange information with the management of the daycare center and the management of the organization, and who are involved in the planning and development processes of the facility.

In addition, topic-centered parents' evenings, discussion evenings, interest groups, etc. are



initiated and supported within the facility as needed. These forms of cooperation often lead to a lively and fruitful exchange between parents and educators. Finally, an annual evaluation takes place by means of parent surveys, which also includes a timely evaluation and feedback of the results.

## **8 Settling in**

When a child enters the daycare center, a new phase of life begins for both child and parents. The child must learn to detach itself from its previous caregivers for the period of care and to develop new relationships, to get involved with new people, new rooms and often a new rhythm.

The time period for settling in varies from individual to individual. An intensive exchange between parents and educator is indispensable for us to shape this important developmental phase and to give the child security and safety in the daycare.

In order to prepare parents for the settling-in phase, we have developed our own booklet (Parents' Information on Settling-In) with important information and to prepare for discussions.

## **9 Transition to elementary school**

The skills that children need to develop a willingness to perform, a desire to learn and an interest in school are fundamentally learned from the first day at the daycare center. In the last year before school enrollment, targeted projects provide additional support to prepare the children for school.

There are no explicit 'preschool lessons', since the education and skills development of the children entrusted to us is an important integral part of the daily pedagogical work from the very beginning and does not only take place in the last year before school starts. Targeted and systematic observation of the children reveals areas in which children need support in order to master everyday life at school. We see it as our primary task to recognize these individual support needs and to work out suitable support options in cooperation with the parents.

The oXxymoron GmbH has a cooperation agreement with the Zille elementary school. Within this framework, regular joint events take place so that the children get to know the place of school. They experience children who have made the transition from daycare to school and can benefit from their experiences. A space for discussion is opened up, enabling children to prepare for the transition, ask questions and reduce any fears they may have.

In order to make the children feel the departure from kindergarten and the upcoming new beginning at school as a conscious experience, the transition phase is accompanied by various

farewell rituals. These include, for example, a special excursion for preschoolers only, a joint visit to school and a big farewell party. In this way, we ensure that the children can master the transition from daycare to elementary school with self-confidence, independence and motivation.

In cooperation with the Colbestraße daycare center, the Zille elementary school and the FamoX family and education center, we also offer parents guidance and support in the transition of their children from daycare to school as part of the "family program".

## **10 Inclusion**

We work inclusively - this means that we care for children with very different requirements together. This also includes children with recognized increased or significantly increased support needs.

Our educational goal is the participation of all daycare children in the day-to-day life of the daycare center. All children spend the day together in peer groups and learn from the outset that differences are normal and that everyone deserves equal respect.

Our multi-professional teams organize everyday life together in heterogeneous groups. These consist of curative, special or rehabilitation educators, inclusion specialists, educators, childhood educators, career changers, etc. The educational work is geared towards the individual requirements and is based on the interests and needs of the children. Every child is encouraged to engage actively, independently and exploratively with the things in their environment, in social relationships with other children and adults and with themselves. All processes and educational activities are planned and implemented in such a way that every child can participate according to their level and pace of development. Support for children with recognized needs is embedded in the day-to-day life of the daycare centre. Individual participation and support goals are discussed in the small team and their implementation is planned. This takes place through the design of the premises and processes, the provision of materials and activities, the composition of small groups and projects that are initiated and led by the children's interests.

In addition to the kita-specific team meetings, there are also cross-kita team meetings with inputs and collegial consultations to ensure a continuous exchange on inclusive work. Exchange meetings and conferences with external specialists such as therapists, social pediatric centers, authorities, family helpers, etc. serve to ensure close networking and cooperation with other agencies involved in supporting the children.

## 11 Quality assurance

Team meetings are held every Wednesday from 5 to 7 p.m. to discuss current and regularly recurring topics. The main topics of these meetings include:

- Reflection on the pedagogical work and updating of the conception
- Professional exchange
- Review and further development of observation tools
- Individual case discussions
- Transitions: Transitions of children from or to other institutions
- Planning of parental work
- Review of quality standards
- Regular implementation of internal evaluations according to the Berlin educational program
- Planning and preparation of external evaluations according to the Berlin Education Program

In updating our concept, we are guided by current scientific studies and the state of research. All team members regularly participate in various internal and external trainings. There are two team days per year.

At the company level, there are weekly changing formats for service meetings and collegial exchange at the management level. All daycare center managers receive regular supervision and participate in the regular events of the leadership training of oXxymoron GmbH. The facility has a budget for supervision, which it can use for team supervision as needed.