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Welcome in our Preschool

Info Pack September 2019 - July 2020

International Montessori
English Speaking Preschool e.V.

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Child's name:

Starting date:

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“Within child lies the fate of the future.”

(Maria Montessori)

Welcome

Dear parents, families and caregivers,

At the start of your child's preschool year there are many new things for you and for them to learn about and get used to. This welcome pack is intended to help you to become familiar with the range of routines, policies and procedures. We greatly encourage and appreciate a family's involvement into our daily life. Parents and families are the most important people in children's lives and have the biggest influence upon their learning. A relationship of mutual respect, trust and empathy will be established with parents and teachers to promote the child's wellbeing. It is built on open, honest, respectful communication.

The first week that you attend preschool please bring:

1. Spare clothes bag (depending on the season: t-shirt, long sleeve, underwear, socks, jumper, pants)
2. Blanket and pillow for resting time (small ones please)
3. House shoes (with non-slip soles for safety reasons)
4. Gumboots (for rainy days)
5. Rain pants/ Snow pants
6. Sun cream
7. Hat/ sunhat
8. Water bottle
9. Red book bag (on a daily basis)
10. Red t-shirt and hat from the preschool

Please label all of your child's belongings!

General clothing in Preschool

- Please bring your child in clothes that they can get dirty in.
- Please don't send your child wearing singlet tops during summer time.
- Please make sure your child wears sensible shoes. Don't let them wear thongs (flip flops) as this won't make it safe to run and climb.

1. The Montessori Method – A short overview

Children between the ages of 3 and 6 possess an ‘absorbent mind’ (Maria Montessori). People often refer to young children as ‘soaking in everything they see and hear like a sponge’. They are full of curiosity and have voracious appetites for knowledge. They want to become independent, competent people; in other words, they are intrinsically motivated.

Children will naturally learn and master skills without the needs for rewards. Their ability to absorb information at this age will never be surpassed. Children have an innate and insatiable desire to learn new ideas and skills and are driven by their desire to become independent, capable people.

The main goals of the Montessori Method are:

- Independence
- Independent, creative thinking
- Self-directed learning
- Self-discipline
- Good working habits
- Strong understanding of ethics
- Respect for themselves and others
- A love for learning

Our Montessori classroom is a vibrant community of children, where the child learns to interact socially in a variety of ways. The three-year age range enables older children to analyse what they have learnt as they teach the younger child, while the younger children are inspired to more advanced work through observing the older ones. With such a variety of levels in the classroom, each child can work at their own pace, unhindered by competition and encouraged by co-operation.

It is important for a Montessori classroom to be a prepared environment. It is the link for a child to learn from adults. Rooms are child sized with activities set up for success and allow freedom of movement and choice. The environment has to be safe for the child to explore freely. The environment has to be ready and beautiful for the children so it invites them to work.

Montessori refers to *work* as an activity the child does or what many people might call *play*. She calls this work since it is through this that they create themselves and it is not just a play. Their play is their work and they are still enjoying it. The adult’s role then is to construct the environment in which they will learn. The development of the child is therefore dependent on the environment the child is in, and this environment also includes the parents.

2. Settling in policy

The first few weeks when a child is settling into preschool is a time of crucial importance to their later happiness in the setting. All children are individuals and while some children will adjust fairly easily to the new environment and new routines, others will take longer to feel comfortable and secure. It is important to work closely with you as the child's first caregiver. Together, we can take steps to ensure that the transition into our preschool goes as smoothly as possible. Here in preschool we integrate the children after the "Berlin Model". This Model was developed by Paul Heimann and states that the pace of integration into preschool is based on the child. The individual child, again, is in the focus.

Children tend to settle into preschool in many different ways. We must remember that all children are individual and we must treat them as such. Some children will confidently move into the classroom as soon as they come in for their first day. Other children may be nervous and anxious about leaving their most treasured possession, which to them at this time is their parent/guardian.

Please be reassured and try not to worry if your child experiences difficulties – it is a very normal part of a child's development to be anxious, nervous, or even angry about starting preschool. We also recognize that many parents will find this a difficult and sometimes very emotional and upsetting process. We hope we can use our experience to support you and your child.

You are always welcome to ask about how we work and how we deal with particular situations that may arise. Our whole team is here for you!

In our experience, settling-in will vary greatly from one child to another. Our aim is to settle children into the daily routine on their terms. When children are ready to move away from their parents we will encourage and support this.

Each child is different and therefore each settling-in period is different. We recommend that you plan in at least two weeks to support your child. During the settling-in period you are at the preschool. The attendance time varies in the beginning from 1 to 6 hours each day. This is the time for your child to get to know their teachers with the reassurance of having you here too. As the relationship develops, your child will be able to trust that the teachers are able to meet their needs, can be helpful, comforting and deal positively with any problems.

The following will help you and your child to have a happy transition:

1. Plan in extra time: Each child is an individual and needs his own time to settle into preschool. Therefore the integration can take two to six weeks. (Berlin Modell)
2. Be positive: After your first day, discuss with your child how the day was, what they have done, remembered and liked.
3. Always say goodbye. It is important that you don't leave without saying goodbye. Reassure your child you will be back to pick them up, so your child will not lose trust in you. Never sneak away. Once you have decided to leave, stick to your decision and leave calmly and quickly. On the first few days it is highly recommended to pick the child up by latest 12pm. We will then progressively extend the hours until your child is happy to stay till 3pm or longer.
4. Develop a routine with your child. It is the best you do the same thing every time you arrive, say goodbye and tell your child when you will return (e.g. after garden time, after lunch, rest time etc.).
5. We keep in touch. Your child might become upset when you leave but calm down and settle a few minutes later. You can call us any time to ask how your child is. We will also call you in case your child is not happy or won't stop crying or in case everything is fine. Be assured we want to make your child as happy as possible and will keep you up to date about their settling-in period.

3. Arrival and Departure

1. The sign in sheet is on the information board in the hallway. You have to sign in the time and the person who will pick your child up.
2. Please always ring the bell when you enter the preschool (even if you enter with another family).
3. Please always let a teacher know that you are there. Never drop your child without a teacher noticing.
4. When picking up please make sure the person is on the sign-in sheet. If there is a change please let us know beforehand via phone.
5. Please contact the head teacher if you are running late.

4. Our daily routine

“Play is the work of the child.” Maria Montessori

Our preschool’s daily routine has a flexible timetable that can change dependent on the children’s interest. This daily routine will give you an idea of how your child will spend their day at the preschool.

7.30 - 8.55	Drop-off time
9.00 - 9.30	Circle time (morning greeting, daily learning topic)
9.30 - 10.30	Morning snack time
9.30 – 10.30	Montessori working period (children have freedom of choice with the prepared environment)/ Music Class/ Art Class
10.30 - 11.30	Garden (weather permitting)
11.30 - 12.00	Wash hands, prepare for lunch (children help to set the tables), small circle, Share Time at Wednesdays
12.00 - 12.30	Lunch
12.30 - 2.00	Resting time or quiet activities (depending on each child’s need)
2.00 - 3.00	Montessori work cycle/ free play/ project work or park
3.00 - 4.00	Afternoon snack time/ Garden time
4.00 - 5.00	Games, stories, clean up, last pick up

The daily routine will be different on Mondays (Music Class) and Tuesdays (outing day). We do try to be outdoors as much as possible, weather permitting.

5. Meal times

Nutritious meals and snacks are essential for young children's optimal growth and development. The energy provided by healthy foods ensures that your child will be ready to fully participate in the day's learning opportunities. During meals and snack children learn how to make healthy choices as they can discover a wide variety of different foods. It is important to develop healthy eating habits from a young age. Meal times also give children the opportunity to reinforce the importance of grace, courtesy and good manners in the Montessori preschool. Mealtimes are also an important time for social interaction with other children and adults.

Morning and Afternoon Snacks

All snack food provided consists of fruit and vegetables, yogurt, fresh bread, healthy spreads and favourites requested by the children. Children help prepare snacks on a daily basis and also participate in buying items at grocery stores or markets. Helping to prepare snacks helps your child to understand the properties of healthy food and why it is good for our body. We also cook and bake our own snack regularly (e.g. homemade muesli, zucchini muffins, self-made bread, self-made spreads (e.g. hummus). Through healthy eating experiences children develop curiosity, cooperation, confidence and enthusiasm to try new food.

Lunch

Lunch is delivered daily at 11:45am by 'die Kinderküche' (<https://www.diekinderkueche.de/>), a caterer concentrating on the nutritious needs of children. They developed their menu following the principles of the 'DGE' (Dt. Gesellschaft für Ernährung). The weekly food contains vegetables, two meat dishes, two vegetarian dishes and one fish dish. Two to three times a week there is fresh fruit and two to three times a week raw vegetables or salad.

Please keep us informed of any changes to dietary requirements such as the development of allergies or intolerances!

Fingerfood (Tuesdays)= Healthy Food

When packing a lunch box for your child, you should feel confident that you are providing them with a nutritious supply of food that will get them through the day with the energy they need to function.

With the unpredictable nature of our day to day lives, preparing and packing a healthy lunchbox can be a difficult task. Finding time to shop and prepare interesting and healthy meals can be stressful. But the food we send to school with our children can contribute 1/3 of their daily intakes of nutrients.

Top tips for parents:

Fruit – choose from fresh first!

- ☀ Fresh fruit is easy to pack (apples, grapes, berries, banana, kiwi fruit, plums, mandarins, pears)
- ☀ Dried fruit and nuts (sultanas, apricots, dates, prunes, apples)

Vegetables – choose fresh first!

- ☀ Raw vegetables as stripes or in a sandwich (carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes, cucumber, celery or capsicum) or in dips such as hummus.

Grains – starchy food

- ☀ Have a variety to choose from such as wholegrain, wholemeal or high fibre breads such as seeded rolls, Lebanese bread, pita, lavash, bagels; brown and white rice, wraps, potato patties, rice crackers (vary to keep your child interested)

Protein

- ☀ Tuna or salmon (fresh or canned in spring water or oils such as canola, sunflower or olive oil); boiled eggs; beans; deli meats (ham, sliced turkey or chicken)

Dairy

- ☀ Reduced fat yoghurt (don't forget to pack a spoon), reduced fat cheese or reduced fat milk (remember to pack with an ice pack or cooler box in summer)

And never forget: Drink

- ☀ A bottle of WATER to keep your child hydrated all day. A juice is an additional drink and doesn't count as a drink. Fruit juices are not necessary as they increase the risk of tooth decay and are filling and may take the place of

healthier foods. Please also avoid 'quetschies' (pouchies) as they are neither a drink nor a replacement for fresh fruit or vegetables.



Please make sure your child is able to open and close their water bottle. (Please don't bring baby bottles into Preschool!)

6. Special activities

Alongside the Montessori Work we support the children's whole development through a balance of planned and spontaneous experiences that are based on children's individual interests and abilities. As we are funded by the state of Bavaria we implement the Bavarian education and training plan. We want to make sure that the child will have many different experiences before joining the school.

Music Class

Each Monday the children join Music Class with Annette Nödinger. This is a music lesson outside of school with our trained music teacher. The children get introduced to musical concepts such as beat, rhythm, dynamics, form, and new instruments.

Benefits of movement and music:

- Music enhances early language and communication skills and broadens your child's vocabulary.
- Actively participating in music and movement strengthen your child's cognitive and memory skills.
- Singing songs, following directions and working in a group situation all assist with the development of your child's listening skills.
- The music class supports positive social skills and independence through interaction with other children.
- Dancing, singing and playing instruments and musical games stimulate your child's creativity and imagination. Children often do not have the words to express their feelings and music can be a way to release their emotions.
- Children can discover love for music that will last a lifetime.

Art Class

Every second Friday the children can participate in Cynthia Drags project based art class. Through Cynthia the children are learning:

- Their own artistic abilities through stimulation/ strengthen self- confidence
- Usage of different art material
- Different artistic techniques (nature art, sketching, abstract art..)
- Creative thinking
- Expression of their individual personality and emotions

Movement Class

Alternating with art class, every second Thursday the children participate in a movement class. Currently we offer ballet. The children learn steps, take part in group dances and - most importantly - move their bodies and have fun!

Project Work

Every afternoon during the week the children can join project work. This is based on their free will. The topic of the project work is always chosen by the children in a monthly "Kinderkonferenz". In this group section the children learn democratic structures and have time to talk about their wishes, needs and ideas what THEY WANT TO LEARN ABOUT. The teachers support the ideas of the children and will help the children to define goals and steps in order to learn based on their development about their interests. After every project topic the children will also have time to reflect on their work. So far we had topics such as "Bavaria", "Castles", "Creating movies", "Butterflies", "Electronics", "Frogs" and "Planets". This kind of work strengthens the social network as families are encouraged to participate as well. Project work updates are always our monthly Preschool Newsletter.

Park/ Preschool Garden/ Forest Day

Outdoor play environments are ideal for encouraging children to be active and for promoting gross motor development. Simply being outside can sometimes be enough to encourage children's gross motor play. The children benefit from having a wide choice of gross motor experiences that are non-competitive and focussed on having fun. We go to many different parks for outings or in the afternoon. The children can benefit from different climbing equipment, water and sand play and open space for running. Providing a range of choices for gross motor play caters to children's individual interests, skills and abilities. While being in our garden we provide interesting props such as hula hoop rings, balls, parachute games and blowing bubble tools. The children also enjoy active group games such as 'Duck duck goose', 'What's the time Mr. Wolf' or 'Simon says'. On some outings we even go into the forest (approximately once a month). The children love to build forts there and can discover the nature with us.

Share Time

Every Wednesday three to four children can bring material from home and talk about it. (You can find your child's exact date in the Preschool Newsletter). The presentation of your child could be about books, projects, craftings and paintings, experiments, photos from family or holidays, holiday souvenirs or educational valuable toys. Please make sure when bringing an item that the child is responsible for it. We collect the item in the morning in a basket. During Share Time the child will be encouraged to talk in front of the class and strengthen their self-confidence! Share Time is a great connection between home and the preschool. The children love to participate in it as they are very proud of themselves!

7. Partnerships

The best experiences for children happen when there is a strong relationship between the teachers and the child's family. The relationship with each family will be unique in many ways but all partnerships will share some features:

- Mutual trust
- Open respectful communication
- Empathy
- Openness to view of others, values and perspectives
- Shared decision making
- Clarity about roles and responsibilities
- Appreciation of each other's knowledge and experience
- Commitment to resolve tensions and conflicts
- Shared aims or goals – what is the best for the child

Our preschool is about families and teachers being actively involved in the care and education of children. Utilising family knowledge and understanding, resources, and strengths assist shared decision making for the children at our preschool. We, as your child's teachers, share information about your child in an open, respectful and collaborative way. We develop partnerships between the teachers and family and appreciate and value each other's knowledge and use in caring for children. We share information and decision making and recognise and respect diversity. We support you in your parenting role and respect and value families' beliefs and values about child rearing.

8. Communication - Together we are strong-

Effective communication helps building partnerships. We communicate with families in different ways –written, by phone or verbal. We have an ongoing communication with families through their participation – via informal conversations, more formal planned meetings. Twice a year we have a parent teacher talk to discuss your child's progress and development. A monthly Newsletter will keep you informed about our curriculum, outings, special celebrations and other important news of your child's daily life. Every first Friday in a month you are invited to participate at our Coffee Afternoon. At the afternoon all families meet in Preschool and have time to talk to each other while eating very delicious snacks each family brought. The children love to share their experiences and newly learned material with their parents. Parents and teachers

additionally have time to talk together. We believe we have established an environment where all families feel welcomed and confident about raising any queries, concerns, thoughts or ideas.