

Asamstr. 11, 81541 München, Tel: 089 54 07 10 28



## Welcome to our Preschool

### **Info Pack September 2022 - August 2023**

International Montessori  
English Speaking Preschool e.V.

Child's name: .....

Starting date: .....

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*“Within the 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 to learn about and get used to. This welcome pack is intended to help you to become familiar with our routines, policies, and procedures. We greatly encourage and appreciate a family's involvement in the preschool's daily life. Parents and families are the most important people in children's lives and have the biggest influence upon their learning. We would like to foster a relationship of mutual respect, trust, and empathy between parents and teachers to promote the child's well-being that 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 sleeves, 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. Rain boots (for rainy days)
5. Rain pants/Snow pants
6. Sun cream
7. Hat/sunhat
8. Water bottle
9. Red book bag (every Friday)
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 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 and have an innate and insatiable desire to learn new ideas and skills. Their ability to absorb information at this age will never be surpassed!

**The main goals of the Montessori Method are:**

- Independence
- Creative thought
- Self-directed learning
- Self-discipline
- Good working habits
- Strong understanding of ethics
- Respect for themselves and others
- A love of 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 analyze what they have learnt as they teach the younger children, while the younger children are inspired to do 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 cooperation.

It is important for a Montessori classroom to be a “prepared environment.” Rooms are child-sized, with activities set up to allow freedom of movement and choice. The environment is safe for the children to explore freely, and beautiful for the children so it invites them to work.

Montessori refers to *work* as an activity the child does - what many people might call *play*! She calls this “work” since it is through this that they create themselves, and it is not just play. Their play is their work, and they are still enjoying it. Calling it “work” also signals to the child that we, the adults, are taking what they do seriously - it is worthy of our attention and respect!

## **2. Settling-in Policy**

The first few weeks when a child is settling into preschool are important to their sense of trust and security. All children are different, and while some children will adjust fairly easily to the new environment and new routines, others will take longer to feel comfortable and secure. The teachers will be working 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 using 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. Some children will confidently move around the classroom as soon as they come in for their first day. Other children may be nervous and anxious about leaving 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 difficult, and it is sometimes a very emotional process. We will be doing our best to support you and your child through this process. 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. We recommend that you plan in at least two weeks to support your child. During the settling-in period, we expect a primary caregiver to stay in the preschool with the child. 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 there, too. As the relationship develops, your child will be able to trust that the teachers are able to meet their needs, can be helpful and comforting, and can 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 different and needs their own time to settle into preschool. Therefore, the integration can take two to six weeks. (Berlin Model)

2. Be positive: After your first day, discuss with your child how the day was, what they have done, what they remembered and liked, etc.
  
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 until 3pm or longer.
  
4. Develop a routine with your child: It is 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. Have open communication with the team: Your child might become upset when you leave, but then 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. 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 Pick Up List is on the information board in the hallway. You have to mark the time you will pick your child up, and write in the name of the person picking them up.
  
2. Please always ring the bell when you enter the preschool (even if you enter with another family, or the door is opened for you by someone else in the house). The bell is how teachers know a child is arriving!
  
3. Please always let a teacher know that you are there. Never drop your child without a teacher noticing.
  
4. If there are any changes to who will be picking up your child, please let us know as early as possible via phone.
  
5. Please contact the teachers if you are running late (or early!).

## **4. Our Daily Routine**

Our preschool's daily routine has a flexible timetable that can change depending 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
7:30 - 10:30	Free play, snack time
10:30 - 11:00	Circle time (morning greeting, songs, games)
11:00 - 12:00	Morning garden time
12:00 - 12:15	Transition time (share time, circle time on a specific topic, etc.)
12:15 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 - 2:00	Resting time or quiet activities
2:00 - 3:00	Two o'clock shelf
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 days when we have external teachers coming in or special activities.

Mondays (2:00): Music Class with Annette

Tuesdays (time dependent): Outing Day

Wednesdays (every two weeks at 10:00): Little Wildlife Explorers with Sandra

Fridays (9:30): Art with Cynthia

## **5. Meal times**

During meals and snacks, children learn how to make their own choices as they discover a wide variety of different foods. Meal times also give children the opportunity to practice grace, courtesy, and good manners in the Montessori preschool. Mealtimes are also an important time for social interaction with both other children and adults. **Please keep us informed of any changes to dietary requirements, such as the development of allergies or intolerances!**

### **Morning and Afternoon Snacks**

Snack foods are provided to the children all morning long, and most of the afternoon. It is up to the children if and when they choose to eat it, as well as how much. The snack food provided typically consists of fruit and vegetables, yogurt, bread, spreads, cornflakes, milk and favorites requested by the children. Children often help prepare snacks and sometimes participate in buying items at the grocery store. We also cook and bake our own snack from time to time (e.g. homemade muesli, zucchini muffins,

self-made bread). By making their own food and being exposed to new foods, children develop curiosity, cooperation, confidence, and enthusiasm to try new things.

## **Lunch**

Lunch is delivered daily 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.

## **Fingerfood (Tuesdays)**

As we go on regular outings on Tuesdays, we ask you to pack lunch for your child on these days. When packing a lunch box for your child, you should feel confident that you are providing them with a balanced supply of food that will get them through the day with the energy they need to function. Here are some suggestions, if you are in need of inspiration!

- ☀️ Fresh fruit (easy to pack!)
- ☀️ Dried fruit and nuts - raisins, apricots, apples
- ☀️ Raw vegetables as strips, in a sandwich, or with dips
- ☀️ Grains (ideally which do not require a fork) - rolls, bread, pita, bagels, crackers
- ☀️ Protein - boiled eggs, deli meats, cheese, yogurt (don't forget to pack a spoon!)
- ☀️ A bottle of water to keep your child hydrated all day - make sure your child is able to open and close their water bottle!

## **6. Special activities**

Alongside the Montessori work, we support children's holistic development through a balance of planned and spontaneous experiences that are based on children's interests and abilities. Our curriculum is guided by the Bavarian education and training plan.

### **Music Class**

Each Thursday, the children have music class with Annette Nödinger. 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 children's vocabulary.
- Actively participating in music and movement strengthens your children's cognitive and memory skills.
- Singing songs, following directions, and working in a group situation all assist with the development of children's listening skills.
- Dancing, singing and playing instruments and musical games stimulate children's creativity and imagination.

## **Art Class**

Every Friday, the children can participate in Cynthia Drack's project-based art class. Though Cynthia, the children are learning:

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

## **Little Wildlife Explorers**

Every second Wednesday, the children get a chance to learn more about nature with Sandra, who runs a program called Little Wildlife Explorers (<https://www.littlewildlifeexplorers.com/>). Its main focus is to teach wildlife biology, life, sciences, conservation, the importance of nature in our daily lives, and the impact of humans on it. The sessions involve workshops, as well as science or art classes.

## **Project Work**

During afternoons, the children can choose to join project work. The topic of the project work is always chosen by the children in a monthly "Kinderkonferenz," where they can learn democratic structures and have time to talk about their wishes, needs, and ideas about what they want to learn about. The teachers support the ideas of the children and help them to formulate questions that can guide the investigation process. After every project topic, the children will also have time to reflect on their work. In the past, we have had topics including Bavaria, Castles, Butterflies, Electronics, Frogs, Planets, Vikings, Volcanoes, and many more. Project work updates are always in 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 as part of their daily activity. The children can benefit from different climbing equipment, sand play, and open space for running. While in our garden, we provide toys and props such as sun toys. On some outings, we even go into the forest (approximately once a month). The children love to build forts there and discover nature with us.

## **Outing Day**

Every Tuesday, the group goes on a trip outside the Kindergarten. The teachers plan various outings for the children, ranging from going to parks and playgrounds to visiting museums and zoos. The children are also given the opportunity to take part in guided tours and workshops. The outings are also often related to the project theme for the month! Some examples of exciting trips the group has been to in the past are: Kölle Zoo, Münchner Künstlerhaus, Deutsches Museum Kinderreich, Faschingzirkus zum Mitmachen, Flughafen Besucherpark, and more.

## **Share Time**

Every Thursday, 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). Your child's presentation could be about books, projects, crafts and paintings, experiments, photos from family or holidays, holiday souvenirs, or toys. Please make sure when bringing an item that the child is responsible for it. They only take them out when it is their time to share, but we also give them the opportunity to play or show it to their friends in the afternoon. Children are encouraged to talk in front of the class, which is a great avenue to develop their self-confidence!

## **Birthdays**

A birthday is a special occasion for every child, and we make sure that we celebrate it in a memorable way here in preschool. We usually celebrate in the afternoon, and we ask the parents to come and take part in it. The birthday circle is a very special "ceremony" of sorts, specific to our kids and our preschool. As part of it, we show a birthday book that contains pictures and stories of the child growing up. We will be asking you to prepare in advance - don't worry, we will provide guidance! Afterwards, the children have a snack brought in by the parents (muffins, cake, etc.).

## **International Celebration Days**

We are an international kindergarten, and we love the resulting beautiful mix of cultures! In an attempt to broaden the kids' horizons and honor the places we come from, we ask every family to sign up for a holiday from your home country/culture. The parents come in on a day (coordinated with the teachers) and tell the children about the holiday and its significance, as well as a fun activity or snack. We can't wait for you to help us celebrate!

## **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 and respectful communication
- Openness to others' views, values, and perspectives
- Shared decision making
- Appreciation of each other's knowledge and experience
- Commitment to resolve tensions and conflicts
- Shared aims and goals – what is the best for the child

Our preschool relies on families and teachers being actively involved in the care and education of children. Your knowledge and understanding, resources, and strengths assist shared decision making for the children at our preschool.

## **8. Communication - Together we are strong**

Effective communication helps build partnerships. We communicate with families in different ways – through email, mobile messaging (through the Signal app), and parent-teacher 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. We have regular Coffee Afternoons on Fridays (scheduled every six weeks or so), where the families meet in the preschool and have time to talk and interact with each other while eating delicious snacks brought by each family. We believe we have established an environment where all families feel welcomed and confident about raising any queries, concerns, thoughts, or ideas!

## **See You Soon!**

We are excited to partner with you as we go on this journey together. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak with anyone on the team-- we are here to support you as best as we can! We cannot wait to get to know your child and your family, and hope that your time here is one marked by growth, love, and learning.