



# **Educational concept**

Bubbles e.V., Zenettistr. 38, 80337 Munich  
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Author: Parents in cooperation with pedagogical team

## **A. General Information**

### **1. The group**

Our German-English facility accommodates a maximum of twenty children from the age of two up until school age. The children are of mixed age, sex and origin. The teachers are German and English speakers. The child-to-teacher ratio (a minimum of 2 - 3 teachers at our core educational time) enables a comprehensive development of the children.

### **2. The supporting organization**

The supporting organization of the facility is the registered association "Bubbles e.V." The association's bodies (members' meetings, parents' meetings and board of directors) are described in the statute, which can be viewed in the kindergarten office. One parent of each child at the kindergarten must be a member of the association. The board of directors represents the association in external matters.

### **3. The premises**

The premises are located at Zenettistraße 38 (Isarvorstadt), a 5-minute walk from the subway station Poccistraße (U3/U6). The premises are also easily accessible by car. The premises are on the ground floor, are very sunny and comprise around 130m<sup>2</sup>. A 90m<sup>2</sup> size room – which includes an elevated playhouse – provides space for educational work, the morning circle and free play. There is additional space reserved for quieter play. An adjacent sleeping room is also used not only for sleeping but also during free play and for smaller group activities. For physical activities there is ample open space with padded mats and climbing equipment. There is a kitchen area and a separate children's WC with diaper changing facilities. A large, safe playground is located nearby, which the children can reach on foot. The playground is well equipped for children aged between 2 and 6.

### **4. Opening hours**

The kindergarten is open daily from Monday to Friday between the hours of 7:45am to 4:15pm. We offered staggered pick-up times. Children can be dropped off any time between 7.45am and 8.30am. The core hours are between 8.30am and 12.30pm. A teacher is on hand during these drop-off and pick-up times to exchange information with parents.

The kindergarten is closed a total of twenty-three days per year. These days are determined each year at the parents' meeting in consultation with the teachers.

## 5. Nutrition

Priority is placed on balanced, organic and healthy nutrition. The menu is filled with fresh vegetables and fruit. Sugar is avoided where possible. Parents take turns on a weekly rotation to prepare breakfast and provide for snack. Lunch is a varied menu provided by an organic catering service. Breakfast, lunch and the afternoon snack are eaten as a group meal.

## 6. Parent duties

Parental assistance (in the form of duties) is an essential part of our concept and financing. This should, however, be within acceptable limits for working parents. Parents have the following responsibilities:

- Taking part in parent meetings, which are obligatory for at least one parent
- Parent-teacher interviews
- Taking on at least one duty.
- Breakfast service and laundry duty (on a weekly rotation).
- Helping to spring clean the kindergarten at least once a year.
- Reading and adhering to notices on the pin-up board in the wardrobe area.
- Parental supervision in special cases (staff illness, supervision on field trips)

These tasks will be discussed individually and assigned at the parents' meetings. In urgent cases the board can, in consultation with the staff, assign tasks with equitable discretion.

Furthermore, our parents' meetings give parents the opportunity to be involved in planning of the kindergarten's activities for the year ahead.

## 7. Quality assurance of the pedagogical work

Our quality assurance measure include:

### Team meetings:

Our pedagogical team meets twice a month to discuss the planning of projects and activities, case briefings, child supervision documents, reflection of its pedagogical work, exchange of specialist knowledge, preparation of parent evenings, further development of concept.

### Further training

Each teacher is given the opportunity to attend training seminars throughout the year, at which she/he can expand her/his pedagogical knowledge.

### Parents' survey

Once a year parents are asked to fill out an anonymous questionnaire and give their evaluation of the pedagogical work of the kindergarten. The results are shared and worked through with the teachers as well as the board of parents.

## **8. The kindergarten's network**

The kindergarten management and board keep in regular contact with the umbrella organization "Klein Kind Tagesstätten e.V." (KKT), which offers expert advice as well as training seminars.

As the children come from various parts of the city and will attend different schools, cooperation with a certain primary school only occurs when necessary (eg. pre-school German course).

## **B. Educational Guidelines**

### **1. Guiding principles**

Our educational concept is based on three components:

1. Love and trust
2. Setting boundaries
3. Promoting age-appropriate, comprehensive development

A child is especially capable of learning when it feels safe in its surroundings – which means having loving, trusted people taking care of him or her on a regular and consistent basis. Above else, children require emotional comfort, a loving environment as well as a sense of security in order to develop their personality. In an atmosphere of trust, warmth, tolerance and compassion the child will learn to grow and grow into the group.

Children who are respected and loved are happy children. This in turn provides a good foundation for the development of their memory and intellectual abilities. Memory and emotions are closely linked because they are controlled by the same area of the brain. This is why children remember things best when they are in association with pleasant memories.

With this in mind, we have clear rules and rituals that apply to everyone. A clear daily structure defines our actions and gives the children security.

The teachers support each child individually and holistically, taking age, gender as well as its strengths and weaknesses into account. We regard all the kindergarten years as pre-school years. Information and activities are always offered to the children so that even younger children have the opportunity to expand their knowledge and capabilities.

To document the child's educational and developmental process, all its information and worksheets are stored in its own personal folder. These folders are available to the children at all times so that they can repeat learning content any time they wish. As well as this, an in-house supervision sheet is filled out once a year for each child.

Development meetings are prepared by the teachers once a year in the spring and held with each set of parents. Our in-house supervision sheets form the basis for these meetings; they encompass questions from PERIK, SISMIK and SELDAK. In addition to daily chats during pick-up or drop-off, we also offer parents the opportunity to arrange further meetings with the staff if and when desired.

## **2. Familiarization**

Familiarization into the kindergarten is adapted to the individual needs of each child. We take into consideration age and behavior, as well as the child's experience eg. whether it has already attended a day-care center or kindergarten. Our motto is: as long as necessary, as short as possible. The moment of saying goodbye in particular needs to be kept as short as possible. Clear communication and agreement between parents and teachers is of utmost importance here.

We offer each new child an afternoon visit to the kindergarten in advance, giving it the opportunity get to know the kindergarten and the other children during free play. During this time, we discuss organizational matters and the familiarization process with the parents, and answer any questions, so that the child can be the center of attention on its first kindergarten day.

## **3. Individual and social-emotional development**

Each child is accepted for who they are, and its development process is supported and fostered individually and at its own pace. Every child has the right to have difficult phases. We see these as an important stage of development and an opportunity for the child to grow and learn from them.

Free-play therefore plays an important role. In a concept based on the methods of Maria Montessori, the children are allowed to freely choose activities and have relevant educational material to build their own learning program within the boundaries set by the teachers. In this manner, the child is allowed the freedom to react according to its curiosity and current interests, while developing the skills to think and act independently. Children learn primarily through doing. The teachers help them by making sure appropriate materials are available when they are needed. Observation of free-play is of assistance when searching for relevant themes for the group or for individual children. Sometimes, through observation, a sub-theme may develop and the teachers may adjust their lesson planning according to this topic. It is, however, also important that the children can play without observation and without adults influencing events. The opportunity to play unobserved and in a self-directed way is especially important for older children, as it allows them to develop self-confidence and gives them the chance to solve conflicts on their own.

Through strengthened self-confidence, the child is able to recognize its own individuality and stay true to it. He or she learns to say "no" which can help, amongst many things, to prevent all types of abuse.

The children should learn to develop social contacts and learn how to deal with conflict. It is the teachers' responsibility to support the children in group conflicts and to help them become more and more adept at solving such conflicts on their own. Definite examples of conflict are addressed by the teachers and discussed in groups and sometimes they become sub-themes. Teachers use role-playing, picture books, discussion-groups and painting as a playful way of reinforcing new experiences and

establishing codes of conduct.

To a certain extent the children are included in the planning. For example when all the children are sitting together in “morning circle.” This way, their understanding of democratic processes is strengthened. The teachers heed “minority rights” so that wishes, which a majority is not in favour of, are nonetheless respected and a solution can be found which satisfies everybody.

Due to the mixed age of the children, the children always find suitable partners. Younger children have role models who they can look up to, who they can emulate and who can help them. Through passing on their experience, the older children gain by consolidating their knowledge and becoming aware of their abilities.

On top of this, role-playing and theatre-play help the children to get to know themselves and the other children better. Role-playing is important to child development because it is here that the children work through their fears and needs while at the same time developing their creativity.

The children are also expected to take part in the daily chores of the kindergarten: setting the table, cleaning the table and wiping up, sweeping floors, preparing meals, cleaning the house, etc.

#### **4. Physical activity and nature/environmental awareness**

Movement is extremely important for children: for their growth, development of the muscular and skeletal systems, for good circulation and a healthy body. While climbing, crawling, running, sliding and hopping, children develop endurance and concentration, train their dexterity, and develop skills that help them to be self-confident and sure of themselves. Physical activity is not only important for their health but also for their mental capacity.

Being out in nature can stimulate thought in fun and entertaining ways. The forest, fields and streams are wonderful places for experimentation and observation, which awake interest in the study of nature. Children need the opportunity to satisfy their curiosity and they can do this nowhere as easily as in the forest or in the fields. He or she who has experienced how trees become green and later lose their leaves, how flowers open and later wither, becomes thoughtful and begins to understand the essentials of life.

Exploration of nature stimulates perceptual capacity and concentration. We therefore spend a lot of time outdoors at playgrounds and nearby parks. We also have equipment within the kindergarten that helps to train motor skills. Special days outdoors (trips to the Isar or forest etc.) are held at regular intervals so that the children can experience nature directly. Questions or collected items resulting from these trips can be included in activities in the days following.

## 5. Language development

The children are taught in German and English. Our guiding principle is immersion. Immersion means the children will be surrounded by and gain experience in the other (German or English) language. The teachers, as well as the children, are of mixed German and English-speaking backgrounds. Each teacher speaks only in one given language to the children. The spoken language will be reinforced through the use of non-verbal communication. The immersion principle places no stress on the children, as learning takes place without compulsion. The children learn the other language playfully and not through translation. Furthermore, it is internationally recognized as the most effective method to teach language.

Particular attention is paid to the lingual development of each child. Children develop their speech best when they are spoken to often. We make time for this. Picture-books are examined in small groups; the children are encouraged to speak at length. Rhymes, songs, stories and tall-tales stimulate enjoyment of language. Those that can play with words and sentences, and practice using language in a light-hearted way, learn to be expressive. We place value on the art of conversation, where everyone is listened to and everyone has a chance to have his or her say.

Our pedagogical team monitors the childrens' language development closely. If irregularities arise, parents are asked to take advantage of the help available as early as possible eg. speech therapy, pre-school German course.

## 6. Creative development

Creativity plays a primary role in our kindergarten as it supports many aspects of a child's development. We believe that toy and costumes should be available in limited quantity, but of quality. A child surrounded by few industrially manufactured toys is more likely to inventive and learns to improvise. This is the best motor for creativity. Therefore, during a typical day at kindergarten, the children use their creativity to invent games, stories and play make-believe. With some carefully selected props and toys, the children are able to play together and share their imaginative thoughts and ideas. During our daily free-play period we enable the children to explore their creative sides. We have a "mini-house" filled with toys and house-props, a doll's house, an elevated "playhouse", a building corner and the children sometimes use the sleeping room.

Apart from supporting their creativity during play, we also believe that it is vital the children are stimulated through some form of creative expression, for example, art and music.

Art:

There are many materials available to the children such as paints and craft materials. To stimulate creativity, particular materials and techniques are chosen and shown to the children by the teachers, according to a topic or the child's needs. We use clay, felt, finger-paints, pop-up pictures and natural materials. When children frequently take part in art activities, they become more inventive and feel more confident about their artwork. The materials can be taken from daily life; this develops the inventiveness of the children to the highest degree. (For example: tin cans, paper coasters, boxes, cardboard, toilet-paper rolls, sticks and wood, pieces of cloth). In addition, we may take the children to a local art exhibition to look at the various styles and techniques used by an artist and to stimulate new ideas and inspiration.

### Music:

Music is used in some form every day from our morning circle with songs, circle and finger games to our movement circle with musical chairs etc. We believe it not only encourages creativity but also supports other aspects of a child's development.

One such aspect is speech. Singing songs everyday develops the children's vocabulary, presents the opportunity to work on syllables, and encourages the children to listen to the rhythm and melody of the language. Repeating songs gives children the chance to strengthen their pronunciation.

Secondly, it helps foster self-confidence. Being involved in a music group is a fantastic way to gain confidence. Children feel like they are a valued part of a team, working together on something very special. Even shy children love to express themselves when they are amongst a group and will gradually become more comfortable with their voices. We give them opportunities to perform in front of a group or parents, which in turn builds their confidence and promotes a sense of pride and self-belief. To be able to play in front of others requires courage and this will grow with time and experience.

Thirdly, it teaches children to abide by rules. An orchestra would sound chaotic without a conductor so therefore music in kindergarten requires some boundaries and direction. That is why we encourage the children to watch and listen to the teacher's or conducting child's instructions. This creates a sense of respect for the music, teacher and the other children when we work together. It is a fantastic way to develop their skills of giving direction.

Fourthly, it helps develop social skills. This means being part of a group and learning to respect the other children. They must listen to others when they are playing and wait for their turn to make music.

Finally, it helps develop general knowledge. There are many educational values to the songs we sing everyday. For example, learning the months of the year in the correct order through catchy and recognizable songs. The songs are enjoyable and the children are learning without realizing it.

## 7. Learning Methods

Children are by nature very inquisitive, they discover and learn new things with great eagerness. We want to encourage this curiosity and exploratory urge by offering appropriate activities that use their senses and cognitive skills.

Methodological learning competence is the foundation for self-directed learning, a skill required for the rest of our lives. Methodological learning competence is acquired through the examination of content. It doesn't matter if children can or cannot read and write before beginning school. They will learn these skills later in school once they have formed a solid foundation. A solid foundation for us means the children have a good feeling for language, letters and numbers.

In this day and age in which technology plays a big role, understanding technology is a basic skill that we promote through regular experiments. It is also important to bring children closer to modern methods of gathering information. In addition to using the nearby city library, the children are often involved when searching for information on the Internet.

During all activities, the children learn how to concentrate, abide by simple rules, observe, listen to others and learn to wait for his/her turn etc. We encourage the children starting school to be more self-reliant and to make their own decisions especially when it comes to practical matters, such as tying a shoelace, reading the time, using good behaviour on the way to school and knowing how to act in emergency situations or how to answer the phone.

We base our activities on educator Maria Montessori's theories. The children can explore concepts at their own pace. This naturally encourages children to try more challenging areas, which accelerates their learning experience. Learning occurs at a comfortable pace for each child, rather than inflicting the same rate on every child in the kindergarten. Older children work with the younger ones, so mentoring comes as much from peers as it does from the adult teachers in the classroom.

## 8. Culture

The children are learning intercultural skills, an important factor for citizens of an increasingly mobile, multicultural and polyglot world. In a multi-lingual environment they develop these traits naturally through meeting children and teachers from various cultural backgrounds. The backgrounds of our international staff may be seen in some of the activities, games and songs that the children take part in. If the present theme leads to a particular culture being explored, we arrange "culture-days" where the children can have the opportunity to experience typical foods, traditions, and conventions of other cultures and countries. In addition, we may learn about important cultural events and holidays of other cultures and celebrate them together.

## **9. Planning and project work**

After assessing the group structure and needs, the educational team decides what the main theme of the kindergarten year will be. During the year there will be smaller themes prepared and offered. The children are often involved in the planning of the smaller themes. This can involve either finding information (library and Internet) or by bringing in own ideas or objects from home. From their input, the teachers expand with activities that cover all the requirements that the BEP ("Bayerischer Bildung- und Erziehungsplan"/Bavarian Education Plan) advises, including art, music (dance), science (experiments), maths, language and literacy, culture, motor skills etc.

Should another relevant theme happen to develop, it will be acted upon and deepened in the form of a project. Projects can be the result of simple events such as questions or stories from the children, the experiences of a group member, or of the entire group. In the course of the project, research will be undertaken regarding the topic of interest encompassing all aspects of this item or idea. It is not possible to determine a length of time as the focus changes as we explore a theme.

At the end of the year, the children and teachers combine all the themes together and create a display/exhibition for the parents at the summer party. Completing a project together fosters a sense of togetherness and helps the children mature. The children are also able to reflect on what they have learned and experienced and how they learned it. This is the critical phase for consolidating knowledge of learning methods.

The components of the themes and projects are filed for each child in a personal folder that can be viewed anytime by the children and the parents. Upon finishing kindergarten each child can take their folder home with them to look back on and appreciate what they learned in their kindergarten years.

## **10. Excursions**

Excursions, concert and museum visits are chosen to fit the current topic. Subject matter is therefore deepened, and the children are able to gain knowledge from people and in another environment. Teachers take up on the impressions the children have experienced and discuss them in the kindergarten. The children also gain more confidence using city streets and public transport and can practice consideration of others.

## **11. Resting times**

In a day filled with information and various impressions it is important that the children have the room and time to process their new thoughts. This is why a rest after lunch is compulsory for all children. All children lie down for half an hour in a darkened room. One teacher reads the children a story, or plays them quiet music or an audio book from a CD. Any children who are still awake after this time may go

back into the common room with the teachers and can play or draw at a table. Children who have fallen asleep in this time, need the sleep and can do this until snack time. Should they wake up beforehand, they may come in independently into the common room. Shortly before snack, the door to the sleeping room and its window is opened, so that the children may wake up of their own accord. If they don't they are woken gently.

## **12. Child Protection Act §8a SGB VIII**

As per the Munich Fundamental Agreement, our association has the task and the responsibility to be aware of and to put into action the child protection plan in cases where the child' wellbeing is in danger.

According to § 8a, par. 4 SGB VIII we are as an association, obligated to work towards "the mobilization of assistance for legal guardians, if we consider it necessary. In special cases we inform the youth welfare office, if the assistance given does not appear sufficient to avert danger." Our child protection plan means following the Munich Fundamental Agreement MGV § 1/Section 1: "...to prevent children from having to suffer in their development by the abusive exercise of parental authority, through neglect, due to insufficient parental behavior or lack of protection against risks of damage to third parties..."

## **C. Closing thoughts**

We believe that our concept offers a variety of experiences and learning opportunities. We select our teachers carefully so we can put our trust into their teaching methods. The constant exchange of information between staff and parents, as well as communication between the parents, in a friendly and positive atmosphere, is of utmost importance to us. The development of the children should be actively monitored through regular meetings between parents and staff. At the same time, parents should be willing to let their children go and trust the competence of the staff. This balancing act requires a lot of trust. This is why it is so important to attend parent meetings. We encourage an open, honest and constructive form of communication and a good working relationship between staff and parents. We would like everyone to feel comfortable here.