



“My child is going to nursery”

Information for settling in



Department of Culture and Education
Municipal Day Care Centres

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Our understanding of education

As accompanying adults, we see our duty as giving children safety through education and providing them a stimulating, challenging environment for their individual learning.

Education refers to the active process of a child acquiring knowledge and skills. By fostering their individual skills and stimulating them to act and explore independently, the child becomes confident in the world around them.

Dear parents,

Nursery is the first education establishment that the vast majority of children visit. The child experiences an exciting and stimulating time full of various changes: the pace of daily life changes, the child learns to say “goodbye” and discovers a new spatial environment. The child also meets other children and new grown-ups.

There are also changes for you as parents: it is the first time you put your child in the care of - as yet - unfamiliar people, you have to alter your routine by returning to work, for instance, and experience parental life in a new way.

Both children and adults have to overcome ‘transitions’ in many phases of their lives. This is the time when children acquire a variety of experiences in their transition from family to nursery. They need time to be able to leave their parents, to allow others to console them, so that they can explore their new surroundings with curiosity.

The child learns new behaviours and rules, becomes more independent and self-reliant, which in turn influences the family, who have to adapt and engage with a new behavioural repertoire.

In the child’s first chapter of life, the child is professionally supported by qualified nursery staff at the day care centre as they settle in. Our aim is to continuously develop and promote the skills of the child so that they can actively overcome the transition and establish a good relationship with education staff and other children, with the help of dependable caregivers.

We invite you to act in concert with us to support your child in the ‘transition’ from family to nursery or from nursery to elementary education.

Annette Borns



Senator for Culture and Education
Day Care Centres

Doris Oldenburg



Department Director for Municipal

Starting nursery

What is starting nursery like?

Can you remember your first day at nursery? Or perhaps your first day at school or your first day in your new job? New surroundings, new people, a new routine: everything's new, arousing curiosity and interest, but it can also be unsettling and scary. These are the feelings your child has during their first few days at nursery. For children, starting nursery often means saying "goodbye" to their parents for the first time.

It will take time before your child will be able to feel comfortable in their new surroundings. They have to get to know everything and get used to it all. We call this time **settling in**.

The aim of settling in is to ensure both children and parents feel at ease with us and gain trust in the qualified nursery staff. This in turn necessitates the settling in phase for us to better get to know your child and their interests, needs and fears. As parents, you can help your child and the qualified nursery staff in this respect.

Parents and qualified nursery staff are one team

We'd like to have a conversation with you. It's important for us to work together with you! You know your child the best; you know what they need and can help us help them settle in. As qualified nursery staff, we want to work closely with you as parents, to ensure your child settles in well at nursery. We'd love to know what your child likes, what they dislike, what their eating and sleeping habits are and what they can do already. We want to get to know you and would like to build mutual trust. If you feel your child is well placed with us at nursery, it will help your child gain trust.

How will my child settle in?

You can find out about the general process of settling in during the admission consultation at your nursery. The settling in process will be planned and agreed upon together with you as parents. There are certain phases that help your child settle in:

1. **Getting to know the nursery:** At the beginning of the settling in process, you'll come to the nursery together with your child. Together, you will spend a lot of time there to get to know everything. You may ask to regularly visit the nursery with your child in the months leading up to your child starting nursery (e.g. taster days).

2. **Gaining trust:** This is the point when nursery really begins! Visit the nursery with your child every day. Your child will get to know the people and routine. You as parents, your child and the qualified nursery staff will get to know one another. This takes time.

3. **Practicing saying “goodbye”:** Once the child feels safe, say “goodbye” to them and, after a few days, leave the room for the first time (e.g. for a few minutes). With each day, your child will gradually spend more and more time without mummy and daddy at the nursery.

4. **Routine begins:** Once your child is already spending most of the day at the nursery, there will be a final meeting with you, discussing your thoughts about the nursery and how your child is settling in. Even after the settling in phase, the qualified nursery staff will regularly keep in contact with you about your child.



How long will it take for my child to settle in?

There's no set amount of time regarding how long it takes to settle in; every child is different. Your child has settled in once they feel comfortable at the nursery. How will I know if my child is comfortable? You will know once your child plays, eats and sleeps at the nursery, allows their nappy to be changed, explores their surroundings and can be consoled by the qualified nursery staff.

Getting to know new people, surroundings and routines and building trust all take time.

Our qualified nursery staff will take care of your child and ensure that your child can gradually get used to the new surroundings in their own time.

Some children need three or four weeks until they really start to feel safe at nursery; others get used to it after a week. As parents, you should therefore plan ahead as your child will need the essential time together with you.

As parents, you also have to be patient. This has a positive influence on your child. Even children that feel comfortable straight away and seem to cope well without mummy and daddy may suddenly start to cling to their parents in the second or third week.



Mummy or daddy – who should accompany my child as they settle in?

It's important that the child is accompanied by a grown-up they really trust; this tends to be the parents. If this isn't possible, granny or granddad could also step in. During the settling in process, it's best for the same grown-up to be present every day.

If possible, it's also a good idea for both parents to familiarise themselves with the nursery, e.g. at the registration meeting, taster days or at collective parties at the nursery. Then both mummy *and* daddy know where their child spends the day.

Can the qualified nursery staff understand my child?

“My child can't talk yet!” – “My child doesn't speak German.” – “My child has their own special words that only I understand.”

You can trust that the qualified nursery staff understand your child when they need something; the nursery staff have a lot of experience in communicating with children at nursery age.

Explain to the qualified nursery staff how your child says they're hungry, thirsty, tired or afraid.

Also, speak with the qualified nursery staff if you have any concerns!

How can I make it easier for my child to settle in?

We have a number of practical tips from experience that may help you support your child in settling in at nursery:

- Be patient with your child! It takes time to get used to something completely new.
- Have faith in your child! They'll soon settle in well.
- Be patient with yourself! Life at nursery and being separated from your child are perhaps a new experience for you too. You will also likely need time to get to know it all.
- Plan to have some free time for several weeks.
- Watch your child at nursery with care: how are they coping settling in?
- Your child now needs your full attention when you're with them at nursery. (It's therefore a good idea to switch off your mobile/laptop).
- Speak to the qualified nursery staff about anything that's on your mind. You'll help them understand your child better!



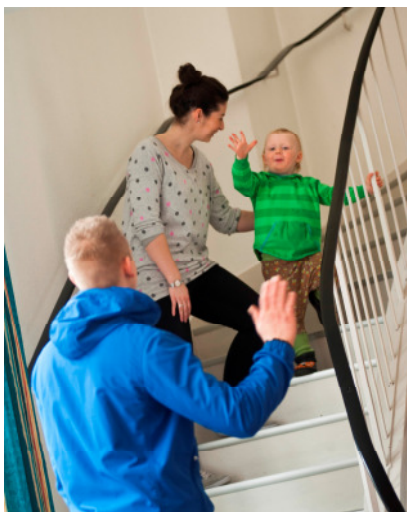
How do I say “goodbye” to my child?

It’s really important to say “goodbye” to your child every time you leave the room! Please don’t try to ‘sneak away’ without your child noticing; practice saying “goodbye” to them!

You can tell your child:

- *that* you’re going now
- *where* you’re going (e.g. shopping, walking, work, etc.)
- *when* you’ll return (e.g. after play time, after lunch, after the midday nap)
- wish your child a nice time (e.g. playing, with the other children)

A ‘goodbye ritual’ could also be nice for both the child and the parents: e.g. wave from the window/at the door, a goodbye kiss – the qualified nursery staff also have some ideas to help you and your child say “goodbye”.



What do I do if my child cries?

You can assume your child may indeed cry when you say “goodbye” to them. Goodbyes are often difficult and crying is the child’s normal way of expressing their feelings. It’s important that you let your child be consoled by the qualified nursery staff so that your child gradually accepts them as people they can trust.

If your child doesn’t calm down after a few minutes, you’ll be called back into the room. Eventually it’ll work out and you’ll be able to stay outside for longer. It’s more pleasant for you as parents, if you wait at an agreed spot rather than standing and listening in just behind the door.

You can ask the qualified nursery staff to call you after 15 minutes to let you know how your child is doing.

A familiar object from home can make the first goodbye a little easier for your child: e.g. a dummy, a cuddly toy, a comfort blanket, a photograph, a favourite toy or even a photograph or clothes with the familiar smell of mummy and daddy.

What happens if my child falls ill during the settling in phase?

Settling in at nursery can be an exciting time for the child. Sometimes children then naturally call for a little time-out when they need it, e.g. by falling ill.

In any case, let your child recover to full health at home before bringing them back to the nursery!

Your child will then return to nursery with renewed strength and the settling in process can be resumed.

How will I know how my child is doing at nursery?

As parents, you can make use of various opportunities to get to know the nursery and the qualified nursery staff before the settling in process (e.g. the summer party, flea market at nursery). Some nurseries give you the option of visiting the nursery with your child a few months beforehand at play time (e.g. taster days).

Set aside plenty of time for the settling in process.

The most important thing is to keep asking questions! Address all your questions and concerns. It's best for the child if the parents trust the qualified nursery staff. Trust takes time to grow. Just as you do, the qualified nursery staff want nothing more than your child to feel at home at nursery.

Every day, you could briefly ask how your child is doing today, even if nursery has long since become part of the routine.



I still have so many questions!

“What is the daily routine at nursery?” – “What happens if my child is tired before nap time?” – “Can my child also have a say on who changes their nappies?” – “My child used to go to our day nanny, will my child still need to settle in?” – “My child has allergies.” – “My child needs special medicine.” – “My child has special nutritional needs.”

Do you have any more questions or did you not quite understand something? Ask us! We'd be happy to give you all the important information about your child's settling in process. It's important to us that we talk to one another and discuss all your questions together!

We will give you all the important information about settling in at a personal meeting in advance. Many nurseries also provide an information sheet in this regard.



Transition from nursery to elementary education

Once your child moves on from nursery to elementary education at age three, this means saying “goodbye” to familiar nursery life for both the parents and the child. This important step in your child’s life can be quite exciting, but it can also be a time of uncertainty:

“My child is only just three years old. How will they get by in this new situation?” – “Will my child be comfortable in the new group? Will they make friends?” – “Will my child adjust to the new daily routine?” – “Will my child begin to trust the new teaching staff?”

Although you are already familiar with nursery, you may need information about elementary education:

- How does the transition take place for my child?
- Who can I turn to, who are my new contact partners?
- Will my child still be able to have a midday nap?
- Can I attend the new group to help my child settle in?

Ask us! We are happy to provide you with all the important information regarding your child’s transition to the new group.

We would like to work with you, as parents, during the transition to elementary education, and we’d like to do so with mutual trust for one another. We offer you the opportunity to talk about it with qualified nursery staff at a parents’ meeting in advance. In order to provide the child adequate support in settling in to the new group, we would like to be in regular contact with you as parents. You will also have a contact teacher at elementary school.

Every transition becomes easier when it’s seen through together

Even if the child has already visited nursery (the same nursery or another day care facility), they need a professionally supervised

transition into elementary education. At elementary school, the child will have to adjust to new children and grown-ups, as well as to larger groups, new surroundings and a different routine. At this time, children are only three years old, sometimes even younger. They are at a sensitive phase in their development and require even greater care and attention from adults.

That's why every child will be accompanied by the qualified teaching staff in this new step. The child gradually gets to know their new group. For example, at the end of their nursery time, the child may already visit the new group at special meet and play times.



Last but not least

Thank you very much for your interest in our municipal day care centres. We hope that this brochure has been able to answer a lot of your questions about the settling in process. We think it's important that we stay in touch and work together to achieve the best for your child.

We look forward to meeting you and your child!

Legal notice

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