

Sunshine Day Care Nursery: 2023 Educational Concept

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1. Meaning and Purpose

In this educational concept we examine and explain to you the values and standards that we follow in our day-to-day work with the children in our care. It provides the framework for our interpersonal interaction, educational work and child care routines.

2. Social Education Principles

Self-competence

Each child is an independent personality. Sunshine Day Care Nursery treats all children and their respective personal traits, strengths and weaknesses with respect. We strive to respond to the children's needs in an age-appropriate and individual manner. We support the children in becoming and being independent by placing our trust in their ability to deal with tasks given to them, commending them and assisting them in solving problems on their own.

Social competence

Kids need other kids to develop their social skills and to strengthen their personal identity. By working in different social forms and mixed-age groups, the children learn how to be tolerant when in the company of their peers, as well as older and younger children.

Through the opportunity to participate in the group and interact with the nursery's carers every day, each child learns early how to take on personal responsibility and thus perceives himself/herself as an independent personality within a social environment. We allow and encourage the kids to resolve their conflicts on their own, and without our immediate intervention/meddling.

We support the children in their social and emotional development through loving and steady guidance in all matters.

We show respect for and respond to the cultural background of children coming from other countries. That said, we also aim in our day-to-day work to familiarize the children with our culture, for better and easier integration.

Cognitive competence

Here at our nursery, we aim to adjust our daily routine (activities, relaxation, rest and recuperation time, meals, etc.) to the children as best possible. While we ask the kids to follow a few specific rules, we also allow them to move about freely within these boundaries. Our daily routine is dynamic to some extent, allowing the kids to find their bearings time and again.

Nature is very important to us. Taking the kids outside almost daily, we enable them to learn how to interact with nature in a playful manner.

3. The Settling-in Period

Throughout the process of settling in at our nursery, each child and his or her well-being are the focus of our attention.

Starting out at the day care nursery means, to every child, a first giant step away from the comforts of the family. In order for a child to be able to let go, an atmosphere of trust, security and acceptance is fundamental. Therefore we specifically include the parents in the process of switching from family life to life at the nursery, to make settling in as gentle as possible.

Sunshine Day Care Nursery carefully plans and prepares the settling-in period of each child. Depending on a child's temperament, his or her prior relationship experiences and individual behavior as a child, the settling-in period may vary in length. That is why we (re-)adjust our care intensity over this period to match the child's settling-in progress.

Settling in

We follow the Berlin model of adjustment/settling in to guide children through the period of becoming familiar with life at our nursery. According to this method of settling in, one of the child's parents, the child's main caregiver/attachment figure, spends a few hours per day for a couple of days with the child at the nursery, before making a first brief attempt at separation. If the child reacts well to this first attempt, the length of separation is then gradually increased over the following days.

By having one parent present as a familiar caregiver/attachment figure, the parents create a secure base that the child can withdraw to at any time if he or she needs parental closeness, protection and security. Gradually, over time, a relationship between the child and his or her carer acting as a new caregiver/attachment figure then starts to form.

The settling-in period is deemed concluded once the child has developed a solid relationship with his or her carers, seeks a carer's closeness and accepts to be comforted, reassured and encouraged by the carer acting as his or her new caregiver/attachment figure. The child playing, eating and sleeping on our premises also shows us that the settling-in period has reached its conclusion. If the child as much as fails to do one of the three, we will extend the settling-in period or, where possible, shorten the care days.

Goodbye and hello again

We place a great deal of importance on the child and his or her caregiver/attachment figure consciously experiencing being separated and seeing each other again. Rituals or familiar objects can help make these transitions smoother. By carefully preparing and supporting these farewells and reunions, we can strengthen the bond of trust between the child and his or her parents.

4. Implementing our Principles

Sleeping and resting

A sufficient amount of sleep and enough moments of rest are – as is being able to satisfy one's urge to be physically active – important prerequisites to a healthy development of all children.

That is why we make sure that each child is allowed to relax following his or her own pattern. We respond to the individual needs of toddlers and infants and allow them to go to sleep whenever they feel like doing it, based on what we have agreed with their parents. We offer this opportunity to all kids from approximately 1 ½ years of age, particularly during the lunch break around noon, where we allow the kids to rest, but don't urge them to go to sleep. It is then that our carers create a relaxed atmosphere, tell a story or sing reassuring songs. The kids are allowed to take along their own plush toys, pacifiers/dummies, cuddle cloths, etc., and each child is given, to the extent possible, his or her own permanent sleeping spot.

One carer stays in the room with the kids and helps them go to sleep, singing lullabies or playing a music CD with relaxing music. All children who have no desire to sleep leave the room again after 15 to 30 minutes in the company of the carer, and spend their time with activities that don't make any noise, such as leafing through children's books, assembling jigsaw puzzles, or drawing.

Nutrition

Our communal meals are one of the cornerstones of the daily routine at our day care nursery, not least of all because they foster our sense of togetherness. A meal, in addition to serving a nutritional purpose, is also a time for social interaction between the kids as well as between the kids and their carers. And that is why we are careful to create a familiar atmosphere characterized by lively conversations.

We place a great deal of importance on a varied, healthy and balanced diet. Consequently, it is a given that fruit, vegetables and salads are on the menu daily. All our meals are prepared by our own chef fresh every day and in a way that is in line with the nutritional needs of the children, in order to play a part in how we support them in their personal development. Our beverage of choice for the children is water.

At our nursery, all nutrition is age-appropriate and follows, especially as far as infants and toddlers are concerned, the instructions as given to us by the kids' parents. We bottle-feed infants or feed them baby food according to their individual patterns. We ask the parents to bring along their own infant formula or mother's milk.

It is important to us to allow toddlers to experience nutrition through all their senses; therefore we encourage them to discover new food varieties and develop a positive attitude towards their food. Supporting the kids in becoming independent is one of the main educational principles of our day care nursery, hence we encourage them to use flatware/cutlery early.

We invite the kids to try/taste new types of food occasionally, without, however, urging them to do so, and we take their dietary habits into account as best possible. We ask parents to tell us about any individual needs their children may have and that we should pay attention to, for example due to allergies or their cultural background.

In order to raise the kids' awareness for the origins of their food, we occasionally take them along to the market, involve them as best possible when preparing our meals or play food-related games with them.

Personal hygiene

Through performing daily personal hygiene tasks, the kids develop a healthy attitude towards cleanliness and learn how to feel good in their own bodies. And that is why washing oneself and brushing one's teeth as well as changing diapers/nappies regularly are integral parts of our daily routine. In order to make personal hygiene fun, we have decorated our lavatory in a creative and child-friendly manner. Playfully assisted by our carers, each child is enabled to develop a healthy attitude towards his or her own body. Handling the body in a natural way makes personal hygiene a pleasant and relaxed activity to the kids.

Rituals

Every transition from one situation to another may cause insecurity and fear in toddlers. In order to prevent that from happening, we aim to make all transitions throughout each day at our nursery as pleasant and relaxed as possible.

Our daily routine remains the same day after day, and we only modify it in exceptional cases and where it is justifiable from an educational perspective. By steadfastly adhering to our daily routine, we provide the kids with a sense of structure, security and the certainty that they have their undisputed place in our community. Fixed meal times, fixed sleep/rest times, a well-structured daily routine with recurring rituals all work together to strengthen the kids' sense of security and time.

The following rituals in different situations accompany us through the day:

- -saying goodbye to the parents / saying hello to the carers
- -morning circle (welcoming ritual)
- -rituals accompanying meals (a song to start off the meal)
- -clearing-up rituals (clearing-up songs)
- -washing and personal hygiene rituals
- -sleep rituals (lullabies, plush toys as bedtime companions)

Developing their motor skills and hence satisfying their need to be physically active in their early years is of fundamental importance for the overall development of all children.

We take the kids outside every day – to our own garden/yard and playground – we also have a specially sheltered terrace.

Playing and cavorting in the open air, the children are able to gather experiences in a most simple and natural way and learn how to find out how things in our environment are related. We don't just answer the kids' questions, instead we aim to provide them with food for thought and bring them, through their own sensory experiences, through images and stories, closer to the answers that they seek. Children need to be allowed and enabled to touch, feel, hear, smell or taste things in order to perceive and understand the world around them through all their senses. Thanks to the possibility of making experiences in a playful manner, the kids can also acquire the knowledge they need to better understand their environment.

Through the wide range of activities that we as educators offer them, we aim to experience, together with the kids, our environment with all our senses, sensitizing the children for it – going on outings to the nearby forest or strolls in the rain, walking barefoot in the sand, rolling around in the autumn leaves, feeding the birds, peeling and dicing fruit and vegetables brought in. Through collecting various natural materials such as chestnuts, tree bark, leaves, rocks, pine cones, or moss, the children gain further insights into how nature and its seasons work and further expand their range of sensory experiences. And we open the door to yet more experiences in summer, when we open our sandbox and the kiddie pool.

Infant needs and development

We go to great lengths to respond as best possible to each child's individual patterns or rhythms. It is therefore important that we maintain contact with the parents and, when they drop off and pick up their kids, exchange the latest information about any changes that may have occurred. All suggestions and criticism voiced by the parents are very important to us and are greatly appreciated.

Our carers regularly take written notes of their observations to document the development of each infant. These observations also form the basis of status/progress reports and talks.

Group changes

We consider each child of up to 18 months of age an infant; he or she therefore requires 1.5 day care places. Within this period, we provide care for the child in our infant group. Between 18 and 22 months of age, the child moves on to a mixed-age group.

In the month prior to the group change, we allow the infants to join the new child group for one hour at a time, in order that they can become familiar with the new rooms, toys, kids, and with the new daily routine – a short internal settling-in period, if you will. The periods that the infants spend in the new

group are then gradually increased in length. Since we join the groups together during our off-peak hours (in the morning and evening), the kids are familiar with all our carers. During the settling-in period, we pay a great deal of attention to the kids' needs and give them enough time – between one and four weeks. If necessary, a child's care giver/attachment figure will stay with the child in the new group “for as long as it takes” – if it takes longer, we will, of course, slightly extend that period.

Creativity

In all three groups we allow the children to develop their creativity and give it free rein. Our carers/educators support the kids in their activities, for example giving them pieces of cloth to build a house – instead of a finished tent. We aim to establish as few guidelines as possible, encouraging the kids to be creative instead by providing them with examples/input.

What we want to avoid in our group rooms and with our play materials is sensory overload. That is why we exchange toys regularly and thus make them attractive again.

Language acquisition/development

We allow the children to express themselves and voice their emotions both verbally and nonverbally, depending on their age. Our carers/educators will pay attention to the kids, observe them, listen closely to what they have to say, and communicate with them in a way that is clear and easy to understand. We take their remarks and emotions seriously. Also, we pay careful attention to each child's facial expressions and gestures.

At our day care nursery we speak Swiss German.

We are aware of our own emotions, and we are therefore capable of conveying them to the children in a way that they can understand. We act in an authentic manner.

During play, e.g. when performing finger verses, during circle games, when telling stories and when reading from children's books, we use our own voices and different pitches.

Dealing with difficult situations and/or development crises

In group meetings that take place regularly we analyze difficult care situations and discuss them with the nursery manager in a protected setting. If necessary, we draw up an education plan and define concrete procedures. Where it appears that a problem can't be solved, the nursery manager may, as agreed with the parents, consult an external specialist.

5. Our Cooperation with the Parents

Our cooperation and the exchange of information and opinions with the parents is one of the cornerstones of day-to-day life at our nursery. We place a great deal of importance on an atmosphere of trust, mutual appreciation and respect between family and nursery. Treating each other with honesty and openness and keeping in touch are conducive to a constructive cooperation between our team of carers and a child's parents.

Parent-teacher meetings are an important part of our educational work, as they allow a common thread to form in education and hence support the kids in developing their personality. These meetings can be arranged at any time at the parents' or the group leaders' request. In the meetings, we bring the parents up to date on what goes on every day at the nursery and draw up, at the parents' request, periodic reports about their kids' behavior and progress. Any issues that may occur are discussed, cleared up and resolved as quickly as possible when they occur.

6. Our Cooperation within the Team

Good teamwork and a good work environment are elementary when it comes to aiming for educational excellence. That is why, in addition to sharing and exchanging information and experiences on a daily basis, we regularly schedule meetings in which we talk about educational, organizational and personal issues. It is also here that we discuss and define, within the team and as a team, the goals of our joint educational work. All team members then adhere to what has been agreed as well as to the nursery's organizational framework and its educational concept.

In order to be able to guarantee that we always meet our own quality standards, our carers regularly update their educational knowledge through ongoing training. We also hold in-house courses on topics pertaining to day-to-day life at the nursery (preventing fires, first aid for children, etc.). In addition to that, all our team members are continuously coached and periodically given performance reports. Through the combination of all these measures, we aim to achieve a high degree of motivation and maximize the quality of the care we provide.