



**Kanton Bern**  
**Canton de Berne**

# Kindergarten in the German-speaking region of Canton Bern

## Information for parents

Elterninformation Kindergarten Englisch

**Bildungs- und Kulturdirektion**

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## Dear parents,

Now that your child has reached the age of four, he or she will be enrolled in kindergarten in August. Enrolling your child in kindergarten is a special occasion not only for the child but also for you. It means that your child will be integrated in a larger group of children and marks the start of his or her eleven-year compulsory schooling.

As parents, you can contribute a great deal to your child's success and help your child through his or her school career with your care and support. Encourage your child to do as much as possible on his or her own. Doing so boosts a child's self-confidence, encourages independence and makes getting started in the kindergarten and life as a member of a larger group a lot easier.

We have put together the most important information for you here, so that you can get a complete picture of what you and your child can expect in kindergarten.

We wish you and your child a good start and a carefree, exciting time in kindergarten!

Department of Education

## Please note

In some municipalities, kindergarten children are taught together with children in Year 1 and Year 2 of primary school (mixed age groups) for all or part of the day (Basisstufe or cycle élémentaire).

## **Welcome to kindergarten!**

### **Entry into kindergarten**

#### **Eintritt in den Kindergarten**

Entering kindergarten will open up a whole new sphere of life, play and experience for your child. He or she will meet a group of children who are at different points in their development, have different needs, speak different languages and come from different social and cultural backgrounds.

Together, these children will grow into a community in kindergarten, where they can play together and learn from each other. In kindergarten, your child will have opportunities to try new things, to experiment and to create. Varied experiences involving all the senses will allow your child to keep developing his or her perceptions of things and the relationships between them.

### **Kindergarten teaching staff**

#### **Lehrperson für den Kindergarten**

The class, which is made up of children between the ages of four and six, is led by a kindergarten teacher. Depending on class size and composition, it is possible that a second kindergarten teacher will teach as well, or a class assistant may support the teacher during lessons.

The teacher encourages and supports each child individually according to the child's abilities, interests and developmental level. He or she provides impulses, chooses suitable forms of instruction, plans the activities for each day, and prepares the educational materials that promote new experiences and learning progress.

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## **Educational aims and forms of instruction**

### **Lehrplan 21**

Teaching in kindergarten is based on the Lehrplan. The Lehrplan serves teachers as a compass that helps them plan their lessons from kindergarten through Year 9 of school.

### **Playing and learning**

#### **Spielen und Lernen**

Playing is one of the most important forms of learning in kindergarten. Playing allows children to discover and follow their own learning paths. Playing also builds up children's endurance, inspires them to practice and learn more about something, and provides appropriate challenges and opportunities for action.

The kindergarten is furnished with a rich variety of settings for playing and learning, and your child will be free to decide which appeals to him or her on any given day. The children are also encouraged to try out different forms of play and learning that they might not have chosen on their own.

Starting with interest-driven, casual learning in everyday situations and play situations, learning will become more targeted and more systematic as your child progresses through kindergarten. The children's ability to cope with pre-defined tasks and assignments increases over time.

### **Learning from one another**

#### **Voneinander lernen**

As part of the group, your child will learn with and from other children. The children learn that rules are rules. They learn how to behave themselves appropriately in a variety of situations and how to reconcile their interests with those of other children. They practice self-restraint and self-assertion, and practice trying to find solutions in conflict situations. This promotes the development of their social skills.

**Personal development****Persönliche Entwicklung**

Children also develop their personal skills in kindergarten. They are guided towards greater independence, assume shared responsibility and become self-acting individuals. As a result, their self-confidence increases. They learn to focus on achieving a goal and to keep their own emotions under control. They learn to be aware of their own feelings and to conduct themselves in a given situation appropriately. The children develop confidence in their own skills and abilities and get better at assessing them.

**Fundamentals for the acquisition of basic techniques****Grundlagen für den Erwerb der Kulturtechniken**

The children learn how to express their thoughts and emotions, to relate experiences and to listen to stories. This promotes their language skills and expands their vocabulary.

Listening to syllables and words in songs and rhymes prepares the children to learn to read and write. Their fine motor skills and ability to visualise space and shapes also continue to develop.

The children come to recognise mathematical relationships and principles in the context of playful interaction with quantities and numbers.

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## **Supporting development**

### **Supporting and promoting**

#### **Unterstützen und fördern**

Children bring different needs, experiences and skills with them to kindergarten. The teacher will gauge the developmental level of each child by observing the child and talking with his or her parents. This allows the teacher to identify a child's strengths, talents and interests and to determine what things are still difficult for him or her. The teacher then uses this insight into the children's experiences and individual development to plan and arrange the work with the children.

### **Extra support**

#### **Zusätzliche Unterstützung**

Children who need extra support for their development receive targeted assistance and impulses to stimulate development. For example, with your consent, an additional specialist can work with your child to promote his or her language or motor development.

### **German as a second language**

#### **Deutsch als Zweitsprache (DaZ)**

Children whose native language is not German come to kindergarten with a wealth of experiences and vocabulary associated with their first language. There are resources available in kindergarten that are specifically geared towards helping children who are growing up with other languages to learn German.

Your child will have a far easier start in kindergarten, however, if he or she already understands the language of instruction and can be understood by the teacher and the other children from the very beginning. The earlier your child comes into contact with the German language, the easier it will be for him or her to learn it. Your child should be given regular opportunities to hear and speak German for at least one year before entering kindergarten. He or she could practise this in a playgroup, for instance, in a day-care centre or with other children in the neighbourhood.



The teacher uses this insight into the children's experiences and individual development to plan and arrange the work with the children.

## Cooperation between parents and teachers

### Cooperation

#### Zusammenarbeit

Cooperation with the teacher and the head of the school promotes the provision of the best possible support for your child and is a binding responsibility of parents.

### Fit for kindergarten

#### Fit für den Kindergarten

Kindergarten teachers contact the parents at the beginning of the kindergarten year.

Getting to know the kindergarten and meeting the teacher on a visiting day can help your child develop a sense of security in these new surroundings.

You will find some suggestions of ways to support your child's development and what can help your child get off to a successful start in kindergarten in the brochure 'Fit for kindergarten' or at [www.be.ch/fit-fuer-den-kindergarten](http://www.be.ch/fit-fuer-den-kindergarten).

### Mutual information

#### Gegenseitige Information

Expectations and goals can be clarified through a regular and mutual exchange of information and discussions. Children often behave differently in kindergarten than at home. Parents and teachers exchange observations and experiences with the aim of better understanding the child and thus offering him or her better support and encouragement.

The teacher will inform you promptly and regularly about what is happening in the kindergarten.

The kindergarten will support you in the raising and education of your child. If you need any information or have any questions about the kindergarten or your child's development, please get in touch with the teacher of your child's class.

## **Various forms of cooperation**

### **Verschiedene Formen der Zusammenarbeit**

The teachers can also decide on various forms of cooperation with the parents (e.g. parent evenings, letters to the parents, discussions, events for parents and children).

Events in the kindergarten afford parents and teachers an opportunity to get to know each other better and to build up trust in one another.

## **Discussion sessions**

### **Gespräche**

A discussion session to exchange information and thoughts or clarify any issues may be requested by the teacher or the parents.

## **Parent-teacher meeting**

### **Standortgespräch**

Once each year, the teacher holds a parent-teacher meeting. During this meeting, parents and the teacher share their observations with one another and talk about the

child's development, learning progress, work behaviour as well as personal and social skills.

The teacher records the topics discussed at this meeting on a form provided by the Department of Education for this purpose (checking them off in a list of topics). Additional information or agreements reached by the parents and teacher can also be noted down on the form. The form is part of the folder which will one day hold your child's school assessment reports as well.

## **Visits**

### **Besuche**

Visits to the kindergarten by the parents are welcomed if made with the agreement of the teacher.

Expectations and goals can be clarified through a regular and mutual exchange of information and discussions.

## Organisation of the kindergarten

### Kindergarten as part of compulsory schooling

#### Kindergarten als Teil der Volksschule

Kindergarten is a stand-alone component of compulsory schooling, which is free and lasts eleven years. As a rule, kindergarten lasts two years. Every child who reaches the age of four on or before 31 July enters kindergarten the following August. Age is the determining factor for entry.

Parents have the option of waiting a year before enrolling their child in the first year of kindergarten, for reasons of the child's development level. If you wish to exercise this option, please indicate this on the registration form you receive from your local authority. If you wish, you can consult the head of the school before making your decision. You can also seek advice from the educational counselling office, your paediatrician or the parent advice service.

### Kindergarten hours

#### Kindergartenzeit

The number of kindergarten lessons (45 minutes) per week depends on the number of weeks of school per year at your place of residence. For example, if there are 38 weeks of school, the number of lessons will range between 23 and 26 per week, and if there are 39 weeks of school, there will be between 22 and 25 lessons per week.

### Reduction of teaching times in the first year of kindergarten

#### Reduktion der Unterrichtszeit im ersten Kindergartenjahr

In your child's first year of kindergarten, you can have the number of hours your child attends kindergarten reduced. Please inform the head of the school of your wishes when you register your child. The teaching time may not be reduced by more than one third. This option is designed to allow your child to be introduced to the full teaching time gradually.

The head of the school decides on the organisation and exact amount of the reduced teaching time.

### Kindergarten attendance

#### Besuch des Unterrichts

Children attend kindergarten regularly from Monday to Friday according to the timetable provided. Kindergarten instruction begins and ends at the same times in the morning as the school ('block' times). Lessons are also held in the afternoon one or two times a week.

Make sure that your child arrives at lessons well rested. Ensure that your child is appropriately dressed and brings whatever is needed for lessons, and also for special events or outings.

## **Route to and from the kindergarten**

### **Kindergartenweg**

Parents are responsible for their children outside the kindergarten hours and while they are on their way to and from the kindergarten. Help your child learn the route to the kindergarten and back so that he or she will be able to make the trip alone someday.

## **Absences**

### **Absenzen**

Please inform the teacher of foreseeable absences (e.g. for reasons such as illness or accident affecting the child or in the family, change of residence, doctor's or dentist's appointment) in due time, but certainly before the start of lessons. If your child is ill (e.g. has a fever or feels nauseous), he or she should stay at home until fully recovered.

## **Authorisation for planned absences**

### **Dispensationen**

Planned absences can only be authorised if a written request stating the grounds for the absence is submitted to the head of the school four weeks in advance. Authorisations can be granted for reasons such as the following: celebrations of high religious feasts, important family events, attendance at a course in the native language and culture (HSK).

## **Free half days**

### **Freie Halbtage**

Your child is entitled to up to five free half days in each school year. He or she can be absent from lessons on these half days without having to give a reason. You should notify the class teacher in advance if you wish to claim a free half day for your child. The half days can be taken either individually or together.

## **Entry into the 1st year of primary school**

### **Übertritt in das 1. Schuljahr der Primarstufe**

As a rule, all children start their 1st year at primary school after spending two years in kindergarten. In exceptional cases – specifically, due to the child's individual development level – a child may start the 1st year at primary school one year earlier or one year later. In these cases, the decision is taken by the head of the school at the teacher's request and in consultation with the parents.

The kindergarten teachers and the first-year teachers work together. Joint projects and visiting days allow them to prepare the children for primary school and ease the transition.

## Child care and health

### Day school

#### Tagesschule

A number of schools offer 'day schools' (Tagesschulen: afternoon childcare programmes) which can supplement kindergarten. These provide supervision during the midday period (with lunch) and in the afternoon after kindergarten ends. Day school attendance is voluntary. The parents contribute to the costs of supervision and meals according to their income.

The head of each school can tell you exactly what is offered there. General information on day schools can be found at: [www.be.ch/schulergaenzende-angebote](http://www.be.ch/schulergaenzende-angebote)

Further possibilities for child care and supervision outside the family (day-care facilities for children, professional caregivers, etc.) can be found at: [www.fambe.sites.ch](http://www.fambe.sites.ch)

### Medical examination

#### Ärztliche Untersuchung

A medical examination and the yearly dental check-up performed by a dentist are compulsory and free for all children in kindergarten.

The doctor will notify you if any treatment is necessary. The parents are responsible for the costs of such treatment.

## Head of the school, authorities and specialised services

### Head of the school

#### Schulleitung

The head of the school is responsible for the educational and organisational management of the school and the kindergarten. If you have any questions about organisational aspects of the school or a situation that cannot be resolved with the teacher, you can discuss them with the head of the school.

### Local authority

#### Gemeindebehörde

The competent local authority is responsible for ensuring that children attend the kindergarten in accordance with the cantonal laws and local regulations.

### School inspectorate

#### Schulinspektorat

The regional school inspectorate supervises compulsory schooling in the canton.

### Educational counselling office

#### Erziehungsberatungsstellen (EB)

The cantonal educational counselling office in your region can advise you on particularities in the development of your child and special educational questions:

[www.be.ch/erziehungsberatung](http://www.be.ch/erziehungsberatung)

Further information on compulsory schooling can be found at:

[www.be.ch/volksschule](http://www.be.ch/volksschule)

