

BERLIN KIDS INTERNATIONAL KITA



EDUCATIONAL CONCEPTION

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1. RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTION

Pfefferwerk Stadtkultur gGmbH is a non-profit organisation that since 1991 has focussed on providing childcare and youth and community services. Pfefferwerk Stadtkultur gGmbH founds, administers, manages, promotes and links up a variety of social projects and institutions in the Berlin region. Through our activities, we aim to promote humanity, freedom, equal opportunity and solidarity. We place great value on responsibility for oneself and the well-being of the community, professionalism, trust and reliability. Pfefferwerk works to promote the dignity of the individual and the coexistence of civilisations.

Pfefferwerk Stadtkultur gGmbH currently manages twelve children's daycare centres, with Berlin Kids being the only bilingual one.

2. BERLIN KIDS INTERNATIONAL DAYCARE CENTRE (KITA)

2.1. HISTORY

Berlin Kids International was founded in March 2000 by a parents' association as a bilingual daycare centre, the first of its kind in East Berlin. It initially only offered places for ten children and was located in a room rented from a local kita in Wichertstrasse 24, Pankow, Prenzlauer Berg, which was established in the 1970s. Due to the great demand for bilingual childcare, its capacity had to be increased. While enlarging the kita, the parents' association sought structural support from Pfefferwerk Stadtkultur gGmbH. In January 2001, Pfefferwerk took over the administration of Berlin Kids e.V.; a year later, in 2002, it also took over the local kita that was still operating in the same building.

2.2. GROUPS AND CAPACITY

Currently, Berlin Kids has some 80 children in five homogenous age groups, each of which consists of 15 or 16 children and two teachers. Every August, children leave the kita to enter school, and the same number of new children is admitted to the kita. (Vacancies that arise during the year are immediately filled by children who are on the waiting list.)

2.3. ROOMS

Our spacious rooms provide children with many opportunities for play and activities and also give them the option of not participating in group activities if they do not wish to do so.

Every group has two large rooms designed and painted in a way that is stimulating and appropriate for children. By dividing up rooms into different thematic areas, we offer children the opportunity to play and engage in activities in self-chosen groups without being disturbed. Every group also has a spacious changing area, a bathroom (with a shower) and three toilets.

In the spring of 2005, the group rooms were renovated and the sanitary rooms were completely refurbished.

2.4. OUTDOOR AREA



The kita also has a large outdoor area that provides many opportunities for children to climb, two slides, two swings and a grass-covered area with trees. The "ball hut", a wooden shed filled with snoozle balls, is a favourite with the children. We also have a courtyard with a water-play area and a green area. A large sun-roof was installed in the courtyard in the summer of 2005.

Since we consider it important to educate our children about nature and ecology, we let them grow and harvest flowers and vegetables in a little garden, thereby introducing them to the natural sciences.

2.5. OPENING HOURS AND FEES

Our kita is open weekdays from 6.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. The kita is open all year round and only closes on about ten days every year. For the most part, these are the days between a national holiday and the following weekend. Days on which the kita is closed are announced at the beginning of every year on the bulletin board.

Fees are calculated according to the "Kita-Kostenbeteiligungsgesetz" and vary depending on the income of the parents. Pfefferwerk Stadtkultur gGmbH does not charge any additional fees. The only additional costs are for each group's weekly organic food box (Bio-Kiste) and for external classes, i.e. music or swimming class, if they are attended by your child.



3. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES: DEVELOPING COMPETENCES



The following objectives guide our pedagogic actions and indicate the direction in which we intend to steer the development and education of our children. It is our aim to enable them to live in and master the challenges of their present and future environment, and to actively shape society. We want to provide these young personalities with competences.

The Berlin Educational Programme (Berliner Bildungsprogramm, Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Sport, 2004) identifies specific competences as pedagogic objectives for early educators; since they are identical with our educational approach (see Section 5), we have included them here:

- *"Ich-Konzept" (Self-confidence, self concept)*

Children should be aware of themselves, trust their abilities, act responsibly, and develop a sense of independence and self-initiative.

- *Social competence*

Children should be capable of establishing social relations and developing them in such a way that these are characterized by mutual respect and esteem; children should understand social and interaction-related matters, act responsibly when interacting with others and negotiate and compromise with others appropriately.

- *Conceptual competence*

Children should be capable of acquiring theoretical and practical knowledge and skills, and in so doing learn to understand things and take action; children should learn to be perceptive and to express themselves.

- *Learning competence*

Children must come to understand that they must learn; what needs to be learned and how to learn; how to acquire knowledge and skills, how to distinguish between what is important and what is not; and children must develop a willingness to learn from others.



(Berliner Bildungsprogramm 2004, Verlag das netz, p. 26)

4. BILINGUALITY

English and German are the two languages of interaction at our kita (a 50-50 ratio). This is an extension of the bilinguality of the children's home environment, where each parent communicates with their child/children in his or her mother tongue. Thus language is clearly identified with the person who speaks it, which is very important if the child is to develop relations and communicate with others.

This concept makes it possible for English and German to be taught in everyday interaction and common activities (they do not have to be taught in specific units). Children who are monolingual thus also acquire the respective partner language.

Sufficient teaching materials (books, games, CDs etc.) are available in both languages; teachers conduct activities, the morning circle and projects in their respective mother tongue.

We pay particular attention to the specific situation of bilingual (and, in some cases, English-speaking) families in Germany. The places our kita has to offer are therefore awarded with a view to achieving a 70 to 30 bilingual-monolingual ratio. Therefore, children with a bilingual or a native English-speaking background have higher priority than children with a monolingual background.

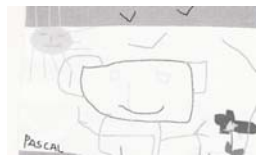
5. THE SITUATIONAL APPROACH: AN EDUCATIONAL CONCEPT

We do not aim to merely keep children busy; instead we want to focus on them. Our point of departure is each child's specific environment and circumstances, the

experiences it has had. Starting from there, we can focus on any subject matter the child is involved with or affected by. This is in line with our principle that we all learn from each other and that educators should not perceive the children they teach as "containers" into which knowledge is poured. Children should not be "teaching objects", but rather "active subjects". In practice this means that children are included in and involved with the planning and organisation of daily activities. In this process, everyone is their own human being, an individual, and thereby brings to bear their personal competences, feelings, opinions, questions, answers, prejudices, experiences, insecurities etc. This provides an opportunity for active learning; there are no separate or separating instruction units. Learning takes place all the time and everywhere. Children are not taught through an isolated learning process but continuously in a reciprocal process. Thus they learn through experiences in "real contexts", where their cultural values and experiences are embedded.

Our daycare centre has rooms where children can sense, feel, think and act. Activities and play are structured so that they enable children to act independently. We are thereby implementing the mandate society has given to us to educate and teach children by providing them with an opportunity to reflect upon their experiences and feelings. This teaches them to cope with existing and future situations. Children can thus develop a sense of stability which is an important basis for their further development. Our approach is a holistic one. Our task as teachers is to support and develop our children's ability to act, learn and achieve while at the same time taking into account their cultural and religious values and experiences.

We would like to stress that although this approach is democratic, it is not antiauthoritarian. Rules, a system of order, rituals and good behaviour are pedagogic elements and objectives – and this must be clear to everyone involved. Our pedagogic aim is the effective development of independent, authentic, and group-minded individuals.



Some words on supervision

Regarding our duty to supervise children, this does not mean continuous control or excessive or smothering care – rather, we aim to give them guidance so they can act independently and learn to cope with certain risks and dangers.

In order for children to become more careful, considerate and competent, they must learn how to deal with dangerous materials and situations (one can cut oneself with a knife, burn one's fingers on a stove, or fall from a tree). This calls for early educators to distinguish carefully between learning from experiences and protecting a child from serious danger. By following this principle, educators will establish a logical and transparent system of rules for the group.

We do our best to provide indoor and outdoor facilities that allow a realistic implementation of our pedagogic concept, so that children can be independent. Our duty to supervise our children is defined and determined by the age and the development of each child, and by arrangements made with a child's parents. This presupposes that our educators are capable of judging situations in the appropriate manner, and that they cooperate closely with parents.

6. THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS



Our educational concept views the educator as someone who stimulates a child's imagination and accompanies, guides and supports children in their learning processes. Educators observe the child and interact with it. Close exchange and coordination with parents is also important.

Our "situational approach", and the fact that we are a bilingual daycare centre, make high demands on our educators. They must be able to respond in a flexible and competent way to situations as they arise, and they must continuously expand their knowledge. It is also very important that each teacher and his/her counterpart in a group ensures that activities and subject matter are dealt with equally in both languages. This presupposes that our educators are well-trained, team-oriented and have at least a working knowledge of the respective partner tongue. They should also espouse the educational principles of our kita and share a similar idea of man.



7. DAILY ROUTINE



Our daycare centre takes its social responsibility seriously and is thus available for your child all day during opening hours. However it is in our – and no doubt also in the parents' – interest to provide certain points of orientation, i.e. a daily routine, that offers a basis for high quality education.

An "average day" at our kita is structured as follows:

6 a.m. to 8.30 a.m.	Early morning group (one play group, with a small breakfast offered at 8 a.m.)
8.30 a.m.	all 5 groups are open (teachers pick up their children from the early morning group)
9.30 a.m.	morning circle
approx. 10 a.m.	activities/projects
afterwards	outdoor activities
11.15 a.m. to 12 a.m.	lunch (varies according to age group)
12 noon/1 p.m.	
until 2 p.m.	lunch-time nap/break (depending on the age and personality of each child; we have children who take a nap, others who rest and others who stay up)

2.30 p.m.	snack
afterwards	outdoor activities, continuation of projects/activities or playtime
4 p.m. or 4.30 p.m.	groups close
4.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.	late afternoon group

8. WEEKLY AND ANNUAL EVENTS

In much the same way that structuring a day provides a certain orientation to all parties involved (especially for children), so does structuring the week. However, we would like to point out that rituals and fixed scheduled events may always change. New ones may arise, and old ones may evolve, prove useful or appear outdated. Thus the following plan for a week at our kita is not rigid and set in stone. For us it is important to view educational work as a dynamic process, during which existing rituals are continuously reviewed as to their usefulness and appropriateness.

Monday	weekly morning circle – presentation of the “word of the week” which identifies the week’s theme
Tuesday	musical activity with a music student (external offer, cost: €12 per month)
Wednesday	sports (Käthe-Kollwitz-Schule gymnasium, located nearby)
Friday	wish day – children may freely choose their group and activity (every second Friday)



The above list is not exhaustive and only includes those events that concern all five groups. Individual group activities and projects are announced on the respective group announcement boards. We do our best to provide afternoon projects or activities, such as story time (requires parent participation) or additional music/singing classes, details of which are posted on the announcement board. For an

additional charge, children can also take swimming lessons organised and arranged by the TSC swimming club.

Our daycare centre celebrates annual highlights, national holidays and traditional cultural festivals of English and German-speaking countries.

9. MEALS

A balanced and healthy diet is very important for us. Lunch is therefore ordered from an external caterer (Apetito, frozen food). Meals (quick-frozen food, with no added preservatives) are delivered in individual components. In our kitchen we have special cooking and heating ovens so that lunch is served fresh and the greatest possible flexibility is guaranteed. The only meat we serve is poultry.

We also offer breakfast and in the afternoon a snack from the “organic food box”. Once a week food is ordered from an organic grocery store nearby. In each group, a parent collects money for the organic food box once a month (€6 or 7 per child per month). Fruit and vegetables are available on a regular basis. Tea (without sugar) and milk are on offer throughout the day.

We aim to keep children’s sugar consumption as low as possible. Thus sweets and sweet desserts are only offered on special occasions. On those days, too, we strive to provide a balanced and nutritious variety of food.

10. A FEW MORE PRINCIPLES

- Since we make an effort to teach our children non-violent ways of resolving conflicts, no weapons or toy weapons are allowed in the daycare centre.
- We use media only to supplement group projects or activities. A computer with educational software is available if necessary.
- To allow our children to grow up strong and healthy and to let them express their urge to move about and run around, they must spend time outdoors every day. We try to do so as much as possible, except during inclement weather.

▪ Accidents/illness

If your child is unable to attend due to an illness, please let us know as soon as possible. If your child was ill with an infectious disease, he or she must provide a doctor’s certificate indicating it is healthy and fit to attend the kita before it can return.

As a rule, teachers do not dispense medication to children. (Special circumstances may call for an exception to this rule, and parents will have to make special arrangements with the respective educators.)

When a child develops symptoms of an illness or is unwell at the daycare centre, its parents will be contacted immediately and will be asked to pick up their child. If a child has an accident at the daycare centre, its injury will first be attended to and then its parents will be contacted; if the child is not able to stay at the kita, its parents will be asked to pick it up. In the event of a more serious accident, an emergency physician will be called or the child will be taken to a doctor.

11. SETTLING IN AND PRESCHOOL INSTRUCTION

Only a brief overview of these topics is given in this brochure; for more detailed information, see the respective separate leaflets.

Settling in

We are fully aware that the settling-in period is a difficult process for both parents and children, who are insecure and anxious about being separated. Thus we take this matter very seriously. Depending on the needs of each child and its parents, the children are introduced to everyday life at the kita in a step-by-step process. We follow the infans Institute's recommendations, which are that the settling-in period may last up to three weeks.

Preschool instruction

We aim to educate children in all aspects of their personal development. Thus preschool should not focus exclusively on preparing children for acquiring basic reading and writing skills (or on teaching them how to write or read). Instead, we try to further and enhance the instruction and education of our children so as to turn them into personalities who think independently and act with a sense of social responsibility. We therefore focus on projects and specific subjects or themes that affect all areas of everyday life and that respond to specific personal events in the lives of our children. The principle of bilinguality outlined above continues to apply. In addition, children receive one hour of "preschool instruction" twice a week (in both languages) to promote their ability to concentrate and focus over a longer period of time, and to prepare them for learning how to read and write. This approach enables us to monitor the development of every child and to document its preferred language. Of course, we also assist and support our children whenever they express an interest in acquiring basic reading and writing skills.

During their last year at our daycare centre, our children benefit greatly from their educators' expertise and qualifications; the instruction they receive is outlined by the framework plan for preschool instruction.

12. PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Since we recognize and respect the prime influence parents have on the development of their children, the participation of parents is an important part of our daily kita work. We can only educate children if we also respect the existing principle of family loyalty, by ensuring parents' cooperation and participation. We want to support our children in their efforts to become independent and help them develop new strategies for resolving problems and finding answers to the many far-ranging questions they have. We respect and promote each child's cultural background, provided no one's dignity is violated and no culture or concept of family or religion is discriminated against.



We aim to maintain the greatest possible degree of transparency of daily life in the kita for parents. We document the activities of our children (i.e. display photos and



record videos) so that parents can see for themselves what they have been doing. It is each teacher's responsibility to arrange parent-teacher meetings and to cooperate with the parents of her/his group. We recognize and respect the competences and dynamic forces of each child and its family and maintain an open dialogue with parents on the objectives and limits of cooperation. We place great value on achieving a consensus between all the varying interests and expectations, and on promoting mutual understanding and acceptance of different points of view. Parents' active support and participation is greatly appreciated when it comes to:

- organizing parties, celebrations and activities
- complementing the work of the teachers (story time, input on and material for projects, organising visits to their workplace, etc.) and
- decorating and equipping the group rooms.

Every year two parent representatives are elected per group who through close cooperation with the respective parents and teachers and the kita's director coordinate and organize what needs to be done.

The history of our daycare centre – it arose out of a parents' initiative – stresses the traditional importance of parent involvement. We respect and are grateful for the participation of parents and highly value their commitment.

The Berlin Kids International Parents Association remains active and provides support for the work of the kita in many areas. New members are always welcome! (For more information please see the association's information leaflets.)

13. NETWORKING

Pfefferwerk gGmbH is responsible for a number of services and programmes in the field of youth and community work, and this provides many opportunities for cooperation and networking. (For example group outings to Klein Wall near Berlin could be organized, or exchanges could be conducted with other Pfefferwerk daycare centres.) We are working both to use existing contacts to, and to establish and develop contacts with, other childcare and youth institutions in our neighbourhood. The aim is to establish relationships with other bilingual institutions and schools in order to guarantee the success of our work.



We also aim to open ourselves up to the neighbourhood and to actively participate in community work.

14. REGISTRATION AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Our daycare centre is open to visitors the first Monday of every month beginning at 3 p.m. Visitors are taken on a tour of the facilities and grounds and receive information. They may also use this opportunity to register their children. Since our waiting list is very long, we recommend you apply as soon as possible. We admit children from the age of a year and a half.

When you register your child, you do not have to furnish any documents right away. In the year in which your child is to be admitted you must obtain a "Betreuungsbescheid" from your Bezirksamt by the end of February of that year.

You will then have to provide:

- the Betreuungsbescheid (if your child is bilingual, there will be a special mention of this on the Bescheid)
- proof of the parents' income
- a doctor's certificate indicating that the child is fit to attend a kita (should not be older than one week).



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