

EDUCATIONAL CONCEPT



**MINIHAUS**
MÜNCHEN

KINDERKRIPPEN – KINDERGÄRTEN

Educational concept

MINIHAUS München

Fürstenrieder Straße 267, 81377 Munich

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Status: December 2015

1. Information about the proprietor

Minihaus München offers high-quality private childcare places for children of crèche and kindergarten age. We consider ourselves a provider of social services and we aim to provide parents with the best possible support in caring for, educating and bringing up their children. We are characterized by pronounced customer focus, a high degree of flexibility and a strong awareness of quality.

In looking after the children entrusted to our care, we can fall back on decades of experience. Ms Liselotte Eckerl-Riesch, the founder of our company, set up the first facility, an out-of-school centre for special needs children, in 1977. Over time, more facilities and services were added, including crèches and kindergartens from 2009 onwards. Minihaus München is now one of the largest private proprietors of crèches and kindergartens in Munich. The President of Germany awarded Ms Eckerl-Riesch the *Bundesverdienstkreuz* [Federal Service Cross] for her outstanding social commitment.

Minihaus München has a first-class, learning-focused educational concept for the daycare of children aged from zero to six years. This concept took a development team with members from a variety of professions two years' intensive work to complete. Our decades of experience in looking after children and the latest information from developmental psychology, bonding research and early years education all made a significant contribution to the development of this concept.

Our concept is the foundation of our educational work and guarantees a consistently high quality of childcare at all our sites. It is binding on all our facilities and is implemented appropriately against the background of site-specific boundary conditions such as size, location and premises.

In the course of our quality development process, our educational concept is subject to continuous examination and further development. Feedback and suggestions from parents, children and staff all make a significant contribution to this development process.

2. Location and premises

We were very careful in selecting all our sites and planned and implemented them in collaboration with an experienced team of architects. In this process it was and remains our objective to create facilities in which children, parents and staff all feel completely at home.

Our Minihaus München in Fürstenrieder Straße 267 was opened in 2009. It is in the Sendling-Westpark district of Munich (postcode 81377). Opposite our facility is the extensive site of the *Waldfriedhof* cemetery. There are good links to the footpath and cycle networks and to public transport – and there are short-term parking spaces for cars in the immediate vicinity.

In total, our facility at Fürstenrieder Straße 267 has 36 places for children aged from nine weeks to three years. The places are distributed among three groups of 12 places each.

The childcare places are essentially available to all parents, regardless of their cultural background, religious affiliation, social class or occupation.

Our facility occupies the ground floor of an office block. The premises were converted to be child-friendly before we opened. Each crèche group has at its disposal a main group room and a side room which can be used for sleeping, but also on a multifunctional basis for educational activities. In each case, the side rooms are immediately adjacent to the main room.

In designing the premises, we put great emphasis on high-quality interior design and a cosy, friendly atmosphere to suit the needs demanded by the children's developmental stage. Each group room has different areas to encourage exploration, play, retreat, exercise or learning through play. Special, high-quality exercise equipment made of natural materials also fosters the development of motor skills. We designed special secret holes in the wall between the main group room and the side room to encourage the children's instinct to explore.

Besides eating, the main group rooms are used mainly for free play and for educational offerings within our education-focused concept. The side rooms are for sleeping and as places to retreat to and can also be used on a multifunctional basis for educational offerings.

The generously-proportioned hall which connects the group rooms and the washrooms is designed as a play hall. It allows the children in particular to indulge their love of exercise and to participate in inter-group activities.

Our facility has two very attractive washrooms for children which are easily accessible from all our group rooms. The washrooms have nappy-changing tables, child-sized washbasins and special toilets for children of crèche age. The washrooms are equipped so that they can also be used for educational activities in creative/artistic or scientific spheres, for example.

The cloakroom and area for meeting parents come before the group rooms and are located in the entrance area. Each child has his or her own place in the cloakroom with a coat peg and storage space. The cloakroom also has information boards for parents with information about current educational activities, particular news and announcements about events.

There is also a facility manager's office, washrooms for visitors and staff, a small kitchen and a storeroom for the cleaning staff.

Outside is a very quiet garden area extending to over 400 sqm. All children can access the garden directly from group rooms without assistance. In designing the open space, we gave a high priority to providing various levels and surfaces to encourage younger children to play creatively with one another and to enable them to make a variety of sensory experiences and experience with nature. Play equipment suitable for the age (e.g. swing, willow tepees, wooden locomotive with tender) and a generously-proportioned sandpit provide varied stimuli for play. Large parasols and the established trees provide pleasant shade on sunny days.

In addition to using our own garden, we also consider it very important to join the children in exploring and getting to know the local environment around our facility. Regular joint

trips to local green spaces and nature parks, playgrounds or other places of interest to children are accordingly an important part of our educational routine. *Westpark* park nearby is worthy of particular mention here, with a variety of opportunities to gather experience of nature and to give free rein to children's natural curiosity and love of exercise.

3. Our philosophy

We are convinced that a happy childhood and parental career flexibility are not mutually exclusive. A condition for combining family and a career are high-quality, flexible childcare offerings which consistently focus on the needs of children and their parents.

Our aim therefore, in collaboration with our staff, is to do everything in our power to ensure that

- children feel safe, secure and at home with us and have the time and space to develop healthily at their own pace.
- parents can rely on their children receiving top-quality childcare and optimum education when they are with us.

To achieve this, we give top priority to

- an atmosphere to make the children feel secure, warm and safe.
- close collaboration with parents and the parents' committee which is characterized by flexibility, trust, appreciation and competence.
- qualified, committed and motivated staff who perform their work with care and competence in the service of children and parents.
- a modern educational childcare concept which taps into children's natural curiosity and their love of play and provides ideal support for their development.
- boundary conditions which suit parents' requirements for reliability and flexibility as well as possible.
- extra services which supplement children's care and education as required and take the load off parents.

4. Educational principles

Our aim is to support the children to the best of our ability as they develop into self-confident, socially competent, life-affirming and happy personalities with a love of learning. For this to succeed, we consistently base our educational activities on children's fundamental requirements which are of primary importance for the early years:

- the need for security, emotional stability, bonding and care
- the need to express curiosity through play, to explore, comprehend and understand the world
- the need to experience community and to share experiences with other people

Using these basic requirements as a starting point, we developed an educational concept which puts children's needs at its very centre. This concept draws heavily on the content of the *Bayerischer Bildungs- und Erziehungsplan* [Bavarian state training and education plan] and ensures a high quality of both education and childcare.

We consider a finely-tuned educational methodology which perceives the different needs of children and deals with them sensitively to be particularly important. A methodology which is characterized by our accompanying the children in their daily routine with empathy and care. We want children to be able to rely on our being there when they need consolation, words of encouragement or suggestions, when they want to show us something, share something with us or make a contribution or when they need quiet and to retreat. Our educational approach is based among other things on pioneering principles such as those developed by Maria Montessori. In line with the motto "Help me to do it myself ...", we support children specifically at their own pace and take account of their individuality as they complete important developmental steps and acquire elementary learning experience.

We implement a modern, education-focused methodology based on our sensitive attitude. Together with the children, we discover the world and encourage them to indulge their natural drive to explore and find out. We understand education as a holistic process in which the child acquires valuable skills through "doing", especially through play. Within this process, we see ourselves as empathetic and creative educational companions and providers of stimulus. We want to be there when a child makes a new discovery and has questions about it, or when he or she needs a hand for just a brief moment to complete a new developmental step or if a child needs visual material in order to understand particular relationships. As well as supporting children with their self-managed learning in a manner which suits the situation, we also consider it important to offer them attractive activities and projects and to awaken their interest in different areas of education.

Our educational methodology is interfaith and intercultural. We teach the children the key elements of the Christian/Western culture in which they are growing up. This includes celebrating the usual festivals of our culture and enjoying following rituals. At the same time, we want to make the children aware of other cultures, religions and customs and to incorporate this cultural and religious variety as an enrichment of the childcare routine.

In addition to raising awareness of different cultures and religions, our educational approach is characterized by a "gender-sensitive" attitude. Children start wondering about their gender role at an early stage. They imitate female/male role models and experiment with these in play. We encourage the children to try out different roles, to delve deeper into them and to harmonize them with their individual characteristics and talents. The aim is to support children of both sexes in finding their sexual identity and to compensate for role-specific discrimination.

The participation of children and adults has a high priority at Minihaus München. We are convinced that if the children actively participate in their routine, this will permanently

reinforce their self-confidence and provide the basis for healthy development of their personality. For this reason, we think it is very important to invite and encourage the children to participate in the everyday routine right from the start, but differentiated by their age and stage of development. If they are actively involved in designing their own lives, they should end up with a variety of opportunities to glean experience in perceived self-efficacy, to express their opinions, to take an active part in helping shape the educational routine, to understand their rights to suit their ages, to insist on them and to stand up for their needs. We also think it is especially important to take complaints, criticism and suggestions from parents and children seriously and to react to them swiftly.

Our educational methodology takes account of the fact that children need guidance and security to develop their personalities, as well as space to develop. A settled routine, recurring rituals, a straightforward room design and clear rules and limits to foster social living and working together are important components of our educational methodology. This also includes every child having a fixed group to belong to and trusted link staff to look after him or her. We open up the groups at certain times in the daily routine to enable children from different groups to spend time with one another and gain experience together.

Minihaus München expressly stands by the UN convention on the rights of the disabled and its aims of inclusion. We aim to give all children, regardless of their individual strengths and weaknesses, the opportunity of growing up together and of experiencing childcare, education and upbringing in one place.

5. Education in basic skills

In line with the *Bayerischer Bildungs- und Erziehungsplan* [BEP - Bavarian state training and education plan] and the *Bayerisches Kinderbildungs- und Betreuungsgesetz* [BayKiBiG – Bavarian state law governing child education and childcare], it is our aim to support the children entrusted to our care comprehensively as they develop their personalities. Education in basic skills is a key foundation in the development of a healthy personality and prepares children at an early stage for subsequent challenges at school, at work, in the family and in society.

Key basic skills include:

- personal skills such as self-confidence, a positive self-image, experience of autonomy and skills, perceived self-efficacy and an openness to new things
- cognitive skills such as perception with all the senses, the ability to think and to solve problems, memory, imagination and creativity
- physical skills such as fine and gross motor skills, handling stress and relaxation, personal hygiene and health-conscious behaviour
- social skills such as the ability to build relationships, empathy, the ability to make contact and to co-operate, the acceptance of rules and limits, the development of values

- skills for the learning process itself, such as learning strategies, acquisition of knowledge, knowledge transfer, the ability to solve problems, concentration and attention
- the building up of resilience to be able to deal appropriately with change and stress

In order to support the children as best we can in acquiring and developing basic skills, we implement the measures below in our crèche groups.

Our finely-tuned educational methodology teaches children the feelings of esteem, appreciation, security and safety. We foster the building up of a positive self-image by taking the children's strengths, potential and opportunities for expression and design seriously and then tapping into these specifically in our daily routine.

Our participative educational methodology consistently involves the children in the educational routine to suit their ages. As a result, we give the children a great variety of experience in terms of skills and independence and allow them to acquire valuable experience of perceived self-efficacy.

Our varied, learning-centred educational methodology allows the children to explore the world with all their senses, to train thinking and problem-solving skills and to satisfy their curiosity and thirst for knowledge. We place particular emphasis at an early stage on the acquisition through play of the skills required for learning.

Our health-conscious educational methodology encourages the children to develop a positive body image and personal hygiene habits appropriate to their ages, to develop a feeling for a healthy diet and to learn how to deal with stress and relaxation.

Our educational methodology fosters relationships, facilitating a wide variety of social experiences with other children and adults on the basis of age-appropriate rules and limits. We consider the teaching of empathy, mutual respect and esteem, together with development of the skills of making contact, cooperating and dealing with conflict, to be of great importance here. In the process, we teach the children universal values to prepare them as well as possible for life in a tolerant, open and democratic society.

Our structured and stimulating environment gives the children security and direction on the one hand, but on the other, provides them with a wide variety of opportunities to deal with different topics and areas of education under their own control. This includes providing the children with a wide variety of materials to stimulate their imagination and creativity and to encourage them to live out their urge to explore.

6. Our educational areas

In no phase of life does a person learn more than in his or her early years. Equipped with insatiable curiosity and a pronounced thirst for knowledge and exploration, the growing child yearns to discover, grasp and understand all the different aspects of him or herself and the world. Ideally, early years education is completed as a natural, holistic process – with the child as the key component, driver and designer of this process. We see our task as being to work in close collaboration with parents to provide children with suitable

boundary conditions for their educational processes and to accompany them on their educational journey as empathetic and competent providers of stimulus.

Children's play has a particular significance in early years education. As they play, children "educate" themselves in a holistic manner. They practice social interaction, train their perception and senses along with their fine and gross motor skills, start to understand connections and if/then relationships, repeat and modify sequences of action, foster their creativity and imagination, experience perceived self-efficacy, learn to deal with success and failure and much more. Our aim is to accompany a child as it plays in specific situations, to be alert to when a child needs support or suggestion, if questions need answering or if materials are required to support the acquisition of knowledge.

In addition to this situational approach, we offer a wide variety of educational activities and projects to provide the children with specific support in their educational processes. These activities take place in the daily routine in the respective crèche groups and in inter-group workshops. In each group, the professionals put together a weekly education plan with various educational areas and put up a notice for parents' information. The topics of the various workshops are also announced by means of a notice. The design of the education plan and the workshops incorporates to a significant extent the children's interests along with current/seasonal topics which are the focus for several days or weeks.

Our education plan and the workshops cover the educational areas below in line with the *Bayerischer Bildungs- und Erziehungsplan*.

Language and literacy

Language and literacy are of key importance for development of the personality and have a particular priority in our education-focused methodology. It is our aim to use a language-conscious educational approach and age-differentiated educational activities to foster children's language development and to the best of our ability, to fill them with enthusiasm for the world of signs, symbols and writing. Making up rhymes, reading aloud, singing, sound and language games, looking at picture books, discussion groups and talking about body language, facial expression and gestures in play together are examples of language activities we offer. Our language offering is based on the developmental stage of the children in question and is differentiated accordingly when children transfer to kindergarten.

In addition to teaching German, we actively promote familiarization with a second language by making it possible to experience English in the daily routine. We teach valuable foreign language skills through songs, stories, guessing games and routine activities commented in English.

Science, environment, technology and mathematics

We get to the bottom of things in exciting projects and deal with topics from science, the environment and technology to suit the children's ages. Together with the children, we conduct experiments, deal with the four elements, experiment with light and shadow, observe natural phenomena, go out on trips, examine technical connections, work with different materials and explore our surroundings, near and far. At the same time, we give the children a basic understanding of mathematics by allowing them to experience the work of mathematics through their senses in play. The children thus make an early start

on handling mathematical categories and principles such as quantities, sizes, shapes, repetition, patterns and symmetries.

Music and rhythm

Music is an ideal medium for children and being involved with it encourages the whole personality of a child. In music, children can tell one another things, express their feelings, work through emotional stress, develop a feel for rhythm and movement, acquire linguistic and cognitive skills and gather social experience which bonds. Our education plan includes a variety of musical activities including, for example, singing songs, listening to a sound story, dancing together and trying out instruments.

Creativity and imagination

At a very early stage, children have a need to express themselves through creative design and free painting. They are fascinated by designing something themselves – it makes them proud and allows them to experience competence. At the same time, creative and imaginative design fosters fine motor skills and cognitive development. In the context of our educational plan we offer the children numerous opportunities to realize themselves in a creative and imaginative way. We provide a variety of materials and encourage the children to give their creativity free rein.

Exercise

Adequate exercise is essential for the healthy development of a child. Children have a natural urge to move around and they derive pleasure from it. Exercise contributes to a positive body image and fosters cognitive, emotional and social development. For this reason, we offer the children numerous opportunities in our education-focused offerings to live out their urge to move. Special exercise equipment made of natural materials and developed especially for early years applications motivates even the youngest children to get important experience with motor skills. We build exercise building sites, dance together, drive around in little "Bobby" cars, play and do gymnastics with balls and let off steam in the garden.

Health and hygiene

Fundamental attitudes, behaviours and habits for a healthy/unhealthy life are laid down in the very early years. We therefore place a high priority on teaching the children health-conscious behaviour and age-appropriate personal hygiene at an early stage, both in the group routine and as part of our education-focused offering. We thus support the children in listening to the signals their bodies give them, for example in developing a feel for what does them good and how to deal appropriately with stress and strain. We teach the children simple relaxation techniques and skills for looking after their own bodies, such as cleaning teeth and washing hands. Diet is of particular importance. We join the children in enjoying food as an pleasure involving all the senses and teach them about how foods are produced and about a healthy diet.

7. Example day

Time	Drop-off and pick-up times	Crèche
7.30 am – 8.30 am	Drop-off time	Arrive in groups Free play and initial educational offerings
8.30 am – 12.30 pm	Core educational time	Greeting ritual/morning circle time Shared breakfast Directed free play Educational offerings in groups and in workshops Rest phases Playtime and fun in the garden Excursions and exploratory outings Lunch, clean teeth, start of rest/sleep phase
12.30 pm – 2 pm	Pick-up time/drop-off time	Sleep and rest time, quiet activities (keeping themselves busy quietly, reading aloud, imaginary journeys, relaxation island)
2 pm – 5 pm (Friday – 4 pm)	Educational time Individual pick-up times	Afternoon snack Singing circle Directed free play Educational offerings in groups and in workshops Rest phases Play and fun in the garden Excursions and exploratory outings

8. Annual planning

At the beginning of every year, the education team develops an annual plan for each crèche year and agrees it with the parents' committee. The annual plan is made available to all parents and serves as a basis for the activities planned in a year. Based on the educational concept, the annual plan includes educational focal points, special activities such as a health week or creativity week, events and festivals such as the lantern festival, Christmas celebrations and the summer party. The educational focal points are developed by the facility manager in close collaboration with education professionals and may vary from year to year.

9. Acclimatization

Starting at crèche is a special event for children and their parents and represents the beginning of a new stage in life. For many children, and also for mothers and fathers, it is frequently the first time they are to be separated for an extended period and this is very much associated with ambivalent emotions.

To make the transition to crèche successful, we put a lot of emphasis at Minihaus München on a careful, step-by-step acclimatization process. It is especially important for us to work

closely with parents and to fine-tune the acclimatization phase so that it suits the needs of children and parents as well as possible. The acclimatization process implemented at Minihaus München is based on the INFANS acclimatization model which taps into the latest research into bonding and which has proved to work very well in practice.

The child is acclimatized in a total of four phases which combined usually take between two and four weeks.

- For the first few days, the mother or father stays in the group room for about two hours and then takes the child home with them.
- A first attempt at separation is usually made on Day 4. The mother or father leaves the group room for a short period, but remains in the immediate vicinity. If this initial separation attempt is successful, times without parental contact are gradually increased over the next few days. The parents still remain nearby, however.
- If the first attempt at separation shows that the child needs a little more time, a further attempt is not made until a few days later. If the child can then be consoled by staff, the periods without mother or father are then gradually increased over the next few days. Parents remain nearby.
- In the final phase, the times for which the child stays at Minihaus München without his or her mother or father are extended up to the desired booking times. Acclimatization has been completed successfully when the child has got used to his or her new environment, has built up a relationship of trust with staff and participates in group activities with enjoyment and curiosity.

The acclimatization phases described are by way of an example. Each child brings his or her own individuality, particular needs and different prior experience. We aim to match acclimatization to a child's needs as accurately as possible and at the same time, to harmonize it with family requirements. The type and duration of acclimatization can accordingly vary dramatically from child to child.

We collaborate closely with parents during the acclimatization process. Parents are given important information about a typical acclimatization process in advance. From the first day, there is regular discussion with parents. This serves on the one hand to indicate to the child that there is a close, trusting relationship between staff and mother/father and on the other, to exchange important information. An acclimatization questionnaire, which staff discuss with parents in the first few days, supports this process. Once the acclimatization phase is complete, a detailed conversation is conducted with parents about the successful acclimatization period and further childcare expectations.

10. Collaboration with parents

Successful care, education and upbringing in the crèche is only possible in close collaboration with parents. Parents are the experts where their child is concerned and we see ourselves as service-providers giving parents the best possible support in looking after their children.

The building up of a partnership of trust between parents and Minihaus München to educate and bring up children therefore has key importance in our educational concept. Within the context of an actively and flexibly designed educational partnership with parents, it is our aim to specify childcare objectives, provide parents with comprehensive information about the daily routine and the development of their child at Minihaus München and about our educational offerings, to offer advice on developmental and educational issues if required and to involve parents in the Minihaus routine in an appropriate manner.

This intensive collaboration with parents takes place on different levels.

Discussions with parents: numerous discussions with parents take place before we start childcare and during the process, e.g. information discussions before a contract is signed, the discussion prior to acclimatization, detailed acclimatization discussion, discussion once acclimatization is complete, a quick word when children are dropped off or picked up, regular development discussions and discussions of specific situations at parents' request if there is a particular need for a meeting and advice.

In addition to the facility manager and education professionals, the Head of Education at Minihaus München is also happy to be contact for parents.

Parents' evenings: regular parents' evenings are held. These parents' evenings serve on the one hand to elect the parents' committee and on the other, to give parents the opportunity of getting to know one another, of obtaining comprehensive information about the group routine, educational offerings and current developments and of exchanging information with education professionals. In addition to these parents' evenings, we hold information and training events at regular intervals on a variety of subjects, such as language development, preventive dental care, a healthy diet, dealing with childhood infections and illnesses etc.

Parents' events: in the course of a crèche year, a variety of events takes place to which parents are warmly invited and/or in the preparation and delivery of which they can be involved. A few examples include our lantern festival, joint Christmas parties, Mum and Dad days, joint trips, family days, summer parties etc.

Parents' information: in addition to discussions with parents, parents' evenings and parents' events, we also consider it important to keep parents informed in writing about important subjects and developments. We do so via letters/e-mails to parents, notices (and in some cases photos) on topics such as our annual plan, weekly education plan, workshops, educational activities, current events, the occurrence of infectious diseases etc.

Parents' committee: the parents' committee is elected at the start of each crèche year. The parents' committee provides support for fostering communication between parents and the facility/proprietor, for training and educational work, for the organization and running of parents' events and festivals, for making contact in the social sphere and for cooperation with local primary schools.

Parent survey: as part of our quality development measures, we conduct a written parent survey once a year. The results of the parent survey help reflect the quality of our

work and develop it further if appropriate. We put up a notice to inform parents of the results of the survey.

11. Observation and recording of development

To enable us to support the educational processes of the children entrusted to our care to the best of our ability, our education professionals carry out specific observation of development and record it. We use structured and scientifically validated observation processes for this, such as the development tables of Prof. Kuno Beller. We use our observations as sources for our professional discourse, for planning our educational activities and for preparing development discussions with parents.

With the involvement of both child and parents, we also put together a detailed portfolio for each child, a tangible record of the child's development including photos, learning histories and examples of his or her work. The children are allowed to take the portfolio home once they have completed their time at Minihaus München.

12. Diet

Parents can be confident that their children are given an age-appropriate, healthy and varied diet at Minihaus München. All food and drink is provided by Minihaus, taking another burden away from parents who do not need to send their children in with anything.

Our dietary concept is closely linked to the promotion of health and educating children about diet. We specifically address these areas in our daily educational routine, enabling the children to get to know and distinguish between different kinds of food, to acquire knowledge about healthy eating, to enjoy their food with all their senses, to distinguish between hunger and appetite, to be involved in the preparation of meals and to develop a positive, enjoyable culture of eating. Eating together in the group has a key role here.

Daily food and drink consists of breakfast, a hot lunch and an afternoon snack. Light snacks like fruit or yogurt are also available to the children during the day. Water and tea are offered as drinks.

Breakfast, the afternoon snack and light snacks are freshly prepared in our facilities. The fresh foods are ordered from a supplier of foods from certified organic growers. Lunch is ordered deep-frozen from a certified supplier of high-quality children's/baby food, heated to retain vitamins and supplemented with fresh ingredients like salad and vegetables. As we look after children from a variety of cultures, we do not serve meals which include pork.

At parents' request, it is also possible to offer vegetarian food. To the extent that it is logistically possible, we take account of existing food intolerances and allergies when catering.

Our facility managers receive regular training from a dietician to ensure a healthy and varied diet.

13. Personal hygiene

Children are included in all personal hygiene and care activities at an early stage to suit their age and stage of development. In this way, we encourage them to take age-appropriate responsibility and to be independent. At the forefront of care activities are social and emotional contact and the aim of developing a natural, health-conscious and responsible attitude to their own bodies, to cleanliness and to hygiene.

Personal hygiene and the changing of nappies is performed sensitively to suit the individual needs of the children in question. We see nappy-changing, in particular, as an important social interaction which involves not only caring activities, but also creates close contact between staff and child which is of great importance in emotional, cognitive and language development. Cleaning teeth, washing hands and other personal hygiene activities are also part of the regular routine and are practised with the children in stages.

14. Networking and cooperation

At Minihaus München in Fürstenrieder Straße 267, we think it is very important to open up fields of learning and experience to the children which reflect the world in which they live and to enable them to get to know their social and spatial environment. As a result, we make a variety of trips and excursions with the crèche groups. These include, for example, seeking out nearby playgrounds, nature reserves and parks, trips on public transport, visiting shops, business and public facilities such as libraries, museums, the theatre, the fire station, the police station and so on. In the course of these activities, children discover the world and gradually learn to find their way around their environment. This also promotes development of their independence.

We also consider it important to network and cooperate with relevant local institutions, facilities and services. The aim is to maintain an exchange of information and specialisms with our cooperation partners so that we have access to valuable skills and resources if necessary. This can be especially helpful if parents need particular advice or are seeking particular educational or childcare options for their children.

We maintain cooperations with the department of education and sport, with the department of health and the environment, with the municipal youth welfare department and with Sendling-Westpark social services and employment department, with educational advice centres, with paediatric practices, with early intervention centres, with speech therapy and ergotherapy practices, with specialist medical and psychosocial services, with the local library, with swim and ski schools and with a variety of cultural institutions.

15. Staff

Minihaus München places great emphasis on employing motivated, satisfied and professionally qualified staff. This is a fundamental prerequisite for implementing our high-quality, finely-tuned educational methodology.

Overall management of education professionals is the responsibility of the Head of Education at Minihaus München. The Head of Education has outstanding specialist skills and a proven track record in both career and management. He/she is responsible for quality assurance and development in the whole of the education area. In this connection, he/she supports and coaches our facility managers on site and is available to all members of staff for specialist advice. He/she also implements qualification measures for education professionals at regular intervals, such as topic-specific courses or education days, for example. All our staff furthermore have the opportunity of attending high-quality in-service training events at our in-house training academy "*Feinschliff*".

Our facility managers are education professionals with above-average specialist skills and several years' professional experience. They take part in internal management conferences at regular intervals to develop manager potential and assure quality. They also have the opportunity of attending high-quality certification courses for managers at our training academy. To enable our facility managers to concentrate completely on the areas of staff management, education and collaboration with parents when on site, they are largely relieved of administrative tasks by our central administration department.

Childcare staff consist of nursery teachers, nursery nurses, nursery teachers in their probationary year, those on work experience and other staff. The number of staff working in a group exceeds the ratio required by law and allows us to implement a high-quality, fine-tuned education-focused approach. Regular team meetings, subject meetings, staff appraisals, specific induction of new staff, education days to develop our concept and our teams and joint activities to build team spirit are important components of our staff development concept.

To enable our education professionals to devote themselves entirely to work with the children, they are relieved of work which is not directly linked to educational activities by housekeeping and kitchen staff, by our technical service and by cleaners. We also have floating staff to cover staff shortages in particular nurseries.

16. Group size and composition

Our crèche groups at Fürstenrieder Straße 267 have up to 12 children aged from nine weeks to three years. The children are looked after in groups of mixed ages and genders. This gives them the opportunity of acquiring a variety of social experience with older and younger children of both sexes within their groups. For children who grow up without siblings at home, in particular, this is the chance to gain valuable experience with children of a different age and acquire important social skills.

At the same time, we ensure that if at all possible, every child has enough playmates to suit his or her stage of development, gender and age.

17. Opening times, days we are closed

Our crèche groups at Fürstenrieder Straße 267 are open from Monday to Thursday from 7.30 am to 5 pm. On Friday, the groups are open from 7.30 am to 4 pm.

We offer full-day places, morning places and afternoon places with flexible booking times to suit requirements. It is also possible to book individual weekdays. Our variety of educational activities is offered in both the mornings and the afternoons (see Item 8, example day). We do not accept drop-offs and pick-ups between 8.30 am and 12.30 pm when the majority of children is present to ensure that educational work is not disturbed.

Our facility at Fürstenrieder Straße 267 is closed in the Christmas holidays, for three weeks in the summer holidays and on two days which fall between public holidays and weekends. We are also closed for two days a year for concept development days with education staff. We give parents plenty of notice in writing of the firm dates when we are closed.

18. Child protection

As proprietors of childcare facilities, we are subject to the regulations of German federal child protection legislation. We take very seriously the mandate formulated in this legislation to protect children whose mental or physical health is at risk. Our aim is to do everything to ensure that the children's wellbeing is guaranteed at all times or to detect potential risks to a child's wellbeing at an early stage and eliminate them. In this connection, we collaborate closely with parents, advice centres and, if necessary, with the relevant specialists at the youth welfare department.

We also ensure that our staff receive regular training in this area and that their awareness is raised. In the process, we can also make use of the variety of skills and experience of our partner company, *Kinderhaus München*, which has been running out-of-school sessions for special needs children in Munich for decades.

As already described in the section entitled "Educational principles", we place particular emphasis on encouraging children and their parents to get involved from the outset and to give them the opportunity of participating in the educational routine at Minihaus München on their own terms. This gives children a variety of positive experiences of perceived self-efficacy and autonomy right from the start, and thus fosters long-term development of self-confidence and self-assurance. This in turn enables the children to develop into personalities who are aware of their rights and who feel secure and courageous enough to stand up for those rights, and those of others, in an appropriate way.

For us, participation also means our staff regularly examining their educational approaches and constantly asking themselves which situations children can participate in. We accordingly understand our participation concept as a continuous process with the aim of developing step by step opportunities for participation by the children entrusted to our care and of anchoring those opportunities in our structure.

Our complaints management process is closely linked to our participation concept. Minihaus München considers it of paramount importance that its facilities have an atmosphere which makes it easy to make a complaint and that all parents are confident of being allowed to express complaints at any time and also know whom they can contact. If children and their parents express complaints, they must experience being taken seriously, realize that they will not sustain any disadvantage from having complained and obtain a swift response to their complaint.

Minihaus München views every complaint as an opportunity to examine the quality of childcare in its facilities and if appropriate, to introduce any measures necessary for improvement. Complaints are accordingly an important component of our quality development process.

19. Quality development and quality assurance

Minihaus München considers consistent quality development and quality assurance of paramount importance. We aim to examine the quality of our offerings and services regularly, to identify potential for improvement at an early stage and to introduce suitable measures to develop quality.

Feedback, suggestions and criticism from parents are especially important to us. They help us reflect on our work and continue developing. This also includes carrying out and evaluating our annual parent surveys.

Intense exchange with our staff is also very important to enable us to take up ideas and suggestions, allowing these to be incorporated in continued structural and conceptual development.

A key component of our quality assurance is the intensive looking after of our facilities by our Head of Education and the holding of regular specialist conferences with our management staff.

As part of our quality management system, we define and record all the processes relevant to the care, education and upbringing of children, checking them regularly for effectiveness. We are supported in this by our scientific adviser and by our quality management officer.

Our in-house training academy also allows us to provide all staff and managers with high-quality in-service and further training opportunities.

As a member of the *Dachverband Bayerischer Träger von Kindertageseinrichtungen* [Bavarian umbrella organization for proprietors of childcare facilities], we are involved in inter-proprietor quality discussions and in-service training events.

The points mentioned are a selection of our measures to assure and develop quality. However, these can only become fully effective in the context of the motivation which drives our work every day:

To provide parents with the best possible high-quality support in caring for, educating and bringing up their children and to create places in which children feel safe, at home and secure, enabling them to develop into healthy, happy, self-confident personalities with a love of learning.

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December 2015, Minihaus München
