

Preschool Information



The German International School Sydney enables your child to live a fulfilled life in tomorrow's modern, fast changing and challenging global society.



German International School Sydney
(German School Johannes Gutenberg Limited by Guarantee)

33 Myoora Road, Terrey Hills NSW 2084
Phone: (02) 9485 1900; Fax: (02) 9485 1999
Email: info@germanschoolsydney.com
www.germanschoolsydney.com

ABN: 63 003 484 204, CRICOS Provider ID: 02379D

Accredited German School Abroad
Registered with NSW Board of Studies

PRESCHOOL INFORMATION

The preschool is attended by children between three and five years of age. After preschool they progress to Kindergarten, which is part of the official school system in Australia.

We recommend that children attend five days per week but it is also possible to enroll children for three days (Mondays to Wednesdays) or two days (Thursdays and Fridays) only.

All staff members are bilingual, pedagogically qualified as Staatlich Anerkannte Erzieherin (Kindergarten teacher in Germany) or Early Childhood teacher and have experience teaching in German / European and Australian preschools.

As the preschool is not funded by the German Government all operational costs have to be covered by parent fees. Australian legislation applies (NSW Children's Services Regulation 2004 / Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998).

All staff members are subject to working with children checks / employment screening in accordance with child protection regulations. All parents have access to a copy of the NSW Children's Services Regulation 2004 and the document can also be viewed through the DOCS website www.community.nsw.gov.au. The DOCS Children's Service Advisor (CSA) for our region is Cassandra Wass and she can be contacted on Ph: 94069777.

Prior to your child visiting our preschool you will have to fill out the following forms:

- Enrolment form (Terms & Conditions)
- Emergency contacts
- Consent form for emergencies
- General permission forms
- Membership application form for School Association
- Health form
- Questionnaire

As well as the above we require a copy of your child's immunisation record, visa status and birth certificate / passport.

All emergency contact details have to be checked and updated regularly by parents!

Opening hours are from 8.30am to 3.30pm. We are not permitted to care for school aged children. The school provides an extended hours program for children needing to stay before and after school.

Please always inform us when your child is not coming.

All children have to be signed in and out each day on the appropriate 'sign in' sheets documenting the time they are signed in and out with an accompanying signature of the person responsible for this. **After children have been signed out they are then the responsibility of the person that has collected them.**

Children using the school bus will be given an 'attendance sheet' so that parents can record the time that they board the bus and also sign this in the appropriate place on the 'attendance sheet'. When they leave the preschool in the afternoon a staff member will sign them out recording their time of departure. To ensure we stay in contact with the parents, bus children will carry a communication book with them.

If someone other than you is going to pick up your child, you need to fill out an authorization form at the preschool. The authorised person has to identify him or herself if the staff members do not know him or her using some form of photo identification. In urgent cases you can contact us by telephone if somebody else will be collecting your child.

The Program

We offer a bi-lingual preschool program which is based on an immersion approach. The pedagogical ideas are based on elements of best practice from around the world. We conduct the program in German and English language. Many of our practices are taken from German early childhood curriculums but our work is mainly based on the early years learning framework for Australia (EYLF). We also use the NSW Curriculum Framework/Practice of Relationships as this document recognises the importance of the child as being protagonists and central to the development of the program. It also recognises the importance of relationships that children develop with each other, with staff and the importance of relationships between the centre and families. References are also made to the educational project of Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy within this document, and as this project is a respected model of early childhood education throughout the world much of our work explores practices used there. These include documenting the children's learning and using this documentation to drive and develop the program forward, recognising the contribution that the environment makes to children's learning and the importance of the child both as an individual and group learner.

The daily program is relatively flexible and is shaped around a combination of opportunities to play freely, to participate in guided activities including small group activities, circle times, mealtimes and quiet times. The children's ideas and needs take priority over planned programs and we consider their needs to be of primary importance in forming the day. Questions and inquiries of the children are grasped and used as a means of developing projects (Inquiry based projects). The length and depth in which these projects are explored as well as the direction and shape that they take varies and is dependent upon the children's interests and needs. Everyone working within the preschool setting makes contributions to the documentation of these projects and an important component of the documentation is then to consider which parts of various projects should be documented in children's individual portfolios. The sharing of ideas amongst the staff and time for reflection are important parts of our pedagogical work and occur on a daily basis through the exchange of dialogue as well as within team meetings. In these ways we can ensure that the program offered and the learning environment remains relevant to the needs of the children and also offers opportunities for changing the direction of a project back on course or for developing projects further.

We understand that learning is not only about the acquisition of knowledge and the understanding of various learning theories, but we also consider the importance of the development of social and communication skills as well as personality development with special regards to the development of independence and resilience. These latter aspects of the development of children's personality are important as they will need these in order to successfully handle a world that is full of change.

Children learn and develop best when they feel comfortable, when their needs and wants are considered to be important and they are accepted as individuals.

We recognise that it is important for children to feel competent and that they can do things for themselves. They also learn best when all of their senses are engaged in the learning process and when the program is formulated in an integrated way.

In the preschool there is a day book that is made up of activities and events that have been documented throughout the day. Children that take the bus are given a copy as a form of communication for their parents. The group projects are also documented in the children's individual portfolios and allow for a closer insight into individual children's development and for this reason in depth comments relating to children's individual development are not included in the day book.

Every preschool child has an individual portfolio that follows their development in many different areas as well as conveying their various interests. These portfolios are made up of different types of documentation displaying the children's strengths and capabilities, pictures that they have created, photographs and memories collected from different events and pedagogical comments regarding the individual's development and how aspects of this can be developed further. The children are allowed to keep the portfolios when they leave the preschool (at the end of their time with us) and when both their parents have signed for them as confirmation of having received them.

In preschool we do not have official times set aside for parent/teacher interviews. We leave this open for families to make a time that is suitable for both them and our teaching staff upon request, outside of opening hours. Within these meetings parents have opportunities to discuss the development of their individual child and together with teaching staff formulate pedagogical goals. Aside from these meetings, parents have access to their child's individual portfolio at any time and are encouraged to contribute to these by adding pieces, together with their child, that enhance them (these can be in the form of photographs, drawings, anecdotes etc). We want to support individual families, acknowledge their beliefs and goals and are therefore dependant on effective collaboration.

The first day

The first day will be new and exciting for everyone. You are welcome to stay as long as you like until your child becomes accustomed to the new environment. It is also possible that children stay for only a short period of time on their first day. Sometimes a soft toy can be of great help. Often children prefer to wander around and watch others before they are ready to join in. Please be patient and give your child plenty of time. When your child has settled in and you decide to leave, make sure you say goodbye and that you will return. Then please leave immediately as any delay in departure can upset your child or increase anxiety. From our experience children calm down relatively quickly and do not cry for prolonged periods. Feel free to call us to hear how your child is settling-in. It may be helpful to pick your child up earlier during the first days. Please speak to us about any concerns or questions you might have and don't forget that each child settles in differently. This is why it is so important to take the individual needs into account and we plan an appropriate settling in routine together.

Collaboration with Families

Good cooperation with all families is essential. We appreciate constructive criticism and, if possible, will try to incorporate ideas and wishes into our program. Parents are always welcome to visit or stay for the day and can phone to speak to their child. We have regular parent evenings to give parents the opportunity to get to know each other, share ideas, hear about current preschool issues and communicate their ideas for the program. Wishes for the agenda are collected prior to the meeting. Apart from this we also have parent information evenings with specific topics, the possibility for parents to join the PRC or other committees as parent representatives and special activities like excursions and festivities. All parents are invited to become a candidate for the board of the school.

We are very grateful if parents feel part of the community and are willing to take responsibility for extra work that might be necessary at preschool. Working bees for changing the sand or replacing the soft fall occur regularly and there are usually small mending or repair jobs that need to be done as well. Please put your name down in the list we hang up in the sign-in area if we need help. For excursions, visits to the gym and visits to the library we might need parents to accompany us.

Information will be passed on in the form of letters (please look in your preschool mail folder daily) or through the Gutenberg Post (School newsletter).

You will also find important information including our policies and procedures, the Children's Services Regulations, the NSW Curriculum Framework, the daily group documentation book and a folder with articles about child development or specific themes laid out for you in the sign-in area.

Please approach a staff member if you would like to have copies of policies. In the front cover of the policy folder you will find some yellow post-its on which you can write feed back, comments and proposed changes before attaching it to the specific policy.

Grievances

We are people – we make mistakes!

We take grievances and feedback from our families seriously and use them as opportunities to reflect on our work and make any changes where necessary.

Please speak to us if you have problems, questions or complaints so that we can clarify any misunderstandings or make adjustments. We do urge that you come and speak to us before making an official complaint and usually we are able to assist you and solve any problems. If you do make a complaint we can assure you that this does not affect our behaviour towards children and their families and of course we undertake grievances in a professional manner. If you would like to make a complaint, but have reservations about contacting us, then there are also parent representatives that can be contacted or the school management.

The official grievance policy can be found in our policy folder and will be given to you on request. If you would like to make an official complaint to DOCS (Department of Community Services) the CSA (Children's Service Advisor) for our region is Cassandra Wass and she can be contacted on (02) 94069777.

We also enjoy receiving praise.

Code of Ethics

The Preschool Team has decided to accept the code put together by the ECA (Early Childhood Australia). The code can be viewed under www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au and it is also displayed in the preschool.

Concept for language learning

Young children learn when there are connections made to their everyday lives and when they are provided with authentic situations. It makes little sense for children at this age to learn language in an abstract way or to be offered worksheets. Bilingual children learn their second language through play in real and authentic situations in which they have opportunities to speak and listen with others. Our goal is to promote both languages in our setting in which we create situations where the children have a need to communicate in these languages (German/English).

It is recommended that children who do not speak German as their mother tongue at home attend the preschool for five days so that they have the opportunity to use the language as much as possible in an authentic setting. We also recommend that families speak with their children in the language that is their mother-tongue (not the second language), as it is important for children learning a second language to have their mother-tongue as a strong foundation. The ability to be able to communicate in many languages is an immense enrichment for children. Children that experience difficulties with language should not be discouraged from learning more than one language and it is especially important in these situations that parents maintain their home language with children experiencing difficulties – again so that a strong basis is formed.

Many children need time before they actively use their second language. Often they are acquiring the second language passively and beginning to formulate understandings about how to use it in certain situations. The time that it takes children to start using a language actively varies between individuals, but the emphasis here is most often they do need time and space before the language becomes active.

Nutrition and Meal times

The parents will provide all meals. Please remember to separate morning tea and lunch into different containers so that we can refrigerate the food. **It is important to choose only healthy and nutritious food** e.g. fruit, vegetables, cereals, yogurt or sandwiches. Sweets, cake or crisps are only allowed on special occasions when they are shared with the other children. Please approach us if you would like more information. Filtered drinking water will be supplied throughout the day.

The children can decide when they would like to sit down for morning tea. This gives them the opportunity to make choices, be independent and enjoy their meal in a small group of friends. Some children prefer to eat early while others who may have had a large breakfast are not hungry until later. All children who have not eaten by 10am will be reminded by the teachers. At lunchtime all children sit and eat together. We find it very important to create a pleasant atmosphere during mealtimes and want the children to perceive food as something enjoyable. We will not force a child to eat. Food that is left over will be brought home in the lunchboxes so that parents can see what their child ate during the day.

Please note that the Australian food handling regulations prevent us from heating meals in the microwave oven.

Birthdays

Birthdays are very special and are, of course, celebrated. Every birthday is planned individually with regard to the children's wishes. If you would like us to take photos or videos, you are welcome to leave your camera at the preschool on that day.

Toys and personal items

Your child is welcome to bring toys or other items from home if he or she wants to share them with others. Please note that we will not take any responsibilities for lost or damaged items, so consider carefully which toys you will allow your child to bring. Breakable or valuable items are not recommended. Should any problems concerning toys/personal items arise, we will use these situations as opportunities for learning and facilitate discussions with the children – often encouraging them to develop problem solving skills. Depending on the results of these discussions we may ask that your child leave the toy or item at home.

Clothing

At preschool it is important that your child feels comfortable and can play without restrictions. Please send your child suitably dressed in practical clothes. Good clothes are not advisable!!! Slippers should be slip-proof. Accidents can happen and that is why each child should keep an extra set of clothes at preschool. In addition, your child also needs a hat and so that there is no mistake in identifying items all clothing should be labeled with a name.

Everyone has a different perception of feeling cold or warm and therefore we let the children decide for themselves when they take their jumpers off or put them on. We ask them whether they would like to put them on or off and help when they need help. We will not dress or undress children against their will. Children are not allowed to play without a hat, so it is important to bring one each day. Long sleeved shirts and wide-brimmed hats offer more protection from the sun. Please also ensure that clothing, in particular hats, have no cords that could be a strangulation hazard.

Painting, messy play, play dough, experimenting, crawling, eating, playing, all this can be quite messy! That is why you should never send your child to preschool wearing good clothing! The paint we purchase is supposed to be washable, but apparently the manufacturers seem to have a different perception of cleanliness because very often stains will remain visible. It is best to soak the clothes in soapy water prior to washing them. We have sufficient aprons available at preschool but we have also experienced that more children smear paint on their clothing while putting on or taking off the apron than they usually do while actually painting. For this reason we strongly recommend you to dress your child in old or already stained clothing!

Sun protection

Australia has one of the highest skin cancer rates worldwide and therefore we take sun protection very seriously. On the other hand we acknowledge that the use of sunscreen imposes a risk of its own and many children develop allergies. That is why we prefer parents to use their own brands, however if you do not provide a sunscreen we will use the brand that we have in the preschool. If you do supply us with your own brand then you must obtain an MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheet) from the manufacturer because we are obliged under the OHS regulations (Occupational Health and Safety) to have these forms showing the chemical analysis.

Please apply sunscreen on your child's exposed skin every morning. We will renew the protection if we go outside in the afternoons. Remember that a hat is compulsory while playing outside. Please read our 'Sun Protection Policy' in the policy folder.

Sickness and Accidents

Sick children are not to attend preschool. Parents of children who are unwell are encouraged to keep their children at home. Please inform us immediately if your child has contracted a communicable disease so that we can inform other families and take appropriate measures. After your child has recovered, you are required to bring a Doctor's note. We have a chart displayed

showing the length of time children must be excluded after certain illnesses. Children not immunised will be unable to attend preschool until any outbreak of the disease is over. We strongly recommend keeping all immunisations up to date! In those instances where a child would fall ill while at preschool, the staff will inform the parents or the emergency contact person immediately and ask them to pick up the child. In the case of an accident, staff will administer first aid and notify the parents. If in severe cases and if nobody can be contacted, an ambulance will be called to ensure the child receives medical aid. Ambulance and hospital costs are to be paid by the parents. Medication will only be administered if a medical practitioner prescribes it or/ and parents have filled out the appropriate authorization form.

Please read all policies in the parent folder relating to medical issues!

We fill out accident report forms for every accident that occurs on the premises, even if no first aid is necessary. Parents must sign the accident reports and will receive a copy to take home. These accident forms are gathered and evaluated to identify safety hazards which must be dealt with. If you should see any safety hazards please let us know so that we can address them accordingly.

Rest times

All children who need a rest after lunch have the possibility to do so. Children who do not wish to lie down have the possibility to play quietly in the room. Sheets, cushions and blankets are to be brought from home and taken back regularly for washing if you would like your child to sleep. Please note that we will never put a child to sleep against his or her will.

Library

We make regular visits to the school library. Each child can independently choose a book, video or DVD and take it home for one week. Please ensure that the children look after the books and learn to be responsible for them. Any library materials that are lost or damaged must be paid for.

Child Care Benefit

Families who have permanent resident status or are Australian Citizens might be eligible to claim Child Care Benefit. This is dependant on income and work hours. You will have to take your receipts to the Family Assistance Office and complete the relevant forms. As we are not a long day care facility, the Child Care Rebate does not apply.

Child protection

All staff members are mandatory reporters under the child protection legislation and are required to report all suspected incidents of child abuse and maltreatment of children. We encourage all parents to contact the Department of Community Services if they suspect any child being at risk of harm.

All staff members of the school as well as all volunteers and prac students are subject to a Working with children check / screening.

DoCS Helpline for mandatory reporters: 133 627

for general public: 132 111

Hand washing procedures

We regularly practice correct hand washing procedures with the children. Before and after mealtimes, after touching body fluids, after using the toilet and after outside play we make sure that all children wash their hands properly. Please do the same when you bring your child in the mornings and before going home in the afternoons. This is to reduce risk of infections and to establish routines that help make hand washing a regular habit. It also helps to ensure children know exactly how to wash them properly. Correct hand washing procedures are displayed in the wash room.

Confidentiality

All staff members have to, by law, observe strict confidentiality regarding all matters concerning your child and family. If we deem it necessary to contact a specialist, therapist or other authority regarding your child's development we will always seek prior permission in writing.

We openly display and publish photos at the preschool, in our photo albums, in the year book and on our website and therefore we need permission of the parents that their child can appear in these.

Today many centres ban parents from bringing photo or video cameras or they only permit parents to photograph their own child. We find this sad because the children will not have pictures as mementoes of their friends at preschool. Group activities could not be photographed either. We therefore ask parents to sign a permission form on which they permit other parents to take pictures of their children. If you are not comfortable with this or have reasons why you would prefer your child not to be photographed, leave this form blank. In this case staff will ensure that your child will not appear on any pictures or video recordings.

Late Pick ups

We are one of the few centres that do not collect late pick up fees and we hope for your cooperation to ensure that it can stay this way.

We are aware of the fact that unforeseen circumstances can occasionally prevent parents from arriving on time. We do not want parents to feel bad if this has happened once or twice but please keep in mind that we have to ensure appropriate staff ratios and that the preschool teachers have other private and professional commitments too.

Please always call us immediately to let us know if you will be late!

In the event that we do not hear from parents and children are not picked up then we are obliged to contact the police.

Transition to school

Children that are of a suitable age to start school and are ready developmentally make the transition to Kindergarten at the end of the school year. Sometimes there are situations where it is not clear cut as to whether a child should start and in these situations we meet with parents to discuss the best possible options for the child. In making these decisions we consider our philosophy, the needs of the child and we keep in mind that the welfare of the child is of uppermost importance and takes priority in any decision making.

Our transition concept is unique in that it involves collaboration with primary school colleagues as a means of preparing the children for the next year. The children have opportunities to work with a support person in the preschool throughout the year and then transition with this teacher into the Kindergarten. This allows a gentle transition with a familiar person that children can utilise for assistance and support throughout their year in Kindergarten. Older primary school children are also involved in the process through a 'Buddy System' and are there as a support to the children as they start Kindergarten.

Philosophy

We believe that:

-Children are competent, resourceful and capable of directing their learning. They act as co-constructors of knowledge and actively seek to make meaning of the world.

-Children have rights as protagonists in their own learning and rights as citizens of a global society. They are each unique individuals that deserve care and attention in focusing on their interests and strengths.

-Children's ideas and actions help to drive the program in the form of topics for research, observation, documentation and interpretation.

-Children have a desire to interact and communicate with others as a means of constructing their knowledge and formulating their ideas. They benefit from opportunities to express their thoughts as well as to listen to others point of view within authentic situations.

-Children communicate using many different 'languages' as a means of representing their ideas and co-constructing their knowledge. Engaging children in the processes of discussion, representing ideas using graphic formation or using some form of symbolic language, such as the use of drawing materials, paint or clay provides opportunities for children to develop concepts further and to become involved in problem solving.

-Providing children with a range of different media and materials and encouraging them to engage in their use in a guided way allows them to explore the materials and to develop their understandings about their world. The co-construction of knowledge does not come about by involving children in the use of stencils, rather involving children in response activities using media allows them to work in a creative and imaginative way where their problem-solving skills are also utilised.

-Opportunities to make mistakes and to experience conflict provide the basis for authentic growth. Children learn from opportunities to work together to try to solve problems or to work through situations where conflict has occurred.

-The environment plays an important role in supporting the children's investigations and acts as 'third teacher'. The organisation of the preschool setting in relation to how it is arranged and the materials within provide children with opportunities to embark on constructing and co-constructing their ideas and knowledge further. The environment allows children to work both collectively in small groups and individually and allows children to make these choices in a self-directed way.

-Children learn a second language in authentic situations where they have opportunities to engage in listening to and using the language. They develop

new vocabulary and sentence structures by having opportunities to engage with people that speak this language as their mother-tongue. Often this language acquisition is not observable to begin with, but after having adequate time and opportunities to interact using the language and in an environment where mistakes are encouraged, then children begin to take risks and utilise this second language in the preschool environment.

-Children with special needs also have rights and the right to have these needs supported by everybody within the setting including the support of specialist services where necessary eg: Speech and language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists.

-Respecting diversity means valuing and reflecting the practices, values and beliefs of families. We honour the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families. We value children's different capacities and abilities and respect differences in families' home lives.

-Children feel supported when their family is encouraged to become involved in their education and when parents are made to feel welcome and co-collaborators in decisions relating to them.

-Parents feel supported when they are well informed and listened to and when they have opportunities to meet with other parents and teachers in ways and times that foster real collaboration.

We aim to achieve this through:

-Creating an environment where children are encouraged to take risks, to express their potential, abilities and curiosity.

-Providing a challenging program using both provocations and ideas that evolve as part of the collaborative process between the children, adults and the environment as well as curriculums from both Australia (National Early Learning Framework) and Germany.

-Encouraging children to realise their potential as partners in the leaning process and protagonists in developing new ideas and projects by involving them in the process of developing ideas for research, observation, documentation and interpretation.

-Interacting with children in respectful ways that encourage them to develop their concept of self, their identities, autonomy and security and to know that their identities and privacy are respected.

-Allowing for opportunities for children to interact as part of a group, as well as for opportunities to work in an individual capacity.

-Evaluating the physical environment on a regular basis and making decisions about the arrangement and the materials within, in collaboration with the children, staff and families.

-Ensuring that the physical environment is not only safe and hygienic but that it challenges children to inquire into their world in real and authentic ways.

-Using situations where conflict has occurred as a learning opportunity by encouraging children to talk through or think about the situation and develop strategies and ideas as a means of encouraging problem solving.

-Providing children with opportunities and materials to interact with their environment such as use of light and shadow, mirrors and projected images (such as using an OHP) provide many provocations and possibilities such as opportunities to investigate, explore, play and to make-meaning of the world as well as to explore a range of concepts in an integrated way (art, science, creativity, language use).

-Providing children with a range of interesting creative materials and media including a wide range of drawing implements, collage materials and paper products in varying shapes, weights, colours and textures, a variety of different types of paint, clay, wire.

-Ensuring that children have access to technology that can be used as a tool in enabling them to explore their world and extend their investigations and ideas further.

-Respecting the diversity of families and communities, and the aspirations they hold for children and in doing so foster children's motivation to learn and reinforce their sense of themselves as competent learners. This involves making curriculum decisions that uphold all children's rights to have their cultures, identities, abilities and strengths acknowledged and valued, and respond to the complexity of children's and families' lives.

-Encouraging the development of a second language (German or English) by providing opportunities to interact with native language speakers where models of the language can be heard in an environment where risk taking is encouraged.

-Encouraging families to become involved in the processes involved in various different parts of the preschool from project work to co-contributing to children's individual portfolios.

-Providing opportunities for parents to meet other parents and teachers in ways and times that meet their needs.

-Providing opportunities for staff to become involved in training and through collaborating both on a daily basis and in formal staff meetings.

-Referring children with special needs to appropriate services in consultation with parents.

Wherever specialist assistance is then utilised, then conferring with specialists in order to support child with special needs further.