



Pre-School Concept – CAREHOOD

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Pre-School concept - CAREHOOD

1. Preface

In principle, pre-school education for every child at **CAREHOOD** begins with his or her first day at our school where he or she will be allocated to a relatively large group of children. At this stage, the child is already separated from his or her parents and is in the company of educationalists within an unfamiliar environment.

This environment needs to contain a diverse selection of play opportunities, activities and diverse challenges. During periods of free play, children seek out play mates and decide what they would like to play. During the daily routine at the school, the child will need to comply with certain rules and take part in the activities organised by the teachers. Within the group itself, children experience areas of freedom and compulsion, friendships and conflicts and success and failure. All of these need to be dealt with.

CAREHOOD does not offer typical pre-schooling, the period between nursery school and primary school. Such activities (concentrated on the last year before a child begins school) would begin to take effect too late and would not be far-reaching enough. Instead, pre-school education begins at the nursery school and takes place in a focussed and planned manner across all areas on a daily basis.

2. Readiness for school

Seven essential factors determine whether a child is ready for school or not:

- 2.1. physical development;
- 2.2. development of motor skills;
- 2.3. development of perceptive and cognitive skills;
- 2.4. development of the memory and concentration limit;
- 2.5. development of language;
- 2.6. development of motivation;
- 2.7. development of a child's personality.

2.1 Physical readiness to begin school/school entry maturity

Before beginning school, a child is examined and the status of his or her physical development is established by a doctor.

Physical development is largely dependent on biological maturing processes (first growth spurt). First growth spurt refers to the proportional decrease in the core body length compared to a corresponding proportional increase in the length of its extremities. The waist, previously cylindrical, becomes narrower and the shoulders wider. We also see a so-called S-curvature to the spine, a larger and more marked preponderance of the lower part of the face and a corresponding recession of the high-shaped forehead of a small child whilst motor skills become much more controlled compared to before. The average height and weight of a child in Germany beginning school at the age of 6 should be 118 +/- 11 cm and 21 kg +/- 4.5 kg respectively.

2.2 Development of motor skills

The status of development of a child's motor skills depends on the development of the nerve system, bone growth and muscles. A distinction is drawn between gross motor skills (bodily control) and fine motor skills (the ability to perform movements).

The status of development of a child's gross motor skills, such as walking, climbing steps, standing on one leg, catching a ball and so forth, is important. Lack of development in this area can often trigger social behaviour problems. Clumsy and ham-fisted children are often teased and neglected by their classmates. This may lead to anxiety within this functional area and to aggressive social behaviour.

The status of development of a child's fine motor skills is also a prerequisite for successful attendance at school. The whole of the process of learning to write is based on the fine motor skill function.

Progress of motor skills can be observed in such activities as painting, handicrafts, sticking, cutting things out etc.

2.3 Development of perceptive and cognitive skills

In order to be able to follow initial teaching successfully, a child will need to be able to recognise and differentiate between such aspects as colours, shapes and sizes. He or she must be able to identify objects as small, large, round, square etc. and also needs to be capable of recognising the reciprocal relationships between these objects and align them correctly. Up to five elements should be involved (e.g. comparing, sorting, making).

Visual motor coordination skills and sight are also of significance. Such abilities relate to classification and to the understanding and reproducing of shapes. These are important skills which a child can practise, meaning that any minor shortcomings can be addressed by the teaching process.

Cognitive and perceptive skills are closely related. A good level of general intellectual motivation exerts a positive and reinforcing effect on other skills such as concentration, stamina, attitude to work etc.

Cognitive skills are revealed in the way a child recognises relationships and the validity of rules and through free and structured language work material (e.g. recognising the missing elements within patterns, understanding or completing picture stories etc).

2.4 Memory and concentration (attitude to work)

Children successively develop their optical and acoustic memory whilst still infants. This supports intellectual skills, and memory later assists in the completion of intellectual work.

Learning and work at school require a minimum degree of awareness of the task at hand and of stamina. School-based learning is not possible unless a child possesses the ability to devote his or her voluntary attention for a significant period of time (several minutes) to a task set. Children's attitude to work is revealed by the degree of stamina they display and by the precision they exercise in working their way through a child-appropriate exercise or game. Attentiveness and the ability to concentrate are demonstrated by such factors as whether a child can trace or redraw a figure he or she has been shown (using a stencil pattern or similar device), whether he or she can renarrate a short story, whether he or she can keep track of the names mentioned in a picture story or whether he or she can remain occupied for a significant period of time with a puzzle or memory game etc.

2.5 Development of language

The faculty of speech (the ability to speak, listen and decode) is required at both pre-school and at school itself. A child needs to assimilate, explain, pass on and represent information. This also includes the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with a range of (discourse) partners (social aspect). Linguistic behaviour and power of expression are also governed by environmental factors and emotional mood (e.g. insecurity, fear). Initial teaching will support and balance the stage of linguistic development, which each child has reached.

Linguistic development is particularly closely linked to the development of intellectual skills. Thought is expressed through language in the form of quiet, thoughtful speech. Children starting school have an active and passive vocabulary of approximately 2,500 words. The school will expect a child to be able to understand simple texts (passive vocabulary), tell a story coherently, observe basic sentence structures, be able to listen and be able to follow instructions.

2.6 Development of motivation

So-called 'the motivation-to-achieve', meaning making and effort to increase one's own capabilities in all activities and maintain as high a level of performance as possible, is -particularly important for school learning and work. 'The Motivation to-achieve' begins to develop when a child is aged between 3 ½ and 4 ½. It is critical whether children learn to perceive their successes or failures as the product of their efforts and endeavours, as a product of chance or as a product of their own talents. Performance based on ability and effort generates increased motivation and greater self-confidence. It is essential for success at school that a child should be able to dedicate a certain amount of attention to tasks set and find such tasks so interesting that he or she then works alone in developing the task further.

Children who approach tasks to be performed with confidence and an expectation of success will enjoy improved learning and performance than children whose fear of failure prevents them from succeeding.

The parental home, the nursery school and the school all have a vital balancing task to perform in this area in assisting children to use their own experiences to develop a positive view of their own performance levels and abilities.

2.7 Development of a child's personality

A child's readiness to begin school and school entry maturity are also revealed by the status of his or her social and emotional development.

The following abilities are essential and necessary within this area:

- the ability to establish contact with children of the same age and with adults (including establishing contact and identifying with the teacher);
- the ability to be able to work together with children of the same age and take part in lessons;
- self-assurance, self-control;
- the ability to engage emotionally (enter into camaraderie, friendships, working partnerships etc.) and social integration (e.g. compliance with rules);
- a child's ability to assume responsibility within his or her own area;
- the ability to stand up to conflict and deal with conflict in an appropriate manner;
- the ability to act autonomously when appropriate;
- stamina and physical staying power.

A vital element to all this is integration into the play or work group and ultimately into the working community of the school class, where children demonstrate a focussed and persistent way of working and independence from the constant support of their families.

Social and emotional school entry maturity is revealed by such characteristics as the ability to work in a group, emotional security and stability, age-appropriate autonomy and adaptability and by the child's capacity to act in an age-appropriate manner in subordinating his or her own needs. In other words, children are able to wait until it is their turn.

Although persons of trust such as parents continue to be important, the child builds up new relations of trust (with teaching staff), and this provides the child with a secure environment in which to act.

3. Main focuses and implementation of pre-school education at CAREHOOD

In order to assist and support the children entrusted into our care in the acquisition of stable and sustainable school entry maturity, the pre-school education at the nursery school offers focussed and intensive development in the following areas.

In general terms, we attach considerable importance to independence and to a sense of responsibility within everyday actions. We also set great store by recognition and avoidance of risks and encourage a strong degree of self-confidence which enables our children to turn to their own resources in order to find the most effective solution as possible to problems which routinely occur.

3.1 Social competences

Every child has the fundamental right to be accepted as he or she is, even if he or she does not behave in a manner appropriate to the situation. We want our children to deal with one another affectionately and in a spirit of partnership. Social competence is not innate. Children need to learn how to behave in a socially adequate and competent way.

Our group communities provide the opportunity to achieve this. We as educationalists and you as parents are the main role models in this.

We address topics aimed at achieving desired behaviour within the everyday work of the groups and via role-play games. The values and social norms which we teach, the independence the children experience and the rules with which compliance is required, bring the children security in the range of actions they undertake and prompt acceptance in the group. The children initiate social relationships whilst also developing empathy. This enables them to assume a sense of responsibility both for others and themselves. They learn to arrive at constructive solutions independently of adults.

3.1.1 Conflict resolution

The developmental stage of pre-school age children makes them equally prepared to pursue conflicts or seek cooperation. In recognising a conflict situation, children learn what actions are required, learn to resolve the situation and ultimately learn resilience. Conflicts at this age often begin with arguments about "rights of ownership".

Acceptance of property and the possibility of swapping serve as a vehicle for the children to learn how to discuss a dispute, justify their own actions, initiate a compromise ("it's your turn now and my turn after the break") and thus resolve

conflicts without resorting to violent action.

3.1.2 Ability to cooperate

In the group, children learn to adapt to requirements, rules and social norms. In order to do so, they need to be able to listen and allow a speaker to finish. They need to learn to abide by the necessary rules, present or subordinate their own personal requirements depending on the situation, accord due consideration to the desires of others and be able both to offer and accept help.

The situations and rituals which recur every day provide us with an opportunity to encourage or correct the child's behaviour in a situation oriented manner.

3.1.3 Communication skills

Communication involves putting ideas, concepts and feelings into words and engaging in discussions with counterparts in order to exchange thoughts. The willingness of the child to seek verbal exchange is an essential component of this skill. Our children learn to communicate how they are feeling (in a manner appropriate to the situation). The aim is to develop the ability to approach other people in order to enquire, for example, about taking part in a game and the ability to accept contact proposals. Children should maintain a "critical distance" to strangers without becoming afraid or insecure.

The relationship of trust which is built serves as the basis for the daily initiation of routine related and open communication. We relate the whole process to the personality of the individual child, expand the child's strengths in a focussed manner and avoid demanding too much.

3.2 Emotional competences

Emotions include all manifestations relating to feeling, such as moods, excitement, other psychological states and affects. Affects refer to short-term and intensive feelings (joy, anger, fear), and these often exert a close influence on experience and behaviour. When such emotions occur, the way in which they are perceived and the reaction which takes place are of considerable significance.

The key task is to develop the ability to deal with such feelings in an appropriate manner.

This is another area in which learning from models has a major role to play. Authentic and appropriate action by important persons of trust will provide children with a pattern of action and communication which they can internalise and imitate.

3.2.1 Affective stability

We teach our children to exercise affective stability when dealing with emotions. Affective stability refers to the ability to suppress impulsiveness (subordinate one's own needs) and practise self-control. Both these attributes are essential foundations for later ego-strength and social recognition.

3.2.2 Self-confidence

Self-confidence grows as children enter pre-school age. We set great store by autonomy. Experiences such as deciding what and how much I wish to eat, being

allowed to wash my own hands and sitting down on my potty myself bring a sense of success which establishes and strengthens a child's feeling of self-confidence in a sustainable way. As they grow older, children begin to move more freely within their environment, expand their action radius and become capable of choosing their own play and handicrafts materials. This enables them to develop confidence in their own powers and learn how they themselves can have an effect on something.

3.2.3 Frustration tolerance

Frustration tolerance refers to learning how to accept failure and make constructive future use of such failure. Board games or other comparisons with the performance of other children provide a chance for our children to learn how to be a "good loser" by continuing the game or by re-attempting a task which has not been successfully concluded the first time around. It is important for us to help every child to learn to accept his or her individual weaknesses and to concentrate on the areas of strength of each child.

3.3 Cognitive competences

3.3.1 Basic scientific knowledge

The interests (thirst for knowledge) of pre-school age children focus increasingly on their environment. The children constantly enquire 'why and how' things happen.

We nurture this interest and enrich children's knowledge by undertaking the following activities amongst others:

- scientific experiments (on such topics as water and air);
- observations in nature related to plant care and the sprouting of seeds;
- observations of how species of animals behave;
- environmental education on such topics as dealing with waste etc.

Factual explanations are also given, and the children are provided with a chance to present their own ideas.

We provide further support in the form of regular project days, museum visits and carefully planned excursions.

3.3.2 Basic mathematical knowledge

Children begin to deal with numbers when they enter pre-school age. They visualise figures (such as by drawing them in a book), acquire a concept of amounts and numbers and practise counting (starting with 1–20).

This leads to simple arithmetical skills such as performing additions by counting fingers. Learning their own telephone number through play is a further possible activity in this regard.

Children also start to measure and weigh lengths, heights, weights and widths. They begin to access the basic geometric forms which they recognise from everyday life.

During daily routine, we attach considerable importance to using all a child's senses in learning how to grasp, understand and internalise these initial ideas of quantity, weight and number. We work with everyday materials and Montessori manipulatives, practise how to use scales and metre sticks and train children in judging measurements by eye.

3.3.3 Language development

A child requires mastery of the English/German language before he or she can attend primary school. Pre-school children give presentations to the larger group in order to provide them with the language education they need and to impart a sense of personal security.

Ongoing expansion of vocabulary and training the children's ability to express themselves correctly are two extremely important areas.

This is backed up by providing further teaching of the basic linguistic knowledge required for everyday life relating to syntax, gender-specific use of articles, conjugation of verbs, declination of nouns and comparison of adjectives.

We learn together first names and surnames, the town or city and street where a child lives and the child's birthday.

Children enjoy games with words and sounds whilst also being given an opportunity to try out linguistic rhythm and melody register changes from loud to quiet to forceful. All these skills are further developed in small and large groups and via one-to-one teaching.

Interpretation of picture books, narration or re-enactment of stories, creation of rhymes and learning poems off-by-heart are all helpful in this regard.

Our development support measures include a wide variety of language games and language worksheets, targeted role-play or doll games as well as arousing the children's enthusiasm for book and reading every single day.

Children with special language requirements receive individual support.

3.3.4 Visual perception

Children learn to differentiate between and give names to shapes and colours, recognise objects and classify these objects according to the characteristics they display. The children also learn to tell the difference between various spatial references such as left, right, top and bottom.

Children also experience the concept of time for the first time and learn how time is divided into seasons, months and days of the week and such concepts as yesterday, today and tomorrow.

The following perception processes are of particular importance:

- perception of a figure against a background (e.g. jigsaw puzzle);
- constancy of form (a child recognises one figure amongst many, including figures placed inside one another);
- recognition of spatial position (left or right, top or bottom, front or back);
- recognition of spatial relationships.

Targeted exercises carried out using special worksheets on which the child learns to perceive, understand and implement the work requirement and the task at hand are an important element within this area.

3.3.5 Auditory perception

A child recognises and localises noises from his or her environment. He or she absorbs and follows instructions.

Children can differentiate between words containing the same phoneme, can sing along to simple melodies and can clap in time to syllables.

We use Orff instruments and finger-counting and singing games to give children a

sense of rhythm and the ability to categorise various sounds according to volume, pitch and depth.

3.3.6 Sensory perception

We begin targeted training and development of sensory perception whilst the children are still very small. We use Montessori practice walls and natural materials to sensitise senses of touch and taste within the scope of age-specific projects.

Children become familiar with their body and the way it works. They are able to name parts of the body and link these to the various senses. Children learn how to paint themselves and how to depict their own body in terms of its structure and functions.

Children learn the necessary and accepted basic principles of bodily hygiene within the scope of the hygiene education provided and via their daily routine at home (cleaning teeth, washing hands and face, regular overall washing, regular changing of underwear and socks etc.).

3.3.7 Concentration and attitude to work

Children need to use the free play situations which they have chosen themselves and which are not usually compulsory as a basis for learning that certain tasks and duties need to be fulfilled regardless of whether the child feels like doing so or not. We initiate such an approach even with the youngest of our children by introducing rituals, fixed daily routines and rules with which the children need to comply interspersed with periods of free play.

Motivation and praise teach the child to take an active role in seeking performance-related attention and recognition. The feedback from teachers and parents teaches the child to assess and evaluate his or her performance.

We conduct daily practice through play using construction materials, puzzles, pin boards, board games and pre-school worksheets in order to expand the children's ability to concentrate and motivation on a gradual basis.

3.4 Motor skills

3.4.1 Gross motor skills

Children of pre-school age exhibit a marked tendency to keep wishing to move around. We give due consideration to this in all our planning. We set store by sufficient exercise outside in the fresh air and by normal body weight.

Age-appropriate movement exercises may include the following:

- climbing stairs and overcoming obstacles;
- imitating movements (jumping jack figure);
- hopping on one leg;
- providing one's own momentum when on a swing;
- climbing;
- getting dressed and undressed unaided.

During the daily playtime spent in the garden and during PE lessons we create incentives to foster bodily control, coordination, movement ability and flexibility. We also support the acquisition of speed, strength and stamina.

We enhance gross motor skills in the following ways:

- walking and running (quickly and slowly and including change of direction);
- hopping and jumping (high, long, down, around and over obstacles);
- climbing (wall bars, ropes, box stairs);
- balancing (bench);
- throwing and catching balls, rings and bean bags;
- rolling and bouncing a ball.

These activities also develop a sense of community and practise complying with rules.

3.4.2 Fine motor skills

Fine motor skills and dexterity are trained through the use of various materials, techniques and everyday tools (scissors, knife, pliers). Shaping and kneading activities strengthen the muscles of the hands.

Hand-eye coordination enables the children to complete works involving cutting, sticking, folding, threading pearls or simple sewing.

All the above activities also foster creativity.

Special games involving rapid reaction, yo-yos, dice games, any kind of game involving skill, all kinds of handicrafts, construction games such as Lego and appropriate back up computer games assist us in the specific training of fine motor skills.

3.4.3 Graphic motor skills

Graphic motor skills involve dealing with pen and paper (holding a pen in the right way). Timely recognition and acceptance of left or right handedness is an essential prerequisite to the avoidance of any later experiences of failure at school.

Our children are surrounded by products which feature images and logotype and are interested in such products even before they can read or write themselves. We support this interest through such activities as painting, tracing lines and curves, dot-to-dot exercises and getting the children to write their first letters and their own names. Children produce their first attempts at writing during this time.

Children with particular motor skills requirements will receive individual support.

3.5 Transition to school

We will conduct detailed discussions with the parents of our pre-school children on a child's school entry maturity at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the last year in nursery school.

If there are any areas of uncertainty, we will observe children in a focussed manner in accordance with specialist criteria (Beller Table) and reach agreement with parents on the necessary measures to be taken. We will offer parents moral and professional support as their child makes the transition to this new stage of life and will also provide training on how to deal with fear of school, a widespread phenomenon nowadays.

Specially trained and experienced teaching staff will hold 30-45 minute sessions with our final year nursery school children on 2-3 days a week. These sessions will resemble

pre-school lessons and will include exercises and teaching in all areas of competence.

We discuss what a child's first day at school will be like. We will also organise a sleepover at the nursery school and hold a party together with the children to mark the beginning of a new phase of life.

We are looking forward to successful cooperation with you.

Your CAREHOOD Team