

Early language training in Kindergarten and before starting school

Being able to speak the German language confidently provides the foundation for participating in lessons and for success in learning. Children between the ages of 3-5 have the ability to learn languages particularly easily and quickly. Specific instruction in the German language is given as early as the first year in Kindergarten. Here your child is not just given special training in the language, but also in many other areas which are important for his/her enjoyment of learning and also for his/her subsequent school education. Therefore it is especially important for your child to begin attending a Kindergarten when he/she is 3 years old.

In addition, the level of German language proficiency of every child is determined when they enrol for school. Children who have either no or insufficient knowledge of the German language will be given extra language training by the teachers for one year before they start school. The participation in the one-year, preschool language training is mandatory for children who need training in the language.

Special needs training in schools

The special language training which was started in kindergarten and before starting school is continued in school so that the children can also meet the requirements called for by the teaching in terms of language. Depending on the local situation and level of German language proficiency of their pupils the schools will carry out various forms of special language training, among others:

- Language learning classes if the knowledge of German is not yet sufficient for attending a normal class;
- Intensive special needs courses and additional special lessons in German for pupils who already attend a normal class but still have special needs;

- Special needs concepts (e. g. bilingual literacy, intercultural working groups, assistance for the transition from the secondary area I to secondary area II) at schools with a high share of children from emigrant families.

In addition, there are some services offered in the languages of the countries of origin:

- In the primary area (school years 1-4) lessons given in the language of the country of origin are offered within the framework of the financial, personal and organisational possibilities in the following languages: Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian, Farsi, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Croatian, Kurdish-Kurmanci, Macedonian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Spanish and Turkish.

Participation in these additional lessons is voluntary and the children must be registered by their parents. Once they are registered, participation is obligatory. It is only possible to cancel the registration for the child at the end of the school year and reasons must be given by the parents for the cancellation.

- Pupils, who did not attend a school in Germany from the beginning of their school life can have their knowledge of their native language/language of origin recognised by means of a language proficiency test, rather than achievements in a compulsory foreign language.

School transport:

Many pupils can only reach their schools by using public transport. The school administrative bodies (rural districts and urban districts) will under certain conditions take on responsibility for the travelling expenses. Age, physical and mental ability of the child and safety of the school route are taken into account here. The school administrative body responsible for your child's school will be pleased to answer any questions relating to this issue.

Contacts:

Individual contacts are available in each of the four departments of the regional education authority who are responsible for the integration and special needs of pupils whose native language is not German.

Landesschulbehörde
Abteilung Braunschweig
Dezernat 2
Wilhelmstr. 62 – 69
38100 Braunschweig
Tel.: 0531 / 484 – 0

Landesschulbehörde
Abteilung Hannover
Dezernat 2
Am Waterlooplatz 11
30169 Hannover
Tel.: 0511 / 106 - 0

Landesschulbehörde
Abteilung Lüneburg
Dezernat 2
Auf der Hude 2
21339 Lüneburg
Tel.: 04131 / 15 – 0

Landesschulbehörde
Abteilung Osnabrück
Dezernat 2
Mühlenschweg 8
49090 Osnabrück
Tel.: 0541 / 314 - 01

In addition, there is a district consultant for intercultural education for each district covered by the regional education authority:

Abteilung Braunschweig:
Frau Susanne Hopp
HRS Meinersen
Am Gajenberg
38536 Meinersen
Email: Hopp-Meinersen@t-online.de

Abteilung Hannover:
Herr Rainer Langner
Landesschulbehörde
Abteilung Hannover -
Am Waterlooplatz 11
30169 Hannover
Tel.: 0511 / 106 - 7111
Email: rainer.langner@lschb-h.niedersachsen.de

Abteilung Lüneburg:
Herr Axel Erdmann
RS Achim
Waldenburger Str. 8-12
28832 Achim
Tel.: 04131 / 15 - 2885
Email: Axel.Erdmann@lschb-
lg.niedersachsen.de

Abteilung Osnabrück:
Herr Harald Kleem
Idafehn-Süd
26841 Ostrhauderfehn
Email: hklemm@t-online.de

For further information and contacts please visit the Internet page of the Lower Saxony Ministry of Education under www.mk.niedersachsen.de and the Lower Saxony education server "NiBIS" under www.nibis.de.

National advice and information centres in Lower Saxony:

Arbeitsgemeinschaft MigrantInnen und Flüchtlinge in Niedersachsen e.V.
AMFN
Geschäftsstelle
Zur Bettfedernfabrik 1
30451 Hannover
Telefon: (0511) 9215803
Email: info@amfn.de

Niedersächsischer Integrationsrat - NIR
Geschäftsstelle
c/o Bildungsverein Soziales Lernen und Kommunikation e. V.
Wedekindstr. 14
30161 Hannover
Telefon: (0511) 338 798 54
Email: nds-integrationsrat@nds-integrationsrat.de

Verband bi-nationaler Familien und Partnerschaften – IAF
Charlottenstr. 5
30449 Hannover
Telefon: (0511) 447623
Email: info@iaf-hannover.de

Information on parent participation can be obtained from the following address:

Landeselternrat
Geschäftsstelle
Königstraße 19
30175 Hannover
Telefon: 0511 / 31 59 83
www.elternrat-niedersachsen.info

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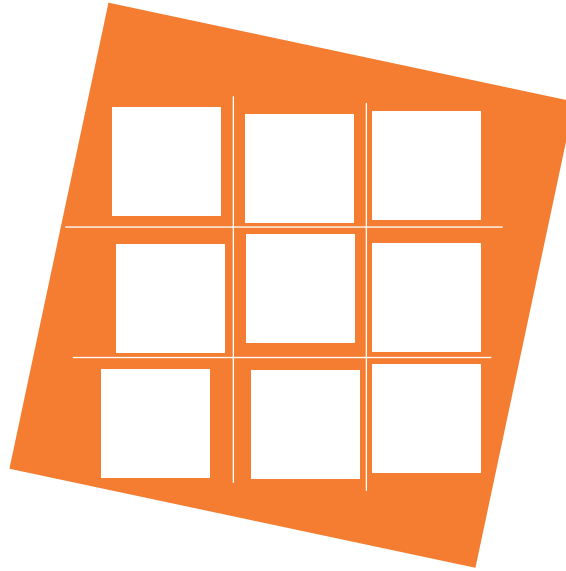
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INFO ENGLISCH

Schools in Lower Saxony

Information sheet for immigrant parents



Niedersachsen



Dear parents,

Your child is attending a school in Lower Saxony. The future of all children essentially depends on joy in learning, on success in learning and not least on the qualifications they achieve.

Parents know their children better than anyone else. By supporting and fostering the learning of your child at home, you can make a considerable contribution to his/her success at school. This includes talking with the child each day about what he/she has experienced, telling stories and reading out loud. It also includes maintaining good contacts with the school and taking an interest in school life. This way you also help the teachers who make an effort every day together with you to achieve the best possible school education for your child.

This leaflet in your language should provide you with basic information about the school system in Lower Saxony: about the various school forms, school qualifications and important legal provisions, about the importance of attending kindergarten and the ability to confidently speak the German language for the education of your child and about your possibilities to participate as parents.

Here you will also find information about possible contacts in and outside the school, whom you can contact for confidential advice if you have any questions in connection with the schooling of your child.

We hope that this information leaflet serves you as a useful guide and we would be pleased if this could contribute to improving your contacts to your child's school and intensifying the cooperation between you as parents and the teachers. Both are an essential prerequisite for the learning motivation and the educational success of your child.



Bernd Busemann
Minister of Education
for Lower Saxony

Gabriele Erpenbeck
Commissioner for Foreigners
of the State of Lower Saxony

The Lower Saxony School Education Act

The School Education Act of Lower Saxony (NSchG) is the legal basis for the Lower Saxony education system. Compulsory education, education obligations and parents' participation are regulated in the NSchG.

■ Compulsory education

All pupils living in Lower Saxony have a right to education – and they are obliged to take part in lessons regularly.

Children who are older than the age of 6 by 30 June in one year will be required to attend school at the start of the following school year. Compulsory education is 12 years.

■ Education obligations

It is the task of the school to further develop the character of pupils. The pupils should learn to act in accordance with ethical principles and recognise and observe religious and cultural values. Pupils of schools in Lower Saxony are to be given the skills to form their relationships with other people by being fair and tolerant and showing solidarity.

■ Participation of parents

Parents or legal guardians have the opportunity to participate in their children's school.

The parents or legal guardians of the pupils of a class form the **Klassenelternschaft** [Class parents' group] from whom they elect the chairperson and his/her deputy.

The chairpersons of the class parents' groups form the **Schulelternrat** [School parents' association] which in turn elects a chairperson and deputy. The chairperson of the school parents' association is the contact for the school principal.

The school principal and the teachers must inform the school parents' association and the class parents' groups about the organisation of the school and the assessment of performances, and about the contents, planning and layout of the lessons. This does not just concern circulating announcements. The opportunity must also be given for discussions, questions and suggestions since, according to the NSchG, all questions relating to the school can be discussed by the class parents' groups and the school parents' association.

"A lively school with its own profile does not just need pupils and teachers, it also needs the participation of the parents"

Bernd Busemann, Minister for Education and Culture for Lower Saxony.

In a time in which children from emigrant families are among the pupils at nearly every school, the participation of parents with a migration background is especially important. Therefore the NSchG says, in §90 (2):

"If a school is attended by at least ten foreign pupils and if none of their parents or legal guardians are a member of the school parents' association then these parents or legal guardians may elect an additional member and a deputy member of the school parents' association from their midst."

The presence of parents from emigrant families in the school parents' association is intended to guarantee that migration or integration-specific concerns are taken into account in the discussions in the association.

Apart from the parent representatives in the school there are also parent representatives on a municipal and a regional level. These associations discuss problems which concern more than just the individual schools.

As in the school parents' association the participation of parents of foreign origin is also explicitly provided for in the **Landeselternrat** [Regional parents' association]. The parents and legal guardians of the pupils of all school forms and the parents and legal guardians of foreign pupils are represented in the regional parents' association.

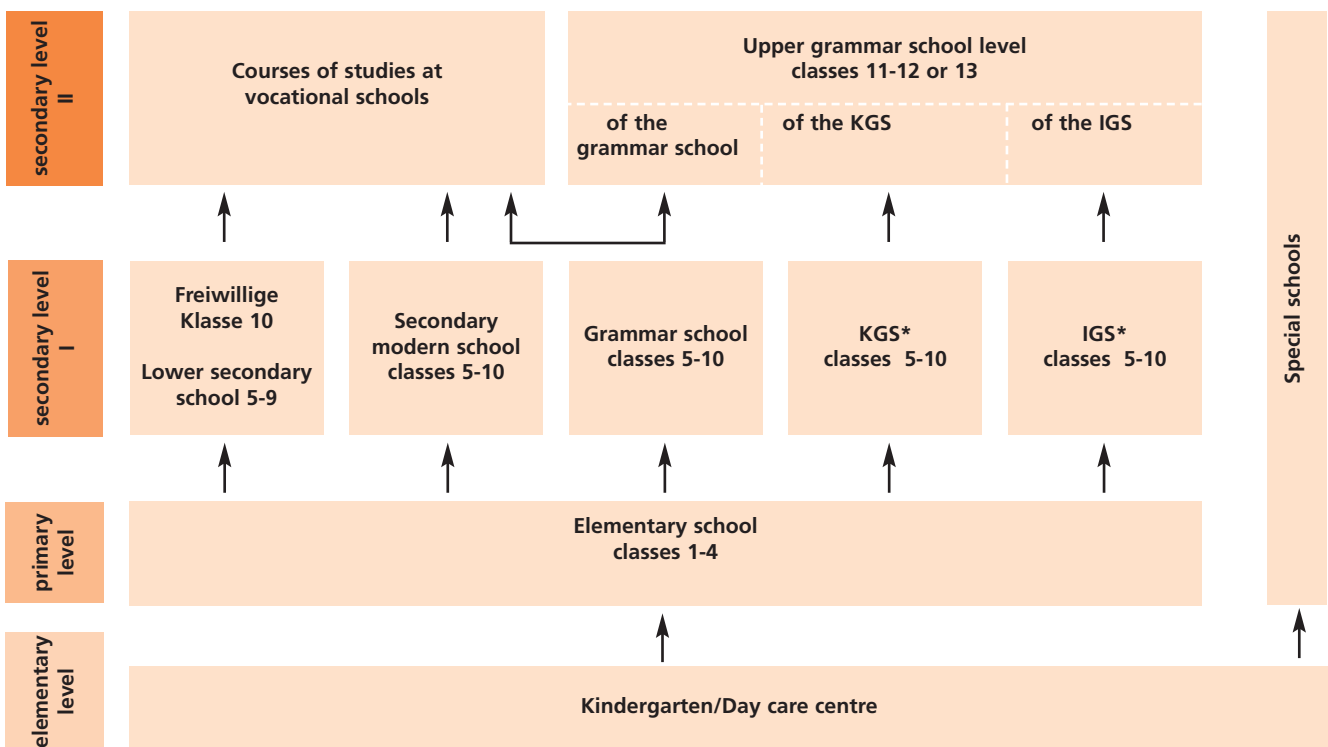
Learning in school is of elementary and prime importance for children and youths. The Lower Saxony School Education Act offers parents and legal guardians the possibilities to participate in the important place of learning school. This also applies for parents from emigrant families. Come and participate in the parents' association of the school!

Schoolbooks available on loan against payment of a fee

In schools in Lower Saxony it is possible to borrow schoolbooks against payment of a fee and this way save up to two thirds of the costs of acquiring schoolbooks. A reduction of the fee is granted for all children coming from families with three or more children; in certain cases parents can also be completely exempted from the rental fee. Information can be obtained from the respective schools. The regulations and information can also be found on the Internet at www.mk.niedersachsen.de in the column issues.

Translator's note: The German parents' organisations are similar to the PTA Parents' Teachers Organisations in other English-speaking countries, however they have a slightly different organisation and form of participation.

The School System in Lower Saxony



School forms

The **Grundschule** [elementary school] covers the school years 1 – 4 and at some elementary schools it also covers the school kindergarten. 6-year old children, who are not yet able to work in the 1st class, are given special training in the school kindergarten. At the end of the 4th year the elementary school will express a recommendation for the suitable school form for secondary education. The decision on which one of the secondary education schools to choose will be made by the parents or legal guardians after detailed consultancy with the teachers.

The **Hauptschule** [lower secondary school] covers the school years 5 – 9 and the possibility of attending the 10th class. At the end of the 9th year it is possible to attain the certificate of secondary education [Hauptschulabschluss]. At the end of the 10th year the following qualifications can be attained:

- Extended secondary education certificate I, which entitles the pupil to attend the introductory phase of the upper form of general grammar schools or of a specialized grammar school.
- Secondary qualification I – secondary modern school or lower secondary school leaving qualification.

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The attainment of a qualification presumes the successful participation in a final examination in the 9th or 10th year.

The **Realschule** [secondary modern school] covers the school years 5 – 10. The lessons consist of compulsory and compulsory optional lessons and optional clubs. At the end of the 10th year it is possible to attain the following qualifications:

- Extended secondary qualification I, which entitles to attend the introductory phase of the upper form of general grammar schools or a specialized grammar school.
- Secondary qualification I – secondary modern school or lower secondary school leaving qualification.

The attainment of a qualification presumes the successful participation in a final examination in the 10th year.

The **Gymnasium** [grammar school] covers the school years 5 – 12. At the end of the 10th year it is possible to attain the following qualifications:

- Extended secondary qualification I,
- Secondary qualification I – secondary modern school or lower secondary school leaving qualification.

At the end of the 12th year it is possible to attain the Abitur [equivalent to A levels] which entitles the pupil to study at a university.

The **Förderschule** [special school] is attended by children who are so restricted in their possibilities for development, learning and education that they cannot be sufficiently supported in their learning in the lessons without additional special educational measures. The transfer to a special school first requires a thorough examination of the child. Insufficient knowledge of the German language or problems when learning German are by themselves not a reason for transfer to a special school.

The **cooperative comprehensive school (KGS)** or the **integrated comprehensive school (IGS)** can be attended instead of a lower secondary school, a secondary modern school or a grammar school. The comprehensive schools cover the school years 5 – 12 or 13. It is possible to attain the same qualifications as at the lower secondary school, a secondary modern school or a grammar school. The attainment of a qualification presumes the successful participation in a final examination in the school's final year.