

## Information on entering kindergarten

*Extracts from the information sheet for parents, kindergarten and primary level teachers in the city of Zurich, school health services and the school medical service (the full information sheet is available in 10 languages: [www.stadt-zuerich.ch/schularzt](http://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/schularzt)).*

**Enrolment at kindergarten and primary school is an important step in the life of a child. Children develop very differently and not equally quickly in all respects. Early enrolment, deferment or special support measures need to be carefully considered and planned. The following basic prerequisites will ensure that your child enjoys a successful start to kindergarten.**

### Encouraging and eliciting confidence and curiosity

In the course of the first years of their life, children steadily gain the confidence to leave the family for a while and develop a curiosity for the outside world. Play-groups and day nurseries are important learning and training environments in this respect. Entering kindergarten at the age of 4 or 5 is then the next step in their development. Now children are ready every day to spend the whole morning in a sizeable group (about 18-25 children of the same age and a little older) under the supervision of the kindergarten teacher. Stimuli from the kindergarten form the basis for further development steps corresponding to the child's age. The cantonal kindergarten curriculum also corresponds to these stages of development (to be found at: [www.vsa.zh.ch](http://www.vsa.zh.ch)).

Nowadays paediatricians believe that children develop most favourably, and are also encouraged and challenged most, when their environment offers experiences to match their stage of development.

### Prerequisites needed for a good start to kindergarten

In the course of their 5th year of life most children acquire the necessary physical, socio-emotional and intellectual prerequisites not only for being ready and open for the challenges of the new kindergarten environment but also for mastering these. Both in free play and handicraft work, as well as in the guided lessons of everyday kindergarten life «in the circle» it is important that the children are alert and take part with all their senses in order to be able to benefit from the activities. Knowledge of German is an advantage here. Many children still require support when taking the step of entering kindergarten. Experience shows that the children best succeed in accepting and making use of the support offered when able to fulfil **most** of the prerequisites described below. In this context it is important to bear in mind that it is not **individual points**, but the **overall picture** of the child's stage of development which is decisive in assessing whether or not the child settles into kindergarten well.

### 1. Physical prerequisites

The kindergarten child

- is alert and receptive in the morning, so as to be able to take active part in the kindergarten programme. This presupposes sufficiently long (10 - 12 hours) and undisturbed sleep at night.
- is strengthened before kindergarten with a breakfast suitable for children and no longer drinks milk powder.
- can manage the way to the kindergarten on foot - alone or, at least to begin with, accompanied by an adult.
- can physically endure the whole morning.
- can unpack, eat and drink unaided the packed lunch brought from home.
- notices the need to go to the toilet and can use the WC independently with just a little help (e.g. opening trouser button). Nappies are no longer worn.
- has the basic ability as well as certain skills in running, skipping, climbing stairs, but also in drawing and painting, washing hands, nose-blowing, putting on clothes and shoes, closing zips and buttons.

### 2. Social and emotional prerequisites

The kindergarten child

- can bear regular separation from their reference person for the whole morning and feels comfortable in the group. A dummy is no longer needed.
- tries to express feelings and needs in a way that is understandable for others.
- endeavours to make contact with other children and teachers in an appropriate manner.
- understands rules (of the game) and tries to apply them.
- endeavours to show consideration and solve conflicts without violence.
- has the (self-) confidence to make another attempt after a setback.
- can be consoled by others.

### 3. Intellectual prerequisites

The kindergarten child

- is interested in new and unknown things and is proud of achievements.
- observes and can retain instructions in movement games, handicraft work and painting.
- is capable, in the family language at least, of taking in and reproducing something told to them, using sentences of several words.
- can comprehend and carry out simple orders.
- has mental stamina, i.e. when requested by the kindergarten teacher, can sit still and listen or watch for 5-10 minutes, several times a day.
- can spend time on a game and, by waiting and seeing, display patience and persistence.

### **Early enrolment to kindergarten**

Especially in the case of younger children (4th birthday between 1st May and 31st July) it is important to consider very carefully whether the child's overall development fulfils the prerequisites for benefitting from an early entry into kindergarten (and, two years later, from the transfer to the 1st class). As a rule, the child will then always be among the youngest in the group throughout schooling (also during puberty) and continually have to measure up against and be compared with the predominantly older children in the group / class in all aspects.

Early entry into kindergarten is only recommended from a school medical standpoint when the child has reached an overall stage of development suited to the group of older children and can deal with the requirements of kindergarten without special support.

#### **All day kindergarten and childcare – positive challenge or stress factor?**

Spending the whole day, including midday meal and possibly sleep, in a large group of mixed-age children is a challenge for children of kindergarten age. Depending on previous experience and personality factors, the child may experience this as stimulating, yet on the other hand as too demanding.