

Information

on Language Proficiency Testing for Parents of Children in Nursery Schools or Day Care

We want to be as effective as possible in helping you to ensure that your child enjoys starting school, is able to do well in the classroom from the very beginning, and successfully completes school later. To do so, your child must be able to follow the lesson — that is, be able to speak and understand German, since German is the language used in the classroom.

A law on early assistance for children is aimed at meeting this goal. The following gives you more information about language proficiency testing.

Are the language skills of all children being tested?

Yes. The “Gesetz zur vorschulischen Sprachförderung” (Act on language support programs for preschool children), which went into force on 1 April 2008, requires that children be tested a year before entering school to determine whether their language skills are age-appropriate. If testing reveals that children need help with language development, the law requires that they take part in a language support program during the year before they start school. That applies both to children who are already receiving educational support at nursery school or in day care and to children who are not yet in nursery school or day care.

How are the child’s language skills tested?

Every child who starts nursery school or day care receives a “Sprachlerntagebuch” (language-learning diary). This diary makes it possible to observe and document your child’s language development over the long term. Your child’s current stage of development and the progress made along the way will be discussed with you, and these will be used to identify any specific measures needed for additional support.

A survey¹⁾ based on the “Sprachlerntagebuch” is used for scheduled testing of children’s language skills starting at the age of four, as the law requires. Using this survey, nursery school teachers and day care providers will determine in the spring of the year before the child starts school whether he or she requires special assistance.

The teachers at your child’s nursery school or the day care provider will discuss the results with you once the testing has been completed and will talk to you about the specific German language skills in which your child needs additional help.

What happens if testing determines that your child needs additional help with language skills development?

If the test reveals that your child needs additional help with language development, he or she will take part in a special program designed to boost these skills; this program lasts for the entire year before the child starts school. This long-term support is given at your child’s nursery school or day care provider and fulfills the legal requirements. The nursery school decides how this assistance will be organized and what it will include. Working materials are available to help the nursery schools with this responsibility.

¹⁾ „Qualifizierte Stuserhebung Sprachentwicklung vierjähriger Kinder in Kitas und Kindertagespflege“ (Qualified Assessment of the Language Proficiency of Four-Year-Olds in Nursery Schools and Day Care)

Important:

If your child needs assistance with language skills development and moves to another nursery school or day care provider during the last year before starting elementary school, you must inform the new nursery school or provider about the child's needs. This will ensure that legal requirements continue to be met and that further assistance is able to build on previous support. Please discuss this issue with your child's nursery school teachers or day care provider before moving to a new facility. I strongly advise you to continue sending your child to nursery school or day care so that he or she can receive this assistance as part of his or her regular program.

If you do take your child out of nursery school or day care and do not re-enroll him or her elsewhere during the last year before entering elementary school, your child is still legally required to take part in a one-year language support program before starting school. The same legal requirements apply to children who are taken out of nursery school as to children who never attended one: they are expected to continue the language support program (three hours a day) in a nursery school assigned to provide it.

If you have further questions about language skills testing and language support programs, please speak to your child's nursery school or day care provider.