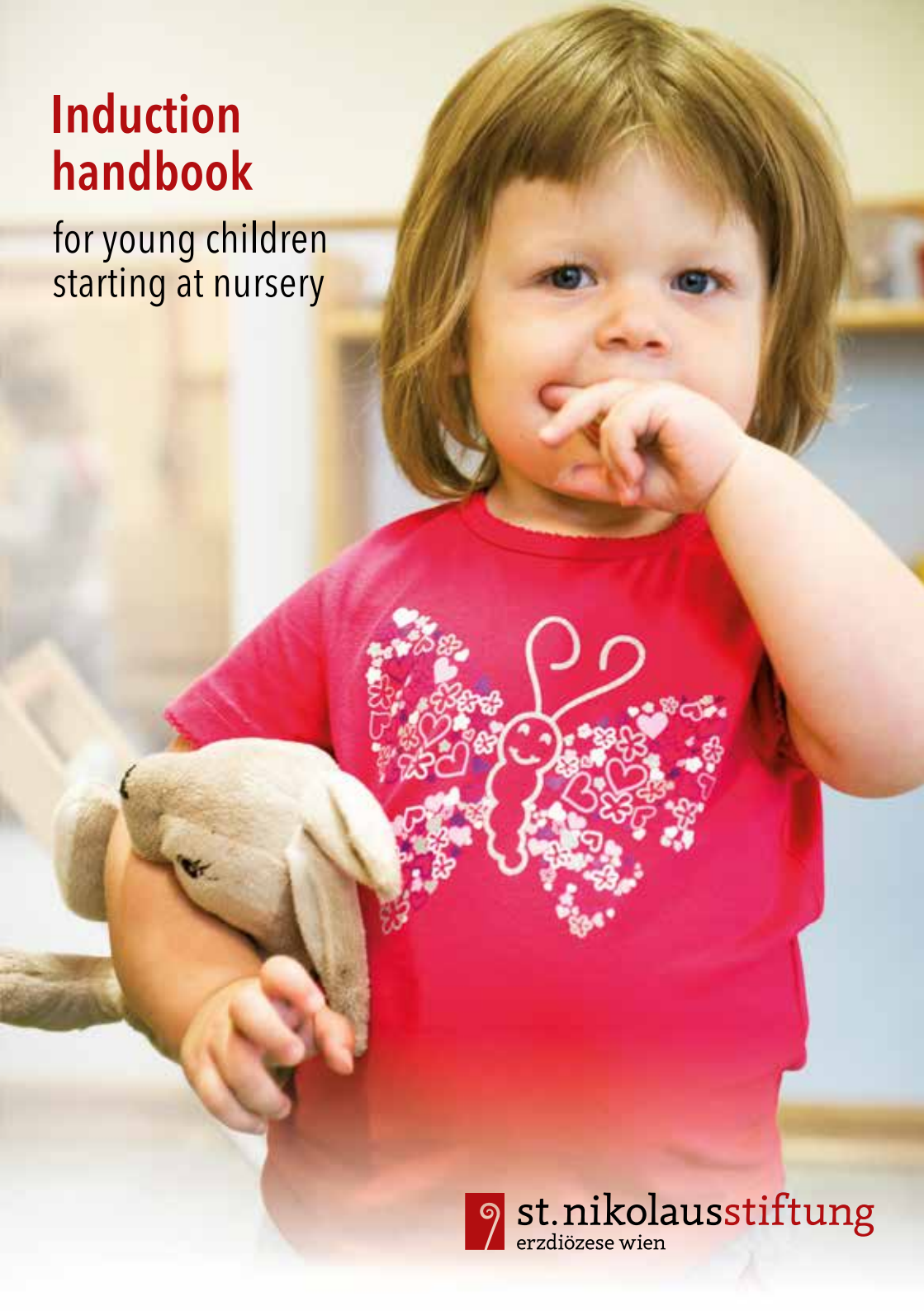


Induction handbook

for young children
starting at nursery



st. nikolausstiftung
erzdiözese wien



This booklet provides guidelines for parents of children who will be attending our crèche and nursery.

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EIGENTÜMERIN, HERAUSGEBERIN
UND VERLEGERIN:
St. Nikolausstiftung Erzdiözese Wien
Stephansplatz 6/2/3
1010 Wien
T 01 51552 3838
E office@nikolausstiftung.at
W nikolausstiftung.at |
facebook.at/nikolausstiftung

KONZEPTION:
Susanna Haas, Pädagogische Leiterin
PROJEKTMANAGEMENT UND REDAKTION:
Mag.^a Marlene Erlacher,
Mag.^a Gabriele Zwick
GESTALTUNG:
Gerald Waibel, www.fffundwe.at

DRUCK:
Grasl FairPrint, Druckhausstraße 1,
2540 Bad Vöslau



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Dear Parents,

We are delighted that you have enrolled your child in our nursery. You, your family, and your child are at the start of a whole new stage of life. Your son or daughter will gain a new community to add to that of their family, making new friends in their group and taking the next steps in their development.

We need your support to help ensure that we are sensitive to your child's needs as s/he makes the transition from family to this new environment. This booklet sets out the steps that will make sure the induction process is handled sensitively and goes smoothly.

Susanna Haas
Educational Director
St. Nikolausstiftung



Basics

Getting used to us... take your time and give yourselves space

Making a successful transition from family to daycare is something that everyone – parents, teacher, and child – works on together. It is important to agree clear expectations and to promote a sense of security.

Each child reacts differently to unfamiliar situations. One child might need less time, another might need more, before they are able to feel at home in new rooms and amongst children and adults they have only met recently. And so it's worth being aware that how long you come with your child to nursery for induction will depend on your child's individual reaction.

Be prepared for a period of about a month – but remember that the induction period can also take longer than this.

If you are planning to return to work you should make sure any timescales you agree take this into account.

Where possible, your child should always be accompanied by the same adult.

Creating trust and building relationships

As parents you are the most important caregivers your child has. A key part of a caring and sensitive induction process is making

sure that your child now builds a sustainable relationship with his/her teacher and assistant.

Having the reassurance of your presence in the first few days will give your child the opportunity to connect positively with his/her new carers, to get to know them, to experience them, to hear them and to understand who they are. Your child's teacher and assistant will be strangers at first, but after a successful induction process your son/daughter will trust them, and they will accompany your child through an important stage of their life.

"Hello and Goodbye": practising separation

Induction does not just begin on the first day of nursery. The best preparation begins quite a few weeks before that. Your child should, for instance, already have been separated from you successfully a couple of times before starting induction. An afternoon with Grandma, an hour alone with the babysitter, or with a friend who has already looked after your daughter/son before ... your child will bring all these experiences to nursery. If s/he has no experience of being separated from you, or has been through negative experiences of separation, we will need to plan for a longer induction period.

Children need to be allowed to cry

It hurts to be separated from a parent that you love. Early on in induction, when you leave the room for the first time, your child is likely to cry. In the context of the enormous step that your child is taking, this is completely normal and entirely to be expected. It's important that your child learns to trust the teacher and assistant as quickly as possible so that after a while s/he will settle, be ready to play and be willing to be distracted.

It's bound to be difficult for you if your child is sad. So it's all the more important that you trust us and are keen to work together with our teachers and assistants.



How can we develop mutual trust?

Preliminary discussion form

The first step is the preliminary discussion with your child's teacher. On the basis of the preliminary discussion form, s/he will review your child's habits, favourite activities, development, and deal with any outstanding questions you may have. This information will help us get to know your child and will of course be treated as confidential.

Things to do before your first visit to the nursery

Before the summer your nursery will hold a parents' information evening. Please do attend if you can, as the evening will allow you to raise and discuss any questions or concerns you may have.

It is also your final opportunity to arrange a taster day for your child and yourself. De-

pending on availability, these will be arranged for an afternoon or a few hours during the summer term.

This session allows you to play with your child in the group and to get to know other parents and their children. It also gives you the chance to talk to the teacher and assistant and ask questions.

TIP > *Other things you can do to prepare your child: look at picture books dealing with nursery; get used to the journey from your house to the nursery; invite round other children who will be attending the same nursery. Preparing together will allow your child to approach the idea of nursery gently and gradually.*

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO MANAGE SEPARATION IN THE RIGHT WAY?

Separations and transitions get "saved" in children's memories. Experiences your child has made will be retrieved when s/he deals with change in the future, and your child could, for instance, become caught up in the memory of negative experiences when s/he starts school.

For a young child, separation means being abandoned. No young child understands it when their carer explains, "I'll be right back - I'll just be five minutes." They are not equipped to grasp concepts of time like later, right away, five minutes, etc. yet. This is something that has to be EXPERIENCED. The carer goes away, comes back within a time that the child can understand, and takes him/her home. To begin with, this period is five minutes, then 30 minutes, then an hour and a half - extending to a full morning after about two weeks.

Your child will have time to get used to the anxiety of separation and the happiness of being collected and seeing you again. S/he will adapt to this change in rhythm, experience it, and will be able to go along with it as time goes by.

Staggered induction

Induction begins at the start of the new nursery year, during September. In order to give enough time to each individual new starter, we stagger our induction periods. This means that you can discuss with the teacher and headteacher when it would be best for you to come to nursery with your child for the first time. We will make every attempt to take account of any deadlines you may have for returning to work. However, you will need to come to nursery continuously from the first day - and not go on holiday in the second week, for example.

It's important to remember that induction requires a lot of time and patience. If you are pressed for time please ask a person your child trusts, such as grandma or granddad, to help with this.



The process

The first three days - being there for your child

In the first few days, your presence is essential. Only you, or a person your child trusts, can give your child the reassurance s/he needs to adjust to this new environment. Plan to attend for a maximum of an hour for the first three days. During this time, stay with your child and don't leave him or her for any amount of time. Take your child with you if you leave the room.

Your child will need you in the first few days. You don't have to do very much. Just your presence in the room will be enough to create a safe place that your child can retreat to at any time, if they feel overwhelmed. So place yourself at the edge of the group room, where child can see you.

Under no circumstances play with your child; just keep an eye on them and enjoy seeing them take their first steps into a new world. Please don't read, make phone calls or do anything that distracts you or your child. And please don't encourage your child to behave in any particular way, or interact with other children in the group.

Why is this necessary?

If you actively engage with your child during this phase, read a book aloud, play a game, walk around the room, etc., you may prevent your child from connecting with his/her new carers. You will be intruding on the world of the teacher and prolonging the induction process.

If your child is reluctant to leave you in the first week, just give him/her more time to watch what's going on; and discuss next steps with the teacher.

TIP > *It's important that you do use the taster day to play actively with your child and to explore the room.*

Parents are role models

As a mother or father you have an enormous influence on your child. If you are friendly to the teacher and interested in what is going on, your child will notice and be relaxed in this new situation. S/he will sense whether you are at ease with the situation and whether you trust us.

TIP > *It's important that you raise any questions or anxieties you may have before your child starts at nursery, not in front of the group or in front of your child.*



First steps towards separation

You should not make any attempt to separate from your child in the first three days: this period is crucial to your child's induction and it is important that it is not compromised by premature separation.

You can try a first, short separation at the earliest on day four (but never on a Monday!) Please don't go out of the room without saying goodbye to your child. This will affect your child's confidence and they won't want to let you out of their sight from then on. Or they will become clingy, to make sure you don't disappear unexpectedly again.

When you say goodbye, it's possible that your child will cry or make some other attempt to get you to stay or else take them with you. It is entirely normal for children to try to

make sure that a person they love will stay with them.

To begin with, leave the room – not the nursery – for a maximum of a couple of minutes, and see how your child reacts. If they allow themselves to be distracted by the teacher offering to play a game, over the next few days you can gradually increase the length of time for which you leave your child. If your child cries when you leave the room, you should leave anyway, but please stay close by. If the teacher cannot console your child within a few minutes, you will be called back.

Saying goodbye

Once your child is happy to spend time alone in the group, the "departure" phase can start.

Even if you find this difficult, please keep your goodbyes short. Try not to prolong them more than necessary, as this will only cause your child stress. Children generally experience much less stress if goodbyes are kept short.

Pickup time

Please arrive at the nursery at the agreed time to pick up your child. Even if your child wants to stay longer in the group, or asks you to join in and play, please say that it is time to go home. In this way your child will gain confidence in the process of being collected. S/he will remember being collected when s/he arrives the next day, and will gradually understand what it means when you say, "I'll pick

you up after your snack." This is an important stage in your child's learning.

End of induction period

The induction period will come to an end when the teacher is able to console your child if s/he becomes distressed. This need not mean that your child no longer cries when you say goodbye after you have dropped him/her off. In doing this, s/he is simply expressing sadness that you are leaving – as is his/her right. However, by the time the induction period is over, s/he should be allowing him/herself to be consoled by the teacher when you go. If possible you should leave your child with us for half days only, at least in the first few weeks. Remember that even in the context



of a smooth induction period your child will need to use all his or her energy and abilities to adapt to the new arrangements. Attending for full days from the very beginning will make this a more difficult process for your child.

Are there any times to avoid when arranging induction?

The induction period should not coincide with other changes within the family (e.g. birth of a sibling, moving house), as this could cause your child to become overwhelmed. If your child is ill you should postpone induction. Illness (even seemingly minor ailments, such as colds) can impair your child's interest in a new environment, and their ability to engage with it. If it is clear before induction starts that there will be a break in daycare (e.g. due to a holiday, hospital appointment etc.), induction should be postponed until after the break. "Never on a Monday" is the rule of thumb for any new activity during induction. This is particularly valid for the first time your child sleeps in nursery and the first time you leave your child on his or her own. At the start of the week, after they have spent the weekend at home with their parents, children can find it especially hard to get their bearings in an environment they aren't yet fully confident with.

SUMMARY

Before starting nursery

Attend a parents' information evening and arrange a taster day.

Day 1–Day 3

Come with your child to a group for one hour maximum – don't make any attempt to leave them at this stage!

From Day 4

First short separation (maximum 15 minutes). Say goodbye to your child and leave the room, but stay close by. If your child doesn't settle within a short space of time, we'll call you straight back in. If this is necessary, we'll leave it another 2–3 days before the next separation. If your child does settle, periods of separation can be lengthened over the next few days.

From week 2/3

Even if your child is happy to stay at nursery on his or her own, please pick him/her up at the latest after lunch. If your child has handled separation well up to this point, the length of time after lunch can be extended. We will deal with any other issues, for instance sleep routines, as appropriate to the needs of your child and in discussion with you. It's important that we can always reach you during the induction period, and that you are able to come and collect your child if necessary.

Duration and end of induction

Induction comes to an end when the teacher is able to console your child in an emergency. The length of the induction period depends on your child. It usually lasts around a month – but it may be longer.

More tips for successful induction:

- > If your child has problems being separated from one parent in particular, it may be sensible for the other parent to accompany them through induction. It is entirely possible that children being accompanied by their father may find induction into a new environment easier than if s/he were accompanied by his/her mother (or vice versa).
- > The first time you say goodbye and go out, leave behind something that belongs to you, such as a jacket or your bag, so that your child has an “anchor”, and knows you are coming back.
- > Introduce routines for saying goodbye, for instance fly your child like a plane over to the teacher, or wave one more time from the window, etc.

Shared responsibility

Don't be disappointed in your child, the nursery, or yourself if induction takes a little bit longer. No-one involved is to blame for this! It may become clear during the induction phase that the kind of care your child needs cannot be provided in a group of 15–20 children. If this is the case, our teachers and directors can advise you on alternative options.

The educational partnership of “parents, child, and teacher” will locate the solution your child needs at the moment. Sometimes all you need to do is take a small step back in order to move forwards. And soon – given a bit of breathing space – the induction process will be much easier both for you and for your child.

**We look forward to
welcoming you and your child!**



Die Stiftung stellt sich vor

Die St. Nikolausstiftung Erzdiözese Wien ist eine private Trägerorganisation von Kindergärten und Horten in Wien. Zur Stiftung zählen rund 80 Standorte, in welchen circa 6.000 Kinder im Alter von 0-10 Jahren betreut werden.

Wir leben ein Miteinander, eine Erziehungspartnerschaft und fördern die individuellen Lebensentwürfe der Mädchen und Buben. Unsere Pädagogik der Achtsamkeit nimmt die Kinder so wahr, wie sie sind, und lässt den Kindergartenalltag zum Beziehungsalltag werden.

