



Deutsche Schule Nairobi
German School Nairobi

The Support and Challenge Programme at the German School Nairobi

1. Aims

Our Primary School not only forms the foundation of the German School Nairobi, but also stands as a school in itself, independent of its secondary section. Based on its “learn through play” methodology, the school aims to equip its students with basic skills, capabilities and a readiness to continue with their education in the German or indeed in any other school system. The school aims to develop the child’s personality. The school bases each child’s education on his / her pre-school, as well as outside school experiences, and ties these with the child’s current development stage. It thus gently leads the child into the world of school and learning, aiming to develop the child’s cultural skills, as well as his / her learning abilities.

(cf. Syllabus for Primary School and Special Needs Primary School, Thuringia Ministry of Culture and Education).

In accordance with this task, we strive to challenge and support our children in equal measures. In an everyday situation, this means we aim to strengthen their strengths and weaken their weaknesses! It goes without saying that the prerequisite for us to fulfil this task is to identify each child’s strengths and weaknesses. Only then can we begin to implement this programme.

For those children who have setbacks or learning difficulties, we use all the didactic, methodical and pedagogical tools available to us, to assist them in gaining basic abilities and skills. On the other hand, for those children who are particularly gifted and talented, who can complete their work much faster than their peers, we provide additional stimulus material, so that they are able to further develop their talents and interests in the extra time they have.

2. Assessment

In order to get an exact assessment of the student’s background, his / her current learning status, and also in order to be able to correctly follow the learning process of each individual child, we have implemented various assessment techniques in the different classes.

These are:

- Systematic observation of students with written records
- Participation in Competence tests in Class 3 (based on the Federal State Thuringia) in the subjects Mathematics and German
- Written examination to ensure the child has met the set goals
- Online diagnosis
- Language Tests
- Constructive exchange between parents and teachers

2.1 Systematic observation of students with written records

Daily observation of students in both their written as well as oral work still forms the most important basis for support students in the Primary School. This observation gives us information about the knowledge and comprehension abilities of the children, about their skills to grasp, and implement concepts, to apply them to the material being learnt, to think critically, and finally, how to retain these concepts. We regularly record our observations in “observations forms” that we have created ourselves. This is done in the subjects German, and Mathematics. A similar record of the children’s work habits and their social behaviour is kept.

2.2 Written tests / examinations

Written examinations in the subjects Mathematics and German are used to assess how much of the material taught the individual student has grasped. These tests relate mostly to the material being currently studied, and are carried out and graded at regular intervals. The results of these examinations show us whether or not individual students have understood the material, and whether it needs to be re-clarified to them.

Standardised tests also provide useful information for an individual student’s learning development curve. During the four years a child spends at the Primary School, a writing test (*Peter May Hamburger Schreibprobe*) in the subject German is done at the end of each of the 4 years. A further test is done to assess the student’s fluency in reading. (*Lese-Stolpertest*)

2.3 Online Diagnosis

All children from Classes 2 – 4 take part in an online diagnosis test in German and Mathematics at the end of each of their school years. This gives us individual progress reports of the child. With the help of this, we can support each child to catch up on the weaknesses either during free work, as homework, or even in the holidays. In Class 3, online diagnosis (see 2.4) can be limited to some children based on the competence tests.

2.4 Participation in Competence Tests for students in Class 3 of the Primary School in German and Mathematics.

Each year, students in Class 3 take part in Competence Tests of the Federal State Thuringia, in the subjects German and Mathematics. The main purpose of these tests is to ensure correct lesson development compared to national standards. They are also an indicator of expected performance of the student, and what school system s/he should follow in the Lower Secondary School. In addition, the results of the competence tests give teachers an insight into their own teaching strengths and weaknesses in relation to national standards.

2.5 Language Test

All children, whose first language is not German, must undergo a language test before they can be admitted to Class 1. The aim of the test is to assess whether the child’s knowledge of the German language is sufficient enough to allow him / her to follow lessons in Class 1, which are exclusively taught in German. Based on the test results, the teachers are able to decide upon whether or not the child can be admitted to Class 1, and whether s/he will be in the First Language or Foreign Language German Class.

2.6 Exchange between parents and teachers

In order to cope with learning difficulties or psycho-social problems affecting individual students, we co-operate very closely with the Kindergarten of the German School Nairobi, from which we receive the majority of our children.

The main focus of our support programme is to have an exchange with the parents of these children, which is formed on the basis of mutual trust. Parents are welcome to discuss any issues regarding their children not only during Parent's Day (which takes place twice a year), but also during the consultation hours of individual teachers, or at appointments made jointly by the parties concerned, and parents may even talk to the teachers by phone. Together, decisions can be made on what school-related or even non-school related measures need to be taken.

An individual learning agreement can be made for students during parent –teacher consultation meetings. In this agreement, a form designed by the teachers of the Primary School will be filled out, indicating the weaknesses that need to be addressed for the child concerned. The goals that need to be met are indicated on this form, too, and the child's progress based on this agreement is reviewed periodically.

3. Measures implemented to support students

3.1 Differentiation

The focus of our daily support lies in internal differentiation. New material is generally taught to the children as a class group. Associated exercises to test and deepen knowledge, as well as revision are carried out differentially, depending on student ability. Different groups of students receive different types of material, which are more suited to their needs and requirements. In Mathematics for example we would use more visual material where the child still needs to understand the underlying concept. Simultaneously, other children who have understood this concept would be given exercises looking at the concept more abstractly.

Our text books, "Bausteine" (German) and "Denken und Rechnen" (Mathematics) offer a whole range of additional material that can be used successfully as differentiated exercises. In addition we give the children a comprehensive range of self – testing material ("LÜK-Kästen, Logico, Kontrollfix and Paletti").

Integral tools of this internal differentiation include week-based schedules, independent work and work stations. In addition, we work on differentiated, individual homework plans. These are given out at the beginning of the week, and the children are expected to complete them either at home, or during the "homework supervision" time at the school. Thus homework becomes an additional tool we use to support individual children.

3.2 Promotion of Language competence

A particular challenge we face here at the German School is that of language instruction. We attempt to meet this challenge by offering a high number of German lessons, as well as externally differentiating the children in groups of DaM (First Language German) and DaF (foreign Language German). Classes have German lessons as follows:

Class 1: 10 Lessons

Class 2: 8 Lessons

Class 3: 7 Lessons

Class 4: 6 Lessons

Regular language tests are carried out to determine which group the child would be best suited to. The number of supporting Foreign Language German lessons required by a child are discussed and determined by the respective DaM / DaF teachers at the beginning of each new academic year.

Supporting our children to read well is of great significance in the school. We give all the children a positive experience of reading right from the beginning of their school life. This is an indispensable prerequisite for the acquisition of a reading competence. We achieve this through implementing the following measures:

- "Leseeltern" reading in Classes 1 and 2
- "Reading Passport"
- Free reading time
- Regular visits to our school library
- Established class libraries
- Reading Competitions
- Fixed reading times
- Reading unabridged versions
- Working on text interpretation questions with the Programme "Antolin"

Nonetheless, teaching of the English language is also highly valued at the German School Nairobi. Many children who attend our school are growing up in bilingual (English / German) families, or have a good command of the language by the time they come to the primary School simply by living in an English speaking environment. In order to meet this challenge as best as we can, we begin English lessons in Class 1, with 2 lessons per week. In Class 2, this number is increased to 3 lessons, which is further increased to 4 lessons in Classes 3 and 4.

In Classes 1 and 2, the children are taught as one group, and the lessons are differentiated internally, with a native teacher as far as possible. In Classes 3 and 4, the English lessons are split, similar to the DaM / DaF German lessons. Thus, for 2 out of the 4 lessons, the class is split into 2 groups, EaM (First language English) and EaF (Foreign Language English.) In the remaining 2 lessons, the children are taught as one group, according to the syllabus at hand.

Regular testing also forms the basis of what group each child should belong to.

3.3 Extra-Curricular activities

On two days a week, we offer a joint-class (Classes 1 / 2, Classes 3 /4) homework supervision programme. Children are supervised while they independently complete the homework set out on their individual homework plans.

On at least two afternoons a week, we offer extra-curricular activities. Parents as well as any other volunteers are welcome to contribute to the development of their children. This is to support the children outside the confinements of their academic work.

We normally offer the following activities on a yearly basis:

- Swimming
- Football
- Gymnastics
- Athletics
- Recorder
- Theatre
- Dance
- Drums

The children register in these activities after discussion with their parents. They may change the activity after each semester.

For those children who have specific learning disabilities, we co-operate closely with a speech therapist (German-speaking), a psychologist (English-speaking) and with our embassy doctor.

3.4 Promotion of Social Competences

3.4.1 School and Class rules

In order to give the children a definite framework within the school, there are school and class rules. The rules are created in conjunction with the children, so that they are transparent to them, they mirror the wishes of the children and are therefore easily accepted by them. Rules are created by parents, students and teachers, and decided upon in the Teachers' Conference.

Furthermore, parents and teachers of the Primary School children have developed a "Rules Booklet", which is given out to every child. This booklet contains the rights of the students, as well as the teachers, as well general rules for lessons and break-times. The measures to be taken in case a child misbehaves / breaks a school rule have been described at the end of the booklet.

3.4.2 Annual activities

- Celebration of children joining Class 1
- Athletics Games
- Lantern festival
- Christmas Concert in Tigoni
- Spring Concert in the Multi-Purpose Hall
- Closing ceremony before the Christmas Holidays
- Swimming Gala
- Completion of Swimming Badges
- Fasching (Carnival)
- Global (Ball game competition with other European Schools in Nairobi)
- Cultural Day
- Kangaroo Mathematics Competition
- Art Exhibition
- Reading Competition
- Hiking day
- Closing Ceremony before the Summer Holidays

The aim of these activities that involve all the children of the Primary School is, among other things, to give the children a sense of identity and pride in their school. Other highlights of activities in the Primary School include Class trips and Project Week, which take place in alternation with each other.

3.4.3 Extra-curricular activities

The various extra-curricular activities available to the children of the Primary School on a weekly basis allow them to further develop their interests and skills in a relaxed atmosphere, in mixed-age groups.

3.4.4 Design of School grounds

The German School Nairobi is set upon sprawling grounds. In addition, the Primary School has its own playground with a variety of equipment. This encourages the children to exercise physically, as well as develop and strengthen their social skills through group play.

3.4.5 Variety of educational methods

In daily lessons, educational methods are constantly varied (individual, partner or group work). Similarly, teaching and learning methods are rotated (topics split into weekly units, projects, independent work, learning via different media etc.)

4. Outlook

The increasing number of children with special needs naturally poses a problem for us at the German School Nairobi, too. Learning difficulties, social –emotional problems, motor skills deficiencies etc. are just as much of a daily problem for teachers at the German School Nairobi as it would be in any normal school in Germany.

Unfortunately we at the German School in Nairobi do not have access to a child psychologist, nor to a special needs department, as would be the norm for parents in Germany. In spite of this handicap, through the Support and Challenge concept described here, we attempt to deal with special needs children. In order to fully fulfil this concept, we are striving to address this issue. Thus, in order to properly assist special needs children at the school, we urgently need a German-speaking school psychologist and / or Special Needs Teacher at the German School, who would be able to advise and support the entire teaching staff on how to go about these issues. With the assistance of such a person, we would be more successful in dealing with children who need specific educational support.