

# Stepping Stones International preschool Charlottenlund



# Stepping Stones Preschool

A great place for new beginnings...



## INTRODUCTION

Stepping Stones Preschool-Charlottenlund is a lovely nursery/preschool, located in a beautiful Vila on Bernstorffsvej 230, close to the beautiful Bernstorffs park. We have 35 children. 13 children in the Polar bears group, age 1-3. And 22 children in the Tigers group, age 3-5. Our ratio in the Polar bears is one teacher/pedagogue to three children and in the Tigers it is one teacher to six children. The children are together early in the morning and in the late afternoon. From 8.30-15.20 the children are divided into their own groups. During the day, the children are divided into smaller groups of 6-8 children, depending on the activity.

## Our Curriculum

Stepping Stones preschool offers a well-rounded curriculum based on the common educational foundation as well as the six curriculum themes from the Danish strengthened pedagogical curriculum.

Stepping Stones preschool focuses on the importance of meeting each child as an individual human being, which develops in his/her own special way and we see the child's unique potential for processing information in specific ways.

Our approach to education caters to each child's interests and learning styles. We provide a rich environment and a variety of educational choices to help children direct, develop and expand their own interests and unique talents. In addition, we support children in making their own choices both individually and as a group.

We see education as a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by just hearing words, but by experiences in which the child interacts with its environment. This joy of discovery caused by doing and exploring develops a strong foundation for the child's self esteem.

Preschool-age children are very active and curious and, they learn with every experience and play opportunity. In fact, the most important learning that takes place in this stage of development comes through play and 'hands on' activities. Children use many different ways to show their understanding and express their thoughts and creativity. They express themselves through drawing, building, dance and movement, painting, sculpting, pretend play, modelling and music. It is important that we give them enough opportunities to express themselves. By incorporating these activities in our curriculum, we are encouraging their learning and development.

Something very important in our daily approach to education is that **learning and play are not separated**.

In addition, we see the parents as the child's first teacher. Here at Stepping Stones we encourage parents to participate actively in our community, being part of celebrations and various events and topics throughout the year, as they are a vital component for the children and our community.

Preschoolers are constantly on the move, exploring their world with exuberance, curiosity, and a seemingly endless source of energy. A child's capacity for learning in this stage is enormous. They learn and develop from every experience, relationship, and adventure they encounter. At Stepping Stones, we aim to create the space and provide plenty of opportunities to explore objects, the world around them and play in different environments to help develop their imagination and master the motor, cognitive, language and social skills that are essential for future development.

Good pedagogical learning environments are particularly important for children in vulnerable positions. We have a responsibility to support children with various challenges and ensure that everyone participates in our community.



## Social & Personal development

One of the advantages of being a smaller preschool is that all the children and teachers are familiar with each other. This helps us promote and create a friendly family like attitude at Stepping Stones. From early in the morning, children greet each other and the teachers in a warm way, showing trust and affection. We create a secure and comfortable environment so that we can achieve the best possible conditions for the development of the individual child.

Throughout our daily activities, we make sure that every child has the chance to demonstrate their abilities (during circle time, cooking class, science class, body movement, story time, music & art class) and we praise their efforts and actions. We encourage the children to express their own ideas and to describe themselves positively. Furthermore, we encourage them to interact cooperatively with their peers while playing, reading, sharing materials and doing activities together.

The child's feelings must be understood and recognized and, children need to feel accepted as they are and for what they are. We recognize the child, his/her resources and feelings and we allow them to participate freely to strengthen the child's interests and emotions. For example, we do this by being flexible in relation to planned activities. If we are doing an activity about a specific topic, but this topic raises children's interest in a different area, we follow the child's interests. Moreover, we guide the children towards confident self-expression in music, meanwhile gaining physical coordination and control of their bodies, voices, inner feelings and emotions.

To support the individual child in its development and being an international preschool, we understand and recognize the children's cultural diversity and cover themes related to nationalities, different traditions, recipes, songs and celebration of foreign holidays.

## Language & Communication

Through activities such as story time, 'book show-and-tell', puppet shows, singing rhymes, games and playing, children grow an interest in language and books. Story time is an important activity in our curriculum as we believe it is very beneficial to promote their listening skills, comprehension and vocabulary as we ask questions about the story and talk about it afterwards. Children also gain confidence and become accustomed with the language as they are encouraged to listen and share their opinions and experiences throughout group and individual activities such as circle time. We encourage the children to use sentences instead of individual words as they become more and more familiar with the English language. In addition, we use different tools, materials and methods to introduce the children to the first pre-writing and reading steps, such as learning letter recognition, formation and sounds. The children learn and practice language using fun and engaging tools (playdough, sand, paper letters, pompoms, salt trays, and much more).

Through our daily activities, children learn about the helpfulness of language and how they can use it in a creative, imaginative, nonverbal and verbal way, for instance while dancing together, playing, singing, reading books to each other and other creative and artistic activities.

## Body movement

In order to develop control over their large and small muscles, children are encouraged to use their body through physical activities and games, body movement and music, outdoor play, field trips and, through self-help practices such as going up and down the stairs, cutting fruits and mixing ingredients during cooking class.

In addition, they gain autonomy and independence by doing regular tasks such as getting dressed and helping to clean up after themselves when needed. We also promote their fine motor skills by teaching them how to hold the pencil, use age appropriate scissors and do small manipulative activities such as building with Lego and playing with beads.

Through body and movement, the child will be aware of and understand their own physical reactions and boundaries. They also become conscious of their own "physical strength" and consequences of their own body. By using their body and gaining control over it, they understand its function and importance of being healthy and safe. Children are free to use their bodies creatively following the music or a story and this helps them gain confidence and shape their personalities as well. Children learn about their bodies and physical environment when they are playing and in motion.

As part of our curriculum, children also learn about fire safety, first aid skills, health, nutrition and hygiene.

## Nature & Science

As part of our curriculum, we focus on themes and activities that teach children about nature, the weather, the animal kingdom and human body. We use our daily practices to talk about and explain why nature works the way it does at the same time as they are experiencing it, for example, why does it rain and how do plants grow. We show children how to take care of nature, trees, plants, flowers and animals and involve them in several activities, such as watering our plants, making insect hotels and planting. We incorporate recycling activities and make art projects out of different materials such as boxes, plastic bottles and nature elements.

Through outdoor play and exploration, the children will obtain higher strength, better coordination and greater flexibility. Good experiences with nature will give the foundation of respect for nature and the environment.

Through science experiments, the children learn about the world around them. It can help them create a healthy dose of scepticism and help children to solve problems themselves

## Culture, aesthetics & community

Aesthetic experiences give the child the opportunity to share, reflect and understand their own experiences and thoughts. Curiosity, sensation, play and imagination are part of the aesthetic learning process and can create new perspectives and views that can be new knowledge and new learning. Therefore, the child must be supported in creating cultural expressions in a learning environment that involves the child in the process, appreciates engagement and construction, as well as the child's own experimental expression.

The child should feel that his/her way of managing time and space, play, friendships and conflicts is met with curiosity and respect. At the same time, the educational learning environment must be a democratic community where all children can participate and experience themselves as an active part of decision making.

At Stepping Stones, we encourage a democratic environment by promoting the dialogue with the children and giving them the right communication skills. Children learn to listen and respect others' opinions, to express their own opinion and wishes and develop both as individuals and as members of a society.

All children are included in equal and different types of communities where they experience their own and others' cultural backgrounds, norms, traditions and values.

Our school is designed to stimulate children's curiosity. The Children must be offered a physical, mental and aesthetic child environment that promotes their well-being, health, development and learning. We observe and listen to the children and if there is an area that is not used for its purpose, based on the children's wishes and needs, we will create a new area.

Around the school, you will find many corners where the children can play. Through pretend play, the children develop empathy toward each other. They develop a desire to take care of others by cooking something for them or taking care of the toys. Moreover, through pretend play they also start to socialize with other kids and play together by following very simple rules.



## Books

### The Importance of Reading in Our Academic Curriculum

The act of reading stories is a fundamental aspect of our academic curriculum. It's been proven that reading daily to young children stimulates the part of the brain responsible for language comprehension, which helps them develop language skills and enhances their social and literacy abilities. Additionally, it activates areas in the brain linked with visual imagery.



## Circle time

Both groups have circle time every day to start the day in the best way. We always start by saying good morning and singing songs.

We talk about our theme and what kind of activities we have for the day.

Circle time is also used to discuss and reflect on various issues and topics or how the group is doing in general. Circle time also allows the children to reflect and talk about the things they like or dislike and what they would like to explore and learn next. Their opinion matters and we want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to share their wonderful minds.



## Gym, Music and Yoga classes

Downstairs we have a small gym, with soft mats and big mirrors. The children use the gym minimum once a week.

During Gym class we work on gross motor skills, using lots of different props such as obstacle courses, beanbags, balls, and more. Depending on the theme the children are working on, we may include a story or game together with the children. This helps to build confidence, encourages imagination, and supports the child's social/emotional development. Sometimes, we have gym outside.

We use music everyday in our classrooms but once a week the children has a planned group lesson, where they learn about rhythm, song structure, melody, and dynamics through play.

We understand the importance of managing stress in children's lives. As part of our curriculum, we have introduced yoga to our students, which helps them unwind and relax. The kids participate in various breathing exercises and stretches that benefit both their mind and body. Most importantly, we ensure that they have fun while practicing yoga.



## Art

We also have a lovely art room where the kids can explore different art techniques, such as painting, modeling and crafting, while practicing basic skills like holding the brush, cutting, gluing, and more. The children also work on projects related to the themes they are learning. We also do art projects in the classrooms and outside.

**We pay more important attention to the children's creativity, the process and the uniqueness of their creations, than the end result.**



## Academic

We have academic tools available in the classrooms and stations with different academic activities.

The purpose of the academic activities is to get the children familiar with the alphabet, numbers and other logical concepts through fun and stimulating activities. We create different letter/number activities the children can choose from according to their curiosity. The children also have notebooks where they can practice writing letters and numbers, in different formats, for instance, by tracing, writing independently, and as they progress and develop, they write words, do simple additions and subtractions, etc.



## Science & Nature

The children explore their environment all the time and in many activities, they experiment, explore, measure and more.

Moreover, once a week the children have a planned science class where they discuss topics related to geography, botany, zoology, and biology. It is important that children learn about nature, animals, plants, the world, and of course, themselves. We will try to get them closer to understanding these themes in more depth and from a different perspective through the use of exciting experiments and observations and of course, a lot of fun. They will get a chance to become little scientists by conducting experiments - they will predict, observe and discuss the outcomes.



## Baking/Cooking class

The children recreate a healthy recipe once a week. Cooking and baking are a fun way to learn and it helps them to develop in different areas such as motor skills, math abilities, language, teamwork and focus, among others. An important focus of this activity is the process as well as engaging their senses by touching, smelling and tasting while trying out different healthy recipes.



## Communication, Documentation & Evaluation

1. Monthly newsletters from the groups and office.
2. ClassDojo. Our communication platform, primarily to share pictures and updates from the classrooms.
3. Yearly assessment for each individual child.
4. Meetings: Welcome meeting. Welcome back to school meeting. Yearly parent teacher conference. Follow-up meetings.
5. Portfolio for each individual child when they leave the school.

\*Stepping Stones' portfolio is a big book with pictures of the different activities the child has been participating in throughout the years. It contains all their work, child's assessment and greetings from the teachers.



A good children's environment is the essence for learning and development. In order to achieve a good environment, it is important to look at different environments and perspectives.

The physical environment regards the possibility of movement, space, noise, light, ergonomics and hygiene. The indoor and outdoor physical environment fosters optimal growth and development through opportunities for exploration and learning. The aesthetic environment focuses on the interior design and decoration of the rooms, which have an impact on the children's experiences and actions.

The psychological environment is the foundation for how the children feel and interact with each other and adults. A good psychological environment is created when focusing on social relationships, good communication and understanding. The children and parents should always feel safe and the staff should always be apparent, present, engaged, motivated and inclusive. The children's perspective takes into consideration understanding the children as individuals and appreciating their differences. It is our goal to understand, respond and use the children's perspectives to improve the quality of our practice.

Stepping Stones preschool is a small school but with many good resources. We divide the children in smaller groups so they can get more space and attention. It gives the teachers an opportunity to give the individual child more attention. The children decorate their classrooms throughout the school year, which gives them a belonging to their classroom. We study different themes every month, where we focus on relationships, nature, cultural celebrations and the world around us. Furthermore, we have a good and clear communication between children, parents and teachers and the children interact well together.

In order to provide the best environment and quality of education, we evaluate our children's environment throughout the year. We have a yearly evaluation of our curriculum and we update our yearly plan.

