

Toy-free kindergarten

Information for parents

For 3 months, the toys are going on holiday – leaving behind chairs, tables, ropes, cloths, clothes pegs, cardboard boxes... the imagination of the children and the children themselves.

What is the aim of this project?

The children have much more time to play freely in the toy-free kindergarten. They make up their own minds about what they want to do. The ideas for activities come from the children. Important life skills are strengthened: talking to each other, solving problems together, noticing what they want themselves, sensing how others are feeling, learning to negotiate well... skills that are needed to grow into independent young people and adults.

What will the children learn from the project?



Building things

How can I arrange chairs without everything collapsing? This means learning how physical laws work through play.

Children often plan construction projects with each other. They practise contributing ideas to the group, being the boss and making compromises. Playing together instead of side by side! That takes practice.

Eating a mid-morning snack

Am I thirsty, hungry, tired or do I want to eat now because that's what two friends are doing? In the toy-free kindergarten the children can decide for themselves when and where they want to eat their mid-morning snack. This allows children to learn to perceive signals from their own bodies, and to consider social desires such as "eating together".

Arguing and negotiating

The children practise expressing their own opinions and asserting themselves. They become bolder and able to clearly formulate their wishes. They learn to express their feelings, gradually expanding their vocabulary as a result.

Feeling bored

It is quite possible that the children may get bored at times. In the toy-free kindergarten, the kindergarten teacher holds back and gives the child time to find a way out of boredom. Sometimes

it's OK to just sit and watch what's happening and stare into space. Children are encouraged to develop a new play idea for themselves. Boredom is often the prerequisite for creativity.

Becoming braver

Through play, children create opportunities for themselves to overcome fears and become braver. This could mean jumping from a table onto a mat below. They will hesitate if the mat is too far away or if other children are still on the mat. They will ask for help, climb down again to push the mat closer or build a higher "jumping tower". They climb, jump, crawl, dance... They learn to measure their strength and to assess obstacles better so that they hurt themselves and others less.

What is a typical kindergarten morning like?

The children arrive at the kindergarten, get changed by themselves in the cloakroom, say hello to the kindergarten teacher, then go and play. Some come to the kindergarten with a clear idea of what they want to do, or continue playing where they left off yesterday. Others walk around the kindergarten to find an idea or a game. Others sit down and watch what's going on. They can eat when they are hungry or feel like it.

Towards the end of the half-day, negotiations take place and a decision is made on how and what to tidy up. Afterwards the kindergarten teacher evaluates the morning with the children. What did you enjoy most today? What are you particularly proud of?

Toy-free kindergarten: does that mean no rules?

Not at all. The usual kindergarten rules generally continue to apply. Others change a little. The children are given more say.

Some of the rituals are also maintained, while others change.

What is the teacher's role?

The kindergarten teacher accompanies the children with restraint, enabling them to considerably enhance their skills. They continuously watch what is happening in the kindergarten and gain a deeper insight into the developmental status of the children. They guide the children so that they start to think for themselves. The children learn a lot by having their own say, by being involved in the way things are organised, by contributing ideas and by taking responsibility.

What if I'm worried about my child?

If you are worried about something or if your child does not want to go to kindergarten, please contact the kindergarten teacher so that you can discuss your observations and concerns.

Aargau addiction prevention and toy-free kindergarten?

Aargau addiction prevention launched the project in the canton of Aargau in 2002 and has been running it ever since. People with good life skills are less likely to develop addictive behaviour. They find solutions when faced with critical life situations and are good at seeking and accepting help. They are self-aware and know what they are capable of doing. They can find words to describe how they feel.

Further information can be found at www.spielzeugfrei.ch