



## **A good start is crucial**

### **Supplementary language support in the year before school starts**

*(as part of the SprachFit programme)*

The federal state of Baden-Württemberg wants to support all children as effectively as possible in making a good start to school. A particularly important aspect of this is ensuring that they can speak and understand German well. Because language is the key to learning and to active participation in school life.

The SprachFit language support programme has been developed to support children specifically in the development of their language skills at as early a stage as possible. The aim is to give them more confidence in using the German language and thus to improve their educational opportunities. A central component of the programme is the supplementary language support that is available in the year before school starts – for children in particular need of support.

### **Here's how a child's need for language support is identified**

12 to 24 months before they start school, all children undergo a school readiness assessment (Einschulungsuntersuchung – ESU) carried out by the health authority. In the context of this assessment, a decision is made as to whether additional language support is required. If the health authority determines that intensive language support is required, the school management can decide that the child should attend the supplementary language support course in the year before they start school.

### **Content and conditions of the supplementary language support**

The supplementary language support before school starts comprises:

- four 45-minute classes of language support a week in the year before school starts;
- support in small groups of 4 to 12 children;
- an integrated approach: language learning is supported with exercise, music, emotional-social and basic mathematical skills;
- the language support can be provided in pre-school or primary school;
- the language support is provided by trained primary school teachers, SprachFit teachers or pre-school teaching assistants.

A central feature is the close collaboration between pre-schools and primary schools. This makes the transition to school easier and helps to avoid discontinuities in the educational pathway.



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### **All children are considered – including those without a pre-school place**

All children, including those who do not attend a pre-school, are included in the school readiness assessment by the health authority. If a need for intensive language support is identified, they also take part in the supplementary language support in the year before school starts.

### **Aims of the language support**

The aim is to strengthen children's linguistic confidence so that they can:

- follow the teaching better;
- understand their work better;
- formulate their own thoughts and communicate with others;
- participate actively in classes and school life.

Early language support can reduce potential learning barriers, strengthen self-confidence and significantly improve educational opportunities.

### **Language support is set to become obligatory**

Language support in the year before school starts is currently being developed throughout the state. From the 2027/28 school year, it will be obligatory for all children for whom a need for language support is identified in the course of the school readiness assessment. Until then, participation can only be recommended.

### **Children who need further support**

If there is still a significant need for support after the language support course in the year before school starts – in language or general development, for example – a child of obligatory school age can attend a junior class. In this additional year, children receive intensive preparation for starting school, Year 1 and teaching at primary school.

If children have not been in Germany for long and have little knowledge of German if any, they can learn German in a preparatory class (Vorbereitungsklasse – (VKL).

If the need for further support is only small, additional language support courses can be continued in Years 1 and 2.



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### **How parents can support their children**

Parents can support the language development of their child by:

- ensuring regular participation in the language support available;
- talking to their child about the content of the language support course, repeating songs and rhymes with them;
- keeping in contact with teaching assistants and teachers and asking questions whenever they arise;
- speaking, singing and reading aloud in their native language as much as possible at home – this also helps with learning German.

### **Further information about the process**

Details about the organisation of the language support (e.g. location, time, persons involved) will be provided by the relevant body or the education office.

### **A common aim: equal opportunities for all children**

Through broad, well-planned and consistent language support, all children – irrespective of their origin and individual requirements – are given the opportunity for a successful school career and equal involvement in education.

Together, we will help to ensure that your child makes a strong start to school!