

**The Delfin 4 language proficiency assessment, two years before school enrolment**

Dear parents,

Language plays a key role in the development process of every child. Language is the key and the foundation for success at school, in the future professional career and in society as a whole.

With this flyer we would like to once again draw your attention as parents to the importance of the language assessment two years before school enrolment.

Participation is mandatory for all children who do not attend a day care centre.

As you have probably gathered from the media coverage over the last few months, the results of scientific studies and tests reveal a clear picture: too many of our children fail to reach the minimum standards in German and mathematics by the end of primary school. More than one in five children find it difficult to achieve the required learning milestones at school. For children who do not attend a day care centre, this is mainly attributed to the fact that the language development and language skills of children are not always sufficiently cultivated before they start school. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to promote them early on in their lives. Determining language proficiency two years before school enrolment will ensure that all children, if necessary, have access to early language support. This ensures that the basic prerequisites for successful school learning are met.

The assessment of linguistic development and the resulting support for the children attending a day care centre is in the hands of the institution itself.

Children that do not attend a day care centre and children whose parents have not consented to educational documentation at the children's day care centre are tested using the Delfin 4 procedure under the responsibility of the state education authorities. This means that primary school teachers or social workers at the primary schools will carry out the one-time 'Besuch im Pfiffikushaus' (visit to the Pfiffikushaus) test with these children.

Parents of the affected children receive a corresponding invitation and can accompany their child to the test. Children who require additional pedagogical language support based on the results of the language proficiency assessment will then receive assistance at day care facilities or family centres. Regular participation in the language courses is also mandatory.

Best regards,

Dorothee Feller

Minister of School and Education of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia

Josefine Paul

Minister for Children, Youth, Family, Equality, Refugees and Integration of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia

### **Why does the language proficiency assessment take place two years prior to school enrolment?**

Children must have a sufficient command of the German language so they can learn successfully at school. The so-called language proficiency assessment verifies whether the language development of a child is appropriate for their age. It takes place two years before school enrolment so that children who need language support can be prepared for school in an optimum manner.

However, the language proficiency assessment does not check whether children may require speech therapy for medical reasons.

### **Who takes part in the language proficiency assessment?**

All children born between 1 October 2018 and 30 September 2019 will have their language development assessed at least two years before they start school. For children attending a day care centre, language development is a regular part of the pedagogical work at the facility.

All other children must participate in a language proficiency assessment. This includes children who are currently undergoing speech or language therapy.

### **Who does not take part in the language proficiency assessment?**

Children do not take part in the language proficiency assessment if

- they attend a day care centre and their parents have agreed to the educational documentation,

- they attend a special day care centre or receive integrated support for disabled children and it can be assumed that the test is not applicable to them or will not provide additional findings.

### **When and where is the language proficiency assessment carried out?**

The language proficiency assessment will take place between 8 May 2023 and 21 June 2023 at a primary school. It is carried out under the responsibility of the educational authority. Parents of the affected children receive a corresponding invitation and can accompany their child to the test.

### **How is a child's language proficiency assessed?**

The children are individually tested by primary school teachers or social workers specialising in primary school socio-pedagogy. The process takes about 30 minutes. At the end of the procedure, the teacher informs the parents if their child needs additional language support.

### **Do children have to take part in the language proficiency assessment?**

Participation in the language proficiency assessment procedure is mandatory.

This is the only way to help all children who need additional language support. If parents do not ensure that their child takes part in the language proficiency assessment, they may face a fine.

### **What does 'Delfin 4' mean?**

The procedure for determining the language proficiency is based on the 'Delfin 4' tool developed by Professor Lilian Fried at the Technical University of Dortmund. The name is the acronym for the German phrase for 'Diagnostics, Parenting, Promoting Language Skills in North Rhine-Westphalia for 4-year-olds'

*[Diagnostik, Elternarbeit, Förderung der Sprachkompetenz In Nordrhein-Westfalen bei 4-Jährigen]*. It is applied in the form of the individual test called 'Besuch im Pfiffikushaus'.

## **What happens next if it is determined that a child needs additional language support?**

### **⇒ If a child does not attend a day care centre,**

Parents are advised to register their child at a day care centre. If parents do not register their child at a day care centre, they must have their child participate in a preschool language course. This can be carried out at a day care centre or a family centre, for example.

### **⇒ If the child attends a day care centre,**

the child receives support at the day care centre from qualified professionals. This language support is integrated into the everyday routine of the day care centre.

## **How long does the language support last?**

The children receive pedagogical language support up to the school enrolment stage.

## **Is language support free of charge?**

Yes, the funds for the additional language support at the day care centres are provided by the state government. Any travel expenses which are incurred will not be reimbursed.

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