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## Information about the school system in Niedersachsen

### **Our Children, Our Future!**

- Day care center / nursery school
- School system
- Primary school
- Secondary school
- Recognition of foreign qualifications
- Transition from school to work

in English



## Dear Parents

The integration process for new immigrants and refugees in Germany is very challenging as everything is still unfamiliar to them. The children's future and their integration into school are a major concern for the parents and every parent aims to have a better future for their children. Germany's education system differs from that of many other countries, as its foundation is based on the active support of parents as well as the support of their children. Another focal point is the continuous constructive cooperation between teachers and parents. That is why parents need correct and reliable information about the educational system in Lower Saxony.

In this booklet, we provide some essential information. We are however aware that we are not able to answer all questions. For further information, please contact the responsible offices, for example, your local education authority or the schools.

## Who are we?

The MigrantenElternNetzwerk Niedersachsen (MEN) is a Parents Network for Migrants in Lower Saxony which aims to improve the educational opportunities of children with a migrant background. This is achieved through activating parents and strengthening their competencies to be more actively involved in the education of their children. Simultaneously, we represent their interests to policy-makers, administrators, and decision-makers at the state level.

**Information for parents with young children  
aged between 1 and 6 years old**

**When can your child attend a nursery school?**

**Nursery school / day care center, 1 year to 3 years old**  
Once your child has reached the age of one, you have a legal right to register your child for childcare in a nursery school or day care centre.

**Why should my child attend a nursery school / day care center?**

- The children learn to speak German more quickly. They receive special language support in the facilities (if needed).
- The children learn to play together with other children.
- The children are stimulated and prepared for school. It is essential that the child attends day care center from the age of 5.

**The right to a day care place**

**Nursery school / day care centre: 3 years to 6 years**  
Children between 3-6 years of age also have a legal right to get a place in a day care center. The place does not necessarily have to be in the surrounding area of the child's home.

**How do I obtain a place?**

Applications are submitted to your municipality (e.g. Youth Welfare Office, Online-Portal) and directly to the day care center. You will be notified in writing as soon as the place is available.  
Please ensure that you submit an application as soon as possible and remember to register your child in several centers. As places are not always available in the desired day care.

**What to bring with you when applying?**

Your identification documents will be requested. A certified copy of your child's birth certificate should be provided. Proof that your child has received a measles vaccination. It is also required.

**Duration of time my child will be cared for?**

The times vary depending on the facility and the space available. There are all-day places and only morning or afternoon places. Usually the childcare hours are from 8.30 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.  
The child must be brought and picked up on time.

**Will my child be fed there?**

There are specific times for breakfast and lunch. You should enquire at the facility if you should give your child breakfast or make a contribution to the cost. A reduction is provided for parents who receive benefits.  
Lunch depends on the care time of your child.  
In most cases, the facilities offer an alternative to pork.

## Information for parents regarding primary school children (6 to 10 years)

### Compulsory school attendance

In Lower Saxony, children between the ages of 6 and 18 years are required to attend school for 12 years. Usually, school enrolment takes place after the summer holidays in August / September of each year.

### When does your child start school?

It is compulsory for children who turn 6 years by 30 June to attend school. Parents whose children turn 6 years between the beginning of July and the end of September, no longer have to automatically enrol them in school. The families decide whether their children can begin at a later stage. In this case they must apply for a later enrolment by 01 May. All other children who are not yet fully ready for school (physically, mentally or socially) can start school one year later.

### Before school

Children should have attended day care from at least the age of 5 years. We recommend attendance at day care from the age of 3 years. At the age of 4 years, your child's pediatrician will conduct an U8 examination to determine your child's developmental status. A language test is carried out 15 months before the child starts school. If the child does not pass the test, he or she will receive linguistic support. A preliminary medical examination of your child will also take place in your local health department. An invitation will be sent to you in writing.

### Enrollment

Before starting the first class, your child will receive an invitation from the school. If the distance from home to school is too far, they will receive a free bus ticket. Further information about this will be provided by the school. A list of the required materials (school bag, books, pencils, notebooks) will also be provided by the school. Families from low-income households can apply for a subsidy through the Bildungs- und Teilhabepaket (BuT).

### Classes

Usually, the children have lessons from 8.00 a.m. until 1.00 p.m. The children are expected to regularly attend classes and to be on time. Please inform the school immediately by telephone if your child is unable to attend school. In case the child is unable to attend school for more than three days you will be required to provide proof of absence (a doctors letter, an excuse letter

from the parent etc.). Please find out what your school's regulations are regarding this issue.

**The participation of parents**

Both the school and the teachers are expected to cooperate with parents. This is achieved through parents' evenings (Elternabende) and parent meetings (Elterngespräche). Parent representatives are also elected in each class.

**Questions?**

Should you have any questions or require further information, please make an appointment with your class teacher.



## Secondary schools (after primary school)

After primary school has finished (grade 4), the child moves on to a secondary school.

As parents, you decide which secondary school your child should attend.

Teachers will inform parents about the type of school forms during counselling interviews. They will also advise parents on the best school type that will promote your child's individual growth.

The performance of your child should match the type of school selected with regard to the grades, the interests and the existing friendships with other children.

1 - Lower secondary school (Hauptschule)

2 - Intermediate school (Realschule)

3 - Grammar school (Gymnasium)

4 - Comprehensive school (Gesamtschule - upper secondary school, IGS)

### Lower secondary school (Hauptschule)

The lower secondary school consists of the school years 5 to 9 and / or 10. It provides pupils with a basic general education and an individual vocational training. The lower secondary school leaving certificate (Hauptschulabschluss) can be obtained after the 9th grade. With a good report at the end of grade 9, pupils can attend grade 10 and obtain the intermediate secondary school leaving certificate (Realschulabschluss).

### Intermediate secondary school (Realschule)

The intermediate secondary School (Realschule) covers the 5th to 10th grades. It provides pupils with an extended general education and a general vocational training. After the 9th year of schooling, the lower secondary school leaving certificate (Hauptschulabschluss) can be obtained. The intermediate school leaving certificate (Realschulabschluss) which is obtained after completing the 10th grade enables students to attend technical colleges.

### Grammar school (Gymnasium)

The grammar school consists of the school grades 5 to 13. It provides pupils with a broad and in-depth education which focuses on research skills. At the end of the 10th grade, the pupils receive - depending on their performance - an intermediate school leaving certificate (Realschulabschluss). Pupils are able to attend a technical college after completing the 12th grade. The **general higher education entrance qualification** for A'levels (Abitur) is awarded after completion of the 13th year.

**Comprehensive school (Gesamtschule)**

The comprehensive school provides pupils with a basic, extended or broad and in-depth education and enables them to continue their vocational or university-related education. The upper secondary school (Oberschule) covers grades 5 to 10. Usually with the school streams of a Hauptschule / Realschule. There the lower secondary school leaving certificate (Hauptschulabschluss) and intermediate school leaving (Realschulabschluss) can be obtained. The integrated comprehensive school (Integrierte Gesamtschule, IGS) educates pupils from 5th to 13th grade. This type of school is rare to find in other countries. Depending on the child's performance the child can obtain the same qualifications as in the lower secondary school (Hauptschule), intermediate secondary school (Realschule) and A'level (Abitur).

**What is good for my child?**

The performance of your child should match the type of school chosen, this includes the school grades and the child's interests. Informative events and websites of the respective school help parents to choose the right school.

**The participation of parents**

Information and advice for parents and pupils are provided during parents' evenings, parent-teacher conferences, information sessions and individual discussions. Should you have a question, please arrange an appointment with the responsible subject teacher or the class teacher.



## Transitioning from school to work: Information for parents and young adults

After successfully completing school, the next step is either apprenticeship or university studies. In Germany it is not so easy to find a job, especially for those who have no apprenticeship. The vocational training depends on the ability to perform and the interests and abilities of the young person. Apprenticeship training has an important role to play in Germany and is considered to be the key to a professional career.

### Dual Vocational Training

The dual training system is the most common system of vocational training in Germany. Dual means that one part of the training takes place in a company (e.g. 4 days per week) and another part in a vocational school (1 day per week). This enables the link between theory and practice. About 2/3 of the employees in Germany, except for the academic professions, are trained in a dual system.

#### Time and duration of the training

The training usually takes 2-3 years. In the vocational school, subjects related to the specific occupation and general skills such as German, Politics and Sport e.t.c., are taught.

#### Selection

There are about 330 recognised training occupations in Germany. This makes it difficult to make a choice. The Employment Agency advises and supports young people in finding the right training.

#### Place of training / admission

An application is normally made in a company. The monthly salary varies from occupation to occupation and lies between 400€ and 600€. The salary increases after each year of training. Language skills, at least level B1, are necessary. Upon acceptance you will receive a contract from the training company. An enrolment in a vocational school is required.



### Vocational school

In addition to training in the dual system, some professions can also be trained at a vocational school. Classes are held on a full-time basis. At the state vocational schools, training is free of charge. Private schools charge fees.

### A-levels

The requirement for studying at a university is usually the A-levels (General Higher Education Entrance Qualification). To study at an University of applied sciences you will need an advanced technical college entrance qualification. The studies are free of charge and recognised for their good quality.

Individuals with refugee status can also receive financial support under the Vocational Training Assistance Act (BAFöG).

### What must you consider?

Before making your career choice, please seek advice. Several institutions are available to assist (e.g. Vocational Information Centre (BIZ) at the Employment Agency or the student advisory service).



## Qualification of foreign school-leaving qualifications

A large number of pupils who come to Germany already attended school in their countries. These children face the question of whether their school-leaving certificate will be recognised, just as the question about the school or class they will be admitted to in Lower Saxony.

In Lower Saxony, it is generally the case that the the school concerned is responsible for determining the academic equivalency of the childs qualifications and the class into which the new pupils will be placed. The school' s decision is based on the number of years of school attendance and the number of subjects taught in the country of origin.

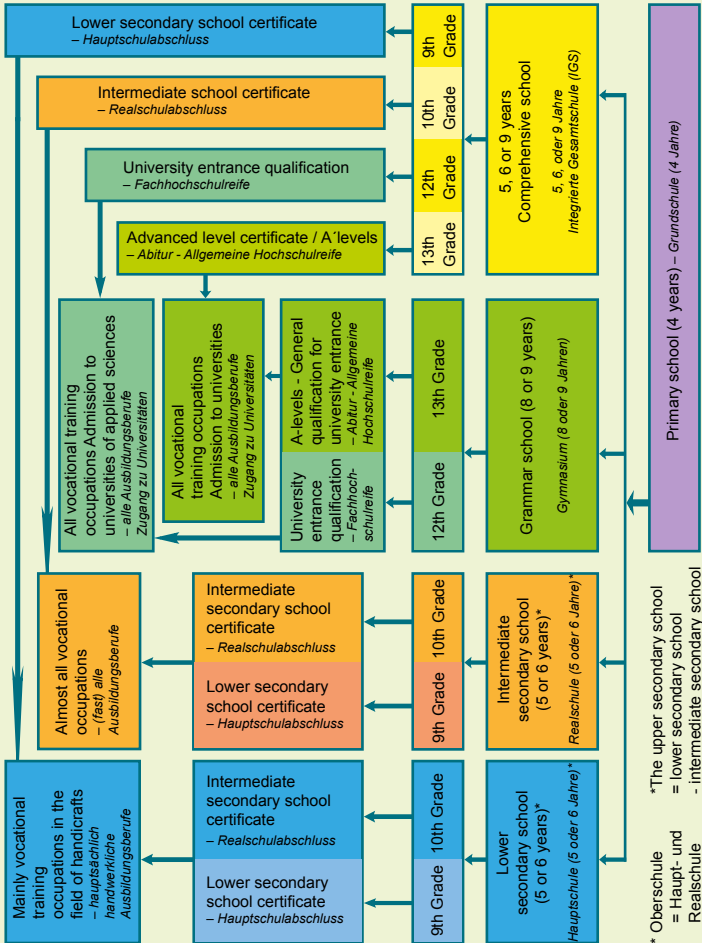
You do not need to submit a written application for the verification of certificates. When registering you should bring with you the following:

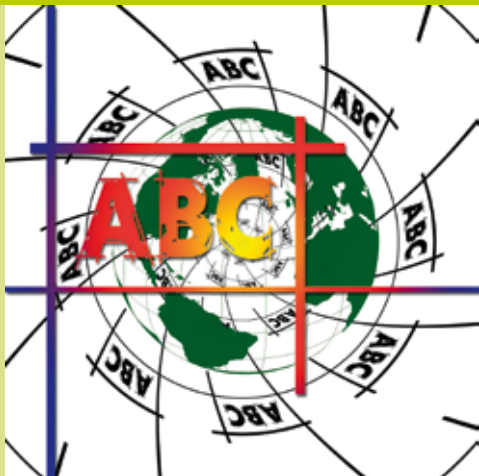
- identity card or passport
- residence permit
- certificate of registration from the municipality
- original copies of the school-leaving certificates
- certified translations of all documents or certificates
- photocopy of all documents mentioned

If you cannot provide any documents, please ask at the relevant school. If your child has not yet mastered the German language, your child will be supported. The school will also give you information about this.



# The school system in Germany





## Kontakt:

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Das MigrantenElternNetzwerk Niedersachsen wird gefördert durch:



Niedersächsisches Ministerium  
für Soziales, Gesundheit  
und Gleichstellung

Das MigrantenElternNetzwerk Niedersachsen wird unterstützt durch:



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