

Info Sheet

Enrolling in Daycare or School

Welcome! We are very happy that you and your family have decided to move to Jena and become part of the Microverse Family. We understand that relocating to a new city in a foreign country can come with many challenges—especially when it comes to settling in with children.

This information sheet is here to help answer common questions such as: Where can my child go to kindergarten? How do I enroll them in school? What schools are available, and how do I know which one is right for my child?

The following information is collected with international scientists in mind, who may not be familiar with the German Kindergarten and School system, but German scientists may find some helpful tips as well!

Please be aware, that the information in this sheet is for general reference only. While we try to keep it accurate and up to date, some details might be outdated or not be fully accurate. Please double-check with official sources before making any decisions, as we are not responsible for any issues that may arise from using this information. We inserted many links to official sources and can guide you personally, if you have questions. [Don't hesitate to contact us!](#)

Quick links:

Students and employees of FSU and the Microverse Cluster will find a wealth of well-organized information at the [Family Office](#).

This information on the [German School System](#) provides a basic overview.

General Information on the School System

School System in Thuringia

In Germany, Education is managed by each federal state, so school systems can vary slightly across Germany. Most schools are public and free of charge, though there are private options.

Kindergartens offer full-day childcare for children up to school-starting age (typically age 6). It is in principle possible to start Kindergarten from the age of 6 months but children in Thuringia typically start kindergarten between the ages one to three. Kindergarten is not mandatory and focuses on play-based learning and social development. As an alternative, you can also choose a “Tagesmutter/-vater” (“Day-mother/-father”). A “Tagesmutter” is a certified childminder who provides daycare for children aged one to three in a home-like setting, usually offering flexible, small-group care. Some Tagesmutter may also offer care for babies who are younger than one.

Typically at age six, children begin primary school, which lasts for four years. Jena has a wide diversity of primary school options. Most children attend a “Grundschule”, that provides only primary education. These schools typically have 2-4 classes per year (each class has around 25 children). However Jena also offers “Gemeinschaftschule”, that provide both primary and secondary education; these schools have a primary school section that may be smaller than in a Grundschule, with 1-2 classes per year. There are also several private schools (both primary schools and those that offer primary and secondary education) – these schools charge fees, typically around 300-400 euros per month (but can be higher in some cases).

Different schools can follow very different educational philosophies and methods – for example some schools have mixed classes containing multiple year groups. However, there is a universal basic content to the learning that is determined by the Thuringian state government. For example, all schools provide swimming training in the third class and bicycle safety training in the fourth class. A useful booklet listing all Jena’s schools and their features is the “[Jenaer Schulwegweiser](#)”. For primary education, the school day typically starts at 7.30 or 8am, with lessons until lunchtime. The curriculum focusses on reading, writing and maths, with also art, music, sport and ethics. English lessons start in the third class. Typically a class will have the same teacher for the entire 4 years of primary education. It is however relatively common in Germany for children to repeat a year or sometimes to skip a year.

After Grundschule, students are placed into different types of secondary schools based on their academic performance and teacher recommendations. Regelschule offers basic and intermediate school qualifications after grades 9 and 10, which allow students to begin vocational training. Gesamtschule and Gemeinschaftsschule offer all qualifications, including the Abitur (highest school degree). Gymnasium prepares pupils directly for the Abitur exams. Förderschule is designed for children with severe disabilities or special educational needs.

[More information in various languages on the schools system](#)

Homeschooling

In general, homeschooling is not allowed in Germany.

German law requires all children to attend school (known as “Schulpflicht”), and this usually means going to a state-approved school in person. The idea is that education is not just about academics, but also about social integration and learning to live in a democratic society.

There are very few exceptions, such as serious medical reasons, but even then, special arrangements are usually made through the school system—not traditional homeschooling like in some other countries. Families who attempt to homeschool without permission can face fines or legal action.

All-Day Program and After-School Care

Primary schools in Thuringia offer all-day care to support families with childcare and education outside regular lessons. Children complete homework, join projects, and enjoy leisure activities.

All children from school entry to the end of primary school are entitled to after-school care, called “Hort”. Participation is voluntary, but schools must offer it. In state-run schools, Hort staff are employed by the state to ensure unity between school and care. Typically, children eat lunch at school (this is provided and there is a separate fee for it, but they can also bring packed lunch), then go directly to Hort, and can be picked up anytime before around 5pm. It is also common for children to make their own way to and from school, on foot or with public transport, even in primary school.

The Hort is available for primary school pupils (grades 1-4, including Gemeinschaftsschulen) Monday to Friday both before school and in the afternoon: children can attend for up to 10 hours a day (including lesson time). Parents must apply in writing by May 31 for the following school year.

Opening hours are set between 6:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., also during part of each school holiday (in the summer typically 3 weeks of holiday care are provided with up to three weeks of summer closure). Parents are informed of all dates. Costs are shared by families based on income and number of children but are generally very affordable. Fee details are provided by the school authority.

Enroll in Kindergarten

The procedure is as follows:

1. Register your child at the [KiTa Portal](#) Jena. Inform yourself about childcare services in the city and search facilities matching your child's individual needs.
2. Choose up to three facilities for your registration via the "Select facility" button. You can use the "My selection" menu item to make registrations for the selected facilities. Your child is now recorded on the waiting lists of the selected facilities.
3. In your user account you will receive messages when changes are made to your registrations. Places are allocated according to the admission criteria of the facilities. In the event that a place is offered to you, you will be informed via your user account and can then conclude a care contract with the respective facility.

The amount of the day-care fees is basically calculated according to the average monthly income, the number of children entitled to child benefit in the household and the care time. Maximum monthly fees for a regular childcare time of 45 hours per week or 9 hours per day for one child are 225€. Additionally, the day care facility provides meals for the children, which are charged separately.

[The Studierendenwerk Thüringen](#) provides kindergartens at the universities in Erfurt, Ilmenau, Jena, Nordhausen and Weimar. They support especially student parents and employees of the universities. Children of student parents are given priority. The Studierendenwerk not only offers high-quality early childhood education and upbringing in the kindergarten but is also available to provide advice and support as needed. For example the Kita Beutenberg on the Beutenberg campus is part of the Studierendenwerk Thüringen network.

[FAQs concerning the KiTa Portal](#)

[More information on daycare in Jena](#)

[More information on the daycare fees in Jena](#)

Enroll in School

Usually, parents or guardians of children starting primary or secondary education in Jena register with their school preferences during a specified period in the preceding year (typically in May the preceding year for primary school and in March of the school start year for secondary school). This applies to families who already live in Jena. However, as a new resident in Jena with school-age children (age six or older), you will be allocated a school place outside this usual system.

As a new resident with children of age six or older, the procedure is as follows:

1. The education authority (Schulamt) helps you find the suitable school for your child. You can find the contact details for your education authority at: www.schulaemter.de ; for Jena, the [Schulamt "Ostthüringen"](#)
2. Please introduce yourself to the school that the education authority has found for your child.
3. After talking to you, the school principal will find the appropriate class and the necessary language training for your child.

Alternatively, you can contact schools directly in advance of coming to Jena and the school does the arrangement with the School authority.

If your child is registered in Jena and under six years old, you will receive a letter from the Schulamt with all the necessary information. If you are not sure what to do, please contact the [Schulamt "Ostthüringen"](#).

If you want to familiarize yourself with the schools in Jena before talking to the Schulamt, you find useful information on the various schools here:

[Map of the schools in Thuringia here \(German\)](#) (scroll to bottom of the page, you can zoom in to Jena)

[List of schools in Thuringia here \(German\)](#) (enter "Jena" at "Ort")

[Jena School Fair](#) (every second year)

[Jena Schulwegweiser \(German\)](#)

And, of course, on the schools' websites.

There is one bilingual primary school in Jena, [the "Dualingo" School](#). This is a private school that also offers a kindergarten. The classes are partially taught in mixed-age groups, so that starting school can be flexible. The girls and boys are taught by both English and French native speakers. A third of all classes are in English or French. Please be aware, that there is usually a waiting list!

Different schools in Jena may have different proportions of children of non-German background and experience in dealing with non-German speaking families. For example the ["Gemeinschaftschule Galileo"](#) in Winzerla (not far from the Beutenberg campus) has a relatively high proportion of non-German children.

Contact for Further Questions

Family Office at FSU: <https://www.uni-jena.de/en/familienbuero>

Family Office at UKJ: <https://www.uniklinikum-jena.de/Familie.html>

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