

# **Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens**

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## Introduction

In Act no. 64 of 17 June 2005 relating to Kindergartens (the Kindergarten Act), the Storting established the regulatory framework governing the purpose and content of kindergartens, cf. Sections 1, 2 and 3. On 1 March 2006, pursuant to the stipulations of Section 2 of that act, the Ministry of Education and Research laid down regulations which provide a framework plan for the content and tasks of kindergartens. The regulations will come into force on 1 August 2006. On the same date, the regulations of 1 December 1995 no. 948 on a framework plan for kindergartens, pursuant to the second paragraph of Section 2 of Act no. 19 of 5 May 1995 relating to Kindergartens, will be repealed. The framework plan provides guidelines on the values, content and tasks of kindergartens. All kindergartens shall base their activities on the values established in the Kindergarten Act, and on the international conventions to which Norway is a signatory, including the ILO's Convention no. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN in 1989, ratified by Norway in 1991 and incorporated into Norwegian law in 2003. In all actions concerning children undertaken by authorities and organisations, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. States shall ensure that the institutions and services responsible for the care or protection of children conform with the established standards, particularly in terms of safety, health, the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision. The Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasises the right of children to freedom of expression.

The aim of the framework plan is to give head teachers of kindergartens, pedagogical leaders and other staff a binding framework for the planning, implementation and assessment of the activities of kindergartens. The framework plan also provides information to parents, owners and supervisory authorities. The framework plan is therefore aimed at:

- personnel at kindergartens, as a planning, documentation and assessment tool
- parents/guardians, to provide an insight into the activities of kindergartens, and to allow participation and involvement in decision-making in accordance with Section 4 of the Kindergarten Act
- owners of kindergartens, who can set out guidelines for local adaptations to the framework plan (Section 2), and who are responsible for individual kindergartens having the necessary frameworks
- municipal authorities, who are responsible for monitoring whether kindergartens within their municipalities provide adequate pedagogical activities in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations (Section 16).

The framework plan for the content and tasks of kindergartens describes the societal role of kindergartens. Kindergartens' programmes shall be built on a holistic pedagogical philosophy, with care, play and learning being at the core of activities. Social and linguistic skills, as well as seven learning areas, are also important to the pedagogical environment provided by kindergartens; cf. Chapter 3.

The plan emphasises the importance of adults' attitudes, knowledge and ability to relate to and understand children, so that they can bring up children to participate actively in a democratic society. The plan focuses both on the present and on the future. The framework plan underlines the unique nature of the educational activities of kindergartens. An annual plan, which is drawn up by the kindergarten's coordinating committee, shall set out the specific work of each individual kindergarten.

The Framework Plan shall be adapted to differing ways of running kindergartens, and to local conditions and regulatory environments. It is desirable that the municipal authorities and private owners collaborate on preparing the guidelines for local adaptations.

## Part I The social mandate of kindergartens

*Kindergartens shall provide children under compulsory school age with good opportunities for development and activity in close understanding and collaboration with the children's homes.*

(Kindergarten Act, Section 1, Purpose)

The social role of kindergartens is to offer pre-school children a care and educational environment that benefits each child. They should provide both education and a public service to the parents of young children.

Kindergartens shall support and take into account individual children, whilst also looking after the common interests of the children. Kindergartens shall provide pre-school children with an environment that offers both challenges appropriate to the age and level of function of the children, and protection from physical and psychological harm. Kindergartens shall increase the opportunities that children have to learn and to participate actively in a peer group. Kindergartens shall have the physical, social and cultural qualities that at any given time correspond to current knowledge and understanding regarding children and their requirements. Kindergartens shall promote good health and prevent illness, and shall help to ensure social equality. Kindergartens have a responsibility in society for the early prevention of discrimination and bullying.

In addition to the majority population, Norwegian society consists of Indigenous Sámi people, national minorities and minorities with immigrant backgrounds. On account of geographic mobility and increasing internationalisation, Norwegian society is far more diverse than it was in the past. There are now many ways of being Norwegian. This cultural diversity shall be reflected in kindergartens. Social, ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic and economic differences in the population mean that children come to kindergartens with different experiences. Kindergartens shall support children on the basis of their own cultural and individual circumstances.

### **Chapter 1 The purpose, values and tasks of kindergartens**

*Kindergartens shall assist in giving the children an upbringing that accords with Christian values.*

*Owners of private kindergartens may in their statutes prescribe that the second paragraph shall not apply.*

*Private kindergartens and kindergartens owned or run by parishes of the Norwegian State Church may incorporate in their statutes special provisions in regard to ideological aims.*

(Kindergarten Act, Section 1, Purpose)

## 1.1 Mission statement for kindergartens

The purpose of kindergartens is to give pre-school children good opportunities for development and activity. This shall be done in close understanding and collaboration with their homes.

The Kindergarten Act states that the upbringing provided by kindergartens shall accord with Christian values. This means that kindergartens shall base their activities on ethical values that are rooted in Christianity, and which are assumed to be widely held by the Norwegian population. Christian values are taken to mean empathy or charity, forgiveness, a belief in human worth, equality, communal responsibility, honesty and fairness. These are values that can be found in most religions and ideologies. Kindergartens shall teach children about beliefs and values. Teaching children to have faith is the responsibility of the home.

Kindergartens shall teach these values in accordance with human rights conventions to which Norway is a signatory. International conventions and Norwegian law emphasise both the right of parents to bring up children in accordance with their religion or ideology and the right of children to learn about the society in which they are growing up. International rules and Norwegian law provide protection against religious and cultural discrimination. Children shall not be asked to have an opinion on religious beliefs or movements. Kindergartens must ensure that children do not experience a conflict of loyalty between their home and their kindergarten.

## 1.2 Kindergartens with other mission statements

The Kindergarten Act's mission statement allows private owners of kindergartens and parishes of the Norwegian State Church to have special provisions with regard to religious/ideological aims. Private owners can also leave out the Christian religious aims, cf. the third paragraph of Section 1 of the Kindergarten Act. This shall be made clear in their statutes. Alternative wordings with regard to values can be established in such cases, cf. paragraph four of Section 1 of the Kindergarten Act. This will provide clarification to parents/guardians, kindergarten staff, supervisory authorities and others. Parents who apply for admission to kindergartens with special provisions regarding religious/ideological aims, are entitled to information about the kindergarten's values. They also have the same opportunities as parents at other kindergartens to participate in discussions on the implementation of the provisions.

Kindergartens with special provisions with regard to ideological aims are still covered by the other stipulations of the Kindergarten Act, the framework plan and other relevant regulations.

## 1.3 The fundamental values of kindergartens

*Care, upbringing and learning in kindergartens shall promote human dignity, equality, intellectual freedom, tolerance, health and an appreciation of sustainable development.*

(Kindergarten Act, Section 2, Content of kindergartens)

Kindergartens shall promote fundamental values such as a sense of community, care for others and joint responsibility, and shall represent an environment that supports respect for human worth and the right to be different. Human equality, equal opportunity, intellectual freedom and tolerance are important social values that shall provide foundations for the care, upbringing, play and learning in kindergartens.

The equality of the genders shall be reflected in the education provided by kindergartens. Kindergartens shall bring up children to relate to and create an equal society. Kindergartens shall base their activities on the principle of equality of the sexes. Boys and girls shall have the same opportunities to be seen and heard, and shall be encouraged to participate jointly in all activities at kindergartens. Staff must reflect on their own attitudes towards, and on society's expectations of, boys and girls.

It is important to instil a sense of responsibility for managing the natural and cultural heritage, and of responsibility for people's lives and health, in kindergartens. An understanding of sustainable development shall be promoted in everyday life. Respect for life is fundamental.

Charity and solidarity are cornerstones of our culture. Tolerance and respect shall be fundamental values for kindergartens. It is very important that children experience warmth and love at kindergartens. By interacting with their peer group, they can develop solidarity with other children. Putting themselves in other people's situations will help them to develop empathy, solidarity and tolerance. In a global perspective, it is very important that children develop attitudes of charity and solidarity.

Kindergartens shall lay the foundations for lifelong learning and active participation in a democratic society in close understanding and collaboration with the homes of the children. The ethical instruction provided by kindergartens must take into account the age of children and each child's cultural, religious and ideological background. It is crucial to work in a way that allows a common understanding of what is happening at the kindergarten. The integrity of individual children and parents shall be respected.

As role models, staff have a particular responsibility for ensuring that the values of the kindergarten are adhered to in practice. Reflections on their own values and actions should be included in the pedagogical discussions of staff. Kindergartens must systematically assess whether their own practice and culture helps to promote the values that are supposed to form the basis for their activities.

## **1.4 Children and childhood**

The framework plan is based on a holistic view of children. This means that the development of children is seen as a dynamic and closely interwoven interaction between their physical and mental circumstances and the environment in which they grow up. Children are social players who themselves contribute to their own and other children's learning. Interaction with other people is crucial to children's development and learning.

Childhood is a phase of life with an intrinsic value, in the same way as other phases of human life. One of the characteristics of childhood is interaction through play, which provides scope for initiative, imagination and enthusiasm. Children wonder about things and ask questions, seek adventures and gain experience in their own learning arenas. In close interaction with

their surroundings, they are active in all areas of life. The care, upbringing, play and education that children experience at a young age shape their attitudes, values and confidence in themselves and in other people, and their motivation for learning later in life.

Children gain fundamental and relevant knowledge and insights through everyday events that occur in social interaction, play and structured activities. Through learning processes, children become familiar with and increasingly understand the physical and social world around them, at the same time as recreating and changing the cultures to which they belong. Kindergartens must offer all children a rich, varied, stimulating and challenging pedagogical environment, regardless of their age, gender, level of function and social and cultural background. This means that the care and activities provided must be adapted to each individual child and to the relevant group of children.

Children affect their surroundings through their activities and behaviour. How children experience encounters with other people will affect their perception of themselves. Staff must respond to children in a way that promotes respect and acceptance, confidence and trust. Staff's views on children and childhood will affect their interpretations of children's participation. It is very important to understand children's various means of expressing themselves.

For children who experience a difficult childhood full of conflicts, kindergartens must face up to their responsibilities by providing compensatory measures. Cross-disciplinary cooperation with other welfare services is important.

## 1.5 Children's participation

*Children in kindergartens shall have the right to express their views on the day-to-day activities of the kindergarten.*

*Children shall regularly be given the opportunity to take active part in planning and assessing the activities of the kindergarten.*

*The children's views shall be given due weight according to their age and maturity.*  
(Kindergarten Act, Section 3, Children's right to participation)

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasises the fact that children are entitled to express their views on everything that affects them, and that their views should always be taken into consideration. Children are entitled to express their views on, and to influence, all aspects of their lives at kindergartens. The degree of participation and how the right to participation is put into practice will depend on the age and level of function of the child. Children must both experience a sense of belonging and community, and feel that they can exert self-determination and express their own intentions. Children must be encouraged to put themselves in the position of showing consideration towards other people.

Children express their feelings both through body language and through words. The youngest children express their views through body positions, mimicry and other forms of emotional expression. Children's emotional expressions shall be taken seriously. Children must be helped to wonder about things and to ask questions. They must be actively encouraged to express their thoughts and opinions, and must receive acknowledgement for doing so. The

seeds of inconsiderate behaviour, bullying and lack of empathy may be found in violations to the child's self esteem.

Kindergartens must operate on the basis of children's own ways of expressing themselves. Staff must listen to and attempt to interpret their body language, and must be observant in relation to their actions, aesthetic expressions and eventually their verbal communications. Kindergartens must allow for the different perspectives of different children, and must respect their intentions and realms of experience. Children's right to freedom of expression shall be ensured, and their participation must be integrated in work on the content of kindergartens. Taking children's participation seriously requires good communication between children and staff, and between staff and parents.

Children's right to participation requires time and space for listening and talking. Pedagogical activities must be organised and planned in such a way that there is time and space for children's participation. This can encourage children to influence their own lives at their kindergarten. Children must come into contact with clear and responsible adults who take the whole group into consideration.

## 1.6 Collaboration with the homes of the children

*Kindergartens shall provide children under compulsory school age with good opportunities for development and activity in close understanding and collaboration with the children's homes.*

(Kindergarten Act, Section 1, Purpose)

*Kindergartens shall assist homes with the care and upbringing of their children, and thereby lay a sound foundation for the children's development, life-long learning and active participation in a democratic society.*

(Kindergarten Act, Section 2, Content of kindergartens)

*In order to ensure collaboration with the children's homes, each kindergarten shall have a parents' council and a coordinating committee.*

(Kindergarten Act, Section 4, Parents' council and coordinating committee)

The terms home and parents refer here both to parents and any other guardians.

Parents are responsible for their children's upbringing. This principle is set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in Act no. 7 of 8 April 1981 relating to Children and Parents. Kindergartens represent a complementary environment to the home. Kindergartens must show respect for different types of families.

Two concepts in the law, *understanding* and *collaboration*, cover different aspects of the contact between kindergartens and parents. Understanding means mutual respect and recognition of each other's responsibilities and tasks in relation to the child. Collaboration means regular contact during which information and reasoning is exchanged. Questions relating to the wellbeing and development of children shall be discussed, along with the pedagogical activities of the kindergarten. This collaboration shall make it possible to develop the mutual understanding needed to deal with dilemmas that may arise when the considerations of an individual child have to be seen within the context of the group of

children. Staff must work to strike a balance between respecting parents' priorities and safeguarding children's rights and the fundamental common values to which kindergartens are committed.

Parents and the staff of kindergartens have a joint responsibility for the wellbeing and development of children. The daily collaboration between homes and kindergartens must build on mutual openness and trust. Parents must feel confident that they can raise the issues that concern them in relation to their children and their kindergartens, even if they involve criticism. Parents must be informed of the general duty of confidentiality of the staff, and their special duty of disclosure in relation to child welfare services.

Both parents and staff must accept that kindergartens have a social mandate and particular values that the staff are committed to. Staff are responsible for providing parents with the necessary information about the activities of the kindergarten, and the reasoning behind them, and for inviting parents to participate. Parents must feel confident that their children are being noticed and respected, and that they are participating in a social environment that benefits them. Kindergartens must be sensitive to the expectations and wishes of parents, both as individuals and as a group. The implementation of the kindergarten's values should therefore be discussed regularly at the parents' council meetings and coordinating committee. It is particularly important to build a mutual understanding and confidence between kindergartens and homes in this matter.

Kindergartens play an important role as meeting places for children and their parents, and in promoting cultural values. When dealing with parents from minority language backgrounds, kindergartens have a particular responsibility for ensuring that parents are able to understand and make themselves understood at the kindergarten. Dealing with parents from different cultures, both within Norwegian society and from other countries, requires respect, sensitivity and understanding. This requires staff to be clear and conscious about their own role, and to have confidence in their own skills.

Parents may require help with and give advice on how to bring up their children. In some cases, the best thing to do may be to get external help and advice in relation to work with children and families in difficult situations. Parents must be informed about the various welfare services in the municipality, cf. Chapter 5.

The collaboration of parents in the overall activities of kindergartens is ensured through their participation in parents' councils and coordinating committees.

## **1.7 Kindergartens as pedagogical undertakings**

*Kindergartens shall be pedagogical undertakings.*  
(Kindergartens Act, Section 2, Content of kindergartens)

Kindergartens play an important role as arenas in which pre-school children grow up and learn. Kindergartens shall support the development of children on their own terms, and shall provide challenges to individual children and groups of children. They shall provide an individually tailored and equal programme, and promote a meaningful childhood regardless of

level of function, place of residence and social, cultural and ethnic background. Kindergartens as educational centres have unique characteristics and traditions that must be maintained, but they must also be seen in the context of the school system. One of the features of the Norwegian kindergarten tradition is that it takes a holistic view of care, upbringing, play, everyday activities and learning. Kindergartens help to create our culture, and play an important role in promoting cultural values.

Kindergartens shall have a head teacher. The head teacher of the kindergarten and the pedagogical leader have particular responsibility for the planning, implementation, assessment and development of the kindergarten's tasks and content. They are also responsible for advising the rest of the staff so that they have a common understanding of the kindergarten's responsibilities and tasks. The head teacher of the kindergarten's role involves ensuring that individual staff members are able to make use of their skills.

As pedagogical institutions within society, kindergartens must change and develop. The staff in the kindergartens shall be capable of learning, thus equipping them to face new requirements and challenges. Improving the quality of kindergartens involves constantly developing staff skills and competencies.

## **1.8 Physical environments that promote the development of all children**

*Kindergartens shall provide children with opportunities for play, self-expression and meaningful experiences and activities in safe, yet challenging surroundings.*  
(Kindergarten Act, Section 2, Content of kindergartens)

Kindergartens shall have sufficient space and equipment to allow play and varied activities that promote a love of exercise, and provide a wide range of motor and sensory experiences, as well as the opportunity to learn and master skills. Alternating between play, learning, concentration and expression is necessary for physical and psychological well-being. The design of the physical outdoor and indoor environment provides an important framework for children's well-being, experiences and learning. Staff in kindergartens must look at the physical frameworks for children's learning environments as an entity. The countryside and local neighbourhood also provide opportunities for experiences and challenges.

Kindergartens' physical environments shall be designed in such a way that all children have many opportunities to participate actively in play and other activities. The arrangement of the physical environment must take into account that children of different ages, and with different levels of ability, will use the same spaces. Young children have a strong need for outdoor and indoor play areas, as well as for tranquillity and concentration. The design of the physical environment must include the fact that children have a need to form groups, and that different activities will be taking place at the same time. The toys and materials available in a well arranged environment form the basis for children's play and activities, and for the organisation of various educational pursuits.

When planning the design of a kindergarten, the societal aim of reducing barriers to people with disabilities must be taken into consideration. The planning, location and construction of new kindergartens should be based on principles of universal access. This means that products, buildings and outdoor areas shall be designed in such a way that everyone can enjoy them equally without special requirements or tools, in so far as this is possible.

## 1.9 An inclusive community with space for individual children

*Kindergartens shall take account of children's age, level of functioning, gender, and social, ethnic and cultural background, including the language and culture of Sámi children.*  
(Kindergarten Act, Section 2, Content of kindergartens)

Pre-school children are not a uniform group, and children arrive at kindergartens with different backgrounds. The provision of an equal, high-quality day care programme therefore requires individual adjustments to the service and local adjustments to the content.

The content of kindergartens shall be designed in such a way that it feels relevant to the individual children and to the group. The care and learning environment at kindergartens shall promote the well-being, joy, sense of achievement and self-esteem of children. Kindergartens must support and challenge individual children on their own terms, and help them to enjoy a meaningful life together with other children and adults.

Staff are responsible for ensuring that all children, regardless of their level of functioning, age, gender and family background, feel that they and everyone else in the group are important to the community. Kindergartens shall provide an environment in which different individuals and different cultural expressions meet with respect for their differences. Looking at differences and similarities can help to foster understandings and insights. Encountering something that is different from yourself allows you to develop a positive curiosity about the similarities and differences between people and cultures. The content of kindergartens must be communicated in a way that allows different children to participate in different ways, in line with their own interests, skills and development levels.

Kindergartens have a particular responsibility for preventing potential problems and for discovering children with special needs. It may be appropriate to design a special programme for these children. This may involve adjusting social, pedagogical and/or physical aspects of the kindergarten. Parents and any support services involved with the child are important partners for kindergartens, cf. Chapter 5.

Everyday life at kindergartens shall be characterised by social interaction that involves staff in listening to, supporting and challenging the children. Kindergartens shall promote positive actions that counteract rejection, bullying and violence. Staff shall help to ensure that each individual child's individuality and need for self-expression can occur safely and within the norms and rules of the group.

## 1.10 Kindergartens for Sámi children

*Kindergartens shall take account of children's age, level of functioning, gender, and social, ethnic and cultural background, including the language and culture of Sámi children.*

(Kindergarten Act, Section 2, Content of kindergartens)

*The municipality is responsible for ensuring that kindergartens for Sámi children in Sámi districts are based on the Sámi language and culture. In other municipalities steps shall be taken to enable Sámi children to secure and develop their language and their culture.*

(Kindergarten Act, Section 8, Responsibility of the municipality)

Norway has, on account of the special rights of Indigenous peoples, a special obligation to safeguard the interests of Sámi children and parents, this relates to the ILO's Convention no. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. Sámi children need to be helped to retain and develop their language and culture regardless of where in Norway they live. Kindergartens for Sámi children in Sámi districts shall be an integrated part of Sámi society and shall demonstrate the diversity, vigour and variety of Sámi society. Sámi statutes shall include the aim of strengthening children's identity as Sámi people through the use of Sámi language, and by teaching children about Sámi culture, ways of life and society. Important aspects of Sámi child rearing should be retained through working methods and everyday life. The programme of kindergartens must be arranged in such a way that children are involved in various work processes, and are able to participate in cultural and social activities. It is crucial that staff speak Sámi.

At kindergartens catering for Sámi children but outside Sámi districts, parents and children are entitled to expect staff to be familiar with Sámi culture, and to emphasise it as part of the kindergarten's programme.

## Part II The content of kindergartens

The content of kindergartens shall be comprehensive and varied, and shall be designed in such a way that individual children gain experiences that support the development of their knowledge, skills and attitudes. The content shall also promote linguistic and social competence through joint tasks and social interaction. Children should have the opportunity to experience how digital tools can be used for play, communication and the gathering of information. The working methods and content of kindergartens must be viewed together. Working methods must foster children's curiosity, creativity and thirst for knowledge. Staff must be sensitive to children's sense of wonder and search for knowledge. Children shall have a large degree of freedom in terms of choosing activities. Finding the appropriate right balance between activities initiated by the children and by the adults is a challenge.

Kindergartens shall take a holistic view of care, upbringing, play, learning and social and linguistic skills. Kindergartens shall be cultural arenas in which children help to create their own culture. All of the above form parts of the content of kindergartens, and must be seen as part of an interwoven and complex whole.

In order to make it easier for kindergartens to plan a varied and comprehensive pedagogical programme, the content of kindergartens is divided into seven learning areas that are of central importance to experience, exploration and learning. These areas are largely the same as the ones that children subsequently encounter in school. Positive experiences and useful teaching within these areas at kindergartens may give children a good relationship to the learning areas, and motivate them to learn more.

### **Chapter 2 Care, play and learning**

Kindergartens shall instil children with self-confidence and confidence in others. The active involvement and enthusiasm of children in the kindergarten's community help children to learn about themselves in relation to others. By encountering differences, children become aware of themselves and of their personalities. Respecting differences is one of the key values of kindergartens. Children's surprise at actions and attitudes that they encounter in one another form the basis for a critical reflection on their position in society. Consideration for one another and mutual processes of interaction in play and learning are essential to the cultivation of children. Responding to children's questions and wonderings, in professional and ethical ways, forms a basis for children's participation. Children must be supported and guided in their actions and attitudes. Cultivation and participation can be seen as mutual processes. This can help children have a positive relationship to themselves and to their own learning processes. They can develop a respect for and understanding of differences. All children are entitled to be treated as the individuals that they are. Staff shall help children to understand that their actions can affect other people. Not all actions are acceptable.

#### **2.1 Care and upbringing**

*Care, upbringing and learning in kindergartens shall promote human dignity, equality, intellectual freedom, tolerance, health and an appreciation of sustainable development.*

(Kindergarten Act, Section 2, Content of kindergartens)

Children are entitled to care and shall be treated with care. The staff at kindergartens have a professional ethical obligation to provide care to all children at their kindergarten. The obligation of care requires staff to be attentive and open to the uniqueness of each individual child, and to the uniqueness of the situation and the group.

A caring relationship requires sensitivity, closeness, understanding and the ability and willingness to interact. Care shall exist in all everyday situations, and shall be shown when children are playing and learning, as well as during nursing, meals and dressing. Care has an intrinsic value. Care is closely related to upbringing, health and security, and is also an important requisite for the development and learning of children. A lot of care is required in order to give children varied challenges and the opportunity for meaningful activities. Kindergartens shall offer children an environment that is characterised by joy, humour, creativity and consideration for the group. Good care enhances the ability of children to develop self-confidence, confidence in others, good relationships, and to gradually take greater responsibility for themselves and the group.

Care at kindergartens refers both to the relationship between staff and children and to the care children show to each other. Giving children the opportunity to give and receive care forms the basis for developing social competence, and plays an important role in the context of lifelong learning.

Raising children is a process through which adults lead and guide the next generation. By means of this, the values, norms, ideas and modes of expression and action are passed on. Staff shall guide children in their alternation between fulfilling social norms and requirements, and being themselves. Children must be helped to understand the boundaries for acceptable interaction with other people. Raising children must be conducted in close understanding and cooperation with the children's homes. Staff at kindergartens must be able to justify value judgements relating to children's upbringing both to themselves and to parents.

Life at kindergartens consists of complex interactions between people. Care relies on this interaction being mutual. Children shall be treated in a caring manner. This requires responsible staff who get involved with and care about the joy and development of individual children.

Staff have a particular responsibility for ensuring that children who receive inadequate care at home experience security and stability at the kindergarten. Kindergartens and child welfare authorities shall cooperate to provide proper care to these children, cf. Chapter 5

Children shall receive an upbringing that is in accordance with the kindergarten's values, and that provides the foundations for their opportunity to participate actively in a democratic society. Children shall both adapt their behaviour and be encouraged to remain independent of and critical towards norms and various forms of influence.

## **2.2 Play**

*Kindergartens shall provide children with opportunities for play, self-expression and meaningful experiences and activities in safe, yet challenging surroundings.*  
(Kindergarten Act, Section 2, Content of kindergartens)

Play shall play a prominent role in life at kindergartens. Play has intrinsic value and is an important part of child culture. Play is a universal human phenomenon, which children are skilled at and enjoy. It is a fundamental lifestyle and way of learning through which children can express themselves.

Play has many forms of expression, and can lead to understanding and friendship across ages and linguistic and cultural barriers. Playing together forms the foundation for children's friendships with one another. Participating in play and making friends form the basis for the well-being of children and for the opinions they form at kindergartens. Through interaction with each other, they form the foundations for learning and social competence. On the other hand, forced exclusion from play prevents friendship and appropriate relationships.

Children learn and develop a complex set of skills through play. By playing pretend, children enter their own imaginative worlds, see other people's perspectives and give shape to their thoughts and feelings. Through investigation and conversation about the world and phenomena, they gain knowledge and insights in many areas. Playing with the physical world, both outdoors and indoors, involves exploration and the processing of impressions.

Play is part of child culture, and reflects both the environments in which children grow up and society in general. Play also involves the transfer of traditions of children's culture from older to younger children. Play, aesthetic activities, humour and creativity are phenomena that are linked to one another. The games that small children play are closely related to their particular sense of humour. For the youngest children, humour is primarily based on the body, and is developed through interaction between the children. Children play on the basis of their curiosity, abilities and circumstances.

Outdoor play and activities are an important part of child culture that must be retained, regardless of the geographic and climatic conditions. Children should be influenced and inspired in their play by local experiences.

Kindergartens shall provide the physical and organisational framework for varied play. The content of kindergartens should inspire the imagination, creative zest and self-expression. Staff must make themselves available to children by supporting, inspiring and encouraging them in their play. This will also help to ensure that all children have good experiences, and get a sense of mastering interactions with other children through play. Particular attention must be given to children who do not participate in play, who are excluded or who destroy other children's games.

## 2.3 Learning

*Kindergartens shall give children basic knowledge of central and topical fields. Kindergartens shall nurture children's curiosity, creativity and desire to learn and offer challenges based on the children's interests, knowledge and skills.*  
(Kindergarten Act, Section 2, Content of kindergartens)

Kindergartens shall foster children's curiosity, thirst for knowledge and desire to learn, and shall help to provide a sound basis for lifelong learning. The term lifelong learning refers to the fact that learning is acquired in different arenas throughout one's life. Learning takes place in everyday interaction with other people and with the community, and is closely related to play, upbringing and care. Children can learn from everything they experience in all areas of life. Children's questions must be responded to in a challenging and investigative manner, to form the basis for an active and developmentally pedagogical environment at the kindergarten. The children's own interests and questions should form the basis for learning processes and themes at kindergartens. The way in which staff respond to children's expressions in terms of body language, verbal language, feelings and social relationships will affect how they learn. Friendship and the possibility of good relationships at the kindergarten are prerequisites for learning well and for experiencing joy and a sense of achievement.

Learning about themselves, about other people, about interaction and about the physical world around them are processes that help to make children's lives meaningful. Kindergartens shall enhance the ability of children to learn in formal and informal learning environments. The formal environments are planned and led by the staff. Informal learning environments are closely linked with everyday activities, and with here-and-now situations that occur during play, upbringing and other interaction. It is not appropriate to draw a clear line between formal and informal learning environments. Both have a pedagogical purpose. The seven learning areas must be linked with both formal and informal learning environments.

Staff at kindergartens must play an active part in children's learning processes. Some children constantly seek out learning situations themselves. They explore and experiment, look for new challenges and ask staff if they are wondering about something. They communicate their curiosity and their thirst for knowledge. Other children seek out new situations more rarely, and communicate their interests to a lesser extent. Staff must share their knowledge, and display enthusiasm and imagination in order to awaken the interest of these children. By taking the interests of children as a starting point, staff can, together with the children, investigate, ask questions and together find answers that will satisfy the children. The communication of topical and relevant knowledge forms the basis for new questions, and the search for further knowledge.

Learning will be affected by the quality of the interaction between children and staff. Staff shall focus on giving acknowledgment and encouragement in relation to the children's learning. Support and challenges through varied experiences, information and materials can promote learning. Early experiences and events affect self-esteem. This means that the actions and attitudes of staff in response to children's learning experiences are crucial.

## **2.4 Social competence**

*Kindergartens shall impart values and culture, provide room for children's own cultural creativity and help to ensure that all children experience joy and ability to cope in a social and cultural community.*

(Kindergarten Act, Section 2, Content of kindergartens)

Early experiences with peers are of great importance to children's ability to interact well, and this makes kindergartens important arenas for social development, learning, and the building

of friendships. All children in kindergartens, regardless of age, gender, ethnic background and ability level must be given equal opportunities to participate in meaningful activities with their peer groups. The upbringing provided by kindergartens aims to ensure that children develop independence, as well as confidence in themselves as individuals and in their personal and cultural identities.

Social competence is about interacting with other people in a positive manner in different situations. This competence is expressed and learned by children through interaction with each other and with adults. It is reflected in children's abilities to show initiative and to maintain friendships. Understanding social situations and processes and acquiring social competence require experience of and participation in the community. Social competence is constantly developed through actions and experiences. This occurs through all situations over the course of the day. All children must experience a wide variety of interaction. Everyday life at kindergartens should be characterised by positive emotional experiences. Joy, humour and aesthetic experiences must be important parts of children's existence at kindergartens. Through care, play and learning, children's social competence will both be expressed and confirmed through their ability to put themselves in other people's positions and to show compassion. From a young age, children can show that they care about one another, solve conflicts and see each other's perspectives. They can show consideration and care. They do this both through physical and verbal actions. They must learn to cooperate on positive forms of interaction. Kindergartens shall be characterised by experiences that foster self-esteem and a sense of achievement, play with peers and a sense of belonging to a positive community.

Kindergartens shall help to ensure that children develop confidence and pride in their own backgrounds, and respect for the cultural values and expressions of others. Interaction challenges children to master the balance between expressing themselves and recognising the needs of others. Social competence is very important as means of preventing the development of problem behaviour such as discrimination and bullying. Kindergartens have a responsibility to society for the early prevention of such behaviour.

Kindergartens shall constantly work to support and promote the social competence of individual children and groups of children. Staff are role models whose own behaviour helps to teach children their social competence. Active and clearly expressed staff are needed to create a warm and inclusive social environment. Recognition and supportive relationships form the basis for the development of social competence.

## **2.5 Linguistic competence**

Early childhood is the fundamental period for the development of language. Interaction through body language and play involving sounds is important to the way in which young children approach other people. The ability of adults to understand and confirm children's expressions, as well as to put their impressions and experiences into words, is crucial to the continued development of their speech. Language is personal and identity-forming, and is closely related to feelings. The mother tongue is important to a sense of identity and achievement in a number of areas. A highly developed mother tongue is a fundamental requirement for the subsequent development of language skills, both in terms of writing and reading comprehension.

Kindergartens must ensure that all children have varied and positive experiences of using language as a means of communication, a tool for thinking and expressing their own thoughts and feelings. All children must have a rich and varied language environment at their kindergarten. Some children develop their language skills late, or have other language problems. They must receive help at an early stage.

Joint experiences and activities provide unique opportunities for communication between children. It is important for children to be understood in their interaction with other children. Children often use more imaginative and creative communication amongst themselves than with adults. Alternation between the use of body language, movement and words helps to support the development of speech. During play, children often use varied and complex speech.

Many children do not have Norwegian as their mother tongue, and learn Norwegian as a second language at their kindergartens. It is important that these children are understood and get the opportunity to express themselves. Kindergartens must support them in their use of their mother tongue, whilst working actively to promote their Norwegian language skills.

Staff play an important part as linguistic role models. Conversations, reading aloud and a variety of activities described under the learning area communication, language and text are important aspects of the content of kindergartens.

## 2.6 Kindergartens as cultural arenas

*Kindergartens shall impart values and culture, provide room for children's own cultural creativity and help to ensure that all children experience joy and ability to cope in a social and cultural community.*

(Kindergarten Act, Section 2, Content of kindergartens)

Culture is here taken to mean art and aesthetics, as well as common patterns of behaviour, knowledge, values, attitudes, experiences and modes of expression. Culture is about heritage and traditions, about creating and about bringing to life, renewing and making relevant. Culture arises out of the tension between the tradition and a renewal. Both local and national cultural values, in so far as they are reflected in the environments in which children grow up, must be represented in the activities of kindergartens.

Kindergartens play an important role as arenas for the development of cultural identity. Alternation between teaching and children's own activities is a feature of kindergartens. Kindergartens must be open to influences from their local, regional, national and global surroundings.

Child culture is to be taken as culture *of, with and for* children. Children participate in culture and create their own culture. Children recreate and renew culture through interaction with one another, with adults and with the culture they encounter in other people and situations. Children interpret their impressions and create meaning by playing and realising the things that concern them. Children's cultural creativity and play promotes communication across cultures. Children must have the opportunity to express themselves through a number of 'languages', and to combine them in playful interaction and with different aesthetic modes of

expression. In our media society, children receive a lot of impressions. They must be helped to process their impressions, and to reflect on and sort information.

The population of Norway is linguistically, culturally and religiously diverse, which enriches and strengthens the communities in the kindergartens. Kindergartens shall therefore facilitate dialogue and interaction between different groups, on an equal footing. Children who belong to the Sámi indigenous population, to national minorities or to ethnic minority cultures must be supported in the development of their double cultural affiliations. Children's encounters with different cultures and traditions form the basis for respectful interaction between different ethnic groups. Being conscious of their own cultural heritage, whilst participating in the cultures of others, helps children put themselves in the positions of others.

Staff must be clear role models, and must be conscious of their own cultures and values. In order to fulfil the responsibility that kindergartens have for raising children, staff must recognise their role in promoting cultures through their own behaviour. Staff must be willing to reflect on their own attitudes and actions.

Kindergartens should involve themselves in the surrounding cultures by meeting other institutions, organisations, groups and individuals. Older generations can share important knowledge with children and staff at kindergartens. Staff should pass on traditions that create a sense of belonging through books, literature, singing, music and creative activities.

## Chapter 3 Learning areas

*Kindergartens shall give children basic knowledge of central and topical fields. Kindergartens shall nurture children's curiosity, creativity and desire to learn and offer challenges based on the children's interests, knowledge and skills.*

(Kindergarten Act, Section 2, Content of kindergartens)

Each learning area covers a wide range of learning. The learning areas rarely appear in isolation. Several areas are often represented alongside one another in thematic programmes and in connection with everyday activities and walks in the local neighbourhood. In social interaction during play and everyday activities, there is often spontaneous communication linked to the learning areas. In order for children to play and interact well together, it is also crucial that they have rich, joint experiences and shared knowledge in many areas.

There are goals for the work within each learning area, in order to promote the development and learning of children, and to clarify the responsibilities of staff. The aims that focus on children's experiences and learning, are expressed as process aims. The children shall become familiar with the learning areas and working methods. Work on the learning areas must be appropriate to the ages and interests of the children, and to the composition of the group of children and other circumstances. The teaching material, methods of working, equipment and approach must be designed with the different needs of children in mind. All children shall be given equal opportunities to face challenges that correspond to their level of development. Some children will require special educational help, cf. Chapter 5.

The way in which the learning areas are adapted to the interests of individual children, the group, and the local community, shall be determined by each individual kindergarten, and set out in the kindergarten's annual plan. Progression must also be clarified in detail here.

### 3.1 Communication, language and text

Providing early and good linguistic stimulation is an important part of the role of kindergartens. Communication takes place through an interplay of receiving and interpreting messages, and sending messages oneself. Both non-verbal and verbal communication play an important role in developing good verbal language skills. Varied and rich experiences are essential prerequisites to understanding concepts. It is necessary to converse about experiences, thoughts and feelings in order to develop a rich use of language. Text covers both written and oral stories, poetry, rhymes, nonsense verses and songs. Important aspects of the transfer of cultural values are linked to communications, language and texts.

**Through work on communications, language and texts, kindergartens shall help to ensure that children**

- listen, observe and respond to mutual interaction with children and adults
- develop their understanding of concepts, and use a varied vocabulary
- use their language to express feelings, wishes and experiences, to solve conflicts and to create positive relationships through play and other social interaction

- develop a positive relationship with texts and pictures as sources of aesthetic pleasure, knowledge and conversations, and as inspiration for fantasies and creativity
- listen to sounds and rhythms in the language and become familiar with symbols such as numbers and letters
- become familiar with books, songs, pictures, the media, etc.

**In order to work towards these goals, staff must**

- be conscious of their position as role models for how to listen and respond constructively, and how to use body language, speech and text
- promote trust between children, and between children and adults, so that children enjoy communicating and feel confident using different types of language and texts in their everyday lives
- facilitate meaningful experiences, and create time and space for the use of non-verbal and verbal language in everyday activities, play and in more formal situations
- create an environment that stimulates all children to use language well, and that encourages listening, conversation and play involving sounds, rhymes, rhythms and fantasies with the aid of language and song
- understand the importance of children's mother tongues
- encourage children with bi- and multilingual backgrounds to use their languages, whilst helping them to gain experiences that build up their conceptual understanding and vocabulary in Norwegian
- support children who have various communication difficulties, who do not use language much or who are late developers in terms of language
- allow children to encounter symbols such as letters and numbers in everyday situations, and support children's initiative in terms of counting, sorting, reading, playing at writing and dictating texts
- create an environment in which children and adults every day experience excitement and joy through reading aloud, telling stories, singing and conversation, and being conscious of the ethical, aesthetic and cultural values that they are communicating.

### **3.2 Body, movement and health**

During the early years of childhood, children acquire fundamental motor skills, body control, physical characteristics, habits and insights into how they can protect their health and quality of life. Children are physically active, and they express themselves a lot through their bodies. Through physical activity, children learn about the world and about themselves. Through sensory impressions and movement, children gain experience, skills and knowledge in a number of areas. The contact that children have with other children often starts with body language and bodily activities. This is important to the development of social competence. A good healthy diet, and proper alternation between activity and rest, play important roles in the development of a healthy body. Varied physical activity both indoors and outdoors is of great importance to the development of motor skills and body control. Active use of the outdoor environment and local neighbourhood provide many opportunities.

**Through work on the body, movement and health, kindergartens shall help to ensure that children**

- develop a positive self-image through physical achievements
- have positive experiences of varied and all-round movements and challenges

- continue to develop their body control, gross motor skills and fine motor skills, sense of rhythm and motor sensitivity
- have positive experiences of outdoor activities and being outdoors in different seasons
- develop a love of using nature for exploration and physical challenges, and gain an understanding of how one can use the environment and countryside whilst also looking after it
- develop an understanding and respect for their own and other people's bodies, and for the fact that everyone is different
- learn about the human body and begin to understand the importance of good habits and healthy eating.

**In order to work towards these goals, staff must**

- organise everyday activities in such a way that there is a planned alternation between periods of rest, activity and mealtimes, to help children to develop good habits, attitudes and knowledge regarding diet, hygiene, activity and rest
- ensure good planning, flexible preparation and flexible use of the physical environment, as well as assessing how the local neighbourhood can supplement the kindergarten's premises at different times of year
- ensure that the body and movement culture at the kindergarten reflects the diversity of the children's cultural backgrounds, and take into account cultural differences in terms of attitudes towards the body
- facilitate and provide inspiration for safe and challenging physical games and activities for everyone, regardless of gender and physical, psychological and social circumstances
- understand and provide encouragement for children's sensory motor and physical games, to inspire all children to seek out physical challenges and to try out their physical potential
- support children's ideas for games, and suggest play and games in which the children are physically active and experience joy through a sense of achievement and community
- facilitate physical play and activity that breaks with traditional gender roles, allowing girls and boys to participate in all forms of activity on an equal footing
- look after the health and safety of children, and be capable of giving first aid.

**3.3 Art, culture and creativity**

Kindergartens must give children the opportunity to experience art and culture, as well as to express themselves aesthetically. Experiencing cultural events together and doing or creating shared activities foster cohesion. Children create their own culture on the basis of their own experiences. Rich experiences of art, culture and aesthetics will give children a multitude of opportunities for sensory perception, experience, experimentation, creative activities, thoughts and communication. This learning area covers modes of expression such as visual art, crafts, music, dance, drama, language, literature, film, architecture and design. Presenting art and culture helps to foster familiarity with, and a sense of belonging to, cultural modes of expression.

**Through work on art, culture and creativity, kindergartens shall help to ensure that children**

- develop their sensitivity to listening, observing and expressing themselves through a range of encounters with and reflections on culture, art and aesthetics
- strengthen their cultural identity and their personal modes of expression
- use their imaginations and creative thought processes, and discover the joy of creating things
- develop their abilities to process and communicate their impressions, and produce varied forms of expression through creative activities
- develop an elementary understanding of tools, techniques and form, in order to express themselves aesthetically through visual language, music, song, dance and drama
- experience that art, culture and aesthetics foster closeness and understandings.

**In order to work towards these goals, staff must**

- create sufficient space for both adult and child led activities, in order to perform and enjoy forms of aesthetic impressions and expressions
- have a conscious understanding of the interaction between art, culture and children's play
- ensure that children everyday have access to books, pictures, instruments, dressing-up gear and rich, varied materials and tools for creative activities
- listen to and pay attention to children's cultural expressions, show respect for their modes of expression and encourage them to continue exploring aesthetic subjects
- motivate children to express themselves, and allow them to find their own modes of expression
- ensure that there is an aesthetic aspect to the physical environment and its contents
- encourage and stimulate children to observe aesthetic phenomena and details in their encounters with nature and the physical world, and in artistic forms of expression such as architecture, pictures, texts, music and movement
- ensure that children experience local, national and international artistic and cultural expressions, and that they get possibilities to meet artists
- give children the opportunity to become familiar with traditions in terms of living environments, building methods and trades, cultural landscapes and cultural heritages in the local neighbourhood.

### **3.4 Nature, environment and technology**

Nature provides a multitude of experiences and activities at all times of year, and in all weather. Nature allows children to experience beauty, and inspires aesthetic expression. This learning area helps children become familiar with and gain an understanding of plants and animals, landscape, seasons and weather. The aim is for children to begin to understand the significance of sustainable development. This includes love of nature, and an understanding of the interactions within nature and between humans and nature.

**Through work on nature, environment and technology, kindergartens shall help to ensure that children**

- experience nature and a sense of wonder at the diversity of nature

- experience joy at being in the natural world, and gain a fundamental understanding of nature, conservation and interaction in the natural world
- experience and learn about animals and plants, and about their mutual dependence and importance to food production
- learn to observe, wonder, experiment, systematise, describe and talk about phenomena in the physical world
- experience how technology can be used in play and in everyday life.

**In order to work towards these goals, staff must**

- start from children’s curiosity, interests and backgrounds, and help them to experience with all of their senses, observe and wonder about phenomena in the natural and technological worlds
- promote an understanding of sustainable development through words and actions, and select literature and activities that promote such an understanding
- include outdoor activities and play in the daily routine of the kindergarten
- use the local neighbourhood so that children can observe and learn about animals, fish, birds, insects and plants
- give children an insight into the production of foodstuffs
- give children an incipient understanding of birth, growth, aging and death
- build on and develop the children’s experiences of technological toys and technology in everyday life.

### **3.5 Ethics, religion and philosophy**

Ethics, religion and philosophy affect our values and attitudes, and help to shape the way in which we perceive and understand the world and human beings. Religions and ideologies provide the foundations for ethical norms. For centuries, Norwegian and European cultures have been dominated by Christian beliefs and traditions along with humanist values. Today Norway is a multi-religious and multicultural society. Kindergartens shall reflect and respect the diversity represented by groups of children. At the same time the kindergartens should also include values and traditions from Christian cultural heritage. The ethical guidance provided by kindergartens must take into account the circumstances of children and their cultural, religious and ideological backgrounds.

**Through work on ethics, religion and philosophy, kindergartens shall help to ensure that children**

- realise that fundamental questions are important, by providing the time and the necessary peace and quiet for wondering, thinking, conversation and stories
- acquire society’s fundamental norms and values
- develop tolerance of and interest in each other, and respect for each other's backgrounds, regardless of cultural and religious or ideological affiliation
- gain an understanding of fundamental Christian values and of their place in our culture
- learn about Christian festivals and traditions
- learn about traditions relating to the festivals of religions and ideologies that are represented in the group of children
- learn about religions, ethics and philosophy as aspects of culture and society.

### **In order to work towards these goals, staff must**

- be conscious of their professional ethical responsibility for practising the values of the kindergarten
- treat children's beliefs, questions and wondering seriously and respectfully
- provide space for experiences, wondering, reflection and good conversations
- generate interest in, and contribute towards an understanding and tolerance of, different cultures and lifestyles
- help children who are experiencing conflicts at home to find constructive solutions
- be conscious of the importance of staff as role models, and behave in such a way that children are supported in their own identities and develop respect for one another
- allow Christian cultural heritage to be expressed through the celebration of festivals, amongst other things
- celebrate other religious, ideological and cultural traditions that are represented at the kindergarten.

### **3.6 Local community and society**

Children's participation in the internal life of kindergartens may be their first step towards gaining an understanding and experience of participation in a democratic society.

Kindergartens shall help to ensure that children approach the world outside their families with trust and curiosity. Kindergartens shall focus on increasing knowledge about and affiliation to the local community, countryside, art and culture, working life, traditions and lifestyle.

Children shall participate in exploring and discovering their local communities. Children's varying experiences from their homes, circle of acquaintances and travels will provide knowledge about different societies. This learning area also covers the importance of the media in the everyday lives of children.

#### **Through work on the local community and society, kindergartens shall help to ensure that children**

- develop confidence in their own participation in and influence on the community
- experience that all people, regardless of their age or circumstances, form part of and contribute towards the kindergarten's community
- become familiar with and participate in society through experiences in their local communities
- experience that equal attention is paid to boys and girls
- learn about some historic changes to their local communities and societies
- develop an understanding of different traditions and lifestyles
- learn about the fact that the Sámi people are the Indigenous people of Norway, and get acquainted with Sámi stories, myths and other aspects of Sámi culture and everyday life.

#### **In order to work towards these goals, staff must**

- adhere to democratic principles in their everyday work
- work to ensure that all children know that they are valuable and important members of the community
- ensure that children experience that their choices and actions can affect the situations both of themselves and of others

- give children an incipient understanding of the importance of human rights, and particularly of the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- work on equality between boys and girls, and ensure that both genders face varied challenges and receive an equal amount of attention
- ensure that children extend their understanding of cultural similarities and differences, and work to create an inclusive environment that counteracts bullying and racism
- know and care about society, and show interest in children's living environments and the many possibilities offered by the local neighbourhood
- use the resources of the local community to provide rich experiences and learning opportunities appropriate to the children's circumstances and interests, and ensure that the kindergarten makes an active contribution to the local community
- give children the opportunity to have meaningful meetings with people, workplaces and institutions in the local community, and ensure that children are able to process and broaden their experiences
- use literature and the possibilities offered by the media to extend and broaden the experiences and learning of children
- help to ensure that children have an inquisitive and critical attitude towards what they see in the media.

### **3.7 Numbers, spaces and shapes**

From an early age, children are preoccupied by numbers and counting, they explore spaces and shapes, and they form arguments and search for connections. Through play, experimentation and everyday activities, children develop their mathematical skills. Kindergartens have a responsibility for encouraging children in their own investigations, and for facilitating early and good stimulation.

#### **Through work on numbers, spaces and shapes, kindergartens shall help to ensure that children**

- enjoy exploring and playing with numbers and shapes
- acquire accurate and applicable mathematical concepts
- experience, explore and play with shapes and patterns
- experience different types of sizes, shapes and measures through sorting and comparing
- experience position and orientation, and thus develop their abilities to navigate.

#### **In order to work towards these goals, staff must**

- listen and pay attention to the mathematical ideas that children express through play, conversation and everyday activities
- support the mathematical development of children on the basis of their interests and modes of expression
- be conscious of their own use of terms in relation to mathematical phenomena
- support children's curiosity, love of mathematics and desire to explore mathematical connections
- reason and wonder together with children about similarities, differences, sizes and quantities, and stimulate children ability to use language as a tool for logical thought
- ensure that children have access to and make use of various types of games, technology, counting materials, blocks, toys and modelling materials, and provide materials that give them experiences of classifying, ordering, sorting and comparing

- provide children with design impulses and experiences through exploring, discovering and creating different shapes and patterns
- ensure that children encounter different types of measures, units and measuring equipment in their play and everyday activities, and stimulate children to think about distances, weights, volumes and time.

## **Part III Planning and collaboration**

### ***Chapter 4 Planning, documentation and assessment***

Kindergartens are pedagogical centres that shall be planned, documented and assessed. Individual kindergartens are free to choose methods and scopes based on local circumstances and needs. The implementation of the plan must be so flexible that there is space for spontaneity and children's participation. Heads of kindergartens have a particular responsibility for implementing and leading the kindergarten's work on planning, documentation and assessment. Pedagogical leaders are responsible for the planning, documentation and assessment of work with the group of children for whom they are responsible. Supervisors of kindergartens and pedagogical leaders are responsible for ensuring that the aims and framework of a kindergarten are clear to the staff, that staff develop a shared understanding of the aims, and that parents receive reliable and sufficient information about the activities of the kindergarten. The broadest possible participation of children, parents, kindergarten staff and the owners should be encouraged in the planning, documentation and assessment of the kindergarten's activities.

#### **4.1 Planning**

Good planning can help to create a well-designed and appropriate use of the kindergarten's human and material resources, as well as of the local community and countryside. The planning of the physical design, organisation, content and processes of kindergartens must be done on the basis of the kindergarten's overall goals, which are stated in the Kindergarten Act and described in greater detail in this Framework Plan. The planning must be based on an understanding of the development and learning of children, individually and in groups, on observations, documentation, reflection, systematic assessment and conversations with children and parents.

All kindergartens shall draw up an annual plan. Individual kindergartens should decide whether plans should also be drawn up for shorter periods. Kindergartens may also require a long-term plan, in order to ensure progression and continuity in the learning and experiences of children throughout their stay at the kindergarten. Organisational development and staff training must also be seen in a longer term perspective. The kindergarten's plans should be seen in the context of municipal planning of the kindergarten sector and of children's home backgrounds.

The annual plan functions are:

- A tool to help kindergarten staff run activities in a conscious and specified manner
- A starting point for parents' opportunities to influence the content of the kindergarten
- A basis for municipal supervision of the kindergarten
- A source of information about the pedagogical work of the kindergarten to the owners, politicians, municipality, partners of the kindergarten and other stakeholders.

The annual plan shall contain information about how the kindergarten will work on the care, upbringing, play and learning of the children, ensuring that they have good opportunities for development and activity in close understanding and cooperation with their homes. The plan must set out how the stipulations of the Kindergarten Act on content will be followed up, documented and assessed. The celebration of local cultural events should also be specified in

the plan. At kindergartens for Sámi children in Sámi districts, the Sámi seasonal calendar should form the basis for school activities. Plans for the children's transition from the kindergarten to school must also be specified in the kindergarten's annual plan.

The annual plan must specify the kindergarten's work on facilitating the participation of children. Children can participate in planning work, either through direct comments made during conversations on what they like doing at the kindergarten, or by expressing themselves in other ways. The annual plan shall be adopted by the kindergarten's coordinating committee. Parents must be given the opportunity to participate actively in the planning of the kindergarten's programme. Questions about content and prioritisations must be discussed at the parents' council and the coordinating committee. It is important to discuss with parents what they want to participate in and how. The supervisor of the kindergarten has responsibility for the content of the annual plan in terms of learning areas.

#### **4.2 Documentation as a basis for reflection and learning**

An understanding of the work of staff and of children's activities at the kindergarten provides an important basis for the development of the kindergarten. Documentation can be a means of finding out about different perceptions, and of encouraging critical and reflective practice. Children's learning and the work of staff must be understood to allow reflection on the values and tasks of the kindergarten, and on its role as an arena for play, learning and development.

The documentation of kindergartens can provide information about what children experience, learn and do there to parents, the local community and to the municipality in its capacity as the supervisory body. An ethical perspective must be used for the documentation of children's play, learning and work. Both children and parents may react if too much of what children say and do becomes the subject of written observations and assessments.

Documentation linked to *individual children* can be used in connection with cooperation with external welfare services if this is done in collaboration and understanding with the parents/guardians of the children. If specific goals are to be set for individual children, there must be a reason for this, and the goals must be set in collaboration with the parents and any partners outside the kindergarten. This type of documentation is subject to a duty of confidentiality. Records related to planning and observation may be subject to licensing in accordance with Act no. 31 of 14 April 2000 relating to the Processing of Personal Data. This act requires people to have a license from the Data Inspectorate if they wish to process sensitive personal data. Parents are entitled to see documentation about their own children.

#### **4.3 Assessment of the kindergarten's work**

The quality of the everyday interaction between people at the kindergarten is one of the most important factors for the development and learning of the children. The well-being and development of the group of children and individual children shall therefore be observed and assessed on an ongoing basis. Attention must be paid to interaction amongst the children, between children and staff and amongst the staff. The work of the kindergarten shall be assessed, i.e. described, analysed and interpreted, in relation to criteria set out in the Kindergarten Act, this Framework Plan and any local guidelines and plans.

The head of the kindergarten has overall responsibility for the pedagogical activities being assessed in a planned, systematic and open manner. She or he must ensure that the assessments are carried out with the understanding of the parents and the staff group. The parents' council and coordinating committee of the kindergarten shall have the power to exercise real influence over the assessment process. The annual plan must set out the way in which the assessment of the kindergarten's work is to be implemented: what is to be assessed, what is the purpose, who is to participate in the assessment work and how and when will it take place.

The experiences and points of view of children shall be taken into account by the assessment. Kindergartens shall normally not assess the achievement of goals by individual children in relation to specific criteria; cf. the above paragraph on the documentation of the development of individual children.

Information and documentation shall provide the basis for reflection and discussions within the staff group and with children and parents. The results of the assessment should be used as a basis for work on next year's annual plan.

Assessments that are made available to other people can encourage open and wide-ranging debate about the aims, content, tasks and quality of a kindergarten. Assessments are also important as a way of refreshing the approach and organisation of kindergartens. Kindergartens should work on renewing themselves on the basis of intentions set out in their plans, allowances for the specific group of children and parents and current challenges in the local community and society.

Systematic assessment provides the foundations for kindergartens as pedagogical centres. Kindergartens as organisations carry traditions, a range of expertise, tacit understandings and unspoken knowledge that it is important to express in words and reflect on, in order to provide a basis for future quality improvements.

## ***Chapter 5 Collaboration***

Municipalities are responsible for ensuring that the various services provided to families with children are properly coordinated. In order to ensure that children and parents receive as comprehensive a service as possible, helping children as they grow up and develop, kindergartens must collaborate with other services and institutions in the municipality. Cross-disciplinary and holistic thinking is therefore of central importance. Both parents and kindergartens may need to cooperate with various welfare services. During such collaboration, the stipulations on the duty of confidentiality and information contained in the Kindergarten Act and other regulations must be adhered to.

### **5.1 Primary school**

Kindergartens shall, in collaboration with schools, facilitate the transition of children from a kindergarten to year one and to any after-school groups. This shall be done in close collaboration with the children's homes. Plans for the children's transition from kindergarten to school must be specified in the kindergarten's annual plan.

Both kindergartens and schools are institutions that provide care, upbringing, play and learning. Children will encounter similarities and differences between these two institutions. Kindergartens and schools should provide each other with mutual information about their activities. Kindergartens and schools have a joint responsibility for ensuring that children can face the differences with curiosity and confidence in their own abilities. Children must be able to leave their kindergartens properly. They should look forward to starting school and know that there is a connection between their kindergarten and their school.

If the kindergarten is to provide the school with information about an individual child, parents must consent. Parents must be given access to, and be able to influence, the exchange of information. Such collaboration must focus both on what children can do and are capable of, and where they need special assistance. Close cooperation between kindergartens and schools is particularly important for children who need special care or special learning environments. If extensive special arrangements are required, the collaboration must be initiated in plenty of time before the transition to school.

Children at a given kindergarten may live within the catchment areas of several schools. Individual municipalities must find appropriate solutions for how kindergartens and schools shall cooperate in practice regarding this.

## **5.2 Child welfare service**

The main task of the child welfare service is to ensure that children who live in conditions that could damage their health or development receive necessary and timely help and care. Having the child welfare service able to fulfil its task in relation to children in serious situations, may often be dependent on receiving information from others.

Through their daily, close contact with children, staff at kindergartens play an important role in observing and receiving information about the care that children are receiving at home and about their backgrounds. In order to ensure that children in serious situations are seen by the child welfare service and receive the help they need, it is highly important that staff at kindergartens comply with the duty of information when it comes into force. Section 22 of the Kindergarten Act imposes a duty on all employees at kindergartens to inform the child welfare service if there is reason to believe that a child is being abused or is suffering from other serious forms of neglect. This duty of information overrides their duty of confidentiality.

A place at a kindergarten is a measure used by the child welfare service. A place at a kindergarten can either be a voluntary measure or a measure imposed by the child welfare service. Section 13 of the Kindergarten Act states that children for whom a resolution has been made in accordance with Section 4-12 and the second paragraph of Section 4-4 are entitled to prioritised admission. Close cooperation with the child welfare service is important where a place at a kindergarten has been used as a measure pursuant to the Child Welfare Act. This is equally important when the child welfare service requires assistance from the kindergarten in relation to a specific child.

A general and systematic system of collaboration between the kindergarten and the child welfare service should be established. Individual municipalities must find appropriate solutions for how kindergartens and the child welfare service should cooperate. The aim should be cooperation on the basis of regular, formal contact, common goals in relation to the

child and an understanding of one another's tasks and ways of working. Kindergartens and child welfare services are two of several institutions who help to create safe environments in which children can grow up.

### **5.3 Mother and child health clinics**

Mother and child health clinics are responsible for general preventive health care and for promoting healthy lifestyles. They ensure that children grow up in a safe environment in a given municipality. Health clinics can suggest that an application should be made for a place at a kindergarten for children who have a particular need for pedagogical assistance, and can provide an expert opinion during discussions on the prioritisation of admissions. Health clinics can cooperate on the provision of services for children with special requirements.

Health clinics shall give advice and guidance on the provision of medication at kindergartens and on the prevention of contagious diseases. Health clinics are also of key importance in mapping children's language skills.

### **5.4 Pedagogical-psychological counselling service**

The responsibilities and tasks of the pedagogical-psychological counselling service in relation to pre-school children are set out in the Section 5-6 of Act no. 61 of 17 July 1998 relating to Primary and Secondary Education. The right of children to special educational assistance is set out in Section 5-7 of the same act. The special educational assistance can be given at kindergartens.

The pedagogical-psychological counselling service is one of the many professional bodies that can provide an expert opinion on whether a child with a reduced level of function may be entitled to prioritised admission to a kindergarten in accordance with Section 13 of the Kindergarten Act. The pedagogical-psychological counselling service can in such cases also provide advice and guidance to the kindergarten.

The pedagogical-psychological counselling service is the expert body for recommendations on special educational assistance. If a kindergarten seeks collaboration on and help with an individual child at the kindergarten, the parents must have given their consent. Parents must be actively involved in this cooperation.

### **5.5 Educational establishments**

Pursuant to Section 24 of the Kindergarten Act, owners of kindergartens are obliged to make their kindergarten available for practice teaching for students undergoing preschool teacher training. The head teacher is obliged to provide guidance to students during such practice training. Kindergartens should also cooperate with upper secondary schools that provide courses for child and youth workers. The students' work experience at the kindergarten must be included in the kindergarten's annual plan. Kindergartens can collaborate further with university colleges and universities on development work, graduate education and competence building.

## **5.6 The Sámi Parliament**

The Sámi Parliament controls funds that can be used for measures for Sámi children at kindergartens, and can provide guidance and assistance to staff, regardless of where in the country the kindergarten is situated.

## **5.7 Other partners**

Kindergartens should work with the local community to provide children with a variety of experiences and to give them a connection to their neighbourhood. Positive cooperation between kindergartens and schools, cultural bodies, institutions, voluntary organisations and churches can enrich both the kindergarten and the local community, and help to establish the local connections of the kindergarten.