

Englisch

Language skills assessment one year before starting school

It is important for children to be able to speak and understand the German language to a level appropriate to their age if they are to be successful at school. All children in Bremen take a language test one year before starting school. This language skills assessment serves to examine the stage of the child's language development. If children are found to be in need of support, they are given language development support during the year before they start school. The costs for both the language test and the language development support are borne by the Bremen municipal authorities.

What method is used?

The Cito language test. With the Cito language test, three areas are examined:

Understanding of specific words (passive vocabulary): Objects (e.g. pen, car) and activities (e.g. laughing, writing) are named and the child is asked to select the appropriate picture from a series of pictures. Being familiar with and understanding words (passive vocabulary) is the prerequisite for using the words yourself (active vocabulary). It is only possible to use a word in a way that makes sense if you are familiar with the word.

Understanding of abstract terms: The child is asked about colours, shapes, spatial relationships (e.g. in front of/ behind) and temporal sequences (e.g. before/after) as well as about comparative characteristics (e.g. larger/smaller). The child answers by selecting the appropriate picture.

Differentiation of sounds (phonological awareness): In each case, two words are read out which are either similar (e.g. needle – noodle) or the same (e.g. roof – roof). In this case, the child's task is to try to distinguish whether the sounds are different. When they are learning to read and write at school, it is important that children are able to distinguish between similar sounding words.

Who takes the test?

All children who are due to start school in the year 2020 in Bremen.

How is the Cito language test carried out?

The children complete the test at a computer, with guidance from an educational specialist. Completing the test will take around 25 minutes and it will take place in a primary school.

A little clown called Primo accompanies the children through the language test on the computer. To help them to focus, the children do the test wearing headphones. The children answer the questions by selecting the appropriate picture in each case. This means that they need to be able to use a computer mouse. Some children have little or no experience in using a computer mouse. This is not essential, however. Before the test begins, the children will have everything explained to them in a playful atmosphere and are given the chance to practise using a child-friendly computer mouse. Experience has shown that children learn how to use the mouse very quickly and without any difficulties.

Is participation in the language skills assessment compulsory?

Yes. In Bremen, it is mandatory for all children to complete a language test one year before they start school and to take part in support sessions if this is deemed necessary. This obligation is laid down in paragraph, 36 of the Bremen Education Act.

What alternatives are there to the Cito test?

It is possible to substitute participation in the Cito test with the results of a so-called diagnostic language assessment. You will need to apply to the Senator for Children and Education if you wish to make use of this option. You will have to bear the costs of this procedure yourself. You can find further details on the Senator for Children and Education's website (www.bildung.bremen.de).

Does the test result have an influence on whether the child can start school?

No. The results of the language skills assessment have no effect on the school starting date of the child. Your child will not be disadvantaged in any way if he/she is given language development support. On the contrary, the child will receive extra help and will therefore be better prepared for starting school.