

Learning chess — at the age of four

English language lessons and lunch dishes of your choice... What other reasons inspire parents to choose private kindergartens?

Every parent dreams of their child attending a good kindergarten. In recent years, the Ministry of Education has been supporting the creation of new private pre-school institutions, as well as state run. We visit Minsk's pre-school Daddy Fox to find out how private kindergartens differ from their state run counterparts, as well as learning of potential challenges.

Interestingly, the name comes from Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *Little Prince*, where the Fox tells the hero that we are responsible for those whom we tame and that only the heart can see to the core of things. It's also rare in mixing children of different ages.

Miracle of childhood

The founder and director of Daddy Fox, Anna Moiseeva, has four children of her own. She's happy to chat about her kindergarten, for which she rents part of a Frunzensky District nursery. It sports a large room filled with various game zones and there is an abundance of toys. Indoor plants are found in the cosy corner, with its colourful furniture and soft music. There's a feeling of a true home environment. Next door to the games room is a sleeping area

and an educational room whose walls are covered in posters of numbers. There are even English words stuck to the furniture. Every detail seems to inspire learning from the youngest age.

Ms. Moiseeva asserts that this isn't the main aim of her kindergarten though. She explains, "Ideally, children should stay with their mother until they're about seven, since an 'umbilical cord' connects them until that time. However, if parents need to send their child to kindergarten, I think it's best to preserve the wonder of childhood. A good kindergarten should employ teachers who love children. You don't need expensive furniture and toys, although we have the chance to offer the best here. We have caring and talented teachers and quickly say goodbye to any who are lukewarm about their duties."



BELTA

Nine private pre-school institutions officially operate in Belarus: seven in Minsk, one in the Mogilev Region and one in the Minsk District.

Little people

Interestingly, specialists in various areas work in the kindergarten, including a psychologist, a foreign language teacher and a musical director. There are too many different lessons to enumerate, with

children always learning through play. Ms. Moiseeva notes, "Teaching in our kindergarten is based on the *Pralska* pre-school education programme. However, we also use our own experience and techniques. Do children need to study English? I'd never force any of them but modern children tend to be interested in everything, especially when it's presented as a game. They all read well as a result, including in English."

There are no more than 15 children per group, so teachers can apply an individual approach.

Teething problems

What problems arise in establishing a private kindergarten?

"There was no resistance from officials. On the contrary, we actively co-operate," says the director. "However, at the initial stage, you do need to invest a lot in this business: buying furniture, clothes and

toys, paying rent and staff salaries.

In the first five years, it was very difficult, but it became easier with time. We're seeing demand for the services of a private kindergarten, as people have more disposable income and can afford to choose."

I notice that children's menus are individualised also, to suit their preferences, and that there are always several kinds of fruit to choose from. On the day we arrive, the menu includes fish soup, meat chops, mashed potatoes, salad with Chinese cabbage, bread and juice for lunch, followed by meat pilaf, tea and homemade buns later in the afternoon. In summer, fewer children attend but those who stay have the chance to take trips into the countryside.

Parents' opinions:

Nadezhda MIKHAILOVSKAYA, mother to three year old Masha:

"The main reason we chose a private kindergarten was because many of our local kindergartens were already full, with about 30 children per group. Daddy Fox has small groups and I like that each class is divided into subgroups of 5-6 children, according to age, when they have lessons. The children study English and even learn how to play chess (from the age of 4). My daughter is already interested in this."

DARYA, mother to daughter Sasha and son Platon:

"My eldest daughter is a homebody and didn't want to go to kindergarten, so we sent her relatively late, at the age of three and a half. We chose Daddy Fox because there are fewer children than in the ordinary kindergartens, and they are looked after better; the teachers help them to develop their talents. In April, we plan to send Platon; he is 2 years and 4 months at present. Sasha loves her little brother, so it's great that they won't be separated, being in the same group."

Art works with coffee aroma

Art-café opens to visitors at National Art Museum

By Lyudmila Minakova

A trip to admire art works can now include a relaxing cup of tea or coffee, even late through the evening, since the café is open from 11am to 11pm. "It's not just a café, but a meeting place," explains the Director General, Vladimir Prokoptsov. "We'll show films by young directors and stu-

dents of the Academy of Arts, and organise meetings with Belarusian musicians, as well as exhibitions by young artists and themed nights."

The idea has long been percolating, coming to life temporarily for the 'Parisian' café during the *Belarus-Born Artists of the Paris School* project. Unsurprisingly, feedback was positive and the



Art-café in the National Art Museum

Board of Trustees decided to make the feature more permanent.

The café is located in the conference room, where the 'Parisian' café was set up.

"We've matched its style to the architecture of the museum," explains Mr. Prokoptsov. Young Anna Silivonchik's *A Table for Two* exposition is on show there at present.

Cruise ship heading out from city of Pinsk

First Belarusian cruise liner being built at Pinsk Shipbuilding and Repairing Plant

The oil powered cruise ship for tourists' sightseeing should be afloat by late 2014, making trips from Brest to Kiev, with stops en-route.

"This project is part of the Pripjat Polesie natural resources programme, promoting enjoyment of our environment," explains Chief Engineer Stanislav

Stefanovich. "The 44m ship being made for Dneprbugvodput enterprise will have two levels, meeting all modern requirements, and will be 7m in width."

Pinsk's shipbuilders already have experience of building similar oil powered ships, of smaller size, which travel through the Vitebsk and Mogilev regions. The new cruise ship will be the first of its class created there.