

# ... MARTHA HJEMMET





## Facts about Martha Hjemmet

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### Opening Hours:

Martha Hjemmet is open Monday to Thursday from 6:30am to 5:00pm, and on Friday from 6:30am to 4:30pm.

Martha Hjemmet is made up of a large 3-storey, renovated and modernized building. All of our rooms are full of light and inviting. Our shared areas include a workshop and a music and activity room. We have a top-tuned production kitchen, where healthy, organic food is made daily for all the children. In addition, we have a sizeable outdoor playground.

### Martha Hjemmet is divided into three departments:

- Day care/nursery for children 0 to 3 years old
- Kindergarten for children 3 to 6 years old
- Recreation center for children 6 to 10 years old. This is where children come each day after school. In Denmark, most school days end around 1 pm. Instead of going directly home after school, children go to the recreation center. The youngest school children are picked up daily by a Martha Hjemmet pedagogue and chaperoned back to the recreation center.

All in all, Martha Hjemmet has 225 children.



### **Management Team:**

Martha Hjemmet's management team is made up of our institution's leader, one department head from each of the three departments, as well as our head chef. With the exception of our formally trained head chef, each member of the management team is an educated teacher, with additional university degrees in areas such as psychology, education, sociology, and management from the perspective of Social Construction Theory.

Martha Hjemmet has a total of 45 employees, which includes pedagogues, and teacher assistants, as well as kitchen and maintenance staff.

In the following text, we will refer to the educated staff as teachers. Translating the Danish word, pædagog, to English is not simple, as it is not possible to make direct comparisons because of the differences in foreign school systems. We could call ourselves educators, preschool teachers, teachers or pedagogues. Different names for the same profession.

In Denmark, to become an educated teacher, one must attend a University College for 3 1/2 years to obtain a bachelor's degree. This degree is necessary in order to find work in a day care/nursery, kindergarten or recreation center. You can also with the same degree work as a social worker.

Martha Hjemmet is an independently owned institution, which means that we have an operational agreement with the city of Copenhagen, but aside from that, the institution is run entirely by a fund, Martha Fonden (The Martha Foundation). Martha Hjemmet's leader and a committee comprised of the institution's parents ensure that the work done at Martha Hjemmet reaches its educational goals while staying on budget.

Together with three other large Copenhagen institutions, Martha Hjemmet is involved in a networking group. The group's common goal, aside from providing professional sparring for one another, is to optimize and streamline the management team's efforts throughout the four institutions.

We regard Martha Hjemmet as an educational institution, and therefore, we make a point of always having interning student teachers present. Additionally, our leadership is represented by one of our department heads who sits on the national censor board - a group of individuals who assist on evaluating the country's student teachers during exams.



## Martha Hjemmet's History

Martha Hjemmet's history goes many years back. The first building blocks of Martha Hjemmet started in the late 1800's, where a group of dedicated women strived to improve the conditions for the many poor families in the area. These women could see the unfortunate circumstances not only for the small children, who were left home alone daily so that their parents could work, but also for the sick children, who needed nutrition and care.



Many supported the women's initiative, and on March 24, 1886, Martha Hjemmet was inaugurated. Throughout the years, Martha Hjemmet has had many different functions. It has been a sewing room for neighborhood mothers, a day care center, a Sunday school, a residence for ill, and a boarding school for children, whose parents could not look after them. There has always been focus on healthfulness and well-being. In 1897 Martha Hjemmet began cooperation with the organization Diakonissestiftelsen, and that union is still present to this day.

As women's presence in the labor force increased over the years, so did the demand for childcare, which is why Martha Hjemmet was rebuilt as a childcare facility in the late 1950's. It is Martha Hjemmet's responsiveness to society's needs which still remains intact today.

At Martha Hjemmet, we work together with the municipality of Copenhagen on a project called familiepladsprojektet, or The Family Project. It means that one teacher within our staff has primary focus on a handful of families who, for one reason or another, need assistance for a given period. This means that we have the opportunity to offer additional conferences with the parents, supervision for the teachers, and extra support for those children in need.



## The Multicultural Aspect and the Interest for International Cooperation



Martha Hjemmet is situated in a part of Copenhagen called Nørrebro, and it is here the city is most culturally diverse. The influences and enrichment derived from such a multicultural population can also be felt at Martha Hjemmet.



On an everyday basis, we meet children and parents from many different continents. From Asia, Africa, Central America, the Middle East as well as many different nations in Europe. Specifically, we have about 25 nations represented among our families, which gives us unique instances to be exposed to the many cultures, and thereby opportunities for growth. At Martha Hjemmet we embrace challenging situations as well, where we strive to promote a constructive interaction between different cultures, also when there may be dissimilar values present.



We are occupied by the wealth that comes along with exchanging international colleagues. Each year we host international student teachers as interns who come to us by way of a local college. The college coordinates the internships and visits, and we find it extremely inspiring to experience how Martha Hjemmet is seen through other's eyes, and to hear of other country's ways of approaching our profession.

We work constantly for exchange opportunities with other institutions from within the EU.



## The Child's Good Life at Martha Hjemmet

We want to create a secure and stimulating day for the children at Martha Hjemmet. A place where children are met by interested and engaged adults, who see the children as the unique individuals they are. It is a place where the children look forward to seeing their friends and the adults, a place of comfort, where it is fun and exciting to be, where one can play, where there are challenges and one can learn, and finally, a place where care is abundant.

Martha Hjemmet has to be a welcoming and secure place for parents to drop off their children, too. A house that facilitates discussion between parents and staff. A house where parents feel that they are seen and heard, and also a place where they can get advice and support from the personnel.

Aside from the daily contact with parents, we also host arrangements where parents can come, have a cup of coffee and chat with the other parents and the staff. In addition to these informal gatherings, parents are also involved in our the parent meetings we hold twice a year, parent/teacher conferences and several recurrent events like our harvest festival and Christmas party.





## Food and Meals at Martha Hjemmet

It is important for us that basic needs such as sleep, food, safety and security are provided. A hungry and insecure child has poor chances for learning much.

We, at Martha Hjemmet, have chosen to focus on the food we eat and our mealtimes as key values and central parts of our day. We feel that if a child is to grow and learn optimally, awareness on these subjects must be present. At Martha Hjemmet mealtime is key. Our skillful head chef and her assistants create healthy, enticing and exciting meals daily. Aside from the nutritious food itself, the ritual of mealtime also gives teachers a unique opportunity to see each child as an individual and to aid in creating good framework for companionship.

We prioritize quality at Martha Hjemmet, and feel that in order to notice quality, one must be given plenty of time to experience things at a natural pace. When we refer to mealtime, it is important that there is ample time to enjoy the food and each other's company. There is a direct relation between the quality of the food and the quality of the togetherness. To serve children food that is made from quality ingredients, placed on an attractive table is just one way we clearly purvey a message of wanting to treat each other well. We speak kindly to each other, we listen to each other, and we help each other.

At Martha Hjemmet we have written a cookbook filled with wonderful recipes as well as a chapter on the more psychological and educational aspects of a meal. The cookbook was nominated in 2010 for the prestigious Gourmand International Cookbook Prize.



## Transitions and Curriculum/Setting Goals



In Denmark, all day care centers and kindergartens develop their own curriculum according to a national template (learning plan) with six overall themes: linguistic development, nature and natural phenomena, cultural expressions, body and movement, diverse personal development and social skills. In addition, we must describe how we work with children with special needs.



The six themes of the curriculum are comparable with the statutory set themes, which children are taught during their first school year.



Recreation centers are also required to work with various national overall themes. Additionally recreation centers must work together with the schools. In essence, this means that the recreation center teachers have some fixed work hours at the schools. Teachers at the recreation center participate, with the grade school teacher, in the first parent/teacher conferences as well.

Teachers from the recreation center and representatives from the school meet routinely as a way to discuss progress and plan their common efforts.



Transitions, in general, are something we focus on at Martha Hjemmet, and from a political side, it is a subject that is currently highly prioritized.

At Martha Hjemmet we want to make the transition from day care/nursery to kindergarten as easy and natural as possible for children and their parents. Therefore, we always hold a meeting with the child's parents, the day care/nursery teacher and their future kindergarten teacher. In that way, the parents and the day



care provider pass on information about the child to the kindergarten teacher. Moreover, the child's start in kindergarten is discussed, as well as reconciling expectations to kindergarten life. Afterwards, a day care/nursery teacher accompanies the child during the first few days in kindergarten.

The transition from kindergarten to school is also an important area of focus for us. Each fall, we create a group of the oldest children, who are set to begin school the following school year. One day a week – until spring - the group meets to participate in suitable activities for our to-be school students.

We invest great efforts here in order to make the child feel secure and to help the child develop the skills needed to flourish and learn optimally in school.

We plan activities which among other things are focused on language development, numerical comprehension, social skills, a readiness in receiving collective messages, understanding and completing a collective assignment, fostering the ability to think abstract, and the development of fine and gross motor skills, as well as an awareness of letters. The teachers are responsible for working with the coming school children didactically during the course of their months spent together.

Being in the school group also means visiting one or more of the local schools.



## Martha Hjemmet's Way of Learning

We believe in a situational and relational conditioned method of learning. In other words, we don't believe that learning is only or primarily an inner cognitive process but arises in a situation related to a specific context and formed by the relations within that given context.

In our opinion, learning is about acquisition of habits, knowledge and skills particularly when simultaneous during the formation of identity. Children's development and learning happens through their participation in the connections in which they occur. A central concept is therefore participation. To be a participator demands that the child feels valued and is given an influence on the comradeship/ the group.

That means that we believe that children's learning cannot be controlled by a simple input/output – logic. We cannot control where, when and in what way learning occurs.

In other words, we believe that children's learning cannot be controlled by a simple input/output logic. We cannot control where, when and in what way learning occurs. However, we can attempt to create a stimulating environment for learning, where all senses are stimulated. By interested and engaging adults. By teachers who pay attention to the social dynamics in the groups and intervene during play and conversations, if you want to support an opening for the child into the group - the community.

We can be conscious of how we, by the manner of our speech, shape each other, as language has the power to open or close an individual's opportunity to develop their identity. We must be good role models because children also learn by what we call Master Learning, a phenomenon that occurs when children imitate the behavior of the adults and children they are exposed to.

Welcome to Martha Hjemmet.