

## Approach

The **E**vangelische **G**esamtschule **G**elsenkirchen-Bismarck (EGG), a protestant comprehensive school, was founded in the summer of 1998, and is attended by approximately 1200 pupils. Children of different confessions, nationalities, and social background live and learn together in the EGG. As a school operated by the Westphalian Evangelical Church, we are called upon to realise a special progressive educational approach, with the four letters „**F E L S**“ (rock) as an expression of this concept:

- As a **F**amily School we aim at creating a familiar atmosphere, which takes into account and respects the children's and adolescents' personalities and needs.
- As **E**ducational School we place an emphasis on the transfer of knowledge, but also want to give our pupils the courage to stand up for their beliefs and to exercise tolerance.
- As **L**ife School we aim at the best possible individual support and challenge for every child in heterogeneous groups of learning, so that every adolescent is able to reach the individually best possible results when leaving school, and to prevent any pupil from leaving our school without a qualification. We offer full-time learning concepts and individualized learning structures.
- As **S**chool for the Neighbourhood we are firmly anchored in Gelsenkirchen, and closely linked to the urban quarter of Bismarck in many ways, forming a multifunctional and cultural centre.

The school's unique and highly award-winning architecture offers an excellent support for these pedagogical concepts.

## Family School

The EGG as an **all-day school** offers spaces, in which children and adolescents can feel „at home“.

On admission, a **school contract** is signed, in which parents or legal guardians and the school mutually agree on the education to be provided.

In our school, class teachers in classes 5-10 and the year-counsellors in classes 11-13 are staffed in **tandems** and given a central role, and in all years we aim at teaching as many subjects as possible maintaining class structures.

At the beginning of the first school year (in class 5), every class moves into its own **terraced house**, comprising a couple of facilities and a garden, together with its class teachers. All 5 of these terraced houses form the **classroom house**. The special **architecture** enables the school community to identify with its school. Pupils decorate and care for their class houses and their surroundings, based on regular responsibilities (e.g. class duties and rules), and pupils and teachers regularly and democratically discuss matters concerning their year and their house. The teachers' and the pupil's intensive communication is additionally encouraged by interdisciplinary references to class curriculum in **free working periods** and **personalised**

**learning sessions**, as well as during the yearly **class trips**.

Pupils, parents, and teachers construct space and time together as a school community. Important elements here are **personalised learning sequences**, **class-teacher-days**, the **project week**, the yearly **trips**, as well as the **sports-and-games meeting**.

School life in the EGG is unimaginable without the lively participation of the families. Parents give positive stimuli, e.g. in **workshops**, **committees** and decision-making **boards**. In addition, parents, pupils, and teachers jointly organise **festivities**, like the summer fête, and the **open day**, which is followed later in the year by the Advent bazaar and the alumni meeting on the same day. The **Förderverein** (Friends of the school association) provides indispensable support, and assists the school e.g. in buying equipment and the realisation of special projects.

## **Educational School**

The EGG houses and teaches pupils from different background and of varying abilities. In their daily affairs, our pupils are taught to meet the others with openness and respect, and to accept differences between them.

The joint learning of pupils of different religious denominations and beliefs amplifies this mutual respect. Knowing about other beliefs, celebrating religious feasts together, and the **dialogue between religions and cultures** in lessons facilitate a greater openness that acknowledges both common ground and differences.

It is a particular concern of ours to raise our pupils to become **mature stakeholders in society**. Students are offered opportunities to assume responsibility in the students' council of their respective year, and during the regular meetings of the school's student council. In addition, students – like their parents – can collaborate in different boards and committees.

Our pupils are sensitised towards awareness for **treating their environment respectfully and for safeguarding the creation**. Together and with the support of their class teachers, the pupils care for their classrooms and the adjoining gardens.

Subject lessons and project teaching contribute towards pupils' understanding of the environment and of their responsibility for its protection and conservation.

At our school, children and adolescents are perceived and accepted as individuals. A **letter of assessment**, that informs about a student's learning, his social behaviour and work habits, and his personal development supplement the semester reports.

**Personalised learning** teaches pupils that different dispositions and talents are normal disparities between humans, and should therefore not result in judgement.

Already from year 5 onwards, classes with different focuses are formed, e.g. **inclusive classes**, in which pupils with common and with individual learning references are given special need support by special need teachers. In **special woodwind classes**, interested pupils are given a first impression of what playing an instrument means. In this, a local music school aids the school.

Every pupil is introduced to the methods required for the **personalized learning** lessons. *Personalized* in this context means placing an emphasis on every pupil's individual advancement as well as teaching basic democracy.

From year 9 onwards – after restructuring the classes – the competencies gained in personalized learning will be further developed and continually improved, taking into account the increasing independence of the pupils.

In year 11/EF (introductory phase), a compulsory three-week work experience in a charitable institution (**diakonisches Praktikum** – supported by the evangelical social institutions in Gelsenkirchen) enables the pupils to expand their interpersonal skills by interacting with people at society's fringe.

Fellow pupils, class teachers, year-counsellors and our advice-centre-team, comprising a qualified social education worker and a woman school parson, provide support for a constructive handling of interpersonal conflict situations (cf. **consultation concept**).

From year 7 onwards we support and counsel our pupils in their **professional and educational orientation**. This is supplemented by the yearly recurring **Bismarcker Handwerkermarkt** (local Craftsmen's Fair). Our pupils are thus led to reach their individually feasible qualification in any of the **final degrees** available in German secondary school up to the Abitur (German equivalent to A-level).

## Life School

Our school's self-conception is that of a house for learning and for life.

The school's unique and multiple award-winning **architecture** does not only convey a special atmosphere, inspiring a familiar communication with one another, it also offers manifold opportunities to responsibly experience and shape school as a living space.

In the **erection stage**, the architects and the pupils planned our school's classrooms jointly. Apart from the actual classroom, additionally equipped with a gallery, every house offers a vestibule with coat racks and lockers as well as sanitary facilities. The gallery may be used for lessons and for recreational activities.

Every house for one year holds additional rooms for differentiated teaching

and staffroom(s) for the **year's class teachers**, who work together closely as a **team**.

During break time, the rooms remain unlocked, so that the pupils of that class may stay in their house to chat or play. Both the multifaceted ways of using the rooms, and the pupils' participation in decorating their surroundings after moving in, induce them to highly identify with their class house.

The context of a day school allows time to offer voluntary recreational programs (**Offene Mittagsangebote**) so that pupils may sensibly fill their lunch break: Many pupils participate in musical or sports activities, while others use the lunch break to eat in our canteen (**Mensa**). Others may use the library to play chess, read or work on projects. Common social learning implies that, once a year, every class is assigned to help in the canteen for one week.

Every class is given two lessons per week in which the class teachers accompany the pupils' work on their weekly schedule (**Wochenplanarbeit**).

In-class-teaching in the lower and intermediate school is supplemented by **extra-curricular school project groups**, which are chosen by pupils according to their inclination. These are offered once a week for the years 6 to 8 in the afternoon.

Every year, a **project week** is conducted for the whole school. Whereas the contents are predetermined for some of the year groups, the others may choose the topics freely.

**Class trips** are arranged yearly for the pupils of our school. These trips strengthen the class-community and serve to broaden pupils' horizon. Additionally, there are offers to participate in theme trips, such as the German Protestant Church

main entrance, but also offers multifaceted links to the neighbourhood. The upper rooms of the Neighbourhood House are also used after school hours.

The ground floor houses the **social advice-centre team**, which is responsible mainly for the individual advice and support of pupils. The team also establishes cooperative ties with youth counselling institutions and other facilities in Gelsenkirchen.

The second floor is home to the **Parents' Café**. Thanks to the dedicated commitment of the parents, there are not only regular parents' meetings, but also parental regulars' tables and topic-orientated activities, all of which are very popular.

Apart from the Neighbourhood House, the school's architecture offers further facilities, such as the canteen (**Mensa**), the **library**, the **Oasis**, and the **Theatre**, which are open to its **partners from outside the school** in the evenings, at the weekends or during the holidays, and may be used for many different purposes.

Our school has established cooperative ties with other institutions in Gelsenkirchen, participates in neighbourhood events and organises a yearly recurring summer fête, linked to a local craftsmen's fair as well as the **Advent bazaar**, which is accompanied by the yearly alumni meeting. The proceeds from the yearly **charity-run** are spent both on improving the school's facilities and on the school's twinning with Zambia.

There is an open relationship with the neighbouring church communities. The **regular services for every year** are held in the vicinity's churches or in the school itself. In addition, the **chapel** is used for staff services, Muslim religious groups or for **classes in which religious education is taught jointly**.

During their work experience in a charitable institution (**diakonisches Praktikum**) in year 11/EF, the pupils become acquainted with social institutions of the city of Gelsenkirchen.

Finally, in the course of a school year, many of our school's musical activities, presentations in the field of arts and drama, or shows about our school's twinnings flow into **performances** and **concerts**, that are always open to the neighbourhood, too.

Our networking exceeds the neighbourhood. We are members of a national organisation for progressive education: **Blick über den Zaun** (BüZ), the northern evangelical schools' organisation (**Evangelischen Schulbund Nord**) as well as the non-profit society for comprehensive schools (**Gemeinnützigen Gesellschaft Gesamtschule - GGG**).