

Induction Advice:

Welcome to Bremerhaven.

This advice is to help new teachers arriving from outside Germany and has been written by teachers recruited from the UK who are currently working here.

It has been agreed by the local authority (Schulamt) that you will be given up to a week's structured induction in order to settle in and clear up any problems you may have.

Differences to Note

There are many differences between the UK and German education systems that are sometimes not apparent until a teacher from overseas arrives. This is an attempt to provide a check list so that new arrivals know what type of questions to ask, so that their induction goes well.

1. Fachbereich Englisch

There is no sense of 'departments', at least as understood in the UK. You will meet the majority of colleagues who teach your subject(s) at a meeting (Fachkonferenz) at the start of the school year. This is by no means every teacher of your subject(s) and includes only those who will be teaching that subject that year.

There are often no staff/departmental handbooks. It is very important that you clarify with, as suggested below, your link person, or with several colleagues, how they correct and assess work.

2. Klassenbuch

In terms of day-to-day lessons, all work done, as well as absences need to be written in an A4 register for the class (Klassenbuch). This is very easy to use; simply copy the format used by other subject teachers.

3. Bewertung

Make sure you know when deadlines are coming: in our experience the year is split into two semesters (Halbjahre) and there is a grade due at the end of each one. These grades need to be filled in on a sheet or PC. You will need to base these grades on a specific number of formal tests (Klassenarbeiten – Schriftliche Note) and oral work in class / homework etc (Mündliche Note) - the number of tests varies from school to school, and from subject to subject, and according to the number of lessons taught a week to the class. Sometimes the weighting of the schriftliche and mündliche Noten can vary.

This assessment information will need to be completed some time before the end of the semester. There is then a meeting (Zeugniskonferenz), often chaired by the Head, where the assembled subject teachers and the form teacher discuss the final grade for each student in each subject. You need to understand the role of English as a core subject (Kernfach) and what that means in terms of progressing to the next year or level (Versetzung) etc.

Initially for your induction you can ask for:

1	a clear link person – this would ideally be the senior teacher responsible for English course content (FachleiterIn Englisch), or a senior teacher responsible for the part of the school you will mostly be involved with.
2	a tour of the school.
3	introductions into the different levels and types of school.
4	explanation of classes – streams within a school or the differences between E and G-Kurs within Gesamtschulen and Sekundarschulen.
5	the homework policy.
6	the break duty policy N.B. new smoking laws.
7	the discipline policy, giving typical responses. e.g. rights of staff (Hausrecht) / Auszeit models / suspensions / sending pupils home (Entlassungen) due to illness / letters home
8	a guide to what information belongs in the register (Einträge im Klassenbuch) – this will include grades, incidents in lesson as well as attendance.
9	health and safety, and fire procedures.
10	procedure for cover (Vertretungsplan), lesson changes, room changes, cancellations etc.
11	who to call if you are sick.

Sometimes you may get or want to ask for

- a reduced timetable for the ‘settling in period’ – this is seen as good practice and will help you get established properly.
- lesson observation (Hospitation) in schools in order to make clear the expectations which students here will have (starting with morning greetings, standing up or not standing up etc)

If you are working in FE (Sek 2) speak to one of us who is currently working in the sector as the expectations are somewhat different.

The following is also important to cover once you are settled in:

1	clarifying general expectations for assessment and marking eg. an explanation of the grades 1-6. Reporting results of tests back to the class and head teacher (Protokol and Klassenspiegel) and popular methods of testing pupils eg. Diktat, Hausaufgabekontrolle, Klassenarbeit and Kurzarbeit.
2	understanding the role of English as a core subject (Kernfach) and what that means in terms of going up to the next grade (Versetzung) etc.
3	discussion around curriculum planning / schemes of work and sharing of resources, role of heads of departments etc.
4	teacher responsibilities and obligations (e.g. around directed time (Präsenzzeit) and further professional development – for example – how to log in and book INSET on the LFI training website, what training can justify time off work (Unterrichtsbefreiung) etc).
5	parental rights and expectations, role of parent representatives (ElternsprecherInnen), parents evenings.
6	role of student representatives (KlassensprecherInnen) who can be a particularly useful source of information about what has happened in a class in the past.
7	school structures, and in particular an overview of the school year – e.g. deadlines for exams, reports etc.
8	school support services such as the local authority’s psychological support service (Schulpyschologen), de-escalation support for students with EBD (Anti Gewalt Training) etc and also statementing of children with dyslexia (Anerkannte LRS).

Official business

Outside of the school you will need to cover of initial residential / police registration in Germany and other issues especially those regarding pay / tax / bank accounts etc.

There is a service centre (Bürgerbüro) in the city centre (Hanse Carre) which can register (anmelden) you once you have an address – there is one in the City Administration (Stadthäuser) in Lehe, too. Most Housing Associations or Co-ops (e.g. Woge) will provide you with proof of tenancy so that you can then get registered. When you register you should also get a Welcome Package (Willkommenspaket) with discounts for various things such as library membership etc. The Bürgerbüro will also provide you with a tax card (Steuerkarte).

You should be able to open a bank account (Konto) now without an address.

You can ask your school secretary to organize getting paid once you are equipped with a tax card and bank account. If this has taken more than a month, and you need an advance, you are entitled to ask for one (Abschlag) which means you will get some of your pay in cash from an office in the City Administration to tide you over. A word of warning! You will be in a higher tax bracket if you do not give your tax card to your school secretary sooner rather than later!

Once you get your pay advice you might like to ask us what the various deductions mean and we can check that you're getting paid on the right scale. Don't forget that your employer is the local authority (Schulamts) not the school – so many things can only be agreed at that level – e.g. staying on longer than 2 years if you want to.

As is the case in the UK, the majority of teachers are in a union (e.g. the GEW.) See http://www.gew-hb.de/Aufruf_an_auslndische_Lehrkrfte.html for more info in English. Membership also provides insurance cover for loss of keys etc (Haftpflchtversicherung). Most schools will have a rep (a 'Vertrauensperson' – Nick Strauss - number below – has a list of them.)

All staff including teachers are covered by the elected 'Personalrat' for schools who are generally the first place to call if you can't resolve a problem within your school. The phone number of the chairperson of the Personalrat, Ute Möhle, is 590 2602. Ute is an English teacher, so don't be shy! There is also a structure of women staff representatives (Frauenbeauftragte) which can support female members of staff.

More about money ...

After the end of the tax year here, you will be eligible to apply for a tax return. The 'employees council' (Arbeitnehmerkammer) provides a 10 service which has meant refunds of over 1,000 ... worth looking into! (For single people the returns will be less but things like union dues and work related expenses are all tax deductible. If you lived in Germany directly before coming to Bremerhaven all your moving costs are also tax deductible.) Ask for the list of what you should bring!

Unlike some places in the UK you do not get paid on the first day of the summer holidays.

Also, don't forget that after your time here, you may be entitled to cash in your pension contributions, or at least have them transferred. For information about how to do this ask Frau Scheel on 590 2786.

Who we are in Bremerhaven

All of the teachers currently working here are willing to provide an introduction for a language teacher from outside Germany to provide support on formal and informal matters.

We can be contacted by email via the GEW Office in Bremerhaven:

Bremerhaven [at] gew-hb.de

Bremerhaven, September 2009