

Childcare in Moscow [RU] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

It can be daunting for a family with young children to move to Moscow. Settling in a new area is always difficult, but in a country where newcomers often do not speak the language it can create serious dilemmas, not least for the education of the children; finding playschools for them and childcare to suit their needs and language requirements.

There are a few established English-speaking playgroups and daycare centers in Moscow. The most popular ones include Sad Sam's, situated in St. Andrew's Church, where children are taught in English and Russian. At the Little Angel's Kindergarten at Akademicheskaya the main language is English since they follow the British curriculum, although they also offer Russian, French and German tuition 2-3 times a week.

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The British and U.S. Embassy playgroups are another popular option, although places can be limited. The American Day-Care Center and Pre-School is located at the U.S. Embassy and costs \$4,000 per semester for non-diplomats' children.

The International schools, such as the British International School and the International School have their own playgroups. And although the kindergarten at the Anglo-American School costs \$22,650 per school year, it tends to be convenient for parents whose older children are already attending the Anglo-American School.

Of course some families do not hesitate to put their children into the Russian detsky sad. This is sometimes the preferred option for people who know they will be staying in Russia indefinitely and who see the advantages of having their children become fluent in Russian. It is often more convenient since Russian kindergartens are likely to be situated very near the house and tend to be much cheaper than the foreign schools.

"What I do is unusual," says one mother who sends her children to a Russian playgroup. "Lots of expats are only here for two years and do not think their children are going to pick up the language in such a short time. We are going to be here five years and it works for me, I'm very pleased with it. Also they're much cheaper than foreign ones."

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The Montessori School at Barrikadnaya welcomes as many as 12 nationalities from the age of 2 and a half. "Lots of the kids who come here are from mixed backgrounds," says a spokesperson for the school. "We combine English and Russian discussions and follow the British curriculum in our kindergarten. From September 1 we will be adding another year, equivalent to the first year in mainstream Russian schooling, continuing with the English group."

The trilingual playschool Petit Cref is a popular option because of its very central location and linguistic advantages, although the fees are enough to hold back some parents. "It is a lot of money to spend on a two-year old," says mother-of-one Charlotte Baring. "And anyway our son speaks English at school, French with me and Russian with our nanny."

As for nannies, the vast majority of expat families have found that good ones are best found by word of mouth, "through the expat grapevine."

Some families prefer to have Filipino nannies, others employ Russians to develop their children's language and all are equally satisfied.

"There are so many around, and you can get great recommendations on expat forums and expat baby groups," says Charlotte Baring.

Average wages for nannies are said to be rising. Some pay 25,000 to 30,000 rubles a month for live-in nannies. "We are so pleased with our nanny," says Lucy Cranfield, who pays her nanny 200 rubles per hour. "She is of a certain age, very caring. The Russians have a wonderful touch with children, she is like an old-fashioned granny figure, which we have lost in England."

One widely recommended source of information for kindergarten and nannies among others is Fun Stuff News, a monthly electronic newsletter produced by Barbara Spier which can be subscribed to for free.

- reprinted from The Moscow News

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