

Press release
22 May 2023

New Helperknapp campus: Living and learning in the heart of nature!

On Friday 19 May, the public inauguration of the new Helperknapp campus took place. The people involved in the project gave the audience interesting insights into the history of the development of the ultra-modern school site. Frank Conrad (Mayor of Helperknapp), Jean-Claude Bisenius (local councillor of Helperknapp), Olivier Zirnheld (Schroeder & Associés), Tom Beiler (BFF architectes), Laurent Kohl (Chair of the Helperknapp School Committee), Patrick Mergen (Principal of the primary school) and Carina Gonçalves (Director General of Caritas Youth and Family) described their personal experiences and impressions. Claude Meisch, Minister of Education, Children and Youth, acknowledged in his speech the importance of this innovative project of the commune of Helperknapp.

Helperknapp is a young commune in two senses: on the one hand, it is only five years since the localities of Boevange-sur-Attert and Tuntange merged to form the commune of Helperknapp, and on the other hand, with a total population of 4,963, there are no fewer than 538 children of primary school age. This makes it all the more important for the local authorities to offer their youngest citizens the best possible learning conditions with an infrastructure adapted to the specific needs of children. The new Helperknapp school campus exemplifies these efforts.

The construction of a new, modern primary school was decided even before the merger of municipalities. Because the old school buildings no longer met the requirements of the 21st century, it was decided to centralise the infrastructures: The primary school, after-school care (Maison Relais) and the municipal administration service responsible for them (Service scolaire) were to be brought together on a modern campus. In addition, the school building had to meet the highest environmental standards.

Work for the construction of the new school complex began on 11 September 2018, the sports hall belonging to the complex opened its doors in mid-September 2021, and the school was then officially opened on 15 September 2022.

Many competent staff members take care of the childrens' well-being

The result is an area idyllically embedded in a natural landscape that offers both students and teachers many possibilities. Accommodated here are:

- The **Helperknapp primary school**, where a highly qualified team of experienced teachers and qualified educators accompanies the children with great commitment in the expansion of their knowledge and skills.
- The **Maison Relais**, which takes care of the students according to the guidelines of the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth. Here, the maxim is: children must be able to move freely in order to develop freely!

- The **Service scolaire**, whose staff ensure the maintenance and safety of the facilities and actively support the educators of the school and the Maison Relais.

On the Helperknapp campus, around 130 people work for the benefit of a total of 538 students, divided into 33 school classes.

A highly functional, energy-efficient building with a lot of charm

The attractively and functionally designed learning blocks (four classrooms per school year and one multipurpose room) and the inviting rooms of the Maison Relais offer a friendly ambience and guarantee the harmonious interaction of all those involved in the school's everyday life.

The entire campus is heated with wood chips via a district heating network. A photovoltaic system on the campus roof provides an energy output of about 500 kilowatt hours into the power grid for the energy cooperative; another installation on the sports hall supplies the entire campus with 100 kilowatt hours.

Everything under one roof: a concept for the benefit of the children

An important advantage of the new, joint campus concept of the commune of Helperknapp is obvious: by having the different units working on one site, many costs that had to be borne in the past are saved and can be diverted to other purposes, for the benefit of the children.

Living and learning in mutual respect!

The inclusive concept of Helperknapp campus is based on mindful togetherness in mutual respect, with special emphasis on openness and empathy. According to this philosophy, a participatory approach and democratic decision-making contribute to an all-round positive atmosphere in which everyone feels comfortable.

Child-friendly equipment throughout the campus

When designing the structures, care was taken to ensure that all facilities are thoroughly child-friendly. This applies to the primary school as well as to the equipment of the Maison Relais, the music school, the sports hall, the theatre hall, the library, the educational kitchen and the craft rooms.

Important: as well as education, also recreation!

Both during and outside school hours, the Helperknapp campus offers students a whole range of opportunities to relax from the stress of learning. These include, for example, the adjacent forest, the cosily designed reading corners next to individual classrooms, the jointly designed campus courtyard, the "Airtramp" and the Action Centre .

In addition to opportunities to participate in many extracurricular activities, the children are also involved in the internal school organisation, for example by encouraging them to design their own logo. Social commitment is not neglected either: a fine example of active engagement in this area is a charity run for the benefit of "Télévie", in which 37,000 euros were "run for" by the children themselves.

Healthy food and low-waste fridges

The canteen, run by Hollenfels Youth Hostel, uses mainly locally, regionally and seasonally produced food in the preparation of the tasty meals – around 1,500 menus are served each week. The canteen also has two low-waste fridges, from which anyone interested can help themselves for three euros.

School transport optimally organised

Currently, five different bus routes bring children from all over the community to the campus, with each route marked with its own colour and symbol. Each student has his or her own bus pass, which shows the bus stop where he or she has to get off. There is an escort on each bus who is in contact with both the Maison Relais and the Service scolaire.

Much encouragement at “Meet & Greet”

The new structures immediately met with widespread approval among parents and guardians: as part of a “Meet & Greet” campaign with several open days, families were given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the building and the surrounding grounds before the start of the school year. An information brochure was also distributed, containing a lot of useful information about the Helperknapp campus.

It is also worth noting that the outdoor area of the campus is also open to the general public outside school hours.

So the Helperknapp campus offers an agreeably wide range of possibilities and it can be expected that many generations of students will continue to spend educative, happy hours on this state-of-the-art site!