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INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF FLORENCE

EARLY YEARS OVERVIEW



WELCOME TO EARLY YEARS AT ISF

OUR EARLY YEARS PROGRAM

The Early Years at the International School of Florence comprise of the classes Early Years 1, Early Years 2 and Foundation. They are led by a highly knowledgeable team of educators with many years of experience in teaching our earliest learners within a warm and supportive environment. Our educator to child ratio is 1-8, with a lead teacher and bilingual assistant in each class enabling a high level of support and interaction.

We follow the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme which continues through to Grade 5. The PYP in the Early Years has a child-centered, developmental approach, where children follow their curiosity and imagination through open-ended experiences. It develops caring and culturally aware children to become active participants in their own learning. We also draw inspiration from the Reggio Emilia approach, an Italian educational philosophy, renowned in Early Years education across the globe.

The school day offers a range of opportunities for both exploration within the context of units we study as well as Physical Education, Music, Art, Italian class and Library time.

ISF EARLY YEARS PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

At the heart of the International Baccalaureate Programme (IB) is the “learner profile”, a long-term, holistic vision of education that puts the student at the center of everything we do.

The ten aspirational qualities of the learner profile inspire and motivate the work of teachers, students and schools, providing a statement of the aims and values of the IB and a definition of what we mean by “international-mindedness”.

- Inquirers
- Knowledgeable
- Principled
- Open-minded
- Caring
- Thinkers
- Communicators
- Courageous
- Balanced
- Reflective

CENTRAL FEATURES OF EY LEARNING

PLAY: Play based learning provides benefits for cognitive, social, emotional and physical development and offers authentic opportunities for students to begin their exploration and development of the IB learner profile.

Through play, children actively construct meaning from their interactions with their physical and social worlds. Play can be free, guided, directed or games based bringing valid skills, preferences and understandings of learning.

Children construct, test, confirm or revise ideas by themselves or with their peers, constantly adapting their personal models of how the world works.

Teachers support play through:

- scheduling uninterrupted time for play in both indoor and outdoor spaces
- noticing students’ emerging thinking processes, interests and theories, and responding in ways that extend learning
- monitoring and documenting students’ learning and development during play, and offering appropriate scaffolded learning experiences for individual students and small groups.

ATLs: Learning in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) is based on ‘approaches to learning’ skills (ATLs). These skills aim to support children of all ages to become learners who know how to ask good questions, set effective goals and pursue their aspirations with the determination to achieve them. The infographic below, represents how ATLs can be developed through play.



RELATIONSHIPS: Relationships in the early years are a fundamental part of establishing important skills and dispositions that center on trust, agency and belonging. When the importance of relationships is reinforced, the foundations for an effective learning community are established.

Teachers support the development of relationships through:

- Encouraging and nurturing positive relationships between home, family and school
- Viewing each child as unique and respecting their individuality
- Acknowledging students' efforts and achievements in a multilingual environment
- Conversing, listening and observing interactions
- Recognizing opportunities for students to learn how to self-regulate during play and offer support and feedback when needed
- Planning purposeful play opportunities in engaging learning spaces
- Supporting the development of social skills such as taking turns, sharing, and listening as part of a group

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: Contemporary theories and research informed by the Reggio Emilia approach recognise and value the environment as a 'third teacher'. Behind educators and families, physical spaces hold the potential to influence what and how children learn.

Materials are thoughtfully added to the environment to promote creativity, thinking and problem solving skills, questions, open-ended play and experimentation.

OUTDOORS IN NATURE: At ISF, the youngest members of our school community connect with the natural world that surrounds our campus by frequent trips to our Olive Grove. Learning opportunities outdoors are beneficial to well-being and engage young children's sense of touch, smell, taste, hearing and sound, helping them understand and find meaning in the natural world.

By recognising basic cause and effect relationships, students in the Early Years become aware of the importance of showing care and respect for living things as well as for themselves and each other.

ENGAGING WITH NUMERACY

Throughout the Early Years, children learn mathematics by constructing meaning through ever-increasing levels of abstraction, starting with exploring their own personal experiences, understandings and knowledge. Purposeful teacher guided activities encourage children to discover and construct mathematical meanings through play where concepts such as sorting and organizing or building and designing are featured. Experiences with numbers are

built into the child's daily learning experiences based on their readiness. Number sense from counting, number identification, addition and subtraction, recognising patterns through comparing and sorting, identifying shapes, comparing sizes through lengths and weights and making simple estimations to form graphs are some of the mathematical concepts that the children learn in our Early Years.

ENGAGING WITH LANGUAGE

Students share personal experiences and understandings through talk, play, shared stories and collaborative exploration. Teachers plan and create learning experiences that extend students' language capabilities.

When young students are involved in dramatic and cooperative play, language becomes more complex as it includes negotiating roles, taking turns, conveying desires and meeting the needs of others.

Teachers model language around these explorations through talk-alouds, and use observations about students' expressed interests to ensure a responsive learning environment.

Students' English language skills are reinforced daily through purposeful modelling and contextual interactions, with Italian language extensions offered once a week for Early Years 1 and 2 and three times a week in the Foundation classroom.

ENGAGING WITH LITERACY

Stories provide particular opportunities to develop language comprehension and the foundations of literacy.

When young students assume the roles of characters and play with elements of a story, comprehension increases, as do understandings of print media. Songs and rhymes accompanied by actions that support the development of concepts, sentence structure and vocabulary along with phonemic and graphemic awareness and memory.

As students progress through the Early Years, literacy instruction becomes more formal with the introduction of the reader's, writer's and phonics workshop.

Our task, regarding creativity, is to help children climb their own mountains, as high as possible. No one can do more.

LORIS MALAGUZZI



A TYPICAL DAY

EARLY YEARS 1	
8:30	Playful Learning/ Specialist Lessons
10:00	Snack and Outdoor Play
11:00	Integration- EY1 and EY2 learning together
12:00	Lunch and Outdoor Play
13:00	Nap Time
14:00	Circle Time Free Play
15:20	Goodbyes and Home Time

EARLY YEARS 2	
8:30	Morning Circle Classroom learning
10:00	Snack and Outdoor Play
11:00	Integration- EY1 and EY2 learning together
12:00	Specialist Classes / Classroom Learning
12:50	Lunch and Outdoor Play
13:50	Classroom Learning/ Outdoor Provocations
15:10	Goodbyes and Home Time

FOUNDATION	
8:30	Morning Meeting and Classroom Learning
9:00	Phonics and Writers Workshop
10:00	Snack and Outdoor Play
10:30	Maths / Reader's Workshop
11:50	Lunch and Outdoor Play
12:50	Unit of Inquiry
13:50	Italian/ Specialist Classes (PE, Music, ICT, Art, Library, Italian)
15:20	Goodbyes and Home Time



INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF
FLORENCE

Via del Carota 23/25 - 50012 Bagno a Ripoli (FI)
tel. +39 055 6461007
admissions@isfitaly.org