



INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF FLORENCE

GRADES 1-5 OVERVIEW



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OUR JUNIOR SCHOOL GRADES 1-5 PROGRAM

Our Junior School Program has been designed around the contemporary needs of children, ensuring the breadth and richness of the Italian culture is embedded in all that we do. Our focus is on developing the whole child and providing many opportunities for them to grow, be happy and to succeed.

The Junior School Program (Grades 1-5) at the International School of Florence develops children's understanding of the world through the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP). Our program promotes the development of mathematical and language literacy as well as curiosity in the sciences and social studies through relevant and engaging units of inquiry. A love for the creative and performing arts, together with physical exercise, is fostered by specialist teachers who work collaboratively with classroom teachers, enabling students to make transdisciplinary connections to their learning across the curriculum. Learning is enhanced throughout the year through integrated activities and trips in our local Florentine environment and olive grove. Students learning English as an additional language are offered support by our English Language Learning services (ELL). Students are encouraged to learn our host country's language and culture through daily Italian instruction. An integrated Italian equivalency program is offered for our host country students who wish to meet the requirements of the Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione.

ISF is an authorized Primary Years Programme (PYP) curriculum school. As such, it is engaged in using "structured, purposeful inquiry as the main approach to teaching and learning" across school ages and curricular areas. Our students develop the knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes that the IB identifies as the core of an International Baccalaureate education. It is challenging in its scope and ability to prepare internationally-minded students.

WELCOME FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Welcome to the Junior School section of The International School of Florence! It is my pleasure to introduce myself, Tony Pascoe, as the Lead Learner (Principal) of the Junior School team. We are a community of internationally-minded educators, families, and students who work collaboratively to develop inquiring, motivated, knowledgeable, and caring young people.

As an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (PYP) school since 2008, we take a child-centered, holistic approach to developing each student's understanding of the world around them. We utilize the lens of the PYP to not only develop each child's academic strengths via an integrated, transdisciplinary Programme of Inquiry, but also their social and physical wellbeing through performing arts, physical exercise and education, and an ever growing partnership with organizations in and around the city of Florence. This is all done in synergy with our Italian Programmi Ministeriali, an integrated Italian equivalency program offered for our host country students who wish to meet the requirements of the Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, which recognizes in part the wonderful diversity of our school serving both the local and the international community.

As our ISF Vision states, "We aspire to build communities of creative makers and doers," and develop young people that will make a positive difference to the world through intercultural understanding and respect. We do this by empowering our students to be active, reflective, and responsible life-long learners which gives students the inspiration to develop a love of learning and ensure that they have the necessary skills to cope with the demands of an uncertain future in an ever-changing world. Our curriculum is delivered by a highly-trained, world-class staff of international educators who set consistently high expectations for our students. These relationships between staff and students are central to our community values, and to the success of our school. We place great value on developing and nurturing these relationships so that our students can benefit from a safe and welcoming learning environment where they can take risks, share knowledge, and explore with confidence.

If you have the pleasure of visiting ISF, you will be able to see this exciting and nurturing learning environment first-hand. ISF is a place where students feel a sense of belonging and where they know they are valued as an individual.

I welcome you to arrange a visit so that your family can experience the special atmosphere of our welcoming school community.

Warm Regards,

Tony Pascoe, Principal

MISSION

A laboratory for learning where we collaborate to add meaning to a shared future.

VISION

We aspire to build communities of creative makers and doers.



THE JUNIOR SCHOOL - VILLA LE TAVERNULE

OUR CAMPUS

The Junior School is located in Villa le Tavernule in Bagno a Ripoli, about a 20 minute drive from the center of Florence. The villa was restored to accommodate classrooms, specialist areas, the Horace W. Gibson Aula Magna and the Paul Burke-Mahoney Library. The formal garden has a breath-taking view of the Tuscan countryside. The rural setting of this campus makes it easy to incorporate nature studies into its Units of Inquiries from the PYP Program. This campus has a sports field, two playgrounds and a specially equipped and surfaced play area for the Early Years and Foundation classes.

ACADEMICS

The classroom teachers support the learning of mathematics, language arts, science and social studies using transdisciplinary and stand-alone learning opportunities. Students also have lessons with single-subject teachers in Physical Education, Visual Art, Music and Italian. Students also have lessons in our library where they develop research skills and continue to develop their appreciation for reading. We have an ICT specialist who works with students and teachers to support the integration of technology in the classroom. All teachers are responsible for supporting and the facilitation of our SEL curriculum alongside the Dean of Students, School Counselor and School Nurse. The Inclusion Team ensures that all students are valued, supported, and serviced in the most effective, inclusion-based way possible in order to achieve academic, social, and emotional success.

A PYP education is less focused than many models on test results as an indication of learning and more focused on demonstrations of the use of what has been learned through oral, written and electronic presentations as well as collaboratively developed projects and artistic representations. Classes are open noisy, busy places where students can be observed constructing what they know.

At ISF, English is not a “subject” and instead, is the primary language of instruction and inclusion. As an internationally -minded school, nestled in Florence, we also teach Italian to all of our students. Home-languages are a very valued part of your child’s development, and we encourage the nurturing and fostering of all mother-tongues.

The Primary Years’ Programme (PYP) is structured around six transdisciplinary themes which are significant and meaningful to all students:

- Who we are - An inquiry into the nature of the self; beliefs and values; personal, physical, mental, social and spiritual health; human relationships including families, friends, communities and cultures; rights and responsibilities, what it means to be human.
- Where we are in place and time - An inquiry into

orientation in place and time; personal histories; homes and journeys; the discoveries, explorations and migrations of humankind; the relationships between and the interconnectedness of individuals and civilizations, from local and global perspectives.

- How we express ourselves - An inquiry into the ways in which we discover and express ideas, feelings, nature, culture, beliefs and values; the ways we reflect on, extend and enjoy our creativity; our appreciation of the aesthetic.
- How the world works - An inquiry into the natural world and its laws; the interaction between the natural world (physical and biological) and human societies; how humans use their understanding of scientific principles; the impact of scientific and technological advances on society and on the environment.
- How we organize ourselves - An inquiry into the interconnectedness of human-made systems and communities; the structure and function of organizations; societal decision-making; economic activities and their impact on humankind and the environment.
- Sharing the planet - An inquiry into rights and responsibilities in the struggle to share finite resources with other people and with other living things; communities and the relationships within and between them; access to equal opportunities; peace and conflict resolution.

LITERACY

At the Junior School we use the Teachers College Units of Study in Phonics for Grade 1 & 2 and the Reading Workshop and Writing Workshop Units of Study through to Grade 5. The common aim of the workshop model is to help young people become avid and skilled readers, writers and inquirers.

Each unit within the curriculum provides students with instruction, opportunities for practice, and concrete, achievable goals so they can progress toward being proficient, joyful readers and writers, so they can meet and exceed high standards for reading and writing. Each unit is structured into several bands that are woven into class units of inquiry, transferring students’ learning across the curriculum and throughout their lives. Many of the reading and writing skills unfold in a similar way across units and across grade levels, each time increasing in complexity.

The workshop model uses a predictable routine which starts with a brief mini-lesson by the teacher. Minilessons offer explicit instruction in skills and strategies that students

can add to their toolbox. Then students are given work time where they practice reading and writing and are able to draw upon the strategies they have developed across each unit. While students work independently, teachers use data, from assessments and observations, to work with students in individual conferences or in small groups as needed to meet all students' needs. Each session ends with a share, bringing the community of learners back together again.

Assessment complements and assists teaching and learning; it plays an integral part in each teacher's planning and enables the evaluation of current practice as well as pupil achievement. High quality formative assessment is an essential part of teaching and learning. It ensures a whole school approach to the provision of an excellent education for all children at ISF Junior School and enables teachers to deliver education that best suits the needs of their students. In the PYP, assessment is an ongoing process of gathering, analyzing, reflecting and acting on evidence of student learning to inform teaching. It involves a collaboration between both students and teachers to co-construct learning goals and success criteria where both the learning outcomes and the learning process are evaluated. It also informs the student, teacher, parents and learning community through the monitoring, reporting and measuring of progress.

MATHEMATICS

Mathematics is taught on a daily basis, both through the Unit of Inquiry being explored in class as well as in stand alone dedicated lessons. We follow the AERO Curriculum Framework for Mathematics which builds on the US Common Core State Standards for Mathematics. With the following guiding principles:

- Learning Mathematical ideas should be explored in ways that stimulate curiosity, create enjoyment of mathematics, and develop depth of understanding.
- Teaching An effective mathematics program is based on a carefully designed set of content standards that are clear and specific, focused, and articulated over time as a coherent sequence.
- Technology Technology is an essential tool that should be used strategically in mathematics education.
- Equity All students should have a high quality mathematics program that prepares them for college and career.
- Assessment of student learning in mathematics should take many forms to inform instruction and learning.

STUDENT WELLBEING

Students thrive in an environment that is consistently

nurturing and supportive. At ISF we place the wellbeing of students, their social and emotional growth, at the center of all our practices. We work as a team, in partnership with families to provide learning experiences that foster students' holistic development. We help guide their journey to a more complete understanding of what it means to be global citizens that embody the IB Learner profile. The role of the Dean of Students is to oversee and help implement the best practices in relation to this process. This is done by coordinating Child Safety and Protection as well as adopting the PEEC curriculum which aims to help students achieve their goals and be their best selves.

ITALIAN

Italian language development and cultural awareness are integral in learning about our host country. Whether students are learning Italian as an additional language or as a home language we are able to support their learning through our units of inquiry as well as through stand alone Italian language teaching.

Grade 1 & 2: Italian classes become progressively more regular, with daily instruction by Grade 2.

Classes are grouped according to levels of Italian acquisition and learning is focused on the acquisition of Italian- reading and writing, speaking and listening.

Grade 3 - 5: At the end of 2nd Grade, students are split into 3 different Italian levels. The goals of each differ and the placement into a program is at the discretion of the principal, based on assessments, family need, and teacher recommendation.

Italian Program (Quinta Elementare): The Quinta Elementare is an exam taken at a local Italian public school with an external commission at the end of Grade 5. This exam allows entrance to Italian National State Middle schools. Students who take the Quinta Elementare path are automatically placed in the Italian Program at ISF Middle School (although they can opt out).

The Italian Program is designed for children who speak Italian as a home language. Students receive instruction in literature, grammar, history, geography, science and mathematics in Italian and oral and written exams are taken in all these subject areas. Students are eligible for acceptance to this path if they: Speak Italian as a home language (or one of) or they have been assessed by Italian teachers as being of a sufficient level to meet the needs of the program.

EXTRA CURRICULUM

Students who chose to participate in the JS ECA program will have a choice of several activities/clubs which run Monday through Thursday from 15:30 to 16:30. Students have the

option to join 1 club per day. Clubs run for 3 months, at which point they will have the opportunity to change activities or resume their current activity. The school aims to provide a variety of choices for children in Foundation through Grade 5.

Parents who do not pick up their children by 4:30pm, will be subject to a warning. For repeat offenses the child will be subject to withdrawal from the activities for the remainder of the term or year.

MUSIC

Music at the Junior School is viewed as an experiential approach to the beauty of sound, beginning with the discovery of voice, and moving into a broad range of musical experiences, including classifying and analyzing sounds, composing, harmonizing, listening, playing instruments, notation and reading music. Listening and performing are viewed as social activities that promote musical skills, creativity, and reflection, as well as social and emotional well-being.

Cantabile Choir: The ISF Cantabile Choir is an exciting musical initiative at the International School of Florence. The mission of the ISF Cantabile is to continue to expand our rich musical offering by providing our talented choristers with a collaborative experience of choral music performance.

Students develop their vocal talents with other musicians, and benefit from learning the importance of self-control and self-mastery, teamwork, community spirit, analytical thinking, poise, confidence, focus and discipline, as well as cultural awareness through exposure to attentively selected musical literature.

VISUAL ARTS

In Visual Arts, students are exposed to a wide range of materials learning about many different art techniques and tools. We participate in painting, sculpture, collage, drawing, printmaking, and much more. The aim is to help every student find their own way of expression and guide them to improve and perfect all the skills required to be independent and have a deeper understanding of the process of art. Furthermore, the Visual Arts class collaborates with the classroom teacher to deepen learning across the curriculum. We create! We have fun!

We also look to the past and future. We are committed to learning about art history and many contemporary and diverse artists across the globe. We also place importance on the formal art critique process, elements of art and principles of design and enhancing our art terminology. We are also very interested in what Florence has to offer our students. We have built strong relationships with the Uffizi and Palazzo Stozzi and many other museums in Florence.

LIBRARY

The library is considered the hub of a PYP school. Students develop essential information and literacy skills by accessing a range of media and texts. An essential skill for all learners in today's world is how to find reliable, useful and interesting information. Our aim is to nurture students with a desire to learn and a love of reading. ISF students understand that the library is a learning center, a place of inquiry and an enjoyable place to read at school.

Students will visit the library with their class once a week and the librarian works collaboratively with classroom teachers to plan and organize small/large group learning activities during open library times.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical Education lessons focus on both learning about and learning through physical activity. This dimension helps students to develop an important approach to learning (ATL) skills across the curriculum. Physical Education contributes a unique perspective to the development of the attributes of the IB learner profile, promoting the health of individuals and communities.

Through Physical Education, students learn to appreciate and respect the ideas of others, and develop effective collaboration and communication skills. Students develop knowledge and understanding, plan for performance and reflect on their performance across a range of movement contexts.

Physical Education is concerned with the individual's well-being through the promotion and development of concepts, knowledge, attitudes and skills that contribute to wellbeing. Well-being is intrinsically linked to all aspects of a student's experience at school and beyond. It encompasses physical, emotional, cognitive, spiritual and social health and development, and contributes to an understanding of self, developing and maintaining relationships with others, and participating in an active, healthy lifestyle.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

ICT is one of the connecting components throughout the curriculum. As students engage with ICT across and between the transdisciplinary themes and subject areas, they come to a deeper understanding of its relevance and applicability to their everyday lives. Appropriate attitudes and behaviours concerning the use of ICT are also modelled within the school community. The focus of ICT is not only on the use of technology for its own sake, but to enhance learning across the subject areas. This integrated approach, to support teaching and learning using ICT, provides opportunities for consistent and coordinated practice that can be communicated, understood and undertaken by the whole school. ICT is about more than using hardware

and software. Its purpose is to develop a combination of transferable skills and understanding so that students can actively participate in a digitally connected world.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL)

The ELL program assists students in learning English, while supporting the development of their home language and the host language, Italian. This approach not only values where the children come from, but it also accelerates their access to the curriculum.

In addition, the ELL teachers work with classroom teachers to determine the best ways to help children participate. ELL teachers provide interdisciplinary in-class support as well as work in small groups to develop literacy skills.

PYP EXHIBITION

In Grade 5, students take part in an Exhibition. The Exhibition focuses on a local or global issue that has sufficient scope and sequence to warrant an extended investigation.

The Exhibition has a number of key purposes:

- For students to engage in an in-depth, collaborative inquiry
- To provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate independence and responsibility for their own learning
- To provide students with an opportunity to explore multiple perspectives
- For students to synthesize to apply their learning of previous years and to reflect upon their learning
- To provide an authentic process for assessing student understanding
- To demonstrate how students can take action as a result of their learning
- To unite the students, teachers, parents and other members of the school community in a collaborative experience that incorporates the essential elements of the PYP
- To celebrate the transition of learners from primary to middle school education.





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

