



INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF FLORENCE

GRADE 6-10 (MIDDLE YEARS) OVERVIEW



WELCOME TO GRADES 6-10 AT ISF (THE MIDDLE YEARS)

WELCOME FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

It is my great pleasure and honour to welcome you and your family to the International School of Florence.

The Middle School Years encompass the most transformative experiences in adolescents' lives. It is a time when they discover their identity of who they are as individuals and students. It is during this time when parents and school work in close partnership helping to develop the habits of the mind and heart that will form future engaged and thoughtful citizens.

Our Middle Years Program has been designed around the contemporary needs of adolescent 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. We balance education with leadership opportunities, involvement in physical, cultural and charitable activities, and the development of skills to make and sustain real friendships.

We believe that all children thrive when they are engaged in a challenging academic program within a nurturing environment. At ISF we look forward to guiding and supporting your child on what will be a wonderful learning journey for them.

Sharyn Baddeley, *Head of School*

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.

OUR CAMPUS

The Middle and High Schools are housed in Villa Torri di Gattaia, a five minute walk from the famed Piazzale Michelangelo with its unique view over the city of Florence. The villa is immersed in the nearby countryside and is just 10 minutes from the historical center of Florence. The villa is situated in a setting of formal gardens and its facilities include a covered terrace/lunch room, an Aula Magna, classrooms, the science wing, the art studio, and a two-tiered, wireless access library. A large sports complex, Olympus, hosts the ISF Physical Education program, which is within easy walking distance from the school.

KEY CONCEPTS OF OUR TEACHING AND LEARNING PHILOSOPHY

The fundamental concepts of our program provides a strong foundation for teaching and learning:

- **Holistic Learning** - Our academic programs are broad and balanced, supporting the interconnectedness of knowledge between subjects and extended outward through practical application of real-world experiences.
- **Intercultural Awareness and Communication** - empowers students to explore a wide range of issues, cultures, and experiences with compassion and empathy, both locally and globally.

Student-Centered Learning - supports the development of skills and attributes that enables students to think critically, communicate effectively, collaborate successfully with others, and are confident with the knowledge necessary to achieve lifelong goals and happiness.

ISF MIDDLE YEARS PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The Middle School Program at ISF provides a framework ensuring academic challenge and social/emotional development for students aged 11–14 years. Subjects are taught as distinct areas, with interdisciplinary exploration and learning beyond the classroom woven into the school year. Students explore the arts through Music, Visual Arts and Theater classes, and expand their information and digital literacy through the integration of research skills and technology in the classroom. Wellbeing is supported through weekly small group meetings, as well as Physical Education and Health. All students study three languages throughout Middle School, according to their language levels and preferences. Italian national students may choose to follow the Italian ministerial program, studying History, Geography and Mathematics in Italian, in preparation for a culminating external exam.



LEARNING IN GRADES 6-8 (MIDDLE SCHOOL)

The middle years can be a significant phase of personal, social and intellectual growth. It is a time when students shape and develop understanding of their identities, build relationships in the immediate community of their peers and find their place in the wider world. Along with an increasing sense of independence as learners and as young people, they are beginning to develop an awareness of their responsibility towards others. Relationships with peers and with teachers become increasingly important for learning during these years. These attributes of the adolescent years are best engaged by pedagogical strategies that emphasize individual exploration, collaboration and group work. At the same time, increasing independence means that students also learn to take on individual challenges and delight in extending their skills and their thinking. The middle years curriculum provides opportunities for adolescents to learn and grow in ways that acknowledge and respect this special phase in their development. In addition to fostering conventional discipline knowledge and intellectual growth, the curriculum places great emphasis on the students' engagement, and their spiritual, emotional and social growth. The curriculum includes academic and wellbeing programs, Outdoors Educational Programmes and co-curricular opportunities including music, and sports.

At ISF, students in Grades 6-8 follow one of 2 programmes, the International or Italian Programme. Two-thirds of the MS programme is the same for all students where they are taught in mixed ability groups. The other third of the programme is either Italian Studies consisting of Italian, matematica & scienza, storia & geografia leading to the Terza Media Exam, or international studies in Italian language, maths and social studies. In Grades 9 & 10 students are all taught in mixed ability groups with the exception of languages, where the class is matched to the students' level of ability.

In the MYP curriculum model, learning is constructed through a cycle between asking (inquiry), doing (action) and thinking (reflection). Structured inquiry allows a student's own natural curiosity to build and construct knowledge. Through asking questions from factual (knowledge-based) to conceptual (building on big ideas) and debatable (utilizing critical thinking to understand a complex world) students learn in an engaging and challenging way. "Action" in learning occurs through real world experiences. Students are encouraged to act as individuals, or in collaborative groups. They are taught to act in a principled way, and with integrity. Students also learn to act to support their communities, both locally and globally. "Reflection" of learning encourages students to develop a deeper understanding both of the content and themselves. They become aware not only of "what" they learn, but "how" they learn best. Students learn both to manage and evaluate their own learning through reflection.

LEARNING IN GRADES 9-10 (HIGH SCHOOL)

In our Grades 9 and 10, students take a range of courses: English, Italian, Mathematics, History, Physical Education and Health, a third language which is either French or Spanish, the sciences of Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Environmental Sciences in rotation. Art, Music and Theatre is also in rotation.

An important part of High School life is our Pre-CAS program (Creativity, Activity, Service), where we introduce students to community service through projects both in and outside school.

Students take part in thematically focused assemblies on a variety of life topics.

Within the teaching, students are encouraged to think about how they want to 'be' and act in the world. Developing the awareness to make wise choices from a reflective and balanced standpoint; being responsible and caring to themselves and others; and taking effective and meaningful action; are all part of a well-being thread that runs through the program.

CURRICULUM SUMMARY

For the full scope and sequence of our curriculum, please visit our school website at www.isfitaly.org.

VISUAL ARTS

The Upper School Visual Arts Program presents students with an opportunity to not only create, but also to understand the connections between art, community, history, and culture and its applications in everyday life. Through a variety of teaching approaches, all students are encouraged to develop their creative and critical abilities and to enhance their knowledge, appreciation and enjoyment of the Visual Arts. We proudly exhibit our student artwork throughout the campus during school events and fine arts festivals. All of the art classes take place in our Art Studio, which hosts an open door to our beautiful Tuscan landscape.

MUSIC

ISF's unique position in Florence, music at ISF is at the heart of the school curriculum. With a focus on a variety of high quality musical experiences, students participate in creative general Music classes, where they develop skills in singing, playing classroom instruments, reading music, composing and listening critically. As well as the classroom program, we encourage students to participate in a variety of music activities after school, including public performances. We believe that fostering excellence in Music contributes to a life-long enjoyment and understanding of what Music is all about.

THEATER

In Middle School Drama is taught as a subject from Grade 6 to Grade 8. Students practically explore a variety of different projects linked to international themes. In Theatre they develop an understanding of a variety of theatre styles and practice across time and culture exploring actor training skills, engaging in the art of spontaneous and prepared Improvisation, taking texts from page to stage, and devising scenes from a variety of stimuli. They develop an understanding of how to use visual images, space, light and sound to create meaning and begin to develop an awareness of how to interact with different audiences.

In High School Grades 9 and 10 have the opportunity to explore their creativity through an Art, Theatre Studies and Music Rotation. Students deepen their understanding of the various art forms and are encouraged to become outstanding team players as well as strong leaders – able to take the initiative and work with imagination and insight. In Theatre Studies they develop their understanding further of how to shape and construct their creative ideas as creators, directors, designers and performers.

PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

Sports, whether in teams or as individuals, is a fundamental part of our daily lives at ISF. Physical Education lessons focus on both learning about and learning through physical activity. This dimension helps students to develop an important approach to learning 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 follow an MYP based curriculum with an assessment focus on learning through movement.

Our Competitive Sports Program aims to provide opportunities for all our students to get involved in sports and develop important values such as teamwork, sportsmanship, resilience, and honesty. Active students make for great learners and we strongly value the impact of daily physical activity on the students' growth, their overall wellbeing, and their academic success.



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 importance of wellbeing in the middle years cannot be underestimated; its significance recognized by the fact that each Homeroom class is allocated a dedicated teacher and meets with their Homeroom Advisor 4 times a week at the start of each day. They also have a weekly Life Skills session in Grades 6-10 and lessons are delivered by Homeroom Advisors once a week which often linked to Homeroom morning activities. Topics vary according to the grade group and the needs of the students and are taught creatively through presentations linked to activities and films, assemblies, visiting speakers, and student-led projects.

The wellbeing program seeks to equip students with the skills to cope with the transition from elementary to middle school, and for many, a change of location from a relatively small environment to a larger and often complex educational setting. We aim to foster a strong sense of community and belonging at Homeroom. As students settle into their new surroundings, learning to organise themselves and their belongings for their daily routine is a priority, as is establishing effective homework and study routines. Students are also made aware of the support network available to them; from their Homeroom and subject teachers, to the Leadership Team.

Throughout the year, students are encouraged to build strong relationships, develop personal strengths and self esteem, and issues such as celebrating individuality and bullying are addressed. Students also discuss strategies for coping when they are feeling down or confused by their emotions. Awareness of the value of goal setting, managing technology – including the crucial issue of cyber safety, and preparing for tests and exams become a focus as the year progresses, and students are also given the opportunity to reflect on their progress in all areas of their school life. Encouraging students to consider others is also an important part of wellbeing in the middle years, with fundraising and raising awareness of various social issues a significant part of the program. We aim for happy, healthy individuals who see school as a positive experience and are respectful of themselves, others and their surroundings.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

At the Upper School, ISF students engage in a plethora of academic and athletic extracurricular activities during their lunch periods as well as after school. We believe in the value of nurturing a student's well-roundedness, and aim to offer activities and opportunities to both entice and challenge our students. Some activities run throughout the year, but many change each term, allowing for a student to try out something new.

Activities are open to students by grade level, with some activities running across grade levels when possible, and following Covid-related recommendations. Activity leaders are teachers or experts in their field who provide the materials and insights into their chosen discipline and who bring their passion for their ECA directly to the students. Some ECA's are also part of the CAS program (Creativity-Activity-Service), and those activities can provide both hours and experiences for CAS students which is immensely important in the IB Diploma Program.





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