



HAPPY HEDGEHOGS

EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

SCHOOL YEAR 2020-2021

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THE CLASSROOM

The classroom is organized to suit the age, needs and interests of the children. Each class provides important permanent learning areas and others which change during the course of the year as the children themselves develop other interests and needs. The classroom is divided into the following main areas.

The home corner

The role-play area of the class designed to stimulate communication and promote socialization. It has a play kitchen including a sink, oven and hob, saucepans, cutlery, plates and cups, empty food packaging, sponges and small containers of different colors and a washing machine. Inspired by the children, this corner can change during the year as their interests grow.

Who is here today area

This is an important display in the classroom and part of the children's daily routine at school. It is a visual register that the children can refer to throughout the day and becomes a basis for mathematical and language development as the teachers and children talk about who is present and who is absent from school. Each morning they play games with their photographs and sing name games using this display.

The carpet area

The carpet area is an important focal point in the classroom where each child takes their own cushion and meets to listen to stories, sing songs and enjoy language focus moments with their friends and teachers.

Let's relax

This soft area offers a special place for the children to relax with a bookcase. There is also a basket full of special books which the children can help themselves to.

The busy corner

This is an area with a “busy board” where the children can explore ‘real’ objects, such as telephones, light switches, wheels, etc.

Other Areas

The gym

The gym is visited regularly by the children where they participate in a variety of activities, such as races, obstacle courses, ball and hoop games. Through such activities the children develop a wide range of skills such as pushing and pulling, crawling, balancing, catching and throwing, as well as working on their cooperation skills by working together in small groups. The gym is also used for drama, role-play, relaxation activities, dancing and road-safety games. Children also develop listening skills and learn to follow instructions.

This year, due to the current health situation the children will use the garden and classroom for developing the above skills

The gardens

Both gardens are used frequently by the children and provide two, well-divided green areas equipped with a train, a house, climbing frames and slides. Here, the children can continually develop their fine and gross motor skills, expand their social skills, role-play and use their imagination. These spaces are precious outdoor 'classrooms' where children have the opportunity to observe and come into contact with nature as they hunt for insects, look after the school pets and plants. They can experiment, test their skills and consequently grow through these rich and meaningful outdoor experiences.

THE FAMILY AND SCHOOL

From the very start of the school year we aim to build a special relationship between parents, home and the school. We provide particular moments in which parents can meet with teachers to follow their child's education.

Individual parents' meetings at the beginning of the school year are an important part of the "Settling In" period, where both parents and teachers can exchange useful information to help the child settle in more easily.

A coffee morning* in the first few weeks is organized for all the Early Years classes, parents and staff as an opportunity to get to know each other over a coffee and a special snack in the garden.

**Presently suspended due to Ministry health protocol.*

A general parents' meeting with all the Early Years parents and teachers takes place in *October* to present the year's planning, projects and other notices. Class representatives are also elected during this meeting. A second meeting with all the Early Years parents and teachers takes place in *March* to keep parents up-to-date with class news and to present the end-of-year trips.

Individual meetings with class teachers are available each week. These provide a useful opportunity for families and teachers to work together and focus on the child's learning journey. Appointments can be made in the office.

Individual end-of-year meetings* are provided for parents who would like to talk about their child's experience and answer any queries.

**Due to the current health situation and following Ministerial guideline, parents' meetings will take place online for the S.Y. 2020-2021.*

SETTLING-IN

The settling-in period is important for all the people involved. For the child, it is the first moment that he/she experiences an unfamiliar environment with other children and adults. It is also the first moment of separation from the parents and for this reason, the process has to be gradual and personalized for each child. For parents it is often a time of anxiety so their presence in the class for the first few days is very important in order to allow a serene separation from the child and to develop trust in the teachers who will care for the child. For teachers, it is a crucial stage as they begin to get to know the children, the parents and their class. Using this information, the teachers begin to build a relationship with each child. By observing and understanding the rapport which each child has towards his classmates, the environment and objects, they are able to create a welcoming and stimulating environment for each child on a daily basis. There is not a 'set rule' for the settling-in period. We believe that each child has different needs and we give him/her the necessary time in order for them to feel 'safe' and settled. Parents and teachers will decide together what method is best for their child.

The importance of routine

A good daily routine helps children to feel safe and secure in an environment as it provides stability and continuity. In this situation, children know that their needs will be met and consequently they begin to feel more confident to explore their surroundings by themselves. The daily routines become an important reference point for the children during their day and they begin to look for these moments to help them make sense of time in an increasingly precise and conscious way. The routine also allows children to internalize what comes

before and what comes after. They can then begin to ‘imagine’ what will soon happen and reflect on what has just happened.

The importance of play

Play allows children to discover, feel, make decisions and make choices, actions which they will then experiment with in real life. Through play children begin to learn to respect the rules and learn essential skills for their development. Through taking part in the structured activities created by the teachers, the children develop their cognitive skills and grow in a balanced way.

The importance of observations

Observation is a privileged methodology that is useful for monitoring the different stages of child development and helping children to reach their full potential. Each child is different and each child develops in his/her own time. This is very important and should be respected and valued. Observations allow teachers to build and create a personalized educational path around each child and respond to individual needs.

ACTIVITIES

A typical day in the Happy Hedgehogs offers the children the opportunity to freely explore the classroom, choosing what they would like to do. There is also time for more structured activities, led by one or more teachers. Importance is given to daily routines as these give the Happy Hedgehogs numerous opportunities for the them to learn.

The activities are divided into different learning areas:

- **Artistic activities** - the exploration of materials and techniques to develop fine motor skills, creativity and imagination;
- **Cognitive development activities** - categorization of objects of different consistency, shape, size and color;
- **Linguistic activities** - role-play, stories, rhymes and songs in both Italian and English;
- **Motor skills activities** - fine motor skills: development of hand-eye coordination through pouring, filling, emptying, rolling, throwing, making towers. Gross motor skills: jumping, crawling, sliding, catching, throwing activities which will take place in the classroom, gym and garden;
- **Personal and social activities** - free and structured group games to develop social skills;
- **Music** – discovering movement, rhythm, melody as well as developing listening skills, the memory and creativity.

The english and italian language

Activities and the daily routine are carried out in both languages. Italian is spoken by the Italian teachers and English is spoken by the English teachers. All the teachers plan activities and the children's day together. They also work together in the classroom modelling the idea of communicating in different ways. During the day the children have a specific focus time in each language with the corresponding teacher. In this way the children learn to distinguish the different sounds belonging to the different languages and learn which adult represents which language. Hearing two languages (and maybe even a third if the family is from another country) becomes a natural part of their day.

Civic education

From an early age, it is important that children learn how to stay together in a group and develop values that foster their own and others' well-being. All the Early Years classes develop communication, language and social skills to help children interact and play cooperatively. This, in turn, contributes to creating a feeling of community and comfort within the classroom and the school beyond. Each class creates friendship and kindness projects, while teachers continually model and reinforce appropriate language. A helping hand, a polite gesture or kind word are skills for life and help children to become good citizens.

The Early Years children also learn about recycling and looking after the environment in collaboration with HERA and other associations. Trips to local parks, farms, art galleries, the theatre as well as visits from the police and firemen, for example, encourage children to take an interest in their city and to experience Ferrara as a community.

Early years' google classroom

When families join our school, they are given a [@smiling.service.it](https://smiling.service.it) account for each child which gives them access to Google Classroom and other useful platforms.

Each class has its own virtual classroom where teachers post photos of activities and special events. They can also share extra activities, songs or games, linked to class topics. This is ideal for families who would like to reinforce learning at home and take part in school life. It is also a place where information about the class or Early Years can be posted, just like a virtual noticeboard. Families are encouraged to visit the classroom regularly and are welcome to post comments or photos of work done by the children at home. Didactic digital learning (known as D.D.I in Italian) has become an integrated part of the national curriculum.

Interclass activities

The Early Years annual project, international festivals and school events unite all the classes and enable teachers to plan special moments of collaboration and exchange between the children from the various age groups. Classes make fun videos for each other, meet up live online, exchange gifts and visit each other's classes to do 'Show and Tell' activities (health situation permitting).

Snack time

Morning snack is before the beginning of the daily structured activity at 9.45 a.m. It is a time to sit together, taste new foods and develop language skills. After nap time, at 3.45 p.m. the Happy Hedgehogs have an afternoon snack of

fruit and crackers. Children are encouraged to ask politely for water, fruit or crackers and to stay seated while eating. Each Friday there is a special afternoon snack made by the school cook.

Lunch time

The Hedgehogs eat lunch at 11.50 a.m. in their classroom, together with their teachers. Lunch is an important time for socialization between both teachers and children, and between the children themselves, and for this reason it is a fundamental part of the educational project. Lunch time for the children is an opportunity to develop their autonomy and learn new skills which will help build their identity. Becoming more independent at the table is an important objective for the Hedgehogs. From using their fingers to pick up food as babies, they move on to learn how to use a spoon or fork and develop skills that reinforce their identity. By being introduced to different foods, children discover a whole new world of colors, flavours, smells and new textures. The menu offers a variety of healthy and well-balanced dishes which include regional cooking. International festivals are also celebrated and the children are encouraged to try dishes from different countries.

Afternoon nap

An afternoon nap is important for small children, as it is a moment of relaxation after lunch and free-play. The children sleep in the familiar surroundings of their classroom accompanied by their teacher or assistant who often reads a bedtime story and sets up soft music. Special attention is given to the individual needs of each child.

The Happy Hedgehogs have their own bed complete with a bottom sheet, which is provided and cleaned each week by school. A pillow, pillow case and

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blanket are provided by the family and are given home every Friday to be cleaned and returned to school on Mondays. Any dummies (which must have a container) are sent home every day to be sanitized.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

A confident learner

Competent learners from birth, babies who are just a few hours old gaze at patterns, which resemble the human face in preference to others. They are able to distinguish between things, and show that they like some better than others. In this way, young children learn to discriminate and make connections between different objects and experiences. Children make increasing sense of the world as connections are made. As babies and toddlers, they explore their surroundings through touch, sight, sound, taste, smell and movement. Their sensory and physical exploration affects the patterns that are laid down in the brain. Through repeated experiences of people, objects and materials, young children begin to form mental images, which lead them to imitate, explore and re-enact as they play imaginatively with materials and resources, using all the senses. They also begin to engage in pretend play using gestures and actions. Through this type of play, children start to express feelings and form relationships as their language skills develop enabling them to communicate and express ideas. Children become creative through exploration and discovery as they experiment with sound, media and movement.

A healthy child

For babies and young children, being special to someone and cared for is vital for their physical, social and emotional health and well-being. Health and social well-being underpin and determine children's responses to their environment, to people and to new experiences. Being protected and keeping safe and secure with adult support, ensures that babies and young children quickly

become skillful in a wide range of movements involving both large and fine motor control.

A skillful communicator

To become skilful communicators, babies and children need to be together with a key person and others in warm and loving relationships. Being together leads to the wider development of social relations, which include friendship, empathy, sharing emotions and experiences, and becoming a competent language user. Early attempts at finding a voice are rewarded in a variety of ways, increasing confidence and encouraging children to extend their range and increase their skills. Learning to make sense of the sounds around them is not a simple task. Babies respond differently to some sounds over others and, from an early age, are able to distinguish sound patterns. They use their voices to make contact and to let people know what they need and how they feel. They learn the 'rules' of communication with the help of their key person, with other supportive adults and children. It is in these relationships that their early attempts to converse are interpreted, responded to and valued.

A strong child

The beginnings of autonomy can be observed as babies and young children play and explore alongside a close, attentive, warm and sensitive adults. In order to become strong, the baby needs a nurturing environment in which their key person plays an essential role. By encouraging and supporting decision-making, empathizing and providing opportunities for children, the key person helps them grow emotionally, so that they are able to respond to successes and challenges. Being acknowledged and affirmed by important people in their lives lead children to gain confidence and inner strength. Exploration within close relationships leads to the growth of self-assurance, promoting a sense

of belonging which allows the young child to explore the world from a secure base.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES: DEVELOPMENT VS EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

A CONFIDENT LEARNER

<i>Development</i>	<i>Effective Practice</i>
<p>Representing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to the world with marks and symbols through: • Exploring, experimenting and playing; • Discovering that one thing can stand for another; • Creating and experimenting with one's own symbols and marks; • recognizing that others may use marks differently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with children about the marks they make and value what they do. • Provide a variety of resources for children to represent their experiences. • Give children who are keen to represent the same experience repeatedly but also with a range of different mark making resources. • Provide materials which reflect the marks found in their environment so that children see familiar symbols.
<p>Being Imaginative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to the world imaginatively through: • Imitating, mirroring, moving, imagining; • Exploring and re-enacting; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use playful interactions in which children and adults imitate and mimic each other. • Provide resources which children can explore movement and materials using all of the senses both alone and in a group. • Provide resources which support children's imaginative learning.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging in pretend play with gestures and actions; Expressing feelings and ideas; • Building relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join in children’s play and encourage them to • talk imaginatively.
<p>Making Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting ideas and understandings about the world through: • Making connections through the senses and movement; • Finding out about the environment and other people; • Becoming playfully engaged and involved; • Making patterns, comparing, categorizing, classifying. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow children’s lead as they explore their environment, people and resources. • Accept children’s pace of learning and give them time to make connections. • Provide stimulating resources for children to match, sort, classify and categorize. • Use everyday experiences to help children count and focus on patterns and shapes.
<p>Being Creative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to the world creatively through colours, art, music, dance • Exploring and discovering; • Experimenting with sound and other media and movement; • Developing competence and creativity; • Being resourceful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage repetition in movement, language, music and other sensory experiences. • Provide opportunities for creative physical experiences both indoors and outdoors. • Provide a range of materials for children to represent their unique and individual perception of the world, unrestricted by adult ideas.

<p>Being Together</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a social and effective communicator through: • Gaining attention and making contact; • Positive relationships; • Being with others; • Encouraging conversation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being physically close, making eye contact to encourage ‘conversations’. • Ensure good communication with parents to provide a positive model. • Help children learn the names of others. • Create areas to sit and chat.
<p>Listening and Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening and responding appropriately to the language of others through: • Listening and paying attention to what others say; • Making playful and serious responses; • Enjoying and sharing stories, songs, rhymes and games; • Learning about words and meanings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage playfulness, taking turns and responses. • Talk to children about what you are doing so they link words with actions. • Be available to talk and explore things which interest children and listen to and respond to their questions both serious and playful. • Extend the range of stories, songs, games and rhymes from their own and other cultures.
<p>Speaking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using non-verbal gestures to respond to greetings and questions about themselves: • Beginning to greet the teacher in English (Hello, bye bye); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept the gestures that the children make and accompany them by modeling the suitable vocabulary. • Make sure each child is welcomed by a smile and ‘Good

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning to repeat simple words often used by the teacher; • Beginning to join in with simple chants and songs. 	<p>morning’ from the English teacher.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise each child when he/she says an English word/phrase either through repetition or spontaneously. • Use daily routines as a moment for one to one interaction (begin to count or sing a familiar nursery rhyme and encourage the child to join in).
<p>Stories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning to listen to stories in English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose stories with repeated refrains, use props that entice children to look at and focus on the story.
<p>Mathematics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning to show curiosity towards counting; • Is beginning to join in with simple number songs; • Beginning to repeat numbers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use number language, for example, ‘one’, ‘two’, ‘lots’, ‘how many?’ and ‘count’ in a variety of situations. • Use stories and rhymes to develop understanding of number.

A healthy child

<i>Development</i>	<i>Effective Practice</i>
<p>Healthy Choices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to make choices through: • Discovering and learning about his/her body; • Demonstrating individual preferences; • Making decisions; • Becoming aware of others and their needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for children to make choices without overwhelming them. • Value and support the decisions children make and encourage them to try something else, recognizing that one decision leads to another. • Create time to discuss options so that children really do have a choice. • Allow children to take risks whilst ensuring their safety.
<p>Emotional Well-Being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional stability and resilience through: • Being special to someone; • Being able to express feelings; • Developing healthy dependence; • Developing healthy independence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When young children have a close relationship with a caring and responsive adult, they explore from a safe place to which they can return. • Ensure there is a hand over period at the beginning and end of each day. • Establish shared understanding with parents about ways of responding to the child's emotions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide flexible routines that allow children to follow and pursue their interests. • Children gain confidence to do things for themselves by knowing an adult is close by to support and help if necessary. • Recognize that children need a predictable environment and can be affected temporarily by changes.
<p>Growing and Developing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical well-being through: • Being well nourished; • Being active, rested and protected; • Gaining control of their body; • Acquiring physical skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat mealtimes as an opportunity for children to enjoy food and become independent if feeding themselves. • Learn to recognize individual signs of hunger, tiredness, thirst. • Support, supervise and become involved as children acquire physical skills. • Support, encourage and value children’s independence in becoming toilet trained.
<p>Keeping Safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being safe and protected through: • Discovering boundaries and limits; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a safe environment where there is a balance between freedom and safe limits. • Demonstrate clear and consistent boundaries and

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about rules; • Knowing when and how to ask for help; • Learning when to say no and anticipating when others will do so; • Developing competence and creativity; • Being resourceful. 	<p>reasonable yet challenging expectations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have agreed procedures of how to respond to children’s behavior.
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A skilful communicator

<i>Development</i>	<i>Effective Practice</i>
<p>Making Meaning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding and being understood through: • Communicating meaning; • Influencing others; • Negotiating and making choices; • Understanding each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tune into the different ‘messages’ children are attempting to convey, recognizing that children use actions, words and gestures to communicate. • Respond to what children show you that they are interested in and want you to do. • Respect young children’s choices and encourage their growing ability to negotiate and bargain with you.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to children about choices, reasons for doing things and why sometimes we say ‘no’. • Tune into the different ‘messages’ children are attempting to convey, recognizing that children use actions, words and gestures to communicate. • Respond to what children show you that they are interested in and want you to do. • Respect young children’s choices and encourage their growing ability to negotiate and bargain with you.
<p>Finding a voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a confident and competent language user through: • The impulse to communicate; • Exploring, experimenting, labelling and expressing; • Describing, questioning, representing and predicting; • Sharing thoughts, feelings and ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give meaning to and echo sounds, gestures and actions children use. • Recognise children’s competence and appreciate and value their efforts in discovering and practicing new words and sounds. • Provide opportunities for children to talk with other children and adults about what they see, hear, think and feel.
<p>A Skilful Communicator - Objectives for English as a second language</p>	

Listening and understanding

- Beginning to show curiosity towards English;
 - Developing a positive attitude towards the English language;
 - Beginning to make the link between the English teacher and the English language,
 - Listening for short bursts of time;
 - Beginning to understand simple greetings and phrases about themselves and the daily routine;
 - Beginning to follow simple instructions based on the routines of the classroom.
- Have a sensitive approach to each individual child when speaking to them (use short phrases, repeat the same phrases).
 - Play alongside children, commenting on what they are doing and interacting with the children.
 - Get down at the children's height, make eye contact and use facial expressions, body language and gestures (the same gesture all the time for the word).
 - Comment on what is happening during activities and daily routines.
 - Give clear directions, for example, "Come and sit down, please" at first used with gestures to aid comprehension.

A strong child

<i>Development</i>	<i>Effective Practice</i>
<p>A sense of Belonging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquiring social confidence and competence through: • Being able to ‘snuggle’ in; • Enjoying being with familiar and trusted others; • Valuing individuality and contributions of self and others; • Having a role and identity within the group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize that children will find comfort ‘snuggling’ in with a special adult or object in different places such as cozy corners with soft, inviting surfaces. • At time of transition, such as beginning and end of the day greet parents and children to develop secure and trusting attachments. • Find ways to value and celebrate each child within the group by making events, routines personal. • Encourage all children to participate in and contribute to the group, being mindful that some will find this more difficult than others.

<p>Developing Self-assurance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming able to trust and rely on own abilities through: • Gaining self- assurance through a close relationship; • Becoming confident in what s/he can do; • Valuing and appreciating his/her own abilities; • Feeling self-assured and supported. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give children manageable experiences of being with others. • Provide accessible resources so that children can choose what they need to begin an activity independently. • Encourage children to be part of a collaborative activity, making sure they are not always dependent on your presence for them to contribute and participate. • Have clear and consistent expectations and trust in children’s abilities to increase their self-confidence and show you value and appreciate their efforts.
<p>Being Acknowledge and Affirmed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiencing and seeking closeness through: • Needing recognition, acceptance and comfort; • Being able to contribute to secure relationships; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of the importance of your facial expressions and body language. • Actively listen and give your full attention when children communicate with you. • Tell, as well as read stories, looking at and interacting with the children as a way of letting

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding that s/he can be valued by and important to someone; • Exploring emotional boundaries. 	<p>them know that you think they are important and valued.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage all children to participate in making any rules and help them to understand expectations and boundaries.
<p>Me, Myself and I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realization of own individuality through: • Growing awareness of self; • Realising s/he is separated and different from others; • Recognising personal characteristics and preferences; • Finding out what s/he can do. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to children’s actions, expressions and gestures. • Playfully help children to recognize they are separate and different from others through using mirrors and pointing to facial features. • Recognizing, accepting and understanding that carrying sucking or playing with an object raises a child sense of security.