

**HAPPY HEDGEHOGS
DIDACTIC PROJECT
SCHOOL YEAR 2021-2022**



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INTRODUCTION

‘Connecting Ourselves’

Today’s world connects us to a new digital era and pioneers the way for future learning. Smiling leads our children through this process always keeping in mind the importance of their personal, emotional and social development.

The teachers offer their children a variety of opportunities to explore and investigate, to get to know themselves as individuals but also to meet different people, beliefs and cultures recognizing them as an enrichment. We offer them a Community, the Smiling Community, within which they feel safe and will be able to flourish and grow to become citizens of the modern world.

The Happy Hedgehogs’ Project:

The Happy Hedgehogs will take part in lots of fun activities using all their five senses, testing materials, discovering the functionality of objects and elements, tasting food and recognising flavours; they will discover the origin of sounds and how to use their bodies to make appropriate movements; this will help them 'connect' with the reality around them.

The children will continue to investigate by studying the parts of the body; in a creative workshop ending with a fun project on their faces they will identify the features of their own face and identify those of their friends. Making these first connections and being aware of each other is an important step in the growth of our youngest pupils.

The last part of the Happy Hedgehogs project will focus on recognising different emotions through body language. What do I look like when I'm happy? What do I look like when I am angry? Linking the emotion you feel with your appearance and being able to understand and communicate these emotions is complicated but exciting. Stories, songs and other language activities aim to help children understand their emotions and learn to express them in words.

HOW THE PROJECT WILL BE CARRIED OUT

The Importance of Play

The project will evolve through different types of play because it is by playing that children discover the pleasure of reaching a goal and experience the effort necessary to achieve it. It is through play that children experience reality and learn to distinguish it from fiction. Between the ages of two and three, children begin to explore pretend play and often imitate real-life situations which they have seen at home such as cooking, looking after a baby or going shopping. At nursery, they begin to share these experiences and as they interact with others, they learn the rules which accompany play such as turn-taking and sharing. These different types of play enable children to discover, perceive, test, experiment and elaborate different solutions. Playing ultimately means learning.

The Importance of Logical Thinking

Teachers plan activities and contexts with the areas of learning in mind, giving particular importance to the development of critical skills and logical reasoning. Young children discover meanings in the world as they explore new possibilities and make exciting connections between people, places and things. It is through such self-initiated investigations that children use their knowledge and skills to solve problems, generate questions and make connections. In order to develop logical thinking skills in the children, stimulating contexts are created in which the children can explore concepts by themselves, with the support of the teachers.

The Happy Hedgehogs' Day

The Happy Hedgehogs' Day combines child-led play and adult-led activities. Routines also play an important part of their day, not only giving them emotional stability but also helping them to learn more about themselves. Structured activities, which are partially led by adults, allow plenty of freedom and creativity for each child and are inspired by their interests and needs. These activities take place each week and follow these themes:

Being Part of a Group

Daily life in the Happy Hedgehogs class gives the children numerous occasions to interact with peers and adults on both a physical and emotional level. Through these interactions, such as daily routines and structured play, the children develop confidence in their own abilities and they begin to feel part of a group as they discover the world around them. All free and structured activities are carried out in groups using various materials which help the children to develop cognitive, gross motor and language skills as well as encouraging social and emotional development.

Teachers organize specific activities to help the children recognize and distinguish between different emotions and to express them through speech and gestures. Such activities include role-playing, story-telling and sharing personal experiences.

Exploring Materials Together

Each child explore a wide range of materials that, from week to week, are laid out on the table, placed in small containers or on large sheets of paper on the floor in the centre of the classroom for the children to discover. They can smell, touch and observe elements such as flour, polenta flour and cocoa powder. If they want, they can add objects or toys to the material thereby developing play further.

Getting Messy Together

The children are encouraged to get their hands dirty as they touch, feel and smell materials in different forms, as water or paint is added. As they develop the ability to take part in messy play, they discover how materials can change shape, consistency and colour just like magic! Using play-dough, cooked pasta and different messy mixtures, the children will be supported by the teachers in their discoveries.

Exploring Music and Sounds together

Music is an important part of the Happy Hedgehogs' curriculum. They have music with the English music teacher twice a week where the children are encouraged to explore percussion instruments, move to music and different rhythms, to join in with action songs and to express themselves.

Being Energetic Together

Children need space and time to run and jump, even outside the hours dedicated to structured physical activity in the gym. A free time in which to release all the energy, vitality and joy they have inside. When the weather is favorable, the teachers will go to the newly renovated school gardens, where running competitions, role-playing and movement games will be organized, such as hide and seek, blind fly, the wolf arrives; activities in which they will actively participate, competing with the children. On rainy days, small moments will be cut out, in section, to jump and dance to music.

Role-Play

Imitating adults is the game that children like most. Just like mums and dads, the children love to pretend to get dressed, cook, clean or iron, get ready to go shopping or go to work. During role-play they nourish their imagination, develop language, understand and also face their fears. Each week the teachers set up tables to allow the children to "pretend". Role-play will often be preceded by a reading that will accompany the children in the game, in a spontaneous way.

Learning through Stories

Stories are read to the children on a daily basis, in both Italian and English. This special moment often goes hand in hand with snack time or comes before lunch, when the children can relax and listen to a story. Often puppets and other instruments are used to tell the story.

Early Years' Google Classroom

Didactic digital learning at school (DDI – 'Didattica Digitale Integrata') plus learning and staying connected online from home (LEAD 'Legami Educativi a Distanza') have become an integrated part of the Italian national curriculum. Smiling has chosen to give each class its own virtual classroom where teachers post photos of 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. Families are encouraged to visit the classroom regularly and are welcome to post comments or photos of work done by the children at home.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Meetings with Teachers

These meetings are an ideal opportunity for families and school to work together and focus on the child and his/her learning journey. They are held online and can be booked by emailing or telephoning the office. Parents will be given a code in order to join the video conference on 'Meet', accessed by their child's account, which they receive when they enroll at Smiling. These are the following times:

Federica Lattuga and Alessandra Pizzarulli: Fridays 1.30 p.m. - 2.30 p.m.

Philippa Waterhouse & Deborah Ascani (Early Years Coordinators): Thursdays 2.30 p.m. – 3.30 p.m.

What to Bring:

- A soft bag with a couple of changes of clothing to be left at school. The school uniform needs to be included as well as: comfortable trousers, t-shirts, pants, knickers and socks suitable for the season;
- A plastic or silicone to be brought in a bag;
- Nappies, wet-wipes and nappy-rash cream (if used at home);
- Dummy and a dummy case, if still used, (given home each day to be sanitized);
- A change of shoes to use in an emergency;
- For children who sleep in the afternoon, a soft bag which contains a small flame-resistant pillow (25cm x40cm x5 cm) with a pillow case and a flame-resistant cover/blanket (75cm x100 cm) suitable for the season.

PLEASE LABEL THE ABOVE ITEMS WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME.

Reminders:

- **School uniform is compulsory.** This consists of the school t-shirt or dress and the jumper, hooded top or tank top with the school logo. All pupils are expected to wear plain navy blue trousers/leggings or skirt and plain navy blue tights.

- Shoes without laces and trousers without buttons/fastenings to allow children to move freely during activities and to encourage autonomy
- Toys, soft toys and books are not allowed
- For safety reasons, bracelets, necklaces and jewellery in general are not allowed.

DAILY ROUTINE

Snack

At 9.45 a.m. and 3.45 p.m. a healthy snack is provided by school for the children. Snack consists of fresh, seasonal fruit, crackers or biscuits and sometimes a cake or yogurt. It is also a time to sit down together as a class and chat. On Friday afternoons there is a special snack prepared by our cook. Please do not bring food to school.

Lunch

The Hedgehogs eat lunch at 11:50 a.m. in their classroom. The school cook prepares all meals in the kitchen in Porta Mare. Lunch consists of a first course and a second course, followed by fresh fruit or a desert. The menu, which can be found on the school's website, provides a variety of well-balanced and healthy dishes which also includes regional cuisine. International festivals are also celebrated and children are encouraged to try food from around the world.

Bibs will be given home each Friday to be washed and should be returned on the following Monday.

Afternoon Nap

The Hedgehogs are encouraged to take an afternoon nap from 1 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. The child can bring a dummy (if needed) in a clearly labelled carrying case. This will be given home each day to be cleaned. The teachers often read a story and put on calming music to create a relaxing environment.

The bottom sheet that covers each child's bed is provided and cleaned by school. A pillow, pillowcase, a sheet and cover provided by the family are sent home every Friday to be washed and should be returned on the following Monday.*

**Due to the current health situation, school will provide a clean bag every Monday morning for each child in which to put their items for sleep time. This bag will be sent home on Fridays and should be thrown away.*

DAILY SCHEDULE

Parents are asked to please bring and collect their child on time to avoid crowding outside the school and to keep classes separate.

8.20 – 8.30	First arrival time - gym door
8.50 – 9.00	Second arrival time - gym door
8.20 – 9.30	Free-play in class / garden
9.30 – 9.45	Toilet
9.45 – 10.15	Snack
10.15 – 10.30	Who's here today? Class register song and activity
10.30 – 11.00	Structured activities
11.00 – 11.30	Garden
11.30 – 11.50	Toilet
11.50 – 12.10	Lunch
12.10 – 13.00	Garden or free-play in class
12.30	Children who do not stay in the afternoon can be collected - main door
1.00 – 3.30	Toilet & sleep time
3.30 – 3.45	Waking up, toilet & snack
3.45 – 4.40	Structured activities (story-time and songs) or free play (construction play, drawings)
4.40 – 4.50	Home time – gym door