



## **HAPPY HEDGEHOGS**

**ANNUAL PROJECT  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2022-2023**

**Coordinators:**

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## INTRODUCTION

# ‘Never-Ending Stories’

Our lives are never-ending stories of past, present and future events. Every action, emotion, experience, and decision leads us to something else. Our own stories intertwine with those of our friends and families, to make the narrative even richer and more vivid.

As the Early Years children start their new school year at Smiling, so a new chapter begins for us all:

## The Happy Hedgehogs’ Project:

*The following stories for this project will be read in English and Italian.*

### Discovering Emotions Makes Life Real

#### ‘The Owl Babies’ by Martin Waddell

This tender tale begins with three baby owls who have been left alone for the very first time while their mummy goes hunting. As the three chicks huddle together on a branch, they find comfort and warmth in each other as they face their fears of the dark and the unknown. Of course, Mummy returns and this delightful story is a reminder and reassurance for our little listeners that Mummy always does come back.

The Happy Hedgehogs, with the help of the owl babies, will be encouraged to explore their emotions and fears during this first term as they settle into their new environment as well as the themes of family and light & dark which are featured in ‘The Owl Babies’.

### Colours Make Life Vibrant

#### ‘Little Blue, Little Yellow’ by Leo Lionni

Little Blue and Little Yellow share a wonderful adventure together meeting many colours along the way. When they finally meet each other, they hug and become green! Where have Little Yellow and Little Blue gone? Are they lost? The Happy Hedgehogs will begin their colourful adventure by investigating colours through messy play and linking colours to their environment with a variety of indoor and outdoor games. What is yellow? What is blue? Can you find me something green?

Which is your favourite colour? Following in the footsteps of Little Blue and Little Yellow the children will have plenty of opportunities to experiment with colour mixing. Will they be able to resolve the mystery of Little Blue and Little Yellow? This fun story not only stimulates creativity and curiosity, but also touches on the concept of identity and friendships.

## Actions Make Life Exciting

### ‘We’re Going on a Bear Hunt’ by Michael Rosen

It is time for another adventure with a family of explorers who face the ever-changing weather and overcome obstacles on their way to catch a bear! Will the Happy Hedgehogs be as brave and bold as the family? Will they make it through the squelchy mud and long wavy grass? Only time will tell! This intrepid tale sets the scene for a variety of fun obstacle courses in the gym and garden as the children move ‘over’, ‘under’ and ‘through’ equipment. It inspires imagination and language development such as chanting, rhythm and alliteration as the children ‘swish’, ‘stumble-trip’ and ‘tiptoe’ through different landscapes in swirling snowstorms and sunny days. The story also leads to investigation as they use their senses to explore water, mud, grass and wood. It truly is a never-ending story of adventure!

## To Be Continued...

The final story is for the Happy Hedgehogs to choose. Over the course of the year, as the project progresses the children will be stimulated to develop their own tastes and interests in a variety of stories and fairy tales. Therefore, it will be their turn to take us on an adventure! .....to be continued.

## 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 explores a wide range of materials which 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 & Sounds Together

The children have music lessons with the English music teacher each week. During this precious time, the children explore a variety of instruments and develop listening skills and rhythm. They acquire a repertoire of songs while dancing and moving to music from around the world. The music teacher works with the class teachers to link activities to class topics too.

### 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 them is fundamental. When the weather is favorable, the teachers take the children into the school gardens and organize races, role-play and movement games. They play games such as 'Hide

and Seek', 'Chase', 'Ring-a-ring of Roses' and encourage the children to actively participate. On rainy days, time is set aside for movement games and dancing indoors.

## Role-Play

Imitating adults is a game that children love to play. Just like mums and dads, they pretend to get dressed, cook, clean or iron, get ready to go shopping or go to work. During role-play they develop their imagination, develop language, understand and also face their fears. In the classroom there is an area dedicated to role-play which is changed regularly. The teachers also set up tables to allow the children to "pretend". Role-play will often be preceded by reading a story 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 props are used to tell the story.

## Early Years' Google Classroom

Didactic digital learning at school (DDI – 'Didattica Digitale Integrata') 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 Google 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 at school or online and can be booked by emailing or telephoning the office. Parents who choose online 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.

### Meeting Times:

*Federica Lattuga & Alessandra Pizzarulli: Thursdays 1 p.m. – 2 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 kept at school. The school uniform needs to be included as well as: comfortable trousers (without buttons, zips or ties), t-shirts, pants, knickers and socks suitable for the season
- Two plastic or silicone bibs to be brought in a reusable 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 sanitised)
- A change of shoes
- For children who sleep in the afternoon, a soft bag which contains a small flame-resistant pillow (25cm x 40cm x 5cm) with a pillow case and a flame-resistant cover/blanket (75cm x 100cm) 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 school cook. Please do not bring food to school.

### Lunch

The Hedgehogs eat lunch at 11:50 a.m. in a classroom dedicated to them. 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 dishes 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 take an afternoon nap from 1 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. in their classroom supervised by their teachers who put on calming music to create a relaxing environment.

Each child has a nursery school bed and a bottom sheet. These are both 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. A dummy, if needed, can be brought in a clearly labelled carrying case. This will be given home each day to be sanitised.

## DAILY SCHEDULE

The Happy Hedgehogs' parents can bring and collect their children directly from the classroom.

8 a.m. – 9.30* a.m.	Arrival. Free-play in class/garden. *We advise that children arrive no later than 9.15 a.m.
9.30 a.m. – 9.45 a.m.	Toilet
9.45 a.m. – 10.15 a.m.	Snack
10.15 a.m.– 10.30 a.m.	Carpet Time
10.30 a.m.– 11.a.m.	Structured activities
11.a.m.– 11.30 a.m.	Garden
11.30 a.m.– 11.50 a.m.	Toilet
11.50 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.	Lunch
12.30 p.m. – 1 p.m.	Garden or free-play in class
12.45 p.m.	Children who do not stay in the afternoon can be collected - main door
1.00 p.m. – 3.30 p.m.	Toilet & sleep time
3.30 p.m. – 3.45 p.m.	Waking up and toilet
3.45 p.m. – 4 p.m.	Afternoon snack
4 p.m. – 4.15 p.m.	Carpet Time
4.15 p.m.	Home time