



## **BUTTERFLIES**

**EDUCATIONAL PROJECT**

**Coordinators:**

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## THE CLASSROOM

The Bubbly and Lively Butterflies' classrooms are on the ground and first floor of the school. The classrooms are divided into specific areas and the children have their own personal desks where structured activities are carried out.

### The Carpet Area

The Carpet Area is used for construction play as well as for story time, introducing topics and activities often using the SMARTboard, which is on the wall in front of this area. 'Carpet Time' is an important routine in the Butterflies class, as it is a time to get to know one another, sing songs and share personal news. Every morning after taking the register, the children meet there to fill in the interactive calendar in either Italian or English with the teacher. The Class Helpers, who change each week, count how many children are present and record the results. They cross off the days of the week, take the weather readings and record the temperature by moving the corresponding symbols. A visual timetable with flags representing the class teachers is filled in to help the children develop the concept of time and understand which teachers they have that day and when. This important 'Carpet Time' routine helps the children develop language, literacy skills and mathematics.

### Personal Desks

Each child has his/her own desk with his/her name on, where his/her pencil case and folder are kept. The children very proud of them and help them to feel more grown up, responsible and become more organized as well as teaching them to respect each other's space. The desks are changed around regularly to encourage the children to make friends and work with different peers. They are also grouped together to provide four large tables where the children can play in different learning areas during structured free-play. For example, the teachers set up an arts and crafts table, a maths table, a phonics table, a building table or a boards game table depending on the topic and activities being covered that week. Grouping the desks together also enable the children to work in teams, in pairs and individually.

## The Bookcase

The children can choose books to 'read' during different parts of the day. They can look at them with a friend on the carpet or share them at their table. There are also magazines, comics and non-fiction books which are available for the children, both in English and Italian, during special, quiet moments in the day.

## The Role-Play Corner

This corner can be used by the children when they arrive in the mornings and during free- play. The corner is changed on a regular basis to reflect the children's interests or themes that are being covered in class. Colourful photos, captions, key words and writing material such as diaries, labels, whiteboards and markers are also provided to encourage children to pretend to write, read and develop their phonic knowledge as well as their language and social skills.

## Shelves

A large set of pigeon-hole shelves with pull out boxes contain different educational toys and games from which the children can choose from during free- play. There are building blocks, puzzles, board games, role-play animals and so on. There is also a special space for craft materials and writing tools which the children can select such as: coloured pens, pencils, crayons, paper, coloured card, collage material, stencils, whiteboards and markers. The games and art materials are changed regularly to encourage the children to develop new interests. The Butterflies are also made responsible for tidying up the various boxes and shelves, always helping each other to put away and look after their classroom.

## Displays

Around the classroom there are various display areas with colourful flashcards which reflect the children's interests and topics in the Butterflies class, the alphabet and numbers . There is an enormous tree on the wall in both classes, which changes as the seasons do during the year. The children's photos and work is put up so that they can talk about it and feel proud of their achievements.

## 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 and develop a wide range of skills such as climbing, pushing and pulling, forward rolls, crawling, balancing, catching and throwing. The children learn to move in different ways, to music and rhythms with imagination, increasing control, balance and co-ordination and using large and small equipment safely. The gym is also used for drama, dance, and road safety activities, helping to continually develop skills for listening to and following instructions in English and in Italian.

### 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 imaginations. 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 start of the school year** are held at the end of **August / beginning of September**. Parents receive an invitation from school during the summer holidays. These valuable meetings offer parents and class teachers an opportunity to meet each other, to exchange useful information about the child and to plan for the settling in period.

**A coffee morning** in the first few week of **September** 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.

**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 and school 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, the annual project and to present the end-of-year trips.

**Individual meetings** with class teachers are available for parents who would like an update or who need to talk to the teachers about their child. These provide a useful opportunity for families and teachers to work together and focus on the child's learning journey. Appointments can be made throughout the year by telephoning the school office.

**Individual end-of-year meetings** are provided for parents who would like to receive feedback about their child's school year and may have questions about the new academic year. Parents are invited to start booking appointments from **May** onwards in the class teachers' appointments by telephoning the school office.

**School events** are an important way of involving families in school life, encouraging socialising and cooperation and helping to develop a sense of belonging to the Smiling community. Typical annual family events include the Christmas Show, International Week, Book Day and Sports Day.

Believing that communication with pupils' families is of primary importance, SMILING has set up the following channels of communication:

**Informative articles** which feature in local newspapers to present various initiatives, occasional advertisements and brochures.

**The website** [www.smilingsservice.it](http://www.smilingsservice.it) where practical information (registration forms, schedules, menus, An Extra Smile events letter and educational information are included.

**An Extra Smile** is a friendly monthly newsletter, written in English, which groups the most important social events taking place in Ferrara and its province. Its aim is to help new families from abroad or

families who have just moved from other Italian cities, to settle into our town and to take advantage of its numerous historical and cultural events. Families can subscribe for free on the website or by emailing [anextrasmile@smilingsservice.it](mailto:anextrasmile@smilingsservice.it)

**E-mails** are the most important channel of communication with families. Of course, notices for families

are also displayed on the notice boards at the entrance and these are updated regularly and archived. The office staff are also available to help at the allocated times.

**The Electronic Register** is a quick and easy tool for parents where they can read about the class's daily activities and check for any messages from teachers.

**Google Classroom** enables families to actively participate in their child's school life, with a view to an education alliance. Teachers and parents can access it daily to share educational goals and to allow the students themselves to create a dialogue between home and school.

**Open Days** are held in the period prior to enrollment to present Early Years, Primary School and Secondary School to the school's parents and students as well as any future students.

**The Coordinators and School Principal** are available by appointment for any specific needs.

**Other Schools and Universities** - Smiling school runs successful collaborations with the schools and universities in the local area by welcoming students from Liceo Superiore G. Carducci in Ferrara – which has been in place for over ten years. Through the "Alternanza scuola-lavoro" scheme, students can consolidate their studies in an educational setting and have their first taste of work experience which is in line with their study plan.

**Smiling** also collaborates with the University of Bologna (UNIBO) and Ferrara by providing training internships for those who request them.

**Smiling's Early Years** has been the leader of some innovative projects and in sharing these with other Nursery Schools.

**The City and the Territory** play an important role in school activities which are enriched by various extracurricular proposals, aimed at in-depth disciplinary and project activity. There are many initiatives and educational projects with exciting learning objectives. These often involve our young students, as well as the older ones, who benefit from the services and support of both public and private entities.

## ACTIVITIES

The Butterflies' teachers meet on a regular basis to plan structured and free-play activities as well as coordinating the day-to-day running of the class.

### 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 personalised educational path around each child and respond to individual needs.

### Early Years Annual Project

The activities proposed in Butterflies are based around different topics and the Early Years annual project, carefully chosen to encourage children to share experiences, listen to and learn about others. These topics are covered in both languages through a variety of activities such as stories, songs, drama, music, carpet time, the Smart Board, gym, arts and crafts, maths and English games, pre-reading and pre-writing skill activities, role-play corners, cooking, videos and trips.

Numeracy and Literacy skills are developed throughout these topics. Children develop skills for working individually, in pairs, in small group and as a whole class.

### English and Italian in Butterflies

Activities and the daily routine are carried out in both languages but in Butterflies the Italian teacher has her/his set hours in Italian separate from the English teacher who has her/his set hours in English. Both teachers continue to plan activities together but this separation and distinction between 'Italian time' and 'English time' enables the children to separate the two languages clearly and in turn prepares them for Primary school the following year. Teachers and children continue to build on the previous year's work in both languages. However, in Butterflies English takes on a more predominant role in the timetable.

Through play, structured activities, the daily routines and specific hours with the teachers in both languages, Italian and English become a natural part of the children's day and are treated as if they are a first language.

For new students and foreign students joining Butterflies no previous experience of English or Italian is necessary. With the support of the teachers and family, particular care is given to help the child settle-in, make friends and develop communication and language skills over the course of the year and particularly in the first term.

## 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.

## Digital Citizens

The SMART Board is an exciting and unique opportunity for the children to use, opening up a new world of technology, which is literally at their fingertips. It allows children to learn actively through interactive games and activities and it appeals to all types of learners. The SMART Board is used as a starting point for a lesson, to introduce new concepts, or to reinforce a lesson. It is available for children to use during free play, supervised by an adult, encouraging them to become autonomous. We use a variety of interactive activities, watch presentations, use DVDs, visit different websites or simply use it as a giant canvas for experimenting on with pens, brushes, spray cans, shapes and lines or simply use our magic fingers! The possibilities are endless. At this age it is not only a valuable resource for developing fine motor skills through fun activities, but also an important instrument for developing listening skills, following instructions and learning specific computer language.

## Early Years' Google Classroom

When families join our school, they are given an [@smilingservice.it](https://www.instagram.com/smilingservice.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 parents who would like to take part in school life and reinforce learning at home. 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 Google Classroom regularly and are welcome to post comments or photos of work done by the children at home.



## 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.

## Chinese Cultural Project

The Butterflies take part in an interesting project with the school's Chinese teacher. Through music, songs, drama, dance, art and language games the children explore this fascinating country, its language and culture.

## Music

Music ignites all areas of children's development and skills for school readiness, including intellectual, social-emotional, motor, language, and overall literacy. It helps the body and the mind work together. Dancing to music helps children build motor skills while allowing them to practice self-expression. 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.

## Coding

Coding is a basic literacy in the digital age, and it is important for kids to understand and be able to work with and understand the technology around them. Having children learn coding at a young age prepares them for the future. Coding helps children with communication, creativity, maths, writing, and confidence. Throughout the year, the Butterflies will do a variety of Coding activities linked to class topics.

## House Teams

From the Butterflies onwards, the children are divided into 'houses': Quicksilver (red), Acrobats (green), Druids (blue) or Bravehearts (yellow). Throughout the year, the children receive points towards their house teams which, at the end of the year, are added up to produce a winning team. Through various activities throughout the year, the children work together in their teams, thus creating numerous opportunities to socialise with the other children in the school.

## Smiling's Continuity Project

Smiling International School welcomes pupils from the age of 2 to 18, which is why it is important for us to develop projects and initiatives between all the various school orders. This provides continuity for families, the teachers and most importantly for the children as they move up through our school.

Smiling organizes 'Open Days' for Early Years, Primary, Middle and High School. Parents whose child already attends Smiling receive an invitation to this event which is also open to new parents.

The Early Years children take part in a fun 'Induction morning' in June when they have the opportunity to spend the morning in the next class up to do an activity with the new teachers. It is an important project for all the classes, especially for the Happy Hedgehogs who experience Nursery School for the first time and for the Butterflies who get to spend a morning in Primary School.

Interclass activities, the House Teams, Smiling events and international celebrations are special occasions to bring all the children together and create a sense of community.

Before the new school year begins, coordinators and teachers meet to pass on all the necessary information about the class and each child to the new teachers, providing a valuable stepping stone for the transition and continuity between each year group and school order.

## DAILY ROUTINE

### Folders and Pencil Cases

In Butterflies, the children bring their own pencil case and folder to school. They are very proud of these items, which they have carefully chosen with their families before the start of the year, and they help them to feel grown up. The children learn how to take care of their personal belongings and when to bring this equipment to and from school. This prepares them for Primary school when they will have an even bigger responsibility of bringing and taking books to school for homework!

Every Friday the children take home their folder with their pictures collected during the week. The

children need to empty this folder and bring it back on Monday morning. They also take home their pencil case to be checked, together with parents, that there is a writing pencil, a glue stick, scissors, pencils are sharpened, felt tip pens work and items are labelled with the child's name or initials.

## Snack

The children bring **two snacks** from home each day in a medium-sized bag. Morning snack is at 10.15 a.m. and afternoon snack is at 3.30 p.m. This is similar to Primary school and helps prepare the Butterflies for this future routine. They learn how to open their own snacks or ask for help if needed ("Can you help me please?", "Can you open this please?") as well as learning to recycle their rubbish. They are also encouraged to eat nicely and tidy up any crumbs on their desk after snack.

## Lunch

The Butterflies eat lunch, which is prepared by the school cook, at 12.30 in the lunchroom. Lunch is served by the Butterflies' lunch assistant who encourages children to use whole phrases when asking for food ("Can I have pasta please?"). Lunchtime is an opportunity for the children to develop their autonomy and language skills while developing preferences and trying new food as well as not wasting it. The menu offers a variety of healthy and balanced dishes that include regional cuisine. International festivals are also celebrated and children are encouraged to try dishes from around the world.

The Butterflies then, like the Primary children, have free-play with the lunch assistant until 2.30 p.m. when activities start again with the class teacher.

## Brushing Teeth

The children brush their teeth after lunch supervised by an adult. This is an important part of their day at school to encourage them to follow a good dental hygiene routine from a young age.