



CATERPILLARS

EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

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OUR CLASSROOM

The classroom is organized to suit the age, needs and interests of the children. It 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 has been divided into the following main areas:

The Creative Area

The Creative Area is situated under the natural light of the classroom windows or glass door where children can experiment with messy play and arts and crafts activities. Using the tables provided, the children can choose from a variety of materials to manipulate and explore such as, paint, brushes, pasta, flour, printing materials, special paper and card, glue, scissors, polenta trays and play dough. It is an area where children can express themselves freely, artistically and develop a series of fine motor skills, hand-eye-co-ordination, enabling us to observe how their skills and creativity develop and change over time. It is an area dedicated to the development of fine motor skills with a variety of writing tools and materials available to the children.

The Creative Area is also an area where the children begin to communicate and express themselves through drawings and put their thoughts and emotions onto paper. Marks become recognizable drawings and some children begin to explore “pre-writing” skills, letters and numbers later on in the year. The children are encouraged to write their name, make books and lists. Writing activities are often linked to the role-play and reading corner.

Magnetic Whiteboard

The classroom has a large magnetic whiteboard on the wall, which the children can draw on in large scale and standing up. This helps develop important shoulder and arm muscles needed for writing skills. This magnetic board also provides a fun area for exploring letters, number, shapes and faces as well as a place on which to display flashcards and photos at the children’s height.

The Carpet Area

The carpet area is the heart of the classroom, where the teachers and children all meet up or where the children can play in small groups when they arrive at school. Children and teachers gather here each morning and at the end of the day to listen to a story, talk about a particular theme or share and listen to important “news” during “Carpet Time”. The children are given the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions and begin to listen to others, taking turns in conversation. The children are encouraged to develop their thoughts, reasoning and problem solving skills using an increasingly rich and well-organized language. The children sing songs, learn actions and play a variety of carpet games together, which helps to develop social skills.

During free-play this zone transforms into a construction area where children build and role-play with small world toys and make airports, railway stations, parks, farms, and car parks. The children often discover peers who share similar interests and friendships often start in this area.

During Music it becomes an important space for children to play musical instruments, musical games and dance.

The Reading Area

This is a special place for spending quiet moments and enjoying a story. This can involve the children looking at books independently, sharing them with friends or listening to an adult read to them. They are encouraged to look and talk about what they see to develop their language in both English and Italian. The reading area provides children with a chance to think about stories and enjoy reading with their friends. It inspires them to create their own stories and role-play.

The Role-Play Area

It is an area where children role-play life experiences and develop their imagination. A home, post office, restaurant, are just some of their favorites but it is a special corner which can change into whatever the children want it to be. It is an area of learning that encourages children to bring and share their own experiences to play and discover similar or different experiences with their peers. It also offers a perfect occasion to develop language skills, invent stories and roles and to develop social skills encouraging children to interact, communicate and share emotions.

The SMART Board

The interactive whiteboard is a fun feature in the classroom for the children to use, always under the supervision of their teachers. It is used to introduce a variety of cross-curricular topics, to reinforce language skills, to draw, to share photographs, to link up with other classes in our school and to connect to the Caterpillars' Google Classroom. The SMART Board opens up a world of technology which is literally at their fingertips.

The Science Corner

This 'discovery corner' is a creative area which the children can visit throughout the day. It is equipped with intriguing objects and materials of different shapes and sizes and for the children to observe, build something new, use in different ways developing their imaginations as well as encouraging them to investigate real objects.

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 weeks 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 the annual project, 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 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

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 if there are any messages from the 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 children 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 studyplan.

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 Caterpillars' teachers meet on a regular basis to plan structured and free-play activities, as well as coordinating the day-to-day running of the classes.

Early Years Annual Project

All the Early Years classes work on an annual project too. This project aims to stimulate not only the children's physical and emotional well-being but also the development of their intellectual capacities.

There are opportunities for all the children to work together as a whole class, in small groups or individually, as well as working with the children from other Early Year classes. They put on shows for each other, exchange and share ideas and work, have tea and snack together and so on. The Early Years classes, together with Primary school, celebrate international days, festivals and other important dates in the school.

Throughout the year the school organizes outings within the surrounding area: walks, trips, visits to museums, theatre and farm visits.

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. However, 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 there is a family from another country) is a natural part of their day. Interacting and joining in during English time, developing comprehension skills and beginning to use simple words and phrases in English with the English teacher is simply a natural process for them.

The Importance of Play

Play, in its different forms, makes up the main part of the pedagogy for the Early Years classes. *Pretend play* gives the children the opportunity to construct and reconstruct reality, represent and interpret the world, to create ideas about it and to make sense of it. Social play *becomes* a time to exchange ideas and meanings; a communicative and meta-communicative activity. *Role-play* allows children to re-elaborate their personal experiences; it becomes an opportunity for the children to act out their fears, anxieties and their deepest wishes. Play helps children get rid of tension and they overcome conflicts by attributing their feelings to external elements.

Playing together also has an impact on the social development of children, as it allows them to build relationships with others. Through *group games* the children learn about rules, acceptable behavior, how to deal with winning and losing and how to follow rules. All these elements are fundamental for life itself.

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 need

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.

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.

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.

Little 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. The SMART Board allows children to learn actively through interactive games and activities and it appeals to all types of learners. It 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 @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 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.

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 ROUTINES

Snack

The morning snack is eaten before the daily activities begin at 9.45 a.m. It is a time to sit together, taste new foods and develop language skills. The afternoon snack is eaten after sleep time at around 3.45 p.m. Both snacks are provided by the school and consist of a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, crackers or biscuits. Every Friday the school cook prepares a special snack for the children of cake, pizza, biscuits or yogurt.

Lunch

The children eat lunch, which is prepared by the school cook, in the lunchroom at 11.50 a.m. together with their teachers. Lunch is an important moment for socialization between adults and children and between children themselves, which is why it is a fundamental part of the educational project. Everything is designed in order to create a good relationship between the child and the food, respecting a correct and balanced diet. Lunchtime is also an opportunity for children to become more autonomous, to express their preferences and to develop language. 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.

Brushing Teeth

The Cool Caterpillars 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

Relaxation & Afternoon Nap

All the class takes part in a relaxation moment with the teachers from 1.30 p.m. – 2 p.m. when they unwind together after a busy morning. They play breathing games, tune into their bodies, relax to soft music in a calming atmosphere. The children who do not sleep are then taken through to another room where they play quiet games or play outdoors.

Afternoon Nap in Cool Caterpillars is optional. Parents who would like their child to not sleep anymore are invited to inform teachers at their individual meetings. A teacher/assistant stays with the children who are sleeping, promoting relaxation by playing soft music. Each child has their own nursery school bed complete with a bottom sheet. These are both provided and cleaned each week by school. A pillow, pillowcase and blanket are provided by the family and are given home every Friday to be cleaned and returned to school on Mondays. For children who still use a dummy, this is sent home every day to be sanitised. Please provide a carrying case for it.