



HAPPY HEDGEHOGS

**ANNUAL PROJECT
ACADEMIC YEAR 2023-2024**

Coordinators:

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INTRODUCTION

'Shake, Rock 'n' Roll'

It is time to 'Shake, Rock 'n' Roll' with this year's exciting Early Years' project as the children explore sounds and investigate movement using their bodies!

The Happy Hedgehogs' Project:

The Happy Hedgehogs will 'Shake, Rock 'n' Roll' to music and rhythm linked to their daily routine with the help of Spiky the Hedgehog, the friendly class puppet who loves to sing and bop around! Carefully chosen greeting songs, name games and action songs at the start of the year will help the children familiarise themselves with their new school routine, create ties with their peers and teachers helping them to feel safe and develop a sense of belonging. As the year continues the children will begin to explore percussion instruments, rhythm and sounds further encouraging them to develop concentration levels, self-confidence, language and listening skills and at the same time cultivate a curiosity and enjoyment for sounds, music and movement.

The second part of the Happy Hedgehogs' project will stimulate the children to use different parts of their bodies and to 'Shake, Rock 'n' Roll' using large and small equipment in the gym, garden and classroom. Fun, structured activities aim to develop coordination and balance as well as helping them to develop spatial awareness and gross motor skills. Smaller tools and materials will be introduced leading them to discover a variety of fine motor skills also using their senses and parts of their bodies to experiment and develop their imaginations as they 'Shake, Rock 'n' Roll' a range of natural and man-made materials and objects.

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

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 parents who would like to take part in school life and to reinforce learning at home. 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:

Anita Bolognini / Anna Nigro / Elena Rizzati: Wednesdays 3 p.m. - 4 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 toothbrush and toothpaste (with child's initials) in a clearly labelled, washable bag which can be hung up
- 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 3.40 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.

The bibs brought in at the start of the year are washed and kept at school.

Brushing Teeth

Every day after lunch the children brush their teeth with adult supervision. On Fridays the toothbrush case is sent home to be checked and sanitised thoroughly and returned to school on Monday mornings.

Afternoon Nap

The Hedgehogs take an afternoon nap from 1 p.m. to 3.15 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 accompany and collect their children directly from their 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.
9.15 a.m. – 9.30 a.m.	Toilet
9.30 a.m. – 10.00 a.m.	Snack
10.00 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.	'Carpet Time' (Good morning, Who is here today? What's the weather?) Gym /Music
10.30 a.m. – 11.00 a.m.	Structured activities (annual project...)
11 a.m. – 11.30 a.m.	Games in the garden
11.30 a.m. – 11.50 a.m.	Toilet
11.50 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.	Lunch
12.30 p.m. – 1.00 p.m.	Games in the 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. – 3.15 p.m.	Brushing teeth, toilet & sleep time
3.15 p.m. – 3.40 p.m.	Waking up and toilet
3.40 p.m. – 4 p.m.	Afternoon snack
4 p.m. – 4.15 p.m.	'Carpet Time' (songs and/or story time)
4.15 p.m.	Home time