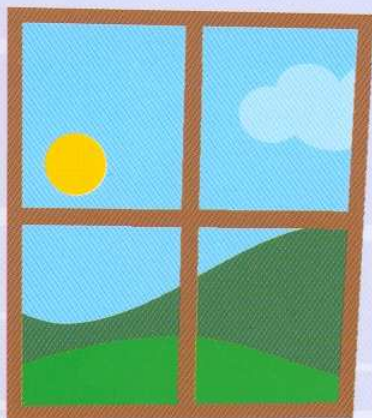




PROVINCIA AUTONOMA DI TRENTO

Servizio per lo sviluppo e l'innovazione
del sistema scolastico e formativo
Ufficio di coordinamento pedagogico generale

Welcome *Benvenuti in lingua inglese*



F.I.O.R.E.
FAMIGLIA, INFANZIA,
ORIENTAMENTI,
RIFLESSIONI EDUCATIVE



PROVINCIA AUTONOMA DI TRENTO
Servizio per lo sviluppo e l'innovazione
del sistema scolastico e formativo

Welcome

Benvenuti in lingua inglese



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Servizio per lo sviluppo e l'innovazione del sistema scolastico e formativo

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Welcome is a friendly greeting
and a way of being receptive,
underlining the pleasure of meeting
and becoming acquainted,
in the context of everyday life,
making those who receive it feel at their ease
and ready for the pleasure of dialogue.

Welcome is also the title
it has been decided to retain
for this new edition of the leaflet,
because it is a message representing
the beginning of a relationship
with the parents of the children
coming to nursery school
for the first time,
commencing a process
of development
and sharing.

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Presentation

**The first
Welcome
was issued in
2002**

In was in 2002 that we first had the idea of preparing a leaflet focusing on the arrival of children at nursery school, both at the beginning of the school year, when the whole school is in movement, and during the course of the year, when the child finds an environment which has already taken on certain characteristics. These are different situations, which both require attention and a gradual approach.

We were keen to ensure that parents could get to know this world before becoming a part of it, partly to prepare the terrain and partly to facilitate this new phase. In some cases it the first time that the child truly leaves the family, while in others it represents the passage from a crèche towards a new environment.

Since then, *Welcome* has passed through the hands of many parents and has been paged through, read and commented on together with teachers.

**and has now
been renewed
and revised**

Today, *Welcome* has reached its third edition and has been included in the F.I.O.R.E. series. This was created with the same intention, namely to discuss subjects regarding children's growth and development.

Welcome is thus in an ideal position, preceded by other works dealing with important topics – such as diet, autonomy and the discovery and exploration of spaces inside and outside school – and will undoubtedly be followed by others dealing with different subjects.

Within F.I.O.R.E. there is no established order. Each text stands in its right and is at the same time linked within the context of a continuing discourse, made up of images and words and coming together with the power of emotions, ideas and feelings.

**while
maintaining
the same spirit**

The spirit behind *Welcome* is the same as it has always been: to offer a message of welcome. There is no question of exhausting the range of possible queries and the will remains to encourage parents to ask that extra question that sometimes only comes with time, perhaps at the first meeting with the school. Thus *Welcome* talks about schools, what they are like, the thinking behind them and how they are structured, without going into detail about how administrative structures are organised and adapted to specific contexts. With the use of concrete examples taken from daily life it provides an overview and deals with the questions most commonly asked by parents.



**in a story that
brings together
daily life and
the education
system**

The document begins by attempting to explain how children are introduced to nursery school and the various dimensions involved. Then it explains situations and attitudes and begins to get to the heart of the processes inevitably taking place in this phase.

It goes on to describe a typical day, with all the reassuring rituals, an organisational structure which is also able to deal with unexpected events, the experience gained and solutions adopted and the proposals offered by schools. Underlying all this, there are the relationships which make it satisfying to be together.

Finally, the leaflet outlines the framework of reference within which nursery schools are included.

Thus *Welcome* brings together a description of certain moments with some general reflections, with the intention of illustrating the open exchange of ideas between school and family. Ultimately, it is a tool for fuelling dialogue regarding matters of interest, along with others designed by each school, the beginning of a conversation which will continue in the context of the individual school.



Let's talk about it....

Settling in regards both children and adults

Is the initial introduction to nursery school something which only concerns children? Are they the only ones who find it difficult? Do all those emotions, sometimes contrasting, leave the adults accompanying them untouched?

Not in our opinion!

It is not just the child who begins a process, sometimes eagerly anticipated because it is a sign of growing up; there is also the parent. The child discovers and ultimately masters the environment as he gradually explores it and makes it his own. He allows himself to be gradually transported by the climate of pleasure and interest surrounding him, but the parent also needs to understand, be aware of and know about certain things from the beginning.

What is more, it is not just parents who are involved; the educators also come into play.

in a knowledge gaining process which is the basis of working together

Thus the slow "work" of preparation which leads to this stage starts much earlier; it begins with the first contacts at the time of enrolment, is reinforced during initiatives offered by the school to get to know the new group due to arrive and takes concrete form in the many situations in some way anticipating what is to come.

In the minds of adults - teachers and parents - the child's introduction to school has always been considered as a delicate time, requiring the utmost attention. The parent needs to have confidence in the school, which is also perceived on the basis of how it presents itself and deals with those approaching it.

On the other hand, the school understands the importance of getting to know parents, because they are the basis of the world that children bring with them.

with common objectives

Against this background, the actions are put into effect: the school contacts parents, organising encounters which represent an opportunity for exchanging ideas, while parents approach the school, asking for basic initial information and participating at the appointments organised.

On both sides the central objective is to ensure that children's entry to school is as serene as possible.

The repeating of these encounters each year illustrates the slow and mutual understanding reached by schools and families. There never seem to be enough instruments and occasions to assist with this process.

Clearly, to some extent knowledge and familiarity can only develop over time, with the progressive adjustment of relationships on the basis of the situations presenting themselves. However, on the other hand it is also the way the relationship begins and people comes into contact that helps them to understand each other.

and the desire to construct significant relationships

During this process the natural insecurity dictated by reciprocal fear of making a wrong move is gradually abandoned and a daily routine of contact takes over. The family and the school, which did not previously know each other, can now establish a significant bond. However nothing can be taken for granted in this process; there are difficulties in "revealing" values, choices and expectations and in standardising possible diversities, as yet to be fully discovered. There also needs to be "investment" in the relationship between adults, just as takes place in the relationship

with the children. Within this triangle there is the whole experience of settling in at school: just as the child is present and active, in the same way the adults experience events and develop relations.

**at a time of
openness to
socialisation**

The period at nursery school represents an important turning point for the family: routines and friendships change, questions arise about matters common to others and the opportunity to share ideas and attitudes increases. The child gradually develops personal relationships with friends that he also enjoys meeting outside school, for example at the playground, also drawing his family towards new acquaintances. The small world of the family expands and is enriched.





ARE

MENSILI D'AUTUNNO.
IL GUSTO...
MARO E UN 16...
E ACIDINO...
E PEPRO...
ACIDA MA...



An important stage in the process of growing up becoming part of a new environment

From the home or crèche towards new challenges

The initial period during which the child is introduced to the school and gets to know it is called *settling in*.

Fitting into a new situation, with people and activities which are different from those at home, involves a process leading to gradual acceptance and participation in the life of the group. Thus this phase is not just limited to the first few days, but is rather a process experienced by children in a personal way, demanding that adults design and apply it in the most appropriate way for the individuals and the group.

Arriving from home or a crèche the child finds himself in a more complex group, where he must interact with more children and various adults. He will thus bring into play the social skills he has already acquired and will develop new ones, taking a big step forward in his psychological development.

to be faced at one's own pace

While some children are rapidly integrated into the new environment, showing pleasure in participation, affection for their teachers and a preference for certain specific friends, it is normal for some children to need more time. There are indeed children who need to observe for a long time before they can let go and enjoy playing with their peers or succeed in having closer relationships with people. Children are different and likewise their way of dealing with new things is different: there are those who prefer to stay close to an adult, those who remain aloof, those who dive straight in and those who try everything...

Attempts are therefore made to find the most suitable timescale and methods for ensuring that the child settles in and creates trusting relationships, also by agreeing the approach with the family

The school considers children's needs carefully, above all those of newly arriving children, preparing spaces and simple activities and bearing in mind that each child has a different family background and previous social experiences.

The teachers are therefore careful to recognise signs of stress, looking for the reasons behind bashfulness, and know how to deal with normal cases of agitation or discouragement and more serious crises.

The children's behaviour is observed carefully

At times children surprise their parents with behaviour they would not have expected. In these cases, the experience of the educators can help adults and children to resolve the situation, as they have seen similar things many times and can "translate" the sense of such behaviour, suggesting ways of finding solutions. The approach to be adopted is agreed between the school and the family and in this way it is possible to avoid sending contrasting messages.

In some cases a minor crisis can arrive unexpectedly, just when it seemed that everything was going well. This is not unusual and simply means that the child has exhausted the initial curiosity and enthusiasm which assisted him in the first few days, the desire to "be big" which made him bold, suddenly realising that there are a lot of things to be dealt with and thus feeling the need to "be little". These are well-known feelings that are met with understanding and welcoming arms, so in a short time everything goes back to normal and the school can once again return to being "my school".

The beginning of school is a “demanding” passage for the whole family

The child’s entry to school is also the time that parents entrust part of his education and development to other adults, with whom the child will spend a large part of the day. Thus it is the beginning of a delicate phase in which the teacher works alongside the parent to get to know the child well and help him deal with separation from the family, retaining the image of his loved ones and the confidence that they will return after the time spent with other people.

For the school each year is new, because all children are special, in terms of their uniqueness and that of their families, while the group dynamics and the concepts within which the programmes take place are also different.



"My school is beautiful inside and out."

Ludovica





...where the day follows a different routine as compared to the home made up of various recognisable moments

The child gets to know the school gradually

In the first few days it is useful for the child's stay at school to be gradual so that he can recognise and begin to master the different moments making up the day. Even the games proposed are initially very simple and mainly have the role of allowing children and adults to get to know each other .

In this phase, the attention of the educator is not so much directed at what the child "does" as to "being" with him generally, while the educational objectives regard the creation of general wellbeing, the formation of the group and the ability to act within the context of the main rules regulating the life of the school.

As soon as he arrives he makes himself comfortable

As soon as they arrive at school the children change their shoes and put on comfortable footwear that they wear all day, but take on and off several times, for example to come into a space with rugs and cushions or to go out into the garden.

Some schools recommend cloth slippers, while others prefer non-slip socks, but in most cases the decision regarding the type of footwear is left to parents, reminding them that the fundamental thing is the comfort and practicality of the footwear. One important factor to bear in mind is the ease with which the child can manage his footwear autonomously, so it should be easy to put on and fasten.

with clothing suitable for doing things and playing

Some schools adopt aprons, while others only use work aprons for certain activities, such as painting, while for the rest of the time they request that children wear clothes suitable for play, which do not limit their movement and which children do not need to worry about getting dirty. It is indeed more than likely that a companion will lose control of a paintbrush or a bit of plasticine may get stuck to the knee... What is fundamental for children, just as for adults who need to dress appropriately for their job, is to feel at their ease and to be able to be autonomous. Thus it is a good idea to have aprons without difficult fastenings, clothes that do not make them sweat and which do not have awkward buttons and zips; it is also best to avoid complicated braces, belts or other accessories which are attractive but difficult to manage.

and then a day packed with games and activities begins

When the children arrive, they go to a play space offering various opportunities for games and social encounters. Thus the child can choose according to his own interests and friendships. He decides which games to play and with whom. He can opt for more "hidden" places (but which can still be supervised by adults), settle down peacefully to draw or play a board game or get involved in construction activities with his companions.

The space, delimited and organised, helps the child to be a part of the game, to organise himself and to concentrate or socialise with companions, while respecting others.

exploring, experimenting, discovering and chatting in a specially designed space

The many and varied materials placed in the play space are an invitation to explore various possibilities, encouraging creativity, logic and expressiveness. The school environment gives the child the security of certainties, where each pupil will soon learn to recognise his own section and group of reference for arrivals and

departures. Then he will gradually become involved in activities offering the possibility of transforming spaces and rules, for example by constructing a racing car track, a setting for plastic animals or signs to play better etc. Collaborating in defining play areas allows the child to feel himself involved in defining a situation which will see his increasing participation day by day.

where a record of what has been done will remain

It is important for the children that there is a record of what has been done, what has changed and why.

Wall charts, showcases, booklets and CDs make up a documentary record illustrating the process, making it possible to look back at a different point of view, recognising the progress made and the skills acquired.



*"I go to school by bus
and every day I go on two great journeys."*

Antonio





...where you are part of a larger organisation and can communicate and share ideas

The feeling of belonging is constructed day by day

The child soon finds security in the normality of the daily routine, made of appointments that he can anticipate: the mid morning snack, conversation, going to the bathroom, lunch, preparing to return home etc.

When everyone has arrived, the teacher and children come together to chat and count those present or see who is there or missing. By doing so they latch onto a common thread which is established over time, creating a feeling of belonging. Each school has its own system, but everywhere the roll-call establishes the idea of being together and belonging to a group. "Are we all here?" is not only a need to count those present but also a way of recognising oneself as a community.

Indeed, the interest demonstrated in their absence means that even those who are not there are spiritually present.

and begins by getting to know the history and needs of each child

Understanding the history of children, any problems that they may have experienced and their special needs, makes it possible to create a more in-depth relationship, finding ways to help them.

If a child requires any special attention it is a good idea to talk to teachers immediately, indicating his needs and seeing what can be done to ensure his wellbeing together with the school. Then there are certain days and moments when someone feels the need for more targeted attention. These are momentary situations that may however require extra input.

Discussion between parents and the teacher puts things into context, often putting them back into perspective and usually resolving the situation.

The child "feels" first of all the agreement established between the adults caring for him and reciprocal esteem creates a protective circle around him.

There are rules guaranteeing everyone's security: for collecting children

The school provides parents with forms where they indicate those responsible for collecting the child in the event that they are unable to do so. This is a way of guaranteeing tighter controls, because the child must always be handed over to authorised people able to supervise his security.

for urgent communications

Parents are kindly asked to advise teachers of absence by telephoning or sending a written message. The child is part of a group waiting for him and hence both friends and adults like to know how he is and what he is doing. If on the other hand the child feels unwell at school, the teachers will advise the parents and it is therefore useful to leave telephone contact numbers at school.

for accidents

Sometimes minor accidents can happen, like falling over while playing, a bang to the head or a scraped knee in the garden. This is a natural consequence of children's liveliness at this age. Normally all that is necessary is a little cold water, a plaster and a kiss, but if the incident is a little more serious and there is any doubt at all about the need for closer examination, the teachers will immediately advise the parents. There is an insurance policy covering accidents and if necessary the teachers will provide the family with the relevant form.

for unforeseen circumstances involving the parent

There may be occasions when parents need to come and get the child before the usual time. In this case they should advise the school, so that the teacher can avoid starting the child off on a time-consuming activity and he will know that his day will be different and can prepare calmly to leave.

for understanding each other

Communication between parents and teachers is fundamental. For this reason meetings are organised, presenting the educational projects and teaching activities. Then there are individual meetings to discuss the progress of each child, his experiences at school, the friends and games he prefers and the steps forward in his development. These are important opportunities for sharing educational decisions, understanding the reasons behind rules and the activities taking place at school.



"I have heaps of fun with my group!"

Silvia





...within a timescale which takes on sense accompanied by reassuring routines

Arriving and leaving are two very important moments

When mummy or daddy, grandparents or other adults given the task, hand over the child to the school and pick him up at the end of the day, they are involved in a simple act, which is nevertheless full of emotion, because at these times the child "belongs" to someone else and enters a different world, with other rules and references in terms of affection; vice-versa he goes back to being the child of the family.

Involving powerful emotions

This involves feelings relating to the stability of relations and for this reason, until it becomes habitual, the passage from one world to another requires support and words which guarantee the return of loved ones and define the measurement of time: "after lunch", "after your nap"... A sort of ritual is created in which the phrases become a form of commitment: the teacher welcomes the child with a personalised greeting which creates familiarity and gives the sense that he is expected, linking the moment to his previous experience. At the same time the child recognises the trust that the parent has in the educators and makes it his own.

Choosing what to do together with each child means a good start to the day

The teacher, who is an attentive observer, can help the parent to accompany the child towards something which may interest him, but it is above all the serenity of the adults that contributes towards reinforcing the child's sense of security, as he gradually starts to take possession of the space, play and his companions.

After a few days the children wait for one another and meeting up becomes the most important thing.

which then follows a recognised pattern

School routines are an organisational necessity, but they are more than this. They are indeed elements which define the day, helping the child to master the schedule mentally. They regard moments of passage from one activity to another, made up of recognised actions that become reassuring. Children come together at the benches because it is time to go to the bathroom, wash their hands, prepare for lunch or go into the garden; they tidy up at the end of the morning or at the end of an activity done with that group etc. Thus the day becomes "predictable". The child knows what comes first, what is next and how a certain moment during the day begins and ends. Thus a sense of time is constructed, along with a "framework" within which he can act in an increasingly participatory manner.

Doing things alone and together is part of the life of the school

At school children are helped to become gradually more autonomous, to develop their self-esteem and enjoy the pleasure of doing things by themselves. They have small tasks such as washing the paintbrushes or setting the table. Clearly those who need help are accompanied and assisted by the teacher or assistant, who represents an emotionally significant figure, but they are invited to try, perhaps with the support of a more expert companion.

made up of many shared times

There are shared times, such as the moment of preparation for the nap or lunch for example, when certain actions take place in small groups. These actions are designed to develop good habits and are also acquired within the child's own family, such as tidying up, washing hands, brushing teeth, going to the toilet.

These simple actions become part of the child's ability to take care of himself and demonstrate respect for others. While the children await their turn there is a simple game and they learn to have a little patience.

and it is natural that sometimes there are also moments of insecurity

"Leaving" and "finding" the family are moments that may be more difficult on some days, because a little insecurity has emerged, even when the initial introductory period has already ended. Then there may be a "bad" day, just as happens for adults, when everything seems to go wrong... or a day of "tantrums", which may be a way of asking for more attention or show the existence of tension. In these cases, small acts by the parent are often enough to reassure the child: staying a few moments longer with him, going into the classroom with him to see what he has produced, meeting his friends, leaving an object from home that he can keep in his pocket etc.



*"If I build a really tall tower
I don't want to knock it down immediately!"*

Corrado





...where children learn by playing purposefully while having fun

At school there are different kinds of play

Play is the most authentic experience of life for the child. Through various types of play he gains experience, constructs emotional relationships, puts himself to the test, finds out about himself, things and others and in short increases his awareness and skills. At nursery school learning is mainly through play: there are different games, creative or with rules, in small or large groups, old or new and even invented with the participation of the children themselves.

and through play one can deal with reality

So sometimes parents rediscover nursery rhymes they knew when they were young, equally loved by their own children; on other occasions they see new and unusual games, perhaps developing from an idea, a story or experiences which have to do with science or technology. The various types of play allow a wide range of experiences: from games related to logic or construction, experimentation with different materials makes it possible to discover cognitive, sensorial and creative aspects and the possibilities of one's own body.

express oneself

There is the game of "let's pretend", which takes place every time that children represent reality or their imagination through familiar figures or people: in the playhouse area they impersonate mummy and daddy, in the shop they are assistants, in the car constructed with building blocks they become pilots etc. When playing at theatre, dressing up or using puppets children give life both to characters they know, such as the "beautiful lady" or

traffic warden, and to imaginary ones, thus exploring their thoughts and desires. By imitating the life of adults they begin to become aware of their male or female identity. The interweaving of truth and fiction typical of these games encourages friendships and alliances, both between peers and with "bigger" friends, recognised to be "more capable".

develop reasoning and carry out experiments

In workshop type games the children manipulate and discover the characteristics of objects, such as hardness, balance, ability to float etc. They explore relations and combinations, make choices and seek solutions in order to carry out small individual or group projects. The different materials used may be unusual or recycled, inviting children to explore them in various ways, encouraging creativity and leading to interesting processes of transformation.

using one's body as the main means of expression

In early childhood it is said that children "learn with their bodies", meaning that knowledge passes through physical experiences before it becomes the capacity for abstract thought. With manual activities and games of movement children try out their own physical and emotional skills and having fun is an increasingly serious means of exploration. Their hands specialise in increasingly more careful actions, their bodies dominate the space by running, jumping and overcoming obstacles; children learn about their own possibilities but also about limitations and adapt their movements to those of others.

Games have their own organisation

In the various spaces prepared in the sections and at different times of day, children have the opportunity to experience varied forms of play, from games chosen freely in the play areas to those proposed by adults. Each play area is regulated by certain simple agreed

rules, such as a limit on the number of players or putting away materials in the relevant containers at the end of the game. At certain times and in certain spaces the game follows a theme, offering a stimulus for a process being developed in projects. The children are put into predetermined groups, by age or especially created in order to carry out a certain "task", with educational objectives previously established by the teachers, who intervene to stimulate interest, always bearing in mind children's need for harmonious development and taking into account the interests they display.

and are also a part of planning with a view to the future

The activities include educational continuity between nursery and primary schools. In this context the children are brought into contact with older companions. These are encounters taking place within the framework of a specific theme, but which have the main objective of ensuring smooth transitions, by allowing children to get to know new environments. In this way the children can imagine their process of development.



"I work a lot in the hole in the sand."

Ivana





...within the framework of an educational project bringing together knowledge and pleasure

The school's educational project is a "construction"

Behind every aspect of organisation there is always commitment and reflection on how to organise the various moments during the day, spend time with the children, get to know them and propose new experiences.

One can see the project as a "construction", made up of many building bricks: the bricks are the activities, work programmes, organisation of the spaces, schedule, initiatives etc. but also the meetings scheduled with families and other schools. In short, everything that the school does and is.

The project develops over the whole year

The construction must be solid, protecting from possible errors, but not closed; the "windows" are important, allowing ample vision and making it possible to notice many things, exploit the opportunities arising and hence to modify actions.

The project departs from certain fundamental starting points: analysis of the space, observation of the children, some links to the previous year and proposals linked to the local area, and then develops, bearing in mind the children's interests.

At the beginning of the school year, the project serves as a "guideline": it establishes the initial lines of action, but then the programme itself shows whether the direction taken is valid.

"Maintenance" work represents an opportunity to evaluate progress, making it possible to modify, supplement or confirm the approaches adopted.

and involves a number of different people

Indeed, the running of the school is not the exclusive task of a few individuals, but rather involves the contribution of many, each according to their job and role. Thus it involves teachers and auxiliary staff, with some moments during the day being managed together, such as the arrival and departure of the children, personal hygiene and the meal. Dealing with the care of the spaces and daily tasks related to the general presentation of the school is also part of the overall school programme. The various situations during the day focus on different objectives, requiring organised scheduling and the presence of one or two teachers, or other people in order to lend a hand.

Parents also get directly involved in activities

In many schools, sharing the same scope leads to significant results, with parents collaborating in a proactive manner, adding their emotional input to the experiences offered. There are "theatre groups" where it is not necessary to be an actor, but simply to enjoy coming together to make children happy, or "construction groups", where sartorial or carpentry skills give rise to the creation of items for dressing up, scenery or other things used for play. There are precious opportunities to make children aware of certain activities, such as making bread or pruning a plant. Amateur musicians and artists stage comedies and nobody is sure who has most fun, the parents or their watching children, who find it incredibly entertaining to see mummy and daddy "at work" in their school.

The school is a network of internal and external relations

Within the school multiple relationships develop between adults and children, recognising the skills they already have in the first years of life. Thus the task of the educator is not so much to provide

predetermined knowledge, as to prepare situations stimulating children's curiosity and a spirit of investigation, encouraging the development of individual skills.

Relations with the outside world involve first of all parents, with regular exchanges and specific events, but also include those working in crèches and primary schools, specialist and social services, in order to best deal with the developmental requirements of children, and agencies and institutions in the area, such as museums, libraries etc.

Various projects designed by multiple players develop out of this network of contacts, making them particularly stimulating and unifying. This concept of the school is also open to the wider social context and the community.



"I do invented drawings because I've got a lot of imagination."

Rinaldo





...managed by competent and sensitive people with affectionate professionalism

The school's personnel: empathetic professionals

Empathy is the ability to feel other people's emotions and share them, providing them with support.

Teachers create bonds with the children based on understanding and closeness, exemplified by the classic expression "the teacher said so!", which demonstrates the trust and affection felt by the child.

The educational guidelines talk about the professionalism of teachers, which "lies in the ability to receive and support children and their families and to be able to respond to their need for knowledge".

with constantly updated skills

The skills and sensitivity of teachers are essential elements in the quality of the school. Constant training makes it possible to develop a professionalism which is extended through research programmes, refresher training and specific courses.

Training is a tool for consolidating knowledge and keeping it up to date, also in relation to changes in the system of social relations and pedagogical research. It is an opportunity to reflect on one's work, explore and try out new educational strategies and verify the results of processes underway. It is "strategy of renewal" and professional growth, which needs to be kept constantly up to date with the times.

in an extended training programme

The training of teaching staff is managed at provincial level by the relevant organisations. All the teachers employed in the province are involved in the programmes, while careful planning and monitoring activities make it

possible to respond to the differing needs of certain schools or a particular Coordination Group, while sharing a common horizon.

which takes many forms

There are a range of training initiatives: courses, laboratories, seminars, study days etc. Each of these has its own objectives and structure, but together they make up a mosaic for the promotion of culture expanding out into the community and communicating with the stakeholders, families above all.

All the school's staff have specific professional and vocational skills

The school's kitchen and auxiliary staff are also kept up-to-date on health regulations to be observed, ways of conserving and cooking food and other factors linked to the cleanliness and functional nature of the school. However, the nursery school is also a big family, where professional skills go hand in hand with interest in developing personal relations with the children. This gives rise to everyday gestures and phrases of welcome such as "Hello, Marco, I'm glad you're feeling better!", "Elisa, I saw you arriving by bicycle" etc.

and are capable of establishing close personal relations based on affection and camaraderie

The child's world of personal relations extends and what the cook said, the bus driver's comment or the auxiliary worker's compliments become important. These are the people who console and help children, who remember to pick up the information sheet for parents, who know the child's character and tastes and often some of his secrets. They are present at birthdays, parties and trips and they are often in direct contact with Father Christmas...

The parent is involved in a continuing dialogue with the school

For parents there are general meetings, and meetings for individual sections or small groups, with occasions set aside for describing what is being done and why, in what way, using what tools etc.

The educational decisions are the background for "approaching" broader educational subjects, linked to the evolving needs and development of the children.

At individual interviews there is the opportunity for more direct exchanging of information between educators and parents, within the context of a more individual relationship, the attention being directed at the individual child and his progress, but also at the adults, the difficulties encountered and any questions which may arise in the process.



*"My teacher is kind
and only loses her patience a little."*

Giovanna





...who are aware of the more "fragile" moments linked to feeling big or little

Considerable care is paid to making children feel at home, especially in certain situations

There are times which are particularly typical of the family, above all mealtimes and going to bed, so special care is paid to these. From a nutritional point of view, the nutritional content tables provided by the provincial health services are the point of reference: the dishes are combined and alternated according to specific criteria drawn up by dieticians. However, the emotional aspect goes hand in hand with the material side, so particular care is dedicated to creating a welcoming canteen area, where in addition to the teachers, auxiliary staff and sometimes the cook are present. Over time each child can construct "face to face" relations, perceiving that he is understood, while learning to respect common rules.

**such as
lunchtime**

The way of presenting dishes sometimes makes it possible to overcome certain "barriers" and encourage children to approach foods initially refused. Thanks to the opportunity to experience certain forms of autonomy – serving themselves or taking on specific roles, such as acting as "waiters" or helping others – the children are motivated to taste foods which they may have rejected at home.

Parents are kept informed

The menu is on display on the school notice board, so the parent is informed and can organise the evening meal. The menu is drawn up on a weekly basis and sometimes for the whole month, with reference to the time of year and giving the priority to

seasonal fruit and vegetables.

The family is kept informed about the meals served according to the different methods adopted by each school, but it is guaranteed that the menus served will be made public. At individual meetings, the parents can learn more about how the child acts at meal time and his relationship with food.

and the school is informed of any dietary problems

If your child has any allergies it is only necessary to present the school with a doctor's certificate and the dishes can be adapted. If on the other hand rejection of a certain food only depends on resistance to eating certain foods, this will probably be overcome with time. Being in a group indeed encourages emulation, while the staff have strategies to help the child to try new flavours, which never involve force. In more complicated cases it is advisable to agree a strategy directly with teachers, because it is important that the school and the family agree on the line to be taken. It is part of the child's development process to gradually get to know unknown things and it is likely that by starting with one small lettuce leaf he will end up by enjoying a whole plateful.

Another delicate moment is the afternoon nap

When a child is tired, he tends to behave as if he is younger. So he will feel the need to be reassured, cuddled and perhaps have an object from home. In schools where a room is available for the afternoon rest, the children making use of it are prepared in small groups, with an adult who takes them to the toilet and then helps them to go to sleep by following a routine which helps them to calm down. Each child has his own way of dealing with this moment. Many choose an object to keep near them, touch or rub on their face. The object represents an emotional bond and alleviates fears of separation.

Supervision is guaranteed, also through the collaboration of the auxiliary staff.

when the individual needs of each child are recognised

Gradually the adults get to know even the smallest nuances of the child's behaviour, so they know whether to approach or remain more distant and become aware of the everyday gestures dear to each child, in a climate of serenity.

The time of awakening is also gentle and the child is given time to come back peacefully into contact with reality. In schools where a room is not available for the afternoon rest, sometimes camp-beds or cushions are prepared in a "protected area" or a relaxing activity is proposed to alleviate tiredness. Children lie down and listen to music, perhaps "snoozing" for a moment in order to recover their energy.



"When I wake up I join my friends who were already more awake."

Paul





...such as staying at school longer for those extra hours which represent a special time

The school day is seven hours long

Nursery schools have a school day lasting seven hours, the opening and closing times being established annually by the school's Management Committee, bearing in mind the needs of families. Possible opening times go from 8.00 to 15.00 or from 8.30 to 15.30 or even from 9.00 to 16.00

but can be extended to up to ten hours

Extended opening for nursery school is a response to the social and working needs of families and has led to opening times being extended to up to 10 hours a day. Extending opening may concern both the morning, anticipating the opening time, and the afternoon, with late closing.

according to the requests presented by the families

Each academic year the provincial government establishes the amount contributed by families for the extra hours, and the minimum number of children required to activate extended hours in each school. Every school organises its timetable on the basis of the hours requested for prolonged opening and enrolment for the programme. Staff for extended opening are allocated in the "Annual Nursery School Programme" prepared by the Autonomous Province of Trento on the basis of opening hours and the number of children enrolled for the different time slots.

These are special times of day

This period is different from the normal school day, but certainly of equal value in educational terms. For many children it represents the beginning and end of the day and therefore

brings with it dynamics linked to separation from family members and reunification with them after several hours.

when children's needs are different as compared to other times

In the morning those arriving first at school find a quieter environment, which is not yet "on the move", when games can be started up with the few friends present. However, soon all the other children start to arrive, gradually joining in. Later in the afternoon, on the other hand, the children who stay longer slow down the pace and participate in activities specially designed for the end of the school day. They also have the chance for a much closer relationship with the adult.

Thus the activities are designed appropriately

New groups are created and sometimes new spaces are used, spaces which become other places to belong to, where one can leave and rediscover a record of the programmes followed and perhaps some different games. Emotional relationships acquire even more importance and the content of the "work" responds to children's needs, with appealing and diversified activities.

often linked to those in the morning, but without forcing

Dedicating time to conversation and recounting the day's experiences is also an important way of consolidating the knowledge already gained by children and providing a sense of continuity, but without any anxiety linked to compulsion. Indeed, learning does not take place through the accumulation of experience, but rather through opportunities that make it possible to reorganise this knowledge.

or different, in order to have a project "just for us"

Doing different things does not mean losing the relationship with other times during the day, because continuity comes above all from the educational style of the school, the attitudes and the type of requests made to children.

The day is also made up of different moments which take on their own special significance and thus the activities may also begin and end for their own reasons: a certain story, experimentation with materials, a project on a theme etc.

which it is satisfying to present to others

It is particularly satisfying to be able to show something to one's companions in the morning, explaining a new game or song to them, telling a story which has come from an illustrated book etc. Just as happens in the family, where the family members recount their comings and goings, at school there is also a thread drawing things together and making children feel that they belong to the same community.



"When there are fewer of us I wait less and rock longer!"

Martina





...all this and much more within the broader context of the Trentino provincial nursery school system

A summary of tasks and objectives

Provincial Law no. 13 - 21 March 1977 and subsequent amendments

Law no. 13 of 1977, with subsequent amendments, is the law regulating nursery schools in Trentino. Among the educational objectives it includes "the full development of the child's personality, within an overall education system which allows effective equality of educational opportunities, overcoming social, cultural and environmental conditioning, in order to ensure that each person effectively obtains the right to study and the creation of a common basic culture which overcomes any kind of discrimination in concrete terms".

The "Guidelines on the educational activities of nursery schools"

The "Guidelines on the educational activities of nursery schools" represent a programme document adopted with the Decree of the President of the Provincial Government no. 5-19/ Leg. of 15 March 1995, which recognises that nursery schools have an important educational role:

present the educational roles of schools

ensuring the development of individual potential:
all children must be able to develop their abilities and cognitive, relational, emotional, expressive and social skills and it is the school's job to remove any difficulties, creating an environment in which this can take place; supporting dialogue and promoting the exchange of ideas with other systems, with different religious beliefs and with new expressions of meaning; increasing

commitment and responsibility and developing ethical values such as solidarity, cooperation, a sense of responsibility, voluntary commitment, understanding and acceptance of others and of diversity;

promoting the exploitation of diversity and of identity and socio-cultural differences, as a sign of the plurality with which these values can be interpreted and experienced in different social groups. The identity of linguistic groups and of local and foreign cultures is supported through specially designed and structured programmes.

The law and the Guidelines

Law 13 and the Guidelines define the specific roles of nursery schools, which are included within the broader educational panorama and not considered as a preparatory step for primary school or a substitute for the family. They are rather intended to “enhance the child’s fulfilment and the unity and integrity of his personality, promoting a process which is intentionally aimed at the acquisition of identity and autonomy”.

establish the idea of the child as active and capable

From an early age the child, who is recognised to have a background of experience and emotions, is considered capable of interpreting reality and explaining things.

Doing things together with adults gives a sense to the experiences gained and helps him to gain skills, encouraging the development of his identity and abilities.

and the importance of collaboration with the family

Education involves the family as the primary place of growth and development, above all due to the specific nature of formative relationships. The indispensable collaboration of parents and close adults ensures two-way dialogue between the school and the children’s family environment.



Organisation

The school schedule	Nursery schools are open for not less than 10 months a year, 5 days a week, for a maximum of 10 hours a day.
Internal structure	Schools are organised into sections, which are normally made up of 25 children and not less than 15. During the day there are also activities involving children from different sections, according to age groups or for workshops, games, experiments and complex activities.
The staff at the school	<p>There are two teachers per section, but in cases when the school is open for more than 7 hours a day further staff are assigned for the number of daily hours necessary and for the period in which the extension to the usual hours is effective.</p> <p>Non-teaching staff – the cook and auxiliary staff – have important tasks inside the school linked to the functioning of the canteen, cleaning and transport services, assistance during the arrival and departure of children, care of individual and collective hygiene and care of the spaces and furnishings. These are staff developing affectionate relationships with the children, meeting them at various times during the day and who sometimes participate in educational activities and other initiatives.</p>
The canteen service	The children have lunch at school. Each year the provincial government establishes the charges for providing this service to families.
The rights of children with special needs or with problems	Disabled children are integrated within nursery schools, which may be provided with additional teachers in order to encourage the participation of such children in activities or in other personalised programmes targeted at those with special needs.

Representative organs

The Management Committee (Art. 11, 12 L.P. no. 13/77) is made up of

At each nursery school a **Management Committee** is set up, made up of representatives of all those involved, both inside and outside the school:

- teaching staff
- one representative of the non-teaching staff
- two representatives of the Municipality where the school is located
- a number of parent representatives equal to the number of other members.



Its tasks

The Management Committee defines the orientation of educational activities, makes any adjustments necessary to comply with the needs of the community in order to best achieve the general objectives established by Law 13 and makes proposals to Staff Committee. It supervises the operation of the canteen service, decides on hours, the calendar and enrolment, according to the provisions of provincial regulations, and makes proposals in the fields indicated by the law.

The Staff Committee (Art. 15 L.P. n. 13/77) is made up of

All the staff, including teachers and auxiliary personnel working in the nursery school make up the **Staff Committee**.

Its tasks

It has the role of organising the activities of the school and the personnel and dealing with relations with parents. It deals with the planning of educational activities and adopts all appropriate measures for exchanging information.

The Assembly of Parents (Art. 16 L.P. n. 13/77) is made up of

The mothers and fathers of the children attending a nursery school make up an organ described as the **Assembly of Parents**. The Chairperson of the Assembly is a parent, who is elected at the first meeting, remaining in office for one year and calling an Assembly at the school any time he or she believes this to be appropriate.

Its tasks

The Assembly of Parents makes proposals to the Management Committee and the Staff Committee, in relation to their respective roles, particularly with regard to educational activities.

The Board of Teachers (Art. 59, 60 L.P. no. 13/77) is made up of

Temporary and permanent teachers, such as replacement teachers for example, make up the **Board of Teachers**, which is chaired by the Educational Coordinator.

Its tasks

The Board of Teachers is responsible for defining schedules and the criteria for educational activities and evaluating progress, general criteria for distributing the hours of teaching staff and the running of the school's activities, including methods for integration and prevention, extending opening hours and initiatives linking the school to other institutions. It has the task of making proposals as regards the forming of sections and decisions regarding equipment, teaching materials and toys. It makes proposals to the relevant departments as regards the training of staff, refresher training for teachers in the Coordination Group and initiatives regarding methodological experimentation and educational research. It programmes all the annual non-teaching activities linked to the running of the school.

Structure

Departments Two provincial departments have jurisdiction as regards nursery schools: the **Nursery School, Education and Vocational Training Department**, which deals mainly with programmes and management; the **Department of Development and Innovation of the Education and Training System**, which deals in particular with educational promotion activities, teacher training, research, innovation and experimentation and general educational coordination.

The figures of reference in the Departments Education Department
Department of Development and Innovation of the Education and Training System
Director General
Marco Tomasi
Director of the General Education Coordination Office
Miriam Pintarelli
Manager of the Nursery School, Education and Vocational Training Department
Roberto Ceccato
Director of the Child Services Office
Emanuela Maino

Coordination Groups Provincial nursery schools are grouped into 12 **Coordination Groups** within the province and each Group has an Educational Coordinator. Furthermore, a provincial Coordination Group for Ladin Nursery Schools has been set up for Ladin schools.

The Educational Coordinator The role of the **Educational Coordinator** is to provide educational-teaching consultancy to the school and to deal with the application of legal and administrative regulations, taking all the necessary measures, also in emergencies, to ensure the functioning and safety of schools.

The Municipalities

The **Municipalities** provide buildings with spaces suitable for nursery schools, see to the supplying of equipment, furnishings and toys and to maintenance and renewal. Using funding from the province they see to the hiring of non-teaching staff, organisation of the canteen service and the educational and administrative functioning of the school.



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Notes on my child's nursery school

Names and numbers close to hand

Name of the school _____

Address _____

Telephone number _____

Fax number _____

Number of children
enrolled _____

Number of sections _____

Opening times _____

Exit time for children _____

Educational coordinator _____

Telephone number _____

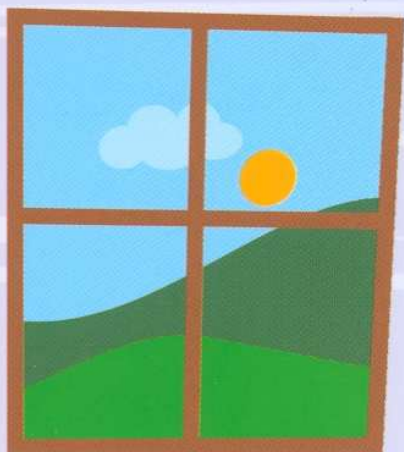
My child's teachers _____

Supporting kitchen staff
and auxiliary sta _____

Chairperson of the
Management Committee _____

Chairperson of the
Parents Assembly _____





F.I.O.R.E.
FAMIGLIA, INFANZIA,
ORIENTAMENTI,
RIFLESSIONI EDUCATIVE