

IMS MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM

The Montessori Elementary Curriculum is a pioneering and preeminent constructivist educational approach. The International Baccalaureate Elementary Years Programme (IB PYP) and many other leading education systems around the world are similarly rooted in constructivism. The constructivist approach is student-centred, integrated, and encourages student-led inquiry to occur, allowing for learners to construct their own learning through building on prior experience and knowledge. By learning in this way, students are able to connect their understandings to real life contexts, leading to deeper understandings and engagement with learning. The aim is to make learning real and to inspire a love of learning in our students.

Elementary aged children have reached the Age of Reason, and are now ready to be helped to think for themselves. They are now far more interested in social interactions and, as a result, the programme at this level is designed to provide new experiences and challenges, such as keeping track of his/her own work in the Montessori class, having specialist lessons of art, music, PE and IT, plus the small group lessons in Chinese. Aside from this, we have the Junior IMS CAS (Community, Action, Service) programme for Upper Elementary children. The programme emphasizes experiential learning and involves the students in new roles to learn new skills and helps them to become aware of their role in society.

Many of the activities in the Elementary classroom will require your child to take more responsibility for their learning. To support this, we encourage you to continue helping your child develop independence at home as well. We can give you some hints on this if needed.

Please note that the first few months of the child's Lower Elementary Montessori experience will be focused on the Great Lessons, introducing them to the extensions of these introductory lessons from an academic standpoint, and on aiding the child to transition into a more responsible Elementary school child, with new roles and responsibilities.

If you have any questions or concerns at any time, please contact your child's teacher directly, who will be able to advise you. We will work with you to resolve any situation in a supportive manner. Communication is critical to your child's development, and your child's new teachers need to have your support and understanding to best help your child, and vice versa. Please let us know how we can help you understand the purpose of the activities in which your child is participating. The Montessori Curriculum often has an indirect benefit that is necessarily intuitively obvious to a parent. Our ultimate goal is to help your child to work independently, take on greater levels of responsibility, to be a confident and happy participant in a world he/she is beginning to understand better each day, and to grow into a person who makes a difference in his/her small community in preparation for the future.

We have prepared some general information for your reference, which are enclosed as separate documents:

- **The Montessori Elementary Curriculum Overview** – The Montessori curriculum is based on scientific research, and has over 100 years of proven success. This summary reviews how the extensive Montessori curriculum uses Great Lessons to spark the student’s imagination and inspire interest and investigation of the Universe, starting with the Story of the Formation of the Universe (an introduction to Geography, Astronomy, Chemistry, Physics), then the Story of the Coming of Life (introducing Biology), then the Story of the Coming of Humans, the Story of Communication in Signs (Art, Drama and Written language) and finally the Story of Numbers (which introduces Geometry and Mathematics). All of these stories are told with questions, leading to the student’s own answers and additional investigation. The Montessori curriculum for the Elementary Years is an integrated, cohesive and interrelated curriculum, introduced in three year cycles through small group lessons.
- **The IMS Elementary Chinese Curriculum** – A detailed review of the Chinese Elementary Years Programme at IMS is attached for your reference. This summarizes how Chinese is taught in the Dual-Language classrooms at IMS, and extended in different streams for the native/near-native speaker or the second language learner in small group lessons.

In both streams the children are learning all aspects of the Chinese language: speaking, listening, reading and writing (in traditional characters), but the emphasis is on communicative skills for Stream 2. This approach allows native speakers in Stream 1 to broaden their vocabulary and compositional skills to complement their speaking ability, and children in Stream 2 to have extensive practice in speaking and listening, giving them confidence in the Chinese language. Daily homework and reading assignments are given and we ask parents to support your child’s efforts at home to complete and return these assignments.

In order to support the widening needs of the Elementary child, the structure of the school day changes compared to that of Casa dei Bambini. As an integrated, interdisciplinary curriculum, your child may be learning about the music of a particular country or period in history while they are also learning about the same country or period within their classroom programme and the work of a particular artist or style unique to that country. They may be learning about health and nutrition in the classroom while also learning about the importance of daily exercise in their PE classes. Motivation is a key to learning, and is an important part of the teacher’s objective to determine how to interest the students.

At IMS, we have high quality librarians and single-subject teachers who provide additional support and extend the availability of research materials, technology, art and music to the students in their work. Both single subject and classroom Montessori teachers plan and teach collaboratively to allow the children to make connections across all subject areas both inside and outside of the work cycle. This will be new for your child, as will be the freedom to explore these areas within limits, as the children move from the classroom to the art room, or music room, the hall, or sports grounds.

Our single-subject areas are:

Music - In addition to the music that is an integral part of the Montessori curriculum, students are introduced to various instruments, music genres, composers/artists and also some essential music theory.

Art - The beauty and importance of Art is closely integrated into the Montessori Curriculum, such as when decorating work, designing projects and making realistic models for the purpose of science or geography. Students visit the Art room formally once a week for a lesson that focuses on specific techniques, exposure to different mediums and the introduction to various artists and styles.

Information Technology (IT) - Information Technology is playing a larger and larger role in the lives of all students. It is our philosophy that IT should enhance learning and teaching in our classrooms, therefore, wherever possible, the IT teacher integrates IT teaching into the classroom and the library.

Physical Education - Once a week, each class has a PE class where the children develop their sports skills. Children are required to wear FULL PE uniforms, hats, and supportive sports trainers on this day as noted in the class calendar. In addition, the classes each have 30 minutes Active Lunch where they put into practice the skills learned in the PE class. They are not required to wear PE uniforms on these days but need to wear hats and supportive sports trainers.

In addition to these lessons, children from both the Lower and Upper Elementary classes are encouraged to work towards being part of one of the many teams that participate in intra-school and inter-school matches. These games take place in football, basketball, hockey and other sports.

Your child will also find these other aspects different to that of the Casa dei Bambini:

Library: The Elementary Library is an integral part of a Montessori Elementary Curriculum. The Library can be accessed at any time when needed and becomes another tool for the Elementary student to facilitate and enrich their learning.

Nature is an important part of the Montessori curriculum, and the herb, vegetable and flower gardens on the campus are an integral part of the children's daily life as they learn to plant seeds, care for seedlings and harvest and use some of the herbs and vegetables in cooking projects.

Going Out is also an important part of the Elementary curriculum. These activities are relevant to a small group of children who are exploring an area of research in the classroom, who then plan an outing to investigate this subject area in the world around. As the child gets older, the level of responsibility for planning and arranging the activity - from permission slips to transportation considerations - increases. Going out is different to Field Trips, which are whole-class oriented, and managed by the teachers rather than by the students. Don't be surprised to get a letter home from a group of students requesting your help in chaperoning a Going Out activity!