

2022-2023 Edition

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IMS

ORIENTATION BOOKLET

TRANSITION
FROM CASA DEI BAMBINI TO
MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY
YEARS 2022 – 2023

A HONG KONG REGISTERED CHARITY

WELCOME TO IMS' MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY PROGRAMME!

Dear Parents,

We are looking forward to welcoming your child to the Montessori Elementary Years programme in the upcoming term. What follows are a few tips to help your child transition from the Casa dei Bambini to “big school” more successfully.

For a younger child, please remember that it is a big transition for any child to move from “Kindergarten” to “Primary School” and that we don't expect that this transition will be easy for every child. Most children will eagerly await this transition, but many will find the added level of responsibility, and the new advent of homework a challenge that will take some time. We will be closely working with your child during the transition week to smooth this process and make it easier.

You have heard a lot in the last few months as you have begun preparing for the transition regarding how the Montessori Elementary Years classes work at IMS, and how they are very different to the Montessori Casa dei Bambini classes (and to more traditional kindergartens as well). The “Age of Reason” is a very real and important change that occurs in the mind of the child around the age of six, which transforms the child, his or her way of thinking, and every aspect of the child's learning and development. The Montessori classroom environment therefore changes with them. Your young child of the Casa dei Bambini years is replaced by an independent child with social questions which the Elementary Years classroom seeks to help them address.

Please read these documents carefully, and discuss them with your child. You may find the attachments helpful to post in a convenient point for you and other family members to reference in the coming months as we work together to help you and your child settle into the new Elementary class! There are many books regarding child development and Montessori available from bookstores as well as in our elementary library – where we hope you will be a frequent visitor and volunteer. The more you know about Montessori at the Elementary level, the more you can support your child's development as they move forward.

IMS' MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM

The Montessori Elementary Curriculum uses a Constructivist educational approach, as does the International Baccalaureate Elementary Years Programme (IB PYP) and many other leading education systems in the world. This means that it 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 develop 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.

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. 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 formerly 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 experience.

- **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!

TRACKING OF PROGRESS

The focus of a Montessori teacher is to introduce the subject matter through small group lessons, and then assist the children to organise their own work in the classroom. Initially this is very much teacher directed; however, as the child exhibits more self-direction and becomes more familiar with the classroom, the child is encouraged to take more responsibility for his/her own choices and for the recording their work.

Each Elementary child keeps a record of their own daily activities in the classroom in their Work Diary and their small group Chinese lesson work in their Chinese Work Journal. The Work Diary is a central part of how a child maintains a running record of what they have been doing during the daily work cycle. These are then reviewed by the teacher who, if necessary, will then discuss with the child to help create a balanced programme of learning activities. Parents are asked to read and sign the Work Diary with their child when it comes home. In this way, it ensures that every child:

- Is accountable for using their time wisely;
- Develops strong time management skills;
- Has a sense of ownership of their learning day.

The teacher has a regular meeting with each child to review the progress of work, learning, and to agree what lessons and work the child should plan to cover next. Teachers will encourage the child to be reflective regarding work quality, time management and social interactions over the week, and will guide the child to begin to establish challenging new goals. (Parents may also wish to do this with their child).

Class Meetings: the Elementary class meets each week to discuss items of importance to the students. The group decides classroom agreements, responsibilities, works through ideas for activities and also discusses issues between students, as guided by the Classroom Teacher. This is an important point of connection for the students as it helps them feel more involved in their classroom community and encourages development of strong social skills.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD AT HOME

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. Elementary age children can make their own bed, help with setting and clearing the table, and be responsible for other meaningful contributions to life at home.

Homework in the traditional sense is not typical in Montessori, however, the role of the home in the child's learning is critical, plus the learning of Chinese characters requires additional practice at home. Homework is a new concept in Elementary School, and your support in helping keep your child interested and motivated is critical.

There are many things you can do at home to support your child's learning:

- **Projects** – visit the library, cook, create a home/balcony garden, play sports and explore other extensions of learning together as a family.
- **Reinforcement of basic number facts**
- **English Reading Homework:**
 - **The joy of reading:** Read to your child at his or her listening comprehension level (this increases vocabulary and extends use of language). This is critical to a child's success, and should be done on a regular basis each day. Pick a book you both will enjoy!

- o **Practice Reading:** Your child should read at his/her technical competency level (which will be lower than his/her comprehension level) to solidify reading skills. (about 30 minutes daily)
- **Chinese Homework** (20-30 minutes). Your child is also assigned about 20 minutes of Chinese homework every evening, which should be written (by your child) in their Chinese Work Journal. This will be reviewed the next day and your child will receive feedback from the teacher if necessary. You can help by reinforcing and checking each evening that these items are recorded until your child gets more comfortable in doing so for himself or herself automatically. Some children find doing homework in the morning, when they are fresh, much more effective and less time consuming than after school.
 - o Please review the suggestions in the attached Chinese Curriculum Summary for more help.
 - o **Please note: Stream 1 students without Chinese at home should begin with 2 hours of tutoring support at home each week.**
 - o Parents may consider purchasing a Chinese Dictionary to assist the children to complete the Chinese Homework.

There is also a helpful book called: Organizing the Disorganized Child: Simple Strategies to Succeed in School by Martin L. Kutscher & Marcella Moran which may be helpful for the very young child.

The Montessori philosophy supports children learning at school. Please note, as the actual time in the Montessori environment is the key to your child's education, time away from the environment cannot be supplemented by homework, therefore we request that family holidays should only be scheduled during official school holidays.

STARTING SCHOOL

First days of School: The beginning of school should be an exciting event for each child. We recommend that you begin having your child wake up at the appropriate time for school in order to get used to the schedule, and have a good breakfast. Speak with your child about school, and all of the fun that the children will be having together when school starts.

Campus opening Time: The school building is open 15 minutes before the official start of class. Elementary children may play in the outdoor play areas under the supervision of IMS staff. Prior to this time, children must be under the direct supervision of parents until the child is dropped off at the school gate or front door and received by an IMS staff member. **Your child may not be left unattended in the school before or after school hours.** Please refer to the attached Campus Specific Logistics for details.

Student Arrivals: IMS Elementary children should be allowed to go directly to the classroom unaccompanied as part of their emerging responsibility. They can be dropped-off at the main gate, or at the school doors.

Students should arrive at school at least five minutes before the official class start time. **It is important that arrival time be carefully observed.** Your newly socially conscious child will be more embarrassed by late arrivals, as they can be disruptive. Further, it diminishes the important social rituals of greeting teachers and friends and any teacher-supervised free-play time before school starts on the playground. Parents can help the morning routine by encouraging your child to check their communication folders each day.

Please note that teachers are preparing classrooms in the morning, supervising students on the playground and welcoming students into the classroom. This time is **not** suited for quick chats with parents. Teachers are usually available for chats after school or via phone or email.

Late arrivals: The child must go to the G/F Reception to have his/her temperature taken and will be required to sign in for a late pass which will then be taken to their classroom teacher.

Bussing commences on the first day of school, new students attend school on this day without parents.

Extra Curricular Activities (ECA) generally begin in the first week of school. Please look out for details on the parent portal.

YOUR ELEMENTARY CHILD'S DAY (WHAT IS DIFFERENT FROM CASA DEI BAMBINI)

Snack: Children are encouraged to bring in their own **healthy snack** for snack time (please see guidelines in the Parent Handbook). Your child's snack should be packed separately from your child's lunch for easy access.

Lunch: Please prepare a healthy lunch for your child to bring to school. Elementary students are encouraged to participate in this activity by helping prepare their own lunch. If your child requires a hot lunch, please place it in a thermos flask. Reheating facilities are not available at school, and lunches cannot be brought into school during school hours. Please refer to the School Parent Handbook for recommended foods.

Communication Folders: Each child now has two zip folders – one English and one Chinese – in which your child places his/her Work Diary, homework and all communications and finished work. Your child is responsible to tell you of any additions to the folder, and you may want to ask your child in the first few months if there is any notes from the teacher or the school, and if you need to sign your child's Work Diary. Please tell your child if you put any communication items for your child's teacher or the school in this zip folder, and ask your child to be sure to give it to the teacher. You will probably find e-mail communication more effective, especially at the beginning.

Please note: this is a big difference from the Casa dei Bambini – administrators no longer check the folders each day, as this is the responsibility of the elementary student.

Also, please note our front desk administrative staff e-mail addresses if it is new. We ask that you e-mail them with any questions or urgent issues, and copy your teachers on any emails you send to the front desk to ensure we are all in the loop with any communication.

Parent Conferences: As in Casa dei Bambini, each year we hold parent conferences in November and April in order to give you the opportunity to discuss your child's progress. In Elementary, however, the conferences are done separately with the Montessori Teacher in the classroom, and the small group Chinese lesson teacher.

Birthday Celebrations: As your child is emerging into the social world, birthday celebrations are now done without parents. Your child may still want to share a snack with friends, and suggestions for appropriate

birthday snacks can be found in the Parent Handbook. Your class teachers will also send out a reminder communication shortly before your child's birthday giving you any special suggestions for the class.

Camp: an important element of social, physical and educational experiential learning begins in Elementary, with the Elementary Camp. This is progression as the children get older. The Camp experience starts as a day camp and moves into an overnight experience as the child gets older. The fee for Camp is invoiced separately in your first month.

Security Guard: IMS provides a full-time security guard who monitors the campus throughout the day. In addition, we have a campus Groundskeeper on duty full-time. The school has CCTV throughout the school building.

- **Visitors:** All Visitors must sign in with our Security Guard when entering the school, and display a "Visitor" badge at all times while on the campus.
- **Parent Volunteers/Meetings:** All parents must sign in with our Security Guard when entering the school, and display a "Parent Volunteer" badge at all times while on the campus. Parents who are on campus for specific volunteer activities in the mornings are requested to sign in, and send your child to class on his/her own, and use the designated access staircase(s) for Library or other areas. In order to ensure an uninterrupted school day and Montessori work cycle, and for the privacy of the other students, we request that parents do not use the classroom corridors during school hours, or visit your child's classroom unless at the request of the teacher.

Off Campus Security: When going outside of school premises, we require a ratio of no less than one adult to six children (1:6) for the Montessori Elementary Years Programme classes vs. 1:4 for Casa dei Bambini children. We will need parents / helpers to volunteer to accompany us on outings from time to time. Your class teachers or Class Parents will contact you, or you may volunteer directly with them if you would like to chaperone a particular activity.

Weather Warnings – School Closing: there are differences between the Casa dei Bambini child and the Elementary student with regard to when the school is closed due to weather warnings. Please see guidelines in the Parent Handbook, which we suggest you post in your kitchen for easy reference.

Bussing: All children attending the Elementary School are requested to take the bus in order to reduce congestion around the school. If you are not already on the bus, please request a bussing form. **NOTE: if you plan to bring your child to school or pick him/her up on any day, you must notify Castle Brothers AND the school administrative office at least one hour before the end of your child's day to ensure the bus does not wait for your child or that IMS does not put your child on the bus that day.**

WHAT IS THE SAME IN ELEMENTARY

Communication: During the first day of transition, your child's new teachers will provide you with their e-mail addresses, so that you can be in routine contact as needed. Each elementary class also has Class Parents, and we look for new class parents each year to work with one of the existing class parents from the year before. Please let your class teacher know if you are interested in helping in this way.

We faculty continue to send out general information regularly by e-mail and to the parent portal, so please keep us updated with your e-mail address and check your portal regularly. In addition, the school newsletter, Montessori Moments are either sent by e-mail, mail chimp, via hard copy, and/or posted to our website: www.ims.edu.hk, so **please check our website and your e-mail address regularly**. Each class continues to have a monthly calendar, which your child will bring home in his/her folder each month, listing

upcoming events and activities. This is an important document to post at home, as new events will be copied to the class calendar.

Montessori Evenings: Teachers are scheduled to help you learn more about the Montessori Method and other topics of interest to families during the course of each term as indicated in the school calendar. You will have the opportunity to come in and see what the children are working on during the second term for an open house – where the children instruct parents in the learning objectives and how to use the materials. You will also be invited to observe in your child’s classroom and small group Chinese lesson as noted in the School Calendar.

Materials: To ensure children have what they need in the classroom throughout the year, IMS purchases and stocks the materials needed in the classes, including stationery, art supplies, music resources and the Chinese Language Pack (Stream 1 & 2 Textbooks, exercise books, work books, pin-yin book and listening CDs), which will assure your child is provided with all the materials for the entire academic year. This fee is invoiced in your first month.

Child Collection Security: If you wish to have a non-parent caregiver collect your child, please call the school and provide the person’s full name, and ask that person to bring a photo ID to show the school (This is only necessary the first time). If the person collecting your child is not recognized by IMS staff, we will call the emergency number which you have provided to verify the identity of the person attempting to collect your child. **Any alternative afternoon pick-up arrangements must be confirmed by the child’s parent with the front office at least one hour prior to the normal end of school for your child.**

Child’s Property: We cannot take any responsibility for the loss of or damage to a student’s property. Please clearly label each item of your child’s property with your child’s name or initials.

Fire Drills: A fire drill is held once each term in order to familiarize the children and staff with the exit routes, and to ensure maximum safety in the event of an emergency. Parents should familiarize themselves with the appropriate exit routes in order to be able to help. Parents who are in the school when the fire alarm sounds must participate in the evacuation of the building according to the fire drill procedure.

Travel: If both parents plan to travel outside of Hong Kong at the same time, please notify the school, using the Travel Form, of the contact details of an appropriate Guardian, and the duration of your trip. The guardian cannot be the family’s helper or nanny, and IMS must have a signed letter that in the case of emergency, that this Guardian has the right to make emergency decisions regarding your child.

Illness: If your child is ill, please do not have them attend school. If your child has a fever (above 99.5°F / 37.5°C), is vomiting or has diarrhea, or has a contagious rash or other infection, a parent will be called to collect the child from school. If necessary, an IMS staff-member will bring your child to the nearest hospital, while attempting to contact the parents / guardian.

Uniforms: We are a little stricter at the Elementary level about uniform. **Please ensure that your child has on the full uniform including backpack and hat.**

Children need the large size backpack for durability and size in order to accommodate folders and the Chinese Homework.

When children are outdoors they must be wearing a hat during school hours. (IMS’ “Get hat, Go play!” policy). Please reference the Parent Handbook for the full school uniform details.

OTHER WAYS YOU CAN HELP IN ELEMENTARY

We are all looking forward to working with you in pursuit of a well-rounded education for your child. As you know, we encourage parents to get involved in making IMS a wonderful environment for your child. After your child has settled in, we encourage you to participate more actively in the life of the Elementary school.

In Elementary, as in Casa dei Bambini, we have classroom parents to support the teachers in each of our classes, and they may be asking for your help as needed in your child's classroom. Each year we encourage the parent of a new child to join an existing class parent in helping in the class. **Please let us know if you would like to volunteer to be a new Class Parent.** A number of parents have already offered to help – thank you!

Elementary teachers need your involvement. Perhaps you can share a skill (knitting, sewing, a particular crafts, etc.) or you can liaise with the teacher to talk to a group of children about your business. You can also consider helping to read with new readers, volunteering in the library, or in the Campus garden, or helping support Going Out activities and field trips, or becoming more actively involved in the PTA.

The PTA can always use help with the PTA newsletter and Memory Book and many other areas - ideas for making more of IMS for your child are welcome! The Parents Teacher Association Committee meets each month – usually the second Tuesday of the month. This is a great place to meet other families, support the teachers & staff, and learn what you can do to make this an ever greater community. If you would like to get more actively involved in the PTA, please let the PTA know – pta@ims.edu.hk.

Elementary may be different for parents and children, however there are still many ways to get involved!

Your child's education is very important, and the Montessori programme offers so many exciting possibilities! Our ultimate goal is to help your child to gain self-direction and the inspiration for life-long learning. We look forward to working closely with you in the coming years!