



INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF
FLORENCE

**PRIMARY YEARS
PROGRAMME**
GRADES 1 TO 5



GRADES 1-5

AT ISF

In Grades 1 through 5 at the International School of Florence, we turn natural curiosity into a lifelong habit of inquiry. These five years are defined by students taking ownership of their learning, moving from foundational skills to complex global thinking within a community that values their voice.

Our primary program is led by a dedicated team of international educators who specialize in guiding young learners through these transformative years within a warm, inclusive, and intellectually stimulating environment. To ensure a high level of support and meaningful interaction and to foster deep connections between teachers and students, we maintain small class sizes. Each class is led by a primary teacher, supported by a network of subject specialists who collaborate to meet the diverse needs of our growing learners.

As an IB World School, our curriculum for Grades 1–5 is rooted in the Primary Years Programme (PYP). This framework is designed to be:
Child-Centered & Developmental: We honor the unique pace of each child's growth, moving from the play-based inquiry of the early years to the sophisticated, research-based projects of Grade 5.

Inquiry-Based: We encourage students to follow their curiosity, using their own experiences to make sense of the world.

Empowering: Our students are not just learners; they are active participants. By Grade 5, this culminates in the PYP Exhibition, where students take full agency over a collaborative research project that addresses real-world issues.

Stefania Terrell, PYP Coordinator



LEARNER PROFILE

As the IB Mission in action, the LEARNER PROFILE remains central to all IB programmes. The whole learning community plays an important part in developing, valuing, appreciating, monitoring and demonstrating the learner profile in action.

The ten aspirational qualities of the learner profile inspire and motivate the work of teachers, students and schools, providing a statement of the aims and values of the IB and a definition of what we mean by “international-mindedness”.





**Inquirers
Knowledgeable
Principled
Open-minded
Caring**

**Balanced
Reflective
Communicator
Thinker
Courageous**

Students have a range of opportunities to develop and demonstrate attributes of the learner profile in the daily life of our learning community:

- as part of the school curriculum through the transdisciplinary units of inquiry and through subject-specific investigations;
- through interactions in a variety of learning spaces (in the library, music room, makerspace through social interactions, break and lunch, sport, after school activities, field trips, etc.);
- through school events such as assemblies and sports days;
- at home and in the wider community through interactions with family and friends.

INQUIRY

“Inquiry-based learning is about empowering students to take ownership of their learning by asking big questions, exploring their passions, and engaging in meaningful work that connects to their world.”

Trevor MacKenzie



Inquiry-based learning in the Primary Years Programme is about empowering students to take ownership of their learning by engaging with the five essential elements: knowledge, concepts, approaches to learning (skills), learner profile attributes, and action.

Through structured and guided inquiry, students explore significant transdisciplinary themes that connect to real-world issues and their personal experiences. This approach ensures that learning is not only relevant and significant but also globally minded, as students investigate interconnected ideas across subject areas while addressing human commonalities.

Teachers at ISF encourage inquiry-based learning by creating an environment that nurtures curiosity, critical thinking, and active engagement. They leverage the five essential elements of the PYP to design learning experiences that are transdisciplinary, student-centered, and globally minded. Here are some strategies they use:

- **Designing Provocations to Spark Inquiry**

Teachers use thought-provoking questions, scenarios, or resources to ignite students' curiosity and prompt them to ask meaningful questions.

- **Facilitating Conceptual Understanding**

Teachers guide students to explore key concepts such as function, perspective, and responsibility through units of inquiry. By framing learning around these broad concepts, they help students think critically and deeply.

- **Encouraging Student Agency**

PYP teachers empower students by giving them voice, choice, and ownership in their learning. They involve students in co-constructing questions for inquiry and allow them to select topics or methods of exploration that align with their interests.

- **Developing Approaches to Learning (AtL) Skills**

Teachers explicitly teach and model the AtL skills: thinking, communication, research, self-management, and social skills, so that students can effectively engage in the inquiry process.

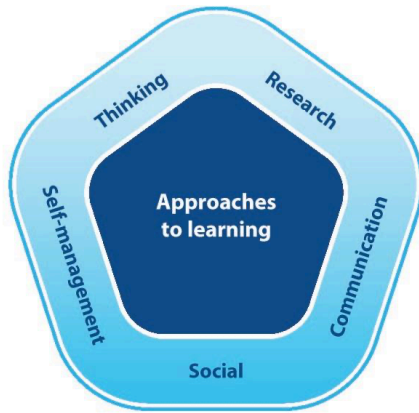
- **Promoting Reflection and Action**

Reflection is integral to the PYP inquiry cycle. Teachers encourage students to reflect on their learning by asking questions like: "What have I learned? How has my thinking changed? What action can I take based on my understanding?"

- **Integrating Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning opportunities like field trips, experiments, or hands-on projects allow students to immerse themselves in real-world contexts.

APPROACHES TO LEARNING



Learning in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) is based on ‘approaches to learning’ skills (ATLs). These skills aim to support children of all ages to become learners who know how to ask good questions, set effective goals, and pursue their aspirations with the determination to achieve them.



central features of learning

G1-5 PROGRAMME OF INQUIRY

A transdisciplinary program of inquiry provides students with a comprehensive learning experience that is broad, balanced, conceptual, and interconnected. It aims to offer students a mix of subject-specific knowledge, conceptual understandings, skills, opportunities to develop the IB learner profile attributes, and to take action.

The six transdisciplinary themes capture human commonalities that are significant and relevant regardless of where students are in the world and to which ethnic or cultural groups they belong.

The Programme of Inquiry is a dynamic framework that evolves alongside our students; it is intentionally designed to remain responsive to new global contexts and the shifting interests of the learners, ensuring that the curriculum remains as relevant as it is rigorous.

*TRANSDISCIPLINARY THEMES						
	Who We Are	How We Express Ourselves	How The World Works	How We Organise Ourselves	Where We Are in Place and Time	Sharing the Planet
GRADE 1	Understanding your emotions can help you maintain positive relationships.	Inspiration from different sources can spark creativity.	Investigating properties and attributes leads to new understandings and connections.	In a supportive community, members work together to make it thrive.	Knowing about the past helps us to understand the present better.	Living things are affected by and adapt to changes in the natural world.
GRADE 2	Homes reflect personal and cultural identities.	Sound and movement are forms of expression around the world.	Earth materials have different properties which provide many of the resources humans use.	Money plays an important role as a system of exchanges in the world.	Our city and its surroundings are distinctive and unique.	People interact with, use and value the natural environment in different ways.
GRADE 3	The human body has various systems that are connected and dependent on each other.	Traditions and celebrations have commonalities across cultures.	Energy can be transformed and used to support human needs and progress..	Maps enhance our understanding of spatial relationships.	Discoveries about our origins help us understand where we are in time.	People interact with, use and value plants in different ways.

GRADE 4	People's experiences and the choices they make can affect their wellbeing and sense of self	The arts can entertain, provoke and teach.	Powerful geological forces continually reshape the Earth, requiring life to adapt and innovate.	Trading systems evolve over time	By investigating ancient civilizations we can find evidence of their influence on the modern world.	Biodiversity relies on the interdependent balance of organisms within an ecosystem.
GRADE 5	Human migration is a response to challenges, risks and opportunities.	PYP Exhibition	Human curiosity drives innovation and discovery about space	The evolution of power structures from ancient times to the present influences the rights and responsibilities of the individual.	Throughout history, humans have improved engineering solutions by building on the knowledge of others	The diverse forms of water on Earth and its impact on humans and the landscape.

**This is our Programme of Inquiry for the 2025-26 academic year.*

WHOLE SCHOOL SHARED INQUIRY

In addition to the six units of inquiry above, each grade engages in a shared inquiry at the beginning of the year under the transdisciplinary theme ‘Who We Are’ with the following central idea:

We can all help to make school a safe and healthy place to learn

OUTDOOR SPACES

At the International School of Florence, our campus is an extension of the classroom. We believe that movement, fresh air, and a direct connection to nature are essential for a child's holistic development. Our students have frequent opportunities to immerse themselves in our unique settings, which include multiple playgrounds, a dedicated didactic garden, and our olive grove.

Our diverse outdoor spaces are not just for breaks; they are vital environments for developing the IB Approaches to Learning (ATL). In these settings, students explicitly practice:

- **Social Skills:** Collaborating on team challenges and navigating shared spaces.
- **Self-Management:** Assessing risks during play and practicing mindfulness in nature.
- **Research Skills:** Observing and recording data in a "living" classroom.





ENGAGING WITH NUMERACY

Mathematics provides a powerful, universal language for describing and analyzing the world around us. It is intentionally taught in relevant, real-life contexts so students develop conceptual understanding across the five strands: Number, Pattern and Function, Shape and Space, Measurement, and Data Handling.

Our approach emphasizes active, problem-based learning where student thinking is the central focus. Students are encouraged to develop their own mathematical ideas and strategies, using concrete manipulatives and hands-on activities to build understanding. A central component is mathematical discourse, where students share, justify, and reflect on their processes and solutions - this strengthens both conceptual depth and procedural fluency.



ENGAGING WITH LITERACY

At the International School of Florence, we cultivate lifelong readers and skilled communicators through the **Reader's** and **Writer's Workshop** model. We view literacy not merely as a set of isolated skills, but as a tool for inquiry and self-expression that grows in complexity as students move from Grade 1 through Grade 5.

Our workshop framework ensures that all students receive a balance of explicit, systematic instruction and immersive practice. In the lower primary years (Grades 1 and 2), we place a strong emphasis on building a linguistic "toolkit" through foundational phonics training, focusing on the decoding and encoding skills necessary for fluency and accuracy.

As students progress into upper primary (Grades 3–5), the workshop naturally evolves from the "joy of the story" and narrative basics to deep comprehension, literary analysis, and sophisticated writing. Throughout the journey, the workshop model remains the constant, providing a predictable structure where:

- **Explicit Modeling:** Teachers provide targeted lessons on the strategies used by proficient readers and writers.
- **Student Agency:** Children are given extended time to work at their own level, exercising choice in their texts and topics to build genuine engagement and "stamina."
- **Differentiated Support:** Through one-on-one conferencing and small-group work, educators provide personalized coaching that connects literacy skills back to the real-world contexts found in our Units of Inquiry.



SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

Our commitment to student well-being is supported by the explicit teaching of the Second Step SEL Programme. This evidence-based curriculum provides students with essential skills for self-management, responsible decision-making, and relationship building. The program focuses on teaching four key areas: Empathy and Compassion, Emotion Management, Problem Solving, and Goal Setting. By systematically fostering these social and emotional competencies, we aim to build a positive school climate where students are equipped to understand their own feelings, navigate social challenges, and grow into successful, contributing members of their community.



INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is treated as a powerful lens for inquiry. Following the IB PYP ICT framework, we move beyond teaching students how to use tools; we empower them to become responsible digital citizens, computational thinkers, and innovative creators.

CODING & ROBOTICS

From Grade 1 through Grade 5, students develop a progressive understanding of logic and sequencing by bringing code to life in the physical world. Our curriculum moves from foundational block-based coding to more complex syntax, using robotics to make abstract concepts tangible.

A cornerstone of this journey is our participation in the FIRST Lego League (FLL). This global program challenges students to apply engineering principles to real-world missions, requiring them to research innovative solutions and work collaboratively.



THE PYP EXHIBITION

The PYP exhibition serves as the culminating collaborative experience in the final year of the IB Primary Years Programme. It requires students to engage in a collaborative, transdisciplinary inquiry process that involves identifying, investigating, and offering solutions to real-life issues or opportunities. Under the guidance of teachers and mentors, students demonstrate agency by taking responsibility for their own learning and applying the approaches to learning (ATL) skills they have developed throughout the programme. The process concludes with a formal presentation where students share their inquiry and personal action with the school community, providing a comprehensive assessment of their ability to embody the IB learner profile attributes.



A TYPICAL DAY AT THE JS



8.30	Morning Meeting and Classroom Learning
9.00	Phonics and Writer's Workshop
10.00	Snack and Outdoor Play
10.30	Maths / Reader's Workshop
11.00	Lunch and Outdoor Play
12.50	Unit of Inquiry
13.50	Italian/ Specialist Classes (PE, Music, ICT, Art, Library, Italian)
15.20	Goodbyes and Home Time



The IB develops inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through education that builds intercultural understanding and respect.



Our Values

RESILIENCE RESPECT
RELATIONSHIPS
RESPONSIBILITY



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