



## **SERVICE CHARTER**

# **NURSERY KINDERGARTEN**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Service Charter for the **EARLY YEARS** at Andersen International School outlines the core principles and guarantees offered to the children attending our services and to their families. This document represents an agreement between our Institution and its users, through which the school declares the aims, characteristics, organizational and pedagogical approaches, and the delivery methods of the service. This Charter is fundamentally inspired by Articles 3, 33, and 34 of the Italian Constitution, as well as by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is valid for multiple years and is periodically reviewed and updated.

Our Service Charter is inspired by the following principles:

- **IMPARTIALITY**
- **CONTINUITY**
- **RIGHT TO CHOOSE**
- **PARTICIPATION**
- **CLARITY AND TRANSPARENCY**
- **EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS**

The project is conceived not only as a statement of intent (from the Latin pro-jectare, meaning to anticipate what is yet to come), but also as a clear snapshot of the service at a specific point in time. The pedagogical project is a document that outlines the commitments between the educational institution and the methodological framework of the service. The pedagogical choices and goals are then connected to specific projects within the educational program.

## 2. PURPOSE OF THE SERVICE

*"The image we form of the child shapes our ideas about them, and it is on these ideas that we base our working hypotheses regarding early childhood."  
(Stern, The Interpersonal World of the Infant)*

Our daily work with children has as its fundamental goal the pursuit of well-being—both among the children themselves and in the adult–child relationship.

For a child, well-being means feeling welcomed, being in the mind and gaze of the educator, being able to relate confidently with peers and reference adults, having the opportunity to play alone or with others, to explore and experiment, but also to rest or enjoy solitude when needed.

The theoretical foundation of this educational approach begins with the image of the child as a "person in formation": an active child who learns every day from experience independently, through imitation of peers, and through the stimulation provided by adults.

The essential condition for children to experience the nursery as a place of growth lies in the emotional security provided by adults through attentive relationships, individual care, and a genuine interest in each child. Our educational staff is committed to building this relationship of listening, care, attention, and interest with every child and their family. The team of educators accompanies each child on their journey of discovery of themselves, the world, and the nursery environment.

The team of educators accompanies each child on their journey of self-discovery, exploration of the world, and engagement with the nursery environment by:

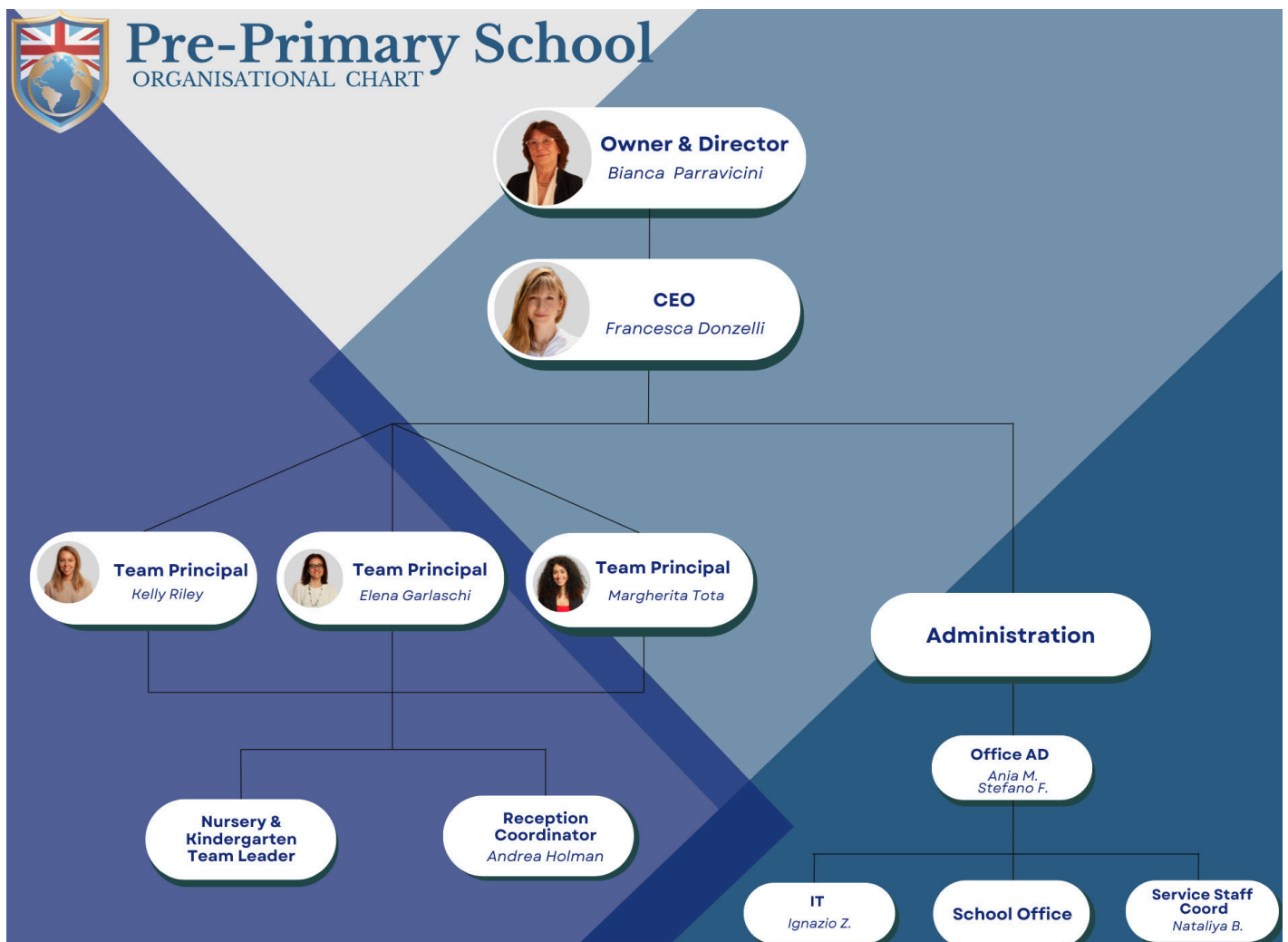
- Paying attention to each request and need expressed by the child;
- Encouraging peaceful interactions among children and supporting spontaneous, positive social exchanges;
- Prioritizing free play, which occupies a significant portion of the day;
- Supporting the child in the development of their personal identity and relationships with others;
- Creating a predictable, safe, and personalized environment, where the child can independently recognize the various activity areas and the structure of the daily routine;
- Planning play activities that are developmentally appropriate for each group of children and aligned with their interests;
- Supporting the child's path toward autonomy and a positive self-image as a competent and capable individual;
- Involving children in tidying up the environment as part of the play experience.

Another key goal of the institution is to support families in their journey of growth alongside their children. To this end, individual meetings are offered throughout the year. The Nursery and Kindergarten services are educational not only for children offering them valuable opportunities for growth but also for adults: parents and educators alike. By sharing the responsibility for the children's development, adults are invited to reflect on the meaning of their educational role.

If we were to identify a guiding document that reflects our educational philosophy, we would refer to the publication by the European Commission Network on Childcare (Balaguer, Mestres, Penn, Italian translation, 1995), which outlines the following goals for early childhood services.

To ensure children:

- A healthy life
- A sense of self as individuals
- Dignity and autonomy
- Self-confidence and joy in learning
- An environment attentive to their needs
- Socialization, friendship, and collaboration with others
- Equal opportunities without discrimination based on gender, race, or disability
- Appreciation of cultural diversity in an international environment
- Support as members of both a family and a community
- Happiness



### 3. COORDINATION AND SUPERVISION

The Management and the Coordination Team, each within the scope of their specific responsibilities, are the guarantors of full alignment between the operational and organizational structure of the service and the contents of the Service Charter.

The Coordination Team is responsible for the actual implementation of this document by carrying out the following actions:

- ◆ Supports, oversees, and supervises the development of the Educational Program;
- ◆ Encourages, guides, and supports individual educators in the practical implementation of classroom planning;
- ◆ Provides concrete help and support to educators;
- ◆ Ensures educational consistency by monitoring the overall quality of teaching practices;
- ◆ Organizes the educational staff through specific guidelines and delegated responsibilities to manage daily operations and respond to emergencies, while remaining a key point of reference for decision-making;
- ◆ Facilitates communication among team members by leading meetings and mediating discussions to achieve shared positions;
- ◆ Enhances the most meaningful activities and experiences of each service, as well as the professionalism of educators;
- ◆ Collaborates with management in organizing and delivering staff training initiatives;
- ◆ Encourages the team to engage in innovation and experimentation;
- ◆ Listens to and assesses the needs of the team, aiming to meet them using the resources provided by Management;
- ◆ Ensures that each educator's educational approach aligns with the pedagogical project and promotes individual professional responsibility;
- ◆ Represents the service externally, according to specific assignments and instructions;
- ◆ Acts as a continuous liaison between the services and the families;
- ◆ Promotes, supports, and organizes moments for documentation, assessment, and evaluation of educational programming;
- ◆ Participates in ongoing professional development to acquire tools that foster new perspectives and visions within the team.



## 4. THE EDUCATIONAL TEAM

The educational team is responsible for implementing the principles set forth in this Service Charter, following these shared guidelines:



- Despite differences among its members, the team works toward shared intervention strategies and assumes collective responsibility for both educational and didactic planning;
- The team is capable of producing, adopting, and cyclically reviewing the educational program, even with diverse viewpoints among its members;
- The team views conflict as a developmental factor: even when starting from divergent positions, team members are expected to discuss and agree on a common—yet revisable—course of action;
- The team shares a conscious and collective responsibility for the effective functioning of the service according to the organizational, managerial, and pedagogical framework established by Management;

- The team defines the forms and methods of communication and interaction with families;
- The team highlights and documents significant experiences;
- The team is capable of evaluating and reflecting on its own work, using the outcomes to make any necessary changes or improvements;
- The team is open to considering and testing proposals for educational innovation and experimentation, even as a means of professional growth.



## **5. TOOLS USED BY THE EDUCATIONAL TEAM**

The main tools employed by the educational team are:

### **OBSERVATION**

Observing free play is essential, as children, when unaware they are being watched—express themselves without inhibition. Through careful observation and analysis of play styles, educators can identify any difficulties a child might be experiencing and discuss them collectively. However, children are observed throughout all moments of the day, not just during free play. Observation also helps identify each child's preferences, shaping the educational planning; it reveals peer relationship dynamics, helps assess the harmonious development of a child's personality, and, more broadly, supports our belief that it is impossible to properly care for a child without truly knowing them. During the settling-in period, observations are recorded in a dedicated diary in which educators describe the behavior and key milestones of each individual child.

### **DOCUMENTATION**

Documenting experiences, learning paths, and everyday life within an educational setting means making nursery life visible and understandable, while also giving insight into the pedagogical model behind it. It is a way to tell the story of the nursery and to leave traces for reflection.

For us, documentation means:

- Representing life at the nursery through children's drawings displayed on walls, filmed footage, photos, and quotes from the children themselves
- Collecting written observations about the children
- Keeping a diary of each child's settling-in process
- Maintaining written records of staff meetings
- Sharing selected children's work with parents

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT**

Self-assessing one's own work with a critical and constructive mindset is a fundamental tool for the educational team.

All staff members are capable of evaluating and reflecting on their own practices to implement the necessary improvements or changes.

The team maintains a high level of quality thanks to the contributions of each individual member. As part of a collective team, everyone is called upon to make a consistent personal commitment toward the shared goals of the service, which are reflected in the daily operations of the nursery.



## 6. SERVICE ORGANIZATION

*"In building a city that meets human needs, we must start with the needs of children."*

*(Margaret Mead, anthropologist)*

The Early Years educational service of Andersen International School was established in Milan in 2001 in a residential area. The school is located in the eastern part of Milan, at Via Don Carlo San Martino No. 8, within Municipality 3, "Città Studi, Lambrate, Venezia," in the historic Ortica district. The building originally housed the boys' orphanage of the Pio Istituto dei Figli della Provvidenza, founded by Don Carlo San Martino, after whom the street is now named.

The school is easily accessible via the Forlanini and Argonne stations on the M4 metro line (blue line); from Lambrate train station; and from the city center via bus line 54, tram line 5, or the suburban railway lines S5, S6, and S9.

The **Nursery** and **Kindergarten** sections are located in a dedicated facility surrounded by a large garden and are open from September to the end of June.

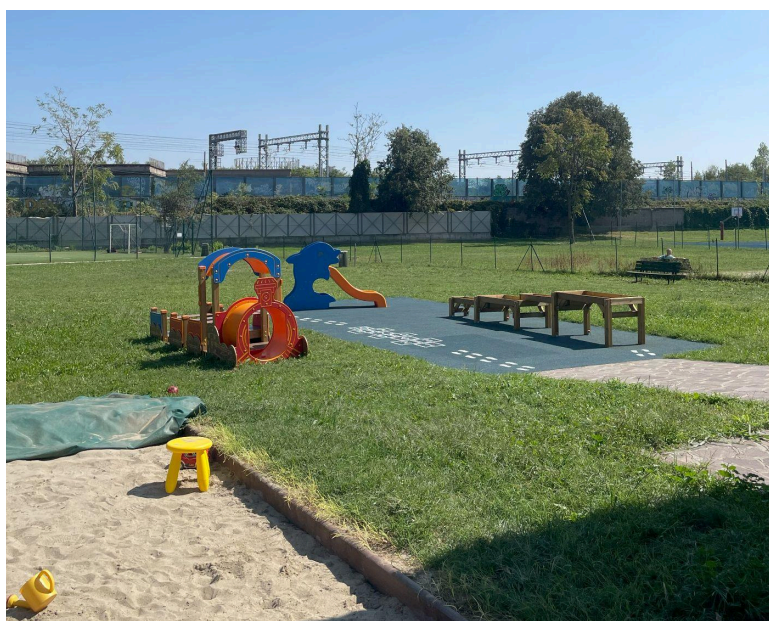
The service is open Monday through Friday, from 7:30 AM to 6:00 PM.

The educational staff includes highly qualified native English-speaking teachers specialized in early and very early childhood education, as well as native Italian-speaking educators who hold university degrees and specialize in early childhood pedagogy.

## 7. SPACE ORGANIZATION

*"All grown-ups were once children, but only few of them remember it."*

*(A. De Saint-Exupéry)*



The design of the spaces has been carefully planned to stimulate children's curiosity and encourage exploration, while also meeting their natural need for reassurance and familiarity. Spaces speak: every child and parent entering our facility forms an immediate impression of the environment at first glance. Each area communicates through its layout, dimensions, lighting, and furnishings. Space influences the behavior of those who inhabit it and is, at the same time,

a visible reflection of what happens within. This is why the arrangement and use of space are

fundamental to ensuring children's physical and emotional well-being and must be the result of intentional, collaborative planning. The goal is to make sure that, through targeted use of space and carefully guided activities, each child feels part of the group and is recognized by adults and peers alike, supported by a thoughtful educational approach.

The environment must be appropriately adapted to meet children's needs. The service areas are therefore organized into workshops and activity corners designed to address those needs. The Nursery and Kindergarten sections offer children a welcoming, emotionally safe environment that invites them to act, move, build, and discover, all while respecting individual life rhythms. In these settings, adults and children share the joy of being together, playing, exploring, discovering, and learning, which is why all spaces are intentionally stimulating and engaging.

The overall atmosphere is defined by welcoming environments and carefully selected, meaningful materials available to the children.



In summary:

- The environment must be thoughtfully designed and progressively adapted based on the needs of the children and adults who inhabit it. It is not static, but constantly evolving in response to children's growth and change.
- Space arrangement must be varied, differentiated, well-organized, and pleasant — including wall decor and furniture placement.
- Interest areas and activity zones must be clearly defined.
- The spatial layout should promote both social and cognitive autonomy in children.

## 8. THE DIMENSION OF TIME: ROUTINES AS MOMENTS OF CARE FOR NURSERY AND KINDERGARTEN

Time in the Nursery and Kindergarten sections is marked by important routines: arrival, structured educational activities, changing, meals, nap time, and end-of-day reunion. These routines are essential because they help foster a child's sense of security and autonomy and support the formation of a strong, trusting relationship with the educator. During these moments, educators engage in rich communication, promoting the child's overall well-being and helping them build a positive self-image in relation to others.

**Arrival** is a particularly delicate time: welcoming a child means greeting them with a smile, reassuring them, and giving voice to their emotions. Educators understand that welcoming a child also means welcoming their parents, their family, and their story. This calls for continuous, thoughtful communication with families, always centered on the child.

**Reunion time** is also carefully structured. Young children need a gradual process to reconnect with their parents. Common behaviors include "escaping" and playfully running away or "stalling" by asking to finish a game, not out of rejection, but as a way of managing the transition. Educators help parents understand that this is a normal part of the process.

**Changing time** is another key routine: it becomes a moment of intimate communication between the educator and the child, conveyed through gestures, words, and eye contact. Through play, educators guide children in discovering their own bodies. Older children are encouraged to use the bathroom independently, always under adult supervision, to support their growing autonomy.

**Mealtime** also has strong educational value: eating at school is different from eating at home. Children learn to share the adult's attention, respect each other's pace, and eat while seated. Educators eat with the children, modeling positive attitudes toward food and table manners. They do not force children to eat but encourage them to try new foods, helping them feel safe and respected at the table.

**Nap time** follows lunch. For a child, sleep means letting go of the familiar for something less certain, in an environment that may differ from their bedroom at home. Educators work to create a peaceful atmosphere, attuned to each child's habits and needs. Children are soothed with cuddles, caresses, comforting words, pacifiers, stuffed animals, or transitional objects. The sleep room is kept in semi-darkness — never completely dark — as total darkness can frighten children, especially upon waking. Children who wake early and cannot go back to sleep are brought back to the classroom to play.



## TYPICAL DAILY SCHEDULE

- 7.30 - 8.30: Pre-school
- 8.30 - 9.15: Arrival and free play
- 9.15 - 10.00: Circle time, changing, and snack
- 10.00 - 10.45: Educational activity (age-differentiated)
- 10.45 - 11.15: Outdoor play in the garden
- 11.15 - 11.30: Changing and meal preparation
- 11.30 - 12.30: Lunch and nap preparation
- 12.30 - 14.00: Nap time
- 14.00 - 14.30: Changing and snack
- 14.30 - 15.30: Afternoon workshops
- 15.30 - 15.45: Reunion with parents
- 15.45 - 18.00: Post-school (extended care)

## 9. SETTLING-IN PERIOD

The settling-in process is coordinated with families and tailored to the individual needs of each child. Educators aim to make the transition from home to school as smooth and reassuring as possible. By observing the mother-child relationship, educators determine the best way to approach each family. A successful transition for the child also depends on a positive settling-in experience for the parent. Educators

must therefore welcome not only the child but also the parent – with all their emotions, concerns, and expectations. The settling-in period is a significant event in a child's and family's life. It involves emotions, expectations, fears, needs, and curiosity. During individual meetings, educators explain daily routines and how parents should support their child through this phase, which typically lasts between 5 and 10 days. A designated reference educator is present throughout the settling-in period, playing a vital role in the child's early experiences at school.



## 10. RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES



Managing relationships with families is just as important for educators as interacting with the children themselves.

Entering this new social environment brings many expectations for parents, but sometimes also a sense of guilt toward their children. The decision to send a child to nursery is not always driven by the awareness of the high educational value the nursery represents. This is why it's essential to establish a trusting and harmonious relationship from the very beginning. The relationship with parents must be nurtured with care and attention and is an integral part of the nursery's educational project. Building a relationship based on respect, trust, and mutual understanding is fundamental to authentically sharing educational responsibility, which develops through daily interactions and regular meetings. The nursery collaborates with families by embracing diversity and supporting parenting for the well-being of the children. For this reason, the relationship with parents is constant and ongoing, helping families to understand that the nursery is a communal space for both children and their families. Our highly qualified educators are fully aware that they must support the parent-child pair, not just the child alone. Relationships with families are nourished through reciprocal understanding and shared educational goals and strategies. The educator's approach is reflective and aims to help parents without creating anxiety or concern, while supporting them in finding solutions. The school also regularly organizes parental training sessions throughout the year on key topics related to early childhood (such as nutrition, sleep-wake rhythms, emotions, etc.).



# 11. PLAYING IN NURSERY

*"There can be no work that is truly fulfilling and well done without play; there can be no healthy and meaningful thinking without play"*

*(Charles Dickens)*



At the nursery, play is considered to have enormous educational potential: it is through play that children learn, understand, act, and express themselves. It offers a constantly renewed opportunity to engage with reality, understand it, and reshape it. Through play, children interact, affirm their individuality, learn rules, and actively participate in their own learning process.

Throughout the day, there are moments of free play (during arrival, reunion, and after lunch), in which children can freely choose what materials to use, with whom to play, and for how long; and structured play, where the educator proposes a specific type of activity.

During playtime, educators observe in order to better understand each child, seeing how they interact with objects and peers. Their role can range from distant support and encouragement to mediating conflicts when children struggle to resolve issues on their own.

Our play activities include:

- Manipulative play: offered from the very first months at nursery.
- Heuristic play: a setup where children experiment with "poor" materials – everyday objects that encourage sensory exploration, focus, and imagination.
- Graphic-painting play: drawing a colored line on paper is a magical and captivating experience for young children. The objectives include exploring materials, developing fine motor skills, and expressing emotions.



- Water play: a favorite activity during the summer. A space is set up with containers and various everyday items that allow children to pour, fill, and empty, helping them grasp concepts like full/empty, floating/sinking.
- Motor play: aimed at developing body awareness and understanding spatial relationships (in/out, near/far, front/back). It can be free or structured.
- Symbolic play: highly engaging, allowing children to recreate everyday scenes or imitate adults, especially their parents.
- Treasure basket: filled with common household objects that stimulate the senses (keys, bottle caps, curlers, scented sachets, etc.).

The school's educational offering also includes the regular involvement of external specialists during the academic year. These professionals work alongside educators to implement tailored educational projects for the children, such as the "Emotions through Music" project (led by a child psychologist and a music teacher), baby yoga, and pet therapy.



## 12. INCLUSION AND WELCOMING OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The integration project for children with disabilities begins with an initial stage of collecting information about the child through a meeting with the family. This meeting involves the educators as well as other professionals who support the child (such as a neuropsychiatrist, psychomotor therapist, etc.). In a second phase, the child is observed within the nursery setting to identify both strengths and areas for improvement. Based on these observations, the educators develop the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), which is then discussed in a working group involving the family and specialists. This ensures

continuity and consistency in the interventions provided. Throughout the school year, regular assessments are carried out to evaluate the activities and monitor the child's progress.

During the final working group meeting, held before the child transitions to preschool, the teachers who will be responsible for the child in the new setting are also invited. This ensures continuity in the educational journey and supports a smooth handover.

## 13. INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

To promote intercultural education in the nursery means:

- Knowing and respecting the cultural traditions of other peoples
- Encouraging dialogue among parents, for example through shared snack times or family workshops
- Designing educational experiences with children that focus on appreciating differences, discovering similarities, and respecting others. Teaching children from a young age to welcome and care for others with kindness lays the foundation for raising individuals capable of living harmoniously together
- Striving to understand the caregiving practices present within each child's family

The nursery includes books featuring characters from different ethnic backgrounds, dolls with various skin tones, and songs from other cultures. It also offers games and musical instruments from around the world, such as the rainstick, maracas, and lullabies from other countries to help children fall asleep.

Even the garden, a beloved place for the children, offers opportunities to observe and experience change: flowers blooming in spring, leaves turning red and yellow in autumn. These natural transformations become a chance to explore and understand diversity. Intercultural education should not be treated as a separate topic but as an intentional, methodological, and educational approach that runs through the entire educational environment and all planned activities.

Teaching children to listen respectfully in silence when another child or adult is speaking is also a form of intercultural education. Encouraging sharing toys and resolving conflicts through words fosters a culture of respect and reciprocity—even from early childhood.

