



**MIMOSA SCHOOL**  
**REGGIO EMILIA PHILOSOPHY**  
**ORIENTATION PACK**

*There are hundreds of different images of a child. Each one of us has inside ourselves an image of child that directs us as we begin to relate to a child, and this image orients us as we talk and listen to a child, and this image pushes us to behave in certain ways*

*(to paraphrase Loris Malaguzzi).*

*A network of communication exists between the children, parents and teachers of Reggio. These three protagonists work together to create the spirit of cooperation, collaboration, and co-construction of knowledge. They work together, interacting toward a common purpose: the building of a culture which respects childhood as a time to explore, create and be joyful. Each of these three protagonists has rights within the school*

*Mimosa holds relationships between parents, teachers, and children at its heart. It is a community that upholds the right of each parent, child and teacher to actively participate and collaborate in constructing our learning community.*

*At Mimosa we see the teacher as the second teacher, as co researcher with your child, as partner in the community at school as an extension of your home .*

*In the Reggio approach the three teachers are the parent, the teacher or co-researcher and the environment.*

*This document serves to orient parents to the philosophical position held by the school, to the image of child which underpins everything that we do, to our expectations of you as parents, and to the expectations held of and by teachers in the school.*



# IMAGE OF CHILD



## **At Mimosa we hold an image of child who is born to connect...**

- By relating with the world through their senses: Children who are dressed comfortably can explore a rich sensory environment without fear of being dirty.
- By learning about themselves and others in play: Adults oversee the rough and tumble, give and take of the day with children, not for children. We allow time for them to negotiate and compromise, stepping in only when help is needed.
- By building relationships: Children connect closely with their teacher and group, but also have relationships of trust with all the adults and children at school.

## **At Mimosa we hold an image of child who is rich in resources, curious and who seeks to make meaning...**

- By being protagonists in their own learning: They make their thinking visible through the languages of art, movement, design, engineering and more. Teachers encourage this expression.
- By following their learning journey at their own pace: Children understand and engage with concepts differently at different times including written numeracy and language.
- By constructing theories and hypothesis about how things work: Children explore their ideas deeply using materials and tools. The process is important rather than answers or facts.

## **At Mimosa we hold an image of child who is a citizen from birth...**

- Being a full person now: We value who they are, not what they will become, by embracing their whole personalities and respecting all their ideas and feelings without minimising or distracting.
- Having a preferred name and pronoun and way of being in the world: We celebrate all gender and individual expression with them.
- Contributing to a culture of democracy: Children make decisions in our morning meetings, and they input school practices and policies. We support children to think about outcomes and to manage the consequences of their decisions.
- Being part of a collective: Children's rights are not absolute but are balanced in relation to the rights of others and include responsibilities.
- Having special rights and special accommodations: Children, parents and teachers become inclusive in their practice as they navigate these sometimes complex situations and relationships.

## **At Mimosa we hold an image of child who is competent....**

- To problem solve: When children encounter a tricky situation or feel stuck, they take time to think, and we step back until our help is asked for.
- To manage difficult situations and difficult feelings: Children can and must be able to stay with discomfort. We hold them and help them to process by listening and talking with them.
- To make considered decisions: Children decide what risks to take when climbing, jumping, using real tools (like graters, knives, hammers, glue guns). We show them how then trust that they will be respectful, cautious and use common sense, while recognising that they may occasionally get hurt.



# IMAGE OF PARENT



## Mimosa holds an image of parents in relationship .....

- Who share their families interests and activities with the teacher: so that all children's interests are visible and reflected for them at school. You can post photos or videos from home. Send favourite books and music to school, as well as Show and Tell.
- Who communicate important experiences: like separations, births and death, visits, in your child and family's life to make sure your child is held and supported in all ways.
- Who build the culture of trust and respect: between yourself, other parents, and the teachers through dialogue. Bring those brilliant ideas, those niggly worries, that come up at parties and in the alleyway, to the teachers and to Izwi. And bring your child to school on time to respect the group process.
- Who speak honestly and authentically with children: Always telling children the truth in age-appropriate ways - when you are leaving and returning, talking about loss and about death, about difficult situations.
- Who commit to attachment parenting and the principles of the protective behaviours programme. Children's bodies and feelings are treated with integrity. Consent is fundamental. Absolutely no force or smacking is ever acceptable.
- Who trust that teachers hold at heart the best interests of all the children: When your child is in a difficult or conflictual relationship with another child, you work with the teacher to understand the context and to find strategies to change the relationship

## Mimosa holds an image of parents as active participants....

- Who uphold and build the ethics and values of the school: by participating in school workshops, through advocating for children and through building a community of care.
- Who make themselves at home in the Mimosa community: by coming to tea on Tuesdays, reading the newsletters, answering surveys, contributing to discussions, participating in events.
- Who contribute skills: in building the governance and the identity of the school, in class groups, through Izwi (the parent-teacher group), on the Board, or by running workshops.

## Mimosa holds an image of parents who co-research and collaborate....

- By being the bridge between home and school. as you discuss the research projects with your children and engage with them to build a community of enquiry between children and adults.
- By bringing your 100 languages into the community every day, but also at Celebrations and Open days, contributing to the social and cultural capital of the community.
- By being a custodian of deep and meaningful learning experiences that enrich and enable an actively engaged community as we connect with other organisations.



# IMAGE OF THE TEACHER



- The teacher is a co-researcher, guiding your child's learning. Not telling them what to do but planning with them, creating the environments and setting the provocations to allow learning to happen, and observing how to follow the children's' interests.
- The teacher is approachable, welcoming and open, and also physically at the gate in the mornings and in all school spaces. They are trustworthy and have ongoing authentic communication with parents. They care about children and families and follow up these relationships.
- The teacher is knowledgeable, with a vast amount of experience, energy and commitment. The teachers share their insights, enthusiasm and interests with others in a community of practice. They continue to grow their expertise through ongoing professional development.
- The teacher is flexible - allowing them to be accommodating of each and every situation that arises, knowing the child and the family, and allowing for any eventuality.
- The teacher has a hundred languages of their own, a hundred ways of learning and expressing themselves. They are creative, imaginative and prepare inviting environments that provoke engagement.
- The teacher is present and professional. They listen to the school, the child, the parent, and communicate effectively with all. They seek advice and support when needed.
- The teacher documents, following and enriching the learning journey of each child, by taking videos, photos, records of the learning and sharing this daily, weekly and over a learning period.
- The teacher makes choices - political and ethical choices based on answers to critical questions such as image of child and an understanding of knowledge and learning.





# ENVIRONMENT AS THIRD TEACHER



**At Mimosa we are always in dialogue with the environment and we look to visualize and create an environment that ...**

- **Is reflective:** Of the children's interests, their thinking and the ongoing project work. Documentation and artifacts made by the children are visible for children and parents to share, and are a tool for assessment, change and growth.
- **Is functional:** Every workspace, indoors and outdoors, has tools and materials that invite children to explore and be independent. These set-ups are considered and intentional. They foster connections, relationships, and collaboration with each other and with the environment.
- **Invites exploration:** Climbing trees, paddling in the river, knee deep immersion in the sandpit, planting and picking, the children connect deeply and physically with the outdoor environment.
- **Is beautiful:** Spaces hold an individual aesthetic appeal and design. There are plants, paintings, natural light and other artifacts that provoke curiosity and wonder in the space and encourage the children to connect and care for these spaces.
- **Is an extension of learning, a school without walls:** An enquiry may regularly take us onto the street, into the garden or alley and to other public spaces.
- **Is connected:** Children and adults respond to local and global issues and advocate for the rights of all, including through presentations and pickets.
- **Is democratic:** Children are visible and are active participants in all spaces and make valued decisions in these spaces. Environments are not adapted to children. If the children are cooking they will use real tools like knives, if constructing they use hammers and glue guns. They weigh up and decide how to navigate spaces, like how high to climb and how far to jump.
- **Encourages care and ownership:** Children are custodians of their environment. From paintbrushes to recycling, children are guided and shown how to take care of tools and materials, as well as plants and all living creatures.

