

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

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**GOOD PRACTICES FOR
SCHOOL WELCOMING, INCLUSION AND
INTEGRATION OF ADOPTED
CHILDREN**

INTRODUCTION

The presence of adopted minors in Italian Schools has become a remarkable phenomenon. In many cases, especially for internationally adopted children, an early contact with the School environment is crucial due to the fact that many of them are adopted when they are school-age children or nearly six years old.

It is clear that adoption involves a number of factors of risk which must be considered in order to build welcoming strategies and ensure the adopted students' well-being from their early days in class.

These strategies, of course, will have to be guaranteed during the whole educational path, paying particular attention to the passage from a grade of School to the next one.

AIMS

1. To promote cooperation and support among School, families, social services and local authorities.
2. To instruct teachers about the adoption process
3. To create a positive and helpful School environment aiming at promoting a positive attitude towards the children's needs.
4. To select a School representative teacher
5. To form a welcoming team composed of
the School Headmaster
a teacher responsible for inclusion
a referent teacher
any authorities or association which have carried out the adoption

<h2>ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES</h2>

(This step is performed by an administrative assistant)

1. To enrol the student in the school
2. To allow students to decide whether to attend Catholic Religion lessons or not.
3. Have the students fill in the established form

FIRST YEAR CLASS ENROLMENT

The student's adoptive family enters the child to www.iscrizione.istruzione.it, then fills in and sends the form to the chosen school.

- If the child is not in possession of a social security number, a temporary one will be provided until the family will provide the documents which certify the adoption sealed abroad.
- As for children in pre-adoptive phase (whose adoptive process has not been completed yet) or in foster care, the enrolment will be done by the adopting families at the school office directly.

ENROLLMENT INTO 2ND AND 3RD YEAR CLASS

In both national or international adoption processes, families can enrol their children in any moment of the school year, by submitting the enrolment form directly at the secretary office.

DOCUMENTATION

Following the enrolment, the school administrative office requires the documents which fulfil the law.

- As for national adoption, schools verify the documents released by the juvenile court (tribunal dei Minori) without keeping them in the student's personal file. The same goes for all the other papers necessary for the enrolment or the transfer to another school.

- As for temporary foster children, the school administration office requires a previous school report in which the minor is referred to with the adoptive family's surname. The headmaster will sign a statement confirming the student's identity.
- The secretary office will inform the teachers that the students will be signed up on the school register with their adoptive families' surname. They will prevent the original surname from appearing.
- The school will verify that the minor has undergone the compulsory vaccinations through a copy of the vaccine certificate. If the minor has not fulfilled these requirements, the family can ask the Local Health Services. The lack of vaccinations will not interfere with the student's school attendance.

<p>COMMUNICATIVE AND RELATIONAL ASPECTS</p>

The headmaster chooses a referential teacher knowledgeable about adoption, giving him/her the following tasks:

- keep in touch with the student's family
- collaborate and support the teachers' team
- collaborate with local services
- supervise the child's school progress
- be a member of the adoption team

The adoption team is responsible for:

- checking the first papers presented by the family
- contacting the family for a first meeting
- informing the family about the school's organization
- hearing out any request made by the family
- filling in the attachment no.2

WELCOMING

The school headmaster or the referential teacher meets the family and acquires information regarding the child's family history. He/she eventually meets the responsible services in order to have a comprehensive and detailed picture of the situation.

CHOICE OF THE CLASS

After a careful evaluation of all the acquired information, the school headmaster decides the class in accordance with the family. In some circumstances, the minor might be asked to attend an inferior grade to his age groupclass.

INCLUSION TIMES

The inclusion time is determined by the headmaster, after hearing the adoption and teachers' team out in accordance with the family and, if necessary, the competent services. If the adopted child is between 5 and 6 years of age, he/she may attend kindergarten one year longer if necessarily. (MIUR no.547, 21/02/2014)

Internationally adopted children sometimes need time; hence it is possible to postpone school attendance of several months.

<h2>EDUCATION AND DIDACTICS</h2>

Class teachers:

- encourage welcoming and integration of the new student with both his/her classmates and the environment.
- simplify the school program and make a differential study plan.
- constantly keep in touch with the family, the referent teacher for integration, the referent teacher for the institute and the team.

The school organises Italian language courses for foreign students and a personalised study plan. The school will provide the student with an intercultural mediator or a teacher

who will take exclusive care of him. The student will be aided by a student tutor. For further information, please read the *Protocollo di accoglienza per alunnistranieri* document.

EVALUATION

The teacher will pay attention to the student's educational path, progresses, motivation, effort and potential shown. In particular, at the end of the school year, a number of factors will be taken into consideration, such as the student's difficulties, state of mind, emotional distress, et cetera.

CONTINUITY

It is important to remember that adoption is a permanent condition, so that it is essential to take care of the student during the advancement from one school order to the following one. The pupil can develop discomfort, frailty, and need of longer times to acquire school contents, emotional turmoil which disturb learning. In order to avoid such conditions, it would be desirable to contemplate certain factors:

- A careful information exchange between teacher of different school orders in concordance with the family.
- Particular care of school-family relation.
- Particular attention to the class relational atmosphere

It is fundamental to help the student make a conscious choice of the High School by a series of school guidance meetings.

OPERATIONAL SUGGESTIONS

The inclusion of an adopted student at school, in particular if he/she comes from a different country, will take place with due regard for his/her times, no matter what order of school he/she is to be placed in. Notwithstanding the existing generic indications, experience has taught us that children and their personal experience differ greatly, as situations do. The

best possible option can be determined only if the child's school, family and associations who have followed the process cooperate. During the first period of school attendance, teachers will detect the best approach with the student even before considering his/ her scholar competence.

KINDERGARTEN

School inclusion needs to be progressive. At first, the child can attend for two or three hours daily spending time playing and staying in a small group. Even the canteen service –if offered by the school- needs to be gradually introduced.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

A child should be granted the chance to visit the school beforehand with his/her parents or at least be introduced to one of his future teachers. Even in this instance it is important to begin the process gradually, with a flexible timetable, alphabetization courses and activities that favour integration with the class. It can also be considered to have the child participate in alphabetization lessons in classes inferior to his/ her own, but this option needs to be evaluated depending on the circumstances.

SECONDARY SCHOOL

Considering that children of this school order are adolescents or pre-adolescents, this delicate phase could arise a number of issues. If the new student comes from a foreign country, class lessons need to be alternated with alphabetization classes with the aid of teachers or translators. From an educative point of view, the class climate is essential.