



Cabella International  
Sahaja School

# Cabella International Sahaja School

**The “Inner Peace School”**

managed by

Casa Madre Impresa Sociale srl.

EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

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## FOREWORD

The *Cabella International Sahaja School* (CISS) educational project arose from the desire of large numbers of parents, from different European countries, to be able to offer their children an education inspired by the values transmitted by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi and by the experience of Sahaja Yoga meditation.

In India, Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi was an active participant in the movement to free the country from British rule, led by Mahatma Gandhi. Her father, a Christian and a prominent member of the Congress Party, was a great linguist and encouraged her to read the ancient philosophical and religious texts of the Hindu tradition in the original language. Shri Mataji's medical studies later allowed Her to blend these traditional teachings with modern developments in neurophysiology to produce a body of meditation techniques called Sahaja Yoga (*Spontaneous Yoga*). These techniques pave the way to a rich, intense spiritual existence that is able to give a meaning to life and that to some extent is the pinnacle of all the religious and philosophical experiences intended to consolidate spiritual values in human beings, beyond the awareness of the senses.

The unique and revolutionary educational system developed by Shri Mataji has already been used for many decades in schools in India, United States of America and Australia.

In 1991, Shri Mataji established residence in Italy, in Cabella Ligure, in the green and peaceful valley of Val Borbera.

In 2009, she decided to set up a pilot educational project in the buildings of the Foundation that bears her name, the "Cabella International Sahaja School", which continued until March 2015.

Since 2014, Sahaja Yoga meditation has been offered in hundreds of schools within the framework of the Inner Peace Day (IPD) project, a venture that has proved so popular that it is already present in 51 countries around the world. The school in Cabella is clearly the pilot workshop in which the courses offered by IPD are developed, studied and improved in a protected and dedicated environment.<sup>1</sup>

## OUR MISSION

To create an educational environment in which childhood is valued and respected, one that is able to nurture children's spiritual potential, allow them to grow and develop in their own time, in a healthy environment that naturally promotes a physical, emotional and spiritual development free of the constraints and artificial pressures of modern society. For us, children are individuals who are aware of their own worth but, at the same time, conscious of their responsibility towards their families, communities and, more generally, the entire world.

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<sup>1</sup> Recently, with the *Inner Peace Day* project, promoted by *Vishwa Nirmala Dharma*, Sahaja meditation was presented in Italy and abroad, with the involvement of around 3,000,000 students. The same project was repeated specifically in Brussels on May 22, 2016, following the terrorist attacks of March 2016, with the patronage of the President of the European Parliament. <http://innerpeaceday.org/>



## THE SAHAJA EDUCATIONAL METHOD

The Sahaja educational method aims to achieve a harmonious, balanced development in children, in which knowledge is understood to be a synthesis between knowledge of the external world and knowledge of one's inner Self.

It is based on a number of key principles:

### 1) Love and a holistic education:

*Discipline your children with love.*

- *There must be balance between loving and intelligence. Handle things lovingly and intelligently. Use intelligence to correct the misbehaving child but the child must know you love him.*
- *The best discipline is to put dignity into children.*

*Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi*

A holistic education is a type of approach that is able to integrate a human being's physical, intellectual and emotional aspects: an education that not only provides academic training but also stimulates the development of an awareness of their inner being.

### 2) Collective life (education in boarding schools):

- *The whole society has to control and discipline the child. They are the children of the whole society.*
- *Encourage them to feel part and parcel of the whole that we are all one and they enjoy the collective oneness.*

*Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi*

Living in an environment that is family-like but also collective is key to the Sahaja educational project. That CISS is a boarding school is a guarantee of excellence for the families who send their children here. It is, after all, an educational system that is in widespread use, and held in high regard in many countries around the world, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, China, India, Pakistan, Switzerland and New Zealand. It is well known that collective life in a school community makes a positive contribution on the development of important qualities such as the ability to interact and collaborate with others, and the capacity to take initiative and to actively engage in problem resolution. Children who have attended boarding schools spontaneously construct solid, lasting relationships with their classmates, and their personality is characterised by exceptional confidence and maturity.<sup>2</sup>

The residential aspect of CISS does not only derive from the practical need to accommodate the children from the many European families who want to send their children to the only Sahaja school in the whole of Europe. We therefore aim to offer a family environment in which interpersonal relationships are based on love, trust and mutual respect, where children can develop their independence, and cultivate not only self-confidence but also trust in others. In this approach, the parents often form an integral part of the project, actively working together with the school or intervening for short periods with the presentation of an extra-curricular project, for instance. In most cases, close friendships already exist between the school's staff and the children's families.

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<sup>2</sup> R.H. Haworth, C. Graber, Y. Gorni, I. Paz, L. Thorpe



### 3) An international education:

Sahaja education proposes an international teaching model, based on curricula such as the *International Primary Curriculum*, that offers its young students a vision of modern society that is free of cultural conditionings or prejudices, while giving them access to a legacy of artistic, cultural and spiritual traditions from every time and place, with the aim of making them citizens of the world.

The concept of International Education is supported not only by some of the best-known international (UNESCO, UNICEF) and local organisations (INDIRE: *Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa* (the Italian national institute for documentation, innovation and educational research), but also by the latest research in educational matters, in light of the constant evolution of modern society, tending increasingly toward globalization.<sup>3</sup>

### 4) Meditation:

Sahaja meditation is an integral part of the children's growth, and is a means through which they develop a well-adjusted personality: at once extremely self-aware and innocent. The children become capable of identifying and maintaining a state of inner peace and satisfaction that helps them to deal with life situations in a balanced way.

Over the past two decades, a large number of schools around the world have tried Sahaja meditation for themselves with great success, enjoying the benefits of following a programme aimed at stimulating a deeper awareness of their Self. Numerous studies have shown evidence of significant short and long-term improvements in students who take part in these meditation projects.

Many cases have in fact demonstrated significant improvements in the treatment of serious conditions such as ADHD (Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) and depression, chronic illnesses such as asthma and epilepsy, or less serious conditions such as anxiety, tension, dissatisfaction and aggressiveness.<sup>4</sup>

### 5) Art, play, creativity and contact with nature in a safe and protected environment:

- *Teach drama, dance, classical dance, music, art and handicrafts.*
- *In any way, whichever are their talents they should be discovered and should be encouraged from the very beginning.*
- *Teach children about dignity and nature, to respect the Mother Earth.*
- *Teachers should make the subject interesting. Find new ways of arousing the interest. It needs not to be so serious, can be like a play also.*

*Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi*

The CISS educational programme places particular emphasis on the study of music and art in any form.

Music: since 2014, an active collaboration with the prestigious *Vienna Boys Choir*, has allowed us to offer our students not only individual lessons for almost all instruments, but also choir and orchestra group sessions. As part of Project *Superar* in June 2015, CISS pupils jointly performed with students from Rocchetta primary school in an end-of-year concert.

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<sup>3</sup> I. Hill, K. Wilber, R. Sternberg, P. Tetlock.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. U. C. Ray, Dr. A. Ketler, Dr. W. Hackl, Prof. A. Morgan, Dr. Chittavikul.



Art: thanks to the commitment of a number of volunteers and parents, our art department is very well equipped, and, in addition to drawing and painting, offers clay modelling, woodwork, embroidery, and creative workshops using a range of materials.

Sport: in addition to weekly gymnastics lessons, our pupils can participate in dance, badminton, tennis, aikido, football, and hockey courses.

Nature: contact with nature is of central importance at our school. Val Borbera, with its mountains, streams, woods, pastures, farms and clean air, offers countless opportunities for outdoor activities. "Outdoor Learning" is an integral part of our curriculum, in which students learn through various activities including observing natural phenomena, gardening, growing vegetables, taking care of domestic animals, excursions, outdoor sports, and building simple structures such as wooden fences, tree houses, etc.

More than a hundred scientists worldwide have conducted extensive research into the different types of pollution that have long had a detrimental effect on children's health, and analysing instead the positive effects of Outdoor Learning.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> C. Arden Pope, D. W. Dockery, R. Clay, D. Cristakis, B. Wallance, N. Morris, A. Peacock, M. Rickinson.



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## THE ORGANISATION OF THE BOARDING SCHOOL

The residential aspect of our educational proposal

### Who we are

*Casa Madre Impresa Sociale srl* has governed the *Cabella International Sahaja School* since January 2015. It is a non-profit organisation whose purpose, through various activities, is the improvement of the quality of people's lives, the development of the human personality in all its expressions, the search for peace and inner well-being, the pluralism of cultures and solidarity among people, the protection and enhancement of the historical, artistic, natural, environmental and cultural traditions from all over the world.

This is achieved through the teachings of Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi as practiced and developed by Her and known as Sahaja Yoga. These teachings, widely recognised all over the world in so many different areas from schools, to sport clubs, to communities, helps the improvement from the micro to the macro environment in which we live and work, starting from the individual well-being.

Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, affirming that the harmonious development of mankind depends on inner balance and self-knowledge, worked throughout her life for the positive transformation and realization of human beings and to build a better society. She points out that if we do not have peace within ourselves we cannot work for peace in the world.

Val Borbera is a place immersed in greenery and bathed in the peace and harmony in nature. It is ideal for people to rediscover themselves and their well-being through meditation, teaching the value of peace, the practice of non-violence and the respect for the environment. Casa Madre operates according to the social and civil code in order to teach a method that increases the well-being of body, mind and spirit. This method is practised by the children and the people engaged in teaching, preventing and removing the psychological and physical hardship of the individual.

Shareholders of *Casa Madre Impresa Sociale* are 97% "Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi Sahaja Yoga World Foundation", n° 747 in the Regional Legal Persons Register of Piemonte Region, and 3% "Vishwa Nirmala Dharma", Association for Social Promotion, that is n° 0093 in the National Italian Association for Social Promotion.

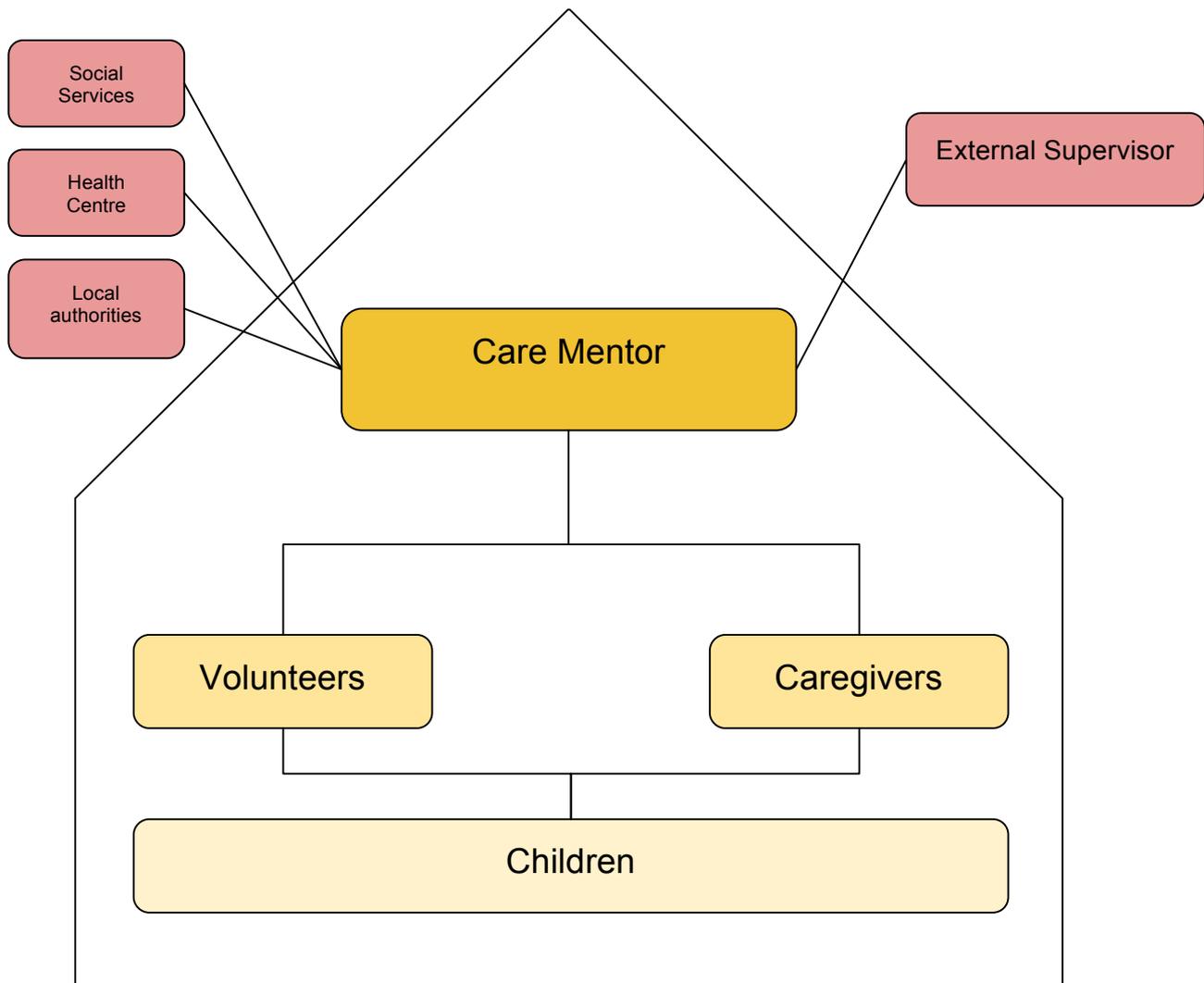
### The Campus

Children will be hosted in the facility owned by the *Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi Sahaja Yoga World Foundation*. It will be loaned, for free, by the parent company Casa Madre Impresa Sociale Srl, located in a locality called *Casa Forme* n°2 in Cabella Ligure, in the province of Alexandria. It complies with the relevant standards and requirements for building and town planning as well as the limits for the following intended use: *building to be used as Community residence, accommodation and social activities and cultural teaching* (See App. G). The building has 4 storeys and consists of: a common dining room of 136 m<sup>2</sup>, 9 common bathrooms including 2 for disabled people, 23 toilets, 24 showers and 35 sinks, 1 private bathroom for the exclusive use of a single bedroom, fully equipped, a room of 30.5 m<sup>2</sup> used for the preparation of meals, a room of 16.5 m<sup>2</sup> used for the storage of food, a room of 9.6 m<sup>2</sup> used for washing utensils, a room of 21 m<sup>2</sup> used as a hanging locker/dressing area, 11 bedrooms with a total of 324 m<sup>2</sup> and 67 beds, a room of 9 m<sup>2</sup> used as a dressing room, a room of 13 m<sup>2</sup> used as an office, a room of 16 m<sup>2</sup> used as the internet room, a room of 14 m<sup>2</sup> used as a reading room, a room of 58 m<sup>2</sup> used as a meditation room/meeting room, 1 terrace, a fire escape, a stair lift for the elimination of architectural barriers, outdoor parking, a ventilation system with heat recovery which allows the recycling of stale indoor air without opening the windows.

CISS intends to model the requirements of the British Government with regard to the residential aspect of British Boarding School (See App. F) and is currently working to present a request for affiliation.



**Staff of the working group dedicated to the management of the guests:**



We would like to point out how group work and interaction among one another is fundamental to the success of a proper education. The experiences of the entire working group are essential to the formation of a feedback for proper assessment and management of hosted minors.

**The Care Mentor**

In accordance to the instructions of *Casa Madre Impresa Sociale srl.*, the Care Mentor manages and supervises all communication with the Social Services, the local health centre and the various Local Authorities. He/she is responsible for the organisation of the teachers employed in the education of the hosted children. He/she is also the point of reference and coordination for the caregivers, volunteers, families and hosted minors and is responsible for the daily management of the boarding school, the coordination of the academic staff and of the volunteer group in order to define a shared intervention strategy.



### **The External Supervisor**

Through the help of a psychologist specialised in education, the External Supervisor provides a continuous specialised support to all educational professionals involved in the education of the hosted children.

### **The Caregivers**

They manage the everyday activities of the students, they care and support and they manage the daily didactic activities aimed at reaching the goals set by the I.E.P. (Individual Education Plan).

### **The role of the Caregiver**

Caregivers, like teachers, are seen as figures capable of guiding children in their voyage towards adulthood. Rather than determining the path to follow, they aim to describe its opportunities, possibilities and pitfalls, motivating the children to have confidence in their innate wisdom that guides them on the right path. To do this, the depth of understanding of the caregivers and teachers is fundamental, not only as professionals but also as human beings. The children have to be able to see the value of the adults' example if they are to accept them as guides. Everyone involved in this project has to practice meditation and have found his or her personal inner balance. On this basis we expect that they find the context and structure for learning that will allow them to enjoy their childhood and undertake a journey towards a balanced, satisfied adult life.

When meditating, both children and caregivers or teachers share a common inner experience that helps them to work out the classical imbalances that define the relationship between children and teacher. These circumstances favour what Piaget called the 'reconstruction of conscience' or in other words, the use of the creative and constructive approach to solve problems. The base of our educational approach aims to provide a guide for the children's growth and pursuit of knowledge without forcing or smothering their natural tendencies and talents.

### **The role of the volunteer**

The contribution of volunteers within the boarding school is very important. Their presence enriches the students and teachers in all the daily activities. The management of daily life provides so many tasks that volunteers can find their own place.

It is important to stress the fact that despite being a free-of-cost contribution and activity, the work of a volunteer is carried out and directed in a similar way to that of a caregiver.

All volunteers who participate in the life of the boarding school are invited to attend weekly meetings and work as part of the team and, just like the caregivers, are requested to fill out a little daily account of the activities done with the students. The *Association for Social Promotion* called "Nirmal Sevak", which also provides training in health and safety measures for all its members regulates the relationship between the volunteers and *Casa Madre Impresa Sociale Ltd.*



### **Internal organization**

The Care Mentor is entrusted with the responsibility of managing and ensuring the correct functioning of the everyday boarding and running of the house. All the work done by the caregivers is also organised, besides keeping a daily register, by four essential meetings:

1. The meeting of Caregivers

This takes place on a weekly basis and it is the time of organization of all the activities and allocation of tasks to be carried out over the week. This meeting is also aimed at monitoring the path and achievements in relation to the Individualized Education Projects (PEI), and at discussing group or individual requests advanced by minors that may relate to any destinations for trips, the purchase of clothing, going out with friends or expressions of personal or group issues.

2. The meeting of the Students

Weekly student meetings are arranged to discuss initiatives, issues and ideas that will then be submitted to the teachers. This moment is crucial because, besides helping the children to develop qualities of discussion and exchange that are necessary for group life, they also identify the time and place to express their needs and issues. The meeting is carried out according to the order of the day decided by the children themselves and it finishes with the recording of the minutes that is then delivered to the group of caregivers who will discuss the points during their meeting.

3. The meeting between Caregivers and children

This is conclusion of the meetings mentioned above. Students and teachers can discuss a manner of things such as how the week is progressing, behavioural issues, problems or requests. It is a real starting point for the development of objectives that children can work towards.

4. Supervision

Once a month a meeting will take place with all staff that work directly with the children the school managed by *Casa Madre Impresa Sociale srl*. These meetings are supervised by an education psychologist, who is seen as a specialised support to all the educational staff involved. The supervisor's professional skills allow to identify implicit theoretical and technical criteria in the different phases of the educational process, thus ensuring the caregivers' and volunteers' constant development of professional skills.

### **Individual Educational Plan (I.E.P.)**

Before enrolment, each child's parents are asked provide the Care Mentor with a detailed description of the child's personality, strengths and weaknesses. Within the first month an individual care plan (IEP) defines short, medium and long term goals on the basis of the conclusions drawn from the observation and assessments carried out by caregivers in close collaboration with the school staff and the parents.



### **Relationship with the parents**

The relationship with the children's parents is the cornerstone of the entire organization of life in the boarding school and for this reason it is the Care Mentor that mediates and liaises directly between parents and teaching staff.

### **Relationship with the school**

The educational aspect and the boarding are two sides of the same educational project. The professionals related to teaching (Teachers) and those related to boarding (caregivers) have equal status and equal responsibility in implementing a holistic education to each child's personality. For this reason it must be a collaboration with constant communication between them.

### **Kitchen**

The kitchen is run by a professional chef, two assistant cooks and a cleaning staff. The sanitary aspects of the kitchen were authorized by SCIA on 29/04/2015 (See APP. H). A HACCP, Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point, is diligently followed. The menu is authorized by SIAN and the menu is set on a biweekly basis which will follow the main guidelines of the public schools of the Piemonte region. The multi-ethnicity of the school is also reflected in the varied range of international food on the menu. When possible, the purchase of seasonal, local and organically grown products is preferred.

### **Trips and extra-curricular activities**

Fun and recreational activities are of a crucial importance in the educational process because apart from offering a cultural enrichment they strengthen the bond between the children and the adults thus creating a solid foundation on which to build educational projects. There are many occasions in which trips are organized to the most important Italian cities, the biggest national amusement parks or public and private museums. The school obviously facilitates and promotes the constant contact with the beautiful and unspoilt nature of Val Borbera.

Cabella Ligure, 04/07/2016



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