



Qatar-Finland International School

Parent Handbook

2020-2021

(Updated in December 2020)





Dear families,

Welcome to the Q.F.I. School community.

We are happy to start the new academic year in collaboration with you. Qatar-Finland International School wants to share the learning journey together with your family as your child's education is extremely important. This handbook is meant for parents and caregivers. It will clarify the everyday practices and procedures in our school. We hope that this handbook will help you organize your daily lives in the best possible way.

Please do not hesitate to turn to our staff members with any questions or concerns you might have regarding your child's education or the school practices.

Wishing a very good academic year 2020-2021.

Sincerely,

Mr. Nikke Keskinen

General Manager
Head of Q.F.I. School





Contents

Contact information	4
Vision.....	5
Mission	5
Values.....	5
Concept of learning	6
Our Way of Teaching	6
Responsibility for learning	7
Curriculum.....	8
Student Assessment.....	8
Admissions and School Fees	9
Daily Working Hours and Structure	10
Student Support in the school	11
Extra-Curricular Activities (ECAs)	11
School Policies	12
Health and Safety	13
Lunch.....	13
Transportation.....	14
Drop-off and Pick-up.....	14
Money.....	15
Devices	15
Library.....	16
Home-School Cooperation	16





Contact information

Front desk:	Ms. Marwa Mahmoud - 4012 7885
Head of Admissions:	Ms. Hanaa Konbaz - 5032 2893
School Nurse / Clinic:	Ms. Edna Sagala - 4012 7896
IT department:	Mr. Bart van Klaveren - 5048 1817
Activity Coordinator (ECA):	Mr. Mikko Paasikoski - 5513 7827
Academic Principal G0-3:	Ms. Hanne Patomäki - 3345 4875
Academic Principal G4-6:	Mr. Sampsa Melkas - 6645 6039
Academic Principal G7-11:	Ms. Tarja Männikkö - 3372 8539
Administrative Principal:	Mr. Yousri Youssef - 5046 9757
General Manager:	Mr. Nikke Keskinen - 6652 2847

Teachers can be reached through email firstname.lastname@qfiscchool.com or via Parent Portal in Ed-admin. The teaching staff and parents will collaboratively define other communication channels if needed. The school will not give out the personal contact information of the teaching staff. Please note that in all student-related matters, the first point of contact is always your child's class teacher/homeroom teacher.

Other relevant contacts:

School canteen:

Jazz Café, Managing Partner Jeronimo Dsouza
+974 3360 8088
jeronimo@jazzgroup.com.qa

School uniforms:

Noble House Trading
+974 4039 0264
info@noblehouseqatar.com

School transport:

Safari Transportation
+974 7064 9696
info@safaritransport.com

Vision

We are a learning community dedicated to inspiring success and nurturing well-being. Finnish education excellence is at the heart of all we do, because we believe that everybody deserves the best possible future.

Mission

				
Respect for diversity	Responsibility for learning	Courage to be creative	Collaboration for shared SUCCESS	Global citizenship
We are different yet we are the same. Let's embrace this.	We are all learners for life. We trust the professionalism of our teachers, and we trust our students to be proactive learners.	To be a pioneer is to take educated risks. To be an innovator is to use your imagination.	Working together works.	We are citizens of the world, confidently navigating our own path to reshape the future.

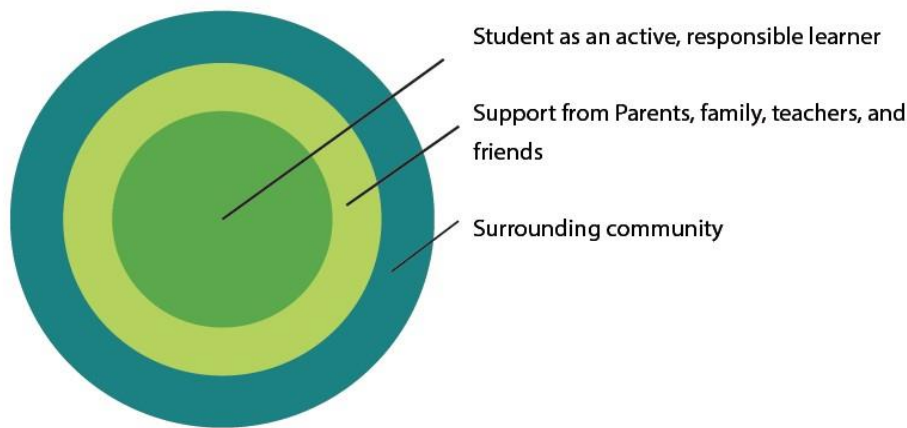
Values

- Respect
- Communication
- Professionalism
- Co-operation
- Equality



Concept of learning

The philosophy and theoretical basis of the Q.F.I. School lies in socio-constructivism and socio-cultural approach and it introduces the idea of meaningful learning – purposeful studying – reflective teaching process as a foundation of pedagogy in a networked society. The school recognizes an individual learner and diversity of learners and supports the learning process of each student. Modern and versatile learning environment enables student to acquire, use and produce knowledge, and enhances participation and collaborative

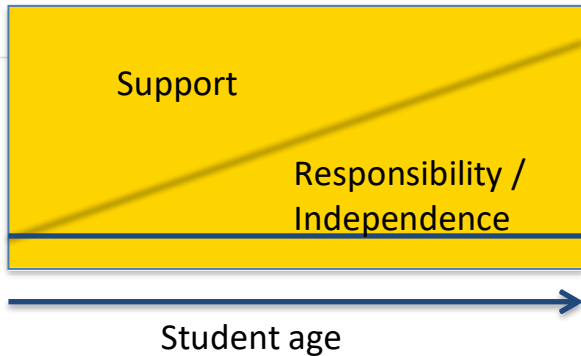


Our Way of Teaching

Most of the content topics are designed to form larger, holistic entireties where several subjects are combined in the most feasible way. Teacher collaboration plays an important role in this approach. The teachers of the same grade level mix the groups and utilize their strengths for the best possible outcomes. The teachers need to plan the activities together!

In the early years, learning is organized through practicing skills together with heavily integrated themes rising from the curriculum topics and the children’s interests. At this level, making a clear distinction whether children are studying e.g. Math or Arts is not relevant, but rather the relevance raises from the integrated content of the learning activities and their connection to the children’s lives. Early learning takes place through play and children’s active participation in collaborative knowledge construction.

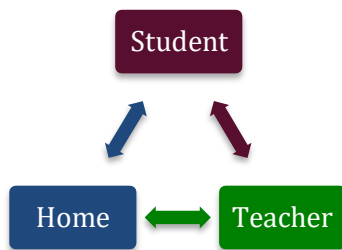




The older the students, the stronger are the roles of individual subjects in their curriculum. At this point the school also introduces the subject teacher system. However, learning should still be organized around integrated themes. These themes and integrated activities are planned collaboratively so that the division of responsibilities in implementation is utilizing the strengths of each staff member.

Another emphasis is put on making sure our students get enough physical exercise during a school day. Therefore, in the classrooms our students may use balance boards whenever standing and gymnastic balls when sitting to do pencil work. Staff together with older students organize optional activities for the longer breaks and we encourage all students to participate. The breaks are planned to be part of holistic learning.

Responsibility for learning



The Finnish system strongly believes in collaboration of the stakeholders mentioned in the picture. There are several studies showing that the students coming from homes that work together with the school and show interest for education, perform socially and academically much better than their peers without this support.

At the same time, the Finnish Education System wants to emphasize the fundamental responsibility for learning, which is always on the student. When bringing up independent learners this responsibility must be taken seriously and nurtured from an early age. Students at all ages can decide if they listen to teacher's instructions. This is an age-appropriate sign of responsibility and it is needed for learning and higher thinking skills.

Our school believes in gradual release of support. The child is never left alone. The nature of support varies. The younger the child, the more support is available. However, we always keep in mind that a young child as well as a mature adult has both the ability to take responsibility and the need for support.

Curriculum

The Q.F.I. School curriculum provides a well-balanced system incorporating highly academic skills and strong self-expression and creative skills. The curriculum combines the Finnish National Core Curriculum with the Qatari curriculum standards.

Our teaching approach is thematic, integrated and child centered. The instruction provides opportunity for successful academic achievement alongside nurturing your child as a whole person. Our teachers have high level content knowledge combined with strong pedagogical skills, a variety of methodological tools and approaches to serve the individual needs of your child.

Apart from enhancing academic achievement, we work to support the development of the following cross-cutting skills:

- Higher level cognitive skills, learning to learn
- Cultural competences, interaction and self-expression
- Looking after oneself, managing daily activities, and safety
- Multi-literacy
- ICT competence
- Working life skills and entrepreneurship
- Participation, empowerment and responsibility

More content related information can be found on school website (www.qfiskool.com).

Student Assessment

Every child that applies to our school goes through the admissions assessment. We assess the students in order to place them in the most appropriate grade level based on their skills. After the initial assessment, the admissions team holds the right to place the student at the appropriate grade level.

Assessment is based on holistic evaluation of the child's learning and his/her performance during the test. The school looks into academic, social, emotional and motoric skills as well as behavior and attitude since they all are equally valuable in child's holistic development. Low performance in any of these areas might be a reason for a refusal of an applicant.





At the beginning of the school year the school pedagogical staff prepares a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) for each student. The mentioned aims come from the school curriculum. The PLP gives a holistic overview of child's strengths and weaknesses and sets some objectives for and tools for the ongoing term. The PLP is reviewed for every term.

The most important data for student assessment comes through continuous teacher observations and continuous formative assessment. In these processes the teacher is able to collect information about student progress through versatile sources. Observing student's daily work and using continuous formative assessment on daily bases gives the teacher

realistic and up-to-date information about student's academic level, working skills and behavior. For example, the following documentation is used:

- teacher's notes, photos, videos
- student test results
- student portfolios
- student self-evaluation documents
- group self-evaluation documents

The school year is divided into three terms. Students receive a report card at the end of each term. Prior to this the parents have a possibility to meet teachers in a Parent-Teacher Conference or Student-Led Conference.

In the early education (Grades 0-2) the evaluation is written and descriptive. Starting from grade 3 student assessment follows numeric scale from 4-10 (4 being failed and 10 being excellent) with a descriptive text.

The children are taught to use peer- and self-evaluation as a natural part of daily routines and group activities. The use of these methods enhances the understanding between learning and assessment and promotes the construction of stronger and more realistic self-image.

Admissions and School Fees

Up-to-date admissions procedures as well as the school fee structure can be found on the school website.

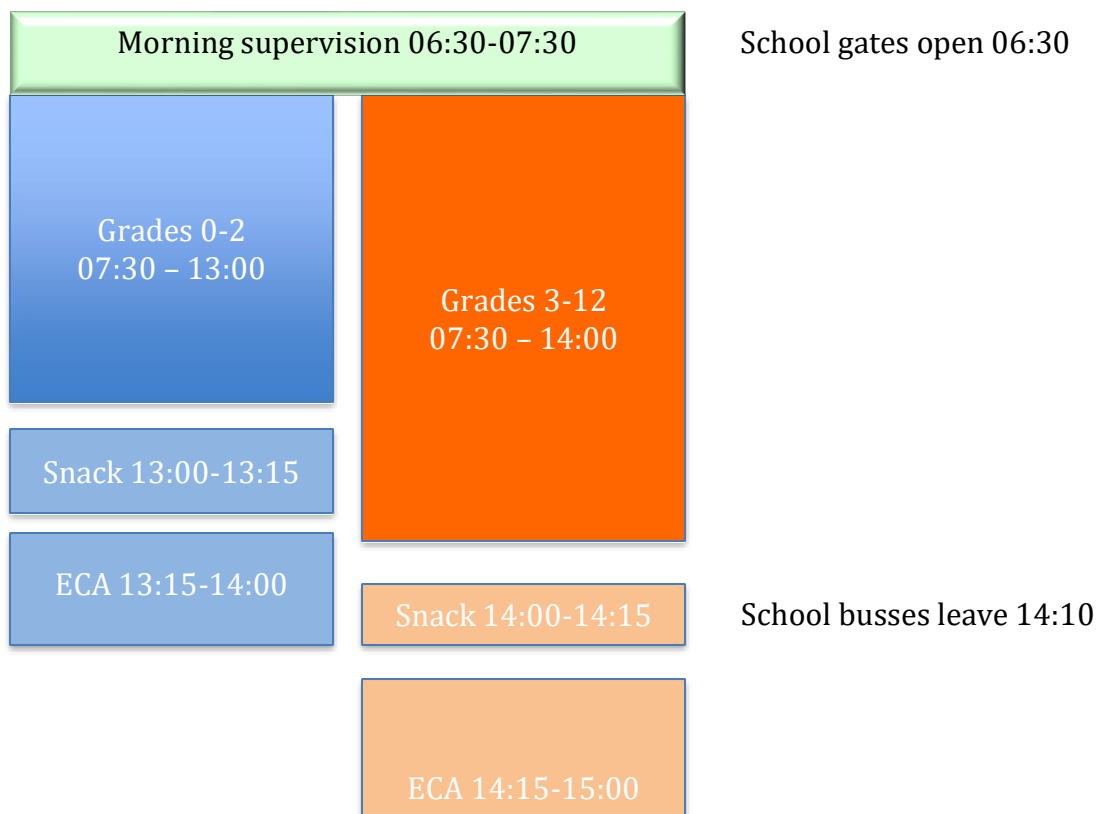
<https://qatarfinlandschool.com/>

Daily Working Hours and Structure

The school runs in three different timetables which vary according to the grade level. For grades 0 to 2 the school begins 07:30 and ends at 1 PM. For grades 3 to 9 the school begins 07:30 and ends at 2 PM. High school students (Grades 10-12) follow their own separate timetable which may vary daily. School buses leave 14.10 daily.

Please note that in the mornings the school gates open at 6.30 and in the afternoon the gates open 5 minutes before the school ends.

Scheduled meetings with the school personnel and visits to the admissions and finance office are possible throughout the day.



All students have also longer breaks during the school day. Please note that the structure of the school day can be changed according to the outside weather conditions. The school follows the air quality. If needed, indoor breaks are in use.





During the winter months it is important that parents see to their children's warm clothing because cold weather does not prevent the children from going outside to play. If your child has a medical reason for not being able to go outside, please contact the class teacher / homeroom teacher / school nurse.

Student Support in the school

Our focus is on early intervention in a flexible manner with solid co-operation between the different stakeholders. In order to prevent the emergence and growth of problems we offer support in three categories: general, intensified and special support.

Everyone is entitled to general support. It is a natural part of everyday teaching and learning process. Intensified and special support categories are based on careful assessment and long-span planning. If general support is not enough, further care is planned by multi-professional Student Welfare Team. The team consists of Academic Principal, School Counselor, Special Needs Teachers and School Nurse.

Extra-Curricular Activities (ECAs)

The school offers a wide variety of Extra Curricular Activities (ECA) mainly organized by outsourced companies. Students staying after school for ECA have a 10 min supervised snack break. The representative of ECA provider picks up the G0-2 students from the classrooms. Grade 3-12 students are expected to arrive to the activities on their own. The companies are also responsible for supervising the students after activities until they are picked up. Students must be picked up from the location of the activity unless otherwise agreed.

The objectives of extra-curricular activities are:

- to support the educational work of the home and school
- to increase involvement on the part of children and young people
- to provide an opportunity for developing social skills and nurturing a sense of community
- to provide an opportunity to feel one is capable and successful
- to develop creative activity and thinking
- to encourage children and young people to produce their own culture
- to provide an opportunity to become more familiar with the student
- to support the pursuit of interests and promote constructive pastimes





Schedule for grades 0-2:

- Snack 13:00 - 13:10 (in the allocated classrooms)
- ECA 13:15 - 14:00

Schedule for grades 3-10:

- Snack 14:00 - 14:10 (in School Canteen)
- ECA 14:15 - 15:00

More information about ECAs can be found on the school website. Please note that all inquiries about outsourced activities should be addressed directly to the provider.

Afternoon Club for grades 0-2

The school also offers Afternoon Clubs for grade 0-2 students organized by the staff. To be eligible for Afternoon Clubs a student must have an older sibling in grade 3-12 or be waiting for bus transportation. Price for the Afternoon Club is 25 QAR/day and it will be deducted from the wristband according to attendance.

Schedule for Afternoon Club (grades 0-2)

- Snack 13:00 - 13:10 (in the allocated classrooms)
- Afternoon Club 13:15 - 14:00

Please note: New signups and online payments (excluding Afternoon Club payments) are needed for every term and must be done using ClubSys application within given timeframe.

School Policies

The school policies regarding e.g. fees, uniforms, behavior and attendance are described in detail in the School Policy Document which can be found on the school website. Please refer to the up-to-date school policy document at

<https://qatarfinlandschool.com/schoollife/>





Please note that according to Ministry guidance, signing the school policies has been required when securing a place in the Q.F.I. School.

Health and Safety

The school has a Health, Safety & Environment Team whose responsibility is to coordinate safety related topics inside the school in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. The team keeps the school's Health and Safety Plan updated and withholds safety trainings for the staff members.

The school has a full-time nurse. School nurse is available in the school every school day for emergencies and other health matters. We ask you to inform the nurse about your child's potential medication or other health related issues. School nurse is available in the school every school day for emergencies and other health matters. Please, do not bring your child to school if he/she is ill.

Please contact the nurse for appointment or enquiries:

Tel. 4012 7896 or

Email: edna.sagala@qfischool.com

The school organizes evacuation drills regularly. We kindly ask you to exercise extreme caution while driving in our drop-off / pick-up areas. The pedestrian crossings (zebra crossing) are no parking zones. Please, educate your children to use these marked crossings.

Lunch

The school has a Canteen. The provider is operating a non-cash system based on bracelet (students) or canteen ID card (parents). If you want to use the canteen services, please come and see the school finance office.

More detailed information will be given by the Canteen provider (Jazz Café) as soon as possible.

There is always a possibility to have a packed lunch brought from home. The students are expected to have healthy, nutritious packed lunches with them. Soft drinks, chips/crisps, nuts, chocolate or other sweets are not allowed.





Transportation

The school cooperates with Safari Transport. Transportation Office is located at the bus gate. All inquiries concerning school transportation should be addressed directly to Safari Transport

tel. 5007 9317

email: registration@safaritransport.com

Drop-off and Pick-up

The school gates open 06:30 in the morning. The children wait outside for the school to start if the weather permits. There are two official drop-off / pick-up areas both with entrance and exit gates. The school busses are using the side entry and exits. Please, note that both parking areas are one-way drive areas. Use consideration and caution when parking your car so that it doesn't obstruct the traffic and cause dangerous situation. All cars must exercise reverse parking. The pedestrian crossings (zebra crossing) are not parking zones. Please, educate your children to use these marked crossings.

In case the child is picked up before the end of last lesson, the person picking the student up must fill in a Student Early Pick up Form. This can be acquired from the Front Desk in the Main Lobby. The form must be signed by the teacher. No student is allowed to leave without the signed form.

Students in grades 0-6 are not allowed to leave the school premises without an adult escort. The secondary (grades 7-12 students are allowed to exit the premises independently).

Q.F.I. School takes their responsibility on students' health and safety very seriously. We think that it is important that the students get enough free time and rest. Also, according to our policies, the students need to be supervised at all times to ensure their safety. Instead of monitoring the late pick-up, the school staff is occupied with numerous other duties after the teaching hours. The school is not liable for the safety of the children after the end of the last lesson.

For these reasons, the students should be picked up promptly after their school day is over.

- If there is a frequent pattern of early pick-ups (10 times), the Class /Homeroom Teacher will contact the family and the Student Welfare Team.
- If the student continues to violate this policy (10 additional times), the parents will be asked to meet with the Counselor and Class/Homeroom Teacher. An Action Plan is made for further procedures.



- If the student continues to violate this policy (10 additional times), the parents will be asked to meet with the Vice Principal, Counselor and Class/Homeroom Teacher. The student and the parents sign a Conditional Agreement, in which the school expectations are reinforced.
- For further cases of tardiness (10 additional times), the student will not be offered a place at the school for the next academic year.

Money

We urge you not to have the students bring money to school. The responsibility for any money that students might possess lies on the family.

Devices

In general, the school encourages and supports the educational use of technology at school. The educators in school decide the best possible use of technology at a given time. The school offers students devices to be used during the lessons (iPads and laptops). However, the students can also bring their own devices from home. High school students are expected to have their own personal laptops to be used in their studies. The school cannot be held responsible and will not cover any loss or damage of devices brought from home.

The use of personal devices is restricted in the school policy. The students are allowed to use their own devices in the morning before the beginning of school (before 07:30) and/or in the afternoon after school hours. Primary students are not allowed to use their own devices during the breaks.

Secondary school students are allowed to use their devices during allocated breaks in dedicated areas. Students' own devices are stored in their school bags on silent mode when they are not in use. During the school hours, the permission to use technology always comes from the pedagogical staff – otherwise the students do not touch their devices (school's or their own).

High school students can freely use their devices during the day as long as it does not disturb the learning/teaching process. This interpretation is done by the school pedagogical staff. During the lessons the personal devices may be used with a specific permission from the pedagogical staff.

In case students misuse their own devices, the school staff has a right to confiscate the device. It will be given back only to students' guardian.



Library

Library is a versatile learning environment, where our students can read, study, research and do projects alone and in groups utilizing the modern technology. Students may borrow books for a specified time using their student ID cards. In case there is any damage or loss of the library materials, the parents are liable for covering the costs before the student is able to borrow more materials. Unpaid library fees can cause for student not to get his/her report card at the end of the term.

Home-School Cooperation

The school strongly believes that bringing up children is a collaborative task, which requires shared values and understanding between homes and the school. Q.F.I. School provides the parents with a handbook, which includes practical information about school life. This will help the families to organize their daily lives and find common understanding with the school in bringing up their children.

In the Q.F.I. School, we believe that the responsibility for learning is shared between students, teachers and homes. Whilst the parents are primarily responsible for the upbringing of their child, we support them by taking responsibility for the child's education at school. However, the school strongly believes that the fundamental responsibility for learning must lie within the child.

Parents are always welcome to our school to join classes, to talk to staff and to contribute to our community building after negotiating this with the school administration. We hope that parents will be active partners in supporting all aspects of their children's learning, in and outside of school. **The first point of contact for the parents is always the Class/Homeroom teacher who will in turn contact other professionals when needed.** Possible further actions will be decided in collaboration with parents.

All of our teachers are willing and happy to talk with the parents about their children's learning or any school matter that they might have in mind. However, this is not done during the lessons or other duties. **Classroom visits need to be booked in advance with the teacher.**

Home-school collaboration is enabled through following structures:

- Parents receive **feedback** about their child's behavior and academic performance in school **on a regular basis** through various means of communication (e.g., phone calls, e-mails, scheduled meetings, student management system, etc.).
- Parents receive a **weekly letter** from teachers with general information of the class (special events, tests, things to remember), topics that are being taught during the week and some pedagogical guidance on how to support the child at home.

- The school year is divided into three terms. Students receive a report card at the end of each term. Prior to this the parents have a possibility to meet teachers in a **Parent-Teacher Conference** and in a **Student-Led Conference**.

**The first and second term report cards include the respective term evaluation. The last report card covers the student's progress over the whole academic year.*

- There is **Principals' Morning coffee** every first Thursday of the month in the Canteen (during AY 2020-2021 they have been held online, according to COVID-19 restrictions and school's safety arrangements).
- The school has a **Parent Association (PA)**. PA is a parent-led group that supports the school in its primary task according to the school values. PA meets on a monthly basis. Each class has a Class Representative who acts as a link between PA and Class/Homeroom Teacher.

The aims of PA are:

- To enrich the children's education by promoting parental involvement in supporting school policies and programs in a constructive way
- To maintain and foster a constructive partnership between staff and parents in the interests of the school and children
- To act as a vehicle for discussion, learning and positive action
- To enhance programs offered by Q.F.I. School
- To work toward achieving these aims through fundraising and other activities

The school expects parents to attend parent evenings and parent-teacher conferences since they provide a valuable opportunity for home-school communication and usually provide valuable information and school procedures.

When requested from the school side, the parents are required to be active towards the school for being able to organize a meeting. If reasonable activity from the parent side is not shown, the child's student place for the coming academic year might be reconsidered.

