

**What is it like to work at Qatar-Finland
International School and live in Doha?**





QATAR·FINLAND
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

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Our mission is to bring Finnish education within reach of all children.



EduCluster Finland (ECF) is a business specialised in educational export with a focus on establishing Finnish International schools, vocational education and training as well as teacher training and professional development. It is a limited company owned by the University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences and Jyväskylä Educational Consortium Gradia. Since 2010 ECF has participated in over 200 international education projects in over 75 countries. Its annual turnover is approximately 11 million euros. The growth continues especially in the Middle East and Asia.

As a company we are very proud to be engaged in the education sector. Education is one of the most important investments a country can make in its people and its future, making educational export a very responsible business. Raising the level of education offers many potential benefits to both individuals and society in general. The fruits of our labour for improving education today will be enjoyed for decades to come. The opportunity to be involved in this means our work is both very meaningful and highly motivating. The most essential resources for our business are the committed, highly trained teachers who put in practice the ideals of the Finnish approach to education in our schools around the world.



Our mission is to share Finnish educational expertise with the world. Our Finnish International schools around the world have been designed to do just this and to bring the highest quality education within the reach of all children.



Q.F.I.School is the only Finnish international school outside the borders of Finland that offers Finnish basic education and high school in English.



The origins of the school lie in the global interest sparked by Finland's excellent results in PISA testing.



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Q.F.I. School is a Finnish international school that offers education according to Finnish curriculum in English, the Q.F.I. High School being the first of its kind outside Finnish borders. Education given at Q.F.I. School has been accredited both by the Qatari and Finnish authorities.

The school currently consists over 100 staff members from more than 25 different nationalities. Almost half of the staff comes from Finland. There are over 750 students from roughly 60 different nationalities, with Qataris being the largest group. Local adaptations to the Finnish curriculum have been made to include subjects such as Arabic Mother Tongue, Qatar History and Islamic Studies.

The origins of the school lie in the global interest sparked by Finland's excellent results in PISA testing. Among others, HH Sheikha Moza from Qatar became interested in Finnish education and visited schools in Finland, which resulted in an official invitation from Qatar to establish a Finnish school in Doha. In 2014 Qatar-Finland International School officially opened its doors



as a part of the Outstanding Schools project of the Qatar Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Since then, the school has grown steadily and reached its full capacity in 2017. The grand opening of the first international Finnish high school was held in 2019. Currently the school operates basic education grades 0-9, high school grades 10-12. The first graduates were in 2022.

The school is located on the north side of Doha, close to the Lusail stadium, the main stage of the 2022 football world cup. The area around the school is being developed into a suburban residential area. The distance from the school to the centre of Doha is about 20 minutes by car.



The vision of the school is to be an exemplary Educational hub of overall well-being and outstanding learning results.

Work

The school hires professionals to the following positions:

- Class teachers
- Language and Subject teachers for both in secondary school and high school
- Special Educational Needs teachers
- Counsellors
- Guidance counsellors
- Learning assistants
- Librarian

Teachers work closely in their multi-professional unit teams consisting of several teachers, learning assistants, a SEN teacher, a counsellor and a vice principal. In these units, the staff plan and organise learning engagements together as much as possible. Workdays follow set hours from 7.30 to 15.00 and responsibilities depend on the position and expertise of the employee.

Professional environment at the school is friendly and supporting, which makes it is easy to challenge oneself and achieve professional growth. Working at the forefront of educational export one gets a chance to constantly define, assess and improve “the Finnish approach to education”. What also makes work rewarding, is having the common goal of sharing the Finnish values and education expertise all over the world, and helping countries develop towards building better societies.





Life

ECF offers a competitive salary package, which makes settling in comfortable. There's a wide variety of housing options in Doha, catering for all needs. The man-made island of **The Pearl** is a more western-like environment next to which the new waterfront area called **Lusail** is about to be finished. Another popular location among the Finnish recruits has been **Al Gassar Resort Residential Towers**, located next to the Katara Cultural Village just inland from the Pearl. For a more spacious, quiet and family friendly type of living there are a wide variety of *compounds* with larger villas to choose from.

There are various cultural and sports events in Doha, and it is possible to continue almost any existing hobby, or to even start a new one.

The weather is very hot during the summer months. However, there are plenty of airconditioned indoor facilities to spend time in. From October to April, the weather is perfect for outdoor activities. Doha has numerous parks with lush greenery and activities for adults and children alike.

What is it really like?

Two perspectives to the life and work in Doha.

Sampsä Melkas came to Doha together with his wife and three children in 2016 to work as a class teacher.

Sampsä lived with his family in the Pearl for the first two years. He says that it's good to stay close to the other Finns in the beginning, especially if the spouse stays at home with the kids. There are many others who stay at home, which enables easy networking, playdates and a generally more active social life. However, the best type of living for a family in Sampsä's opinion is a compound. Sampsä's family moved into one in 2018 and haven't regretted their choice. Children can play outside more freely, ride their bikes and find more friends. Also, the fact that there are more rooms in a villa adds to the comfort.

Sampsä's children go to football practices outside the compound. Most compounds also offer possibilities to have guided activities, such as swimming lessons.

"The school also offers extracurricular activities, which means that many hobbies can be connected to the school day. For one hour after the school day ends, students have a chance to join different kinds of sport and artistic activities. This means less stress for parents as they don't necessarily have to take their children to hobbies in the evenings," Sampsä explains.



In Qatar, it is possible to hire help with housekeeping in case both parents are working. Sampsa's family have gone with the option of hiring someone who comes every day but doesn't live with the family. This is a slightly more expensive but probably more suitable option for a Finn who values his privacy.



In terms of work, Sampsa encourages anyone looking for new challenges and career opportunities to apply. Sampsa gives praise to the working community. "You don't ever have to struggle alone. All work is done in teams and the collegial support is amazing." In Sampsa's opinion, working set hours (7.30-15.00) every day is a positive thing and enables team work as well as planning your work during the working day.

What makes Sampsa and his family stay in Doha year after year?

"Simply put, it's the fascination of experiencing and learning something new almost every single day. There are so many different people with different backgrounds you socialize with every day. This helps you not only to grow professionally but as a human being."



Luke and *Mia Barnes* applied to work at Q.F.I. School out of a sense of professional curiosity and adventure and have not been disappointed by what they have found.

Luke calls Australia home, so having an opportunity for his children to broaden their worldviews by experiencing life and ideas outside of Finland has always been important. Luke feels that Qatar and Qatar-Finland International School have both provided a wealth of cultural and linguistic opportunities for the family of five.

Mia enjoys the international atmosphere in Doha and appreciates how safe it is to raise children here. It has been very eye-opening to see how accommodating Qatar is to people from different parts of the world as well as getting to know the Qatari culture and customs. Also having 13 nationalities represented in one classroom has been rewarding and there are no boring workdays.

Professionally, both Luke and Mia most appreciate the deeply embedded focus on teamwork and have experienced it as a fundamental building block in the way Qatar-Finland International School operates. It is an environment where you are supported by your colleagues and at the same time constantly challenged and made to reflect on how things are

Arriving in the middle of a pandemic was never going to be easy, but the support of colleagues in the school has made all the difference.

done and why, which in terms of professional development is fantastic. Both Luke and Mia were interested in seeing how the Finnish educational model could be implemented in a context outside of Finland, and their time in Qatar has provided an excellent example of this.

The school community, the Finnish community and other international friends provide a safety net which you need at your home away from home. Some of the highlights for Mia of living in Qatar have been going dune bashing in the desert and spending the night there in a tent, paddleboarding to Al Safliya island to see flamingos and experiencing grand-scale sports events such as the Formula 1 competition or FIFA's Arab Cup. There are many things to do during weekends and lots of hobbies to choose from. Padel fever has certainly spread to the majority of the teachers.

Mia and Luke encourage new applicants to apply with an open mind and a willingness to adapt and be flexible. The familiarity of the Finnish system combined with the differences of a new culture make working at Q.F.I. School a rewarding challenge for those who dare to try it.

An International Perspective

Amber Rainkie (Canada) and **Kara Schultz** (South Africa) are two international teachers who work as subject teachers at the school. Both Amber and Kara have been in Doha for over 5 years and have experience in teaching internationally. Kara explains: "The school is different from other schools I have worked at because teachers have the freedom to determine the content and delivery methods that best suit the students' needs."

"Being able to develop my own resources, share with my colleagues and collaborate with others who have different teaching experiences has been great because we are able to find creative options to help move our teaching forward," Amber adds.



Both agree that the community here is supportive and, being an expat, it helps to have a 'home away from home'. "Your colleagues help you in this, and because most of the country is made up of expats, you find other social circles as well –

*there is an understanding
and feeling of safety here
in Doha.*


In the beginning there was a bit of culture shock, but now after having settled in Doha really does feel like home," says Amber.

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