



Qatar-Finland International School

Parent Handbook

AY 2023-2024





Dear parents,

The Qatar-Finland International School was established in Qatar in 2014. The school is truly an international learning environment providing education for 4–18-year-old students – Grades 0-12 and KG. The school curriculum is based on the Finnish National Core Curriculum, with adaptations in the local Qatari context.

The Finnish approach to education is deeply holistic, thereby not only inspiring success but also nurturing well-being. Our world-known education emphasises cross-curricular themes and learning; students do not study only subjects but also themes and phenomena.

Our students love coming to Q.F.I. School due to our versatile working methods which give the students a joy of learning and experiences of success. The function of the working approaches is to develop social, learning, thinking, working, and problem-solving skills, and to foster active participation.

We want our students to learn for life, not only to do well in tests. To this end, continuous assessment is a collaborative process utilised to enhance learning by observing students' daily work and using continuous formative assessment, giving the teacher and the parents realistic and up-to-date information about students' academic level and working skills.

This handbook is meant for parents and caregivers and will clarify our school's everyday practices and procedures. We hope that this handbook will help you organise your daily lives in the best possible way, and 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.

Welcome to the Q.F.I. School family, and I wish you a very good academic year 2023-2024.

Sincerely,

Yousri Youssef
Principal



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	14
Health and Safety	14
Lunch.....	14
Transportation.....	15
Drop-Off and Pick-Up.....	15
Money.....	16
Devices.....	16
Library	17
Home-School Co-operation	18



Contact Information

Front Desk:	Ms. Areej Lababneh	4012 7885
Head of Admissions:	Ms. Marwa Mahmoud	5032 2893
School Nurse/Clinic:	Ms. Sumy Abraham	4012 7896
IT Department:	Mr. Ossi Itäkare	5048 1817
Activity Coordinator (ECA):	Mr. Robert Juvonen	55137827
Academic Vice Principal, Grades KG-6:	Ms. Anne Dullaghan	5996 3591
Academic Vice Principal, Grades 7-12:	Ms. Tuija Lehtinen	5990 1187
Administrative Vice Principal:	Ms. Renja-Kaisa Martikainen	5996 3573
Principal:	Mr. Yousri Youssef	5046 9757

Teachers can be reached through email - firstname.lastname@qfiscchool.com – or via the Edana Parent Portal. 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:
Smart Step
+974 77212248
smartstepcont@gmail.com

Vision

**Qatar-Finland International School -
Exemplary educational hub of overall well-being and outstanding learning results.**

Mission

Qatar-Finland International School adapts Finnish expertise to the unique needs of the Qatari context to offer the best education in the State of Qatar.

We focus on the overall well-being and the individual development of everyone to bring up active global citizens for a sustainable future.

Being excellent in what we do enables us to serve as a learning hub for all educators and develop education on both a national and international level.

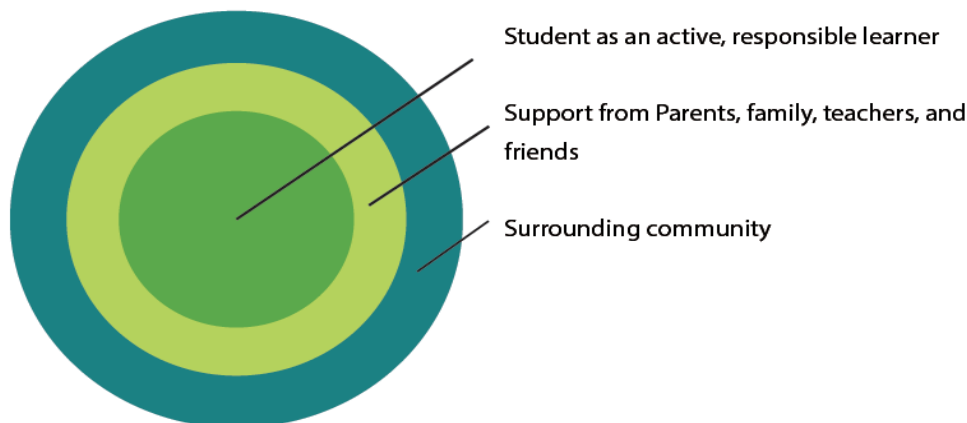
Values

- 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 the socio-cultural approach, and it introduces the idea of meaningful learning through purposeful studying and a reflective teaching process as a foundation of pedagogy in a networked society. The school recognises an individual learner and the diversity of learners and supports the learning process of each student. A modern and versatile learning environment enables students to acquire, use and produce knowledge, and enhances participation and collaboration.

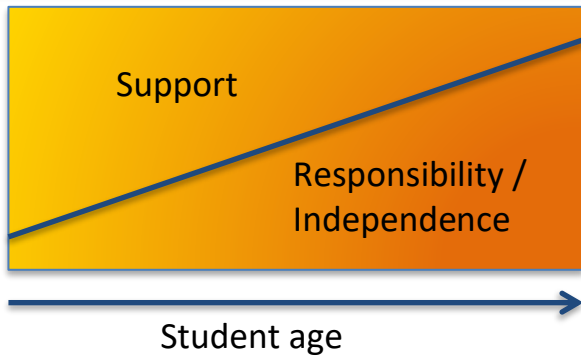


Our Way of Teaching

Most of the content topics are designed to form larger, holistic entities where several subjects are combined in the most feasible way. Teacher collaboration plays an important role in this approach, with teachers of the same grade level mixing the groups and utilising their strengths for the best possible outcomes. This is made possible because teachers plan the activities together.

In the early years, learning is organised through practising skills together with heavily integrated themes rising from the curriculum topics and the children's interests. At this level, making a clear distinction between whether children are studying e.g. math or arts is not relevant, but rather the relevance increases due to 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.

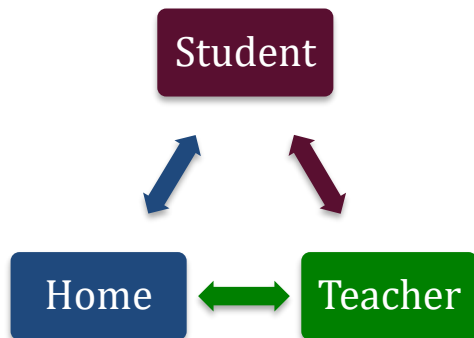




The older the students, the stronger the roles of individual subjects become in their curriculum. At this point, the school also introduces the subject teacher system. However, learning should still be organised around integrated themes, planned collaboratively so that the division of responsibilities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

Additional emphasis is placed on ensuring our students get enough physical exercise during a school day, with breaks being planned as an integral part of the students' well-being.

Responsibility for Learning



The Finnish system strongly believes in the collaboration of the stakeholders mentioned in the graphic. Several studies show that an environment of strong collaboration between homes and school, as well as where the former has a positive attitude towards and interest in education, result in students who perform better socially and academically - especially compared to their peers lacking this support.

At the same time, the Finnish Education System emphasises the fundamental responsibility for learning, which always ultimately lies with the student. When raising independent learners, this responsibility must be taken seriously and nurtured from an early age, however, students of all ages are able to display certain skills, for example, deciding whether to listen to the 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 the gradual release of support, and while the child is never left alone, the nature of support varies. The younger the child, the more support is available as 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 advanced academic skills, strong self-expression, and creative skills. The curriculum combines the Finnish National Core Curriculum with Qatari curriculum standards.

Our teaching approach is thematic, integrated and child-centred. The instruction provides the opportunity for successful academic achievement alongside nurturing your child as a whole person. Our teachers have a high level of content-related knowledge combined with strong pedagogical skills, as well as 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 overarching life 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 our school website (www.qfischool.com).

Student Assessment

Every child that applies to our school goes through the admissions assessment where we assess the students 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 in the appropriate grade level.

Assessment is based on holistic evaluation of the child's learning and their performance during the test. The school investigates academic, social, emotional, and motor skills, as well as behaviour and attitude, since these all are equally valuable in a child's holistic development. Low performance in any of these areas might result in the 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, and the PLP gives a holistic overview of a child's strengths and weaknesses, as well as setting some objectives and helpful tools for the ongoing term. The PLP is reviewed 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, giving the teacher realistic and up-to-date information about students' academic level, working skills and behaviour. 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, and students receive a report card at the end of each term. Prior to this, parents have an opportunity to meet teachers at a Parent-Student-Teacher Conference, or a Student-Led Conference.

In early education (Grades 0-2), the evaluation is written and descriptive, but starting from Grade 3, student assessment follows a numeric scale from 4-10 (4 being a fail and 10 being outstanding).

Students are taught to use peer- and self-evaluation as a natural part of daily routines and group activities. The use of these methods enhances their understanding of learning and assessment and promotes the construction of a 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 according to four different timetables which vary based on the grade level. High school students (Grades 10-12) follow their own separate timetable which may vary daily.

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

Morning supervision 6:30-7:30			
Grades 0-2 7:30-13:00	Grades 3-6 7:30-13:45	Grades 7-9 7:30-13:55	Grades 10-12 7:30-14:45
Snack 13:00-13:15			
ECA/Afternoon club 13:15-14:00			
	Snack 13:45-14:00	Snack 13:55-14:00	
Study Club 14:00-15:00	ECA 14:00-15:00 Study club/Lynxes 14:00-15:00	ECA 14:00-15:00 Study club/Lynxes 14:00-15:00	
			Lynxes 15:00-16:00



Structure of the School Day

Grade 0-2	Grade 3-4	Grade 5-6	Grades 7-9	Grades 10-12
7:30-8:15	7:30-8:15	7:30-8:15	7:30-8:15	7:30-8:15
8:15-8:30 Break	8:15-9:00	8:15-9:00	8:15-9:00	8:15-9:00
8:30-9:15	9:00-9:15 Break	9:00-9:15 Break	9:05-9:50	9:05-9:50
9:15-10:00	9:15-10:00	9:15-10:00	9:50-10:15 Break	9:50-10:15 Break
10:00-10:30 Lunch	10:00-10:30 Lunch	10:00-10:30 Break	10:15-11:00	10:15-11:00
10:30-11:00 Break	10:30-11:00 Break	10:30-11:00 Lunch	11:00-11:35 Break*	11:00-11:25 Lunch
11:00-11:45	11.00-11.45	11.00-11.45	11.35-12:10 Lunch**	11:25-12:10
11:45-12:15 Break	11.45-12.30	11.45-12.30	12:10-12:55	12:10-12:55
12:15-13:00	12.30-13.00 Break	12.30-13.00 Break	12:55-13:40	12:55-13:40
	13.00-13.45	13.00-13.45	13:40-13:55 HR	13:40-13:55 Break/HR
			*G9 Lunch	14:00-14:45
			**G9 Break	

During the winter months, it is important to provide warm clothing for children because cold weather does not justify indoor breaks, and students are expected to spend their breaks outdoors. If your child has a medical reason for not being able to go outside, please contact the class teacher/homeroom teacher/school nurse. The school monitors the air quality carefully, and should the need arise, indoor breaks are implemented accordingly.

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, making it a natural part of the everyday teaching and learning process. Intensified and special support categories are based on careful assessment and long-term planning. If general support is not enough, further care is planned by our multi-professional Student Welfare Team, consisting of the Vice Principal, School Counsellor, Special Needs Teachers, and School Nurse.

Extra-Curricular Activities (ECAs)

Qatar-Finland International School's Extra-Curricular Activities are organised to support the school's educational and teaching work in accordance with the objectives of basic education. The activities are to support the student's ethical and social growth and diversified self-development.





The school offers a wide variety of Extra-Curricular Activities (ECAs), organised by the school's pedagogical staff and outsourced companies.

Students staying after school for ECAs have a short, supervised snack break before the activities. The representative of the ECA provider collects the G0-2 students from their classrooms, while Grades 3-6, and 7-12 students are expected to go to the school canteen to wait for their activities to start. The ECA providers are also responsible for supervising the students following the activities until they are picked up. Students must be collected from the assembly hall unless otherwise agreed.

Afternoon Club (only for Grades 0-2)

The school offers Afternoon Clubs for grade 0-2 students organised by the pedagogical staff. Afternoon Club has an additional fee.

ECA's (for Grades 0-6)

ECA Clubs are all based on the following topics: Sports, Music & Arts, Academics and STEM. All the ECA's have an additional fee.

Their goals are to:

- Support the educational work of the home and school
- Increase involvement on the part of children and young people
- Provide an opportunity for developing social skills and nurturing a sense of community
- Provide an opportunity to feel one is capable and successful
- Develop creative activity and thinking
- Encourage children and young people to participate in cultural activities
- Provide an opportunity to become more familiar with the student
- Support the pursuit of interests and promote constructive pastimes

Lynxes Choir and Debate Team

The School Choir performs regularly in school festivities and other competitions. In the weekly rehearsals, they practice safe and healthy ways to use their voice. The goal is to sing a cappella and in harmonies. To attend choir, you must be committed to rehearsing regularly. Prior experience in choir is not needed.

The school's debate team's main goal is to participate in the Qatar Debate season. The season consists of the preparation for the two annual interschool debate tournaments. Students attending will be expected to participate fully and to the best of their ability.





Lynxes Sports Training (for Grades 4 -12)

The school's Lynxes Sports Training program is for Grade 4-12 students who want to participate and train in different sports. Lynxes Sports offers training in football, volleyball, basketball, and racket sports. Students attending will be expected to participate fully and to the best of their ability. The school's Lynxes Teams are also selected from these training squads for the QUESS and QPPSSA - competitions.

Study Club (Grades 0-12)

Study Club is organised by our teachers. In the study club, students can complete their homework, revise for a test, focus on a topic that needs extra attention, or read a book from the school library. A teacher is always present to provide support for the students who need it.

Study Club is free for students who are taking part in the Lynxes (see above). Students who have a sibling in the Lynxes get a discount.

After-school Schedules

Grades 0-2:

- 1:00-1:15pm Snack in the allocated classrooms
- 1:15-2:00pm Afternoon Club
- 1:15-2:00pm ECA
- 2:00-3:00pm Study Club

Grades 3-6:

- 1:45-2:00pm Snack in School Canteen
- 2:00-3:00 pm ECA and Study Club
- 2:00-3:00pm Lynxes Training (only for grades 4-6)

Grades 7-12:

- 1:55-2:00pm Snack in School Canteen
- 2:00-3:00pm ECA and Study Club
- 2:00-3:00pm Lynxes Training
- 3:00-4:00pm Lynxes Training for HS

More information about ECAs can be found on the school website.

<https://qatarfinlandschool.com/extra-curricular-activities/>

New signups and online payments are made for every term and must be done using the Clubsys portal

<https://qfis.clubsys.app/members/> within the timeframe provided.





Please note that all inquiries about outsourced activities should be addressed directly to the provider or the school's ECA Coordinator.

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 [Qatar Finland International School \(qatarfinlandschool.com\)](http://qatarfinlandschool.com).

Please note that according to Ministry guidance, signing the school policies has been required when securing a place at 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 provides the necessary safety training sessions for staff members.

The school has a full-time nurse who 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, but please, do not bring your child to school if he/she is ill.

Please contact the nurse Ms. Sumy Abraham for appointments or enquiries:
Tel. 4012 7896 or
email: [firstname.lastname\(a\)qfischool.com](mailto:firstname.lastname(a)qfischool.com)

Up-to-date contact information can be found on the school website.

The school organises evacuation drills regularly. We also kindly ask you to exercise extreme caution while driving in our drop-off/pick-up areas.

Lunch

The school has a canteen where the provider, Jazz Café, operates a non-cash system, relying on the bracelet that a student needs to have to buy food. If you would like to make use of the canteen services, please visit the school canteen.





Grades KG-2 have their lunch in the classrooms daily, and parents can preorder the lunch from the canteen through the Canteen App Genio to be delivered to their children. The weekly lunch menu can be found on our school's website and from the Canteen App Genio.

A packed lunch from home is permitted, with students being expected to have healthy, nutritious packed lunches. Soft drinks, chips/crisps, nuts, chocolate, or other sweets are not allowed.

Transportation

The school cooperates with the Smart Step transportation company, with the Transportation Office located at the bus gate (next to the side gate entrance). All inquiries concerning school transportation should be addressed directly to Smart Step.

Tel. 30007631

email: smartstepcont@gmail.com

Drop-off and Pick-up

There are two official drop-off/pick-up areas, both with entrance and exit gates. The side gate is open during the drop-off and pick-up times only. For longer stays in the school premises always park your car at the main gate. The school buses make use of the side entry and exit. 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 a dangerous situation. All drivers must utilise reverse parking. The pedestrian crossings (zebra crossing) are "no parking" zones. Please, educate your children to use these marked crossings.

Drop-Off

- 6:30am: The main gate will be opened. (Supervision for the students in the canteen)
- 7:00am: The side gate will be opened. (Supervision for the students: Grades 0-5 in the assembly hall, Grades 6-9 in the gym)
- 7:00am: The kindergarten will open.
- 7:30am: The first lesson starts. Please, drop your child off on time!

Pick-Up (for all grades in the Assembly Hall)

- 12:00-2:00pm: KG (from the classroom)
- 1:00-1:15pm: Grades 0-2





- 1:45-2:00pm: Grades 3-6 (Students with older siblings will wait for their siblings in the assembly hall.)
- 1:55-2:10pm: Grades 7-9
- 2:45-3pm: Grades 10-12

It is important that you follow the pick-up times precisely to avoid overcrowding the parking area.

In case a child must be picked up before the end of the last lesson, the person picking the student up must fill in a Student Early Pick-Up Form. This can be acquired from the reception in the main lobby and must be signed by the teacher. No student is allowed to leave without said signed form. Please note that early pick-up should only be done for a valid reason.

Students are not allowed to leave the school premises without an adult escort; however, Grade 7-12 students are allowed to exit the premises independently with written permission signed by their parent. Also, an older student from Grades 7-12 is allowed to pick up a younger sibling/s with signed permission from their parent. Permission forms can be found at reception or can be asked for from the class/homeroom teacher.

Q.F.I. School takes the responsibility for students' health and safety very seriously. We strongly believe 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 teaching hours. Thus, the school is not liable for the safety of students after the end of the last lesson.

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

Money

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

Devices

In general, the school encourages and supports the educational use of technology at school. The educators at school decide the best possible use of technology at any 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, with students being allowed to use their own devices in the morning before the beginning of school (before 7:30am) and/or in the afternoon after school hours. Students are not allowed to use their own devices during the breaks.

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

High school students can freely use their devices during the day in specified areas (high school lounge) as long as it does not disturb the learning/teaching process, the interpretation of which is determined by the pedagogical staff. During the lessons, personal devices may be used with the specific permission of the pedagogical staff.

Library

The library is a versatile learning environment where our students can read, study, and conduct research. Through library resources and services, students are exposed to a wide variety of literature and educational materials that accommodate their personal interests and support their academic achievement.

Students in Grades 0-5 have weekly scheduled library lessons consisting of storytelling, information literacy sessions, book browsing, and independent reading time. From Grade 6, students may use the library during arranged unit visits or during break time.

All students have a library account associated with their student ID number which allows them to borrow library books. The borrowing time is one week for Grades 0-2 and two weeks for Grades 3-12. Parents will be notified monthly by email if their child's library book is overdue.

In cases of lost or damaged library books, parents will be liable to pay a replacement fee which includes the price of the book and 30 QAR for shipping and processing. A student with unreturned library books may not receive their report card until the book is returned or fees have been paid.





Home-School Co-operation

The school strongly believes that educating 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 that includes practical information about school life, helping families to organize their daily lives and find a common understanding with the school in educating 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 families 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 join classes at our school, talk to staff, and contribute to our community building after discussing this with the school administration. We hope that parents will be active partners in supporting all aspects of their children's learning, inside and outside of school.

The first point of contact for parents is always the class or homeroom teacher, who will in turn contact other professionals when needed. Any possible further actions will be decided in collaboration with parents.

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

Home-school collaboration is enabled through the following structures:

- Parents receive **feedback** about their child's behaviour 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 about 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 for Grades 0-9 is divided into three terms. Students receive a report card at the end of each term. Prior to this, parents and students have an opportunity to meet teachers in a **Parent-Student-Teacher Conference or a Student-Led Conference**.

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





- During Grades 10-12, the school year is divided into five periods. After each period, students will receive a report that will record their assessments of the different modules they have finished, as well as state the number of credits they have accumulated since the start of Grade 10. For a passing grade, students must achieve a level between 30-50% depending on the subject.
- The admin will invite parents to join the **Principal's Coffee Morning** once a month.
- The school has a **Parent Association (PA)**: a parent-led group that supports the school in its primary task according to the school values. The PA meets monthly, and each class has a class representative who acts as a link between PA and the class/homeroom teacher.

The aims of the 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 Parents' Evenings and Parent-Student-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 in contacting the school should the need for a meeting arise. If reasonable activity from the parent side is not shown, the child's student place for the coming academic year might be reconsidered.

