



Qatar-Finland International School

Parent Handbook

AY 2024-2025





Dear parents,

Welcome to Qatar-Finland International School!

Qatar-Finland International School is one of the outstanding schools in Qatar. The Finnish Education system was introduced to Qatar by Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser in 2014. The school offers all grade levels from KG to high school Grade 12, with 108 staff members from 19 countries. We have 750 students from over 60 countries, making us a truly international school.

Finnish educational excellence is at the heart of everything we do at Qatar-Finland International School because we believe that everyone deserves the best possible education. Successful learning takes place in a supportive environment where teaching is thoughtfully personalised and real-life connections are discovered.

At Qatar-Finland International School, the Finnish approach to education serves as a framework to inform, plan, and implement the Finnish curriculum in an international setting. Adaptations to the Finnish curriculum have been made to reflect both the Qatari cultural context and the diverse international cultural backgrounds of our student population. This is notably demonstrated in courses dedicated to languages, Islamic studies, world history, humanities, and Qatar history.

The theme of the year is “Good Manners”, so we expect all our students to exhibit good and positive behaviour. The behaviour of students, parents, and staff members plays a significant role in shaping the school atmosphere and environment. We want all students to come to school every day with a smile and feel that this is their second home. Good behaviour and a positive environment make every student feel safe and respected.

I am delighted that you have chosen the Finnish Education system for your child. We will ensure that they receive the support needed to achieve their highest potential.

I would also like to emphasise the vital role of collaboration between the school and guardians. Guardians play a significant role in the school's success.

We look forward to a wonderful, rewarding academic year!

Sincerely,

Yousri Youssef
Head of School



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Contact Information

Front Desk:	Ms. Areej Lababneh	4012 7885
Head of Admissions:	Ms. Marwa Mahmoud	5032 2893
School Nurse/Clinic:	Ms. Eneh Pamela Chinwe	
	Mr. Ariel Rosales Mendoza	4012 7896
IT Department:	Mr. Ossi Itäkare	5048 1817
ECA Coordinator:	Mr. Robert Juvonen	55137827
Academic Principal, KG-G6:	Ms. Anne Dullaghan	5996 3591
Academic Principal, G7-12:	Ms. Tuija Lehtinen	5990 1187
Administrative Principal:	Ms. Renja-Kaisa Martikainen	5996 3573
Head of School:	Mr. Yousri Youssef	5046 9757

Staff members 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. Please note that in all student-related matters, the first point of contact is always your child's class/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

Holistic wellbeing and competencies for the future through the Finnish approach

Mission

Qatar-Finland International School's caring environment and student-centred learning methods inspire students to become globally minded, active citizens who are balanced, lifelong learners.

Values

- Wellbeing
- Respect
- Creativity





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 and holistic wellbeing of each student. A caring and inspiring learning environment combined with student-centred learning methods enable students to acquire, use, and produce knowledge. The learning process encourages students to become globally minded lifelong learners who have strong collaboration and communication skills.

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 regrouping the students 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 arising from the curriculum topics and the students' interests. Subjects are combined for interdisciplinary units and projects. Making a clear distinction between subjects is not relevant at this point; the focus lies on integrated learning activities and their connection to the students' lives. Early learning takes place through hands-on activities and students' active participation in collaborative knowledge construction.

The roles of individual subjects become stronger in the curriculum, partly in Grades 3-6 and fully in middle school. At this point, the school also introduces the subject teacher system. However, learning is 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 the school day, with breaks being planned as an integral part of their wellbeing.



Responsibility for Learning

The Finnish system strongly believes in the collaboration of the school, homes, and students. Several studies show that an environment of strong collaboration between homes and school, especially when the former has a positive attitude towards and an interest in education, results 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. Students are guided to independency by letting them take responsibility for their learning. Students participate in Parent-Student-Teacher conferences and contribute to their personal learning plans already from kindergarten age. The Finnish curriculum prepares students for managing their everyday life and studies—not only for reaching their academic goals in cross-curricular projects and exams.

Curriculum

The Q.F.I. School curriculum provides a well-balanced system incorporating advanced academic skills as well as strong self-expression and creative skills. The curriculum combines the Finnish national core curriculum with Qatari curriculum standards.

The teaching approach is thematic, integrated, and child-centred. Instruction provides the opportunity for successful academic achievement while nurturing the student as a whole person. 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 students.

Apart from enhancing academic achievement, support is given for 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, 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 student who applies to our school undergoes the admissions assessment, which assesses their skills to place them in the most appropriate grade level. After the initial assessment, the admissions team has the right to place the student in the appropriate grade level.

Assessment is based on a holistic evaluation of the student's learning and 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 student'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 student's strengths and areas of development, as well as sets 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

In basic education (G0-9), the school year is divided into three terms, and students receive a report card at the end of each term. In high school, the school year is divided into five periods. Prior to this, parents have an opportunity to meet teachers at a Parent-Student-Teacher Conference or a Student-Led Conference.





In early education (KG, G0-2), the evaluation is written and descriptive, but starting from Grade 3, student assessment follows a numerical 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. These methods enhance their understanding of learning and assessment and promote 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/application-process/>

Daily Structure

The school runs according to five different timetables, which vary based on grade level.

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

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



Structure of the School Day

KG	G 0
7:30-10:00 Learning activities	7:30-10:00 Learning activities
10:00-10:30 Lunch	10:00-10:30 Lunch
10:30-11:00 Rest time	10:30-11:00 Rest time
11:00-12:00 Learning activities	11:00-12:00 Learning activities
12:00-12:30 Snack	12:00-12:15 Snack
12:30-13:45 Afternoon activities	12:15-13:00 Learning activities 13:00-13:45 Afternoon activities

G 1-2	G 3-4	G 5-6
7:30-8:15 Lesson 1	7:30-8:15 Lesson 1	7:30-8:15 Lesson 1
8:15-9:00 Lesson 2	8:15-8:45 Break	8:15-8:45 Break
9:00-9:30 Break	8:45-9:30 Lesson 2	8:45-9:30 Lesson 2
9:30-10:15 lesson 3	9:30-10:15 lesson 3	9:30-10:15 lesson 3
10:15-10:45 Lunch	10:15-10:45 Lunch	10:15-10:45 Break
10:45-11:15 Break	10:45-11:15 Break	10:45-11:15 Lunch
11:15-12:00 lesson 4	11:15-12:00 lesson 4	11:15-12:00 lesson 4
12:00-12:15 Break	12:00-12:45 Lesson 5	12:00-12:45 Lesson 5
12:15-13:00 Lesson 5	12:45-13:00 Break	12:45-13:00 Break
	13:00-13:45 Lesson 6	13:00-13:45 Lesson 6

G 7-9	G 10-12
7:30-8:15 Lesson 1	7:30-8:15 Lesson 1
8:15-9:00 Lesson 2	8:15-9:00 Lesson 2
9:00-9:15 Break	9:00-9:15 Break
9:15-10:00 Lesson 3	9:15-10:00 Lesson 3
10:00-10:45 Lesson 4	10:00-10:45 Lesson 4
10:45-11:00 HR	10:45-11:00 HR
11:00-11:45 Break	11:00-11:30 Lunch
11:45-12:15 Lunch	11:30-12:15 Lesson 5
12:15-13:00 Lesson 5	12:15-13:00 Lesson 6
13:00-13:15 Break	13:00-13:15 Break
13.15-14:00 Lesson 6	13.15-14:00 Lesson 7
	14:00-14:45 Lesson 8

During the winter months, it is important to provide warm clothing for students 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/homeroom teacher or school nurse. The school monitors the air quality carefully, and should the need arise, indoor breaks are implemented accordingly.





Student Support in the School

In the Finnish education system, everyone is entitled to student support. The focus is on early intervention in a flexible manner with solid co-operation between the different stakeholders. To prevent the emergence of unnecessary learning challenges, the staff offer general support to all students. The multi-professional **Student Welfare Team** is consulted when needed and more intensified support is delivered. This team consists of the academic principal, school counsellors, and special educational needs teachers.

School support structures include more challenging or individualised tasks, remedial teaching, part-time special needs education, as well as assistance services and special aids. The support given to the student is flexible, based on long-term planning, and adaptable as the student's needs for support change. Support is provided for as long as necessary according to the student's needs and the availability of the school's resources. The individual support methods are planned in collaboration with the student and the parents, and they are described in the pedagogical documents of the student.

School counsellors and a guidance counsellor can support students in their growth and future plans, and two full-time nurses are available for emergencies and other health matters that occur during the school day.

Extracurricular Activities (ECAs)

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

The school offers a wide variety of extracurricular activities (ECAs), which are 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 Grade 0-2 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 1-2)

The school offers Afternoon Clubs for Grade 1-2 students, organised by the pedagogical staff. Afternoon Club is free for all Grade 1-2 students, but registration in the Clubsys system is required.

ECAs (for Grades 0-6)

ECA Clubs are based on the following topics: sports, music, arts, academics, and STEM. All ECAs 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 Band, Choir and Debate Team

The school band performs regularly in school festivities and other events. In the weekly rehearsal, students practice playing band instruments and prepare for upcoming events.

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 3 -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 1-12)

Study Club is organised by the pedagogical staff. In the 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 staff member 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.

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

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

New signups and online payments are required for every term. They must be made 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, for example, fees, uniforms, behaviour, 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 \(qatarfinlandschool.com\)](https://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 and Safety 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 two full-time nurses who are available every school day for emergencies and other health matters. We urge you to inform the nurses about your child's potential medication or other





health-related issues. Do not bring your child to school if he/she is ill.

Please contact the nurses Ms. Eneh Pamela Chinwe and Mr. Ariel Rosales Mendoza for appointments or enquiries:

Tel. 4012 7896 or

email: [nurse\(a\)qfischool.com](mailto:nurse(a)qfischool.com)

The school regularly organises evacuation drills. Please 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. It relies on the bracelet that a student needs to have to buy food. If you would like to use the canteen services, please visit the school canteen.

KG-G2 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 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. The transportation office is 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 parking area 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 does not 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.
- 7am: The side gate will be opened.
- 7.30am: The first lesson starts. Please, drop your child off on time!

Pick-Up (for KG-G2 in the units, for G3-12 in the assembly hall)

- 12pm to 1.45pm: KG (from the unit)
- 1pm to 1.45pm: G0 (from the unit)
- 1pm to 1.15pm: Grades 1-2 (from the unit)
- 1.45pm to 2.00pm: Grades 3-6 (Students with older siblings will wait for their siblings in the assembly hall.)
- 2pm to 2.15pm: Grades 7-9
- 2.45pm to 3pm: Grades 10-12

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

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 parents. Also, an older student from Grades 7-12 is allowed to pick up a younger sibling with signed permission from their parent. Permission forms can be found at reception or 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, following the pick-up times.





Please note the following school procedures at pick-up times:

- Parents who are staying at the school with younger siblings waiting for older siblings to finish school or ECA must go to the canteen to wait.
- The school is still in session, and the assembly hall and outdoor areas are used for school and ECA activities.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for their children once they have been picked up.

Late Pick-Up

If the student will be picked up after the pick-up time, the student is taken to a late pick-up club to wait for the pick-up. (Additional fees apply.) The student will be released from the late pick-up club after a parent/guardian's signature.

Early Pick-Up

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. There must be a valid reason for the early pick-up, for example, a doctor's appointment. Please note that early pick-up should be used only in special situations. Early pick-ups affect the student's learning.

Money and Valuables

Students should not bring money or valuables to school. The family is responsible for any money and/or valuables that students might possess.

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 KG-G9 students devices to be used during the lessons (iPads and laptops). High school students are expected to have their own personal laptops to be used in their studies. The use of personal devices is restricted in the school policy. The school cannot be held responsible and will not cover any loss or damage to devices brought from home.

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 use their devices during the day in specified areas as long as it does not disturb the learning/teaching process, the interpretation of which is determined by the pedagogical staff. Personal devices may be used during the lessons 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 library lessons that consist of storytelling, information literacy sessions, book browsing, and independent reading time. Starting 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 Collaboration

The school strongly believes that educating students is a collaborative task that requires shared values and an understanding between home and school. The responsibility for learning is shared between students, teachers, and homes. Whilst the parents are primarily responsible for the upbringing of their child, the school supports them by taking responsibility for the child's education at school. However, the fundamental responsibility for learning must lie with the child.





Parents are always welcome to the school to join classes, talk to staff, and contribute to the school community 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 **parents' first point of contact is always the class/homeroom teacher, who will, in turn, contact other professionals when needed.** Possible further actions will be decided in collaboration with the parents.

All 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 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 is divided into three terms in basic education. The high school academic year is divided into five periods. Students receive a report card at the end of each term/period. In basic education, 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. In high school, the report card shows all the module grades for each subject the student has been studying.
- The guardians also have the opportunity to meet teachers at the **Parent-Student-Teacher Conferences (one per term in Terms 1 and 2) and a student-led conference (in Term 3).**
- There is a **Principal's Coffee Morning** every first Thursday of the month at 7.30am in the library.
- 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 guardian who acts as a class representative, providing a link between the PA and the class/homeroom teacher.





The aims of the PA are:

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- To enrich the students' 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 students
 - 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-Student-Teacher Conferences, which provide a valuable opportunity for effective home-school communication and to receive more information about the curriculum, learning process, and school procedures.

When requested by the school, the guardians are required to be active participants in and available for meetings if/when the school decides to arrange them. If reasonable activity from the guardian's side is not shown, the child's student place for the coming academic year might be reconsidered.

