

2016/17

Early Education  
Center

Qatar Academy

### Early Education Center Parent Handbook

A manual to support the parents of children in the Early Education Centre in their understanding of the center's operations and procedures.

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## WELCOME

Welcome to the Early Education Centre at Qatar Academy!

At the Early Education Centre (EEC) your child will receive the best of everything. This state of the art facilities are designed with children in mind, with the latest technology and best equipment being provided. The curriculum is based on research and best practice and the qualified staff is dedicated to nurturing creative, joyful and compassionate inquirers. The belief that children are courageous and innovative in their thinking, and that through growth they can help build a harmonious and sustainable world, drives the teaching and learning in the center.

At the EEC an environment is created where each child's language, culture, diversity and unique gifts are deeply respected and celebrated. Our staff is inspired by each child's passion, their natural curiosity and their magical interpretation of the world. We respect and acknowledge each child as an individual learner and value their uniqueness.

This handbook is designed to provide relevant information for parents and students about the operation of the Early Education Centre. It aims to assist all stakeholders to gain a better understanding of procedures and processes. It is divided into six sections:

1. Background and General Information
2. Procedures
3. Curriculum
4. Assessment and Reporting
5. Communication
6. Frequently Asked Questions.

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We trust this document will prove to be a useful reference and look forward to working with all of you throughout the year.

## **1. BACKGROUND AND GENERAL INFORMATION**

The Early Education Centre is a newly developed early educational program, housed within the facilities of Qatar Academy, The Student Centre and The Club House. It serves children aged 6 months through to 3 years, the center is designed to be a quality program in which both the care and education of the children is of the highest order. In addition, parent education workshops which discuss best practices are provided throughout the school year.

Qualified teachers and teaching assistants work together through the Creative Curriculum (developed and published by Teaching Strategies, Washington, USA) to provide stimulating, individualized and developmentally appropriate programming for all children who attend the EEC centers. The program is bilingual with both Arabic and English languages being the focus.

The Early Education Centre is accredited by the International Council of Schools (ICS) and New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASAC), and uses the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards as its guidelines to creating, promoting and sustaining programs that advance and ensure quality early childhood education in Qatar.

## **PHILOSOPHY OF BELIEF AND OBJECTIVES**

### **School's Guiding Statements**

#### **Mission Statement**

It is the mission of Qatar Academy to offer a rigorous program encompassing an international English-medium education, Arabic and Islamic Studies. The Qatar Academy community supports and challenges students to be critical thinkers, and active and contributing members of society through learning experiences serving the needs, interests and learning styles of each student.

#### **Vision Statement**

Qatar Academy's vision is to empower the students to achieve academic excellence and be responsible citizens.

## Objectives

Qatar Academy will meet the educational needs and expectations of our students, and aspire to provide those opportunities that our students need to develop to their full potential through:

- providing for and maintaining the highest standards through continuous evaluation and improvement of all programs
- providing a well-rounded education for the highest standards of academic, physical, social and cultural growth and development
- employing an appropriate admissions policy to ensure that only students of the highest ability, who will benefit from the Academy's programs, will be admitted
- providing consistently challenging targets, so that each student realizes his/her full potential
- teaching the most appropriate, internationally accredited syllabuses
- providing a safe and supportive environment in which to learn
- encouraging the virtues of self-respect and respect for others
- embracing and utilizing Information Communication Technology to ensure students can succeed in a rapidly changing world
- providing a wide-range of extra-curricular opportunities for students to develop outside the academic sphere
- emphasizing that good communication between all parties is fundamental to the efficient running of the school
- promoting management which is supportive and enabling, committed to the development of all people in the organization and to constant improvement
- promoting an appreciation of various traditions and values, including Arab culture and language
- working in partnership with parents, colleges and the local community

## Strategic Goals

- Mission of the school
- Building a stronger sense of community within Qatar Academy
- Create support systems for students
- Achieve operational interdependence with Qatar Foundation
- Financial operational adherence to Qatar Foundation
- Promoting Qatarization

- Developing state of the art Information Technology
- Enhancing Arabic language and Islamic studies.

### EEC Philosophy

The Qatar Academy Early Education Centers offer opportunities for every child aged 6 months to 3 years to learn in safe and nurturing environments through a play-based curriculum. We believe that practices grounded in research support the growth of social, emotional, physical and cognitive development in young learners.

Teaching and learning in classrooms is driven by our Image of Child. We believe that children are: Unique, Capable, Risk-Takers, Social, Curious, Persistent, Sensory, Creative, Researchers and Communicators.

We recognize the importance of forming partnerships with families to build home-school connections, in the best interest of the child.

The EEC meets this philosophy by providing:

- *Highly qualified and experienced teachers informed on research based strategies for early childhood education*
- *A recognized curriculum steeped in current research*
- *A curriculum that develops and supports children's interests and curiosity*
- *An integrated approach to Arabic and English language acquisition*
- *Support for the practices of Islamic faith*
- *Engaging activities that develop and support children's learning*
- *A rich environment that initiates learning; encourages children to feel safe to explore, where they are able to express themselves in a social context.*
- *A nurturing environment that acknowledges children's uniqueness, independence, and builds self confidence*
- *Opportunities for collaboration within the school community to learn together*
- *Opportunities for parents to work as partners*
- *Qualified health care and safety professionals to ensure researched practice in health, hygiene and safety to support well-being and promote wellness*
- *A commitment to creating an inclusive environment that ensures each child's family,*

*heritage language, culture, and diversity is valued, respected.*

## **2. PROCEDURES**

Procedures are formulated to ensure high quality care for your children. The procedures are guided by the requirements and regulations of the NAEYC and supported through accreditation with the ICS and NEASC.

Any questions or concerns you may have, please do not hesitate to address them with your child's teacher, the Assistant Principal or Head Teachers of your child's center or the Primary School Principal.

### **Admissions**

Admission to the Early Education Centre is open to children aged 6 months to 35 months at September 1 of the school year. It is open to Qatari children specifically and, if space available, to children of other nationalities. The enrolment process takes place each spring.

### **Advancing to the Next Level or Class**

Your child will be placed into a class relevant to his or her age on September 1. Your child will remain with that group of children and those teachers for the duration of the school year. Your child's teachers will continue through the curriculum to meet the needs of the individual children and also to meet the needs of the group as it matures, ages and changes developmentally. Your child will progress to the next level or class at the start of the next school year and will, again, be placed according to his or her age at September 1.

### **Operating Hours**

The EEC is open between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon, Sunday through to Thursday. The EEC operates along the same calendar as Qatar Academy. The academic calendar is provided by administration outlining term breaks and holidays. These will be reminded through newsletters, notices and communication tools during the year.

### **Arrivals and Departures**

The Early Education Centre maintains records of your child's arrival and departure. You or a designated person must sign your child in and out of the center on the sheet provided in the classroom each day. The center must be informed if anyone other than you or the designated

person will be collecting your child. Staff will telephone the parents if a non-designated person arrives to pick up a child.

The following are some things to think about for enhancing a smooth transition:

- Please ensure *your child arrives on time*. When he or she arrives on time your child will have enough time to engage in the activities that the teachers have prepared for the group. If it is necessary at any time during the year to arrive later in the morning or pick up early, please let us know in advance.
- You are invited and encouraged to stay for a bit in the morning and to come 5 - 10 minutes early at pick up to play with your child in the classroom.
- Please be on time for pick up. *Even a short delay can seem endless to a child who is waiting.*
- Give your child some undivided attention before engaging in conversations with other adults in the room. Parents often enjoy talking with each other; however, many children require a parent's full attention - especially at pick up time - and may act out or become upset if they don't have it.
- Please respect the pick-up and drop-off times.

In the morning, the teachers arrive early to do any preparations and to gather their thoughts. For many of the teachers, this is an essential part of the day. If you arrive before 7:00am, please wait with your child in the allocated area, rather than coming into the room. The teachers need uninterrupted time to finish their preparations so that they are able to greet you properly and give you their full attention when the day begins.

In the afternoon, the teachers have straightened up, cleaned and prepared the rooms for the next day. Please do not bring your child back to his/her room to play after you have picked them up. The classrooms and the common rooms are not available for children to play in after they leave.

- It is not allowed that parents/caregivers wait at school for other siblings within Qatar Academy to finish.
- Remember that you are responsible for your child at pick-up time.
- If you are unavoidably delayed to collect your child on time, please phone the center and notify us of your expected time of arrival or arrange for another person to collect your child.
- Please do not send older children to collect your child as they will not be released.

### **Routines**

Much of a young child's day in the EEC consists of routines such as greetings and departures, feeding, diapering and toileting, and sleeping. A predictable routine helps children develop a

sense of competence and involvement in their world. In the infant room, your child's routine care is based on his or her own readiness for feeding, diapering and toilet learning, and sleep. As the infants mature, and approach the transition to a new year in a toddler room, we begin to prepare them for the more group-like routine of the toddler room.

### **Orientation**

The EEC provides an orientation presentation for new families to familiarise you with the center. This enables you to gain a better understanding of the environment, the daily routines and activities, the philosophy espoused in teaching your child, what to expect for your child, and your role as a parent. It is expected that all parents attend the orientation presentation.

### **Settling Your Child into the EEC**

We have a special settling in procedure during which we will be especially attuned to helping your child feel comfortable with leaving you to stay in the center. During the settling in procedure you are encouraged to stay and play with your child. As your child gains confidence and comfort, you will be invited to leave your child for increasing amounts of time. Each child reacts differently to being away from his or her parents, and the length of the settling in process will be flexible depending on each child.

It is imperative that as a parent you are comfortable and emotionally ready for your child to attend the EEC, as your child will know if you are not and will have greater difficulty in adjusting to his or her days in the center.

### **Attendance**

We maintain that the Early Education Centre at Qatar Academy is one of the most reputable centers in Doha and accordingly we have many families that are eager to give their children the best opportunities by sending them to this center. It is imperative that you are committed to your child being a part of Qatar Academy Early Education Centre and that you ensure your child's attendance on a continuous basis. Children who are frequently absent (not including for extenuating health concerns or family emergency) may be asked to relinquish their enrolment to allow for another child to benefit from attending the center.

It is recommended that family holidays be scheduled to coordinate with school holidays so your child does not miss time at the EEC.

**Absences**

If your child is absent for any reason please ensure that you inform the administration by emailing or phoning the center as soon as possible

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**Parent - Center Communication**

Teachers will communicate with you on a regular basis - verbally, through Daily Connect or in writing - regarding information about your child’s day (eating, toileting, sleeping, etc.). To foster our parent - center partnership, we invite you to talk with your child’s teacher regularly about your child’s experiences and developments. Communication and continuity between home and the EEC helps to provide a more comfortable experience for your child. Changes at home (e.g., one parent travels, illness in the family, moving houses, when you stop breast or bottle feeding, a parent changes jobs, etc.) often leads to changes in behavior. We can care for and work better with your child if we are aware of the changes at home. The more familiar we are with your family, the more understanding, supportive and helpful we can be.

**On Campus Outings**

The children at the EEC will not take what is traditionally thought of as “field trips.” That means that we will not take the children anywhere in a vehicle (bus, car, etc.). We will, however, take several planned or impromptu “trips” on campus. These will mainly be “walk-about” to enjoy the weather and beautiful surroundings or to a specific destination, such as to an area in the primary school to watch a short performance by one of the primary classes. Safety will always be a high priority when taking these trips and proper staff to student ratios will be maintained.

**Food**

**Food for Toddlers, Twos & Threes**

You must send a snack and lunch each day with your child. The center recognizes the importance of a balanced diet in promoting the healthy growth and development of all children and encourages you to send age appropriate food that meets a child’s needs for whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and proteins. We do not allow children to consume sweets or “junk food” as part of their snack or lunch. For health reasons as well as safety reasons, we do not allow

certain foods including, but not limited to:

- Hot dogs (whole or cut in rounds)
- Whole grapes
- Nuts or any food with nuts in it
- Popcorn, raw peas or hard pretzels
- chunks of raw carrot
- Meat larger than can be swallowed whole
- chips/crisps
- Chocolates or sweets
- flavored milk or juice.

The snack and lunch you send for your child should be ready to eat and not require heating or refrigeration. Your child's snack and lunch should be in containers clearly labelled with their name. Uneaten food will be sent home at the end of each day. All children have access throughout the day to clean water cups and bottled water.

### **Food for Infants**

An infant's eating schedule is dictated by his or her physical needs. There is not a 'bottle feeding schedule;' rather your child will be bottle fed when they are hungry.

- Expressed milk

The center supports breastfeeding mothers by providing a comfortable facility for them to feed their baby in private. Expressed milk should be brought each day to the center in ready-to-feed sanitary bottles, labelled with your child's name and date. The bottles will be stored in the refrigerator and warmed in bottle warmers designed for this purpose. Unused bottles of expressed milk will be sent home at the end of each day.

- Formula milk

Formula milk should be brought each day to the center in ready-to-feed sanitary bottles, labelled with your child's name and date. The bottles will be stored in the refrigerator and warmed in bottle warmers designed for this purpose. Unused bottles of formula milk will be sent home at the end of each day.

- Baby Food

Please discuss your child's individual and nutritional needs and developmental stage with his or her teacher. If your child eats pureed baby food, you must provide baby food each day in sealed

containers clearly labelled with the child's name. Unused containers of baby food will be sent home at the end of each day.

### **Allergy Issues**

There are to be no nuts in any food brought into the school. This is a nut free center. If your child has allergies or food sensitivities, please discuss this with your child's teacher who will in turn be sure the entire staff is aware of the allergies.

### **Birthday Celebrations**

We acknowledge that birthday celebrations are a special part of growing up and the center is delighted to help your child celebrate his or her birthday with their classmates. In so doing we like to ensure that the celebration becomes an integral part of the school day in respect of the children's daily routine without being overwhelming. Therefore we do not allow outside entertainment, and as the school has a healthy eating policy we do not allow any outside food nor the distribution of party packs or gifts of any kind.

Please note that should you wish the class teacher to distribute invitations to a party out of school this can only be done if all students in the class are invited to attend. Please make alternative arrangements to distribute invitations if you are planning a party for smaller groups. As inclusion is part of our school's ethos we appreciate your cooperation and understanding in this sensitive matter.

### **Sleeping**

As with eating and toileting/diaper changing, your child will sleep according to his or her body's rhythms. Some children may not nap at the center, but will take a short rest time with quiet books or music. Many children, however, will need to sleep while in the center. The EEC is equipped with cots (one per child) to accommodate for naps. Linen for the cots is provided and maintained/launched by the center. Your child may bring a special blanket or sleeping/comfort toy, if it helps to calm and soothe him or her.

Your child's napping needs and times will constantly evolve during the course of the school year. We accommodate for those changes and will work with you to make sure your child has the best opportunity for uninterrupted nap times.

### **Clothing**

There is no uniform for the students of the EEC. Rather, it is required that your child comes to school in clothing that will allow him or her to fully participate and enjoy hands-on (oftentimes messy) activities. (i.e. Please do not send your child in expensive clothes that can't get messy or clothes that make it difficult to run, jump, climb, tumble and play.) All clothing needs to be clearly labelled with your child's name. Kindly ensure that your child is dressed appropriately for the weather and wears slip on or Velcro shoes, to foster independence. Sun hats are provided by the center and will be kept at the center to be worn at all times outside.

N.B. Each child needs to have a spare set of clothing (two sets for infants) including underwear and socks which will be kept at the center until needed and replaced. A lightweight cardigan should be included in this supply.

### **Toys**

As the EEC is well equipped with equipment and materials to stimulate and engage children, we strongly encourage them to leave their toys and personal items at home. Should items such as toys be brought to school for show and tell sessions, they will be kept in the classroom. They will be placed back in the child's bag at the end of the session to be taken home at the end of the day. The center will take no responsibility for any such items brought from home.

Exclusion to this, is a child's favourite toy, comforter or item used for the purpose of settling a child and allowing them to feel comfortable in the center during the settling in process.

### **Lost Property**

Please ensure all of your child's belongings and clothes are clearly labelled with his/her name. Lost property will be kept in the administrator's office. The center will not be liable for any lost or damaged items.

### **Diaper and Toileting Supplies**

If your child is still using diapers, you are asked to send a packet of diapers and disposable wipes to be stored and used in the center. Teachers will communicate when more diapers or wipes are needed.

### **Our Teachers**

Qatar Academy Early Education Center employs professional and dedicated staff that understands the needs of children and their families. We maintain that approximately 40% of our staff speaks Arabic. Our qualified staff members hold either of the following qualifications:

- Bachelor or Master's degree in Education, usually with a specialization in early childhood

education

- Certificate in Childcare – or equivalent

The EEC Management encourages and supports staff to further develop their knowledge and skills so that they can give your children the best of care and education.

### **Primary Caregiver**

Especially at the start of the school year, your child may experience some form of “separation anxiety.” This is very typical and developmental behaviour - especially in infants - and we are prepared to support you and your baby through this. As your child starts to feel more comfortable, he or she may naturally gravitate to a specific staff member. We recognize and encourage these bonds. This staff person will become your child’s “primary caregiver” and will foster a special bond with you and your child to help make his or her time at the center as meaningful as possible.

### **Language**

As an Arabic speaking family, one of the greatest benefits of your child attending the Early Education Center is that he or she will simultaneously acquire two languages: Arabic and English. Approximately 40% of our staff speaks Arabic fluently and will speak Arabic regularly in the classroom. This will support your child’s development of a strong “mother tongue” language in Arabic. Your child will be exposed to and learn to understand and speak English through the staff for whom English is her native language. There are books and materials in both English and Arabic available in the classrooms. You are expected to continue to speak to your child in your native language. There is no reason for you to speak to your child in English (if English is not your preferred language) just because he or she is attending the EEC at Qatar Academy, which is an English language school.

### **Parent Participation**

Family is the most important influence in the way that your child grows. Parent participation is vital for each child’s education. The building of relationships between parents and all the teachers is the foundation for the child’s positive experiences at the center. We encourage family involvement and ask you to talk openly with the teachers in order to establish these relationships. Working in partnership will allow staff to work effectively with your child, to have a better understanding and to respect them as unique individuals.

### **Parent Education**

Throughout the school year, parent education sessions are offered by the staff. In these

sessions we will discuss “best developmental practices for home and school.” These sessions also provide an opportunity for you, as parents, to learn more about the education center your child is attending and the philosophy we espouse when caring for your child. It is anticipated that all families participate in these parent education sessions.

### **Open Door Policy**

You are welcome to visit your child’s room anytime once the settling-in period is completed. In fact, we encourage you to spend time at the EEC. By spending time here, you communicate to your child that this is a place for your whole family and not just for your child. However, for some children, it can be confusing to see a parent unexpectedly. For this reason, we ask that you let the teachers know in advance when you are planning to stop by. There also may be some children who cannot tolerate a parent visit at certain times of the day. If this is the case, your child’s teacher will speak to you about other times of the day that will work better for you, your child and the class.

Parents must not use their mobile phones during parent/child interaction within the class. You will be asked to switch your phones off when visiting the center or assisting in the classroom. You may take photos of your child with your cell phone or other device, but the staff needs to notify you as to which children are not allowed to be photographed.

Visitors (including parents when visiting outside of arrival and departure times) must sign the visitor’s book and record their name, purpose of visit and arrival and departure times. They will be asked to provide proof of identity.

### **Health and Hygiene**

Maintaining a healthy environment is the responsibility of the staff and parents. The strict practices of hygiene that we adhere to allow us to minimise the risk of cross infection.

- Routine ‘Health and Hygiene’ checks are conducted by staff daily and weekly which include the cleaning of the center and sterilization of toys.
- Proper hand washing techniques and timings are taught and assisted by staff and should be practiced at home.
- Any child suffering from an illness must not attend the center until he or she is no longer in an infectious state and has been without fever or vomiting for at least 24 hours without the assistance of medication.
- Parents are requested to telephone the center as soon as possible upon learning that their child has a communicable infection such as, but not limited to: conjunctivitis, head lice, chickenpox,

hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) and measles.

In any instance where your child becomes ill at the center, you or your nominated emergency contact will be notified to immediately collect your child.

It is essential that you notify the administration of any changes in address, phone number(s), or emergency contact information.

Further information can be found in the Medical Policy Manual, which is available in the admin office.

### **Sunscreen and Insect Repellent**

It is expected that all children will spend a portion of every day outside, weather permitting. Our outdoor play area is specifically designed to provide plenty of cool, shady areas in which to play for most of the year. Sun hats are provided by the center and will be worn at all times outside. It is recommended that you apply sunscreen to your child every morning as part of his or her dressing procedure. With your permission, staff will reapply sunscreen to your child's exposed skin if he or she goes outside later in the day or if your child has been playing with water (and therefore the sunscreen applied earlier has probably rinsed off). You must supply the sunscreen for this purpose.

If you are concerned about insects in our garden, you are encouraged to apply insect repellent to your child before arriving at the center each morning.

### **Fire and Evacuation Procedures**

The EEC has developed and trained staff in the evacuation procedure to follow in the event of a fire or emergency. It is designed to ensure the safe evacuation of all the children, staff, families and visitors. The Evacuation Procedure is displayed in each room. The Fire Evacuation Procedure is practiced regularly throughout the year, in accordance with the requirements specified within Qatar Foundation and the Ministry of Social Affairs.

### **Parking and Traffic**

Each day, you or a designated carer will be required to come into the center to drop off and pick up your child. At these times, it is required that your car is parked in the designated parking areas and not left waiting in the traffic lane or behind another car. For the safety and convenience of all the children and families, no cars will be allowed to wait in the traffic lane, for any reason.

### **3. CURRICULUM**

The curriculum is known as the Creative Curriculum, developed and published by Teaching Strategies, 2011, Washington, USA. This curriculum is developed specifically for Early Childhood Education. It is based on the premise that birth to age 3 is the most important period of development, when children begin to become competent learners. The curriculum supported by the standards set by the NAEYC.

The Creative Curriculum is a developmentally appropriate and rich program. Developmentally appropriate practice means teaching in ways that match the way children develop and learn. At the EEC we provide the environment and experiences which enable a child to grow physically, emotionally, intellectually and socially.

The curriculum is derived to strongly enhance the interests of the children as well as further developing strengths of each individual child.

The program consists of small group work which foster interest based themes or activities. Through this program the children will experience the following:

- Active play and exercises which enhance physical development and gross motor skills.
- Story time, drama, poetry, music and movement to stimulate the imagination.
- A range of opportunities which encourage curiosity, exploration and language development.
- Opportunities to strengthen perceptual skills, necessary for eventual academic success.
- Opportunities that promote multiculturalism.
- Opportunities incorporating community involvement.

#### 4. ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

When we assess your child we are finding out in a very precise way what your child knows now, and what we should teach her/him next. It is not a test or exam to see what she/he doesn't know. We will observe your child, talk with her/him, play with her/him and record what she/he can do. On-going assessments will continually guide the teachers to make decisions on how to best support your child's development and learning. Your child's achievements and highlights will be detailed in a portfolio which will be kept for and with your child. You and your family have access to your child's portfolio at all times and are welcome to make contributions and comments.

Teachers will formally meet with you three times each year to discuss and celebrate your child's growth.

##### **Portfolios as Assessment Tools**

The EEC values the process of learning i.e. the problem solving, thinking and communicating demonstrated by children when they interact with materials and their peers. One way to make children's learning visible to others i.e. to the child, his/her parent(s) and to our colleagues is to construct child portfolios, or learning profiles.

Portfolios are purposeful collections of children's work e.g. work samples, photographic documentation, comments and conversations. Throughout the week, teachers observe children's interactions with materials, peers and adults to ascertain their interests, ideas, skills and understandings. Observations (of skills; dispositions; knowledge and behavior) are recorded in the child's portfolio as evidence of your child's learning and development. As we study these examples of children's writing, drawing, thinking and social interaction, we can assess and monitor their development against the learning goals.

We value children's collaboration in the construction of their portfolio. We hope that parents too will become involved in the portfolio construction process. Portfolios are available to the child at any time and form the basis of the parent-teacher discussions held twice annually.

##### **Written Reports**

Written school reports will be issued twice a year in January and June. They are an anecdotal report outlining your child's strengths in skills and knowledge.

### **Parent-Teacher Meetings**

The school welcomes contact with the parents and we will be happy to arrange an appointment if you wish to see us, or you can talk on the phone or in person with the parent teacher conferences are held twice a year. They give parents the opportunity to share any thoughts about their child's progress and to have any questions answered. The teacher may make some suggestions as to how a child can be helped further at home.

## **5. COMMUNICATION**

### **Home – EEC connections**

We welcome contact with parents as our partners in the child's learning journey. Should a query or concern arise, please let us know and we will negotiate a time that is mutually acceptable to meet. Should parents have a query related directly to their child, please speak with the teacher.

The Head Teachers at Club House and HBKU and the Assistant Principal at QA are also available by appointment to assist with any further matters of care or concern. The Primary School Principal is also available

### **Newsletter – Akhbar**

The center produces a center e-newsletter – Akhbar every week. This communication contain important information about the center and your child's learning.

### **Email Contact**

Each class has an email address and teachers may be contacted in this manner. They will check their emails during the day outside of their classroom responsibilities. For more urgent matters (say change to pick up arrangements) call the office. The teachers will respond to your email within a day.

### **Blogs**

Each class produces a blog site. Teachers will share classroom news on the blog site at regular intervals. The aim of the blog site is to keep parents informed about the learning goals and curriculum direction in their child's classroom. Please take the time to discuss these with your child, who will be delighted to share his/her learning with you

**Blog site access:**

<http://qataracademyprimary.blogspot.com/p/classes.html>

*Qatar Academy*

Infant	<a href="http://infantqapprimary.blogspot.com">http://infantqapprimary.blogspot.com</a>
Toddler 1	<a href="http://toddler1qapprimary.blogspot.com">http://toddler1qapprimary.blogspot.com</a>
Toddler 2	<a href="http://toddler2qapprimary.blogspot.com">http://toddler2qapprimary.blogspot.com</a>
Toddler 3	<a href="http://toddler3qapprimary.blogspot.com">http://toddler3qapprimary.blogspot.com</a>
Junior 1	<a href="http://junior1qapprimary.blogspot.com">http://junior1qapprimary.blogspot.com</a>
Junior 2	<a href="http://junior2qapprimary.blogspot.com">http://junior2qapprimary.blogspot.com</a>

*HBKU Student Center*

SC Infant	<a href="http://scinfantqapprimary.blogspot.com">http://scinfantqapprimary.blogspot.com</a>
SC Toddler	<a href="http://sctoddlerqapprimary.blogspot.com">http://sctoddlerqapprimary.blogspot.com</a>
SC Junior 1	<a href="http://scjunior1qapprimary.blogspot.com">http://scjunior1qapprimary.blogspot.com</a>
SC Junior 2	<a href="http://scjunior2qapprimary.blogspot.com">http://scjunior2qapprimary.blogspot.com</a>

*Club House*

CH Infant	<a href="http://chinfantqapprimary.blogspot.com">http://chinfantqapprimary.blogspot.com</a>
CH Toddler	<a href="http://chtoddlerqapprimary.blogspot.com">http://chtoddlerqapprimary.blogspot.com</a>
CH Junior 1	<a href="http://chjuniorqapprimary.blogspot.com">http://chjuniorqapprimary.blogspot.com</a>

## 6. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This section of the parent handbook is designed to be a quick reference for commonly accessed information. More in depth information for each of these questions can be found within this Parent Handbook. If you have any questions not answered by this handbook, please speak to your child's teacher to be completely informed.

***What time is the Center Open?***

The Early Education Center is open for attendance from 7:00am until 12:00pm.

***When are the holidays and breaks during the school year?***

The Early Education Center follows the calendar of Qatar Academy which can be accessed at [www.qataracademy.edu.qa](http://www.qataracademy.edu.qa)

***What do I do if my child will be absent from the center for any reason?***

It is recommended that family holidays be scheduled to coordinate with school holidays. If your child is absent because of illness, please notify reception.

\*\*If your child is absent because he or she is suffering from a contagious ailment (conjunctivitis, head lice, chicken pox, etc.) please inform the school as soon as possible so we can take action to prevent the further spread of such ailment.

***Am I allowed to stay and interact with my child in his classroom to settle him it?***

Yes. In fact, you are encouraged to stay for a bit to settle your child in. You are also welcome to come in early to spend some time with your child before taking him or her home.

***How will I know what my child has done during the day (i.e., Did she sleep? How long? How much did she eat? etc.)***

You will get a daily report – through Daily Connect and or verbally - about your child's eating, sleeping and diapering for the day.

***What should my child wear to the center?***

Your child should wear comfortable clothing that is okay to get messy. Your child should wear slip on or velcro-close shoes, to foster independence. Sun hats are provided by The Center, but you should apply sunscreen in the morning before school.

***Who supplies diapers for my child?***

You will send a package of diapers and disposable wipes to be kept at the center for use for your child. The teacher will tell you when more diapers or wipes are needed for your child.

***Who supplies food for my child?***

You will send food for your young child to eat for snack and lunch. We have strict guidelines regarding what cannot be eaten at school so be sure to read the specifics in the "Food for Toddlers, Twos & Threes" section above.

If your infant is drinking expressed milk or formula milk, you will send already prepared bottles

each day which will be kept in the refrigerator and warmed in bottle warmers, as needed.

***Will my child sleep while at the center?***

There are personal cots available for children who sleep during the day at The Center. All children may be given a quiet rest time, but it depends on your child's needs if he or she will sleep.

***I'd like to breastfeed my child before leaving him for the day or before taking him home. Is that possible?***

Yes. We have a space dedicated to giving nursing mothers privacy while breastfeeding her child. You are welcome to use this space before school, after school and during school hours if you wish to come midmorning to breastfeed.

***Should I speak English to my child at home to support his learning it as a second language?***

No. You should continue to speak your native language at home. It is important for children to develop a strong mother tongue when acquiring a second language. Your child will naturally learn to understand and speak English from the native English speaking teachers.

***What should I send each day with my child?***

On a daily basis, you will need to send the following items with your child:

- Bottles of formula or expressed milk, if needed
- Snack and lunch for your child
- Sunscreen, if desired

At the start of the school year, you should bring an extra outfit - including underwear and socks - to be kept in the center for when it's needed. If your child is in the infant class you should send TWO extra sets of clothing.

***Is there anything I should NOT send with my child to the center?***

There are several foods that are not allowed in the center. Please be sure to read the list in the "Food for Toddlers, Twos & Threes" section.

Do not send toys to the center as we have specifically chosen, developmentally appropriate toys and materials here.

If you choose to send a special blanket or sleeping/comfort stuffed toy for your child, please

understand the risk that if it is lost or forgotten, you will not be able to retrieve this special toy until the next school day.

***Is there afternoon care available for my child?***

No. Your child needs to be picked up at 12:00 as there is no afternoon care provided.

***To whom do I speak about my child - either general daily conversation or if there's a bigger issue I would like to discuss?***

Your child has two teachers assigned to their class. Conversations about your child's progress can be had with either of these teachers. If you have an issue you would like to discuss, it is recommended that you make an appointment to speak with the teacher after school hours (after 12:00) rather than having a rushed conversation in the excitement of pick up time.

Teachers are willing and available to meet any day after 12:00

***What should I do at home to support my child's education at the center?***

By choosing to send your child to the Early Education Center, you are obviously an attentive parent who wants the best for your child. We have planned several sessions throughout the school year that you will be very interested in attending. In these sessions we will learn and discuss "best practices." We know you will gain and share valuable insight through these sessions and we look forward to learning with you. To support your child's education at home, we recommend that you be attentive to, sing with, talk with, read to and play with your child - all in your native language.

***When will my child advance to the next level or class?***

Your child will advance to the next class at the start of the next school year.

A family member or friend will pick up my child. Is there anything I should do to facilitate that? At the start of the school year, you will give to the secretary a list of "designated persons" who are allowed to pick up your child from The Center. If you know in advance that someone other than you will pick up your child, kindly inform the teacher and/or Secretary. If it is an emergency situation and someone who is not on your "designated persons" list needs to pick up your child, please call the Secretary as soon as possible.

***If I need to call the school, what number do I call and to whom should I speak?***

When you call the school you will first speak to the administration assistant. You are not able to directly call the teachers in the classrooms, but the administration assistant will deliver any

messages you have.

***What is the value of a child-responsive learning environment?***

To maintain a child's interest in learning, three conditions are necessary; 1. a sense of amazement; 2. a desire to experience; and 3. the motivation to explore. The child-responsive environments work to promote and preserve these qualities in all learners.

Children are encouraged to ask questions. The environment invites children to explore possible solutions to these inquiries through hands-on experience. Through practical experiences, a multitude of opportunities to uncover knowledge and understandings are provided.

Through careful planning and attention to the social context, teachers provide a structure for the child to experience success and build positive feelings about themselves and their abilities.

In today's ever challenging and evolving world, our children need to acquire the skills that are necessary to succeed. A child-responsive programme emphasises inquiring, thinking, planning, experimenting, creating, and problem-solving.

***How would the teacher support the transition period for my child? What about the initial separation when I leave my child?***

You are welcome to stay with your child to support them in settling. Parents are gradually encouraged to reduce the time spent in the class to support their child in bonding with the teaching staff and the other children. The center will share with you different strategies that reduce separation anxiety amongst children.

When you do leave, please inform the teachers that you are leaving and say good-bye to your child (please do not just leave, as this does not build trust). If your child cries, please let the teachers deal with this. The teachers can contact you to let you know your little one has settled.

***Will my child be taught the fundamentals?***

Children are offered opportunities through projects and the environment that supports the learning of knowledge and skills through integrated learning experiences in the areas of language and literacy, social, emotional and physical parameters. Children are given opportunities to use new knowledge and skills within projects that are significant to them. It is developmental and each child will develop according to his/her potentials. Teachers will work with the child's identified strengths, ideas, interests and theories. Teachers observe children's

interactions with peers, material and adults and collaboratively plan learning experiences for both individuals and groups which reflect understandings of children's learning styles and current interests.

A child-responsive environment challenges learners to discover and apply basic skills through a wide range of integrated learning experiences.

***What about reading and writing?***

The ability to utilize reading and writing skills to communicate is a lifelong process that begins at birth. Teachers work to create an environment that supports literacy development in a relaxed manner. Children who are naturally inclined readers and writers will inspire and act as natural mentors to their classmates.

Our curriculum recognises the benefits of providing a learning environment that promotes continuous positive development of social, cognitive, emotional, physical, and creative strengths. The learning environment provides ample opportunity to explore values, broaden communication skills, collaborate, make personal choices, group problem solve, develop ideas and explore information through artistic or imaginative means.

***Is homework assigned?***

Valuable learning experiences also take place outside of the school setting. The benefit of time spent with family and friends, extracurricular interests, discoveries made through play is a critically important element for the child's well-being. We do recommend taking time each and every day to read to or with your child.

Emerging readers should be encouraged to spend 15 minutes daily with reading material that is limited in vocabulary and phonetically controlled. Parent participation is strongly encouraged.

As the parents you are a strong influence on your child's learning, by taking the time to talk, plan, experiment, play, laugh, and create with your child. This is the most important homework assignment of all.

***A Final Word.....***

We will do our best to provide your child with an excellent education in a stimulating and friendly environment. We welcome your feedback and comments at any time.

You may help your child in the following ways:

- Please show an interest in what is happening in the center / your child's classroom by attending our events, parent conferences and talking to the staff.
- Look at what your child brings home and talk about it with him/her e.g. newsletters; art work; notes from the class teacher
- Share books with your child; read stories and together talk about the story – this helps to support your child's literacy development
- Create opportunities for your child to write or draw, encouraging them to bring their work into class to share with their teacher and friends.

We welcome you to the Early Education Center and look forward to developing a warm, relationship that will provide a supportive a positive experience for your child.