



كلية التربية  
College of Education  
QATAR UNIVERSITY جامعة قطر

مركز الطفولة المبكرة  
Early Childhood Center

# Early Childhood Center Parent Handbook

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## Welcome

Welcome to the Early Childhood Center (ECC). The center is affiliated to Qatar University. It welcomes children between the ages of 3 and 5 years. In addition, it serves as an educational model that is open to students, staff and the larger community.



The Early Childhood Center has grown and developed significantly since its inception in 1981 up to present. We are proud to share Qatar University's vision, in becoming regionally recognized for distinctive excellence in education and research. The Early Childhood Center provides a model demonstration and training site for early childhood education with research opportunities to further enhance knowledge of early development, education and quality care for young children, and to that end, the center is organized into three units: The Early Learning unit, Scientific Research unit, and Professional Development unit. This is in keeping with and supporting the Qatar National Vision 2030; aiming at providing excellent education for children in early childhood to become active citizens, while maintaining their culture and traditional values, yet open towards other cultures in the spirit of intercultural understanding.



The Early Learning Unit concerned with providing a quality early childhood program also serves as a pre-teacher training site in support of Qatar University, College of Education's Primary Education Degree program.

The center, in its commitment to the care and wellbeing of children and their families, through its Professional Training Unit that provides training and educational opportunities to the larger community. These educational opportunities include seminars, workshops and classes that are offered throughout the year.

The Scientific Research Unit welcomes research investigators to use the center to conduct studies, either independently or in collaboration with CED faculty.

## **Vision**

We aim that Early Childhood Center (ECC) will be a leading model for quality early childhood education programs locally and regionally through the provision of leadership in professional practice, research and service delivery.

## **Mission Statement**

The mission of the center is to serve as a resource for children, families and the larger community through:

- Exemplifying best practices in teaching and learning using new technologies to support and enrich early learning.
- Training students, early childhood educators and professionals to meet the individual needs of all children while working in partnership with parents and the larger community.
- Initiating research to inform pedagogical practices to support the well-rounded wellbeing of children and families.

## **1. Early Childhood Education Program Philosophy**

The Early Childhood Education Program is committed to providing the highest quality educational experience for all children aged 3 - 5. The Early Childhood Program provides a safe, creative, loving, and appropriate environment for young children. We strive to provide positive, child-oriented learning experiences whereby we address the developmental needs of the whole child (physically, cognitively, socially and emotionally).

## **2. Children Distribution at ECC**

The Early Childhood Center hosts up to 140 children between the ages of 3 and 5. The children are distributed into three class levels as per their age group:

- Pre-school
- Kindergarten 1 (KG1)
- Kindergarten 2 (KG2)

Children in each class level are distributed into two or three class sections. An English medium teacher, an Arabic medium teacher and a teacher assistant lead each class section. Children are distributed into class sections after careful considerations; therefore, section transfer is normally not possible.

### **3. The Physical Educational Environment**

The physical environment in early childhood settings affects the behavior and development of young children. Therefore, indoor and outdoor environments for children need to be purpose built. The ECC was built and equipped with high quality standards to create a stimulating and enriching learning environment to provoke children's curiosity and to encourage children's explorations and investigations.

The Early Childhood Center building design is distinguished with international specifications and customized standards, as well as health and safety standards and developmental educational practices that align with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); and the most recent studies in the field of early childhood. As a result, the center resembles a sustainable environmentally friendly building by providing electricity and water according to the standards of Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS).

### **4. The Curriculum**

ECC recognizes the early childhood educational standards provided by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Qatar. ECC has implemented The Creative Curriculum as a foundation for its early years program since 2015. The Creative Curriculum is a bilingual, comprehensive, research-based curriculum that promotes exploration and discovery as a way of learning, enabling children to develop confidence, creativity, and lifelong critical thinking skills. This curriculum aligns with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) educational guidelines, assuring a program of the highest quality and implementation of curriculum and activities that are developmentally appropriate. This curriculum provides resources in both English and Arabic, thus providing consistency for the children to participate in both Arabic and English instructions and activities.

With The Creative Curriculum, children are immersed in learning through purposeful play-based experiences on topics they are familiar with from their everyday lives. This curriculum consists of several units that are presented as investigations. Through these investigations, children learn

concepts and skills in literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology. They use thinking skills to investigate, ask questions, solve problems, make predictions, and test their ideas. Teachers thoughtfully and purposefully interact with children through mediation. They plan experiences to support emerging literacy. They use many opportunities during the day to help children build competence in math. With adult guidance that promotes and extends children's mathematical thinking children learn math facts and begin to understand math concepts.

Teachers believe that off-site activities can supplement and enrich the curriculum of ECC by providing experiences, which would otherwise not be possible. All off-site activities serve an educational purpose by enhancing and enriching the children's learning experiences. Some adjustments have been made to the curriculum to suit the Qatari culture, values, and beliefs.

## **5. Daily program**

The daily program is well-balanced. It offers choices and range of activities, some initiated by children and others planned by teachers. The daily schedule is structured in a sequence of classroom events:

- Circle time
- Discussion and shared writing
- Small groups
- Physical activities
- Meal time
- Learning centers
- Mighty Minutes
- Read-Aloud
- Outdoor play

## **6. Evaluation and Assessment**

ECC utilizes many assessment strategies to detect child's performance. The Teaching Strategies Gold is a progress monitoring tool. This tool is an ongoing practice used to observe children's growth and development over the year and evaluate the progress of their skills and abilities. The process gives ECC teachers the ability to assess children's interests, needs and abilities across all nine domains of development and learning: Social-Emotional, Physical, Cognitive, Language, Literacy, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Studies and Arts.

## 6.1 Child Portfolio

The Child Portfolio is the child's treasure box. It includes children's photos, artwork, and other work samples done during the academic year.

## 6.2 Parent Teacher Meeting

ECC provides parents the opportunity to meet and share concerns, raise an issue or discuss an idea of interest with a teacher or an administrator. Meetings are conducted upon request. Teachers may choose to arrange for a meeting with parents to discuss child's progress in detail. Parents may also request a meeting with the teacher or administrative staff.

## 6.3 Formal Reporting

When a child completes two academic semesters at ECC, the child is then entitled to receive a progress report at the end of the academic year. The formal report describes the progress of the child. The report is intended to provide feedback on skills the child has achieved according to age level compared against Creative Curriculum learning outcomes.

## 7. Partnership with Parents

Parents are provided with opportunities to support their children's learning beyond assisting at home. Communication is open through emails and child communication book as well face-to-face meetings. Email messages are sent home informing parents when starting a new study, inviting them to special events, activities and meetings among others.

### 7.1 Academic Calendar

Early Childhood Center follows the academic calendar of Qatar University. Calendars are sent to parents by email at the beginning of the academic year. Important dates are contained in this calendar and are available on our website. Any changes to the calendar will be communicated with parents.

### 7.2 Parent Orientation Day

Parent Orientation Day is held at the beginning of the school year, dedicated to welcoming parents to the center. During the orientation, parents are informed about their roles and responsibilities, introduced to the main center policies, and the Creative Curriculum. Parents also meet with their children's teachers and teacher assistants, and have their questions, suggestions and enquiries addressed.



### 7.3 Weekly Newsletter

Teachers send parents a weekly newsletter that includes information on the educational and developmental activities that will be held during the upcoming week. The letter also includes suggestions for enriching educational activities that children may do at home with the support of their parents. These activities may include reading storybooks, singing songs, visiting educational websites, cooking suggestions, using educational flashcards among others. ECC welcomes any enriching educational activity ideas from parents.

### 7.4 Celebrating Learning

During the academic year, the Creative Curriculum program offers children a variety of topics and focus study areas presented as studies. At the end of each study, we often invite parents to attend a conference during instructional time to celebrate their children's learning experiences with them. Children will have the opportunity to showcase samples of work and activities completed during the study.

### 7.5 Annual Events and Celebrations

Early Childhood Center organizes many events and celebrations including Universal Children's Day and Qatar National Day.

A Graduation Ceremony takes place at the end of every academic year, children in KG2 celebrate their graduation in a ceremony attended by parents, administrative and faculty members of Qatar University, in addition to their peers and teachers. Individual and group photos of children in their graduation caps and gowns are taken prior to event.



## 7.6 Birthday Parties and Social Occasions

Parents who would like to celebrate their child's birthday or another social occasion at the center may bring plain small size cupcakes or cakes after consulting with the classroom teacher in regards to food allergies. Birthday celebrations are typically held at the end of a school day. Parents should communicate with the class teachers and inform them about the celebration ideally one week before the designated date. Parents should check with classroom teachers before distributing presents to the children as part of the celebration. Gifts can be simple greeting cards distributed to children on the day. It is advisable to refrain from giving gifts to individual children.



## 7.5 Gifts and Presents to Staff Members

Academic and administrative staff members cannot accept gifts from parents as per Qatar University rules and regulations.

## 8 Presence at the Center

### 8.1 Attendance

Children are required to attend on daily basis from 8.00 am - 12:00 pm. Children can only benefit if they attend and are active in class. Children may need to be absent if ill or have circumstances that requires them to be absent. Parents need to email ECC management and classroom teachers if they anticipate the prolonged absence of their child. Missing days or hours during the day can prevent children from achieving their potential. We therefore request that parents ensure that child absenteeism is kept to a minimum.



## **8.2 Drop off and Pick up**

Gate 1 opens automatically from 7.30 am until 8.30 am for arrival and at 12.00 pm for departure. Parents should never drop off their child at the front door when there is no staff member on duty. All parents will be asked to sign a punctuality contract.

## **8.3 Pick-up Authorization**

Should parents choose to authorize a third party to pick up their children, a signed written form granting permission by parent(s) is required. Only parents, close relatives and those authorized by the parent(s) can pick up children from the center. Please be aware that drivers and non-relative males are not permitted to pick up children from the center.

## **8.4 Clothing and Other Private Items**

Parents should send an extra set of clothing suitable for the season. Even if the child has no longer bathroom accidents, he/ she may get their clothes soiled and may need to be changed. This extra clothing should be placed in a bag with the child's name labeled on it. Parents should remember to label children's bags and each item of clothing including shoes. ECC advises children to wear slip on or Velcro shoes. For their safety, children are not allowed to wear jewelry (the only exception would be post-earrings).

## **8.5 Children's Uniform**

Children are expected to dress in the center uniform on a daily basis. In the uniform package, parents will find a formal uniform and a sportswear uniform. Either uniform can be worn on a regular school day. For their comfort, girls are advised to wear cotton shorts or leggings underneath the uniform dresses. Boys are expected to wear ties only when requested by ECC on special occasions. Parents will be informed when children are expected to wear a specific type of clothing for a special occasion.

## **8.6 Personal Property**

The center provides every child with his/her own pigeonhole. Valuable items and toys are not allowed in the center unless required for educational reasons. In this case, parents should check with classroom teachers before bringing such items.

## **8.7 Photography / Videos**

Children's photos and videos are used for their formative evaluation process and are also often publicly displayed in the center's brochures, posters, public events and the media. Children are

often photographed and filmed by teachers, professional photographers, or/and the media. Parental consent is required for photographing children, thus a photography consent form is distributed to parents at the beginning of the academic year.

For children's and teacher's privacy, safety and comfort, parents should refrain from photographing children when visiting the center.

## **8.8 Scientific Research and Confidentiality**

ECC provides high-level services in early childhood teaching, training, teaching and learning practices, with research opportunities to further support development knowledge, education and quality care for young children. Therefore, our learning environment is equipped in a way that allows visits and observations from researchers and experts for research purposes. The center also provides the means and services for students of the College of Education to teach and interact with children as part of their study requirements. In regards to the Scientific Research Unit, the center's administration is committed to following scientific research ethics when collecting data that serve studies and research services in the field of early childhood.

When a child is enrolled at the center, parents are provided with a consent form, which asks for their permission to have students, trainees, and researchers conduct ethical and confidential research studies which involve children at ECC. These research studies are considered an essential part of the exceptional services provided by the center locally and regionally.

## **9 Children's Health and Wellbeing**

The safety of our children is of paramount importance. The ECC is dedicated to the health and wellbeing of the children, families and staff who spend time at the center. We aim at keeping the ECC environment safe and clean so that injuries, illnesses and infections are kept to a minimum.

### **9.1 Incidents and Accidents**

In case of an incident occurring during the day, an incident report will be sent home informing parents of incident details and how it was managed. This is to provide parents peace of mind while keeping them well informed in a professional way.

### **9.2 ECC First Aid Unit**

The center nurse is the main person responsible for following up on the children's health and wellbeing. The nurse checks on the children's health status (hair cleanliness, short fingernails, personal hygiene and healthy eating) administers medication, and takes necessary measures

to avoid the spread of infectious diseases. The nurse works in coordination with the center management and Qatar University Health Center.

### **9.3 Child's Medical Record**

Parents need to provide updated medical record for the incoming children from their registered primary healthcare center including their completed vaccination records. Furthermore, parents need to complete ECC Child's Medical form.

### **9.4 If Child Is Ill**

- If a child is suffering from a high fever or is affected with a contagious disease (flu, chicken pox etc.), the child should stay at home until complete recovery in order to avoid prolonging illness and in order not to affect the other children.
- If the child becomes ill at the center, parents are expected to pick up their sick child as soon as possible. Parents should arrange for someone else to pick up their child if they are not available.

Qatar University Health Center provides immediate services in case of reporting a child ill, falling in an accident or in case of emergency.

### **9.5 Medication Administration**

ECC nurse is not allowed to administer any type of medication unless there is a clear, written treatment plan by the treating physician showing importance for medication administration during the school day. This policy applies to all medication:

- Medications must be brought to ECC by a parent and handed to the ECC nurse for secured storage.
- Prescription medication must be in an original labeled container from the pharmacy that includes the child's name health care number, expiry date, name of medication, directions of use and the prescribing physician's name.
- The Medication Administration Form must be signed by a parent/guardian and must accompany all medications.
- If a child has asthma, diabetes or a history of anaphylaxis and parents and the child's physician feel it is necessary to carry a 'rescue' inhaler, diabetic supplies or an EpiPen® at all times, then

the center administration must be informed in writing when completing the Medical History Record including the emergency treatment plan.

- The ECC nurse cannot administer the first dose of any medication.
- As per Qatar University health policies, the ECC administration reserves the right to reject requests for administering medication and to contact the prescribing physician for questions/concerns.

### **9.6 First Aid Certificate of Staff**

All our staff are first aid certified. Any child with a minor injury receives first aid treatment from trained staff. Parents will be notified of the injury, as well as the immediate first aid given. Parents may contact the Center if they have any questions on the matter.

### **9.7 Medical Emergency Treatment**

All parents/guardians are required to sign an Emergency Treatment Permission Form granting permission to take the child to HMC emergency section in case of a medical emergency. Parents/guardians will be notified immediately in case of an emergency. If the parent/guardian cannot be located, the emergency contact person will be notified. Depending on the situation, we will see that a child receives the necessary treatment. PARENTS MUST NOTIFY THE CENTER IMMEDIATELY IF THEIR OR THE EMERGENCY CONTACT PERSON'S INFORMATION HAS CHANGED.

### **9.8 Evacuation Procedure**

During emergency evacuation, children will immediately be walked out of the building accompanied by their designated teachers and staff. Regular evacuation drills take place during the academic year to train children on emergency evacuation procedures.

### **9.9 Nutrition and Healthy Eating**

We continuously encourage the children and the parents to bring healthy food to the center. We inform children about healthy eating practices and nutritional value of healthy food. Children will not be allowed to consume snacks that include chips, crackers, chocolate and sweets during meal times and it will be returned home. Therefore, parents need to include snacks that are healthy and fresh to support the growth of their child. The recommended food list will be distributed to parents at the beginning of the academic year.

### 9.10 Toilet training

All children should be already toilet trained at the time of enrollment. A child should be aware of the proper use of the toilet procedures (undressing, sitting on toilet, washing up, drying oneself using toilet paper, getting dressed and handwashing). Parents are expected to support their children in getting used to the center toilets during the children orientation period. In case of an accident, all necessary hygiene measures shall be taken and any soiled underwear will be discarded.

### 10 Behavior Guidance

At ECC, we promote and encourage children to develop empathy, self-respect, self-discipline and self-control. These are important components of our preschool curriculum. Our program promotes respect to others and property. We believe as staff, teachers and role models that we provide children the best learning environment to develop self-control of their behavior.

#### **We, at the Early Childhood Center, believe:**

- In parents involvement when developing child's self-control and guiding decisions
- That children's feelings should be respected
- In fostering strategies which ensure that all children are provided with a supportive and an enjoyable social environment

#### **Suggestions for parents:**

- Encourage children to express their feelings by using "I" statement
- Explain explicitly to children why their behavior is considered appropriate or otherwise inappropriate
- Support empathy in children by explaining to them how a certain behavior affects other people
- Offer children choices to encourage their autonomy and independence yet limit them to two possible and realistic choices
- Redirect children by providing them with an alternative to their unacceptable behavior
- Use positive language say, for example, do this, rather than don't do that
- Show while telling by using gestures and other physical clues.

### 11 Aftercare Program (Offered from 12:00 to 2:20, Sunday – Thursday)

The aim of the aftercare program is to maintain continuity of care for children needing extended care due to parents' work schedules. Currently the program is offered only for children of Qatar University Faculty members.

## 12 Fees

Payments of fees are made online. Cash payments are not accepted at ECC. Parents receive an online link when payments are due. For more information on fee payment, kindly refer to center website.

<http://www.qu.edu.qa/education/centers/early-childhood-center>

## 13 Policy Rights

ECC reserves the right to amend, change, add or adjust any policy as seen appropriate for the benefit of the children and ECC as a whole.

## 14 Communication with ECC

If you would like to contact us:

Phone: 00974 4403 5214 / 5107

Fax: 00974 4403 5202

Email: [ecc.edu@qu.edu.qa](mailto:ecc.edu@qu.edu.qa)

Website: <http://www.qu.edu.qa/education/centers/early-childhood-center>

Instagram: [qu\\_ecc](https://www.instagram.com/qu_ecc)

