



ISLAMIC FOUNDATION SCHOOL FAMILY ALLIANCE

Handbook

“The degree of parent and community interest in high quality education is the critical factor in the impact of the school environment on the achievement and educational aspirations of students.”

– parentsacrossamerica.org

Welcome

Assalaamu Alaikum! We are very happy you have chosen to volunteer your time and services to our school! With your support, we greatly increase the opportunities our students and staff members have in creating a wonderful learning environment for our students. IFS welcomes volunteer participation in all of our special school activities. Many studies show a direct relationship between parent involvement and success of students. When parents are involved in their children's education and overall school experience, students tend to do better. One study done by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in 2002 concluded that when schools, families and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to:

- Attend school regularly
- Earn higher grades and test scores
- Enroll in higher level programs
- Have better social skills, behavior, and adapt well to school
- Graduate and go on to postsecondary education

Your time and efforts volunteering for us enhances our chances of providing an excellent learning environment for students while at the same time supporting teachers and staff members.

This handbook will provide you with important information that will help guide you through your volunteer experience.

Thank you for supporting us and we hope you enjoy your time volunteering here at IFS!

Sincerely,

IFS Administration

Mission

IFS Family Alliance is a parent volunteer group that is led by the IFS administration. IFSFA volunteers work on planning projects and activities under the supervision of the IFS administration. IFSFA's mission is to assist the administration in creating a fun, positive and safe learning environment for children. This mission is fulfilled in adherence to the full-time school calendar and the Sacred Link calendar through:

- Assisting staff with annual school events
- Organizing age appropriate activities for students and families
- Hosting small fundraising events
- Addressing parent and student concerns in a respectful, organized manner through appropriate channels within the structure of the school

Rules and Responsibilities

Your role as an IFSFA volunteer is valuable! Time management and guidelines are critical in making sure your time at IFS is used in the best way possible. Keep these important reminders in check when starting your volunteering experience:

- **Parking:** If you are volunteering for a long period of time, make sure you are parked in the adjacent parking lots by the elementary gym and Masjid. Leave the main front parking lots open for visitors and handicap personnel.
- **Security:** Sign in at the front desk and wear your visitor badge. Security at IFS is very important so please do not walk through the hallways without signing in and wearing your visitor badge. Never open side doors and allow other visitors to enter the building without signing in and obtaining a badge at the front desk.
- **Dress and Behavior:** Dress appropriately. You are an example for students and are a part of the IFS family! Please make sure you are dressed in neat, Islamically appropriate attire and try to refrain from jewelry and shoes that are loud and may cause distractions to students

in classrooms. Remember that students look up to you as a leader, so your behavior and dress is very important

- **Privacy:** Do not interfere or disrupt classrooms in session. As you walk through the halls to your designated volunteering activity, please refrain from visiting or socializing with teachers, staff and students (even your own) if they are in session.
- **Confidentiality:** If you witness sensitive conversations and matters, please do not discuss with anyone who does not have the administrative right or need to know. Like teachers, you are bound by a code of ethics to keep confidential matters within the school. It is highly inappropriate to talk about other parents' children. If you witness a situation that needs to be brought to attention, please meet privately with an Administrator to discuss the issue. Please do not discuss student progresses or difficulties with his/her parents or other parents and community members. This is the responsibility of the teacher.
- **Dependability:** We know there will be times when you may be ill or experiencing a family emergency. Please notify the school or fellow volunteers in advance if you are unable to fulfill your duty. If you make a commitment to volunteer, do your best to fulfill that duty or help find a substitute to take your place so that the work is not left undone. It is very difficult to find someone to fill a spot that a volunteer cancels abruptly or does not show up for.
- **Follow school rules:** Please follow all school rules and refrain from the following:
 - Do Not provide curriculum or teaching plans to teachers or students
 - Do Not discipline students
 - Do Not enter classrooms or teacher lounges without approval
 - Do Not use student bathrooms
 - Do Not counsel students
 - Do Not offer food or medicine to students
 - Do Not solicit businesses or advertisements without Administration approval

- **Communication methods among IFSFA member/volunteers:** The best form of communication is face to face such as in meetings. We encourage you to communicate your thoughts, ideas and concerns at the monthly meetings or through private appointments. Emails are also an efficient way to communicate but make sure you use proper privacy rules when emailing. If you are emailing a large number of people, always BCC (Blind copy) email addresses so you are not disclosing everyone's email addresses to the entire group. WhatsApp and other smart phone communication methods are **NOT recommended**. Talk to the Administration before starting a WhatsApp group because you may violate privacy issues and school protocol. WhatsApp groups automatically display personal contact information on all members and can easily lead to misinformation and exclusive tendencies. Remember that not all parents have cell phones, smart phones or WhatsApp capabilities. Parents have a right to choose NOT to disclose their personal contact information so please refrain from starting WhatsApp groups without discussion and prior approval from all parties involved.

IFSFA Structure

The Family Alliance will consist of three coordinating teams:

- Elementary School
- Middle School
- High School

Parents of students in each of those grade levels are encouraged to participate in the IFSFA team that corresponds to their children's grades.

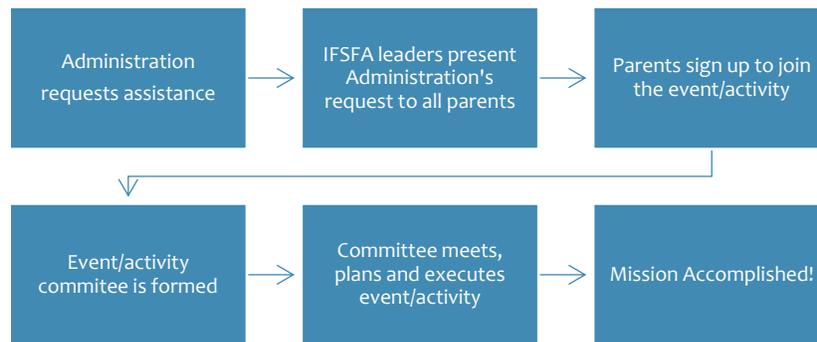
Each team will be led by one veteran volunteer and one new member from the IFS community:

- The new member role for the year will be open to anyone interested in taking that position
- The veteran for the year will be those who have years of experience in volunteerism at IFS

The two leads of each team, under the supervision of administration, will be responsible for meeting monthly with the parents who are interested in assisting the school and have signed up with the team. The teams will identify ideas, define owners, and spin off initiative to a group of parents to drive independently.

Leaders are the bridge between the wider parent volunteer community and the Administration. Volunteers meet two critical needs of our school: assist the school with annual school events and serve the wider parent community with addressing concerns in an organized, respectful manner through the appropriate channels of the school. In both cases, IFSFA leaders and representatives adhere to basic school protocols of communication and do not interfere in classroom, level instruction. You are here to support the school, not interfere in school instruction. **So how do you get involved supporting the school's important annual events?**

- 1) A request is made by the Administration for specific school events and activities at a monthly IFSFA leader meeting. A leader or team of leaders agree to manage that specific event or activity.
- 2) Event managing leader (s) discusses event in detail at the monthly all parent meeting and provides a sign-up sheet for interested parents to join the event.
- 3) Event managing leader emails all the parents that have signed up for the meeting, CC's the administration and begins communication and planning of said event. At this level, the committee can decide the best and most efficient form of communication such as an email group, WhatsApp or group text. *Keep in mind that the best mode of communication is via email because you can keep the Administration copied on all communication.*



What if you have a new idea/concept you would like to implement?

IFS welcomes and encourages parents and students to bring new ideas to our school. Innovation and creativity can bring fresh perspectives that help make IFS a fun and exciting place to learn. Show us your ideas but make sure you follow protocol and be open to feedback. An open exchange of ideas is very important to us and ideas have to be supported and encouraged by all for it to succeed. Follow this basic protocol for new ideas:

- 1) Fill out a **“IFSFA Idea Request Form”** (Forms can be downloaded from website or picked up at the school’s main office)
- 2) After form is approved and signed by the Administration, present your idea to parents at a monthly IFSFA meeting. (If you are an IFSFA leader, present idea at the next IFSFA leader meeting. If you are a parent volunteer, present your idea at the next all parent meeting).
- 3) Discuss details of plan and ask for support from parents. Provide a sign-up sheet if your idea requires assistance from other parents.
- 4) Form a committee with all interested parties and begin communication, planning and execution of your idea.
- 5) Keep Administration notified of all steps and activities your idea needs to be successfully executed.
- 6) Follow school procedures, rules, security and safety measures while on school premises.

Partnership

As an IFSFA volunteer, you are the school's vital partner. Your support and service is greatly needed for annual school events such as (but not limited to):

- 1) **Early Elementary Mystery Readers:** Many of the preschool-KG teachers ask parents to come in once a week or month to surprise the students with a reading. Students really enjoy the fact that there is a surprise guest coming in and you can really bring a lot of creativity and fun to reading in the classroom!
- 2) **After school clubs:** There has been an overwhelming desire to have more after school clubs for our students. The options are almost limitless- from arts and crafts to sports and recreation. Our parent community consists of professionals and experts in many different fields who can start a club that uses those expert skills and interests to broaden students' minds and enhance their creativity.
- 3) **Spirit Shop:** This shop provides a central location where students and community members can go to purchase school spirited products in our school colors. The shop should also provide older students (especially student government members) with an opportunity to run the store and learn valuable skills like organization, responsibility, accountability, and general business skills. You are needed to mentor students and manage the shop. This includes scheduling, inventory and re-stocking.
- 4) **Junior Achievement:** A great way for parents to get directly involved in the classroom. This event is open to parent volunteers who teach students for an entire day or partially for two days on the importance of entrepreneurship and money management. Students and teachers really look forward to this event every year.
- 5) **Scripps District Wide Spelling Bee:** Since 2014, IFS hosts the District wide private school spelling bee. 20-30 private and parochial schools come to IFS to compete through tough spelling word rounds. The administration works very hard to make sure this event is successful and enjoyable for our many guests from all over the district and you can play a big part in assisting with the success of this wonderful event.
- 6) **Math and Science Fairs:** You will have the opportunity to assist the Science and Math department through setting up fairs, assisting students in displaying their projects and even being a Science Fair

Judge! A wonderful opportunity to work with our brilliant students and other parents.

- 7) **Scholastic Book Fair:** A great fundraising event for our libraries that focuses on the importance of reading. Profits made from this event go directly back to the school with resources and furniture for our libraries. You will have the opportunity to work with other parents in planning fun contests for kids, distributing marketing material about the fair, setting up displays, decorating the library and assisting with the daily operation of the fair. Some parents will even can wear a costume provided by Scholastic!
- 8) **End of year celebrations:** this is an excellent opportunity for parents to work directly with their child's teachers in hosting an end of year celebration for early elementary, middle and high school students and families.
- 9) **Annual Fundraising Dinner:** Every year Islamic Foundation School Committee executes a beautiful banquet dinner with notable speakers and wonderful sponsors to raise funds for the school.
- 10) **Classroom or project specific fundraising:** You can help raise funds for smaller projects or charity events by helping with classroom specific or project specific events. This is a great opportunity for you to work directly with your child, their classmates, teachers and other parents to raise funds for important causes dear to our students and community such as Syrian Orphan help, Rohingya Crisis help, anti-bullying, allergy-nutrition awareness, etc.

Representation

As an IFSCA volunteer, you not only serve the needs of the school, you also represent the Islamic Foundation Community! Students, parents and community members view you as an important representative of the Foundation. Everyone will pay close attention to what you do and say about the staff, students and educational programs at IFS. Communities around us may hear negative stories and unfortunate isolated incidents. Through your volunteer experience, you will be able to share all the positive aspects of our school and showcase all the incredible things we do here at IFS. You can be a

powerful tool in positive marketing. So we welcome you as an IFSFA volunteer and we hope you enjoy your time! Jazakallahu Khairun! May Allah reward you with goodness! 😊