

Return of the Children's Library

After a notable absence we are very pleased to report that the **Doha Mums Children's Library** is back. *Kelly Johnstone* headed along to the official re-launch party to find out what we can expect second time around

Finding good books in Doha is a little bit like finding that elusive needle in an enormous haystack. When it comes to books for children, the haystack is 20 times bigger and the needle more like an eyelash – you get the point. So, with that proverbial image in mind, it's easy to see why the re-launch of the Doha Mums Children's Library has been accompanied by a huge collective sigh of relief from mums and dads nationwide – and it seems that the kids are pretty pleased too.

This re-opening of the library at the ACS International School is very big news – so big in fact that Doha Mums founder Roxanne Piper-Davis has flown back to Doha from her new life in Houston, to attend the re-launch party. 'Having a traditional children's library where kids can discover books, pinpoint their favorite topics, and develop a love of reading is so important for their academic and social development.'

It was Roxanne who managed to secure the new venue at ACS Doha. 'We are incredibly grateful to ACS Doha for hosting the Doha Mums Children's Library and we are very excited to welcome children to the new library location.'

Originally located in Souq Waqif, where it shared a space with the Kumon Maths Centre, the children's library was forced to close down during a total refurbishment of the arts centre where it was located. Unable to provide what had become a much-loved and enjoyed resource, Doha Mums set about finding a solution to the lack of venue. Thanks to good contacts at ACS International, Roxanne was able to get them to agree to provide a room for the all-new library at the brand new school.

Alison Gilmour who, along with Kerri Arlando and Lida Larsson, came up with and established the concept, feels that the refurbishment was actually a blessing in disguise. 'While Kumon were very generous to let us share their room at the Souq, the goal was always to set up our own place. Roxanne spoke to ACS Doha and here we are!'

The room, on the first floor of the school which only opened at the start of this school year, is spacious, bright and airy. The walls are decorated with colourful posters and shelves, crammed with books, run around the edge of the room at an ideal height for children to help themselves to those that take their fancy. The books are colour-coded so parents can identify the right books for their child's age group.

'We have a range of fun books that the kids, and their parents, can choose from that have the sole aim of helping the children learn to read with creativity and imagination. All of the books are ones which we have enjoyed reading to our own children and which they, in turn, have enjoyed listening to,' says Gilmour, who is mum to a six year old.

In addition, Larsson is responsible for scouring the internet for the best selling and most popular children's books. When she finds them, she pays for them online and enlists volunteers who are willing to bring books back with them to Doha after a holiday or trip back home.



'We also have access to official school reading lists from the UK and US and so use this to be able to offer government recommended reading material,' says Gilmour.

Mother of two, Kerri Arlando adds: 'We currently have over 2,300 books with another 200 on their way. And this new venue means that we have room to grow into the space.'

As well as being able to take books out, a group of over 20 volunteers will be taking turns to run the library during opening hours, involving the children in a variety of activities such as arts and crafts, sing-a-long sessions and story time.

Members of Doha Mums can join the library for just 100QR per year. This gives them a family card

and entitles each child to take out a maximum of five books at any one time, which must be returned no later than 28 days later.

So, with more books and a shiny new venue, the Doha Mums children's library is open for business again which in turn means that our search for that particular needle seems to have come to an end. Now, where did I put my library card?

The children's library is located at ACS International School near Landmark and is open: Mondays from 9.30am to 12pm; Wednesdays from 3pm to 4.30pm; the first Saturday of each month from 10am to 12pm; and every other Saturday from 1.30pm to 4.30pm. Visitors need to RSVP in the events section of the Doha Mums website.