New Teachers' Information



2018





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In September 2017 El Alsson School moved to a new campus in NEW GIZA, <u>www.newgiza.com</u> a superb development on the plateau overlooking the Great Pyramids and Cairo.

These are notes intended for teachers that know neither El Alsson School, Cairo, nor perhaps the Middle East. Teachers over the years have pointed out that it is important to be prepared for the differences between living in a large cultural melting-pot such as Cairo and in more familiar places nearer to home. The notes have been developed in an attempt to give the reader an idea of living in Cairo and Egypt and a background on the school.

We hope you will find the information useful.

Colin Rogers, Soumaya Amr, and Karim Rogers. Directors.





The Revolution of 2011

Welcome to El Alsson and the New Egypt!

These notes try to honestly describe the school and life in Cairo. If you have taught internationally before you may have worked in a dual track school offering, as we do, an American section and a British section.

Before we talk about the school, some thoughts on Egypt and the recent revolution. It all began back in 2011 as what has been now been labelled the 'Arab Spring'. Tensions in Egypt with the regime of Hosni Mubarak finally boiled over and on January 25th 2011 the people took to the streets and filled the now famous Tahrir Square. 18 days later the regime was toppled and Mubarak and his family had been arrested.. Ordinary people from all walks of life suddenly found they had a voice; suddenly began to believe in themselves.

It has been a difficult road; the only organized group at the time were the Moslem Brotherhood and tin elections, by default gained power. Sometime later in 2013, with the help of the army President Morsi was arrested, his government dissolved and all sane people in the country breathed a sigh of relief. The experience of religious zealots running the country had been a real eye-opener. We survived, bit by bit religious extremism is being dealt with and we have a new constitution and a new president, Abd El Fattah el Sisi.

There will be ups and downs. You can't solve poverty, illiteracy and suffering over-night. Rooting out corruption and dealing with the embittered Brotherhood will take time, but we believe we will get there and never again will we allow even the suggestion of Egypt becoming a radicalized Islamic state.

Our children in El Alsson have lived through a remarkable time; we believe in them and we are proud of them; they are after all the future of this country. For us as a school the teaching and learning we provide has taken on a new dimension. All the teaching staff stayed throughout the revolution which is a testimony to their courage, professionalism and commitment. We are pleased and proud to be educating the future generation.

We hope you will join us. It will be interesting!

Colin Rogers , Soumaya Amr and Karim Rogers.. Directors

Modern Egypt

Cairo is a mega-city of 19 million people. Cairo is called the "Mother of the World" given its location at the crossroads of Africa and the Middle East. The city is diverse and cosmopolitan where old and traditional culture and modern cultures co-exist.

Old Cairo with its bazaars, dusty alleyways and coffee shops is circled by the modern city of five star hotels, fashionable cafes, shopping malls and cinemas. The River Nile dissects the metropolis with the east bank comprising the city centre and old Cairo; the west bank with newer residential suburbs with their local shopping areas.

Housing and new-town developments adjacent to the city are rapidly developing in the form of the new desert cities where modern Cairo is emerging. The 6th October City is adjacent to New Giza where El Alsson moved in 2017. Modern Egypt has become the home of hi-tech industries such as the Smart Village, factories producing Mercedes, BMW, Suzuki and General Motors; tech companies like Toshiba and National and other multi-national electronics industries; food factories like Nestle and Cadbury; pharmaceuticals, textiles and weaving; clothing producers like Benetton, Naf-Naf and Pierre Cardin and a wide range of industrial products and top brand names, all manufacturing under license in Egypt.



Cairo : the bridge to the now famous Tahrir Sq.

Cairo is a mega-city of 19 million people. Cairo is also called the "Mother of the World".

El Alsson was first opened in 1982 in a suburb of Cairo and then moved to our previous 6 acre site in Haraniya, on the Saqqara Road. The Pyramids could be seen from the school in one direction (OK, you had to climb up a ladder to the roof, but it sounds romantic!) and in the other, lush, cultivated land with water buffalos and palm trees and the Mokattam Hills.

After the move the school now has 1590 students from 3 – 18 year olds (FS1 to A2 and K to 12) in two purpose-built buildings, one housing the British school and an identical building housing the American school. Both school are in 2 blocks joined together: Early Years and Primary with Secondary and Early Childhood and Elementary with Middle and High School. Each building is designed and equipped to suit the age group of the children, and they are located next to playgrounds and playing fields (football and rugby field, volleyball and basketball courts).

What's going to happen in the future?

The new schools are built and during this year we should receive the performing arts building (theater, drama studios and music) and the sports hall with exercise and fitness room, the sports hall and indoor



The existing El Alsson was first opened in 1982 on a 6 acre site on the Saqqara (Step pyramid) Road. We are now on our new 14 acre campus in New Giza.



The new School in New Giza

The new school is 14 acres on top of the 6th October City plateau. A huge development—we are the flagship school for the new city that is being built.



swimming pools.

EY and KS1 / EC and Pre k and K. Have an open-plan unit for the little ones, and then 4 classes per year group for the 4, 5 and 6 years year olds. They are all on the ground floor with their own outside playgrounds and activity areas, and inside courtyards where children can mingle outside of the classroom in secure, interesting areas.

Primaries Yr. 2-6 and G1-5. The same concept continues with 4 classes per year group and courtyards outside the classrooms. In addition there are multi-purpose activity halls and specialist rooms: a big (double) art room with roof terrace, 2 computer rooms, 2 music rooms, music practice for individual lessons, a science lab and French room. Arabic as a second language and specialized learning support and staff workrooms are also available.

All classrooms are equipped with Epsom smart boards, internet connections, and sets of I-pads (youngsters) or laptops (older Elementary and Primaries), flexible furniture, social furniture etc. that you would expect to find in a modern school. Every classroom has a large walk-in store which teachers consider to be brilliant! There is an open-air theater / performing arts area for concerts and plays, artificial grass and tartan areas, dedicated playgrounds and a big grassed sports fields.



Foundation Stage / Pre-school Classroom



Foundation Stage / Pre School outside activity area

With the schools designed to be two units of younger and older children, certain facilities are shared: the staff room is a large complex of sitting areas, networked computers and WiFi and staff cafeteria, Nearby is the resource support department and print-shop. The staffroom can seat 100+ teachers at the same time. The libraries are on two floors: downstairs for the youngsters and upstairs for seniors with dedicated study carousels and banks of computers. They are an extensive range of books and on-line access available to staff and students.

Resource controllers manage all of the materials, provide stationery and teachers' materials, children's notebooks and text books, laminating and photocopying services. We have a large clinic, staffed with 3 nurses and 2 doctors and a day-care centre and toddlers unit available to employees (not the public). The day-care is one of the best things we have ever done: young Mum's can get back to work quickly leaving their babes in our care-unit.

One thing that is a little unusual but very welcomed by class teachers/ homeroom teachers, particularly those coming from the UK/US, is that specialists take over your class for Arabic and Religion, French (from Yr4/G3 upwards), music, PE, ICT and art, enabling you to work with children who need help or giving you a break and time during the day to do other things (usually around 8-10 periods free out of a 40 period week).



Day care center.



Senior School Sports Day

The Secondary / Middle and High schools.

Each school (remember the buildings are identical) has some 40 general classrooms, CPD training and video-conferencing room, 4 large ICT suites, 8 science laboratories, and 3 big art studios. There is also a senior students' Common Room and terrace. The Performing Arts with drama studio, music and 220-seat theater, Alsson 'radio and video and the sports hall and pool building, are shared by both schools.

In addition to educational facilities there is an extensive set-up for buses and transportation, IT server center and support and a large number of departments like finance, HR, registrar, engineering and housekeeping who keep the big site running.

Students

The students are 90% Egyptian and come from well-off families. The children are invariably co-operative and keen to learn. Egyptian parents have high expectations of their children and most students work hard and strive to achieve high grades. In AS and A-Level exams recently, 4 students were in the top 10 in the world for Edecxel results and AP results were impressively good!

The school has a cosmopolitan teaching staff with Egyptian teachers working alongside expatriate teachers from the UK, USA, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.





School Philosophy

We believe children should be taught to be confident and have high standards of self-respect and discipline. We believe that each and every child is able to do something well and by offering a full and comprehensive education we aim to find individual talent and help it grow. We believe in accepting children of all abilities, within the school's ability to provide for their needs, working with them and making the best of their talents.

El Alsson has an informal atmosphere with no regimentation that is unnecessary. This is reflected in our uniform design, which is simple and practical for our climate. Blazers and ties, trousers with turn-ups and heavy black shoes do not feature in our school! Whilst we are practical and informal, we maintain clear and precise codes of discipline and order. Teachers do not have to wear formal clothes (hardly practical in Egypt) and the rule is smart/casual.





El Alsson Educational Programmes

El Alsson's "British International School" which follows the National Curriculum of England from FS1 to A-Level; and the "American International School" from Pre-School to G12. It may seem strange to the reader that a school offers different educational tracks, but in Egypt this is by no means unusual. Most candidates ask a variety of questions about how the different programmes work which we are happy to answer at interview. However, as a guide, class tutors or homeroom teachers are not asked to teach in both sections.

Children are admitted to the school by tests and interviews of parents and children. Thereafter, parents choose which educational program they want their child to follow: Foundation Stage 1 leading into the British section and Early Childhood leading into the American Section. The British section of the school is an Edexcel and Cambridge examination centre, and accredited by BSME and BSO. In the American section the school is accredited by the American NCA CASI accreditation agency.

We realize that the two International curriculums must suit Egyptian children living in Egypt, so some subjects are adapted to be culturally and geographically relevant. This is mainly necessary in History and Geography but does not cause teachers any problems. As part of the curriculum, Arabic and Religion (Islam or Christianity) are taught by Egyptian specialist staff. Non-Egyptian students study Arabic as Second Language.



The school has a broad range of teachers' resources as well as clear documentation about HR and what you can expect from us. The school treats your personal development seriously and supports staff with a wide range of CPD opportunities.

El Alsson Educational Programmes

GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education), American Diploma and Advanced Placement.

El Alsson British International school is a registered Edexcel and Cambridge Examination centre and GCSE, AS and A2. GCSE is offered on a two-year basis as in UK. After completing year 11, most students take 3 or 4 AS and A2's which, if successful, allow them to easily go to university in Egypt or Universities anywhere in the world. The American section offers a full High School Diploma program and is an authorized College Board provider of AP subjects. Our results are very good and at least 50% of our students go abroad to an impressive array of universities (see our website under 'British' or 'American').

The Teaching Day

The teaching week is Sunday to Thursday, beginning at 8 am with morning assembly. Most staff come to school by school bus arriving at approximately 7.45 am. The bus journey takes an average of 45 minutes from central Cairo. The recent opening of a huge ring road around Cairo has meant getting to school is usually fairly easy, although going home in the afternoon, depending on where you live, can be a pain because of traffic.

EY and EC staff along with Primary and Elementary staff, have free periods when Arabic teaching staff or other specialists take their class. Secondary teaching is subject based on 6 x 50 minute lessons per day.



Science Lab, Senior School



Year 10 Biology trip to Ain Sokhna

El Alsson Educational Programmes

Most senior school teachers teach around 22-24 periods per week. All teachers participate in cover and duty rotas ... oh joy....! The school day finishes at 2.00pm for FS1,2 & Yr1 / EC, Pre K and K, and 3.00pm for everyone else.

Teachers with responsibility posts will also find that additional timetabled time is allocated where possible for them to do their job, and as far as possible all necessary meetings are scheduled into the working day, with only occasional after-school meetings.

Teachers in EA work hard; such is the nature of our profession. However, we do our best to ensure that staff are not over-timetabled and try to take into account the travel time to and from school, respect for teacher's personal time and the fact that they want to be able to see as much as possible of the fascinating country they are living in.

At the end of the teaching day, after-school clubs currently include horse riding, football, rugby, netball, badminton, basketball, MUN, music, drama, choir, art, productions, math, IT etc. All suggestions for new activities and offers of help are more than welcomed. Students compete in sports matches, drama and MUN against other International schools in Cairo and the Middle East.



EA Basketball girls team



EA Rugby team

What can you do?

Newcomers to Egypt will want to sample Cairo's Pharonic history such as the Pyramids, Saqqara, Memphis and old Cairo, the markets and visiting the Egyptian Museum. These places are easy to find but there are many other interesting archaeological sites within a day's drive from Cairo that are less crowded. Those who are particularly interested in Egypt's ancient archaeological sites and seeing those that are less accessible to the general public should join the Egypt Exploration Society (EES) which organizes regular lectures and visits to archaeological sites, or tag along on school trips with the kids, which won't cost you anything, except if in the desert, the absence of a shower for a night or two!

Islamic Cairo (Old Cairo) and Coptic Cairo are fascinating parts of the city, both having excellent local museums. Islamic Cairo has survived virtually intact as it was spared the ravages of Mongol and Crusader invasion. Apart from the famous mosques and the "souk" area know as Khan El Khalili, Islamic Cairo is little changed, except over the years it sadly fell into ruin. Recently, it has been completely restored, becoming pedestrian-friendly, and now includes the extraordinary Aga Khan's El Azha Gardens of 35 acres. The old city walls have emerged along with the gardens from a very ancient and very, very large rubbish dump and the whole area is now really exciting! It took 800,000 truck loads to clear the centuries old rubbish tip!



Old Cairo



The Pyramids of Giza

What can you do?

Cairo has lots of modern cinemas showing British and American films. There is an international film festival in the autumn which shows some of the latest releases. There are 10 local television channels with many programmes in English and numerous providers offering satellite TV, e.g. OSN, Orbit and Showtime, with masses of channels.

The Cairo Opera House presents international events in classical music and opera in sophisticated surroundings. They also have excellent art galleries. The large number of international hotels provides a wide range of international cuisine. Teachers use them for their night clubs, bars and swimming pools. Apart from the hotels, there is a wide range of restaurants and quality coffee shops throughout Cairo and the suburbs.

Cairo has the weather for outdoor sports. The PE department is only able to claim that they cannot teach outside for about 4 days a year because of rain! In addition to the schools' facilities, there are many sporting clubs with swimming pools and fitness centres like Gold's Gym , tennis and squash courts. Most teachers pay the daily rate to use the club's facilities but longer term membership can be bought. There are also many excellent reasonably priced golf courses—one of the best being next door to the school. During school holidays and long weekends, the Sinai peninsular and Red Sea are popular destinations. Scuba diving and snorkeling on the coral reefs is just incredible and indescribably beautiful!



Cairo Opera House



The river Nile at Aswan

What can you do?

Further afield are the desert oases of Siwa and Baharia, Farafra and Kharga (best visited in winter). The school can advise you on visiting these little known oasis, where off-road expeditions in 4x4's or camel are popular with teachers. (Problem is most of them don't want to come back!) A good way to do it is to join a trip with the students. Then, of course, there are the wonders of Luxor and Aswan. Travel by plane, train or bus to any of these destinations is good for short holidays. Once your residence permit has come through you will be able to fly internally in Egypt at less than the normal foreigner rate; this also applies to hotel rates.

Don't forget—Egypt's geographical position makes it ideal for travelling around the eastern Mediterranean, down into Africa or further afield to Asia.



The White Desert



Coral reefs in the Red Sea.

Food and Drink

Almost everything you want is available from supermarkets - except Marmite, which only appears occasionally and is craved by a very small group of weird foreigners including the author! Prices vary considerably whether you shop at supermarkets like Carrefour or street markets, small shops and street vendors. Fruit and vegetable markets display a huge range of produce all year round. Cairo definitely welcomes vegetarians! There is a flourishing fast-food market (everyone delivers everything - McDonalds will even deliver breakfast!) with all familiar names - Pizza Hut, Pizza Express, Burger King, McDonalds, KFC. More 'sophisticated' cuisine is also available in the city and suburbs including Thai, Chinese, Indian, French, Italian, Lebanese etc.

Alcohol

Although Egypt is predominately a Muslim country, alcohol is widely available and not prohibited. The local beer and wines are good (now owned and produced by Heineken), including made-under-license beers and good local brands. Quality local spirits (plus designer drinks) have recently come on to the market from the same company and are also good. However, more basic 'backstreet-distilleries', although cheap, are truly appalling and at best will only make you impotent! Please don't even think about buying drinks from them!



Fast food abounds!



Medicine

Pharmacies abound, most medical products are available and many of those subject to prescription in the UK or US are available over the counter. If you have to take special medicines regularly, **check with us to make sure they are available—they should be although under a different brand name**

As a teacher you will receive comprehensive medical cover which enables you to use good hospitals and doctors.

Clothes

Winter is usually reasonably warm during the day but cold at night, with temperatures dipping to single figures, so for 8 – 12 weeks of the year you will need jumpers, cardigans and jackets. (Most foreigners think that Cairo is always hot – **not true**!) For other times of the year when it's hot, smart loose cotton clothing is most comfortable. Please respect the conservative culture of the country and Islam and dress modestly in the cities. In Sinai and the Red Sea resorts, wear what you like. This does not mean that in the cities women have to cover up Saudi-style; it just means you have dress modestly.

There is a huge textile industry in Egypt which is famous for its cotton. Reasonably-priced casual and smart clothes are widely available and there are loads of local and international brands. Just a note: you should also bring



Shopping malls



and cinemas

clothes for more formal occasions. When Egyptians celebrate, they really dress up! Don't forget your diamonds when invited to a wedding!

Foreign Exchange

You may borrow money from the school when you arrive, but we also advise new teachers to bring around £1,000 or U\$1200 with them to get you started. We will open a bank account for you with HSBC where we will pay your salary. Cash can then be withdrawn from ATM machines that are located all over the city.

Transferring money abroad through banks or taking it with you in cash is allowed, although you may need our help as sometimes there are restrictions. Since the Egyptian Pound has been floated in 2016, there is more stability and the black market is negligible.

Living on the Salary

Teachers obviously have varying perceptions of the adequacy of their salary. Your salary, paid in local currency with a sterling or dollar supplement, does enable you to live at a decent standard, afford good accommodation, eat out, take holidays and participate in a range of activities such as sports clubs. Everyday bills for phones, electricity and gas are reasonable and traveling around the city by taxi or Uber (Uber takes cash) or going to different parts of Egypt by plane, bus or train is cheap.



Exchange rates as of January 2018 are £1 = EGP 24.40, U\$1.00 : EGP17.20 (EGP = Egyptian Pounds).

As a teacher you are working very much 'in Egypt', not in a remote isolated expatriate community or compound. However, our salaries are competitive with other international schools in the city, even those who are serving the high-income expatriate community and the rich Egyptian elite / nouveau riche, a market we have never tried to enter. Our market is very much the middle income Egyptian community who feel much more comfortable sending their children to EA, rather than other very expensive international schools, which they cannot afford anyway. Many teachers who have been us for more than 10 years are a testament to their happiness working in our school and that they are comfortable on the salary.

So a few important points:

- If you have serious financial commitments at home, such as a mortgage, you should discuss this with us at interview.
- We will advise you honestly because <u>if you are not content and happy</u> working with us, this hurts you, the school and the students.

If, on the other hand you would like to consider working in a well-resourced school that pays serious attention to its curriculum, staff support and pastoral care, and where the salary is good if not top international school levels, then consider us.

Over the 36 years of the school we have had very experienced earlyretirement teachers work with us who just want to experience working



Happily you will be 'working in Egypt', not in a closed, isolated compound.

abroad and continue to enjoy teaching; young teachers just starting out, middle-aged teachers who have worked the international circuit for years and teaching couples with children. Many of our staff have stayed on, are happy and continue to renew contracts.

Work Permits and Residence

The school is responsible for ensuring the proper legal status of all employees and teachers are not required to go to government offices trying to sort out their status. We do it for you. However, there are 3 very important things you should note:

- 1. You must provide us with your original degree certificate. Sorry, no exceptions. Certified copies will also be required. (We will advise you on procedures.)
- 2. To get a work permit Egyptian law requires you to take an HIV test upon arrival which is organized in the school clinic. The results are strictly confidential and the school is only informed of whether the test is satisfactory or not.
- 3. We have to keep your passport for some weeks on and off, whilst the formalities of the work permit and residence are completed. During this time we issue you with an ID card so you have valid identification.

Applicants who have worked in other International schools abroad may have had to surrender their passports to the school, to prevent them breaking contract. **We do not do this and abhor this practice.**



Please make sure your passport is up to date! For example: to renew a British passport when you live abroad you now have to send it back to UK which is a total pain and takes time!

Teachers' Accommodation

Upon arrival in Egypt the school puts you in a 4 Star hotel. Currently we are using the Flamenco Hotel in Zamalek. We usually allow staff to stay up to 1 week at our expense, during which time we arrange finding flats. This is not difficult but can be a bit stressful going around and deciding. We survey teachers reactions to our arrival arrangements every year, and they all say, finding 'flats is a pain'. We agree. We do our best to help you but there isn't a way to make flat hunting fun!

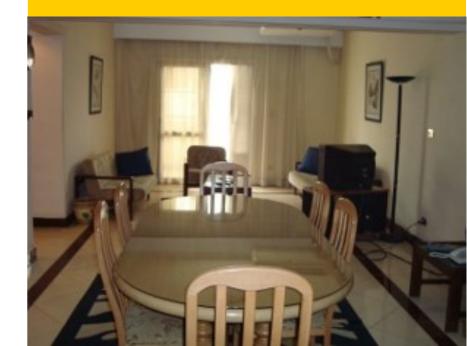
Apartments are spacious in comparison with the UK or large US cities. The main complaint comes from staff who have recently vacated a bed-sit in Fulham is they find them 'too big'! The apartments will have two or three bedrooms, a decent kitchen, living room, dining room and entrée, one or two bathrooms, and are fully furnished, down to cutlery and linen. All will have a telephone and air conditioning, washing machines and TV. Internet access will be available or can be arranged. The school gives you a settling-in allowance of LE1,000 for all the odds and ends you need to be comfortable.

Many teachers share as this is obviously more economical and means that you can find a better quality affordable apartment or small villa. However, sharing does not mean being without your privacy and everyone has their own room in flats of this size. It is worth noting that small single accommodation is more difficult to find. Families in Egypt are usually extended and no one has ever thought of building bed-sits.

Rents for the type of shared accommodation described above can range from EGP7,000 – 9,000 per month (between 2) and around EGP 6,000 - 8,000 for singles.



A typical furnished apartment



Career and Opportunities

Obviously the number of senior responsibility positions is limited. However, there are posts for HOD's and SL's in the senior school, Subject Coordinators in both primary/elementary and senior, and Year Group Leaders in primary and a variety of other responsibilities.

Applications for these positions are invited on an annual basis. Each year we advertise in January for the next September, so we are not sure at the time of writing if responsibility positions are available. Please let us know if you are interested.

<u>CPD</u>

The school has a healthy budget for CPD which includes in-service training, outside agencies and international conferences and workshops. In addition we have a mixture of teacher-delivered training, we provide ICT training, and we have recently offered professionally lead middle management leadership programmes, weekend development courses for EY/EC and Primary/ Elelmentary and training provided by the British Schools of the Middle East. Senior managers attend conferences and inspector training, short training programmes (bought in) and lots of teachers have attended shared training with other International schools in Cairo. We have supported individuals and given scholarships and support for MA's and distance PGCE training through to Senior Principals (Head Teacher) Training. The school treats its' CPD commitment seriously.

New teachers are given a full orientation and induction programme including being introduced and trained to use the various management systems for education.







Performance Development

We don't use the words 'assessment' or 'performance management' rather 'performance development'. By definition, this seems to work much better and staff like the well-worked out processes designed to help them become more effective teachers.



<u>Arrival</u>

When you arrive late August we are very aware that you are coming to Egypt when it is hot and it's all a bit confusing. The orientation covers Living in Egypt, Do's and Don't's and the local Education System plus a variety of social events where you can meet colleagues. Before school starts, there is a week of preparation when you are working with school and Egypt-experienced colleagues who help you get ready. Throughout the first year staff meet regularly with their relevant line manger who provides support and guidance as well as regular staff meetings. At the end of the first 3 months all staff new to the school are observed and a simple appraisal given with feedback and an opportunity to add your own comments. We will meet you from the airport when you first arrive.

Do not worry!

Benefits

The following benefits are provided for expatriate teaching staff:

- Initial 1 or 2-year contract extended on a yearly basis. (Discuss at interview)
- Annual return flight to your country of residence. Internal journeys to the nearest airport within those countries may be offered. During the 3rd year an additional London-Cairo-London ticket or equivalent is provided as a bonus.
- Housing allowance
- Baggage allowance over normal airline allowances up to 30kg.
- Medical cover.
- Family terms and conditions (please request).
- Residence and work permits.
- Fully paid 12 month salary.
- Reasonable timetables.
- Free transport by school bus.
- Settling-in allowance.
- 14 weeks holiday.

Sterling or dollar allowance (paid abroad if possible- tax free).



The Sphinx at the Giza pyramids



and Abu Simbel

Benefits

Holidays, teaching weeks

The 52-week year normally divides up as follows:

36 teaching weeks usually of 165-170 working days, depending on public holidays.

+1 week pre-opening end August/early September. +1 week closing down late June

Holidays.

Please see our calendar on the school website.

National and religious holidays are also taken.



Dahab on the Red Sea



Correspondence

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We hope you will join us in 2018.