

22 Schools, A Brighter Future for Thousands: **Vehbi Koç Foundation Semahat Arsel Primary School Opened in Gölcük**

Every school has a story, and the story of Vehbi Koç Foundation Semahat Arsel Primary School began with a commitment to creating more opportunities for children in Gölcük. Built with the contributions of Ford Otosan as part of the "100% Support for Education" campaign, the school was completed following the groundbreaking ceremony on June 16, 2025, and welcomed 750 students and 40 teachers for the 2026–2027 academic year.

The story of a school often begins long before the construction of its building. That is how the story of a new door opening to children's futures unfolded in the Yüzbaşılar neighborhood of Gölcük. More than replacing the 15-classroom Donanma Primary School in the Yüzbaşılar neighborhood of Gölcük, which was demolished after being deemed structurally unsafe, the goal was to create a modern learning environment for more children and offer greater educational opportunities.

Vehbi Koç Foundation and Ford Otosan joined forces to bring the new school to life under the "100% Support for Education" campaign. Construction began on June 16, 2025, and the school was completed as planned. With a total construction area of 6,750 square meters, the new facility has 35 classrooms and capacity for 750 students, supported by a teaching staff of 40.

The school welcomed its first students for the 2026–2027 academic year. More than a new educational facility, Vehbi Koç Foundation Semahat Arsel Primary School marks a fresh start for the community in Gölcük, offering children a place to learn, build friendships, and pursue their dreams. After all, building a school is about much more than walls and classrooms because the real story begins when children walk through its doors.



Vehbi Koç Foundation Chairperson Semahat Arsel Attended Opening Ceremony

The opening of Vehbi Koç Foundation Semahat Arsel Primary School was celebrated with a ceremony attended by Kocaeli Governor İlhami Aktaş, Vehbi Koç Foundation Chairperson Semahat Arsel, Vehbi Koç Foundation General Manager Oğuz Toprakoğlu, Ford Otosan Board Member and Temel Ticaret General Manager Mehmet Apak, and Ford Otosan General Manager Güven Özyurt, along with government officials, representatives of the education community, and other guests.

"When something needs to be done for this country's children and future, the onus is on us."

Speaking at the ceremony, Vehbi Koç Foundation General Manager Oğuz Toprakoğlu emphasized the Foundation's long-term commitment to education and its plans for the future: "We aim to help children build a strong foundation for learning from an early age and grow into individuals who understand, question, and contribute to a changing world. Our students are at the heart of everything we do. More than anything, we want them to walk through these doors every morning thinking, 'I am so glad this is my school!' and to look forward to coming here each day. Our responsibility does not end when we transfer a school to the Ministry of National Education. We remain committed to ensuring that our schools serve children for generations, adapt to changing needs, and provide high-quality educational opportunities. Vehbi Koç Foundation Chairperson Semahat Arsel has always guided us with the belief that sustaining an initiative is just as important as launching it. Our 'Build, Transfer, and Maintain' principle reflects this long-term commitment and our responsibility extends beyond the school buildings themselves. We also develop initiatives that support teachers and improve learning environments. I firmly believe that Vehbi Koç Foundation Semahat Arsel Primary School will be home to many success stories that begin in Gölcük and help shape the future of our country."

“We see investing in education as one of our most important responsibilities to our country’s future.”
Speaking at the ceremony, Ford Otosan General Manager Güven Özyurt reflected on the company’s longstanding ties with the region, the investment’s impact on the community, and the contributions of Vehbi Koç Foundation Chairperson Semahat Arsel to education: “Opening a school is about much more than bringing a new building into service. Today, we are witnessing the beginning of a new story that will unfold through the voices of children, the dedication of teachers, and the hopes of families. The fact that some of our colleagues at Ford Otosan once attended Donanma Primary School, as it was formerly known, is a testament to the lasting impact of education on people’s lives. For us, Vehbi Koç Foundation Semahat Arsel Primary School is therefore not only an investment in education but also a symbol of a precious connection between the past and the future. Opening this school on Koç Group’s centennial is especially meaningful to us. The words of our late founder, Vehbi Koç, ‘Contributing to the development of youth is a duty to humanity and one’s country,’ resonate perfectly on this occasion. As Koç Group enters its second century, we remain committed to investing in our children’s future as part of our responsibility to our country. We have worked alongside Vehbi Koç Foundation for many years. The Foundation’s ‘Build, Transfer, and Maintain’ approach supports not only the school buildings but also the teachers, students, and learning environments. Having Vehbi Koç Foundation Chairperson Semahat Arsel with us today makes this occasion even more special. Over the years, Ms. Arsel’s contributions to education, healthcare, culture, and social development have touched countless lives. The children who learn and grow in this school, which proudly bears her name, will carry her commitment to education into the future.”

Expanding Educational Opportunities in Kocaeli
The opening of Vehbi Koç Foundation Semahat Arsel Primary School marks another milestone in the Foundation’s longstanding commitment to education in Kocaeli. It is the Foundation’s third donation school in the province and its 22nd across Türkiye. Together, these schools serve more than 20,000 students and employ over 1,000 teachers, dedicated to shaping their futures. The students and teachers of Vehbi Koç Foundation Semahat Arsel Primary School now become part of this growing educational network.

The story does not end here. Vehbi Koç Foundation and Ford Otosan are continuing their investments in education in Kocaeli. Under an agreement with the Kocaeli Governorship, plans are underway to build the Foundation’s 23rd donation school. A protocol has been signed for a new 26-classroom primary school in Başiskele. Meanwhile, renovations at Başiskele Atatürk Secondary School have been completed, and the school has reopened to students.

