



2024-2025 ELEMENTARY HANDBOOK



Dear GAA Elementary Learning Community,

Welcome to the GEMS American Academy Elementary School. This Handbook provides information that will help you become an active member of our GAA community.

GAA provides a broad array of enriched opportunities to learn and grow. Our teachers are enthusiastic and caring professionals who are knowledgeable of successful practices in elementary education. Visitors and new families to our school immediately sense our Culture of Kindness, a signature of our school community that reflects our core values and philosophy. We seek to create a climate that fosters self-esteem by celebrating the growth and development of each student. We believe that advocating, teaching and respecting a diverse student body from cultures throughout the world fosters peace, justice and global understanding.

Children in the elementary years of education are developing the necessary skills, both social and academic, to become confident, inquisitive and engaged learners. We encourage children to be active participants in their own learning and to question and explore the world around them. Our ultimate goal is to instill and inspire a joy of learning by providing a nurturing environment that supports and challenges a child's development.

We recognize that the elementary school years are crucial to laying the foundation for future success. To support the development of each child, our teachers and administrators regularly collaborate to plan and present an enriched American curriculum that will be intellectually challenging and socially rewarding.

Open communication enables us to engage our parents as partners in understanding and meeting the needs of each child. Your children benefit greatly from our shared responsibility for their learning, growth and development. We warmly invite you and your child to acquaint yourselves with this Community Handbook to learn about our School's policies, procedures, expectations and opportunities.

The 2024-2025 school year holds exciting possibilities for teaching and learning.

Sincerely,

Robert Rinaldo
Head of School



Dear GAA Elementary Learning Community,

Welcome to the 2024-2025 school year at GEMS American Academy (GAA). With over 80 nationalities, we pride ourselves on being truly international while delivering the best of what American education has to offer through our enriched American curriculum within the IB Primary Years Program framework. Since its founding, both GAA's reputation of excellence and its student body have continued to grow. Accredited by the Council of International Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges and authorized as an International Baccalaureate Primary Years

Program World School, the quality of GAA's American educational program with an international flavor has been verified.

Our premium international school in the Khalifa City A area of Abu Dhabi provides an exceptional learning environment and is an all-round great place for kids. Our purpose-built facility is cutting-edge that houses numerous classrooms, library spaces, specialist teaching spaces, science labs, recording studios, laptop carts, a double gymnasium, fitness center, dance studio, indoor pool, auditorium, soccer pitch, tennis courts, cafeteria, and a parent café. These facilities demonstrate our understanding of the importance of intellectual, physical, and emotional balance in achieving personal well-being.

GAA is forward thinking and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) feature prominently in both the design of our educational environment and teaching and learning in all classrooms. A focus on powerful authentic learning experiences enhances our student experiences and helps students make meaning and real world connection from school to life.

We thank you for choosing GEMS American Academy as the school for your child and supporting them in achieving their full potential as global citizens and leaders of the future.

This year will be full of educational engagements, memories, and friendships that will last a lifetime for our global students. We look forward to partnering with you to inspire learning, promote our culture of kindness, and encourage personal excellence for your child.

Sincerely,

Leia Kraeuter
Elementary Principal

**Please click on the titles and subtitles in the table of contents to jump to a section.*

Our Vision	6
Our Mission	6
IB LEARNER PROFILE	7
INTRODUCTION	8
THE SCHOOL DAY	9
School Hours	9
Attendance	9
Absence	9
Late Arrival/Early Pick-Up	10
Change to Regular Home Transportation	10
GAA Student Dismissal Procedure	10
Bus Regulations	11
Lunch/Snack	11
Recess	11
Assemblies & Community Shares	12
Birthdays	12
LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES	13
GAA Library	13
Specialist Classes	13
Student Support Services	13
ELL Learners	14
‘Extended Practice’	14
Afterschool Activities (ASAs)	14
Competitive activities	15
Field Trips	15
SCHOOL UNIFORMS	15
Uniform Guidelines	15
Personal Presentation	17
ADEK School Backpack Requirements	17
KG School Backpacks and Lunch Bags	18
Swimming Kit Requirement:	19
INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)	19
Technology	19
Internet Use at School	19
Internet Acceptable Use Policy	19
PARENT COMMUNICATION	20
Visit the Classroom	20
Parental Engagement	21

GAA Parents Association (GAAPA)	21
Appointments with the Counselor	22
Change of Contact Details	22
Withdrawing from School	22
Transfer Certificates	22
ASSESSMENT	23
Reporting to Parents	23
Parent Teacher Conferences	23
Standardized Tests (MAP)	23
HEALTH AND SAFETY	23
School Clinic Information	23
Emergency Contacts	24
Health Forms	24
Medication	24
Illness or Injury	25
Immunizations	26
Health Screenings	26
Helpful Reminders	27
Heat Policy	27
Fire Alarm/Lock-Down Drills	28
MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION	29
Lost and Found	29
Telephones	29
Security	29
Charitable Causes/ Community Service	30
Classroom Assignments and Request Considerations	30
CODE OF CONDUCT - SCHOOL BEHAVIOR	31
Student Relations Policy	31
Responsibilities	31
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS)	31
R.O.A.R	32
Behavior Levels and Possible Consequences	33
Commitment	38
What is bullying?	38
For Students	39
For Parents	39
Consequences	39
Conferences and Problem Solving	39

Loss of Social Time (Lunch, recess, breaks, before or after school)	40
In-School Suspension	40
Out of School Suspension	40
Expulsion	40
COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS AND LEGAL GUARDIANS	40
Informal Resolution	41
Formal Resolution	41
ACADEMIC HONESTY GUIDELINES	41
IMPORTANT CONTACTS WHOM TO CALL FIRST	43
GEMS AMERICAN ACADEMY PARENT CONTRACT	44

Our Vision

We Inspire. We Challenge. We Innovate. We Care.

Our Mission

GEMS American Academy is a diverse and caring international learning community offering a rigorous, relevant and holistic education.

We develop global citizens who have the confidence and conviction to pursue their dreams and impact the world.

We offer:

- GEMS American Academy offers an American-based curriculum, incorporating AERO and NGSS standards, delivered through the IB PYP framework for students from PreK to G5 within an international context. This holistic approach ensures a well-rounded education that prepares students for global citizenship.

The success of our program is based on:

- Teamwork, collaboration and the broad participation of our community.
- Continuous learning and professional development.
- A thorough awareness of educational 'best practices' throughout the world.

IB LEARNER PROFILE

We are committed to providing an international learning environment grounded in best practice from the American education landscape. We develop the attributes of the International Baccalaureate (IB) learner profile.

Inquirers:

We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.

Knowledgeable:

We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.

Thinkers:

We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions

Communicators:

We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of others.

Principled:

We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

Open-minded:

We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from our experience.

Caring:

We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.

Risk-takers:

We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

Balanced:

We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives – intellectual, physical and emotional – to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and the world.

Reflective:

We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

INTRODUCTION

KG and Elementary classes follow a developmentally appropriate program of studies, finishing at 2:45 pm. PreK students have the option to leave at 1 pm or stay till 2:45 pm for play-time. Target class size is 25 students though ADEK regulations allow for class sizes of 30. Each class up to Grade 2 benefits from both a teacher and an Educational Assistant, and Grades 3 – 5 each share multiple Educational Assistants across the grade level.

The Kindergarten curriculum is based on the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IB PYP) framework and Play Based Learning. Our shared vision for the early year's program at GAA is collaborative, incorporating best practices for early childhood development and education.

The Kindergarten program at GAA provides classroom environments arranged to incorporate a range of play based learning that caters for a variety of interest areas and encourages opportunities for children to explore, discover and learn. Interest areas include block play, dramatic play, toys and games, art, discovery, library, sand and water, music and movement, technology, and outdoor learning. Classrooms are safe and welcoming environments that provide areas for large and small group times, individual storage and classroom displays.

Students attend a variety of specialist classes which include Arabic, Visual Art, Drama, STEM, Library, Music, Physical Education, and Swimming. These lessons are taught by specialist teachers who are integrated and connected to the enrichment of the Elementary school program.

Outdoor play is essential for the health and well-being of children. Beyond just physical development, outdoor learning helps children develop skills in each of the four core domains; physical development, social-emotional development, literacy development and cognitive development. While participating in small and large group games students develop their vocabulary, communication skills and cooperative skills. Outdoor time encourages children to explore and take risks, and learn to appreciate the natural environment.

Please note that in order for your child to start school, they will need to be confident when using the toilet by themselves and able to care for all their personal hygiene needs. **Diapers or training pants are not allowed to be worn in school.**

The Elementary curriculum is delivered within the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IB PYP) framework, using the AERO Standards(American Education Reaches Out), Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). We take advantage of our international student community and the cultural diversity that it offers. We celebrate and learn about different countries' cultures, traditions, habits and holidays.

The local UAE community is embraced within our program and this is reflected in the choice of concepts and topics underpinning the program of inquiry. GAA also fully

implements ADEK's guidance with Arabic, Islamic Studies, UAE Moral Education, and UAE Social Studies.

THE SCHOOL DAY

School Hours

The school day for all grades commences at **7:45am** Monday through Friday. Students are not permitted into the grade level hallways/classrooms before 7:30am. PreK-G5 dismissal time is **2:45pm**. Students in PreKindergarten may be collected **at 1:00pm**, but may stay until 2:45pm for 'play time'. The school cannot provide supervision for students **before 7:30am** or after **3:15pm**. Students are to be under parental or guardian supervision while on school premises before and after these times.

Students not collected within 15 minutes after dismissal will be escorted to the Cafeteria area to wait while the parents are called. At 3:10pm, students are moved to the main reception to stay with the reception staff and security until collection.

After repeated occurrences of pick-ups post 3:00pm, the parent will be contacted by the Vice Principal, and if this situation persists, the parent may be contacted by the Principal to enroll the student in the GAA STS School Bus program.

Students may not re-enter the rear gate after **3:05 pm** unless **accompanied** by a parent. In the event an unaccompanied student wishes to return to the school premises after school hours, entrance is **only** permitted via the **Main Entrance** of the school. Students are not permitted to stay by themselves inside the school and must be accompanied by an adult. If not, they must remain with their VP or the reception staff to await pick-up.

Attendance

Parents are expected to call or email the school as early as possible if their child is absent from, or will be late to school. Student participation in learning activities is important, so parents are urged to schedule medical, dental and other appointments after school hours or during vacations.

Parents are expected to attend conferences on the scheduled parent/teacher conference days in the fall and spring, and are encouraged to attend Parent Engagement functions. Together we can build skills and facilitate goal setting in support of learning at home.

Absence

All students are expected to abide by the ADEK provided school schedule and attend school on the days before and after vacations. All students are also expected to follow ADEK Policy 55 on absenteeism which states that students with an absenteeism rate of

more than “10% should be regarded as a cause for concern.”

If absenteeism goes above 10%, students are reported to the safeguarding team for review and a meeting with parents is set up. If students are absent for more than 10% of the academic school year, they are in jeopardy of lower grades for this academic year (which will be noted in reports) and a possible removal from the school for the next school year.

Late Arrival/Early Pick-Up

All students arriving into class past 7:45am are considered tardy and must receive a late pass before entering the classroom. Parents must accompany their child/children to the Main Reception or KG Reception to sign in. If a student is leaving school early, parents should inform the classroom teacher at least an hour in advance and come to the Reception for a ‘check out’ slip. Students will be collected from classrooms and brought to parents in the main reception for collection. Parents should not pick-up directly from classrooms before 2:45 pm. Students will not be accepted or collected from their classroom without a late/early pick up slip.

Change to Regular Home Transportation

If a child is going to leave GAA with a non-parent/guardian, two notes must be sent to school, one from the parent whose child is going to the friend’s house and the other from the parent who is hosting the play date. These notes are best sent to the teacher through email. If this involves using the school bus, the parent must call the school transportation department to ensure there is space on the bus, allowing sufficient time for arrangements.

GAA Student Dismissal Procedure

The GAA school day finishes at 1:00pm for early PreK Dismissal and 2:45pm for PreK-G5. It is vital for the smooth running of the bus service (and the After School Activities Program) that students arrive on time for the bus service. Parents can pick up students directly from the classroom or from a pre-designated spot determined by the family, or will follow the bus collection procedure which is detailed below. Parents are not to disturb instruction and should wait outside in the hallway for their children.

The class EA (Educational Assistant) from KG-GR 2 will escort those students who use the bus service to the buses located near Gate 4 and will hand students over to the respective conductors. The conductors will make sure the students are safely buckled before the bus moves.

Grades 3-5 bus-users are expected to go to buses directly from their classrooms.

Late to bus: Buses leave promptly at 3:15 from Monday to Thursday and 12:15 on Fridays. In respect to all bus users and their families, buses will not wait for late students. In case a student is late to a bus, the parents will be called for pick up or for

authorization to take the late bus (4:30 departure).

Bus Regulations

Students who use the school bus either regularly or as a guest at any time on special occasions must observe the following expectations:

- Students are expected to demonstrate respect for the driver, the conductor and other passengers at all times.
- Students must be seated with a buckled seat belt at all times.
- Students are not permitted to shout or engage in horseplay (kind hands and feet) or use disrespectful language at any time on the bus (kind words).
- Students are expected to keep the buses tidy and not dispose of rubbish on the bus floor.
- Students are not permitted to eat or drink on the bus.

Please be aware that all school buses are equipped with CCTV. Please be aware that students can lose the privilege of riding the school bus if they have challenges meeting the transportation expectations.

To ensure the safety of all students, it is imperative that parents/guardians inform the school in advance if a student will not be riding the bus. Please notify your child's homeroom teacher, the elementary school secretary, or the school's front desk via email or phone call.

Adherence to ADEK transportation safety standards is mandatory for all students. Failure to comply with these regulations may result in consequences including, but not limited to, loss of privileges, suspensions, or termination of bus services.

Lunch/Snack

At GAA, we encourage students to eat healthy, nutritious foods. Water is provided for all students, and students are required to bring their own refillable water bottles. Children should bring a healthy snack from home to eat during the morning break. **Any food sent to school should not contain any nuts or nut products.** Please ensure you send your students to school with a healthy packed lunch from home or order from the GAA 'Slices' website.

KG-Grade 5 students will eat their snacks and lunches in classrooms. No cafeteria access is allowed for Elementary students. **Parents can opt to order classroom delivery through Slices Cafeteria.**

Please note that we will contact families if lunches are determined to not be healthy for an extended period, or not contain enough food.

Recess

Students have scheduled recess times. Each division has a dedicated playground area

with engaging outdoor educational equipment. All students are expected to play safely and fairly and to be respectful of each other and of the equipment. GAA has a “**No hat-No water-No field play**” policy. Students are required to wear a hat and carry a water bottle when they go outside, otherwise, they must remain in the shaded areas.

Assemblies & Community Shares

An Elementary Community Share or assembly is held each month in grades 3-5 on a rotational basis. Sharing helps us to promote community, foster school pride, and celebrate learning and success.

Parents are always encouraged to attend. Each Community Share is documented photographically and shared with parents. Please look to your email for invitations.

Birthdays

Birthdays can be celebrated in Kindergarten and Elementary from 2:15 onwards.

Birthday celebrations in grade levels above Kindergarten are limited to a sharing of a cupcake/muffin or healthy snack during the class’s allocated snack time as these celebrations take away time from our teaching and learning. All snacks sent into school must be pre-approved by the class teacher and/or Vice-Principal.

- PreK-Grade 2: Lauren Sargent (l.sargent_gaa@gemsedu.com)
- Grades 3-5: Douglas Sherrill (d.sherrill_gaa@gemsedu.com)

Reception must be informed of a delivery at least 24 hours in advance. Deliveries will be sent back if not approved. Please remember that the “**No Nut Policy**” is in full effect for birthday cakes, treats, and snack as well

Class celebrations are arranged with the classroom teacher in advance. This will ensure that there are not multiple celebrations on one day. Please arrange cups, plates or napkins, as the school does not provide these items.

- *In connection with our ‘healthy food’ initiative, parents are encouraged to make appropriate choices when planning the celebration for their child. For birthdays we prefer snacks to be individually wrapped or in individual portions, such as fruit and vegetables. No birthday cakes please. For drinks, water is preferred. Please be aware that no soft drinks are allowed.*
- *Please do not send hats, balloons, party favors or gift bags. Invitations to out of school birthday parties can only be sent via school if all students in the class are invited. If you plan to invite only a few classmates, please be aware that this can cause uncomfortable or awkward situations, and/or hurt feelings.*

LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES

GAA Library

Hours: 7:30am - 3:30pm

GEMS American Academy is committed to helping students develop a solid foundation of information literacy skills and a lifelong love of reading. With online database subscriptions, breakout learning spaces, a collection of over 20,000 books, an iPad cart and more, we are well-equipped for exploration and discovery.

Students in Kindergarten-Grade 5 have regular library visits. Students are encouraged to drop by the Library for research and book check-out at appropriate times during the school day. We ask that Elementary students be accompanied by an adult during after-school hours (after 2:55pm).

All GAA students, staff and parents, are encouraged to check out Library resources. A maximum of 5 resources may be checked out per parent/guardian of a child. We ask that materials be returned on a timely basis to enable access by all community members. New books will not be checked out until the parent/guardian's or child's books are returned. Students leaving the school must have a form signed by the library acknowledging the return of all materials or payment of any fines. Year-end report cards will be issued once all library books have been returned or accounted for, this includes library resources checked out to parents.

Lost or damaged items may need to be replaced at your cost. Fines issued include the cost for shipping and processing on top of the book's actual cost.

Specialist Classes

Our specialist teachers integrate their programs with the grade level curricula in order to expand students' understanding of concepts taught in the classroom. Students attend such specialist classes as Arabic, Creative Arts, Physical Education. Some students will also receive specialist instruction in Islamic Education and UAE Social Studies in line with ADEK requirements.

Parents are not allowed entrance in the changing and/or locker rooms. If you wish to change your child, you will be escorted to a special bathroom area where you can assist in private.

Student Support Services

The Student Support Team (SST) is tasked with supporting children with academic, social, emotional or transitional needs. It may involve the inclusion coach, counselor, and the Vice Principal, if deemed necessary. The purpose of this process is to establish an understanding of a child's strengths and to define any areas of need, so that we can identify ways to adapt the school program or to design a more appropriate means of maximizing a child's success at school. If the need for additional support arises for your

child, you will be contacted by your child's teacher for more information.

Learning Support

As an inclusive school, GAA offers support to students with learning differences in a variety of settings using methodologies based on individual needs. Inclusion coaches work in close collaboration with the subject area teachers to develop academic programs allowing each student to engage in learning activities in a way suitable to their individual learning needs.

ELL Learners

As an English-medium school, GAA facilitates the attainment of English proficiency through immersion. ELL students are provided with **in-class support** which is designed to enable non-native speakers of English to reach a sufficient degree of proficiency in the English language and to enhance participation in their classes. ELL support is aligned with mainstream programs and utilizes differentiated instruction within the classroom to meet the needs of individual students who are still learning the fundamentals of listening, speaking, reading and writing in English. The Inclusion Coach may provide additional support for ELL students by building vocabulary and reinforcing understanding of concepts within specific subjects, as needed. This will be looked at within our Strengths and Needs Plans with Student Support Services.

'Extended Practice'

All students are recommended to complete extended learning activities at home on a regular basis. 'Extended Practice' might be work that was not completed during the school day; reinforcement of skills introduced that day, web-based activities, reading, math games, or project work.

Additionally, parents should also include time after school to read with their child and time to play educational games. Meaningful 'Extended Practice' will be assigned by grade level and is collaboratively identified as a grade level focus which supports in-class learning and is expected to be completed. Please do not expect "busy work" or worksheets.

Afterschool Activities (ASAs)

At GEMS American Academy we offer both non-competitive and competitive sporting opportunities for our students from Grade 1 to 5. In addition, we also offer a wide range of academic and creative pursuits to enrich the students' schooling experience. These activities are designed to provide an opportunity for students to socialize with each other in a fun atmosphere.

Some after school activities may incur an added fee and this will be communicated before the activity begins. These paid after school activities will be open to KG - Grade 5.

Students who participate in the non-competitive programs should be picked up promptly at 4:00pm at the end of the activity. All students, including siblings, not participating in an after school program go home by their normal mode of transport at 2:55pm.

Competitive activities

Grade 2 through 5 competitive activities are inclusive in nature and as much as possible will allow all students to become involved. Specific information about when these opportunities are available will be communicated through the Athletic and Activities Director. Further information is distributed throughout the year as the opportunities arise.

Field Trips

Throughout the year, field trips which are authentically linked to each Unit of Inquiry, are arranged including visits to theaters, museums, historic buildings, etc. They are considered part of the program and participation is required. Permission forms must be signed by a parent or guardian. Nannies and other non-parental caregivers are not to attend school field trips. Students must depart from school with their class. The families will pay for all transportation, entrance fees and guided tours.

Standards of dress and behavior are the same on field trips as during a regular school day (school uniform) and students are expected to conduct themselves appropriately. Full school uniform is to be worn including a shirt, tie, black socks and black shoes. Please see the Parent Relations Executive for the GAA uniform policy.

SCHOOL UNIFORMS

Uniform Guidelines

GAA uniform guidelines are communicated at the time of admission and the GAA website has further information. Elementary, middle and high school students have differentiated uniforms from the 2024-2025 school year.

Each student is expected to wear their specific school designated uniform and follow the GAA dress code.



The student uniform is compulsory and students are to arrive at GAA in their complete school uniform, including:

- Socks: Solid black, blue or white
- If girls wear leggings/stockings/pantyhose/tights under their skirts, color must be solid navy blue or black.
- For Physical Education, Athletic shoes must be worn.
- Students wear the PE uniform for the entire school day on days when the student has scheduled PE classes.
- On swim days, students should wear their GAA school uniform and bring the recommended school swim kit.

The GAA uniform supplier is Threads. The uniforms for GAA will only be distributed from Threads' Retail outlet in Dalma Mall. There will be no uniform sale at the school. Uniforms can also be purchased online at www.threadsme.com

GAA may not require uniforms whilst participating in after or out of school activities or on designated special dress days. However; students should be properly dressed in a manner that is not offensive to our host country. The following rules will apply:

- No tight clothes
- No spaghetti strap shirts
- No exposed midriff
- No offensive logos or expressions on clothing

Personal Presentation

Students are expected to arrive at school and depart from school in full school uniform. During school hours and while in school uniform, the following rules apply:

- No makeup or loose jewelry is allowed.
- Necklaces should not be visible.
- Non-regulation outerwear may not be worn in school; it should be kept in lockers.

Spare Clothes Requirement:

All Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten students need to have an extra set of clearly labeled uniform clothing (shirt, shorts, underwear, and socks) sent to school in a Zip-Lock bag in case a spare is needed.

ADEK School Backpack Requirements

This policy has been written using information provided by ADEK and is designed to inform all staff, parents, and students. The health of our students is of paramount importance thus every member of the school community should ensure that they have read this policy and that they understand it. Guidelines:

- Recommended bag weight does not exceed 20% of the child's body weight
- No trolley bags please
- Use ergonomic school bags with individual compartments for books and equipment
- Students should wear both shoulder straps and not to sling a bag over one shoulder
- Bags should have wide, padded, adjustable school bag straps that fits the student's body
- Weigh the child's school bags to determine whether it is heavy or in compliance

Children's bags are stored in lockers. Some of these cubbies are small. We recommend that Pupils should only carry in their school bag the following:

- Lunch box (or carried separately)
- Water bottle
- Pencil case – ideally this should stay in school
- Home readers and Library bag only on those days required

Bags are monitored by the Class Teacher. If a bag is suspected to be too heavy the weight of the bag is checked by school receptionists. If the bag is 20% more than the

pupil's weight, parents are informed by the Class Teacher and advised to reduce the amount their child is carrying. This communication can be logged in Pulse for parent communication.

Grade / Year (US) (UK)	Max. Backpack Weight (KG)
KG1 / FS2	2.2
KG2 / Year 1	2.4
Gr 1 / Year 2	2.6
Gr 2 / Year 3	3.0
Gr 3 / Year 4	3.4
Gr 4 / Year 5	3.8
Gr 5 / Year 6	4.1
Gr 6 / Year 7	4.5
Gr 7 / Year 8	5.0
Gr 8 / Year 9	5.8
Gr 9 / Year 10	6.5
Gr 10 / Year 11	7.3

KG School Backpacks and Lunch Bags

Kindergarten has a no backpack policy (this includes carried and rolling backpacks).

*If you would still like a small book bag for your child, we advise bags with measurements no greater than 9.5 inches (width) and 10.5 inches height, to fit inside our cubby space.

Students will need their lunch box and a water bottle for school.

Students may still need to bring bags for swim kits and there will be common areas to

store these.

Swimming Kit Requirement:

- Dark blue/navy swimwear.
- Dark blue/navy swim cap for all students.
- Towels to dry off.
- No jewelry
- Flip-flops/sandals should be brought to be used in case of fire alarm, school shoes will be used in lieu of forgotten flip-flops/sandals.
- Goggles are recommended.
- Plastic bags are recommended to put wet swimwear in after class.

INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Technology

The effective integration of ICT into the curriculum has many benefits. GAA provides access to a wide range of instructional technologies. As students get older and more responsible and their creation of complex multimedia and written assignments increases, the use of a personal device that mirrors the technology used in the class may be approved. Students in the upper years of elementary may eventually seek to bring their own device to school. Such a device should be similar to those used in class so that teachers can effectively extend their direct teaching of applications, troubleshooting, publishing and internet safety to the context of the student device.

Internet Use at School

Students have age appropriate, filtered access to the Internet to conduct research and communicate about academic topics. As a condition of enrolment, every GAA students accepts our school-wide Acceptable Use Policy that outlines user privileges and responsibilities.

Internet Acceptable Use Policy

Use of the Internet is available to students at GAA through our network. The Internet expands classroom and library resources by making information and images available to students, teachers, library and media specialists. Access to these resources supports individual and group projects, collaboration and the exchange of ideas. Internet access also makes contact with people all over the world a possibility, providing access to experts and expertise in every content area. GAA student Internet users and their families should understand that neither the School nor our faculty can completely control the content of the information obtained from other systems. There are always risks involved in internet use, but we believe when used properly and intelligently, the advantages of access to the worldwide community outweigh the possible risks. GAA is

proactive and provides students with cyber safety and digital citizenship curriculum.

Use of the GAA network is a privilege extended to students who act in an ethical, considerate and responsible manner. Abuses of the Internet, including participation in chat lines, plagiarizing the work of others, trespassing in another student's space, displaying or downloading information or images that are offensive, dangerous and/or objectionable, and giving out personal information, may result in loss of Internet access privileges. Violations may also lead to disciplinary actions outlined elsewhere in this Handbook.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

The school maintains close relations with parents, facilitating communication and cooperation. Keeping abreast of regular school communication is essential and parents are encouraged to actively read the various modes of communicating through email, Seesaw, and the GAA Newsletter.

- **SeeSaw:** broadcast communication about class activities and learning, weekly newsletters, student portfolio work

**teachers will not check this for parent communication via SeeSaw inbox/comments on work.*

- **Email:** contacting teachers directly regarding concerns or needs
- **GAAzette:** broadcast whole school communication and upcoming GAA events

Please make sure your email address is up to date so you receive essential GAA communication. If you are not receiving emails regularly from GAA please speak with the Parent Relations Executive to update your contact information.

At the beginning of the academic year, a *Back to School* information session will be held to introduce parents to the faculty and the general curriculum. We will hold parent/teacher conferences 2 times a year around progress reports/term reports. Please see the GAA calendar for exact dates.

Visit the Classroom

During the academic year, parents are welcome to visit their child's classroom. **Please arrange a convenient time to visit with the classroom teacher in advance.** Individual appointments should be scheduled during the teacher's non-contact time or before or after the end of the school day. Please avoid discussing your child when other students are present.

If an emergency arises and you must contact your child or his/her teacher without a prior arrangement, please contact Reception in the first instance.

Parents/guardians should **not** go directly to the classroom during school hours as this

disrupts in-class learning. You must check in with reception upon arrival and wait for the teacher to come to the main entrance.

Parental Engagement

GAA is aligned with the ADEK Parent Engagement Policy 2024-2025.

GAA has a firm understanding of the benefits of Parental Engagement. We believe in an organic approach, where the bridge between home and school is open and collaborative. Working together we become 'a school without walls' where students learn and grow in all surroundings.

GAA is focused on giving families the skills and resources to engage meaningfully in the learning and growth of their children. GAA is committed to partnering with parents in this endeavor, for the benefit of all our students.

Please note that we are a TEAM - students, parents, and teachers/administrators. Our expectations are that to make learning meaningful and most effective, a strong partnership must occur. Our expectations are that if we need to meet with you regarding concerns or struggles, you are there and a willing partner. We want to help your child do their very best learning and make the most growth possible. ***To show a full partnership, we expect attendance at parent conferences, response to emails, attendance at needed additional parent meetings, etc.***

In return, our school team is here to support in any way we can- and we do ask that you schedule meetings outside of teaching hours (with teachers) and contact for an appointment (with vice principals/principals). Being fully present with students is our first and TOP priority which means we are not able to meet if you come without an appointment.

The Elementary school community welcomes parent involvement, and parents are encouraged to become involved in the daily education of their children.

GAA Parents Association (GAAPA)

GAA Parents Association (GAAPA) supports the development of a sense of unity among parents, students and staff by cooperating in different capacities to enrich the lives of the students and to guide parents towards a better understanding of the aims, policies and philosophy of GEMS American Academy. The achievement of these aims relies upon the cooperation of every parent. All parents of students enrolled in GEMS American Academy are members of the Parent Association. GAA Parents Association has an elected Board of representatives and works with the school administration and parent engagement champions to support our community.

GAAPA is an important part of our school community and we encourage all parents to get involved and/or support the Association's activities throughout the year. In the past, these have included fund-raising activities, coffee mornings, movie afternoons, Iftar dinner during Ramadan and the very popular International Food Festival. If you are

interested in becoming a member, please contact the Parent Relations Executive. While on campus you may identify the members by their **GAA red lanyard**.

In addition to GAAPA, volunteers are always welcome to help in the library and in the classrooms.

Appointments with the Counselor

If you would like to discuss a specific issue, please contact the relevant counselor for your child's grade level. It is important you have already discussed the issue with your child's classroom teacher and the concern/grievance policy has been adhered to.

Our dedicated school counselors are here to provide a wide range of support options to help students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Whether your child is facing academic challenges, friendship issues, or personal concerns, our counselors are available to offer individual counseling sessions, group counseling activities, and classroom guidance lessons.

Our school counselors are committed to fostering a safe and inclusive environment where every child can reach their full potential. Please don't hesitate to reach out and explore the various support options available to ensure your child's success and well-being.

- PreK-Grade 1: Allison Haswell (a.haswell_gaa@gemsedu.com)
- Grades 2-5: Melanie Moses (m.moses_gaa@gemsedu.com)

Change of Contact Details

The School Registrar, the Classroom Teacher, the Reception and the School Nurse should always have current details of your address, email, telephone number and mobile number(s). The accuracy of this information is vital in the case of an emergency to ensure consistent collaboration. We also request a phone number of a friend we can call if we cannot reach the parents.

Withdrawing from School

All notices of withdrawal must be in writing to the Registrar. The school requires a minimum of two weeks' notification of withdrawal. Parents are responsible for completing and returning a Student Clearance Form. In the event of outstanding books, fees or fines, the school will not release records nor issue a Transfer Certificate.

Transfer Certificates

The Ministry of Education in the UAE requires that all students from Grade 2 onward submit a Transfer Certificate when they change schools. After the 1st of November each year, students in all grades require a Transfer Certificate to move schools. GEMS American Academy will be pleased to prepare a Transfer Certificate for all students who have completed the Withdrawal Process previously mentioned.

ASSESSMENT

Reporting to Parents

At GAA we communicate with parents about what students know, understand and can do. We describe the progress of a student's learning and identify areas for growth.

Reporting includes:

- Progress Reports (October & March)
- Formal written reports (February & June)
- Parent Teacher Conferences (September & March)
- End of unit Summative Assessments

Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent Teacher Conferences are an important part of our educational program and provide an opportunity for parents and teachers to discuss with the student personal goals as well as overall progress, and celebrate achievement.

Parents are expected to attend and participate in all conferences. **There are no classes for students on these days.**

Standardized Tests (MAP)

Two times a year beginning in the 2024-2025 school year, students in Grades 2 through 5 sit the MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) test, which is an adaptive comprehensive test that measures a student's abilities and achievements in language, mathematics and science. The assessment data that these tests create is used to assist in differentiating the curriculum to enhance student learning and set goals for future growth.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

School Clinic Information

A registered and Health Authority of Abu Dhabi (HAAD) licensed nurse is on duty during school hours. The nurse provides health screenings; assesses and manages chronic and acute illness; administers medications; provides first aid for school related injuries; promotes health and safety; maintains student medical records.

The nurse is available to consult with parents as needed, regarding health concerns of students, either in person, by telephone or e-mail.

Please be aware that medication may only be distributed by the GAA school nurse.

If a student has special health needs (medication, chronic illness or condition, allergies, or requires special procedure or intervention), parents must meet with the school nurse

to arrange for these needs to be met. All medications and treatments require clear, written instructions by physician's order, as needed, and a parent/guardian's signature. The school nurse will assist the parents by preparing a plan of care for their child and advising them as to what supplies the student will need at school.

Emergency Contacts

Parents must keep the school and the clinic informed of current work, cell, and home phone numbers, where they can be contacted should the need arise. This information can be updated with the Parent Relations Executive and/or the GAA Registrar. When able, make sure your child knows how to reach you during the day.

Health Forms

Each year school health forms will be required for all students. They are:

- Health information Form;
- Emergency Contact Form;
- Medication Consent Form;
- School Screening Form.

New students will be required to fill out an Immunization Record to accompany their child's personal Immunization Record.

If your child is asthmatic or has a life-threatening allergy, a physician-signed form to use or administer an inhaler or Epipen will be required. If your child has a short-term or chronic illness which requires any medical intervention/procedure during the school day, a Special Procedure Form will be required. (For example: blood glucose monitoring, dressing change, tube/catheter management, etc.). If any allergies or asthma or any other conditions should inform the clinic and fill the concerned forms.

Medication

Administration of medications, especially short term, should be done at home whenever possible. However, if a student is required to take prescription or non-prescription medication during the school day, the following guidelines must be met:

- Physician, dentist, or practitioner prescribed medications should be clearly transcribed, and all medication forms should state the student's name, the name of medication, the dosage, the time, the route (oral, inhaled, patch, etc.), and the duration of time that it is to be given (e.g., one week, the school year, etc.), along with the parent's/guardian's signature. Medication forms are available for your convenience in the school clinic.
- Medication must be in the original packaging by the pharmacy and not outdated. Over-the-counter medication to be held in the clinic must be in a sealed, unopened, new bottle. (For short term medication, ask a pharmacist for a separate bottle to be kept in the clinic, to prevent missed doses.)

- Parent/guardian must deliver medication to the school clinic - not the student. If you are giving it to the bus conductor, please write the details and attach the prescribed note from the physician.
- All medicine must be picked up by a parent at the end of the school year.
- The parents should give us the emergency medications that should be kept at the clinic during school hours.

If medication is to be hand-carried, a back-up should also be kept in the school clinic. These situations require written health care plans, with specific details for care. When necessary, the nurse will accept verbal consent via phone to administer an over-the-counter medication (not prescription). Medication will not be dispensed without written parental permission.

Any students with serious health concerns will have their names, pictures, and needs shared with the GAA school nurse and faculty by the parent.

Illness or Injury

If your child visits the clinic and we recommend you follow-up, or be informed of an intervention, you will receive a written note from the clinic. You will also be informed if your child sustains a head or neck injury while at school. If the nurse requests follow-up by your doctor for illness or a school-sustained injury, you will receive a Medical Referral Form. This is a formal way to receive a specific diagnosis and treatment plan while your child is at school. Students with contagious infections need to stay home so they will not expose others. Parents are requested to contact the classroom teacher and elementary secretary providing detailed information regarding their child's contagious disease. When fully recovered and the student returns to school, they need to bring the medical certificate regarding the illness or clearance certificate – one copy to the teacher and one to the nurse. If your child is home with a communicable illness, please contact the school nurse so the parent(s) of other classmates may be alerted of symptoms.

Your child should stay home for any of the following:

- A fever > 37.5 C (100 F); must be fever-free for 24 hours without fever medication
- Vomited more than once in the past 24 hours; feeling of nausea
- Diarrhea (return to school after 48 hours or 24 hours on medication)
- A frequent cough; productive cough
- Persistent pain (ear, stomach, etc.)
- A widespread rash; contagious rash or skin spots
- Head lice (Pediculosis) please notify the school nurse to be given proper instructions
- Bacterial Pink Eye/Conjunctivitis; awakens with thick or sticky eye drainage; eyelashes stuck; redness of the whites of the eyes throughout; can return to school after 24 hours of physician prescribed treatment.

Injuries that happen at home should be taken care of prior to returning to school, along with a physician's note with instructions and limitations if needed. If your child has an outpatient procedure or surgery, you must provide a physician's certificate stating when they can safely return to school and with any limitations/instructions. In all cases, the school nurse is the final arbiter and, if necessary in discussion with the Vice Principal, will signal when the child is "safe" to return to school.

Immunizations

The Health Authority of Abu Dhabi (HAAD) promotes a successful immunization program and is free from vaccine-preventable diseases. Parents are required to submit applicable vaccination documents to the School Nurse (or registrar) for record purposes. Any parent, who wishes to discuss their child's immunizations with the school nurse, is welcome to do so. As per HAAD recommendation the school age vaccination will be in grade one regardless of the age of the students.

In Al Khaleej / SEHA clinic they will not accept the students from KG, they cover defaulters which mean the students who pass grade one to other grades and didn't receive the vaccine in the school for any reason. In this situation, the school will give an official letter to the parents to say that this student he/she didn't receive vaccination in grade one.

Students will be eligible to receive the vaccine in grade one only. As per the HAAD recommendations:

- **In grade 1** they will receive:
 - DPT-5th dose,
 - OPV-5th dose,
 - MMR- 2nd dose and
 - Varicella- 2 doses;
 - *those who didn't receive MMR vaccine at grade 1 will receive it in school as per the consent as MMR defaulters;*
- **Grade 11** – DT, OPV and HPV-3 doses (HPV only for Females). These are administered by the School health department at schools as per the schedule.

When the school academic year starts, we will send the consent forms to the parents of the concerned classes as per the request from the school health department. As per the consent forms we receive, only SEHA will administer the vaccination at schools. All the parents should send a copy of the vaccination record at the time of admission itself and those who took any vaccination during their school year please update it to the clinic.

Health Screenings

Per HAAD, the clinic promotes the screenings which are recommended annually. This consent form is part of the annual school health forms, which is given out at the

beginning of the school year. Please refer to that form with specific guidelines for your child's grade.

Helpful Reminders

- Encourage your child to eat a healthy breakfast every day before school.
- Make sure your child gets 8 or more hours of sleep each night.
- Always send your child to school with a refillable water bottle.
- Sneakers or tennis shoes are required for participation and safety in PE.
- Encourage good hand-washing;
- The school has a "No Hat, No Play" policy and heat stress- air quality policy.
- Please inform the school if your child has any allergies. **Any food brought in must be free of nuts/nut products.**

Heat Policy

Based on the GEMS Hot Weather Policy, nurses will send out heat index during the hotter seasons (May - September)

HEAT AND DISCOMFORT INDEX

HUMIDEX INDEX OF APPARENT TEMPERATURE (degree C)

	25%	30%	35%	40%	45%	50%	55%	60%	65%	70%	75%	80%	85%	90%	95%	100%
42°	48	50	52	55	57	59	62	64	66	68	71	73	75	77	80	82
41°	46	48	51	53	55	57	59	61	64	66	68	70	72	74	76	79
40°	45	47	49	51	53	55	57	59	61	63	65	67	69	71	73	75
39°	43	45	47	49	51	53	55	57	59	61	63	65	66	68	70	72
38°	42	44	45	47	49	51	53	55	56	58	60	62	64	66	67	69
37°	40	42	44	45	47	49	51	52	54	56	58	59	61	63	65	66
36°	39	40	42	44	45	47	49	50	52	54	55	57	59	60	62	63
35°	37	39	40	42	44	45	47	48	50	51	53	54	56	58	59	61
34°	36	37	39	40	42	43	45	46	48	49	51	52	54	55	57	58
33°	34	36	37	39	40	41	43	44	46	47	48	50	51	53	54	55
32°	33	34	36	37	38	40	41	42	44	45	46	48	49	50	52	53
31°	32	33	34	35	37	38	39	40	42	43	44	45	47	48	49	50
30°	30	32	33	34	35	36	37	39	40	41	42	43	45	46	47	48
29°	29	30	31	32	33	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	45	46
28°	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43
27°	27	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41
26°	26	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	34	35	36	37	38	39
25°	25	25	26	27	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	34	35	36	37
24°	24	24	24	25	26	27	28	28	29	30	31	32	33	33	34	35
23°	23	23	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	28	29	30	31	32	32	33
22°	22	22	22	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	27	28	29	30	30	31

- Up to 29 C° No discomfort
- From 30 to 34 C° Slight discomfort sensation
- From 35 to 39 C° Strong discomfort. Caution: limit the heaviest physical activities
- From 40 to 45 C° Strong indisposition sensation. Danger: avoid efforts
- From 46 to 53 C° Serious danger: stop all physical activities
- Over 54 C° Death danger: imminent heatstroke

Depending on the Heat Index reading, below steps to be followed:

Heat Index between 35 C and 39 C

- Outdoor Physical Activity: Students who do not have a hat and water bottle will forfeit participating in physical activity and will be provided with alternative activities. Teachers use discretion in modifying activities so that students participate in moderate-lower intensity activities. Regular water breaks will be offered.
- Breaks & Lunchtime: Students are advised to stay under shade during breaks and lunchtimes.

Heat Index between 40 C and 45 C

- Outdoor physical activity: Lower intensity activities are to be included only and for a maximum of ten minutes. Five minute water breaks should be taken between activities.
- Breaks and Lunchtimes: Students remain indoors during break and lunchtimes.

Heat Index above 45

- Outdoor Physical Activity: If the temperature and humidity moves into 'serious danger' and 'death danger' according to the heat index, any physical activity outside must be stopped.
- Breaks & Lunchtime: Students should be moved into an indoor space with air conditioning. Where this is not possible, students are permitted to use fully shaded outdoor areas with additional risk mitigation measures for example, misting fans. No physical activity can take place.

Please contact your classroom teacher and school nurse if you have any questions or concerns. By working together, we can strive to ensure the health and well-being of your children so that they can gain the most from their experience at school.

Fire Alarm/Lock-Down Drills

The buildings on the campus are fitted with a fire alarm system. Periodically throughout the year, fire drills will take place in order to familiarize pupils with the procedures of emergency evacuation.

1. When the alarm is sounded, students and visitors should leave the building immediately in an orderly fashion using the designated exit. Parents, please exit the building. GAA faculty take the lead role in evacuating your children. No one will be allowed to enter the school building when a fire alarm is sounding.
2. After leaving the building, students and visitors should report to their designated assembly point for an attendance check. The assembly point for all students is the field.
3. Emphasis is placed on remaining quiet and observing rules and directions during the fire drills.

Lockdown drill will be practiced immediately following announcement from GAA intercom.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Lost and Found

Personal items found in the school are stored in designated areas. Please check with Reception for the location of the Lost and Found. Parents are encouraged to label all items with name/grade/section (e.g. KG1F), especially water bottles and lunch boxes and to check the Lost and Found frequently for labeled clothing. If items are not labeled it is difficult to return them to the appropriate student. Teachers are not responsible to look for items and will direct parents to the lost and found. Unattended school books will be returned to the TRC/Library for processing. At the end of each school year, all lost and found items are donated to charity. If students bring valuables to school (e.g. smartphone, iPad) it is the students responsibility for these items..

Telephones

The telephones are for official use only. In the case of an emergency, the Receptionist will call the student's home. Please call the Reception when trying to contact a teacher. The teacher will call back as soon as he/she is free. Teachers are encouraged not to share their phone numbers or personal email addresses with parents. Students should not use their personal phones to call home, order food, or photograph without explicit permission. "Phone passes" are available to students for extraordinary circumstances.

Security

Security guards are on duty on the school campus at all times. GAA utilizes CCTV to monitor the campus 24/7. The security guards are there to assist families during school operational hours and to make certain that academic buildings are properly locked during non-school hours. In case of an emergency, the security guards have access to a telephone.

All visitors must show ID at the school gates and show their school identification lanyard. No parents are allowed to come into the kindergarten reception during the school day (8:30-2:30). Every family will be issued 3 lanyards at the beginning of the year. While on campus parents and guardians are to wear the new GAA yellow lanyard. If lanyard is not worn, we kindly request you to register as a guest before entering the campus. This is to ensure that every adult in school is identified clearly for the safety and security of everyone on campus.



Charitable Causes/ Community Service

Our school community supports a growing number of organizations and charitable causes. The Varkey GEMS Foundation (VGF) and the school based champion takes a lead role in fundraising following the ADEK guidelines. These causes and services provide valued opportunities for our students to take action and demonstrate initiative and further develop their skills and understandings of citizenship and leadership. ADEK approved charitable drives and Community Action activities are organized through the Student Leaders in combination with authentic action from different class inquiries. It is important that charity work is carefully planned and strongly supported so that activities can be integrated into the school calendar. Ideas for fundraising should be brought to the attention of the Varkey GEMS Foundation representative, Vice Principal and Parent Relations Executive for endorsement. Proposals are considered throughout the school year in connection to the PYP Units of Inquiry and/or Global events.

Classroom Assignments and Request Considerations

At our elementary school, we understand that parents and students may have preferences or specific requests regarding classroom assignments. We appreciate the importance of creating a supportive learning environment that considers individual needs and fosters positive educational experiences.

However, it is essential to clarify our policy regarding classroom assignments. While we genuinely value parental input, we cannot guarantee specific classroom placements or accommodate individual requests for various reasons. These reasons include, but are not limited to:

1. **Balanced Class Composition:** Our goal is to create balanced and diverse classrooms that promote academic, social, and emotional growth for all students. Factors such as academic abilities, gender balance, behavioral dynamics, and social interactions are taken into account when assigning students to classes. This approach ensures an equitable distribution of resources and opportunities among all students.
2. **Professional Judgment:** Classroom assignments are made by our experienced educators who possess a deep understanding of each student's needs, learning styles, and strengths. These assignments are carefully considered, taking into account the educational and developmental needs of the entire class, as well as the individual student. Our teachers are committed to providing the best possible learning experience for all students based on their professional expertise.
3. **Administrative Constraints:** Assigning students to classrooms involves a complex process that includes enrollment numbers, staffing considerations, and other logistical factors. As a result, it may not always be possible to honor specific requests due to limitations beyond our control.

While we acknowledge that some families may have legitimate reasons for requesting

specific classroom assignments, it is important to recognize that our decision-making process prioritizes the overall well-being and educational experience of all students. We firmly believe that our teachers are best equipped to determine the most appropriate classroom placement based on their expertise and knowledge of their students.

We encourage parents to trust in our commitment to providing a quality education and fostering a positive learning environment for their children. Rest assured, we are dedicated to ensuring that every student receives the support and attention they need to thrive academically and personally.

CODE OF CONDUCT - SCHOOL BEHAVIOR

Student Relations Policy

Our aim is to create a community of learning in which every student has a right to receive an education in a safe and secure environment. GAA is committed to developing social responsibility and reinforcing ethical and moral values among students so that they demonstrate respect for each other and value individual differences.

Our goal is to teach appropriate positive behavior among all students in order to create a positive culture of kindness that promotes positive social norms. Acknowledging students who exhibit positive behaviors reinforces this culture of kindness and leads to improved academic and behavioral outcomes for all students.

Students are expected to abide by school expectations and procedures any time they are at school, including after-school and evening activities, weekends and during any parent-sponsored events. Parents are encouraged to model and enforce GAA expectations and norms when on school grounds.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding appropriate student or parent behavior, please see the below behavioral plan or contact our GAA counselors or Vice Principals.

Responsibilities

Community members, including students, parents and staff at GAA model how to take personal responsibility for conducting themselves at all times so that their individual behavior does not intimidate or harass any other community member or student for any reason whatsoever. Parents of GAA students are responsible for reporting to the appropriate staff member any instances of bullying type behaviors or other forms of misconduct that may come to their attention. The first point of contact for a report is the homeroom teacher. Most situations can be resolved by the homeroom teacher who is the first point of contact and knows the ins and outs of the classroom relations.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS)

The GAA Elementary School follows the PBIS framework for interventions and behavioral support. In this framework, desired behaviors are directly taught to the

students and practiced until they become routine. Positive behaviors are recognized and acknowledged regularly while negative behaviors are addressed through consistent and predictable consequences applied to all students equally.

R.O.A.R

Throughout the school year students, teachers, and administrators will review the comprehensive school-wide expectations based on the values (ROAR):

- We are **Respectful**
- We take **Ownership**
- We have a **Positive Attitude**
- We are **Responsible**

The code of conduct plan indicates the specific behaviors that are expected in all areas of the school.



GAA WILDCATS ...ROAR!

	Classroom	Hallway and Stairs	Bathroom	Outdoor Play	Library	Bus	Swimming Pool	Auditorium	Technology Use
<i>We are Respectful</i>	We follow essential agreements.	We keep our hands and feet to ourselves.	We are mindful of personal space.	We take turns and share.	We are mindful of other people's needs in the library.	We keep our hands and feet to ourselves. We listen to the adult in charge.	We are mindful of personal space.	We give presenters our full attention.	We are respectful during all online communication.
<i>We take ownership</i>	We take ownership of our choices.	We walk on the right side of the hallway and stairs.	We use time wisely and return to class promptly.	We line up when instructed.	We participate and are involved. We help keep things organized and contribute ideas for the space.	We enter and exit the bus with walking feet. We sit in our seat and face forward.	We are prepared and have our swimming kit.	We respond appropriately as an audience.	We take care of our school devices and accounts.
<i>We have a positive attitude</i>	We are reflective and know that making mistake helps us grow.	We use manners by saying please and thank you. We hold the door for the person behind us.	We clean up after ourselves.	We resolve conflicts peacefully.	We explore and discover through the Library.	We use kind words.	We are risk-takers and always try our best.	We are reflective and take risks when appropriate.	We show independence and resilience by trying to problem solve.
<i>We are responsible</i>	We arrive at school ready to learn.	We walk quietly with purpose and stay in line.	We wash our hands with soap and water.	We are aware of our safety and others.	We take care of books and resources when at home and at school.	We keep all items in our backpack.	We follow the rules and listen to instructions.	We follow the rules and expectations.	We use technology with purpose.



GAA WILDCATS ...ROAR!

	Classroom الغرفة الصفية	Hallway and Stairs الممرات والمسالم	Bathroom المرحاض	Outdoor Play مناطق اللعب الخارجية	Library المكتبة	Bus الحافلة	Swimming Pool بركة السباحة	Auditorium المسرح	Technology Use استخدام التكنولوجيا
We are Respectful نحن نحترم	نتبع الاتفاقيات الأساسية	نحتفظ بأيدينا وأقدامنا لأنفسنا	نعي بالمساحة الشخصية للآخرين	نتناوب ونشارك	نعي باحتياجات الآخرين في المكتبة	نحتفظ بأيدينا وأقدامنا لأنفسنا نستمتع للشخص المسؤول البالغ	نعي بالمساحة الشخصية للآخرين	نعطي المقدمين اهتمامنا بالكامل	نحترم الآخرين عند التواصل عبر الإنترنت
We take ownership نأخذ على عاتقنا	نتحمل مسؤولية قراراتنا	نمشي بجانب الاتجاه الأيمن في الممرات وعلى المسالم	نستخدم الوقت بحكمة ونعود إلى الفصل فور الانتهاء	نقف في الطابور وقت إرشادنا	نحن نشارك، ونساعد في الحفاظ على الأشياء منظمة ونساهم بمشاركة أفكارنا	نركب الحافلة وننزل منها مشياً وبهدوء ونجلس في مقاعدنا ووجهنا للأمام	نحضر أنفسنا لحصة السباحة ونحضر احتياجاتنا	نتفاعل بشكل لائق مع الجمهور	نهتم بأجهزة المدرسة وحساباتنا
We have a positive attitude لدينا سلوك إيجابي	نحن متاملون ونعي بأن الأخطاء تساعدنا على التطور والنمو	نستخدم عبارات الاحترام: من فضلك- لو سمحت، ونفتح الباب للشخص الذي يقف خلفنا	ننظف بعد الاستخدام الشخصي	نحلّ النزاعات سلمياً	نستكشف ونطالع من خلال المكتبة	نستخدم كلمات لطيفة	نخاطر ونبدل قصارى جهدنا دائماً	نحن نتأمل ونخاطر في الوقت المناسب	نظهر الاستقلالية والمرونة عند حل المشكلات
We are responsible نحن نتحمل المسؤولية	نصل إلى المدرسة جاهزين للتعلّم	نمشي بهدوء مع الحفاظ على الاستمرار في الطابور	نغسل أيدينا بالماء والصابون	نحن على وعي بسلامتنا وسلامة الآخرين	نحن نهتم بالكتب والموارد في البيت والمدرسة	نحتفظ بكافة لوازمنا في الحقيبة الخاصة بنا	نتبع القوانين ونستمع للتعليمات	نتبع القوانين، والتوقعات	نستخدم التكنولوجيا لغرض محدد

Behavior Levels and Possible Consequences

It is the responsibility of each student to evaluate the appropriateness of, and to be accountable for all of his/her actions. Any indecent, discourteous or disruptive act is inappropriate and unacceptable. This includes any action inside or outside the classroom which interferes with the educational process or the well-being of others.

Student misconduct is categorized into four levels, with each level resulting in an appropriate consequence in order to modify/correct the student behavior.

In the following pages the list of unacceptable actions and definitions is provided as a guide but is not intended to be a complete list.

Level 1 - Level one behaviors are typically dealt with by homeroom/specialist teachers. Level one focuses on primary behaviors and immediate solutions.

These examples of behaviors merely serve as an illustrative guide and are not limited to the list below:

Examples of Level 1 Behaviors	Examples of Level 1 Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disruptive behaviors ● Disrespect ● Inappropriate use of language ● Pushing or tripping ● Lying/dishonesty ● Low level teasing ● Recurring unexcused tardies ● Poor sportsmanship ● Uniform violation ● Off-task behaviors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Viewing websites that are not part of the assigned class work. ○ Gaming during class ● Inappropriate use of electronic devices (laptop, tablet, etc.) ● Misuse of school facilities – including pool, gym, elevator, etc. ● Interfering with others learning ● Littering ● Chewing gum ● Selling goods on campus ● Misbehavior as determined by teachers and/or school administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student will receive a warning ● The student will be reminded of the behavior expectations and encouraged to modify his/ her behavior accordingly ● Continued disruptive behavior will result in parent contact ● Student will meet with Dean and / or Vice Principal ● Parents will meet with Dean and/or Vice Principal

Level 2 - These behaviors are moderately serious behavior concerns or repeated Level 1 misbehaviors. Logical consequences for Level 2 breach of conduct will be decided by the counselor/vice-principal in consultation with the classroom teacher. A record of the incident will be recorded. Parents will be notified by a member of the Elementary Leadership Team or classroom/specialist teacher.

These examples of behaviors merely serve as an illustrative guide and are not limited to the list below

Examples of Level 2 Behaviors	Examples of Level 2 Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Repeating Level 1 Behaviors ● Academic dishonesty ● Aggressive or constant teasing ● Discrimination/Mocking others ● Disruptive actions on the school bus ● Disrespect of property ● Offensive emails ● Dishonesty ● Indirect bullying ● Downloading programs and games that interfere with student learning or Acceptable Use Policy ● Sending unwanted and/or offensive email or messages (e.g. via chat) ● Plagiarism ● Viewing offensive material ● Violation of technology Acceptable Use Policy (Eg. Unauthorized online gaming, web browsing, etc) ● Possession of items that are deemed unacceptable in school ● Inappropriate use of phone (using during school hours) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Restriction of privileges and activities ● Making up for missed work at lunch times, after school or at home ● Mediation sessions ● Individual counseling ● Parent contact/conference and involvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student will meet with Dean and / or Vice Principal ● Parents will meet with Dean and/or Vice Principal ● Individual behavior chart/plan ● Home-school reporting system (via email, behavior chart or Student Planner) Confiscation of unacceptable items ● PBIS intervention meeting ● Mentoring

Level 3 - Level 3 behaviors are serious breaches of the GAA behavior expectations and/or repeated behaviors of Level 2. A record of the incident may be recorded on the student's file. The Counselor, Vice Principal or Principal in consultation with the classroom/specialist teacher would initiate a follow up with the student involved and decide on appropriate consequences. Parents will be notified by a member of the Elementary Leadership Team or classroom/specialist teacher.

These examples of behaviors merely serve as an illustrative guide and are not limited to the list below:

Examples of Level 3 Behaviors	Examples of Level 3 Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Repeated Level 2 behaviors ● Deliberately defacing property ● Compromising safety for self and/or others ● Blatant or repetitive defiance of a staff member ● Theft of property* ● Vandalism* ● Fighting ● Identity Theft/Impersonation of staff and/or student online or through Social Media ● Violation of technology Acceptable Use Policy E.g. Sharing or taking unauthorized photos or recording video of others. ● Hacking ● Encouraging/Provoking Unlawful Behavior ● Bullying - Physical/Verbal ● Skipping Class/Unexplained Absence ● Purposeful cyber bullying with malicious intent ● Racist comments or actions towards a community member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual counseling, with on-going instruction in personal and social development. ● Mediation sessions ● 3-way conference between administrator, student and parent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student will meet with Dean and / or Vice Principal ● Parents will meet with Dean, Vice Principal and / or Principal ● Individual behavior plan/chart in consultation with Counselor, Homeschool reporting system (via email, behavior plan or student planner) ● Behavior Contract ● School-based community service ● Replacement/ repair of damaged property ● Restriction of privileges and activities ● Internal or external suspension ● All actions taken with regards to the Behavioral Protocols and expectations are decided by the Elementary Leadership Team.

*Students will be held responsible for behavior (regardless of their intent) which results in the loss of school property or the personal property of another student. Students will face disciplinary consequences and will provide financial restitution for property that is stolen.

*School property is to be respected, used and enjoyed by all members of our community. Students will be held responsible for behavior (regardless of their intent) which results in the damage of school property or the personal property of another student. Please treat property with

Level 4 - Level 4 behaviors are the most serious breaches of the GAA behavior expectations and/or repeated behaviors Level 3. A record of the incident will be recorded on the student's file. The Counselor, Vice Principal or Principal in consultation with the classroom/specialist teacher initiates a follow up with the student involved and decides on appropriate consequences. Parents will be notified by a member of the Elementary Leadership Team or classroom/specialist teacher.

These examples of behaviors merely serve as an illustrative guide and are not limited to the list below:

Examples of Level 4 Behaviors	Examples of Level 4 Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Repeated Level 3 behaviors ● Smoking (including tobacco products and electronic cigarettes) * ● Possession Drugs/ Alcohol on campus* ● Physical intimidation or verbal abuse towards a staff member ● Possession of weapons ● Altering or tampering with school records ● Sexual harassment/assault* ● Gross or flagrant violation of school guidelines that endangers the reputation of the school or other students ● Gross violation of Technology Acceptable Use Policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual counseling, with on-going instruction in personal and social development. ● Mediation sessions ● 3-way conference between administrator, student and parent ● Individual behavior plan/chart in consultation with Counselor Home-school reporting system (via email, behavior plan or Student Planner) ● Behavior Contract ● School-based community service ● Replacement/ repair of damaged property ● Restriction of privileges and activities ● Internal or external suspension ● Referral to Principal for possible dismissal or nonrenewal ● All actions taken with regards to the Behavioral Management Procedures are decided by the Elementary Leadership Team. ● ADEK to be informed.

*Students will neither be allowed to smoke nor be in possession of tobacco or e-cigarette (vaping) products under any circumstances on the GAA campus, including all of the parking lots. This also applies to all school related functions whether on or off campus. Anyone caught smoking, smelling of smoke or where the preponderance of evidence indicates the student was smoking or with a smoker but did not report the violation will automatically be given a suspension.

*Unlawful possession, use, or sale of any controlled substance or alcoholic beverage (including being under the influence of) is a serious matter, and a violation of the laws of our host country, the United Arab Emirates. Any infraction, including possession of drug paraphernalia while under the supervision of the school subjects a student to expulsion.

*Sexual harassment is defined as “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature, made by someone from or in the educational setting.” This can also include, but is not limited to, sharing inappropriate pictures via email and on the Internet and inappropriate sexual advances conveyed in online forums such as social network, chats and email. School policy makes it clear that a student may be suspended from school or recommended for expulsion if the Head of School determines that the student has committed sexual harassment.

Commitment

GAA commits to its students that all reported incidents of bullying, harassment or other forms of antisocial behavior by one student or group of students towards another will be taken seriously and dealt with sensitively.

The academic and administrative staff at GAA is responsible for taking immediate action when instances of bullying type behaviors, intimidation or other anti-social behavior come to their attention, whether through personal observation or by a report from another student or a parent. Staff and parents should regularly remind students of the standards of behavior that are expected of them. All faculty follow the discipline with dignity approach and focus on encouraging positive behavior.

What is bullying?

Bullying is a ***continued pattern*** of behavior which includes the willful, conscious desire to hurt, threaten, frighten, intimidate or distress someone.

Bullying can be:

- *Physical* pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching
- *Verbal* name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumors, persistent teasing *Emotional* excluding others, tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating
- *Racist* racial taunts or gestures
- *Sexual* unwanted physical contact or abusive comments

For Students

What should you do if you are bullied or you notice others bullying?

Telling about bullying type behaviors is not telling tales. Bullying type behaviors are wrong and should be reported. You have the right to be safe from attacks and harassment and nobody should expect you to be silent when you or others are being tormented or hurt. You should tell your parents about what is happening. Also tell your teacher, your counselor, the school nurse, Vice Principal, Principal or any other trusted adult. Explain who is involved and what is happening. You may want to take some friends with you for support, especially if they have witnessed the incident.

For Parents

If your child is a victim of bullying:

Encourage your child to talk to you about their school and social life. Watch your child for signs of distress. Listen to your child and take any reports of bullying seriously. Do not keep the bullying a secret. Contact the classroom teacher and then the counselor immediately. We recommend working with the school to develop strategies to support your child. Using the term “bullying” is taken very seriously at GAA and parents are advised to speak with their children regarding the full situation before identifying bullying.

If your child is responsible for bullying:

- Never ignore it.
- Make it clear that such behavior is unacceptable.
- Work with the school to develop strategies to change behavior.

Consequences

When students choose behavior which falls below the basic expectations of the school, disciplinary action will be positive rather than negative in its approach and, while maintaining respect for the student, will ensure that the classroom learning environment is preserved.

Failure to choose to follow school rules and regulations is treated seriously. Our goal is for students to accept responsibility for their actions and begin to understand the link between their behavior and its effect on others.

Conferences and Problem Solving

After initial parent communications, some concerns about student behavior are referred by teachers to the counselor. In order to gather information about a problem, it is normal for a counselor and/or Vice Principal to schedule a meeting with the students involved. At this meeting, students discuss what occurred and they are counseled regarding appropriate behavior. With serious problems or those that repeat, a conference between the parents of the child and classroom teacher and counselor is scheduled.

Loss of Social Time (Lunch, recess, breaks, before or after school)

If students choose to demonstrate lack of control, they may be removed from the class activity or lose the privilege of socializing with their friends for a designated length of time. The teacher who administered the appropriate consequences is responsible for the implementation of the loss of social time.

In-School Suspension

GAA employs a progressive model of disciplinary consequences, and students who choose to repeatedly violate school rules or where the behavior concerned is more serious may receive an in-school exclusion. This takes place in school, under organized supervision. Students will complete work provided by teachers and will receive counseling and advice which relate to the reason for the suspension.

Out of School Suspension

If a serious problem occurs where any student's safety is threatened or there are concerns which remain unresolved after other techniques have been tried, a student may be placed on exclusion for a designated period of time while the matter is investigated and considered.

In order for a student to be readmitted to school, a conference between the Vice Principal and the parents will be required.

During a home exclusion, a student is not permitted to be on campus or to participate in any school related activity. If exclusions continue the principal and the parent will conference on the best placement for the student.

Expulsion

The school reserves the right to expel without refund of fees any student who chooses conduct that seriously disrupts the academic program or exerts a negative influence on other students. GAA follows ADEK protocols when removing a student permanently from the instructional environment.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS AND LEGAL GUARDIANS

At GAA we recognize the importance of regular interaction between faculty and parents so that support for student learning and development is inclusive. In the circumstance that parents have a complaint with a teacher, the school will treat it in accordance with its procedure.

Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

1. If parents have a complaint or concern they should contact their child's teacher first. In most cases, the matter will be resolved. If the teacher/parent cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to contact the grade team leader.
2. Any complaint made directly to the Vice Principal or Principal will be referred back to the relevant teacher (if applicable).
3. Teachers, Vice Principal, and the Principal will keep anecdotal records of concerns and complaints on the date when they were received and reviewed. The GAA teacher will document the outcome of any meeting in an emailed letter to the parent/guardian.

Most complaints will be resolved informally. If this does not happen, parents will be advised that they may follow the formal procedure below.

The grievance procedure would first include the classroom teacher, grade team lead, counselor, Vice Principal, Principal, and finally Head of School.

Formal Resolution

1. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the GEMS Director of International Schools (DIS) who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
2. In most cases the DIS will contact the parents concerned, normally within 3 days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
3. The DIS may need to carry out further investigations.
4. The DIS will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
5. Once the DIS is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The DIS will also explain the decision.

ACADEMIC HONESTY GUIDELINES

Failure to credit information that is not your own, whether in a research paper, homework or test, is known as plagiarism. Such activity is discouraged in the Elementary at GAA.

Plagiarism is using the ideas or words of others without clearly acknowledging or

crediting the source of that information. Plagiarism is regarded as a type of theft and there are laws against it.

To avoid plagiarism, you must give credit whenever you use:

- Another person's idea, opinion, or theory
- A presentation that is not your creation
- Quotations
- A paraphrased version of an original.
- The use of AI to complete assignments without proper citations.

If a student is found to have presented the work of another as their own, he/she will be required to re-write the assignment during recess. Parents and the will be notified and a record of the infraction will be maintained. Further offenses will have serious consequences.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS WHOM TO CALL FIRST

GAA TELEPHONE NUMBER	(+971) 02 2019 555
-----------------------------	---------------------------

If you have a concern or grievance, please follow the appropriate steps below to schedule a solution of oriented meetings:

Teacher - Team Leader - Counselor - Vice Principal - Principal - Head of School

CONTACT INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT	NAME	EMAIL
Head of School	Robert Rinaldo	hos_gaa@gemsedu.com
Elementary Principal	Leia Kraeuter	l.kraeuter_gaa@gemsedu.com
Elementary VP (Gr. 3-5)	Doug Sherrill	d.sherrill_gaa@gemsedu.com
Elementary VP (PreK-Gr. 2)	Lauren Sargent	l.sargent_gaa@gemsedu.com
Innovation Coach & Coordinator	Claire Davies	c.davies_gaa@gemsedu.com
PYP Coordinator	Tiffany Pulci	t.pulci_gaa@gemsedu.com
Registrar	Asma El Derby	registrar_gaa@gemsedu.com
Accounts	Saikrishnan Shetty	finance_gaa@gemsedu.com
Counselor (Gr. 2-5)	Melanie Moses	m.moses_gaa@gemsedu.com
Counselor (KG - Gr. 1)	Alison Haswell	a.haswell_gaa@gemsedu.com
Nurse	Amina Abda	nurse_gaa@gemsedu.com
Parent Relation Executive	Fatma Chabanova	pre_gaa@gemsedu.com
PA to Head of School	Mirna El Haj Ibrahim	m.elhajibrahim_gaa@gemsedu.com
Elementary Secretary	Hazel Barriga	elemsecretary_gaa@gemsedu.com
Manager School Operations	Cuckoo Varghese	c.varghese_gaa@gemsedu.com
Human Resources Coordinator	Linda Rego	l.rego_gaa@gemsedu.com

COMMUNICATION

Curriculum / Accreditation	PYP Coordinator
Facilities Usage	Manager of Operations via Reception
Finance / Tuition	Accounts – Room 09
Health	Nurse – Clinic
Bus Transportation	Transport Operation Officer – Room 08
Cafeteria	Reception
Activities / Calendar	Reception
GAAzette Newsletter	Parent Relations Executive
Parent Association	GAAPA Representatives
Classroom Teacher	SeeSaw/Email/Reception

GEMS AMERICAN ACADEMY PARENT CONTRACT

At GAA, we recognize that a successful partnership between school and home is one of the cornerstones of a child’s educational success. We would respectfully ask parents to support this partnership by completing this digital form.

In order to best support my child’s learning, I will

- Provide him or her with a quiet, orderly place to study
- Ensure my child is prepared for class
- Deliver my child to school on time every day. No student will enter a GAA classroom without a late slip.
- Attend special activities sponsored by GAA to build my understanding of learning outcomes and my capacity to support learning at home.
- Read all communications from the school: Student Passport, Class Communication and GAA Newsletter
- Actively follow the GAA grievance policy and be solution oriented.
- Support the GAA Uniform Policy
- Model the behavior that GAA expects from its faculty and students.
- Support GEMS Culture of Kindness demonstrating appropriate and respectful communication (including email) with all GAA staff.

I have read and understood both the Parent Contract and the Community Handbook.

Parents, please digitally sign that you have read and understood the elementary handbook policies and procedures.

[ELEMENTARY PARENTAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM 2024](#)

Parent of: _____

Grade: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

IB Learner Profile Attributes



*Inquirer, Knowledgeable, Thinker, Communicator,
Principled, Open-Minded, Caring, Risk-Taker, Balanced,
and Reflective*

By embodying the IB Learner Profile Attributes and Attitudes we will develop and strengthen our GAA learning community together.