

أكاديمية جيمس الأمريكية – أبوظبي  
**GEMS American Academy**  
ABU DHABI



**Elementary Community  
Handbook 2014-15**

### 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 to 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 2014-2015 school year holds exciting possibilities for teaching and learning.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Miner, D.Ed.  
Head of School

### Dear GAA Elementary Learning Community

Welcome to the 2014-2015 school year at GEMS American Academy. With over 90 nationalities, we pride ourselves on being truly international while delivering the best of what American education has to offer through our enriched American curriculum. 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 authorised 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. Complete with an in-school 3D planetarium, it also houses numerous classrooms, library spaces, specialist teaching spaces, science labs, recording studios, MAC labs, a double gymnasium, fitness center, dance studio, indoor pool, auditorium, soccer pitch, tennis courts, cafeterias, 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 21<sup>st</sup> century skills provides for a powerful authentic learning experience.

Student results on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing, demonstrates the value of the overall GAA experience and the quality of teaching and learning at our school, with our students performing above international and American norms.

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 and encourage personal excellence for your child.

Sincerely,

Ben Voborsky  
Elementary Principal

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## GEMS Core Educational Values

### World Citizenship

Our students learn about the world and the people in it from an early age, developing an awareness of different cultures and countries. By exploring the world, they become socially, culturally, economically and environmentally aware and learn about their responsibilities as world citizens. They learn to adopt a global perspective and understand how they can make a difference in the global community.



### Universal Values

Our students develop the values, principles and ethics that are respected, admired and accepted in all cultures around the world. Students learn healthy social attitudes and a spirit of humanity, providing them with the ethical foundation and solid social skills to guide them through life.

### Leadership Qualities

Our students practice leadership and build the skills of collaboration and communication. Our academic program builds self-confidence through exploration, experimentation, problem-solving and decision-making. Students learn to work well independently and with others and they develop a pre-disposition for action.



### Forward Thinking

Our students apply their imagination and creativity when viewing circumstances and offering solutions. Students develop proficiency in the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a powerful learning and communication tool.

### IB LEARNER PROFILE

#### At GAA - Abu Dhabi the IB student strives to be:

The aim of all IB programs is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet help to create a better and more peaceful world.

#### Inquirers:

They develop their natural curiosity. They acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning. They actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives.

#### Knowledgeable:

They explore concepts, ideas and issues that have local and global significance. In so doing, they acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.

#### Thinkers:

They exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions.

#### Communicators:

They understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. They work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others.

#### Principled:

They act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups and communities. They take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them.

#### Open-minded:

They understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.

#### Caring:

They show empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. They have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.

#### Risk-takers:

They approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. They are brave and articulate in defending their beliefs.

#### Balanced:

They understand the importance of intellectual, physical and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for themselves and others.

Reflective:

They give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and experience. They are able to assess and understand their strengths and limitations in order to support their learning and personal development.

### OVERVIEW OF GAA ABU DHABI

Our vision at GEMS American Academy is: *Inspire, Educate, Lead, Innovate*

Our Mission is:

*GEMS American Academy provides a rigorous academic program to our international learning community. As a selective international school, our mission is to inspire, educate, lead and innovate. In our GAA learning community we....*

- *Inspire through a well-balanced educational experience that celebrates cultural diversity.*
- *Educate through high academic standards, global values and unique approaches to learning.*
- *Lead through cutting edge learning tools, environments and experiences.*
- *Innovate through creativity, inquiry and a common desire for a better future.*

*We strive to inspire, educate, lead and innovate within a culture of kindness that promotes success for all.*

We offer:

- an American-based curriculum delivered through the IB PYP framework for students from KG1 to G5 within an international context

The success of our program is based on:

- teamwork, collaboration and the broad participation of our community
- the pool of diverse ideas, experiences and values which our community offers
- a thorough awareness of educational 'best practices' throughout the world

- continuous learning and professional development

### We provide:

- each student with the opportunity and support to reach their full potential through differentiation to achieve an inclusive teaching environment
- A kind environment, built on mutual respect and dignified treatment, that encourages self-confidence and the embracing of others whose ideas and experiences differ.

### We believe that:

- each student is a unique individual with equal potential to make a positive contribution to our school community
- it is important to instill an enthusiasm for life-long learning in each student along with the skills and dispositions necessary to prepare them for the challenges and changes which will be faced in their future
- our students must develop the skills and understandings that will enable them to become responsible, contributing citizens of the global community
- Parental engagement is integral to student success and learning

### We support our philosophy through:

- high standards of achievement and performance
- a developmental, student-centered approach to teaching
- a comprehensive and varied curriculum aimed at the acquisition of transferable skills and enduring understandings
- the development of independent learning skills and self-reflection in the learning process
- constructive feedback for learning
- nurturing a strong sense of self-esteem, personal integrity and a respectful, caring attitude toward others
- developing an understanding of, appreciation for, and willingness to accept people whose ideas and experiences differ from our own
- facing problems within a framework of fairness and shared values
- nurturing a sense of responsibility for our environment

### Introduction to the Kindergarten and Elementary School:

All classes follow a full day program of studies from KG1 to Grade 5. Target class sizes are 25 students. 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.

Starting in KG1, students attend a variety of specialist classes which can include Arabic, Visual Art, Drama, Dance, Library, Music, Physical Education, KG Kitchen and Swimming. These lessons are taught by specialist teachers who are integrated and connected to the enrichment of the Elementary school program.

The KG1 curriculum is based on the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP) framework and the Creative Curriculum for early childhood education. The curriculum for KG2 is aligned with the rest of the Elementary school and based on the US Virginia State Standards delivered within the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP) framework.

The Kindergarten program at GAA provides classroom environments arranged to incorporate a variety of interest areas that offer multiple 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, computers, cooking and outdoor learning. Classrooms are safe and welcoming environments that provide areas for large and small group times, individual storage and classroom displays.

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.

The Elementary curriculum is based on the US Virginia State Standards delivered within the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IB PYP) framework, and modeled on the openness of the system of education. 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 ADEC's guidance with Arabic, Islamic Studies and UAE Social Studies.

The Elementary school community is warm and nurturing. Parents are encouraged to become involved in the daily education of their children. GAA also has a very active and supportive Parent Association (GAAPA).

### GAAPA

GAAPA supports the development of a sense of unity among parents, faculty, administration, students and staff by cooperating in different capacities to enrich the lives of the students and to guide parents toward 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. GAAPA has an elected Board of representatives and works with the school administration and parent engagement champions to support our community.

### THE SCHOOL DAY

#### School Hours

The school day for all grades commences at 7:45am. Students are not permitted in the classroom prior to this time. Dismissal time is 2.55pm. The hours for after school co-curricular activities vary. Most activities start at 3:05pm and finish at 4:00pm. Some activities conducted off-campus may finish later than this.

The school cannot provide supervision for students before 7:30am or after 3:05pm. Students are to be under **active** parental supervision while on school premises before and after these times.

If students are not picked up at 3:05 the parents will be called by the classroom teacher with a follow up email cc'ing the vice principal on the tenth occurrence and then escorted to the cafeteria to wait. After the third occurrence the parent will be contacted by the vice principal with a warning. After the third round of this cycle, the parent will be contact by the principal and the parent will be requested to enroll the student in the GAA STS School Bus program.

Students who are late to be collected will be taken to the cafeteria and should be collected from there.

### Attendance

Parents are expected to call or email the school as early as possible but no later than 8:00 a.m. when their child is absent from, or will be late to, school. Attendance and student participation in learning activities is important, so parents are urged to schedule medical, dental and other appointments after school hours or during vacations.

All students are expected to abide by the ADEC provided school schedule and attend school on the days before and after vacations.

Parents are expected to attend conferences on the scheduled parent/teacher conference days in the fall and spring as well as Parent Engagement functions to build shared skills, understandings and facilitate goal settings in support of learning at home.

### Late Arrival/Early Pick-Up

Parents are expected to sign students in or out of school at the Reception if they arrive after 7:45am or depart before 2.55pm. If a student is late arriving at school, parents must accompany their child/children to the Reception to sign in. Students should receive a late pass before entering the classroom. If a student is leaving school early, parents must inform the classroom teacher in advance and come to the Reception before collecting their child from the class.

Students **will not be** accepted or collected from their classroom without a late/early pick up slip. If the student is being accepted into or from a specialist teachers' classroom, the homeroom teacher must be informed and the slip brought to the homeroom teacher.

### Visiting the Clinic/Notes from the GAA Nurse

Unless in an emergency situation, students are required to be issued a nurses pass by the teacher before going to the clinic. Students will return to class with a note from the nurse.

### 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 the students' PASSPORT booklet or 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 and notifying the teachers. Student engagements outside of school hours are the responsibility of the parent for behavioral management, pick up and drop off.

### Lunch/Snack

At GAA we encourage students to eat healthy, nutritious foods. Please visit the GAA Healthy Lunch Box online to gain ideas and swap recipes. Monthly menus for our cafeteria are posted on the Accuro website. Water is provided for all students, and students are required to bring their own refillable water bottles. Children should bring a healthy snack, including fresh fruits and vegetables, from home to eat during the morning break. Any food sent to school should be low in sugar, fat and not contain any nuts or nut products. Students should also avoid processed foods as they are often high in preservatives and unhealthy elements. If a classroom teacher identifies a student who is repeatedly bringing in unhealthy foods, the classroom teacher will notify the parents to adjust this as to promote a healthy lifestyle.

Students from KG1 upwards have the option of bringing lunch from home or purchasing a school meal. Please ensure you send your students to school with a healthy packed lunch or money to prevent an uncomfortable phone call home. Also, your student's lunch will be provided by the cafeteria and billed to your account.

### Recess

Students have scheduled recess times. Each division has a dedicated playground areas 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 also have a "No hat-No play" policy. GAA students are required to wear a hat and carry a water bottle when they go outside.

### Assemblies & Community Sharing

Elementary Community Sharing is held on appropriate Wednesdays and Thursdays of each week on a rotational basis. Community sharing helps us to promote community, foster school pride, and celebrate learning and success. Parents are always encouraged to attend, and KG and Elementary dates are on the GAA calendar and confirmed by the Grade level in the passport or Grade level web site. Photos are also routinely shared in the newsletter and on the Grade level web site.

Each community sharing is documented photographically and shared with parents.

### Birthdays

Birthdays are able to be celebrated in the *Kindergarten only* from 2.30pm.

Snacks:

Please bring in individually sized healthy option snacks such as fruit and vegetables with dips, cupcakes, cakes or donuts.

Drinks:

Water is preferred. Please be aware that no soft drinks are allowed.

Cups, plates or napkins:

Please arrange as the school does not provide these items.

Class celebrations are arranged with the classroom teacher at least 72 hours in advance. 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. Please do not send hats, balloons, party favors or gift bags, as these items will not be distributed at school.

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.

Birthday celebrations in Grade levels above Kindergarten are to be approved by the Vice Principal as these celebrations take away too much time from our teaching and learning. Reception must be informed of a delivery at least 24 hours in advance and a teacher must collect any deliveries from the reception. Deliveries will be sent back if not approved.

### LEARNING ACTIVITIES

After a long school day, students in Kindergarten must be collected by their parent(s) at 2:55pm from their classroom.

#### Co-Curricular Activities

At GEMS American Academy we offer both non-competitive and competitive sporting opportunities for our students from Grade 1 to Grade 5. In addition we also offer a wide range of academic and creative pursuits to enrich the students' American 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 due to various factors and this will be communicated before the activity begins. Students who participate in the non-competitive programs should be picked up promptly at 16:00 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. No supervision can be provided after school for students not participating in an after school program.

Students participating in after school activities are able to sign up for a late bus service. Students not involved in activities are required to go home. Please help us keep halls and the Reception area quiet as they are working environments, even during after school hours.

### **Competitive activities**

Are available for students in grade 2 and above. Specific information about when these opportunities are available will be communicated through the Athletic and Activities Director. Grade 2 through 5 competitive activities are inclusive in nature and as much as possible will allow all students to be become involved.

Further information about the activities program at GAA is available in the Athletics and Activities Handbook. Please contact the respective receptionist for a copy to be forward to yourself.

### **Student Ambassadors –Student Government**

Student Ambassadors are selected from their class to be a part of a student leadership team within the Elementary school. Student ambassadors are often asked to take part in important policy decisions as well as fulfilling other important roles.

### **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 care-givers are not to attend school field trips. Students must depart from school with their class. The student 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 shirt, tie, black socks and black shoes. Please see the Parent Relations Executive for the GAA uniform policy.

Occasionally some students remain in school rather than taking part in the trip. These are extraordinary situations. Students who are excused from the trip are expected to attend school and work will be provided by the class teacher. All school trips will be scheduled at least two weeks in advanced and published on the GAA Elementary Calendar.

### Grade Level Extended Field Trips

Much social development takes place during adolescence and our upper Elementary program encourages social-emotional development as well as academic learning. We want students to become risk-takers and to experience new things first hand. To this end, we take advantage of our local and regional environment by visiting historic sites in the region as well as engaging in team-building exercises. These trips are a required part of the School Program. We are unable to include the cost of these trips in school fees.

Students are expected to behave in a safe and considerate manner during extended field trips. Rules are established to protect the rights and safety of all students and may vary according to the particular trip. Students who do not follow the rules will be excluded from activities or will be sent home at their parents' expense. In the case of a serious infraction, it is likely that a student will be excluded from future school trips and face disciplinary action upon return to school in line with the GAA behavioral policy.

### SCHOOL UNIFORMS

GAA uniform guidelines are communicated at time of admission or visit the GAA website for information. The student uniform is compulsory and students are to arrive at GAA in their complete school uniform.

Please Note: Students can wear the PE uniform for the entire school day on days when the student has PE classes scheduled.

On swim days, students should wear their GAA school uniform and bring the recommended school swim kit.

Recommended *swim kit* includes;

- dark blue/navy swimwear
- dark blue/navy swim cap for long hair below collar line
- towels to dry off
- no watches or bracelets

- 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 recommend
- plastic bag is recommended to put wet suit in after class

Students are expected to wear the correct school uniform including tie and black shoes. Any concerns about a students' uniform will be communicated to the student as well as the parents via the student passport, email, and telephone by the student's teacher. Consequences of incomplete school uniform include:

- Teacher communicates to parents first by student passport. Then by email. And the third occurrence is a phone call home resulting in the loss of Golden/Choice time. After two cycles the student is referred to the Vice Principal.
- Vice Principal communicates the uniform infractions to the student and parent and as a consequence the student loses recess privileges.

All uniform information is available from the GAA Parent Relations Executive.

### Concerning Kindergarten:

All 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.

Each day the children need to bring their: communication passport, hat, water bottle, snack and lunch. These items should be labeled and fit inside a small backpack. If your child rides the bus, please make sure that they are able to carry their backpack independently.

## CURRICULUM

### School Scheduling

The elementary school week runs from Sunday through Thursday. The KG1 and KG2 follow a five day schedule. Grades 1 to 5 follow an 8-day cycle of daily schedules which ensures that no specials are missed due to holidays.

### Special Area Classes

Our Specialist teachers integrate their programs with the grade level curricula in order to expand students' understanding of concepts taught in the classroom. From KG1, students attend such specialist classes, as Arabic, Art, Physical Education, Drama/ Dance, Swimming, Music, and kitchen. Some students will

also receive specialist instruction in Islamic Education and UAE Social Studies in line with ADEC requirements.

### **Physical Education**

Each Elementary class participates in physical education classes. Students are required to attend all physical education classes unless GAA is provided with a written statement that details a sound reason for release from a particular physical education activity, including swimming. This documentation is typically from a medical practitioner.

### **English Language Learners (ELL)**

ELL in class support is a fee based service designed to enable non-native speakers of English to reach a sufficient degree of proficiency in the English language and to enhance participations in the mainstream classes. ELL students are supported in their homeroom class with their classmates. ELL support is aligned with mainstream programs and adapted to meet the needs of students still learning the fundamentals of listening, speaking, reading and writing in English. The ELL teacher also provides support for the mainstream subjects by reviewing class assignments, giving further explanations and reinforcing concepts and subject specific terminology in the classroom setting.

WIDA placement tests are given whenever a child enters GAA and WIDA tests are made throughout the year to determine the student's readiness and ability level to differentiate in homeroom classes. We appreciate the financial and social implications of enrolment in our ELL program, however this program is not optional but rather a condition of enrolment in our school. The ELL teacher working with the Student Support Team is the final arbiter of student readiness to exit ELL.

### **Homework**

All students are recommended to complete extended learning activities at home on a regular basis. Homework 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 homework will be assigned by grade level and is collaboratively identified as a grade level focus which support in-class class learning and is expected to be completed. Please do not expect "busy work" or worksheets as homework.

### **LIBRARY**

### **GAA Library Overview**

Hours: 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

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, a laptop cart, magazine subscriptions, an iPad cart and more, we are well-equipped for exploration and discovery. In addition to the resources we offer within the school, please remember that many of our resources and services are available 24/7 around the world.

### **Library Visits**

Students in Kindergarten-Grade 5 have regular library visits. Flexible scheduling provides additional time for projects and special events. Students are encouraged to drop by the Library for research and book check-out at appropriate times during the school day. Following school wide expectations, we ask that Elementary students be accompanied by an adult during after school hours (after 2.55pm).

### **Borrowing Resources**

All members of the GAA community—students, staff and parents—are encouraged to check out Library resources. A maximum of 5 resources may be checked out at any one time for a period of 2 weeks; exceptions may be made in certain instances by the Head Librarian.

### **Overdue Materials**

We ask that materials be returned on a timely basis to enable access by all community members. Students who fail to return books on a regular basis may have their borrowing restricted. Students leaving the school must have a form signed by the library acknowledging the return of all materials. 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 and Damaged Items**

Any community member who loses or damages an item beyond repair will be billed for the original cost of the item plus 25% for shipping and handling.

## **PARENT COMMUNICATION**

The school maintains close relations with parents which facilitates communication and cooperation. Keeping abreast of regular school

communication is essential and parents are required to actively read the various modes of communicating through the: Student Passports, Grade Level Websites and the GAA Newsletter. 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 or have not subscribed to the online school calendar please speak with the Parent Relations Executive to update your contact information.

At the beginning of the academic year, an orientation day for students and a *Back to School* evening are held to introduce parents to the faculty and the general curriculum. This is followed by transition reports and *Hope and Dreams Day* for goal setting. Student led parent-teacher conference days are scheduled on the calendar to reflect on the goals set and parent and teacher only time to discuss grading or any other topics that need to be covered. MAPs assessment data are shared in fall and spring. Report cards are sent home at the end of each semester.

Parents are invited to community sharing and other special engagements throughout the year. The school encourages parents and teachers to communicate with each other by telephone, passport, note, email or conference at any time. Conferences with the teacher and guidance counselor may be arranged by appointment. Appointments with the principal maybe set after meeting with the teacher, counselor, and vice principal. The school keeps parents informed of upcoming events and school news through the school calendar and weekly grade-specific and school-wide newsletters.

### **Visits to 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. Please do not go directly to the classroom during school hours as this disrupts in-class learning.

### **Parental Engagement**

GAA has a firm understanding of the benefits of Parental Engagement. GAA parent engagement champions provide a full schedule of parent engagements. 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.

Parents can stay informed of their children's learning and progress through a variety of communication styles including engaging in conversation with the school's staff and faculty. GAA is dedicated to developing our teaching practices to allow for more blended learning where students become rich in knowledge from sources beyond just the teacher. GEMS American Academy also offers workshops throughout the year to assist parents with the skills to be able to engage with their children's learning.

The GEMS '3-A-Day' campaign is also supported by GEMS American Academy. GEMS encourage parents to make family learning part of their lifestyle by reminding them to do three of the most effective engagement activities everyday:

1. Talk about learning...
2. Share learning...
3. Encourage learning...



### Room Parents

Every GAA classroom has a Room Parent. The Room Parent serves as a representative for the classroom and will be the link between the teachers and the parents. They also take on the role of organizing class activities such as holiday and end of the year parties, helping with class trips, and other needs as requested by the homeroom teacher. Lastly, a Room Parent will also serve as a liaison between the parent association GAAPA, and the families.

Each classroom should have one Room Parent only. Each Room Parent may in turn request the help and support of additional parents but only one person will take the main role of Room Parent.

### ASSESSMENT

### Student/Parent/Teacher Conferences

Student/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.

These conferences are supported by our *Hopes and Dreams Day*, which is held early in the school year. This is an opportunity for parents to share aspirations of their child with teachers and children to set goals for the year.

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

### Report Cards

#### Transition Reports- identifying needs/concerns

Students in the GAA Elementary School receive a *Transition Report* during the first part of the school year. The intention is to share with parents a “snapshot” of how the child is settling into their new environment. Behaviors that warrant immediate communication with parents are as follows:

*Social- Emotional Needs; Separation Concerns; Aggressive Behavior(s); Academic Concerns, Toileting Concerns; Biting*

### Elementary (KG1-Grade 5)

At the end of each term, parents receive an evaluation of their child’s performance and effort in all subjects. We also evaluate and report on work habits and social development. All grades are supported by teacher comments. The language used in report cards differs across the 2 divisions but intends to provide parents with (1) more detailed/precise insight into what is being learned in all subjects at each grade level, and (2) the most consistent quality of learning demonstrated through assessments by their son/daughter. The language of achievement is always:

- Level 1: *Below Expectation*
- Level 2: *Below but Approaching Expectation (without promotion)*
- Level 2+ *Below but Approaching Expectation (with promotion)*
- Level 3: *At Expectation*
- Level 3+ *Exceeding Expectation*
- Level 4: *Exceptional Performance*

Level 4 achievement is extraordinary and very few students are able to perform consistently at this level.

A strong level 2 is required for promotion at the end of the year. Generally a student who does not achieve strong level 2 results in Mathematics and Language at the end of the year will be recommended for retention. Discussions will be held with the parents and the classroom teacher as soon as concerns about a student's success become apparent.

### **Standardized Tests (MAP)**

Twice a year, students in Grades 1 and up 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. This test is given to students non-ELL students in international schools around the world. No Phase 1 ELL students are assessed. Scores in the form of percentile ranks are reported to the parents. These scores are used to inform instruction and assist in differentiating to enhance student learning.

### **Appointments with the Guidance Counselor**

If you would like to discuss a specific issue, please contact reception to schedule an appointment. It is important you have already discussed the issue with your child's classroom teacher and the concern/grievance policy has been adhered to. Please see the appendix for flow chart and contact information.

### **Student Support Services**

The Student Support Team (SST) is tasked with supporting children with academic, social, emotional or transitional needs. The team includes the parent, the teacher, ELL or LS practitioners, counselor, and vice principal. They may be joined by other involved specialist teachers and the Principal, if deemed necessary. The purpose of this process is to establish an understanding of a child's strengths and to define concerns so that we can discuss ways to adapting the school program or to design a more efficient and appropriate means of maximizing success at school. This collaboratively developed plan which includes parents, classroom teacher, and additional support services and instructional staff may include further classroom options or adaptations, or recommended out-of-school support and assessment. The plan may also include a referral for a medical examination or an assessment by an educational psychologist, an occupational therapist, or a speech and language therapist. Support from a guidance and counseling professional may also be recommended by the team. Reports generated from any of those referrals are not part of a child's permanent school record and used only to provide the best individualized

education program possible setting the student up for success. Please see the Student Support Team Handbook for the SST referral process.

### 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. At the start of the school year we will send an Emergency Contact Sheet home with your child, please return this as quickly as possible to GAA.

If your details change, it is **your responsibility** to give the updated information to the Reception, preferably by email or a note in the passport

### 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 1<sup>st</sup> of November each year, students in all grades require a Transfer Certificate to move schools. GEMS American Academy – Abu Dhabi will be pleased to prepare a Transfer Certificate for all students who have completed the Withdrawal Process previously mentioned.

For students new to the school, please see the Application Package (available from the Registrar or online) for more information about Transfer Certificates.

## 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), the parent is encouraged to schedule a time to meet with the school nurse to arrange for these needs to be taken care of during the student's school day. 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 are encouraged to keep the school and the clinic informed of current work, cell, and home phone numbers, and any other means whereby they can be contacted during the school day 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. The Emergency Care Form will be utilized in many ways, from school trips and events, as a quick contact resource to get in touch with parents, for emergency personnel if the student is transferred to an emergency care facility; or to ensure that the parents/guardians have authorized emergency medical treatment.

### Forms

Each year school health forms will be required for all students. They are: Health information Form; Emergency Care 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 Epi-pen 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.

*For students from Grade 1 onwards- During school hours the elementary students should bring clinic pass during clinic visits (students will get their pass from their teachers, members of staff on supervision duties from elementary/secondary secretaries)*

### 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 time 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 to the bus conductor please write the details and attached the prescribed note of 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 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, along with other 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 you are contacted by the school to pick up your sick child, please do so promptly. 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. When they return need the medical certificate regarding the illness or clearance certificate – one copy to the teacher and 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 must stay home for any of the following:

- A fever > 37.7 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 in the morning with thick or sticky eye drainage; eye lashes 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 or over the weekend 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 out-patient 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 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.

For KG students they will be eligible to receive the vaccine in grade one only. As per the HAAD recommendations- for **grade 1 they will receive DPT-5<sup>th</sup> dose, OPV-5<sup>th</sup> dose, MMR- 2<sup>nd</sup> 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-3doses( HPV only for Females). These are administered by 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 active participation and safety in PE.
- Encourage good hand-washing; before and after meals, after toileting, coughing etc.
- 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.**

### Nurse Heat Warning Policy

The GAA sends out warnings which limit outdoor play opportunities in the hotter seasons.

<b>Heat Index: &gt;110 °F/(&gt; 44 °C)</b>	<b>SEVERE:</b> All outside activities postponed. Stay indoors in air-conditioning. Stay well-hydrated.
<b>Air quality index: &gt; 151 (unhealthy and hazardous)</b>	Children, active adults and people with respiratory disease such as asthma should avoid outdoor exertion.
<b>Heat Index: 90-110 °F/(32-44 °C)</b>	<b>MODERATE:</b> Limit your time outdoors; alternate strenuous & light activities in the shade and the sun; take a 5-10 minute cool down & water break every 20 minutes. (Drink 10 gulps every 20 minutes) Stay with a buddy.
<b>Air quality index : 51- 150 (unhealthy for sensitive groups)</b>	Unusually sensitive individuals should consider limiting prolonged outdoor exertion.
<b>Heat Index: &lt;90 °F/(&lt;32 °C)</b>	<b>MILD:</b> No limitations but best to alternate shade with sun exposure activities. Stay well-hydrated. (Drink 10 gulps every 20 minutes)
<b>Air quality index : &lt;50 ( good)</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Sand Storm Watch</b>	<b>STAY INDOORS:</b> Wash hands & face after coming inside. Watch for asthma/allergic reactions due to dust storm. All outside activities postponed until further notice.

#### Definitions:

- **Heat Index:** A measurement of the air temperature in relation to the relative humidity, used as an indicator of the perceived temperature or the “feels like” temperature.
- **Heat stress:** High air temperature, humidity, and solar radiation that lead to perceived discomfort and physiologic strain when children and adolescents are exposed to such environmental conditions, especially during vigorous exercise and other physical activity.
- **Air quality index:** It is the system used to warn the public when air pollution is dangerous. It can protect yourself, children and others from unhealthy levels of air pollution.

“Heat Stress and air quality index policy”  
Created May 2012/updated March 2014

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.

Lock down drill will be practiced immediately following

### Supervision of Students

A parent or a responsible adult must collect and actively supervise Kindergarten and Elementary students when arriving or outside of school hours, departing the campus. When on campus, parents and students are expected to follow school rules. Students must not be on the school campus after school hours unless in a GAA approved after school activity. Students are not be on campus when school is not in session. Older siblings cannot be responsible for younger students. It is parental responsibility to collect your students on time or STS busing should be arranged.

GAA operates a daily attendance system for all elementary school students arriving or departing school between 7:45am and 3:00pm. Please inform the classroom teacher of any delays or absences. Telephone calls will be made to confirm all absences – usually before 9:00am each morning. It is parental responsibility to inform GAA of a

student absence. Students arriving after 7:45am must be walked to the Reception to be signed in by a parent. Students will be issued with a late slip which is needed to enter the classroom. If students are to depart early, parents must notify the classroom teacher in advance and then sign students out at reception before collecting the student for early dismissal. Please note that we do not provide adult supervision before school in the morning (7:45) and after school (14:55) in the afternoons.

### GAA STUDENT DISMISSAL PROCEDURE

#### KG1, KG2 and Elementary

The GAA school day finishes at 2:45 for KG1 and KG2 and 2:55pm for Grades 1-5. While students should not expect to be dismissed before this time, it is vital for the smooth running of the bus service and the After School Activities Program that teachers do not keep their classes late and students are responsible for their actions to ensure arrival on time for the bus service. Once dismissed from class, students will be handed into the care of a parent or guardian or will follow the bus collection procedure which is detailed below.

The class TA will escort those students who use the bus service to the bus waiting area. There will be a collection point for each bus: clearly visible bus number signs are posted in the area. The TA will hand students over to the respective conductors in turn. Once students have been handed over to the care of the conductors, they will sit quietly until all students have arrived. When it is confirmed that all students are present, the conductors will escort the students to their buses and make sure they are safely buckled before the buses move.

In Grade 3 and up, where Teaching Assistants work with more than one class, the TA will escort those classes for which he/she is responsible to the bus waiting area.

#### 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 seatbelt 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**. Students may ride home with another child if there is enough room on the bus. Parents should check before noon with the Head of Transport to confirm that there is space. Both the driver and the classroom teacher must be notified in writing of any alteration to normal bus arrangements.

### MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

#### Lost and Found

Personal items found in the school are collected and passed along to the GAAPA. Please check with reception for the location of the GAAPA 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 labelled 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 Term, all lost and found items are donated to charity.

If students bring valuables to school (e.g. smart phone, iPad) it is the students responsibility for these items.

#### Telephones

The telephones are for official use only. In the case of 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. Student 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**

A security officer is on duty on the school campus at all times. GAA utilizes CCTV to monitor the campus 24 hours a day. The GAA officer is 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 officers have access to a telephone.

### **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 ADEC 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. ADEC 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 fund-raising 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.

## **SCHOOL BEHAVIOUR**

### **Code of Conduct**

In this school, a proactive and collaborative approach is used to solve discipline problems. The staff is committed to working together with children, parents, teachers and administrators to maintain high standards of behavior. Students are expected to behave appropriately and respectfully at all times. They must observe rules established with their teachers for classroom and playground activities.

Students are expected to abide by school rules and procedures any time they are at school, including after-school and evening activities, weekends and during any parent-sponsored events. Parents are asked

to model and enforce GAA expectations and rules when on school grounds.

### **STUDENT RELATIONS POLICY (Code of Conduct)**

Our aim is to create a community of learning in which every member has a right to receive an education in a safe and secure environment free from the threat of harm from others. GAA is committed to developing social awareness and reinforcing ethical and moral values among students so that they demonstrate respect for each other and value individual differences. If you have any questions or concerns regarding appropriate student or parent behavior please see the previous behavioral plan or GAA counselor or Vice Principal.

#### **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 teachers or counselor any instances of bullying type behaviors or other forms of intimidation that may come to their attention.

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.

#### **The Effects of Anti-Social behavior**

Anti-social behavior can take many forms ranging from the extremes of violence to less obvious acts such as deliberately excluding an individual from a group activity. Whatever forms this kind of behavior takes, it will be unwanted and unpleasant. Bullying and intimidation perpetrated by fellow students can have a very adverse effect on a student's self-esteem, learning effectiveness and general health and well-being.

#### **Commitment**

GAA commits to its students that all reported incidents of bullying, harassment or other forms of anti-social behavior by one student or

group of students towards another will be taken seriously and dealt with sensitively.

### What is bullying?

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

<i>Physical</i>	pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching
<i>Verbal</i>	name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumors, persistent teasing
<i>Emotional</i>	excluding others, tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating
<i>Racist</i>	racial taunts or gestures
<i>Sexual</i>	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 incidents.

### 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 seriously any reports of bullying. Do not keep the bullying a secret. Contact the classroom teacher and then the counselor immediately. Check that your child is not inviting the bullying. Your child may have weak social skills. This does not justify bullying but may cause a child to receive negative attention. Work 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 identify 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 FOR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR**

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 and 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 Exclusion**

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.

### **Home-Based Exclusion**

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 ADEC 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.

#### 1. 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, in the first instance, contact their son's/daughter's teacher. 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 level coordinator.
2. Any complaint made directly to the Vice Principal or Principal will normally be referred back to the relevant teacher unless the Principal deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
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 a 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, coordinator, counselor, Vice Principal, Principal, and finally Head of School.

### 2. 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.

### APPENDICES

#### I: ADMISSIONS POLICY

A student applying for admission must be accepted by the Principal, based on the school's ability to meet the educational needs of the student. GAA is a selective international school and with the proper parent support can accommodate mild reading, learning and behavior challenges, it is not staffed or equipped to handle the needs of moderate or severely disabled children. Like many international schools, GAA does not make provision for high needs children and parents must consider very carefully the education options available before accepting an international post. GAA is not a public school and is not an inclusive school model. Special Education Services do not align with the delivery model of a public school in the USA.

#### Age Requirements for Students Applying for Particular Programs/Grades:

**Kindergarten 1 or 2:** children must be 3 years 8 months or 4 years 8 months on or before September 1<sup>st</sup>. If there is a parent question, please contact the admissions department for the ADEC published guidelines.

**Grades 1-5:** The GAA Registrar places students according to their birth date. When applying, parents are required to submit prior records and recommendations to assist in determining grade placement. Transfer students from North American accredited schools are the most straightforward to process. MAP test results generated during the admissions process are an important indicator of student readiness and experience and will help inform the placement decision.

All students entering GAA are assessed before admission is granted.

#### II: PROCEDURES FOR ASSIGNING CLASS PLACEMENT

GAA believes strongly in the importance of well-balanced mixed groups – we want children to work within a heterogeneous group so that all

benefit from the diversity of backgrounds, talent and thinking skills that makes GAA a special place. It is important that each class is representative of the whole grade level and can be held accountable to the same academic standards. In order to create the optimal class environment, we need to know as much as possible about the social, emotional, physical and academic needs of each child. A well-balanced learning environment has to take into account many different factors. The obvious ones are gender, nationality, new or returning family, and level of English fluency. But just as important, are the social relationships, emotional and physical needs, academic levels, learning styles, and past experiences.

To facilitate our process of class placement, teachers input for each student is requested. The teacher summarizes the child's academic level, and describes any support program the child needs or other special concerns or program adaptations currently in place. This gives a quick overview of each student. For new grade 1-5 students, GAA uses MAP testing, interviews, report cards and records from previous schools to determine as much about the child as possible. This information is then used by the Registrar, Counselor, and Principal to create balanced classes.

The ultimate task is to match teaching strengths and learning needs and to match teachers' management styles and students' management needs considering the teacher's observations, parental concerns and student input, while still keeping the balance of gender, nationality, and new and returning students.

Because our overriding value is to create balanced groups of students who will work well together, we are not able to entertain requests for placements with specific teachers or specific students. You can be confident that all the teachers on any grade level work and plan together and provide similar learning opportunities and experiences for students.

Right up to the day school starts our student lists are changing, so we are not able to post class lists before the start of school. Despite the fact that we will have done the best job we can, not everyone will think his or her placement is ideal. We have found that the best advice we can give you if your child expresses disappointment with his or her new class group is to acknowledge a child's disappointment as genuine but to show your child that you have confidence in his or her social ability to

live through the disappointment and to settle successfully in the new situation. **Your child will be heavily influenced by your reaction!**

This is an opportunity for social growth and independence. Trust your child to grow and learn. Children are so open to new and different experiences, relationships and learning when we encourage and support them in their efforts.

### III: 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. It is expected that students in the upper years of elementary will eventually seek to bring their own laptop to school. Such a laptop should be similar to the laptop 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 student 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 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 our personal information, may result in loss of internet access privileges. Violations may also lead to disciplinary actions outlined elsewhere in this Handbook.

#### **IV: 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.

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 Principal will be notified and a record of the infraction will be maintained. Further offences will have serious consequences.

### V: STUDENT RELATIONS POLICY

#### Code of Conduct

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 pro-social norms. Acknowledging students who exhibit positive behaviors reinforces this culture of kindness and leads to improved academic and behavioral outcomes for all students.

GAA has identified the following school expectations to teach and promote our high standards of responsible behavior:

- ▶ Be Safe
- ▶ Be Respectful
- ▶ Be a Learner

#### Be Safe

Students are taught that physical and emotional safety are prioritized. Students can only learn and play once their safety is secure.

#### Be Respectful

Being respectful involves treating others the way you want to be treated, having a positive regard for peers and adults and valuing differences in culture.

#### Be a Learner

The principle “Be a Learner” essentially relates to valuing the learning process and learning community. This principle also values following the Primary Years Program learner profile attributes and attitudes.



# Elementary Community Handbook

Code of Conduct	Classroom	Hallways	Recess	Cafeteria
Be Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay in assigned areas</li> <li>Use supplies and equipment appropriately</li> <li>Use kind hands and feet</li> <li>Follow instructions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking feet</li> <li>Walk in class groups</li> <li>Keep hands, feet, and body to self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be Sun smart</li> <li>Use equipment properly</li> <li>Stay in bounds</li> <li>Run only where permitted</li> <li>Kind hands and feet</li> <li>Wear appropriate footwear</li> <li>Report danger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay with your class</li> <li>Kind hands and feet</li> <li>Walking feet</li> <li>Sit down to eat</li> <li>Eat your own food</li> <li>Keep food on your plate or in your mouth</li> </ul>
Be Respectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise hand to speak</li> <li>Use kind words</li> <li>Wear appropriate uniform</li> <li>Ask permission to use things</li> <li>Use manners</li> <li>Care for the environment</li> <li>Treat others the way we want to be treated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walk quietly respecting the learning of others</li> <li>Keep hallways neat and clean</li> <li>Acknowledge and greet others politely</li> <li>Smile</li> <li>Help others in need</li> <li>Hold doors for people with hands full</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow instructions</li> <li>Share equipment</li> <li>Return all equipment</li> <li>Care for the environment</li> <li>Clean up after yourself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow adult instructions</li> <li>Use manners</li> <li>Wait to be dismissed by the adult</li> <li>Use inside voices</li> <li>Clean up after yourself</li> </ul>
Be a Learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow instructions</li> <li>Use whole body listening</li> <li>Be on time</li> <li>Do your best</li> <li>Be honest and fair</li> <li>Cooperate with teacher and classmates</li> <li>Accept differences</li> <li>Take care of property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walk with a purpose</li> <li>Be responsible</li> <li>Use time wisely</li> <li>Listen to instructions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Play fair and follow the rules</li> <li>Share and take turns</li> <li>Include others</li> <li>Cooperate with others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be on time</li> <li>Have lunch card or money ready</li> <li>Wait your turn in line</li> </ul>

## Elementary Community Handbook

Code of Conduct	Bathroom	Bus	Auditorium	PE	Swimming
Be Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking feet</li> <li>Use equipment appropriately</li> <li>Flush</li> <li>Wash hands with soap</li> <li>Report problems or danger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sit down</li> <li>Wear your seatbelt</li> <li>Drink water only</li> <li>Keep hands, feet and body to self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow teachers instructions</li> <li>Kind hands and feet</li> <li>Sit in one spot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Show integrity by waiting at entrance if unsupervised</li> <li>Be conscious of your surroundings</li> <li>Think before you do</li> <li>Keep hands, feet and body to self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use walking feet</li> <li>Enter pool safely</li> <li>Stop, Look, Listen when whistle is blown</li> <li>Give swimmers space</li> <li>Always listen to lifeguard</li> </ul>
Be Respectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respect time</li> <li>Respect privacy</li> <li>Use a quiet voice</li> <li>Keep toilet area clean</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use a quiet voice</li> <li>Use kind words</li> <li>Move punctually</li> <li>Follow driver and bus conductor instructions</li> <li>Follow bus code of conduct</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walk with a purpose</li> <li>Pay attention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Show empathy towards other's feelings</li> <li>Use kind words</li> <li>Move compassionately through space</li> <li>Respect equipment</li> <li>Care for personal fitness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tolerate different abilities</li> <li>Use equipment wisely</li> <li>Put equipment away after use</li> <li>Respect personal space and privacy</li> <li>Listen to instructors</li> </ul>
Be a Learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a purpose</li> <li>Have teacher's permission to use bathroom</li> <li>Use only enough water to wash your hands</li> <li>Return directly to class</li> <li>Be Responsible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be on time outside waiting</li> <li>Sit in assigned seat if requested</li> <li>Be cooperative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listen, watch and learn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be on time and be ready</li> <li>Stay engaged at all times</li> <li>Reflect on movement</li> <li>Commit to best effort</li> <li>Cooperate kindly</li> <li>Be fair and follow rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listen, watch and learn</li> <li>Focus in and out of pool</li> <li>Know your level and challenge yourself</li> <li>Set personal goals</li> <li>Come on time and ready</li> <li>Change quickly</li> </ul>

### VI: School Behavior

#### Code of Conduct

At GAA, a proactive and collaborative approach is used to solve discipline problems. The staff is committed to working together with children, parents, teachers and administrators to maintain high standards of behavior. Students are expected to behave appropriately and respectfully at all times in accordance with our positive behavioral expectations.

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 model and to support these expectations.

#### Minor Behavioral Infractions

Minor Infractions are to be managed in the situation by the staff member or the teacher.

It is not necessary to document all Minor Infractions through an incident report. However, once a pattern of minor infractions emerges it will be necessary to document to the possible escalation to Major Infraction.

## Elementary Community Handbook

Infraction	Definition	Regular Strategy	Possible Consequences
Inappropriate Language	Non-threatening, non-directed verbal messages or gestures used within conversation that include swearing, name calling, or use of words in an inappropriate way	<b>Classroom/ General</b> Step 1: Verbal Redirection (Warning) Step 2: Timeout in Class Step 3: Buddy Class Step 4: Incident Report and home contact  <b>Playground/ Lunchroom</b> Step 1: Redirection (Warning) Step 2: Timeout next to duty teacher Step 3: Timeout at bench or table Step 4: Incident report and home contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean up duty</li> <li>• Moved to another area</li> <li>• Separation</li> <li>• Timeout/ Cool down</li> <li>• Assigned play area</li> <li>• Parent contact</li> <li>• Lunch timeout</li> <li>• Letter home</li> <li>• Recess privileges revoked</li> </ul>
Defiance/ disrespect	Refusal to follow classroom or school rules, or staff directions, talking back and/or socially rude interactions		
Disruption	Intentional behavior causing an interruption in class or activity. Disruption includes loud talk, noise with materials or body parts, or getting out of seat		
Rough play	Non-threatening overly physical interactions		
Lying	Student delivers message that is untrue and or deliberately violates rules		
Dress Code Violation	Not wearing the appropriate school uniform		

### Major Behavioral Infractions

Major behavioral infractions such as fighting, harassment/bullying and abusive interactions with peers and/or adults may result in more severe consequences including removal from the classroom, immediate parent meeting, and the involvement of administration. For more details and definitions of other major infractions, please contact the Vice Principal.

## Elementary Community Handbook

### IMPORTANT CONTACTS: WHOM TO CALL FIRST:

GAA Telephone (+971) 02 5574880

GAA Fax Number (+971) 02 5574990

If you have a concern or grievance, please follow the appropriate steps of scheduled solution oriented meetings.

1. Teacher
2. Coordinator
3. Counselor
4. Vice Principal
5. Principal
6. Superintendent/  
CEO

Department	Name	Email
Head of School	Kathy Miner	k.miner_gaa@gemsedu.com
Elementary Principal	Ben Voborsky	b.voborsky_gaa@gemsedu.com
Elementary Vice Principal	Josh Doubleday	j.doubleday_gaa@gemsedu.com
PYP Coordinator	Sofia Lyons	s.lyons_gaa@gemsedu.com
KG Vice Principal	Kathryn Head	k.head_gaa@gemsedu.com
Registrar	Dina Morad	registrar_gaa@gemsedu.com
Accounting	Saikrishnan Shetty	s.shetty_gaa@gemsedu.com
School Counselor	Melanie Moses	m.moses_gaa@gemsedu.com
School Counselor	Phil Abraham	p.abraham_gaa@gemsedu.com
Nurse		nurse_gaa@gemsedu.com
Parent Relations Executive	Kathryn Reynolds	k.reynolds_gaa@gemsedu.com
PA to Executive Principal	Olga Carrillo	o.carrillo_gaa@gemsedu.com
Secretary to E/S Principal	Fiona Keith	f.keith_gaa@gemedu.com
Operations Manager	Jason Kaile	j.kaile_gaa@gemsedu.com
Main Reception		gaa_reception@gemsedu.com
Kindergarten Reception		gaa_reception@gemsedu.com

#### School related issue

After School Activities Program	Chris Mott
E-Sports Activities	E-Sports Coordinator via Reception
Curriculum/Accreditation	PYP Coordinator
Facilities Usage	Operations Manager via Reception
Finance/Tuition	Accountant via Reception
Health	Nurse
Bus Transport	Transport Manager via Reception
Food Services	Reception will provide details
Classroom Teacher	Leave a message with Reception

Guidance Counselor

Leave a message with Reception

### Communication

Activities/Calendar

GAAzette Newsletter

Parent Association (GAAPA)

Reception

Parent Relations Executive (PRE)

GAAPA representatives

### GEMS AMERICAN ACADEMY PARENT CONTRACT

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

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.

Parent of: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_