



A COMPLETE GUIDE

AY 2026-2027

All you need to know

GFA

PARENTS' HANDBOOK

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Welcome Message from the Principal/ CEO



Dear Parents,

I am thrilled to welcome you as the Principal and CEO of GEMS Founders School – Masdar City. GFA is not just a school; it is a vibrant community committed to nurturing academic excellence and a deep connection to the world.

What truly sets us apart is our distinctive approach to education. We go beyond conventional learning methods, offering students hands-on experiences and projects that cultivate a love for learning and a profound appreciation for nature and the urgent need to preserve it. This connects to our holistic approach to education, nurturing not only intellect, but also physical, emotional, and social growth. We encourage our students to learn from the world around them, exploring their own interests, and discovering their passions in a new way. This is the transformative education that defines us.

By instilling a culture of inquiry and critical thinking, we empower our students to think for themselves, becoming informed advocates for sustainable practices both locally and globally. Yet, our commitment to sustainability doesn't end there. It permeates every facet of our community.

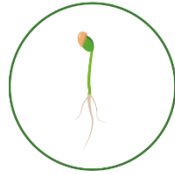
We believe in nurturing a sense of environmental stewardship among our dedicated staff, students, and the broader community. Through regular awareness campaigns, workshops, and events, we inspire everyone associated with our school to adopt a mindset of environmental responsibility, ensuring that sustainability is not merely taught but lived.

I am genuinely excited about the exciting journey that lies ahead of us. Let's work together to create a supportive environment where teachers and parents empower our students to shape a world that's both educated and sustainably enriched.

Kind regards,

Albie Huyser
Principal /CEO

1. Our Vision



GROW



FLOURISH



ACHIEVE

SUSTAINNOVATION

Igniting Minds, Empowering Futures



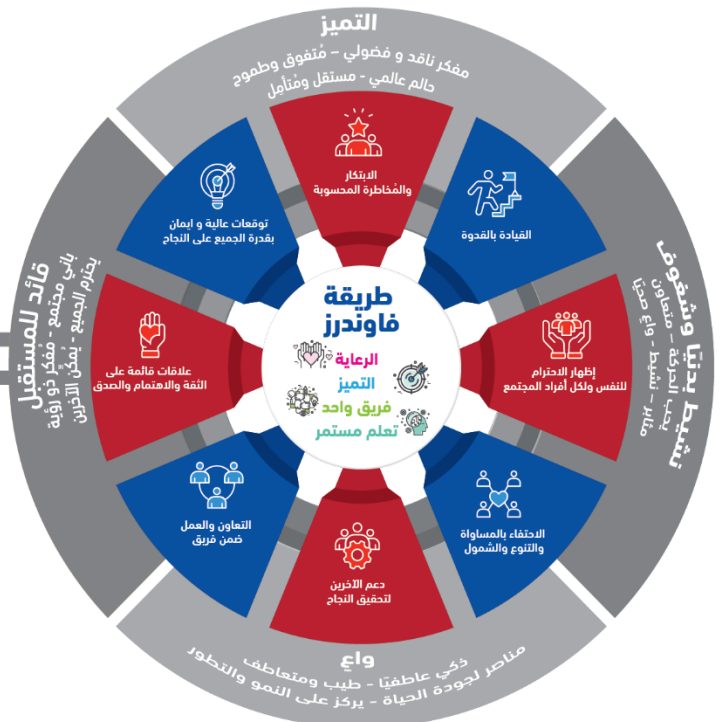
طريقة فاوندرز
THE FOUNDERS WAY



GEMS
EDUCATION



This is how we Grow & Flourish
Together



هكذا ننمو ونزدهر
معاً

A School of Possibilities

1.1 Vision

As 'A School of Possibilities' where we foster an environment of respect and trust, and we treat every child as an individual, personalising the approach to their learning. We build confidence and develop initiative in our students within a safe, happy, forward thinking, and inclusive school. The GEMS core values of Always Learning, Care, Excellence and One Team lie at the heart of the GFA.

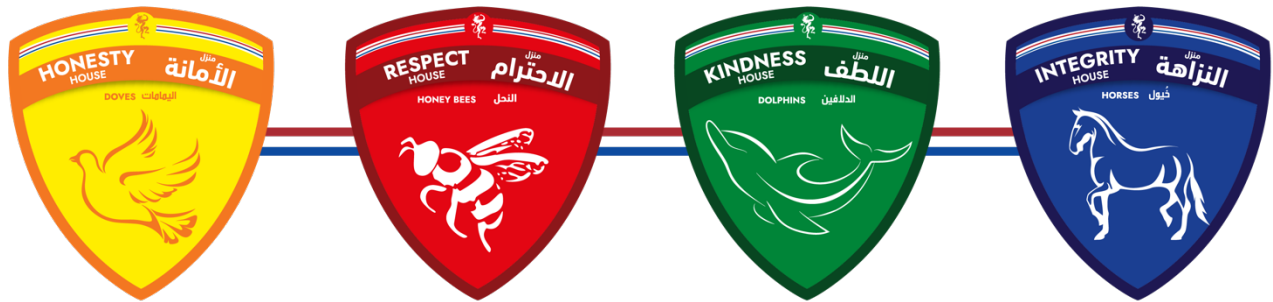
1.2 Mission

At GFA, we mission is SUSTAINNOVATION - Igniting Minds and Empowering Futures. To create an innovative and sustainable learning environment that fosters academic excellence, holistic development and a deep understanding of sustainable practices.

Through our broad and balanced curriculum, we develop responsible, globally conscious citizens. We support all our students to develop their skills as lifelong learners with a strong sense of self-worth. With a deep emphasis on well-being and belonging, together we provide the best support for students throughout all stages of their education.

1.3 GFA Values

AT GFA we create a vibrant learning community where values are not just taught but lived every day.



1.4 Sustainability

GFA pioneers a transformative approach to education by establishing an innovative model for environmental responsibility, where sustainability and commitment to ecological stewardship play a central role in nurturing the leaders of tomorrow and contributing to a greener, more sustainable future through:

- A Net-Zero Energy Approach
- Growing green minds
- Environmental stewardship
- Real-world applications

Please [click here](#) for more information.

2. The GEMS Core Values



3. ADEK Approved Calendar 2026-2027

*All dates subject to final ADEK approval

GEMS جيمس Founders School مدرسة فاؤنדרز MASDAR CITY مدينة مصدر																																																							
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- FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL TERM - STAFF INDUCTION WEEK - SCHOOL CLOSED / HOLIDAYS - RAMADAN - LAST DAY OF SCHOOL TERM - ACADEMIC REVIEW DAY - PUBLIC HOLIDAYS - ASSESSMENTS *Reduced school hours on assessment days.																																																							
Approved by Ms. Albie Huyser Principal/CEO																																																							

4. School Information

Website: <https://www.gemsfoundersschool-masdarcity.com>

 Masdar City - Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

 Email Address: registrar_gfa@gemsedu.com

 Reception: [+971-2-614-3400](tel:+971-2-614-3400)

5. School Day Timings

Students

	FS1 & FS2	Year 1 – 10
Monday – Thursday	7:40 am – 12:30 pm	7:40 am – 2:40 pm
Friday	7:40 am – 11:30 am	

Front of House

Registrar's Office, Fee Counter, Bus Counter

Monday – Thursday 7:30 am – 3:30 pm

Friday – 7:30 am – 11:30 am

6. School Curriculum Overview

6.1 British Curriculum

The National Curriculum for England organised based on key stages:

Key Stage	Year Groups	Ages
Early Years Foundation Stage	FS1	3 - 4
	FS2	4 - 5
Key Stage 1	Year 1 – 2	5 – 7
Key Stage 2	Year 3 – 6	7 – 11
Key Stage 3	Year 7 – 9	12 – 14
Key Stage 4	Year 10-11	15 – 16

6.1.1 The Primary Curriculum

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) FS1 and FS2

Focus areas:

- Communication and Language
- Expressive Arts and Design
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Understanding the World

Teaching and Learning approach:

- Child-led exploration
- Curiosity and creativity
- Development of independence
- Independent learning habits
- Inquiry and discovery
- Literacy and numeracy foundations
- Play-based learning

Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Year 1 – 6

In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 students learn the following subjects:

- Art
- Computing
- English
- French (Year 4 upwards)
- History
- Geography
- Mathematics
- Physical Education (PE)
- PSHE (for non-Muslim students)
- Science
- Sustainability

Focus:

- Critical thinking
- Deepening subject knowledge
- Leadership opportunities
- Preparation for transition to secondary school
- Problem solving
- Research skills

6.1.2 The Secondary Curriculum

Key Stage 3 Years 7 – 9

In **Key Stage 3** students learn the following subjects:

- Art
- Computing
- English
- French
- Geography
- History
- Mathematics
- Physical Education (PE)
- Science
- Sustainability

Focus:

- Academic challenge
- Independent study skills
- Subject specialisation

Key Stage 4 Years 10–11

Key Stage 4 is a two-year programme in which students complete their IGCSE courses, building on the knowledge and skills developed in Key Stage 3. During this phase, students follow a broad and balanced curriculum while also making important choices about their subject pathways. The programme is designed to develop independent learning, critical thinking and subject specialisation, preparing students for further education and future careers.

IGCSE Subject Options at GFA

At GFA, students in Key Stage 4 follow a carefully designed IGCSE curriculum that supports academic success and future pathways.

Subject Choices

Students select from a wide range of subjects across key areas:

- Business and Social Sciences: Business, Economics and Psychology, introducing students to enterprise, global issues and human behaviour.
- English: Options in English Language (First or Second Language) and English Literature, developing communication and critical thinking skills.

- Sciences: Biology, Chemistry and Physics, with a strong emphasis on practical learning and real-world application.
- STEM and Technology: Mathematics, Computer Science, ICT and Geography, developing analytical, digital and problem-solving skills.

Assessment and Qualifications

- Courses are delivered over Years 10 and 11, with final external examinations in May/June of Year 11.
- Students are assessed using the international 1-9 grading scale, where 9 is the highest grade.
- Qualifications are awarded by Pearson Edexcel and Oxford AQA, ensuring international recognition.

Key Features

- A curriculum designed to support academic excellence and personal development
- A strong focus on practical learning and real-life application
- Clear links to future study and career pathways

6.2 Mandatory MOE Subjects

All students study the mandatory Ministry of Education subjects:

- Arabic (for Arab and non-Arab students) FS1 – Year 10
- Islamic Education (for Muslim students) FS2 – Year 10
- UAE Social Studies (for Arab students – FS2 – Year 10
- UAE Moral, Social and Cultural Studies (for non-Arab students) FS2– Year 10

7. Teaching and Learning Philosophy

At GFA, we believe every child has the potential to Grow, Flourish, and Achieve. As a School of Possibilities, we foster an environment of respect, trust, and belonging where every student valued as an individual and supported to reach their full potential. Our approach combines academic excellence with wellbeing, sustainability, and character development to prepare students for success in an ever-changing world.

Our mission of SUSTAINNOVATION – Igniting Minds and Empowering Futures underpins everything we do. Through a broad and balanced British curriculum, enriched by UAE values and global perspectives, we develop confident, responsible, and future-ready students.

Student-Centred Learning

Students are at the centre of the learning process. We recognise that every child learns differently and therefore personalise learning experiences to meet individual strengths, interests, and needs. Students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning, set goals, reflect on their progress, and develop independence as lifelong learners.

Explicit Teaching for Deep Learning

Our teachers use evidence-informed teaching practices to ensure students acquire strong knowledge, understanding, and skills. Learning objectives are clearly communicated, new concepts are carefully modelled, and students receive structured opportunities to practise and apply their learning.

Collaborative Learning

Learning is strengthened through collaboration. Students regularly work with peers to discuss ideas, share perspectives, solve problems, and provide constructive feedback. Collaborative learning develops communication skills, empathy, leadership, and teamwork—qualities that are essential for success in school and beyond.

High Expectations for All

We believe every child can achieve excellence. Teachers maintain consistently high expectations for effort, behaviour, progress, and achievement. Students are encouraged to challenge themselves, persevere through difficulties, and take pride in their accomplishments.

We celebrate progress, recognising that success looks different for every student.

Growth Mindset and Resilience

We encourage students to embrace challenges, learn from mistakes, and view effort as an important part of success. Through a growth mindset approach, students learn that abilities can be developed through dedication, practise, and perseverance.

Our aim is to develop students who are confident, resilient, and prepared to face future challenges with optimism and determination.

Reflection and Self-Assessment

Students are encouraged to become reflective learners by evaluating their own work, identifying strengths, and setting targets for improvement.

Reflection helps students develop self-awareness, responsibility, and ownership of their learning journey.

Inclusion and Belonging

Inclusion is at the heart of our school community. We are committed to ensuring that every child feels safe, valued, respected, and able to participate fully in school life.

We provide appropriate support and challenge for:

- Students of Determination
- Students with additional learning needs
- English language learners
- Gifted and Talented students

Through personalised learning pathways and collaborative partnerships with families, we ensure every student can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Wellbeing as a Foundation for Learning

We recognise that students learn best when they feel happy, safe, and connected. Wellbeing is embedded throughout school life and supports our commitment to developing confident individuals with a strong sense of self-worth and belonging.

Positive relationships, pastoral care, student voice, and safeguarding all contribute to creating an environment where students can flourish.

Sustainability and Global Citizenship

Students are encouraged to become environmentally conscious, socially responsible, and globally aware citizens. Learning opportunities help students understand their role in creating a more sustainable future and making a positive contribution to their local and global communities.

Literacy Across the Curriculum

Strong literacy skills are essential for success across all areas of learning. Literacy is therefore the responsibility of every teacher and is embedded throughout the curriculum.

Reading

Reading is central to academic success and lifelong learning. Students are encouraged to read widely and regularly through classroom activities, library programmes, guided reading sessions, and independent reading opportunities. Our expectations include:

- Daily reading in the primary years
- Regular independent reading in secondary school

- Exposure to a range of fiction and non-fiction texts
- Development of comprehension and critical reading skills

Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary instruction is embedded across all subjects. Students are explicitly taught subject-specific terminology as well as academic vocabulary that supports learning across the curriculum.

Writing Across the Curriculum

Students develop writing skills in all subject areas. They learn to write for different purposes and audiences, including:

- Narratives and creative writing
- Reports and explanation
- Scientific investigations
- Persuasive and argumentative writing
- Research projects and presentations

Teachers support students in developing accuracy, organisation, clarity, and effective communication.

Home Reading

Families are encouraged to support reading at home by:

- Reading regularly with younger children
- Discussing books and texts
- Encouraging independent reading habits
- Modelling positive reading behaviours

Reading remains one of the most effective ways to support academic achievement and language development.

Numeracy Across the Curriculum

Numeracy is an essential life skill that extends beyond mathematics lessons. Students are encouraged to apply mathematical thinking across a wide range of subjects and real-life contexts.

Everyday Problem-Solving

Numeracy supports decision-making in daily life through:

- Financial literacy
- Time management
- Measurement and estimation
- Critical analysis of information

By developing confidence and competence in numeracy, students become better equipped to navigate academic challenges and real-world situations.

8. Bring Your Own Device Policy

Students from Year 2 upwards are expected to bring their own device into school on specific days as per the year group timetable. In addition to this, our students will have access to school computers and iPads. Each class has access to an interactive whiteboard.

As part of our BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) Policy, we will teach students how to safely use the internet for learning, communicating, and sharing. All parents must sign the BYOD Policy upon the admission of their child(ren).

Responsible Use of Technology

Students are expected to use school technology appropriately, safely, and respectfully. Digital tools are used to enhance learning, collaboration, creativity, and communication.

Digital Citizenship

Students are taught how to:

- Behave responsibly online
- Respect others in digital environments
- Protect their personal information
- Recognise and respond to online risks
- Build a positive digital footprint

Digital Learning and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Technology plays an important role in preparing students for success in a digital world. We develop confident, responsible, and ethical users of technology who can use digital tools safely and effectively.

AI Literacy

As Artificial Intelligence becomes increasingly integrated into society, students are introduced to age-appropriate concepts that help them understand:

- What AI is and how it works
- The opportunities and limitations of AI systems
- Ethical considerations surrounding AI use
- The importance of human judgement and critical thinking

Online Research Skills

Students learn to:

- Locate reliable sources of information
- Evaluate credibility and bias
- Cross-check information for accuracy
- Use information responsibly and ethically

Appropriate Use of AI in Learning

AI tools may be used to support learning when directed by teachers and in accordance with school guidelines. Appropriate uses may include:

- Generating ideas and questions
- Supporting research and revision
- Receiving feedback on drafts

Students must acknowledge when AI tools have been used and remain responsible for the accuracy, originality, and quality of their work. Our goal is to ensure that students become thoughtful, ethical, and capable users of emerging technologies while maintaining creativity, critical thinking, and academic integrity.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to demonstrate honesty and integrity in all academic work. Work submitted should accurately reflect each student's own understanding and effort.

Online Platforms

To ensure every child thrives both in and out of the classroom, our school is excited to offer a suite of online platforms designed to support students and keep parents connected. From tracking academic progress and accessing homework assignments to engaging in interactive learning and receiving timely updates, these tools make education more accessible and collaborative. Whether you're a parent looking to stay informed or a student eager to explore new learning resources, our online platforms are here to empower your journey.

Online Platform	Website or App	Relevant Year Groups	Applicable to Students or Parents
Arc Pathway Website link: https://www.arcpathway.com/parents User tutorial	App / Website	FS1 and FS2	Parents
GEMS Connect Website link: https://connect.gemseducation.com	App / Website	FS1 – Year 10	Parents

Phoenix Classroom Website link: https://gems.phoenixclassroom.com	App / Website	FS1 – Year 10	Students and Parents
Reading Wise Website link: https://readingwise.com	Website	Year 2 – 10	Students
Times Tables Rockstars Website link: https://trockstars.com User tutorial	App / Website	Year 1 – 6	Students
Edpuzzle Website link: https://edpuzzle.com User tutorial	App / Website	Year 2 – 10	Students
Language Nut (French, Arabic B) Website link: https://www.languagehut.com/en-us	App / Website	Year 2 - 10	Students
Linguascope Website link: https://www.linguascope.com	App / Website	Year 4 – 6	Students
Century Website link: https://www.century.tech User tutorial	App / Website	Year 3 – 10	Students
Upstrive Website link: https://upstrivesystem.com/education	App / Website	Year 3 – 10	Students
Pearson Active Learn (Secondary Maths, Science, French, specific IGCSE subjects) Website link: ActiveLearn (pearsonactivelearn.com)	Website	Year 7 – 10	Students
Seneca Learning	Website	Year 10	Students
Unifrog Website link: https://www.unifrog.org	Website	Year 6 – 10	Students
Microsoft Teams Website link: https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-teams/free User tutorial	App / Website	Year 2 – 10	Students

9. Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. It enables teachers to understand students' strengths, identify next steps, and provide appropriate support and challenge. Assessment also helps students recognise their achievements and take ownership of their learning journey.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment takes place continuously throughout the learning process and is used to inform teaching and support student progress. Examples include:

- Classwork and homework tasks

- Exit tickets and reflection activities
- Peer and self-assessment
- Teacher observations
- Questioning and discussion
- Quizzes and retrieval activities

These assessments provide valuable information about student understanding and help teachers adapt instruction to meet students' needs.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessments evaluate learning at specific points throughout the year. These may include:

- End-of-unit assessments
- Internal assessments
- Standardised assessments
- GCSE, IGCSE, other external examinations

Summative assessment data helps measure attainment and progress against curriculum expectations and international benchmarks.

Feedback and Improvement

Effective feedback is one of the most powerful ways to improve learning.

Feedback may be delivered through:

- Peer feedback activities
- Self-reflection opportunities
- Verbal discussions with teacher
- Whole- class feedback
- Written comments

Feedback focuses on strengths, areas for development, and the next practical steps for improvement.

Target Setting

Students are encouraged to set ambitious but achievable goals for themselves. Teachers work with students to identify personal learning targets that support academic growth, wellbeing, and personal development.

Monitoring Progress

Student progress is monitored throughout the year using a range of assessment evidence. This enables teachers and leaders to:

- Ensure appropriate challenge for high-achieving students
- Identify strengths and areas for improvement
- Provide intervention where needed

- Support students in achieving their full potential

Reporting to Parents

Parents receive regular updates on their child's learning through:

- Termly Progress reports
- Academic Review Days
- Fortnightly parents drop ins

10. Enrichment and Character Development

Through a wide range of enrichment opportunities, students develop confidence, resilience, leadership skills, creativity, and a strong sense of responsibility.

Leadership Opportunities

Students are encouraged to take on leadership roles and contribute positively to the school community through opportunities such as Student Council, House Leadership, Eco Committees, Ambassadors, Peer Mentors, and Prefect positions. These experiences develop confidence, communication, teamwork, and responsibility.

Sports and Physical Development

Participation in sport promotes teamwork, perseverance, discipline, and wellbeing. Students can take part in inter-house competitions, sports teams, tournaments, and fitness initiatives that encourage healthy and active lifestyles.

Performing Arts

Music, drama and performance opportunities enable students to express themselves creatively, build confidence, and develop collaboration and communication skills.

STEAM and Innovation

Through STEAM projects, coding, robotics, design challenges, and innovation competitions, students develop critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving skills, and an entrepreneurial mindset.

Service Learning and Community Engagement

Students are encouraged to make a positive contribution to their communities through charitable initiatives, volunteering opportunities, and service-learning projects that develop empathy, compassion, and social responsibility.

Environmental Sustainability

As part of our commitment to SUSTAINNOVATION, students engage in environmental initiatives that promote sustainability, conservation, and responsible citizenship, helping them understand their role in creating a more sustainable future.

Student Voice

Student voice is highly valued at GFA. Through leadership groups, surveys, forums, and student-led initiatives, students are encouraged to share ideas, influence school improvement, and take ownership of their educational experience.

Developing the Whole Child

Through these opportunities, students develop the qualities and values that underpin lifelong success, including resilience, integrity, respect, collaboration, leadership, and global citizenship. We nurture confident, compassionate, and future-ready students who are prepared to Grow, Flourish, and Achieve.

11. Home Learning

At GFA, we recognise the important role that families play in supporting learning beyond the classroom. To reinforce and extend learning, students are provided with weekly optional home learning activities that complement the curriculum being taught in school.

Home learning may include a combination of practice books, reading activities and project-based tasks. Where appropriate, carefully selected online learning platforms such as Century Tech, Times Tables Rock Stars, Reading Wise, Microsoft Teams, and other curriculum-specific resources may be used to personalise learning and provide additional challenge or support.

The purpose of optional home learning is not to create additional pressure, but to provide meaningful opportunities for practice, revision, and deeper exploration of topics that interest students. Parents are encouraged to support and celebrate their child's efforts while fostering positive routines and a love of learning at home.

Recommended activities may include:

- Creative and project-based challenges
- Curriculum-linked online learning platforms
- Mathematics fluency practice
- Regular reading and discussion
- Research and inquiry tasks

- Spelling and vocabulary development

By engaging regularly with home learning opportunities, students can strengthen their understanding, build confidence, and develop independent study skills that are essential for lifelong learning.

12. Respecting UAE Culture and Values

As an international school in Abu Dhabi, we are committed to fostering respect for the culture, traditions, values, and laws of the United Arab Emirates. We believe that developing an appreciation for our host nation enriches the educational experience of all students and promotes responsible global citizenship.

Respect for UAE Laws and Values

All members of our school community are expected to respect and uphold the laws, customs, and cultural values of the UAE. Students are encouraged to demonstrate respect, tolerance, responsibility, and integrity in their interactions with others, reflecting both the values of the UAE and the ethos of our school.

UAE Culture and National Identity

Students are provided with opportunities throughout the year to learn about the rich history, heritage, achievements, and traditions of the UAE. Through curriculum experiences, assemblies, special events, and cultural activities, students develop an understanding of Emirati culture and a sense of appreciation for the country's continued growth and success.

National Celebrations

The school actively participates in key national events and celebrations, including UAE National Day, Commemoration Day, Flag Day, and other significant cultural occasions. These events help students develop a deeper connection with the UAE and celebrate the diversity of our school community.

Arabic and Islamic Studies

In accordance with Ministry of Education and ADEK requirements, students participate in Arabic Language and Islamic Studies programmes. These subjects play an important role in promoting language development, cultural understanding, national identity, and respect for Islamic values and traditions.

Cultural Awareness and Respect

As a diverse international community, we encourage students to value different perspectives, cultures, and beliefs while demonstrating sensitivity to local customs and traditions. Respectful behaviour, appropriate dress, and consideration for religious and cultural observances, including Ramadan, are expected from all members of the school community.

Community Service and Social Responsibility

Students are encouraged to make meaningful contributions to their local and global communities through service-learning opportunities, charitable initiatives, environmental projects, and community engagement activities. These experiences help develop empathy, compassion, leadership, and a commitment to making a positive difference in society. Through these experiences, we aim to nurture students who are proud of their own identity, respectful of others, and committed to contributing positively to the UAE and the wider world.

13. Safeguarding

Safeguarding Protocols

- All staff receive face-to-face training upon induction.
- All staff complete GEMS training linked to safeguarding.
- Refresher courses are delivered termly.
- Confidential safeguarding procedures are adhered to following the GEMS Safeguarding Policy and the UAE Code of Conduct.



Designated Safeguarding Lead
Charne Rossouw – Vice Principal

14. Health, Safety and Environment

Health and Safety is a main priority at the GFA. We aim to ensure this process is in place for all students, staff, and visitors. The school complies with the policies, rules and regulations in accordance with GEMS Education, ADEK and the Abu Dhabi Civil Defence.

14.1 Identification Badges

The school commits to safeguarding its students and staff through issuing all parents with access identity cards which must be worn for the security team to check when leaving or accessing all entrance points at the school. The parent lanyard must be worn at all times when on site.

The access identity card carries the student's unique identity number and remains the property of the school. The identity card is not transferrable, and it is the parents' responsibility to provide the school with their up-to-date personal details and photographs prior to joining the school. If the card is lost, parents will have to pay for the replacement card.

14.2 Visitors

- Visitors must ensure that they adhere to the school's health and safety requirements.
- Sign in when entering the school premises and sign out when exiting.
- Parents must always wear their yellow lanyard holding the parent ID card.
- Visitors must always wear a green lanyard holding the visitor badge/sticker, in line with the school's safeguarding.
- Remain within their permitted areas and not to approach any students, without prior management approval.
- Be aware and adhere to the school specific emergency procedures.
- Report any health and safety incidents to the school.

14.3 Car parking

- Always drive with caution and very slowly in the GFA car park.
- Maximum speed limit 15 km per hour – please look out for our students.

14.4 Evacuation and Emergency Management

- We have extensive policies and procedures in place for our school with respect to fire, natural disaster and emergency lockdown procedures.
- We have regular emergency drills with all staff and students. For visitors' safety we ask everyone to sign in at the front gate/desk and always wear a visitor's badge.
- In the event of an emergency, parents will be expected to come to collect their child directly from the school or the evacuation point.

15. Protocols involving students at GFA

We want to remind you that any issues that involve your child and any other child should be reported to your designated teacher / form tutor or the school administration. It is important to follow proper procedures and guidelines to ensure the safety and well-being of all students.

Additionally, we would like to inform you that it is not permitted for parents or guardians to approach, investigate, or speak to any other child that is not their own child. There are legal and school policies in place to protect the privacy and security of all students.

We appreciate your cooperation in maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all students at our school. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the school administration.

16. Attendance and Punctuality

16.1 Attendance

The school rigorously monitors attendance and punctuality and works in partnership with families to support students in maintaining excellent attendance. We encourage all students to aim for attendance of 98% or above, enabling them to benefit fully from the academic, social, and enrichment opportunities available at school.

Attendance Rate	Impact on Learning
98–100%	Excellent attendance and strong continuity of learning
95–97%	Good attendance
90–94%	Attendance concern – learning may be affected
Below 90%	Persistent absenteeism requires school intervention

16.2 Student Absence

Absences must be reported promptly and supported by appropriate documentation where required. Medical appointments, travel plans, and other avoidable absences should, wherever possible, be arranged outside of school hours or term time.

If your child is away from school for whatever reason, please ensure that you apply for leave on GEMS Connect and inform the class teacher by email. If we do not hear from you, the first day of absence, shall result in a courtesy email to you to enquire as to the reason why. The second day will result in a phone

call from the school. Five days of consecutive absence without notification will result in notifying the Senior Leadership Team and the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Students who experience persistent absenteeism or lateness will be subject to attendance monitoring procedures in accordance with ADEK regulations. Where concerns arise, the school will work collaboratively with families to identify barriers and provide appropriate support.

Every day in school is an opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed.

16.3 Applying for Leave on the GEMS Connect App

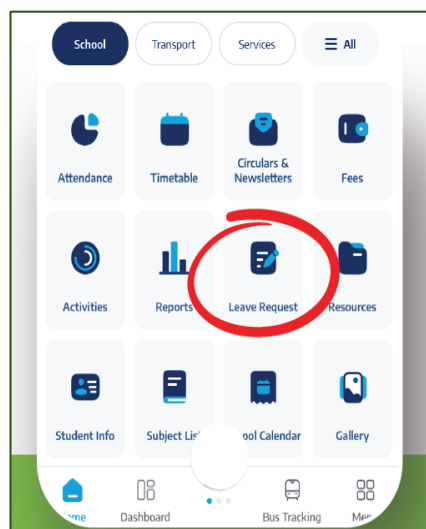
Step 1

***Log in to the GEMS Connect Mobile App
The App can be downloaded from the Google Play Store or the iOS App Store.***

***You can contact the Admin team in case you need a reset for your credentials.
This guide shows you how to apply for leave for today or future dates.***

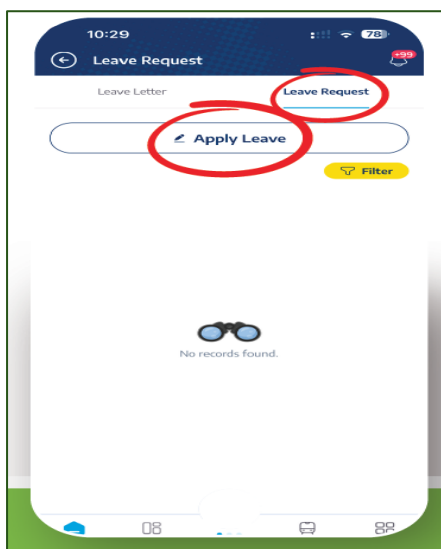
Step 2

Click on Leave Request.



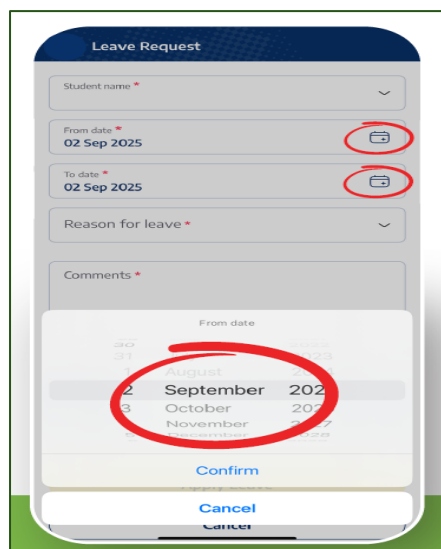
Step 3

Click on Leave Request - to apply for the current day or for days to come. Then tap on Apply Leave



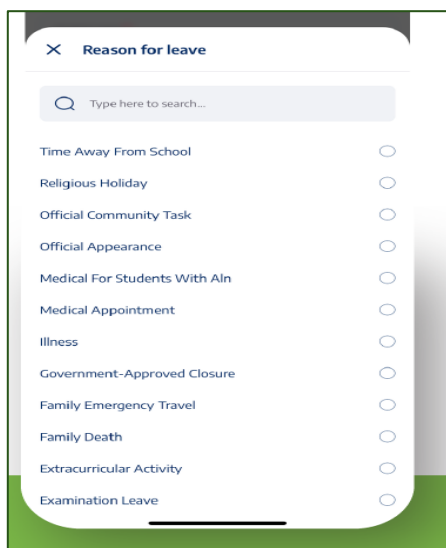
Step 4

Fill in the From date and the To date. Click on the calendar icon to choose your From and To dates.



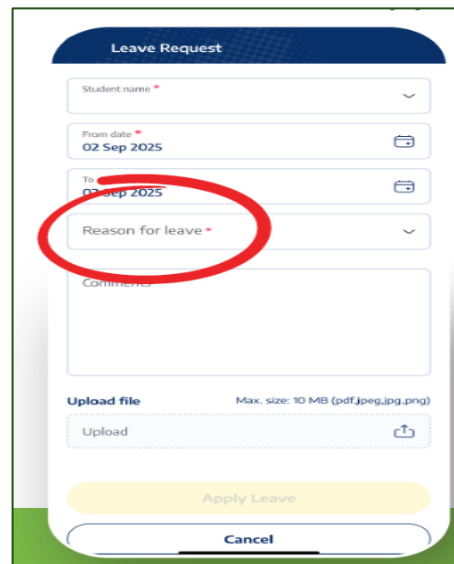
Step 5

Choose the Reason for leave. Click on the drop-down arrow to choose from the available list of reasons.



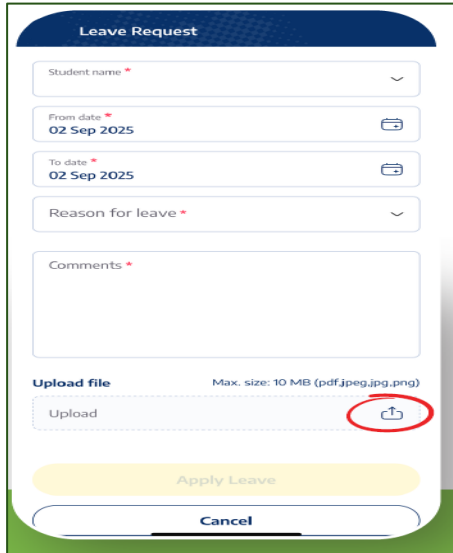
Step 6

Select your reason for leave from the available options. For more than three days of illness a medical certificate has to be provided.



Step 7

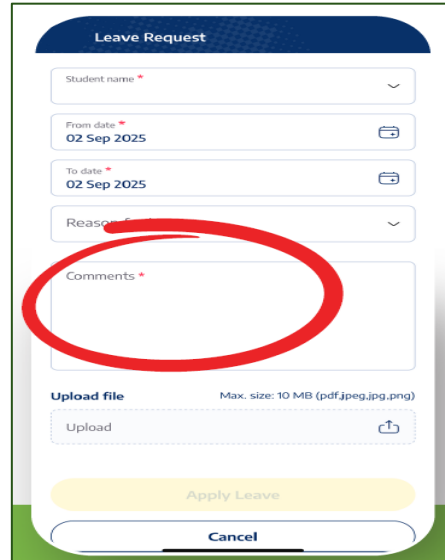
Please enter your comments briefly explaining the reason for the leave(s) applied.



The screenshot shows the 'Leave Request' form with the following fields: Student name, From date (02 Sep 2025), To date (02 Sep 2025), Reason for leave, and Comments. The 'Upload file' button is circled in red.

Step 8

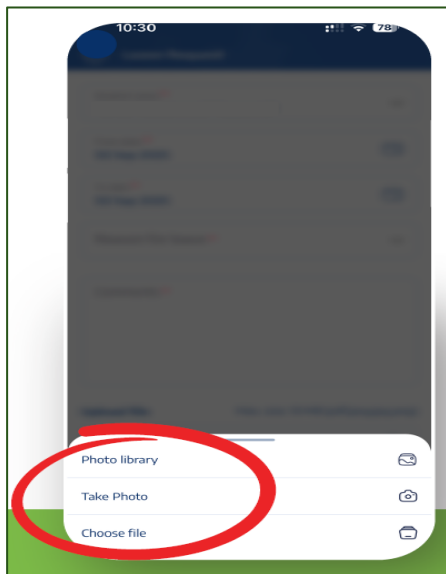
Upload the supporting document for the leave applied (if applicable)



The screenshot shows the 'Leave Request' form with the following fields: Student name, From date (02 Sep 2025), To date (02 Sep 2025), Reason for leave, and Comments. The 'Comments' field is circled in red.

Step 9

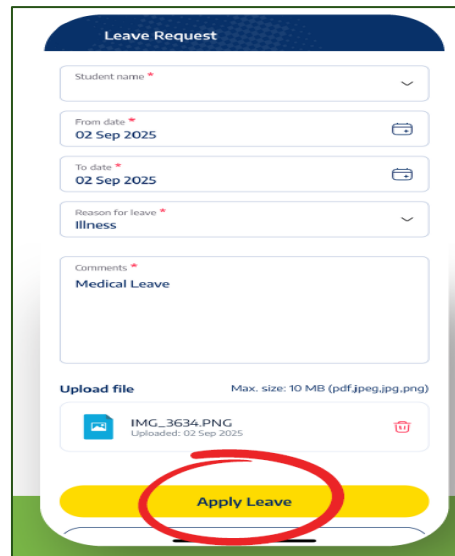
Select a source for your document: Photo Library, Take Photo, or Choose File.



The screenshot shows the document selection menu with the following options: Photo library, Take Photo, and Choose file. The 'Photo library' option is circled in red.

Step 10

After selecting the From and To dates, choosing the Reason for leave, adding Comments, and uploading a file (if needed), tap Apply Leave.



The screenshot shows the 'Leave Request' form with the following fields: Student name, From date (02 Sep 2025), To date (02 Sep 2025), Reason for leave (Illness), and Comments (Medical Leave). The 'Apply Leave' button is circled in red.

16.4 Sickness:

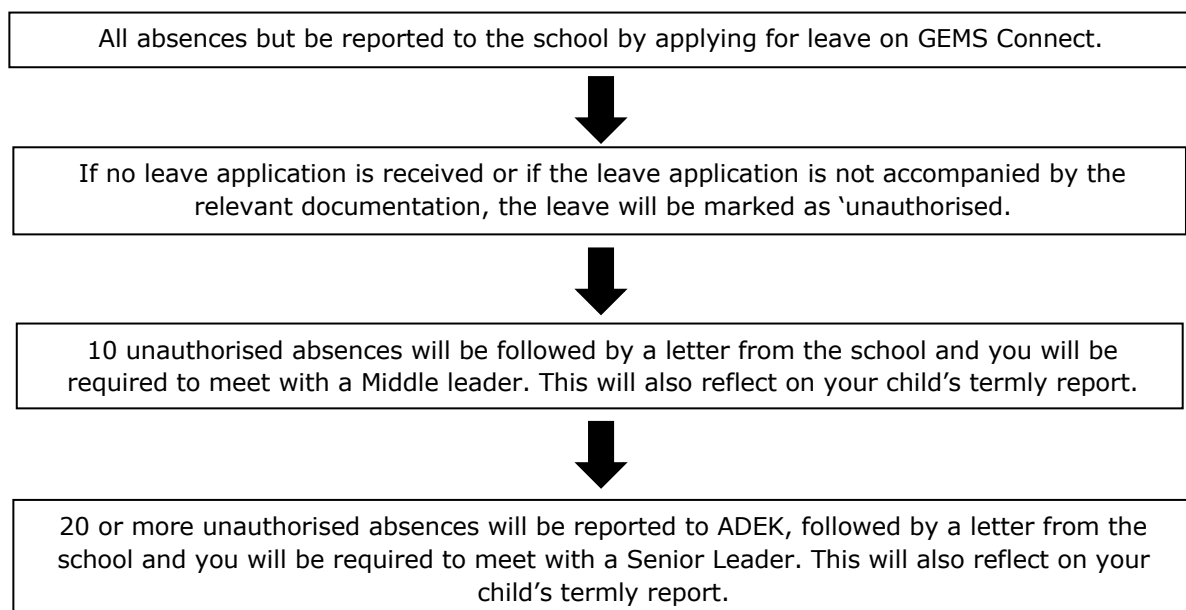
If your child is unwell, please keep him/her at home until they are well enough to return to school. This is particularly important to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.

Please ensure you inform your child's teacher and apply for leave on GEMS Connect, indicating the reason for absence.

As per our attendance policy, if a student is absent due to illness for three days and less, a leave request or written communication is required. If the illness extends beyond three days, a medical note must be provided.

All students are required to do PE unless there is a valid medical reason and a doctor's note should be provided. Should a note not be provided, they will be expected to take part in the lesson, assisting the class teacher with coaching and officiating (where possible). If the parent feels their child should not participate in a PE lesson, they should provide a note to the teacher to explain the reason.

16.5 Unauthorised Absence Escalation Route



16.6 Arrival at School

The school gates open at 7:00 am and entrance to classrooms starts at 7:20 am. All students must be in class by 7:40 am at the latest. We ask that all parents park their cars at allocated parking zones and follow the school's safety policy and the road safety laws on the commercial road outside the school. Common courtesy and consideration of everyone's safety and wellbeing is expected at all drop off and pick up times.

16.7 Adult to Adult Policy

All FS1 – Year 1 students must be handed from an adult to an adult. Students should be taken to their class by the parents and handed to the class teacher.

All students from Year 2-10 must go to their designated meeting point / class ready for the National Anthem and important announcements, which will take place at 7:40 am.

a. Drop Off for non-bus users.

Students will be marked late if they arrive after 7:40 am. If a student arrives after 7:40 am, he/she must go to the reception desk to sign in before joining his/her class. This ensures that the reception team marks your child as 'Late' on the register to ensure that the school has an accurate record of which students are on site in case of an emergency.

We expect students to arrive punctually at school and we place great importance on developing punctuality as a sign of respect towards others in the community. Persistent lateness will be followed up by the Senior Leadership Team and where necessary, the Principal. We understand that there may be infrequent situations when you are unavoidably delayed and if this is the case, please call the school before 7:30 am to inform our reception team of your child's lateness.

b. Collection for non-bus users.

FS1 to Year 1 parents must collect their students from their class at the end of the day if they do not use the bus service.

Year 2 – Year 10 students will gather at the Multi-purpose Hall to be met and collected by their parent/guardian at the end of each school day. In the event that another adult needs to collect your child they must inform the teacher of the child's individual safe word or present the Parent ID.

c. Lateness

All students must be collected on time at the end of the school day. In the unlikely event that you are going to be late to pick up your child, you must call the school. Any students who have not been picked up on time will be referred to the Senior Leadership Team, who will deal with them accordingly. In an emergency when you are unable to collect your child on time, he/she will be placed with a member of the leadership team who will only release him/her once you provide the safe word or proof of ID.

d. Afternoon Drop Off Procedures for bus users.

Upon arrival at the allocated drop off point, all students **must be met by an adult**. If an adult isn't there to pick up the child, then he/she will be brought back to the school where the parents will be called and asked to collect them.

16.8 Early Departure from school

The process to collect your child from school early (before the end of the official school day) is as follows:

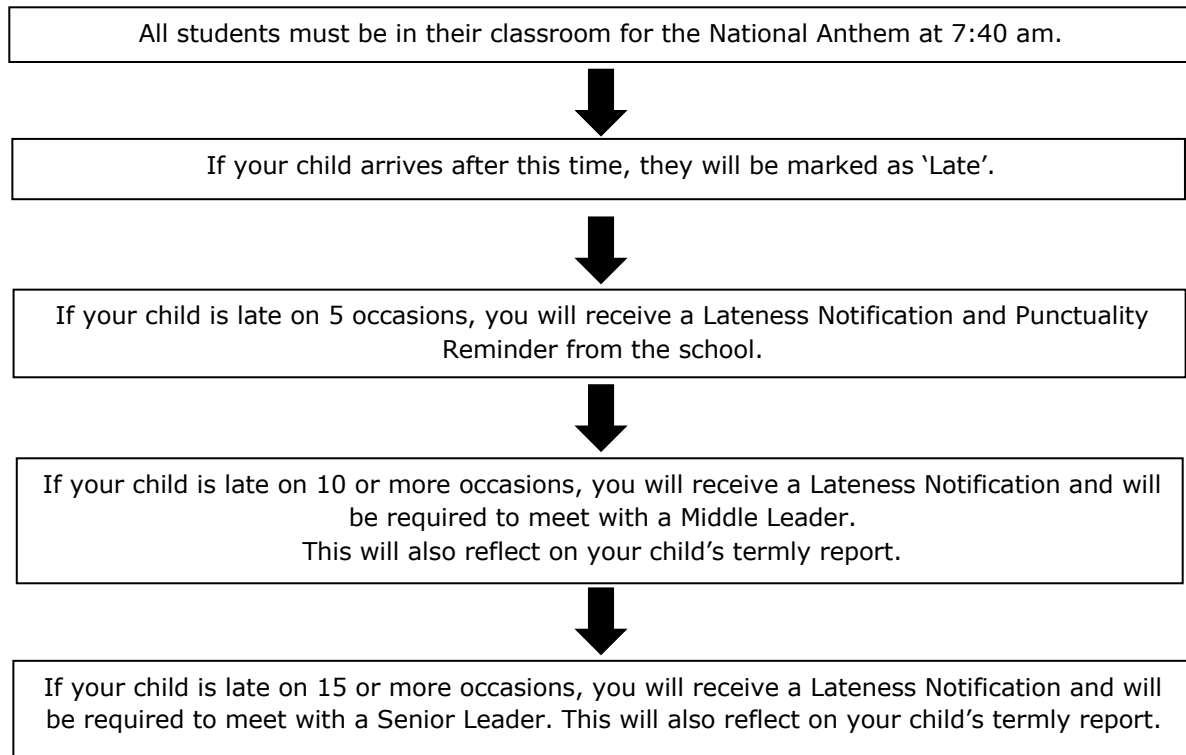
- Regular attendance and punctuality are required, the minimum expectation being 98%. Early departure from school is not acceptable without a valid reason, due to the disruption to not only your child's learning, but also that of their peers.
- All requests for an early departure must be emailed to reception and the class teacher at least **24 hours** in advance, with an explanation of the reason for the early pick up and a supporting document to validate the stated reason.
- Once the request has been validated, an exit slip will be issued at the reception. This must be presented at the security gate before leaving the school premises.

16.9 Early Departure from school in case of an emergency:

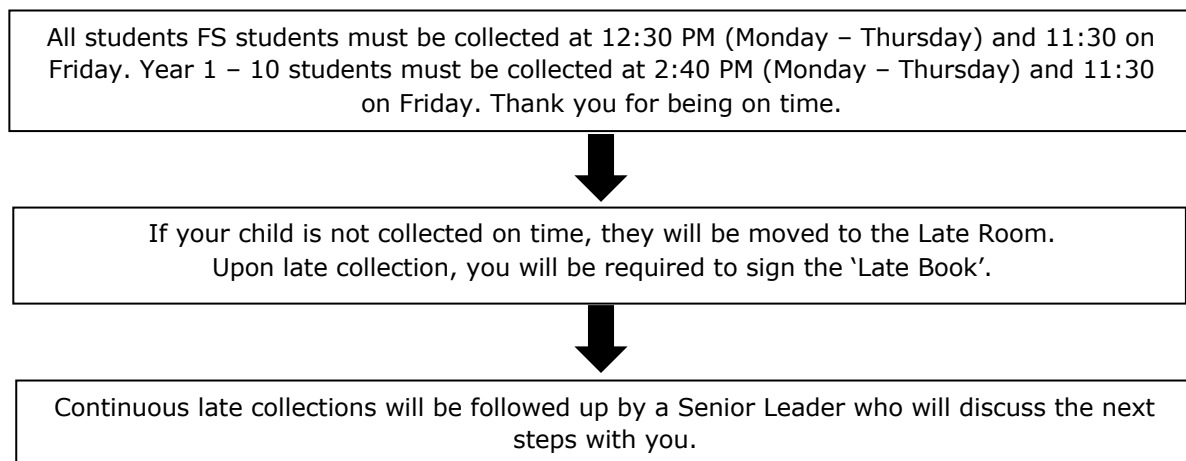
- In the event of an early pick up from school, the class teacher and BBT (the school's transport services for bus users) must be informed, and a response has to be received before 12:30 pm on that day; 11 am for FS1 and FS2
- In case of an emergency, please inform the reception and email the class teacher with the reason for early pick-up, along with any supporting document to validate the reason. This is required as written confirmation that the child was collected at the parent/guardian's request.
- Once the request has been validated and your child is brought down, an exit slip will be issued at the reception. This must be presented at the security gate before leaving the school premises.



16.20 Punctuality Escalation Route – Morning



16.21 Punctuality Escalation Route – Afternoon



17. School Communication Protocols

17.1 Parent Communication Channels:

GFA uses a variety of channels to communicate with parents.

- GEMS Parent Portal - Parents can download it at <https://connect.gemseducation.com>.
- Whole school circulars from communications_gfa@gemsedu.com

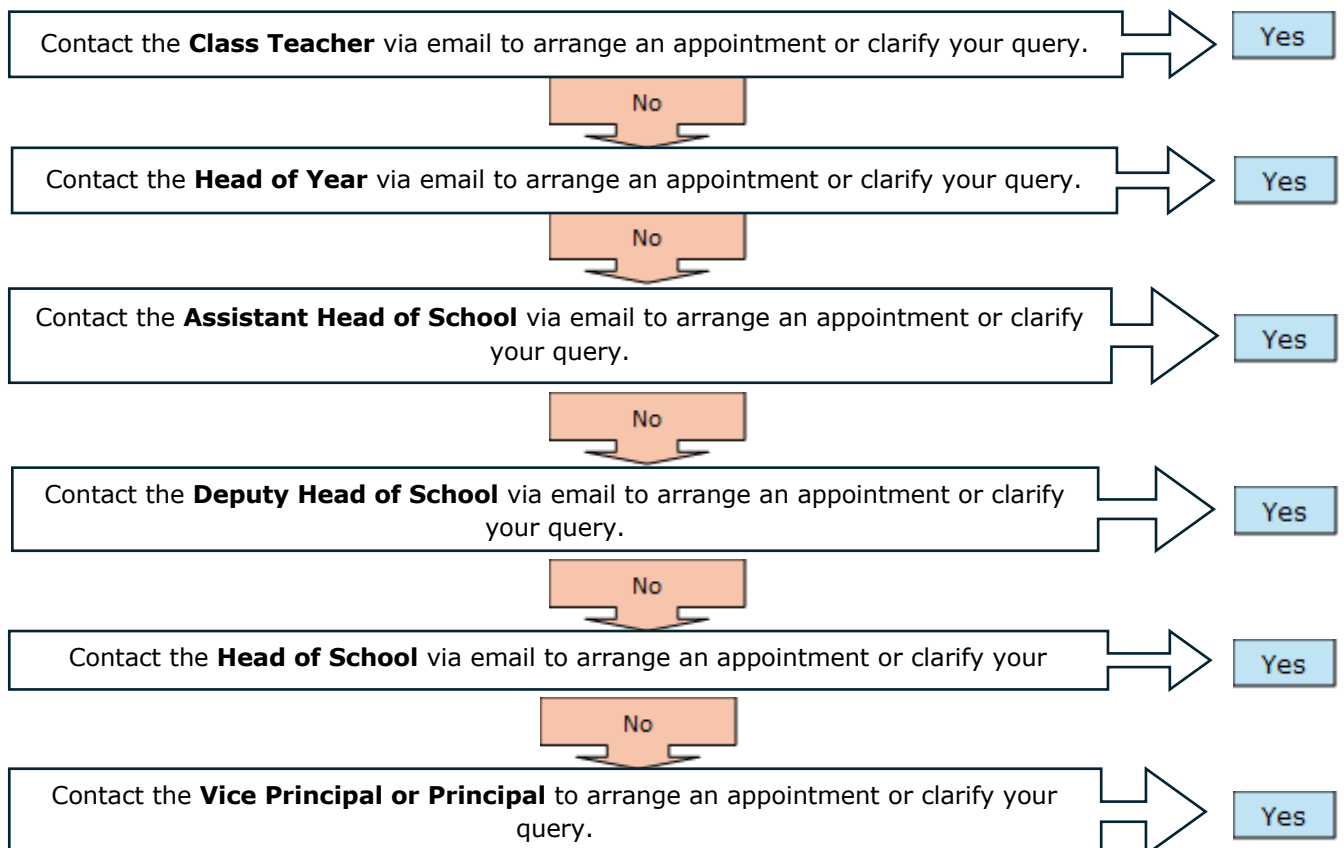
- Whole school newsletter is available on our Parent Portal and our website
- Social media: Facebook, Instagram
- School Website: <https://www.gemsfoundersschool-masdarcity.com>
- Weekly email from the class teacher/form tutor

17.2 Other Forms of Parent Engagement

- Meet the Teacher – At the start of the new year, to involve parents in the year's activities.
- Tuesday Drop-Ins allow parents to meet up with the teachers / form tutors every second Tuesday between 3:00-3:45 pm based on appointments scheduled with the teacher in advance.
- Termly Academic Review Days – which are used to provide parents with bespoke information regarding their child's progress and learning.
- Regular coffee mornings and parent webinars related to key topics, year groups or areas of interest in the community.
- Meet the Heads of school on Wednesdays to have an informal meeting to discuss school specific queries.

17.3 Student Learning Questions, Comments, Compliments or Queries

At GFA, we value your feedback and are always open to suggestions on how to improve our school. The following communication guide and contact details are to ensure that you speak to the right person if you have a question, comment or a compliment.



18. Uniform

18.1 Uniform Expectations

- Student lanyards must be always worn when in school.
- Full and correct school uniform must be worn, at school, when on school trips or attending extra-curricular after school activities.
- Full uniform must be worn to all parent teacher consultations and other formal school events.
- Shirts/blouses should be of an appropriate size. All students' shirts should always be tucked in at the waist.
- Leggings for girls are not allowed; however blue tights are part of the GFA school uniform.
- Only school sweaters are permitted. Students should not tie them around the waist or neck. If not being worn, sweaters should be kept neatly in their school bags.
- School uniform and personal items are the responsibility of the students and their families. Please ensure that all items of clothing and personal possessions are clearly labelled.
- **Please note that trolley bags are not allowed-** students should be using a small rucksack or the Founders school bag which can be purchased at the Threads store in Dalma mall.

18.2 Footwear

- **Black formal leather shoes only.** Trainers of any kind are not part of the school uniform and are not allowed to be worn in formal school uniform.
- Black school shoes should be polished regularly.
- Black shoes with white soles are not permitted.
- White trainers should be worn with the school PE uniform, only on the allocated PE day.

18.3 Jewellery

- Students may wear a watch.
- Girls may wear one small stud in each ear lobe, and these should be removed for PE. No other piercings are permitted.
- Jewellery items of religious significance may only be worn with prior approval by the school, following a formal written parent request.

18.4 Henna Tattoos

- These are only acceptable for religious/cultural occasions.

18.5 Hairstyles

- Girls – hair should be tied back fully off the face. The sensible use of hair accessories is acceptable to keep hair orderly and neat e.g. school coloured headband, hairband, clips, slides, elastic bands and scrunchies are permitted.
- No make-up or nail polish are allowed to be worn by any student.
- Boys - hair must be neat, short and tidy, and if your child has long hair long for religious and cultural reasons, their hair must be styled and tied back appropriately.
- No coloured gel, wax or mousse etc. are allowed to be used when styling hair and no exaggerated styles or cuts.
- All students' hair must be of a natural colour and must not be dyed. The hairstyle itself must be neat and modest. If the student's hairstyle contravenes any of the above requirements, the student will be requested to amend this with immediate effect.



19. Student Code of Conduct

19.1 Attitudes

The cornerstones of standards of students' behaviour are: Respect for oneself, respect for others, respect for the school and local community, respect for the environment and respect for the UAE.

GFA offers all their students a physically and emotionally safe environment in which they can achieve their full academic and personal potential.

For GFA to achieve this objective, the responsibilities of students and parents include:

- Abiding by the school's behaviour policy. This policy will cover the expected code of behaviour during school times, during extracurricular activities, on school buses, during school trips and students' participation in social-media forums.
- Ensuring the student understands the school's expectations and consequences that will arise due to a breach of the school's behaviour policy.

19.2 Roles and Responsibilities

The Leadership Responsibility:

The School Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring that a fair and effective Code of Conduct which includes ways of encouraging and affirming student efforts, rewards and consequences are implemented with the participation of all the stakeholders of the institution.

Staff Responsibility:

Staff will take every opportunity to raise students' awareness and understanding of the many issues related to wellbeing; behaviour, and discipline through the effective use of assemblies, class discussions, student leadership meetings, PSHE and Moral Education lessons. School staff will always consider themselves responsible for the behaviour of students within sight or sound of them and will respond promptly and firmly to any instances of unacceptable behaviour. All incidents will be recorded. Staff will follow consistently follow the school behaviour policy. Where there are any uncertainties, they will follow the advice of a Senior Member of staff.

Parental Responsibility:

Parents should provide a conducive home environment as it plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes that produce good behaviour in schools. It is therefore

important that parents should be aware of the aims, values, and the nature of the expected behaviour of the school. Parents must ensure that they are open to the efforts of communication from the school regarding their child/children and must support the school in all actions taken.

Student Responsibility:

Students must apply themselves to the learning and application of real-life enhancing skills such as self-control; conflict management; problem-solving; decision-making, and effective intra- /inter-personal communication. They must also learn to appreciate that unacceptable behaviour has its consequences. They must live out the school values in all areas of their lives and be true GFA Role Models.

19.3 A Positive Reward Scheme

There is a legitimate expectation that 'virtue is its own reward'. Adherence to the school's expectations should not be something for which students should expect to be constantly rewarded. Having said that, we all respond to praise and recognition, and it is important that achievement and good behaviour be rewarded, and staff will take every opportunity to praise students. Positive behaviour, effort and success will be actively acknowledged, celebrated, communicated and rewarded both in and out of the school through a variety of ways, from house points, verbal praise and Role Model of the week / term. recognition.

House points are awarded for expected behaviour but also for exceptional effort towards the GFA community.

Staff are encouraged to use them; house points are awarded for:

- Exceptional effort
- Excellent or improved behaviour
- Leading on sustainability
- Volunteering
- For outstanding individual pieces of work or contributions in class.
- The number of house points per student is recorded, and the students in the House with the greatest total at the end of the term/year will be rewarded.

19.4 Unacceptable behaviour - This is in line with the MOE and ADEK's regulations and procedures.

Given that students have a right to be in an orderly and safe learning environment, they are expected to behave, both inside and outside the school premises as well as on school buses. Behaviour is considered inappropriate if it is not in-keeping with the culture of the GFA Behaviour Policy and Home-School Agreement.

Unacceptable behaviour in such contexts includes some examples below:

- Shouting or disrupting the class
- Leaving the class without permission
- Showing disrespect for teachers and other students
- Linging, failure to do work to the best of one's ability
- Fighting
- Using inappropriate language
- Playing rough
- Throwing objects at others
- Bullying
- Indulging in acts of vandalism

19.5 Escalation Route

There is a clear referral route for staff if students do not respond to consequences. The referral route is:

- Class Teacher/Form Tutor
- Middle Leader
- Senior Leader
- Head of School
- Vice Principal / Principal

19.6 Mobile Phones

Mobile phones are not to be used by students on the school site or on school buses. If there is an emergency and the student needs to access a phone, they may ask their teacher who will then approve this and send the student to reception to make a call.



If students are seen using a mobile phone in school:

The phone is kept with the class teacher/subject teacher until the end of the school day. If repeated, parents will be contacted to collect the student's phone from the reception at the end of the school day.

We thank parents for having their own phone on silent when in the school.

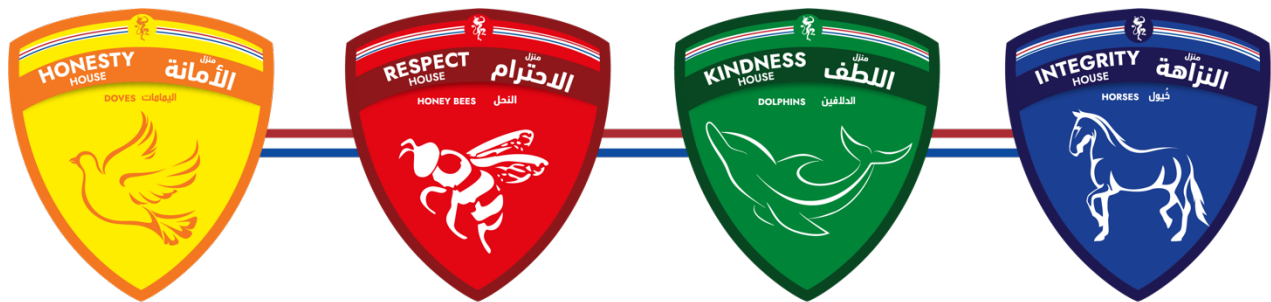
20. The School House / Values System

The School House System is a way for students and staff to develop teamwork, pride and community cohesion.

Throughout the year there are a wide variety of opportunities for students and staff to gain house points and compete in academic; community; sporting; cultural and fun activities as well as acknowledging the best house at key events, and at the end of the year's prize giving.

All students and staff are assigned to one of our four Houses when they join GFA. Siblings are always assigned to the same house. PE shirts are issued in students' House colours. Students need to wear their GEMS GFA House colour kits for PE and sports days. Once House teams have been allocated, students will stay in the same House for the duration of their time at GFA.

Our GFA school Houses are named according to our values-driven philosophy.



21. Food and Nutrition Guidelines

All students have set break times every day for eating and playing. All students are supervised at all times.

21.1 Food from home:

- If a student is bringing a packed lunch to school, we remind parents that:
 - It is essential that they provide them with nourishing, healthy food for their snack and their lunch (refer to the suggestions below).
 - They ensure any healthy drink brought into school is in an unbreakable container.
 - They ensure their child brings a water bottle to school every day.

21.2 Food Restrictions:

- Nuts (including peanut butter and nut-based muesli/snack bars) are not allowed in school, as we have a number of students with severe nut allergies.**
- As we are based in a Muslim country, we do not permit pork products in our school.

- We follow a healthy eating policy and consequently do not permit chocolate, sweets, chips/crisps, fast food (hamburgers, pizza, fried chicken), energy drinks (Powerade, Gatorade) or fizzy drinks (coke, Pepsi, Sprite, 7-Up et al.) in school.

21.3 School Canteen



Year 3-10 students will be able to buy a snack and or a lunch from the canteen as per the allocated timetable.

Slices is our school food provider. Slices' vision is to positively influence the eating habits of the next generation. Its mission is to educate the next generation on healthy eating by providing access to nutritious food from a young age and through a series of initiatives that enable them to look at food differently.

22. School Transport Services (STS)



**SCHOOL
TRANSPORT
SERVICES**

Bright Bus is our service provider for families requiring their child(ren) to be transported to and from school by bus.

A Customer Care Executive of Bright Bus is available at our school to support students and parents. While representatives at the central office are also available to support you. To find out more about the Bright Bus routes, costs, policies, safety procedures, etc. please visit their website at www.stss.ae or call 800STSS (8007877).

Important:

- GPS and Electronic Attendance System - all buses are installed with this system which monitors the movement of students every day when they board and depart from their bus.
- Video Surveillance System – all buses are fitted with purpose built, durable and tamper-proof Digital Video Recorders.
- Student ID card – it is mandatory for students to carry ID cards and get it scanned when boarding and disembarking from the buses. Students are not allowed to travel on the buses without their ID cards. This is to ensure the safety of the students.
- The wearing of seat belts is mandatory.
- Code of Conduct - students are expected to adhere to the School's Bus Behaviour Code of Conduct under all circumstances.

- To ensure the safety of students, parents /carers must show their parent ID when they collect their child at the pick-up point in the afternoon.

23. Health and Well-being

23.1 School Medical Team / Clinic



We have qualified school nurses on site who play an active part in the life of the school. All required medical records are to be submitted to the Medical Team. Parents will be informed if their child has visited the clinic and shall be called if you must collect your child from the clinic. If you are asked to pick up your child, it is because they are unwell and may be putting their own health or others at risk. We ask that a family

member is at the school within 30 minutes of a call being received from our Medical Team.

23.2 Medical Needs

It is the parents' responsibility to inform us of all medical needs. Please complete the Medical Information Form (mandatory) and return it to school at least one week before your child's first day. If any medical needs develop while your child a student at GFA, it is your responsibility to inform us immediately so that we can ensure that the appropriate provision and care is available.

23.3 Medicine

Should your child need to take some medicine during the school day, it should be handed to the school nurse first thing in the morning and collected from her at the end of the day. The nurse will administer the correct dosage at the appropriate time. The medicine should be in a plastic bag clearly labelled with your child's name and class.

23.4 Emergency Contact Details

Once your child has started at GFA, it is the parents' responsibility to provide us with all current direct and emergency contact details.

23.5 Counselling

A school-based service brings counselling to students in a place that is familiar and safe. Counselling is the opportunity to talk about things that are of concern to a young person, in confidence, with a qualified counsellor.

What is spoken about will depend on the individual, but common themes are stress, relationships, change and loss.

Counsellors are trained to listen without judging and to help students sort out their thoughts and feelings about whatever is concerning them.

Referrals can be made through your child's class teacher or a Senior Leader. Parents also have the option to communicate with the school counsellors to refer their child.

23.6 Toileting

All children are expected to be fully toilet trained and able to use the bathroom independently.

23.7 General Wellbeing Needs

Should your child have any personal needs that may have an impact on their wellbeing that our staff need to be mindful of such as: Family bereavement, parental separation etc., please contact your child's class teacher or appropriate member of the Senior Leadership team to keep us informed.

24. Birthdays

We make children feel special on their birthday through small classroom gestures such as a badge, song, or special seat. However, birthday parties during school hours can disrupt learning and be in conflict with our healthy eating ethos. If you would like to send in a small treat, please send individually wrapped cupcakes or treats. These will be sent home in at the end of the day.

25. Home School Agreement

At the start of each academic year, all parents and students are required to review and sign the Home-School Agreement. This agreement outlines the shared responsibilities and expectations of students, parents, and the school in creating a positive, respectful, and productive learning environment.

By signing the agreement, families acknowledge their commitment to supporting their child's education through regular attendance, positive behaviour, effective communication, and engagement with school life. The school, in turn, commits to providing a safe, inclusive, and high-quality learning environment where every child can grow, flourish, and achieve.

The [Home-School Agreement](#) forms an important part of our partnership and reflects our shared commitment to ensuring the best possible outcomes for every student.

26. School Policies

To support a smooth and informed school experience, our key policies are available on the school website and can be accessed at the following link:

[GFA School Policies](#)

We recommend all parents take a moment to review these documents, as they outline important information related to student life, expectations, and school procedures.

