



PYP HANDBOOK 2023-24

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION WELCOME TO GEMS WORLD ACADEMY

Dear Student & Parents,

It is a privilege to welcome you to GEMS World Academy for the 2023-24 academic year. The PYP Handbook is designed to provide you with all the information you may need to gain a solid understanding of the policies and procedures in place to best support your child's learning. A valuable source of information is our weekly newsletter, 'PYP News', which will keep you up to date on all current affairs, events, news and learning taking place within our Academy.

Our ethos is student-centred and personalised learning for every student, in a respectful environment so that all our students are safe, secure and successful.

We place a strong emphasis on our GENIUS values, aligning these with the IB Learner Profile:

- Grounded
- Entrepreneurial
- Nurturing
- Innovative
- Unique
- Sophisticated

If you have questions, my hope is that you find the answer in this handbook. If not, please reach out to our Divisional Secretaries, Receptionists, myself, or any member of the Senior Leadership Team. We are all here to help and support you and your family in any way we can.

I hope that you find GWA the warm, welcoming and inclusive community that I have experienced in my six years here.

I look forward to providing leadership and coordination of our Primary Years Programme, fostering relationships and having a wonderful year ahead. I am here to work with, and support the whole school community *to ensure that our learners are courageous, safe, secure and successful in all their endeavours.*

Kind regards



Angela Roberts
PYP Coordinator

ABOUT GEMS WORLD ACADEMY

Since it was opened in 2008, the Academy has established itself as an International Academy for young world citizens, an Academy where our students benefit from an education that reaches beyond any single national curriculum.

With approximately 2,000 students representing over 100 nationalities, our multicultural community allows us to develop an understanding of what makes people different, whilst celebrating our similarities within an increasingly connected world.

Our Primary School is proudly attended by over 944 students. Student's Primary journey can begin at GWA in the Early Childhood Department which begins in Nursery and concludes in KG2. Students in Pre-K - Grade 5 take part in learning through inquiry in our PYP IB programme. GWA had a graduating class of 77 in the 2022-2023 school year, with all students either receiving IB courses certificates, their IB Diploma or GWA High School Diploma. Alongside these qualifications, students at GWA also graduate with a CIS and NEASC accredited High School Diploma. All programmes on offer have their merits, and the best of these programmes is the one which best matches students' individual approaches to learning and what they individually want to get from their next two years of study.

GWA was judged Very Good by KHDA in 2022-2023, and received an IB average Diploma point score of 34, in addition to a 100% pass rate. Additionally 98% of students attended their number 1 or 2 choice university.

At GWA, we believe that the IB programmes offer students *"the knowledge, skills and character necessary to take action and create a better, more peaceful world"*. To fuel our mission, we strive to ensure every student leaves us as a well-rounded young person with exceptional results.

The IB Learner Profile

The IB Learner Profile comprises ten attributes and responsibilities which go beyond academic success, and help students to meet the aims of the IB programme, which are to develop internationally minded people with a shared commitment to building a better, more peaceful, world.

All GWA students are expected to endeavour to follow the IB Learner Profile. In doing so, you learn to respect yourselves, others, and the world around you.

The profile aims to develop learners who are:

- Inquirers
- Knowledgeable
- Thinkers
- Communicators
- Principled



- Open-minded
- Caring
- Risk-takers
- Balanced
- Reflective

Approaches to Learning

Approaches To Learning (ATL) are deliberate skills and strategies, which are embedded into your lessons to help you learn. They are:

1. Thinking skills
2. Communication skills
3. Social skills
4. Self-management skills
5. Research skills

We want you to be mindful of these skills, and actively try to improve them through the various learning opportunities you are given.

Global Citizenship

Making an active contribution to your local and global community

- We respect and celebrate our diversity and recognise that there are many things that unite us all
- We make a difference in our local communities so that we can build a sustainable planet to share
- We build bridges of knowledge, push boundaries and unite young people
- We aim to produce not just great students, but great people who always act with honesty, confidence and integrity

Our Learning Environment

Learning environments are places in which the pursuit of understanding and the construction of meaning are balanced with the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Our classrooms are lively, safe and characterised by purposeful inquiry. Students are empowered to do their best and are supported by the teaching staff and each other to help achieve this.

We encourage the development of international-mindedness by teachers and students showing respect, tolerance and empathy towards others of different gender, nationality, and levels of academic, linguistic and intellectual development. We model being lifelong learners and support students as contributing thinkers with developing ideas of the world.

The IB Learner Profile is evident in every classroom and guides us in our daily practice to celebrate individual and collaborative achievements, ongoing learning, and thinking in progress. The IB Learner Profile Traits are celebrated each week across the Academy.

Campus Security and ID Badges

GWA guidelines for safety and security are detailed in security documents and procedures that are used by all Academy staff to ensure uniform, orderly and timely responses to emergencies. Our staff and students are taught emergency procedures for building evacuation, and relocation to a safer area of the Academy campus. Drills are practised so students know the appropriate responses in emergency scenarios such as a fire at the Academy.

It is necessary for all parents and visitors to wear Academy ID badges indicating that they have registered with Academy security. All faculty and support staff are required to wear their named photo ID badges at all times whilst on campus, identifying them as authorised Academy personnel. Students in Pre-K - Grade 4 are encouraged to secure their Academy student ID badge to their bag, while students in Grade 5 should wear their lanyard when entering and exiting the building. This student ID is used for the STS bus and can also be loaded with money to use in the cafeteria. While on Academy property, we encourage all parents to report any suspicious behaviour or suspicious items to security at any of the gates or doors. Visitors will have lanyards designating their status by colour. Lost or stolen cards must be reported immediately.

Any visitors must check in with the front Welcome Desk.

Driver & Nanny School ID Cards are a MUST

If your driver or nanny drops off or picks up your child/children from the Academy, they must have their own Academy ID card. Please submit a [Driver/Nanny ID Form](#) and submit it to the Primary Office.

You must fill in the form, sign it and attach a copy of:

1. A copy of your driver's/nanny's passport
2. A copy of your driver's/nanny's UAE residents visa
3. A copy of your driver's/nanny's Emirates ID Card

All documents need to be submitted to the Operations Office, and an Academy ID card will be prepared for them. Failing to get the Academy ID card could mean the Security/Primary Office refusing to release the student.



SECTION TWO: CURRICULUM

THE IB PRIMARY YEARS PROGRAMME (IBPYP)

The Primary Years Programme is the first of four IB programmes of education. It provides schools with a curriculum framework of essential elements — the knowledge, concepts, skills, learning dispositions, and action that young students need to equip them for successful lives, both now and in the future. At GEMS World Academy, we have used these five elements to construct a curriculum that is engaging, relevant, challenging and significant for learners in the 3 –12 age range.

Dispositions are a set of attributes for the Learner Profile to nurture active, compassionate and lifelong learners. The Learner Profile attributes are; Inquirers, Knowledgeable, Thinkers, Communicators, Principled, Open-minded, Caring, Risk-Takers, Balanced and Reflective.

Concepts are the powerful ideas that have relevance within the individual subject areas. These overarching ideas transcend individual subjects and link the programme, enabling students to explore and re-explore them to gain an in-depth, coherent understanding.

Skills are taught, as we know that in order to be lifelong learners, we must equip students with the necessary skills for learning. The skills emphasised within the programme include; thinking skills, social skills, communication skills, self-management skills and research skills.

Knowledge is the significant and relevant content that we believe students should explore and know. This element has six discrete subject areas including; Mathematics, Language (English & Arabic), Social Studies, Science, PSPE (Personal, Social and Physical Education) and the Arts. Each of these subject areas then further outlines the overall expectations at each age range. These six subjects are then encompassed by six ‘trans-disciplinary themes’ that are considered essential to international education. These themes are covered each year, in every grade level (with the exception of Nursery to KG2 where they can elect to cover four per year and 5 per year in KG2) through integrated units of inquiry. These include; *Who We Are*, *How We Express Ourselves*, *Where We Are in Place and Time*, *How the World Works*, *How We Organise Ourselves* and *Sharing the Planet*.

Action is the final essential element, and it is the demonstration of deeper learning through responsible behaviour. Action is how students show that they have combined the other four essential elements together in their own lives, and completed something with the skills, knowledge, concepts and attitudes they have learned.

The PYP aims to develop students’ academic, social and emotional wellbeing, focusing on international-mindedness and strong personal values. It nurtures independent learning skills, encouraging every student to take responsibility for their learning.

The PYP is committed to structured, purposeful inquiry that engages students actively in their own learning. The programme supports students' efforts to construct meaning from the world around them by; drawing on their prior knowledge, providing provocation through new experiences, and providing opportunities for reflection and consolidation. This approach respects students' developing ideas about how the world works. It encourages them to question, consider, and refine their understanding of the social and natural world while developing the attributes of the Learner Profile.

In our Early Childhood Department (Pre-K – KG2), the PYP essential elements are taught through a play-based approach to learning which uses the environment as a third teacher. Teachers support learning by planning uninterrupted time for play, building strong relationships with students and their families, creating responsive, stimulating indoor and outdoor learning spaces, and offering opportunities for symbolic exploration and expression. Language and Mathematics teaching follow students' learning pathways that are connected to personal interests and larger concepts. Through play, as the primary driver for inquiry, children develop cognitively, socially, emotionally and physically.

In Grades 1-5, students are also challenged at their own pace through small-group learning. Our classrooms use tables to organise students flexibly throughout the day according to ability, interest or prior knowledge around a subject or skill. You will not see desks in rows, as we encourage our students to interact, discuss and work together, to not only develop their foundational skills, but to pursue their own lines of inquiry as well.

The PYP curriculum framework emphasises the central principle of 'Agency' that is found throughout the three pillars of the curriculum: the learner, learning and teaching and the learning community. Everyone connected to the school community (including students, parents and teachers) has voice, choice and ownership to impact learning and teaching. These elements complement and reinforce each other to form a coherent whole.



SECTION THREE: STUDYING AT GWA

Our Expectations: We expect only the highest standards of behaviour from our GEMS World Academy students. This involves adhering to the GWA GENIUS Values and GEMS Jewels of Kindness, and the IB Learner Profile at all times.

BEHAVIOUR AND CONSEQUENCES

Please refer to the [Home School Agreement](#)

At GEMS World Academy (GWA) we aim to create a caring, safe and nurturing environment that promotes mutual respect and trust which supports 100% disruption free learning. We believe that the responsibility for establishing a positive academic and social climate that guides our students to become more self-disciplined and responsible, is shared by the students, staff and parents. Students

learn best in an ordered environment that promotes courtesy, cooperation and consideration to all. This is achieved when expectations of learning and behaviour are high, and if they are not adhered to, consequences are made explicit and applied consistently redirecting any poor behaviours. At GWA, we expect every student to be fully prepared for the opportunities and demands of the adult world. During each academic year we place a strong emphasis on our mission, “Education for a Better World” and our (GENIUS) values of: Grounded, Entrepreneurial, Nurturing, Innovative, Unique, and Sophisticated.

GWA’s Behaviour Policy which can be found on the GWA website addresses the forms of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and outlines the ways we address them, whilst promoting habits of self-discipline, kindness, pre-emption, consequences and support. GWA has the statutory power to discipline unacceptable behaviour outside of the premises or normal hours such as any during Academy related activities, travelling to or from GWA, wearing the Academy uniform, or being identifiable as a student of GWA.

Each academic year our PYP students, teachers and parents/carers collaboratively sign a [PYP Student Contract](#) which enables a joint commitment to the Academy’s expectations. This will need to be returned to the Form Tutor at the end of Week 3 of the Academic Year.

Any behaviour incidents will be dealt with according to the Behaviour Policy which can be found on the GWA website.

ANTI-BULLYING

At GWA we aim to create a caring, safe and nurturing environment that promotes mutual respect and trust. We recognise that all forms of bullying, especially if left unaddressed can have a devastating effect on individuals, can create barriers to learning, and have serious consequences for mental wellbeing. By effectively preventing and tackling bullying we can help to create a safe and disciplined environment where students are able to learn and fulfil their true potential.

This policy applies to all forms of bullying and outlines the ways we will aim to keep the students at GWA safe, secure and successful. This is done by:

- Identifying all signs of bullying and taking pre-emptive, prompt and appropriate action to stop it;
- Implementing clear and robust systems for responding to any incidents of bullying;
- Developing confidence in students to stand up against bullying and to report any incidents.

Any bullying incidents will be dealt with according to the Anti-Bullying Policy which can be found on the GWA website.

E-SAFETY

At GWA we aim to create an environment where students, staff, parents and the wider community work together to ensure the responsible, safe and positive use of the internet and digital technologies.

The online world provides us with many opportunities, however it can also present many risks. We all have a duty of care to ensure that students are protected from any online potential harm. It is important that students are able to use the internet for education and personal development under the GWA safeguards so ensuring the safe, legal and responsible use which then helps to develop attributes of competent digital citizens.

The policy applies to all digital resources and devices that are owned by the Academy or the student, and outlines the ways we will aim to keep the students at GWA safe. This is done by:

- Supporting and encouraging students to use digital technologies in a safe and respectful manner;
- Supporting and guiding parents/caregivers in helping to keep their children safe online;
- Implementing clear and robust systems for responding to any online incidents or inappropriate behaviour;
- Ensuring the personal information of students and adults are secure with appropriate use of usernames, logins, email accounts and passwords;
- Ensuring that images of students are used only with written consent.

BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE (BYOD)

The BYOD initiative is implemented from Grade 2 to Grade 12. Students in Grades 2 - 5 are required to bring an iPad (with a recommended keyboard), and Grade 6 - 12 students are required to bring a MacBook. The difference in device is specifically tailored to the developmental needs of the age of students and how it will be used as a tool to support the learning. The care, maintenance and protection of devices are the responsibility of the student. The school will take no responsibility for any loss, damage or theft to devices. Students and parents are required to sign and return a user agreement before a device can be used.

GWA has set clear expectations and responsibilities for all users and all information can be found in the E-Safety Policy.

Mobile Phones

Primary students are not permitted to use their mobile phones anywhere in the Academy building. If they are seen or heard they will be confiscated. Staff are not permitted to use their personal phones to contact students or families. The Academy does not accept any liability for loss, damage or theft of mobile phones if they are brought to the Academy by students. If, for any reason, communication is needed between student and parents, the Academy phone can be used or a message conveyed through the school secretary (pypsecretary_gwa@gemsedu.com).

Headphones/AirPods

AirPods are strictly prohibited by all Primary students on Academy premises. Corded headphones are to be used only during lesson time for educational purposes with the explicit permission of the teacher. Misconduct will result in confiscation of these objects and a behaviour sanction.

Cyber Safety

Students, parents/caregivers and staff must familiarise themselves with the key aspects of Cyber Safety and ensure they are always conducting themselves appropriately online and keeping themselves as safe and secure as possible.

Cyberbullying

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others. Cyberbullying refers to bullying by electronic media and includes sending, posting or sharing negative, hurtful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. E-safety and Cyberbullying is accessed as part of the pastoral care system for students through Form Time, assemblies, guest speakers and tutorial opportunities. Digital Citizenship is formally taught through the Form Time curriculum in every grade level and in other subjects where relevant. Students will be held accountable for cyberbullying and any other interactions that negatively impact the learning environment with behaviour sanctions being applied where appropriate. These are outlined in [GWA Behaviour Policy](#).

Any online bullying incidents will be dealt with according to the [E-Safety Policy](#) and Anti-Bullying Policy which can be found on the GWA website.

THE SCHOOL DAY

Monday to Thursday

Lesson 1	08:00 - 08:50
Lesson 2	08:50 - 09:40
Recess/Snack	09:40 - 10:20
Lesson 3	10:20 - 11:10
Lesson 4	11:10 - 12:00
Recess/Lunch	12:00 - 12:45
Lesson 5	12:45 - 13:35
Lesson 6	13:35 - 14:25
Lesson 7	14:25 - 15:15
Enrichment Opportunities	15:20 - 16:20

Friday

Lesson 1	08:00 - 08:50
Lesson 2	08:50 - 09:40
Recess/Snack	09:40 - 10:20
Lesson 3	10:20 - 11:10
Lesson 4	11:10 - 12:00

Students can purchase snacks and lunch from the Academy cafeteria, or students may bring in packed food. Food should be eaten in classrooms (Pre-K - Grade 1), and the Academy Cafeteria (Grades 2-5) only.

Enrichment Opportunities generally commence at 15:20 with most ending by 16:20. Some special events, organisations and clubs or sports teams may extend for longer. Parents will be notified of these extensions ahead of time. While many Enrichment Opportunities or Academy teams are free, to increase the number of Enrichment Opportunities offerings to our community, GWA uses outside vendors to provide additional activities for a fee.

Morning Arrival:

Monday - Friday, students must not arrive at school before 07:45 as there is no guaranteed supervision before this time. GWA Staff are on duty for morning arrival from 07:45 - 08:00 in designated areas. The doors are opened to enter the hallways at 07:45 for classes to start at 08:00. Prior to that time, students are to wait with an adult in designated areas before going to the classrooms. Students arriving by bus in Early Childhood are taken directly to their classrooms, while bus students in Grades 1-5 are dropped off in designated, supervised areas. Students should be in class and seated by 08:00 each morning (see note on punctuality below).

Afternoon Dismissal:

From Monday to Thursday, Pre-K to Grade 5 dismissal is at 15:15. Pre-K and KG1 have an optional pick-up at 13:30 at the end of their academic programme with an optional non-core curriculum/Enrichment end time of 15:15. All students must be promptly picked up from their designated areas, or will be brought by GWA Staff to their assigned bus or pick-up area. Primary students who are not picked up will be brought to the Primary School Office until parents or guardians arrive. Students in Grades 4 and 5 may be dismissed on their own after the introduction of a signed waiver (which will happen shortly after the academic year starts).

It is an expectation that all students leave the Academy site by 15:30, unless they are involved with an Enrichment Opportunity, or in a supervised academic activity. Direct parent supervision is required outside organised Academy events. On Fridays, students will be dismissed at 12:00 and must have been picked up by 12:15.

Please send a note prior to the start of the Academy day to the classroom/Form Tutor if your child is going home in a different way from their normal routine. Any student involved in an Enrichment Opportunity must be met promptly at the completion of the activity at 16:20. Parents will be contacted if late pick-up from the Academy becomes habitual, as this is unfair to both the child and the staff. Students who are not registered with STS to travel on the bus are not allowed to use the bus.

Leaving Campus:

Students are to remain on campus at all times during the Academy day. If students must leave the campus for health reasons, the Academy medical clinic will call the parents. Students can never excuse themselves from the Academy campus. If a parent wishes to take their child out of the Academy before the regular dismissal time, the parent must notify the appropriate Division Level Office (pypsecretary_gwa@gemsedu.com), copying the student's form tutor. The student may be picked up from the Reception, or the Health Office at the designated time. Parents are asked not to go directly to the classroom during instructional time to get a student, but instead are to wait in the Reception while a member of staff collects the student and brings them to the parent. When leaving the campus with their child(ren), parents must obtain a gate pass to present to the security gate.

Early Childhood spaces:

Although they are inviting spaces, the Early Childhood areas are not to be used outside of classroom hours as these are organised learning spaces. Inappropriate supervision or misuse of the playground outside of regular school hours will result in removal of after Academy playground and field privileges. The Early Years Courtyard will be closed to parents and children at 15:30 each afternoon, and 12:30 on Fridays.

Early Childhood Dismissal (Pre-K - KG1):

Parents wishing to pick up their children at 13:30 should inform the Form Tutors during the beginning of the academic year so they can prepare students for a 13:30 dismissal. This allows us to meet the needs of individual children who have not yet developed the stamina for a full day, and to respect family values who wish for their child to join for part of a full school day.

Friday No Internal Enrichment Activities:

Due to the working week for schools in the UAE, and the accompanying early finish on Fridays, there will be no GWA-provided Enrichment Opportunities after 12:00 on campus. ESM will still run a number of private sports classes after 12:00 on Fridays for those families who have signed their children up in advance.

Punctuality:

Students are expected to be in class on time for lessons to begin at 08:00. Punctuality shows respect for others, classmates and teachers. Tardiness affects not only the student who is late, but disrupts the entire group. Parents are requested to emphasise the importance of being on time with their child. Students G1-5 will be issued with a late slip if they arrive after 08:05. Repeated lateness can result in

detention or loss of free time at school as a consequence. All late arrivals will be recorded and displayed on termly report cards.

National Anthem:

The UAE National Anthem is played at 08:00 each morning. We expect the GWA community to be respectful during this time, whether in classrooms, hallways or open areas. When the anthem plays, please stand silently with hands by your sides until the anthem has finished playing.

ATTENDANCE

Absences:

Students are expected to be present regularly throughout the year to fully participate in the academic programme. Extended holidays and vacations interrupt and impact the students' educational progress and routine. If your child is absent due to sickness or any other reason, please phone the Divisional Office to report their absence.

UNSATISFACTORY	ACCEPTABLE	GOOD	OUTSTANDING
Less than 92%	92 – 95 %	96 – 97%	98 -100%
14 days or more absent	9 – 14 days absent	5 – 8 days absent	4 days or less absent

Planned Absences Other Than School Holidays:

It is the Academy's philosophy that attendance at school is of primary importance. However, there are times when an absence is unavoidable. In such cases, the parent is to complete a Student Absence Request Form from the Primary School Office and have this signed by the teacher. Once this has been passed to the Primary School Office by the teacher, the parent will receive an email confirmation from the office that they are aware of the planned absence. Assignments and examinations may not always be available in advance and may have to be completed upon the student's return. Students are responsible for missed class work assigned when out of the Academy for non-holiday reasons. If a student misses more than 10 days in a term or 20 days in a year, the Academy reserves the right to retain a student if the absences have affected his/her progress.

- Email your teacher informing them of your request. They will email you the Student Absence Request Form.
- Fill in, sign, and send the form back to your teacher.
- Your child will be marked as "Time Away From School" for the duration, not marked as absent. You can also come to the office and complete the form.

Illness:

When a student is ill please email the teacher/ Primary School Office the evening before/the morning of school, call the Primary School Office at 04 373 6326, or email pypsecretary_gwa@gemsedu.com. If the days exceed two days then a doctor's report must be handed into the Primary School Office when the student returns to the Academy.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

GWA is committed to internationalism and differentiated instruction within the parameters of the programme which helps us to meet the individual needs of each student. In order to inspire excellence in academics for all students, we provide an English as an Additional Language (EAL) programme that uses a combination of pull-out, and in-class support for students who are not yet fluent in speaking, reading or writing English at the appropriate level. EAL is compulsory upon conditional admission for students that do not demonstrate language proficiency, as English is the language of instruction at GWA. EAL support is offered from KG2 to Grade 5.

Special Education Needs (SEND)

Students with learning support needs at GWA are able to function in the regular classroom with support and accommodations. An alternative curriculum may be designed for a student with severe to profound learning needs, or if they are unable to meet the curriculum requirements of their grade level. Some students may need high individualised support with additional assistance of an LSA (additional cost if required).

More information may be requested from the EAL and SEND Departments and/or Academy Administration in order to determine the best assistance for student learners.

Guidance and Counselling Services

Counselling at GWA is designed to offer services that promote the personal, social, emotional and educational development of students. The Counsellors work closely with students, parents, administration and teachers to create a successful school experience for all GWA students. Counselling and guidance is often preventative in that it addresses the developmental needs of students before problems arise by connecting to the curriculum. When students experience periods of difficulty or on-going behavioural support is required, Counsellors provide support by assessing student needs, recognising their abilities, and forming strategies to help them achieve their potential.

PRIMARY SCHOOL DIVISION OVERVIEW AND ORGANISATION

As guided by the PYP Standards and Practices, the Primary School at GWA will:

- Establish a firm foundation in the core subjects of; Language A (English), Maths, Social Studies and Science (through learning experiences, stand-alone lessons and integration within the Units of Inquiry);
- Enable students to promote their own International Mindedness through the Learner Profile and the opportunity to take action;
- Respond to the individual intellectual, physical, emotional and social needs of students;

- For PreK - Grade 5, enrich the curriculum through specialist classes that connect to the Units of Inquiry including; Arabic, Expressive Arts (visual and performance), Library, Personal, Social and Physical Education, Language Acquisition and Islamic Education for Muslim students.

The Primary School schedule allows students to experience a curriculum that combines core subjects with single subject classes in a transdisciplinary approach, a hallmark of the PYP curriculum. Arrangements are made to help balance single subject classes to maintain core-learning time, while giving students enrichment.

PYP Assemblies are hosted in the Auditorium on Fridays with dates and times posted on the iSams Academy calendar. These Academy gatherings allow us to celebrate the International Baccalaureate and GEMS Core Values, promote Academy spirit, and celebrate the academic accomplishments of our students. Our students also develop confidence and stage presence in addition to learning acceptable audience skills. Parents are always encouraged to attend assemblies and participate where possible.

Each week, Parent Coffee Mornings offer opportunities to departments/divisions and special guest experts to provide information sessions or workshops on a wide range of topics connected to the Academy and student learning. Information is shared through Newsletter, Email or our Social Media channels.

REPORTING AND ASSESSMENT

Student Reports:

Assessment in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) provides students, parents and teachers with information on student performance in a variety of subject areas, and in their development of knowledge, skills, concepts and attitudes. In a developmental programme such as ours, teachers use a wide variety of assessment tools and observations to document where a child is in relation to the expectations for their age at a certain time of year. Going beyond just paper and pencil tests, assessment at GWA includes a wide variety of options for students to demonstrate their learning. Teaching staff rely on activities, group and individual work, observations, performances, and projects to help create a holistic picture of your child's learning.

Attainment:

The Primary Years Programme (PYP) reports have been designed to communicate your child's progress in each subject on every termly report throughout the academic year. Teachers make professional evaluations regarding students' achievement against the knowledge, skills and levels of the IB curriculum. The evaluations are made using the following categories;

Grade	Characteristic
Exceeding (EE)	The student is consistently demonstrating knowledge, skills, and conceptual understanding which is significantly above grade level expectations .
Applying (AP)	The student is demonstrating knowledge, skills, and conceptual understanding which are above grade level expectations .
Meeting (ME)	The student is demonstrating knowledge, skills, and conceptual understanding which are in line with grade level expectations .
Approaching (AE)	The student is demonstrating knowledge, skills, and conceptual understanding which are approaching but not yet consistently meeting grade level expectations .
Beginning (BE)	The student is in the early emergent stage of knowledge and skill development and has not yet demonstrated grade-level achievement .

Progress:

In addition to reporting on student achievement in each subject, a student's progress is also reported on using the following categories;

Grade	Characteristic
Exceeding (EE)	The student is making better than expected progress relative to his/her starting point.
Meeting (ME)	The student is making progress in line with expectations and relative to his/her starting point.
Approaching (AE)	The student is not yet making expected progress relative to his/her starting point.

Attitude for Learning

Attitude to Learning grades provide information on a student's attitude and engagement in the learning process within the context of each of their subjects. Teachers will evaluate students' characteristics for learning using the following descriptors and the IB learner profile.

Grade	Characteristic
Exceeding (EE)	A student who always; Seeks Challenges. Takes responsibility for their learning. Is collaborative. Is engaged. Is an active participant. Embodies the core values. Is a reflective learner. Is punctual and well equipped for learning.
Meeting (ME)	A student who mostly; Seeks Challenges. Takes responsibility for their learning. Is collaborative. Is engaged. Is an active participant. Embodies the core values. Is a reflective learner. Is punctual and well equipped for learning.
Approaching (AE)	A student who sometimes; Seeks Challenges. Takes responsibility for their learning. Is collaborative. Is engaged. Is an active participant. Embodies the core values. Is a reflective learner. Is punctual and well equipped for learning.

External Norm-Referenced Testing:

In keeping with our mission to inspire academic excellence in all students, and in keeping with all UAE mandates, GWA collects data through externally administered assessments (GL, CAT4) every year to determine how the Academy's programme is performing in relation to other similar Academies.

Parent-Teacher and Student-Led Conferences:

Two types of conferences are held throughout the academic year.

Parent-teacher Conferences are held to discuss students' progress, Reports, celebrating successes and identifying learning goals.

Student-led Conferences are a time for students to show parents their year-long learning, and how they use their knowledge and skills from different subject areas. This is an important event during the year, allowing students the opportunity to reflect on their goals, learning journey and share what they have accomplished.

Additional conferences can be scheduled throughout the academic year by request of either the teacher or the parents. Parents should seek out teacher feedback if they would like any additional information on their child's progress and learning.

Promotion/Retention:

Students that successfully complete the objectives and student outcomes expected for a grade level are promoted to the next grade at the end of the year. Students that may need additional time to develop the skills needed for their grade level will have their individual needs discussed with parents to determine the most appropriate course to support them. Discussions will be held with the parents and

the Form Tutor as soon as concerns about a student's success become apparent. The Principal will also be involved in a decision where learning difficulties are indicated.

Non-Continuance:

In some cases, students failing to meet the academic and/or behavioural parameters and expectations of GWA can be denied continuance during the academic year as deemed appropriate by the Principal in consultation with the CEO/Principal. A student failing to meet programme requirements will be placed on academic (or behavioural) probation. This is not the preferred course of action by the Academy and would only be considered under extremely rare situations.

SECTION FOUR: PRIMARY SCHOOL UNIFORM

Academy Uniform Regulations and Requirements:

It is GWA policy that all students wear Academy uniform when attending the Academy, representing GWA, or when participating in an Academy-organised event outside normal Academy hours. GWA policy on Academy uniform is based on the notion that Academy uniform promotes a sense of pride and professionalism across our Academy community. We expect that all students must have consistent uniforms, and these must be worn from the first day of school. Other clothing and outerwear may be worn to and from the Academy but must be removed and stored in the locker/cubby upon arrival. The PE uniform in Pre-K to Grade 5 may be worn all day on PE and Swimming days. Please ensure that all GWA clothing is clearly labelled with the student name.

Please ensure that all students maintain possession of their lanyard. Pre-K - Grade 4 must wear them on their bag, whilst Grade 5 must wear them around their neck in preparation for Secondary School. Lanyards are a safeguarding issue that allows us to be confident that all students belong to GWA.

Please become familiar with the Uniform Policy which can be found on the GWA website.

SECTION FIVE: HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTION

Home Learning Guidelines:

Through professional discussions with educators, parents and students; as well as an inquiry into homework in primary schools, we have found that:

- Consistent reading for pleasure is directly linked to higher test scores
- Children who read for pleasure are likely to perform better in school than their peers
- There is no positive correlation between homework and achievement for students before middle school

Each grade level team, in conjunction with the leadership team, has collaboratively developed a set of essential agreements for how homework will look across the grade level. The common threads among all grade-level agreements are that:

- Home Learning will always emphasise the importance of reading daily
- Home Learning should not be completed at the expense of students leading a healthy, balanced life – which should include relaxation, exercise, time with family, and play
- Additional home learning should involve an element of student choice to allow children and their families to manage their at-home time effectively

GWA values open communication. Clear and reasonable expectations will be given to students and parents on Back to School Night.

Suggested Grade Level Time Allotment for Home Learning:

PK/KG1		Reading with your child in all languages *See At A Glance Document for current Unit of Inquiry with home learning ideas and activities.
KG2		Reading with your child in all languages, learning extensions on occasion. *See At A Glance Document for current Unit of Inquiry with home learning ideas and activities.
1	Up to 20 minutes – 3 days per week	Reading from levelled books (3-5 go home each week then exchanged the following week), 5 words a week to practise (based on Phonics in the beginning of year, then HF words), Optional IXL and Accelerated Reader learning. Maths: combination of written tasks, IXL.com, TTRockstars, Numbots. *See At A Glance Document for current Unit of Inquiry with home learning ideas and activities. *Possible 10 additional minutes for Arabic/Islamic homework.
2	Up to 20 minutes – 4 days per week	Reading from levelled books (3-5 go home each week then exchanged the following week), 5 words a week to practise (based on Phonics in the beginning of year, then HF words), IXL and Accelerated Reader learning. Maths: combination of written tasks, IXL.com, TTRockstars, Numbots. *See At A Glance Document for current Unit of Inquiry with home learning ideas and activities *Possible 10 additional minutes for Arabic/Islamic homework
3	Up to 30 minutes – 4	*20 minutes of daily reading Maths: combination of written tasks, IXL.com, TTRockstars.

	days per week	<p>*Parents can choose to be flexible and work on a different subject each day. Balance of time between each task/subject: Maths, spelling, writing. Breakdown depends on what is taking place at that time (subjects can be removed for a week if a project is due).</p> <p>*See At A Glance Document for current Unit of Inquiry with home learning ideas and activities</p> <p>*Possible 15 additional minutes for Arabic/Islamic homework</p>
4	Up to 40 minutes – 4 days per week	<p>*20-30 minutes of daily reading and this might be Accelerated Reader, library books, free choice books.</p> <p>Maths: combination of written tasks, IXL.com, UoI integrated tasks.</p> <p>Language: grammar, writing, spelling</p> <p>*Parents can choose to be flexible and work on a different subject each day. Balance of time between each task/subject: maths, spelling, writing. Breakdown depends on what is taking place at that time (subjects can be removed for a week if a project is due).</p> <p>*See At A Glance Document for current Unit of Inquiry with home learning ideas and activities</p> <p>*Possible 15 additional minutes for Arabic/Islamic homework</p>
5	Up to 60 minutes – 4 days per week	<p>*20-30 minutes of daily reading and this might be Accelerated Reader, library books, free choice books. Reading theory can also be used, or book reading with reading logs available.</p> <p>*15-20 minutes per day of maths, linked to class work. May be electronic or worksheets.</p> <p>*See At A Glance Document for current Unit of Inquiry with home learning ideas and activities</p> <p>*iTime and PYPX projects may, at times, constitute a larger portion of home learning</p> <p>*Possible 20 additional minutes for Arabic/Islamic homework</p>

Transportation Services and Bus Behaviour Rules:

Bus transportation to and from GWA is available through a vendor. Parents are in no way restricted to the use of the service, and are welcome to investigate alternative bus transportation services should they desire at their own expense and risk. Registration and payment for STS Bus Services is available in the Academy Business Administration Office (STS Office). Payment in advance is required before bus services are provided by STS. Visit <http://www.stss.ae> for more information. Only registered students can use STS transport. For our youngest students in EC, car seats can be requested for your child should you think of it as appropriate but this request needs to come to STS a week before travel.

Private vehicle drivers (and parents) must adhere to Academy driving and parking requirements, and will be reported to authorities if in violation of safe driving practices. Please drive carefully and slowly on campus at all times. Everyone is expected to follow the direction of our Security Guards.

STUDENTS MUST:

- Be ready and on time for departure and pick-up
- Scan their ID card while boarding and leaving the bus
- Remain seated on designated seats, and wear seatbelts throughout the bus ride
- Sit facing forward at all times
- Only travel on their designated bus
- Keep aisles and walkways clear at all times
- Make sure the road is safe before crossing the street
- Avoid danger zone areas which surround all sides of the bus
- Maintain at least 10 steps away from the bus and make sure the driver can see them
- Be courteous and follow the Bus Guardian and Driver's instructions
- Use electronic devices responsibly, report misuse to the Academy and STS immediately

STUDENTS MUST NOT:

- Stand while the bus is moving
- Distract the Driver
- Throw objects of any kind on the bus
- Shout or be disrespectful towards others
- Damage the bus in any way
- Bring friends onto the bus without written permission from the the Academy
- Place anything outside the windows of the bus
- Eat or drink on the bus

Remember that the bus service is a privilege and not a right. Should problems arise, a series of steps will be taken. Students will first be talked to by a staff member and if there are further issues, parent meetings and bus suspensions ranging from one day to indefinitely will be followed according to the nature of the incident.

GWA does expect students to behave in a manner that is in line with Academy rules when riding on any bus. Bus service can be revoked at any time due to inappropriate behaviour. STS works closely with the GWA Administration to ensure high standards of behaviour on the buses.

Communication:

Communication between parents and the Academy is a high priority at GWA. Parents receive notices throughout the year about Academy events through weekly newsletters (including a section in the main newsletter - PYP News).

Seesaw: Seesaw is our primary means of communicating what is happening in your children's classrooms, and is the main source of information from the teachers. If required, teachers will

occasionally send emails home about information specific to you or your child. Seesaw is each students' online portfolio of their work and learning journey. Teachers, parents, and students have private access to their students to add work samples and offer comments and feedback to reflect on the work.

WhatsApp: Class Teachers may reach out to organise a class representative and the representative may organise a class WhatsApp group. Please see the [Parent WhatsApp Policy](#) to ensure that these groups are used properly.

iSAMS: The Academy's information management system is iSAMS. It is for academic use where parents have access to the Academy calendar, can download Academy reports, and sign attendance excusals etc. All parents have a username and password to the Parent Portal and are requested to ensure that all family information is kept up to date as this is our primary database for parent communication.

GWA-Dubai Parent Association (GWAPA):

Our active parent group supports the development of a sense of unity and community among parents, faculty, administration, students and staff by cooperating in different capacities to enrich the lives of the students, and guide parents toward a better understanding of the aims, policies and philosophy of GWA. The achievement of these aims relies upon the cooperation of every parent. All parents of students enrolled in GWA are automatically members of the Parent Association. It is an important part of our Academy community, and we encourage all parents to get involved and support Association activities throughout the year. An established Constitution and By-Laws are followed. Parent leadership elections from the entire parent population are held annually.

Celebrations and Birthday Parties:

We encourage acknowledging special celebrations, such as birthdays, with classmates at the Academy. Parents should discuss the possible upcoming event with their child's teacher in advance. A small, special individually wrapped treat, such as a cupcake, can be sent into school. The class teacher will send these home with the students, and notify parents in advance.

For a party outside of the Academy that will not include all classmates, invitations should be distributed discreetly outside of class time out of respect for those not invited. The classroom teacher should never be expected to distribute personal and private invitations. **Celebrations should not impact student learning.**

Parent Engagement:

There are many ways in which parents can support the Academy programme and their child(ren) both at home and in the Academy.

Questions, Issues and Concerns:

When questions, issues or concerns arise throughout the year, parents are strongly encouraged to first speak with the appropriate teacher. GWA believes that the vast majority of questions and misunderstandings are solved by asking questions and seeking clarification. If you have a question, go to the source by contacting our staff in person (arranging a time to talk in advance) or by phone or email. If after a meeting with a staff member there remains a concern, please speak to the Grade Leader. If you would like to discuss a specific issue that has not been resolved by the teacher or Grade Leader, we ask you to contact the appropriate Primary Secretary (pypsecretary_gwa@gemsedu.com) to schedule an appointment with either the Assistant Principals, Principal or Counsellor.

Legal Status of Students:

All students attending GWA are required by UAE Law and GWA to live with their parent(s) or legal guardian throughout the academic year. If circumstances are different from this, parents must meet with the School Administration and provide legal documentation for the safety, security and welfare of the student.

Extended Parent Absence from Dubai:

GWA students are required and expected to have proper home supervision by a parent. If a parent is expecting to be out of town/country, and a student will not be under direct parent supervision, please complete a [Parent Away Form](#) to let us know who will have guardianship responsibilities and emergency care details. Please ensure the Form Tutor is aware of parental absence before leaving.

Who to contact (from August 1st, 2023):

Area of Responsibility	Name	Email Address
CEO/Principal	Dr Saima Rana	saima.rana@gemseducation.com
Primary Principal	Peter Bonner	p.bonner_gwa@gemsedu.com
Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning	Awhina Houppapa	a.houppapa_gwa@gemsedu.com
Assistant Principal: Personal Development and Behaviour	Robin Montgomery	r.montgomery_hwa@gemsedu.com
Assistant Principal: Curriculum, Progress and Assessment	Kendra Cantrell	k.cantrell_gwa@gemsedu.com
Assistant Principal: Culture and Wellbeing	David Ince	d.ince_gwa@gemsedu.com
PYP Coordinator	Angela Roberts	a.roberts1_gwa@gemsedu.com
Early Years Coordinator	Chantal McClaren	c.mcclaren_gwa@gemsedu.com
ICT	Dominic Braganza	gwa_icthelpdesk@gemsedu.com

Data Manager (iSams, online platforms)	Kavitha Mohan	k.mohan_gwa@gemsedu.com
Enrichment Secretary	Carolina Perez	c.perez_gwa@gemsedu.com
Primary Secretary	Edina Davidson	pypsecretary_gwa@gemsedu.com

Grade Leaders	Name	Email Address
Nursery Manager	Louna Van Der Merwe	l.vandermerwe_gwa@gemsedu.com
Pre-K	Nicole Van Rensburg	n.rensburg_gwa@gemsedu.com
KG1	Hannah Williams	h.cox_gwa@gemsedu.com
KG2	Nicola McMorow	n.mcmorrow_gwa@gemsedu.com
Grade 1	Melissa Meiring	m.meiring_gwa@gemsedu.com
Grade 2	Lindsay Rosenzweig	l.rosenzweig_gwa@gemsedu.com
Grade 3	Karyn Leon Martin	k.leonmartin_gwa@gemsedu.com
Grade 4	Conor Delaney	c.delaney_gwa@gemsedu.com
Grade 5	Chris Hurst	c.hurst_gwa@gemsedu.com

Directors of Learning	Name	Email Address
PYP Language (English)	Haneen Al Saffar	h.alsaffar_gwa@gemsedu.com
PYP Maths	Hannah Ruffin	h.ruffin_gwa@gemsedu.com
PYP Science	Alan Burke	a.burke_gwa@gemsedu.com
PYP Moral, Social, and Cultural Studies	Irene Conway	i.conway_gwa@gemsedu.com
SEN, EAL, Gifted and Talented (Whole School Vice Principal)	Maka Baramidze	m.baramidze_gwa@gemsedu.com
Expressive Arts (Whole School)	Hayley Ince	h.ince_gwa@gemsedu.com
Arabic and GWALI (Whole School)	Rihabe Akerkedou	r.akerkedou_gwa@gemsedu.com
Islamic (Whole School)	Waseem Alawneh	w.alawneh_gwa@gemsedu.com