



PYP HANDBOOK 2024-25

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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 2024-25 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



Chantal Woods
Early Years Coordinator

ABOUT GEMS WORLD ACADEMY

Since opening in 2008, GEMS World Academy has firmly established itself as a leading IB World School in the region and is now home to approximately 2100 students representing over 100 nationalities. One of the few schools in Dubai which is accredited to offer all four IB programmes, GEMS World Academy offers a curriculum that is significant, engaging, relevant, and challenging and one which reaches beyond any single national curriculum.

We have huge ambition and aspiration for every student, and our commitment to their success is combined with excellent pastoral support to make sure that students feel safe, secure and successful at all times.

Our students develop a passion for learning and a capacity for independent thinking. We have a strong record of academic success that is reflected in our outstanding IB results. True to the aims of our founder, Mr Sunny Varkey, we encourage intellectual curiosity and entrepreneurial spirit, and we foster a real sense of communal endeavour.

We are an inclusive, positive, stimulating, demanding and open-minded community. We enable our students to discover genuine interests that extend beyond the classroom, and to express themselves by encouraging a broad understanding of the world, a social conscience and a considered approach to other people. We strive to ensure that GEMS World Academy – Dubai students have an understanding of their place in society, both locally and globally, and that they seek to always make a positive impact upon it.

We experiment, we demand, we persevere. GEMS World Academy – Dubai is a place with high expectations, relentless ambition and real scholarship, where courtesy and manners matter. GEMS World Academy – Dubai is a place where hard work and a genuine commitment to achieve will create those avenues to success.

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:

- Thinking skills
- Communication skills
- Social skills
- Self-management skills
- 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 genders, nationalities, 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 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 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 to emergencies such as a fire at the Academy.

All parents and visitors must wear Academy ID badges indicating they have registered with Academy security. Parents can obtain ID cards during the new student orientation process, or by following the steps detailed below. 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. If parents wish to bring extended family members for events into GWA they must complete [this](#) form to prevent any issues with them accessing the site. Students in Pre-K - KG2 may keep student IDs in their bags, Students from Grade 1 to Grade 5 are encouraged to secure their Academy student ID badge to their bag. This student ID is used for the STS bus and can also be loaded with money for the cafeteria. While on Academy property, we encourage all parents to report suspicious behaviour or 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.

Parent, Driver & Nanny School ID Cards are a MUST

If you, your driver or nanny drops off or picks up your child/children from the Academy, they must have their own Academy ID card. To obtain this, parent should email info_gwa@gemsedu.com with the following.

1. A copy of the passport or Emirates ID of the applicant
2. A recent passport photo of the applicant
3. The names and classes of the student/s being collected

Please note: ID cards usually take 24-48 hours to print and can be collected from the main reception desk. Failing to get the Academy ID card could result in the Security Team refusing to grant access to the building and/or 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 actions 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 that 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 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 for students to be lifelong learners, we must equip them with the necessary skills. 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: Mathematics, Language (English & Arabic), Social Studies, Science, PSPE (Personal, Social and Physical Education) and the Arts. Each subject area further outlines the overall expectations at each age range. These six subjects are then encompassed by six 'trans-disciplinary themes' 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 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 well-being, focusing on international-mindedness and strong personal values. It nurtures independent learning skills and encourages 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 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 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 of a subject or skill. You will not see desks in rows, as we encourage our students to interact, discuss, and work together not only to develop their foundational skills but also to pursue their own lines of inquiry.

The PYP curriculum framework emphasises the central principle of ‘Agency’, which 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 and 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 for 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 strongly emphasise our mission, “Education for a Better World”, and our (GENIUS) values of Grounded, Entrepreneurial, Nurturing, Innovative, Unique, and Sophisticated.

GWA’s Behaviour Policy, found in the Home School agreement and on the GWA website, highlights acceptable and unacceptable behaviour at the Academy. The policy also outlines how we address these behaviours while promoting positive routines and habits through our CARE Principles (Community, Ambition, Respect, and Endeavour).



GWA has the statutory power to discipline unacceptable behaviour outside of the premises or normal hours, such as during Academy-related activities, travelling to or from GWA, wearing the Academy uniform, or being identifiable as a student of GWA.

ANTI-BULLYING

At GWA, we aim to create a caring, safe, 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, 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 can learn and fulfil their true potential.

This policy applies to all forms of bullying and outlines how 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 report 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 potential harm online. It is important that students are able to use the internet for education and personal development under the GWA safeguards, ensuring safe, legal, and responsible use, which then helps to develop the attributes of competent digital citizens.

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

- Supporting and encouraging students to use digital technologies safely and respectfully
- 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 is 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 5. Students in Grades 2 - 5 are required to bring an iPad (with a recommended keyboard). The care, maintenance and protection of devices are the student's responsibility. The school will take no responsibility for any device loss, damage or theft. Students and parents must use the device responsibly and **for educational purposes only**. The Academy ensures safe internet browsing by adding network filters, and we strongly advise that any VPN or associated network capabilities be removed from the iPads before use in school. Legally, parents are responsible for any device usage their child/ren accesses at the academy or home. Students who use devices inappropriately inside or outside the classroom will be sanctioned in line with the behaviour policy; repeated offences will result in the student being unable to have a device in school.

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 students and parents, the Academy's phones can be used, or a message can be conveyed through the school secretary (pypsecretary_gwa@gemsedu.com).

Headphones/AirPods

AirPods are strictly prohibited for all Primary students on Academy premises, unless specific approval has been given by the Primary Leadership Team. 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 always conduct themselves appropriately online and keep 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, Cyberbullying and Digital Citizenship are accessed as part of the pastoral care system for students through Form Time, assemblies, guest speakers and tutorial opportunities. Students will be held accountable for cyberbullying and any other interactions that negatively impact the learning environment, and behaviour sanctions will be applied where appropriate. These are outlined in the [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

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

Recess/Lunch	12:00 - 12:50
Lesson 5	12:50 - 13:40
Lesson 6	13:40 - 14:30
Lesson 7	14:30 - 15:20
Enrichment Opportunities	15:20 - 16:20

Friday

Tutor Time	08:00 - 08:10
Lesson 1	08:10 - 09:00
Lesson 2	09:00 - 09:50
Recess/Snack	09:50 - 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. Many Early Years activities finish at 16:00. Some special events, organisations, 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, GWA uses outside vendors to provide additional activities for a fee to increase the number of Enrichment offerings to our community. All free and paid activities are booked via the ESM website (www.esm.ae), which requires all families to create an account and add their child/children.

Morning Arrival

Students should not arrive at school Monday - Friday 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. Before that time, students are to wait with an adult in designated areas before going to the classrooms. Students arriving by bus in Early Years 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). Students must not play outside unsupervised anywhere on school campus.

Afternoon Dismissal

From Monday to Thursday, Pre-K to Grade 5 dismissal is at 15:20. 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 at 15:20. 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 reception and supervised by SLT members until parents or guardians arrive. Students in Grades 4 and 5 may be dismissed independently after introducing a signed waiver (which will happen shortly after the academic year starts). This is a privilege afforded to students in Grade 4 and 5, and students, therefore, must act responsibly.

It is expected 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 of organised Academy events. On Fridays, students will be dismissed at 12:00 and must be picked up by 12:15.

Please send a note before the start of the Academy day to the classroom/Form Tutor if your child is going home in a way that is different from their regular routine. Any student involved in an Enrichment Opportunity must be met promptly after the activity at 16:20 or an otherwise stated time. Pick-up will be from the cafeteria unless otherwise stated by the activity leader. 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 not registered with STS to travel on the bus cannot use the bus. A late STS bus is available for bus students and will depart at 17:00.

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, they must notify the PYP Secretary (pypsecretary_gwa@gemsedu.com), copying the student's Form Tutor. The student may be picked up from the Reception or the School Clinic at the designated time. Parents are asked not to go directly to the classroom during instructional time to get a student, but instead, they are asked to wait at Reception while a staff member 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 removing after-academy playground and field privileges. The Early Childhood Courtyard will be closed to parents and children at 15:30 each afternoon and 12:10 on Fridays. At no point are students to play unsupervised by a parent or guardian. Grade 2 or above students are not permitted to use the Courtyard Playground at any time.

Early Childhood Dismissal (Pre-K - KG1)

Parents wishing to pick up their children at 13:30 must inform the Form Tutors at 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 their child to join for part of a full school day. Please note pickup after 13:45 will not be allowed as it disrupts the learning environment for the children who wish to stay for the full day.

Friday Enrichment Activities

Due to the working week for schools in the UAE and the early finish on Fridays, there will be no GWA-provided Enrichment Opportunities after 12:00 on campus. However, ESM will still run several private paid classes after 12:00 on Fridays for families who have signed their children up in advance. These activities will finish at 13:00, and students must be collected at this time from the cafeteria. The late bus for STS students only will leave campus by 13:40.

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 also disrupts the entire group. Parents are requested to emphasise the importance of being on time. Students in Grades 1-5 will be monitored if they are repeatedly late to school. Repeated lateness can result in detention or loss of free time at school. 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 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

The Academy's philosophy is that school attendance is of primary importance. However, there are times when an absence is unavoidable. Assignments and examinations may not always be available in advance and must 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 and the PYP Secretary to inform them of your request. They will email you the Student Absence Request Form.
- Your child will be marked as “Time Away From School” for their absence.

Illness

When a student is ill, please email the teacher the evening before/the morning of school, copying the PYP Secretary (pypsecretary_gwa@gemsedu.com). If the days exceed two days, a doctor’s report should be sent to the PYP Secretary via email or given to the Form Tutor 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 programme's parameters, which helps us meet each student's individual needs. To inspire academic excellence for all students, we provide an English as an Additional Language (EAL) programme that combines 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 who 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 students 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 from 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 students' personal, social, emotional and educational development. The Counsellors work closely with students, parents, administration and teachers to create a successful school experience for all GWA students. Counselling and guidance are often preventative in that they address the developmental needs of students before problems arise by connecting to the curriculum. When students experience periods of difficulty or ongoing 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. These Academy gatherings allow us to celebrate the International Baccalaureate and GEMS Core Values, promote Academy spirit, and celebrate our students' academic accomplishments. Our students also develop confidence and stage presence and learn acceptable audience skills. Parents are always encouraged to attend assemblies and participate where possible.

Each term, a programme of Parent Coffee Mornings offers departments/divisions and special guest experts the opportunity to provide information sessions or workshops on a wide range of topics connected to the Academy and student learning. Information is shared through the Newsletter, Email, or 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 various 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 particular time of year. 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 for 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 PTs, NGRT, 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, celebrate successes and identify 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 at the request of either the teacher or the parents. Parents should seek teacher feedback if they want additional information on their child’s progress and learning.

Promotion/Retention

Students who 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 who 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

GWA policy is that all students wear the Academy uniform when attending the Academy, representing GWA, or participating in an Academy-organised event outside regular Academy hours.

The GWA policy on Academy uniforms is based on the notion that the Academy uniform promotes a sense of pride and professionalism across our Academy community. We expect that all students must have consistent uniforms, which 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 all GWA clothing is clearly labelled with the student's name.

Please ensure that all students maintain possession of their lanyard. Lanyards are a safeguarding issue that allows us to be confident that all students belong to GWA. Students in Pre-K - KG2 may keep student IDs in their bags, students from Grade 1 to Grade 5 are encouraged to secure their Academy student ID badge to their bag.

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 academic achievement
- Children who read for pleasure are likely to perform better in school than their peers
- There is little evidence to suggest a positive correlation between homework and achievement for students in primary school
- Device usage does not, in many cases, support positive learning habits at home

In conjunction with the leadership team, each grade level 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
- For the 2024-25 Academic Year, GWA will be adopting a policy of “**Device-Free Home Learning**” for all grades

Suggested Grade Level Time Allotment for Home Learning		
PK/KG 1		<p>Reading with your child in all languages</p> <p>*See the At A Glance document for the current unit of inquiry regarding home learning ideas and activities.</p>
KG2		<p>Reading with your child in all languages, learning extensions on occasion.</p> <p>*See the At A Glance document for the current unit of inquiry regarding home learning ideas and activities.</p>
1	Up to 20 minutes – 3 days per week	<p>Reading from levelled books (3-5 go home each week then exchanged the following week), 5 words a week to practise (based on Phonics at the beginning of the year, then HF words).</p> <p>Maths: written tasks which consolidate in-class learning and focus on number and operations, mental maths, and fluency-related objectives.</p> <p>*See the At A Glance document for the current unit of inquiry regarding home learning ideas and activities.</p> <p>*Possible 10 additional minutes for Arabic/Islamic homework.</p>
2	Up to 20 minutes – 4 days per week	<p>Reading from levelled books (3-5 go home each week then exchanged the following week), 5 words a week to practise (based on Phonics at the beginning of the year, then HF words).</p> <p>Maths: written tasks which consolidate in-class learning and focus on number and operations, mental maths, and fluency-related objectives.</p> <p>*See the At A Glance document for the current unit of inquiry regarding home learning ideas and activities.</p> <p>*Possible 10 additional minutes for Arabic/Islamic homework.</p>

3	Up to 30 minutes – 4 days per week	<p>Reading: a minimum of 20 minutes of daily reading. This could be personal choice reading or directed reading based on grade-level reading lists.</p> <p>Maths: written tasks which consolidate in-class learning and focus on number and operations, mental maths, and fluency-related objectives.</p> <p>*Project-based learning activities will also be given at different points in the year.</p> <p>*See the At A Glance document for the current unit of inquiry regarding 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>Reading: a minimum of 20 minutes of daily reading. This could be personal choice reading or directed reading based on grade-level reading lists.</p> <p>Maths: written tasks which consolidate in-class learning and focus on number and operations, mental maths, and fluency-related objectives.</p> <p>Language: grammar, writing, spelling.</p> <p>*Project-based learning activities will also be given at different points in the year.</p> <p>*See the At A Glance document for the current unit of inquiry regarding 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>Reading: a minimum of 20 minutes of daily reading. This could be personal choice reading or directed reading based on grade-level reading lists.</p> <p>Maths: written tasks which consolidate in-class learning and focus on number and operations, mental maths, and fluency-related objectives.</p> <p>Language: grammar, writing, spelling.</p> <p>*See the At A Glance document for the current unit of inquiry regarding 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 using 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 are available in the Academy Business Administration Office (STS Office) or online via the GEMS Connect app. Payment in advance is required before STS provides bus services. Only registered students can use

STS transport. For our youngest students in EC, car seats can be requested for your child should you consider it 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 they violate 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 and report misuse 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 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. 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 expects students to behave in a manner that is in line with the Academy's 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 student's 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, and parents can access the Academy calendar, download Academy reports, 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. The food brought in by students must be individually and commercially packaged, with the ingredients and allergen information clearly labelled and in accordance with Dubai Municipality Guidelines. Parents must ensure all pre-packed items do not contain nuts of any kind. Parents must provide a nut-free undertaking letter from the supplier to ensure the product is entirely nut-free and is produced and packaged in a nut-free environment.

For a party outside of the Academy that will not include all classmates, invitations should be distributed discreetly outside 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 speak with the appropriate teacher first. 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 there remains a concern after a meeting with a staff member, 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

UAE law and GWA require all students attending GWA to live with their parent(s) or legal guardian throughout the academic year. If circumstances differ from this, parents must meet with the School Administration and provide legal documentation for the student's safety, security, and welfare.

Extended Parent Absence from Dubai

GWA students are required and expected to have proper home supervision by a parent. If a parent expects to be out of town/country and a student will not be under direct parent supervision, please let us know who will have guardianship responsibilities and emergency care details by emailing (pypsecretary_gwa@gemsedu.com). Please ensure the Form Tutor is aware of parental absence before leaving.

Important Contacts (from August 1st, 2024)

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_gwa@gemsedu.com

Assistant Principal: Curriculum, Progress and Assessment	Kendra Cantrell	k.cantrell1_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, GEMS Connect 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_gwn@gemsedu.com
Pre-K	Nicole Van Rensburg	n.rensburg_gwa@gemsedu.com
KG1	Hannah Williams	h.cox_gwa@gemsedu.com
KG2	Leigh Glicksman	l.glicksman_gwa@gemsedu.com
Grade 1	Melissa Meiring	m.meiring_gwa@gemsedu.com
Grade 2	Chante Kooiman	c.kooiman_gwa@gemsedu.com
Grade 3	Karyn Leon Martin	k.leonmartin_gwa@gemsedu.com
Grade 4	Conor Delaney	c.delaney_gwa@gemsedu.com
Grade 5	Vaanya Alwani	v.alwani_gwa@gemsedu.com

Directors of Learning	Name	Email Address
PYP Language (English)	Haneen Al Saffar	h.alsaffar_gwa@gemsedu.com
PYP Maths	Dina Baajour	d.baajour_gwa@gemsedu.com
PYP Moral, Social, and Cultural Studies	Kendra Cantrell	k.cantrell1_gwa@gemsedu.com