

GEMS
AMERICAN
ACADEMY
QATAR

PARENT GUIDE

2022 - 2023 Academic Year

www.gaa-qatar.com

(Information Subject to Change)

GAAQ
RAPTORS

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Welcome to GEMS American Academy Qatar

GEMS American Academy Qatar (GAAQ) is part of the GEMS Education family, the largest K - 12 private education provider in the world, operating leading international independent schools in six regions globally. As a GEMS Education family, we embody the GEMS core concepts of leading through innovation, pursuing excellence, growing by learning and global citizenship.

GAAQ is a highly-rated American curriculum school in Qatar that operates under the Ministry of Education Higher Education (MOEHE) as an international school. Our academy, located in Al Wakra, offers a rigorous American curriculum to our multicultural student body from Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12. In addition to the U.S. Common Core standards-based academics which culminate with Advanced Placement (AP), we also provide a robust set of extra-curricular activities (e.g., afterschool clubs and sports teams) to support the development of the entire child.

Our balanced educational program places a strong emphasis on academics while incorporating the arts, athletics, community service and a wide range of learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom. Our curriculum is deepened through child-centered learning activities and our teachers strive to foster the development of each student's unique talents and abilities. At GAAQ, we firmly believe that education is about overall student development (academic, social, emotional, physical and cognitive learning).



GEMS Education

Founded as Global Education Management Systems (GEMS), GEMS Education has grown from humble beginnings in 1959 to showcase an unparalleled track record of providing quality education across multiple curricula that meet the needs of local populations around the world.

GEMS students excel across multiple dimensions, garnering global recognition with more than 1,550 international, regional and national awards. Additionally, GEMS has enjoyed some of the best university acceptance rates of an international school. Our students have been accepted into 1,050 universities in 53 countries, including 66 of the world's top 100 universities. Today, more than 20,000 GEMS alumni are changing the world!

GEMS EDUCATION

What Guides Us

Our Mission

GAAQ will become one of the best schools worldwide and we believe the best schools produce learners who are purposeful, tenacious, innovative and respectful leaders.

Our Vision

At GAAQ, we have developed our core values and learning principles to empower students to attain their goals and to become successful citizens of our global community.

Our **Core Values** are:
Respect | Innovation | Leadership | Purpose | Tenacity

Our **Learning Principles** are:

1. Developing healthy connections
2. Goals first
3. Authentic assessment and constructive feedback
4. Effective use of time
5. Nurturing independence and inquiry

What We Believe

At GEMS American Academy Qatar, we believe:

- All people have unconditional worth and should act with self-confidence
- Compassion and fairness promote trust and respect
- A zero-tolerance, anti-bullying culture as well as keeping the Internet safe to use is paramount for student comfort and growth
- The school should cultivate imagination and instill an appreciation for learning as a joyful, lifelong pursuit
- An atmosphere of trust enables children to question, take risks, collaborate and cultivate leadership skills
- Significant accomplishments can be achieved through perseverance and hard work
- Quality education empowers the individual and expands options throughout life; our staff emphasizes the benefits of holistic learning and character development
- Our commitment to advocate for teaching and respecting a diverse student body from many cultures throughout the world fosters peace, justice and global understanding



School Calendar: 2022 - 2023

2022

First Day of School (NEW Student Orientation)	Tuesday, 16 August 2022
Second Day of School	Wednesday, 17 August
Third Day of School	Thursday, 18 August
Lower School: End of Term 1	Monday, 7 November
World Cup (School Break)	Sunday, 20 November - Sunday, 1 January
American Thanksgiving	Friday, 25 November
Qatar National Day	Sunday, 18 December

2023

Classes Resume	Monday, 2 January 2023
Upper School: Semester 1 Exams	Sunday, 15 January - Thursday, 19 January
Upper School: Semester 1 Ends	Thursday, 26 January
Upper School: Semester 2 Begins	Sunday, 29 January
Qatar National Sports Day	Tuesday, 14 February
Spring Break	Sunday, 12 March - Thursday, 16 March
Lower School: End of Term 2	Thursday, 23 March
***Ramadan**	Thursday, 23 March - Friday, 21 April
Easter Holiday	Sunday, 9 April
Eid Fitr Break	Saturday, 23 April - Thursday, 27 April
Advanced Placement (AP) Exams	Monday, 1 May - Friday, 12 May
Senior Exams	Sunday, 21 May - Thursday, 25 May
Upper School: Semester 2 Exams	Sunday, 11 June - Thursday, 15 June
Last Day of School / End S2 for US / End T3 for LS	Thursday, 22 June

To be announced

Learning Schedule and Timings

Below, please find our student learning schedule for both Lower School (PK - Grade 5), Middle School (Grades 6 - 8) and High School (Grades 9 - 12).

LOWER SCHOOL

Sunday - Wednesday

PD1: 7:30am - 8:20 | **PD2**: 8:20 - 9:10 | **PD3**: 9:10 - 10:00 | **PD4**: 10:00 - 10:50
PD5: 10:50 - 11:40 | **PD6**: 11:40am - 12:30pm | **PD7**: 12:30 - 1:20
PD8: 1:20 - 2:15pm

Thursday

PD1: 7:30am - 8:15 | **PD2**: 8:15 - 9:00 | **PD3**: 9:00 - 9:45 | **PD4**: 9:45 - 10:30
PD5: 10:30 - 11:15 | **PD6**: 11:15am - 12:00pm | **PD7**: 12:00pm - 12:45 |
PD8: 12:45 - 1:30pm

Please note that PK - KG1 students will start school at 7:30am and dismiss school at 12:30pm, *Sunday - Thursday*. If a PK - KG1 student has a sibling in KG2 - Grade 12, then the PK - KG1 student can be dismissed at regular school hours.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Middle School

Sunday/Monday Times	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday Times	Thursday
7:30 - 8:25	1	7	5	3	7:30 – 8:10	1
8:25 - 9:20	2	8	6	4	8:10 - 8:50	2
9:20 - 9:50	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory	8:50 – 9:30	3
9:50 - 10:05	Break	Break	Break	Break	9:30 - 10:10	4
10:05 - 11:00	3	1	7	5	10:10- 10:50	Lunch
11:00 - 11:55	4	2	8	6	10:50 - 11:30	5
11:55 - 12:25	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	11:30 - 12:10	6
12:25 - 13:20	5	3	1	7	12:10 - 12:50	7
13:20 - 14:15	6	4	2	8	12:50 - 13:30	8

Learning Schedule and Timings

HIGH SCHOOL

High School

Sunday/Monday Times	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday/Wednesday Times	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday Times	Thursday
7:30 - 8:15	1	1	7:30 - 9:00	1	5	7:30 – 8:10	1
8:15 - 9:00	2	2				8:10 - 8:50	2
9:00 - 9:45	3	3	9:00 - 10:30	2	6	8:50 – 9:30	3
9:45 - 10:30	4	4				9:30 - 10:10	4
10:30 - 11:15	Lunch	Lunch	10:30 - 11:15	Lunch	Lunch	10:10- 10:50	Lunch
11:15 - 12:00	5	5	11:15 - 12:45	3	7	10:50 - 11:30	5
12:00 - 12:45	6	6				11:30 - 12:10	6
12:45 - 13:30	7	7	12:45 - 14:15	4	8	12:10 - 12:50	7
13:30 - 14:15	8	8				12:50 - 13:30	8



School Timings

Doors open for students	7:10 am
School day begins for all students	7:30 am
School Dismissal: *Sundays - Wednesdays*	
Pre-K and KG1	12:30 pm
KG2 - Grade 12	2:15 pm
School Dismissal: *Thursdays*	
Pre-K and KG1	12:30 pm
KG2 - Grade 12	1:30 pm

Things to consider:

- Students will be marked late or absent after 7:30 am.
- Parents should email **d.lastimosa_aaq@gemsedu.com** if their child(ren) will be absent, especially for medical reasons.
- Any children not picked-up by the end of school day must be collected from the reception desk.



General Student Guidelines & Code of Conduct

Respect for Local Culture

As previously stated, GAAQ rules and infractions are merely guidelines as it is not possible to develop a completely comprehensive list of student behaviors. Moreover, GAAQ student discipline policies are superseded by local Qatari regulations and customs. For example, this includes, but is not limited to, public displays of affection and inappropriate dress which are deemed culturally inappropriate in Qatar and the Gulf region.

Hats

The sun and heat are intense in Qatar and soaring temperatures can cause rapid dehydration and sunburn. Please provide a hat for your student to keep at school so they can cover their heads when they are outside. It is also a good idea to have them apply a high-factor sunscreen every morning before coming to school to prevent sunburn and skin damage.

Recess

Lower School students have scheduled recess times. Each grade has a dedicated playground area with appropriate outdoor equipment. Depending on the scheduled use of Gym/PE classes, the football pitch and/or multipurpose room may also be available for play during recess times. All students are expected to play safely and fairly and to be respectful of each other and the school's equipment.

Please note that if the heat index (a combination of temperature and humidity) is above 40, recess and all other outdoor activities will be cancelled for the day. If the heat index is near 35, recess and all other outdoor activities will be limited to a maximum of 10 minutes at a time.

Water Bottles

Please provide your student with a labeled water bottle that can be refilled at a school water fountain as we reinforce the impact of drinking water regularly throughout the day. Providing your child with a reusable water bottle supports our school's desire to promote global citizenship.

Lunch and Snacks

Please note that the operation of our school cafeterias and Parent Café are subject to MOE & MOPH directives.

Students eat in designated areas during scheduled times of the day. Kindergarten students should bring a healthy lunch and snack from home, preferably food and drink items that are low in sugar and without nut or nut products. Students from Grade 1 and onward have the option to bring lunch from home or purchase it from the cafeteria. Students are encouraged to bring their own labeled reusable water bottles that can be filled from school water fountains.

Lost and Found

Lost and found items are kept in a dedicated area across from the nurse's office/health clinic. Any unclaimed items will be donated to charity at various times throughout the school year.

Assemblies

School assemblies are held throughout the year to allow us to celebrate our core values, promote school spirit and unity in addition to help our students develop confidence, stage presence and appropriate audience etiquette.

House System

Our House System provides an environment where students can develop a sense of belonging to a special group within the wider Upper School structure. Currently, we offer the House System beginning in Grade 6 and are planning to include Grade 5 in the 2022 - 2023 school year. Nonetheless, the House names are as follows:

- **Black** Ravens
- **Blue** Falcons
- **Golden** Eagles
- **Red** Hawks

Student Behavior

Our school commitment is to guide students to become self-disciplined, responsible learners, independent and cooperative. We believe that a positive academic environment and social climate is necessary for student success. The responsibility for establishing this culture is shared by each student, faculty member and parent. We value having students follow reasonable expectations and guidelines as we believe it is important for them to understand the purpose of such guidelines.

Bullying

Our school has a zero-tolerance policy regarding bullying. Students will be held accountable for all forms of bullying on and off campus (including cyberbullying) as these behaviors negatively impact the school culture.

Plagiarism

Honesty in schoolwork requires that students give credit to ideas, language or thoughts that are not their own. Attempting to take credit for someone else's ideas or writings as one's own is defined as plagiarism and is in direct violation of academic honesty and integrity. A superficial change of wording, structure or conclusion is not sufficient enough to turn aside the charge of plagiarism. We regard acts of academic dishonesty as a serious violation of the school community's trust. Students who commit plagiarism will face serious consequences.

Acceptable Use Policy for Network Resource

Students can expect a 21st century learning environment where teachers work to integrate technology thoughtfully and purposefully into learning experiences and assignments. The school's IT resources are intended for educational use and to promote student learning. The expectations below are intended to help students understand their responsibilities as GAAQ technology users.

Privileges, Rights and Responsibilities

Please note: Students from Grades 6 - 12 need to bring a laptop or tablet device of their own in addition to headphones to school. Access to the school network and the Internet is a privilege and varies according to the age/grade of the student.

The rules of network etiquette must be followed:

- Upon receiving their network folders, students will be given individual passwords. Under no circumstances should passwords be disclosed to other individuals.
- Copyright must never be violated. It is unacceptable to distribute material owned by others over the Internet.
- Students must report any threatening or abusive communications they receive to a faculty member or ICT teacher.

Acceptable Use

- All students have access to the school network and the Internet through the ICT labs, library, and min labs via laptops, desktops and iPads.
- The school network is to be used only for educational and career development activities.
- A student's right to free speech applies to Internet communication. However, students should only expect only limited privacy at school since Internet traffic can be monitored on the school's server. Network administrators, teachers and parents have the right to request to see content of student computer files and online activities at any time.

Unacceptable Use

- Students will not attempt to gain unauthorized access to the school network or any other computer system.
- Students will not attempt to compromise the system or destroy data by spreading computer viruses.
- Students will not attempt to solicit funds for personal use, school use or otherwise using the school's technological resources.
- Students will not send or display offensive messages or pictures. In addition, they will not use obscene language when using the school's technological resources.
- Students will not access websites that contain material considered pornographic, violent, insulting or degrading to Qatar's religious and cultural beliefs.
- Use of email and chat rooms will be under the supervision of faculty and staff and the scope of activity is limited to educational projects only.
- Students will not add or alter any computer program nor download programs, games, audio or video files from the Internet.

Student Safeguards

Any student information communicated via GAAQ web pages will comply with school policy on data privacy. Web pages shall not include a student's phone number, street address or personal contact information of any kind. Photographs published on web pages may not identify individual students by name without parental approval.

Damage to School Property

Students will be held responsible for all school property that is lost or damaged.

Lost Textbooks

Lost textbooks should be reported to the teacher as soon as possible. Parents will be charged the replacement cost of the book plus 50% of the replacement cost for shipping, processing and handling charges.

Leaving Campus

Students are to remain on campus at all times during the school day. If students must leave because of illness, the school nurse will call the parents. Students may not excuse themselves from campus without written permission from parents. If a parent wishes to take their child out of school before regular dismissal time, the parent must notify the school office and teacher at the earliest convenience. The office will issue an early dismissal form to be signed by the teacher to allow the student to be released.

Parents should not go directly to the classroom during instructional time.



Lockers

Students will be assigned a locker or storage area upon arrival at school.

Electronic Devices and Mobile Phones

Personal electronic devices and mobile phones distract students from the learning environment; their use is not allowed during school hours unless specifically authorized by faculty or staff.

American Curriculum Overview

Early Years' Program

Pre-K and KG1

Creative Curriculum

Assessments are authentic and ongoing. **Students are assessed through play and everyday interactions**. Observations, notes, photos and videos are utilized to captured student learning. The data is then aligned to the Creative Curriculum learning progressions, which help to identify developmental abilities and next steps.

Elementary Program

KG2 - Grade 5

U.S. Common Core standards and best American teaching practices in addition to regulatory requirements of Qatar's MOEHE

Students are assessed in various ways such as **formative** in-class assignments and **summative** assignments at the end of each unit based on the U.S. Common Core grade-level standards.

Middle School Program

Grade 6 - Grade 8

U.S. Common Core standards, best American teaching practices and the College Board's Springboard curriculum, in addition to regulatory requirements of Qatar's MOEHE

Generally, students are assessed in various ways such as semester assessments, tests, quizzes, homework, group assignments/projects, attendance and participation. The assessments may differ by subject.

High School Program

Grade 9 - Grade 12

U.S. Common Core standards, best American teaching practices, College Board's Springboard curriculum and Advanced Placement (AP) courses, in addition to regulatory requirements of Qatar's MOEHE

Generally, students are assessed in various ways such as semester assessments, tests, quizzes, homework, group assignments/projects, attendance and participation. The assessments may differ by subject.

Things to consider:

- Students in Grades 1 - 11 take the **MAP (Measure of Academic Progress)** test. The MAP is a computerized adaptive test which helps improve student learning and make informed decisions to promote a child's academic growth.
- Students in Grades 3 - 4 take the **CAT4 (Cognitive Abilities Test Fourth Edition)** test, which is a suite of tests developed to support schools in understanding students' abilities and, likely, academic potential.
- **WIDA MODEL (Measure of Developing English Language)** is a flexible, on-demand suite of English language proficiency assessments for Grades K - 12.
- The **Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)** exam and Advanced Placement (AP) exams charge a fee for each exam to be paid by parents. These fees are not covered by the school.
- The SAT exam is not taken on our campus. This exam is taken at select testing centers in Doha.
- **PSAT** (**Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test**) exams are taken in Grades 8, 9, 10 and 11.

Student Clubs and Organizations

At GAAQ, there are a plethora of afterschool activities (ASAs) and student organizations for our scholars to engage in. From the Eco Club that incorporates both Lower School and Upper School to our THIMUN delegates, clubs and organizations are considered an important part of GEMS American Academy Qatar's student programming.

Students are highly encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities and to develop themselves more holistically through various student-led, teacher-supervised activities and events. ASAs are offered to KG2 - Grade 12 students only and these students can choose to participate up to two days per week in these programs. For students who are interested in these clubs, there will be opportunities to sign-up throughout the school year.

Please note that bus transportation services are not offered for ASAs.

For a more comprehensive list of ASAs and organizations that your student can be involved in, please **click here** for more information.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

The expectation is for all children to be picked-up at the end of the school day or at the conclusion of ASAs (when offered). **Staff are not widely available to supervise students after 2:45pm**.

Arrival Procedure

7:10 am
Students can start arriving on campus and can proceed directly to their 1st period classroom.

7:30 am
Classroom instruction begins.

Dismissal Procedure

12:30 pm
Pre-K - KG1 Pick-up

2:00 pm | Thursday: 1:15 pm
Pre-K - KG2 BUS Riders will be escorted to their designated buses. Also, **Pre-K - KG2 students (not taking the bus)** will be escorted to their designated pick-up location around this time to be dismissed by 2:15pm.

2:10 pm | Thursday: 1:25 pm
Grade 1 - Grade 12 BUS Riders will go to their designated buses (buses will leave campus at 2:25pm)

2:15 pm | Thursday: 1:30 pm
Student Group: Pre-K - KG2 (remaining students)
Parent Pick-up Location: Child's classroom teacher
How to Pick-up Your Child: Parents can pick-up their children directly from the classroom.

Student Group: Grades 1 - 2
Parent Pick-up Location: Upper School cafeteria/canteen area
How to Pick-up Your Child: Parents are allowed to either come around the back or come inside and pick-up their children from this area.

Student Group: Grades 3 - 12
Parent Pick-up Location: Various locations
How to Pick-up Your Child: Parents of Grades 3 - 4 students can pick-up their children from the Lower School cafeteria/canteen area. Parents of Grades 5 students can pick-up their children from the Elementary mini-gym (ground floor). Students in Grades 6 - 12 students will be released from class during dismissal to exit the school.

***Grades 6 - 12 OLDER sibling(s) are allowed to pick-up younger sibling(s).**

2:30 pm | Thursday: 1:45 pm
All students should be dismissed from school at this time.

2:45 pm | Thursday: 2:00 pm
All remaining students will be picked up by their parents from the main reception area.

Things to consider:

- Elementary parents are allowed to enter the building and come as far as the elementary glass doors, but they cannot go beyond this point.
- Students must be dropped-off and picked-up by a parent or adult who has been registered by the school.
- All registered parents, guardians or drivers must wear a yellow lanyard. Failure to display this may result in refusal to enter the campus/school.
- Students who are going home with another student require written permission either via parent letter, phone call or text confirmation. A letter should be handed to a student's teacher or our front desk. Additionally, Lower School parents can message their student's teacher on ClassDojo.



- **Lower School** students that are attending afterschool activities (ASAs) will be accompanied to their location by a member of staff.
- Parents should not enter any classroom without permission.

School Lanyard with ID Card

All parents and guardians must be registered to come on our campus/enter the school building. Thus, please provide our front desk with the following:

- A passport photo of yourself
- A passport photo of any other guardians

The color designation of the school lanyards are as follows:

- **STAFF**: **Blue**
- **PARENTS**: **Yellow**
- **VISITORS**: **Red**
- **CONTRACTORS**: **Green**

At the start of the school year, please allow up to two (2) weeks for the school lanyard with ID card to be prepared. Once your school lanyard is ready, you will receive an email to collect from the front desk. If you do not have a school lanyard, please register with the front desk receptionists by emailing **reception_aaq@gemsedu.com**.

Daily Attendance

Each day, the doors of the school are open at 7:10 am. Class will start at 7:30 am. Thus, please ensure that your student arrives on time. If you are student arrives late (i.e. after 7:30 am), your student **MUST** report to the Principal Secretary's desk to be signed in and to ensure he/she is marked as present.

If your child is sick or not coming to school for the day, please follow the steps below:

1. Email the Principal's Secretary at **d.lastimosa_aaq@gemsedu.com** and copy **reception_aaq@gemsedu.com** to your email OR call the school directly at +974 4032 9000.
2. Communicate with your student's class teacher via ClassDojo or email your student's 1st period teacher (Upper School).
3. If you are unsure who to contact, please feel free to email our Parent Relations Executive at **j.tyler_aaq@gemsedu.com**.

If you wish to take your student out of school during the day, e.g. *doctor's appointment*, please email or call our front desk **the day before the appointment** so your child's teachers are aware that your student will be leaving school early for the day.

If you wish to remove your student from school for a designated period of time, you must email the Principal directly for approval.

Absences

Students should be regularly present throughout the school year to fully participate in the academic program; extended vacations and frequent absences have a negative impact on educational progress. Thus, if a student is absent for unauthorized reasons for a period of 20 consecutive days or 25 non-consecutive days, there is a possibility that the student will not advance to the next grade level or qualify for re-enrollment for the next academic year.

Homework and Learning Expectations

Homework is designed to enhance classroom learning. Homework assignments are extensions of material explained in class and offer additional skills practice or opportunities for independent research. The amount of time children spend on homework will vary due to their attention span or skill level. If your child is struggling with homework assignments, please contact your student's teacher(s) for suggestions.

Please inform your student's teacher(s) a minimum of three (3) days in advance if homework is required for an anticipated period of student absence. This time will allow the teacher to prepare all necessary assignments. Please note that homework will not be prepared for students missing school due to extended family vacations.

Parent involvement and supervision helps to ensure that correct learning is taking place. We strongly suggest that parents establish a regular, designated time and place for children to complete their homework. Such procedures reinforce study habits learned in school and promote concentration. Please encourage your child to be responsible about completing assignments and to bring them to school when they are due. The school encourages older students to read every evening and for parents to read to their young children regularly.



Educational Field Trips and Outings

Educational field trips and school outings are an integral part of the student experience at GAAQ. These trips serve as an opportunity for students to enhance real-world learning as they begin to see that what they learn in the classroom can help them solve problems. These experiences have a direct impact on how students wholly develop as people, boost socio-emotional growth, show positive academic impact and provide access to environments not available in school.



For students to attend field trips, parents will be required to complete a permission form and cover a portion of the trip cost, if applicable. These forms must be completed and returned to the homeroom teacher (Lower School) or Principal's Secretary (Upper School) at **d.lastimosa_aaq@gemsedu.com**.

Each field trip requires risk assessment, logistical planning and senior leadership approval before being granted MOEHE permission.

School Communication

At GEMS American Academy Qatar, two of our school's hallmark traits are **parent communication** and **family relationships**. Our goal is to be a trusted resource in the triangular connection between parent, teacher and student, so providing academic, athletic, mental and socio-emotional support and care are vitally important to the development and well-being of GAAQ families. Parents are always welcome in the school and have an active role and voice in our school growth.

Lower School (Pre-K - Grade 5) Communication

The **ClassDojo** application is one of the primary communication tools for Lower School as it connects teachers, parents and students. Routinely, pictures, videos, upcoming events, messages and informative posts are shared throughout the school day as the app helps parents receive up-to-date messages, notifications, reminders in addition to picture and video content that showcases classroom learning, achievements and milestones.

So, *how do you connect to ClassDojo?* Well, it's quite simple:

- Search for the ClassDojo app on your mobile device via the App Store (Apple) or App Search function on Android phones
- Download app to your phone
- Search for "GEMS American Academy Qatar"
- Connect to the school and to your Class Teacher (you will receive this information via email about 3 - 5 days prior to the start of school)
- Your student's primary teacher will grant you the rights to access the app

ClassDojo also provides the opportunity to privately message the primary teacher about any questions or concerns you may have. Teachers will reply within 24 - 48 hours during regular working hours.

We encourage our parents to schedule an appointment via ClassDojo or email to address any classroom concerns with your student's teacher. It is best to first communicate directly with the classroom teacher before raising your concerns to the Principal or Parent Relations Executive.

Staff meetings regularly take place each week to monitor and discuss teacher and student performance. In addition, action plans are created and reviewed to determine the effectiveness of strategies that will boost student progress, performance and behavior toward learning goals.

Lastly, **Parent Teacher Conferences (PTCs)** typically occur twice per year. This is an opportunity for parents to meet with your student's teachers and discuss their academic and behavioral progress toward learning goals. PTC information will be communicated well in advance via ClassDojo, the Raptor Report (GAAQ's weekly newsletter) and emails about timings for these meetings.

Upper School Communication

The **Alma** app is the primary communication tool used for Upper School parents and students. Alma is a secure, easy-to-use online system that brings important school information together in one place. The platform helps families stay informed and on track with student learning and activities including attendance history, grades/report cards, administrator notes and class schedules.

To create and activate an Alma account, please see the links below:

- **Create Your New Alma Account**
- **Login to Your Alma Account**

Similarly to Lower School, it is best to first communicate directly with the classroom teacher before raising your concerns to the Principal or Parent Relations Executive. However, unlike Lower School, there is no homeroom teacher, advisory contact or ClassDojo app, so parents will need to communicate directly with their **student's subject teacher** for any questions or concerns. If you are unsure of the subject teacher's name or contact information, please feel free to email the Principal's Secretary at **d.lastimosa_aaq@gemsedu.com** for these details.

Parent Teacher Conferences (PTCs) typically occur twice per year. This is an opportunity for parents to meet directly with your student's teachers and discuss their academic and behavioral progress toward learning goals. PTC information will be communicated well in advance via Alma, the Raptor Report (GAAQ's weekly newsletter) and emails about timings for these meetings.

Staff meetings regularly take place each week to monitor and discuss teacher and student performance. In addition, action plans are created and reviewed to determine the effectiveness of strategies that will boost student progress, performance and behavior toward learning goals.

Lastly, for any inquiries about logging into Alma, obtaining your login username or resetting your Alma password, please email the Principal's Secretary (**d.lastimosa_aaq@gemsedu.com**) or our Data Executive (**s.sivalingam_aaq@gemsedu.com**).

Schoolwide Communication Methods

Newsletter: The school newsletter, **Raptor Report**, is the best resource for comprehensive information on whole school news, specific Lower School and Upper School news and information, reminders, events, Head of School messages as well as a place to highlight student, parent and teacher achievements. Please feel free to share your student's success with our Parent Relations Executive so we can include it in our newsletter and celebrate it.

Email: Typically, parents receive school-wide emails from the Parent Relations Executive regarding the weekly school newsletter and/or pertinent updates or event-based emails that are relevant to the school community. In addition, parents and students can receive emails from teachers.

Bulletin Board and Screen Messages: These physical signage boards and TV screens can be found throughout the reception area of the school. They will display relevant school information and messaging.

Website: Our website is a fantastic resource to understand more about the school, our curriculum and to keep up-to-date with our mentions in publications and school achievements.

Social Media: GAAQ is active on social media and routinely posts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter as well as creates important, school-wide messaging for Instagram and Facebook stories. Following us on these platforms will keep you informed of various activities, events, classroom learning and achievements happening within the school community.

Please follow and like us on:

- **Facebook**: @GEMSAmericanAcademy.Qatar
- **Instagram**: @gems_aaq
- **Twitter**: @GEMSAAQ
- **YouTube**: GAAQ Events
- **TikTok**: gemsaaq

Key Documents and Policies

Click here to view the main policies, academic standards and parent guides for both Lower School and Upper School.

Student Leadership

GAAQ provides opportunities for an active, dynamic student leadership culture for our Upper School students. These student executives are responsible for the chairing of GAAQ's Student Council and oversee the development of the student voice, fundraising, event management, marketing, public relations and many other important functions.

These leadership posts will rotate each academic year as Student Council members are democratically elected.

Parent Association (PA) and Parent Community

While all parents of GAAQ students are considered members of the Parent Association (GAAQPA), a core group of volunteers and elected parent leadership team members tirelessly dedicate their time and effort to organize events and lead initiatives for the benefit of students, parents, staff and the greater school community. They meet regularly throughout the year to help strengthen the sense of school community and encourage parental engagement.

GAAQPA hosts and helps organize campus and virtual events, including but not limited to, monthly Parent Coffee Mornings, Earth Day, Autism Awareness Day, Spring Fair, Pizza Day, United Nations Day, Popcorn Day, Family Movie Night, Qatar National Day as well as monthly guest speakers. These events are also designed to bring families together and enjoy our nearly 80 student nationalities. Additionally, they have a group of parent representatives that maintain an open communication channel with school leadership and the Parent Relations Executive to share feedback on general school matters. Lastly, the PA supports parents by welcoming new GAAQ families, serving as a trusted resource for parent questions and providing an outlet for busy parents to support the school in their free time.

Whether you are a new family to the school or a returning parent looking to engage more with the community, meet other parents or just post and share school content on social media, please email our Parent Relations Executive at **j.tyler_aaq@gemsedu.com** if you are interested in participating.



Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)

Please note: *Grade 6 - Grade 12 students* are **required** to bring their laptop/tablet and headphones to school.

The minimum system requirements for a laptop include:

- 4GB of RAM and Core i5 or i7
- SSD or SATA Hard Drive 256GB or higher
- Minimum screen size: 10”
- Operation system: Windows 10
- Ability to run Microsoft Office and applications such as Adobe Photoshop
- USB port for connecting devices
- Battery life: minimum 6 - 8 hours (fully day)
- Weight: Aim for under 1.6kg
- Wi-Fi connectivity: 2.4GHz and 5 GHz dual-band
- Full keyboard (detachable is fine)
- Touchscreen and Pen is recommended but not required

If students do not bring their device to school, they may have to use a temporary device. However, if there are no additional devices available, students will need to share a device that may have limited storage capacity.



Mobile Phone Use by Students

GEMS American Academy respects the rights of students to have mobile phones. However, students are not allowed to use their mobile phones during the school day or on trips (until dismissal time). Personal phone use should not impact a student's academic or social progress in school. Disciplinary action can follow if this is the case.

Mobile phones are brought to school at entirely the owner's risk. The school will not be involved in disputes and/or investigations over damage, loss or theft. Phones being used for unauthorized reasons during school hours may be confiscated and turned over to the office or administration.

If your student travels by school transportation to and/or from school, then his/her bus has a bus guardian with their own mobile phone. Thus, parents and guardians can contact the bus guardian directly for any urgent matters.

If you have an important or urgent message for your student, please contact the school's front desk at **4032 9000**.

School Uniforms

At GAAQ, it is compulsory for all students to wear school uniforms. Our uniform represents the high standards we expect and deliver as well as a common theme and identity for our students.

Except on certain school-approved occasions or special events, students must wear the following regulation GAAQ uniform every day:

Pre-K, KG1 and KG2

- **Boys**: Red polo shirt with either navy blue trousers or shorts
- **Girls**: Red polo shirt with either navy blue trousers, shorts or skort

See this uniform!

Grade 1 - Grade 5

- **Boys:** Light blue dress shirt with tie; navy blue trousers or shorts
- **Girls:** Light blue dress shirt with neck scarf; navy blue trousers or skort

See this uniform!

Grade 6 - Grade 12

- **Boys:** Light blue dress shirt with tie; navy blue trousers
- **Girls:** Light blue dress shirt with neck scarf; navy blue trousers or skirt

See this uniform! (Grade 6 - Grade 11)

See this uniform! (Grade 12)

Gym/PE Uniforms (Grade 1 - Grade 12)

Each student must also have the prescribed school PE clothing and proper athletic shoes. Clothing should be clearly labeled with the student's name.

See this uniform!

GAAQ may not require uniforms while students are participating in afterschool, out-of-school activities or on designated special dress days such as school spirit days and UN Day. However, students should be properly dressed in a manner that is not offensive to our host country.

- No skirts above the knee
- No tight clothing
- No spaghetti strap shirts
- No offensive logos or expressions on clothing
- No shirts that expose the back
- No exposed midriff
- No low-cut shirts or blouses
- No jewelry that does not compliment the school dress code

School administration has the final judgment on dress code violations. Students may be required to return home for the purpose of changing their clothes if what they are wearing is deemed unacceptable.

Things to consider:

- Please ensure that all belongings are permanently labeled with your child's full name and class.
- Items like a GAAQ-labeled school backpacks, pullover hoodies, hair bands and scrunchies are optional.
- **Grades 1 - 12 students** are required to purchase the Gym/PE uniform.

Our uniforms can be purchased directly from our school store. The store is open from Sunday - Thursday, 7:00 am - 3:30 pm. The contact information is 4032 9007 and **a.parambil_aaq@gemsedu.com**.

To view our school uniform designs, please **click here**.



School Transportation

At GEMS American Academy Qatar, our priority is the safety of the students in our care and we strive to provide a friendly and caring environment designed to remove any stress and concern; we ensure that your students are safely transported from home to school and back.

Below, you will find several reasons for you to choose our School Bus Services. If you need to know why taking the school bus is a good idea, then please read on:

- **It's sociable**: Riding to school with friends is fun! School bus riders have a chance to mix with students of different ages.
- **It encourages independence**: Students getting on the right bus at the right time - with all the bags, snacks and school supplies they need for the day - teaches them about self-reliance from a young age.
- **It's greener**: More students on the bus means fewer cars on the road; this translates to less traffic and lower emissions. Therefore, the impact of your choice to use school transportation can touch the lives of others in a positive way.
- **Designed for working parents**: They can continue their work day with the mental comfort that their child(ren) are safe.
- **Economical**: Our services are highly affordable as we charge a flat rate based on the location. Parents have the added flexibility to choose from one-way or round trip service.

Safety & Reliability

- All buses are equipped with dedicated mobile phones.
- All buses are equipped with CCTV surveillance cameras. This mechanism ensures that your child's experience on the bus is at the highest level. The surveillance camera footage will only be accessed by the Principal and senior management on an as-needed basis.
- Female bus guardians are placed on all buses to support and actively monitor students.

- Vehicles are comprehensively checked daily by two dedicated teams to ensure that no child is left behind. In addition, the cleaning staff disinfects each school bus daily.
- Drivers are assessed and trained on a regular basis as per the transport regulations. In addition, they enroll in refresher courses throughout the year.
- Our highly-trained and experienced school team will personally escort elementary students to and from the vehicle to the school. This process ensures that all students are delivered safely to their classroom destinations.

Bus Behavior Rules

Established rules ensure safety on the buses. Parents are advised to review these rules with their children.

- Always wear your seatbelt.
- Put away pencils, markers, rulers and any sharp or pointed items.
- Keep your arms, legs and head inside the vehicle at all times. Keep windows closed.
- No changing seat while the bus is moving or parked at traffic signals and without asking the monitor/teacher.
- Do not throw anything while on the bus.
- Do not distract the driver or female bus guardian. Please keep the volume down.
- No use of music players, video games or electronic devices without earphones.
- Stay away from control panels, automatic doors, etc., as injury can occur.
- Place trash in the bin or take it home with you.
- No eating on the bus.
- Keep the aisles clear.
- No smoking.
- Foul language, bullying or any behavior that would not be tolerated while at school will not be tolerated on the bus.

Transport Fees

Below, please review the current bus transportation fees for Al Wakra and non-Al Wakra residents.

From within Al Wakrah & Al Wukair

- **Term 1**: 1,600 QAR
- **Term 2**: 1,200 QAR
- **Term 3**: 1,200 QAR

Total: 4,000 QAR

From other areas in Doha

- **Term 1**: 2,800 QAR
- **Term 2**: 2,100 QAR
- **Term 3**: 2,100 QAR

Total: 7,000 QAR

How to Register Your Student for School Transportation

To register for school transportation or if you have any transportation inquiries, please email **transport_aaq@gemsedu.com** or call **4032 9014**.



Health and Safety

Please note: Our Health & Safety policies and procedures have expanded in respect to COVID-19 prevention.

To contact our school nurses, please feel free to contact them via email (**clinic_aaq@gemsedu.com**) and via phone at **4032 9002**.



Our school's Health Clinic is licensed under Qatar's Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) and is staffed with two full-time QCHP-licensed nurses. The Health Clinic is located on the main floor to the left just before our school store; they are ready to provide quality medical service to our students and staff.

Our school nurses promote and maintain optimal student health by:

- Providing first aid as well as arranging for assessment and assistance to a child who becomes ill or injured at school or is demonstrating a significant change in behavior, whether due to a physical or social/emotional cause.
- Communicating with parents and guardians when further medical care or attention may be needed and making referrals, as appropriate.
- Educating the school staff about health matters that affect students and/or staff.
- Collaborating with other school professionals, parents/guardians and the student's health care team, as needed, to foster maximal student success.

If your student needs medications to be administered at school, please contact the nurse to complete and sign the medication consent form. Whenever possible, medication should be given at home before or after school. All medication, both prescription and non-prescription, that must be taken at school requires both doctor orders and parent permission. Medication must be brought to school by a parent or an authorized adult. Medication must be in its original prescription bottle or sealed box.

The Admissions Department requires that the following completed forms must be kept on file at school to enable us to care for your student effectively. These forms must be completed and returned to the Registrar directly and prior to your student starting school.

- **Medical Declaration Form**
- **AAQ Medical Consent Form**
- Immunization Record (copy)

Health services are aligned and follow the guidelines set by the Ministry of Public Health and GEMS American Academy Qatar's policies.



Accident and Medical Emergency Procedure

It is the aim of the school to keep all children safe and secure and to respond appropriately to unforeseen circumstances. In the event of an emergency, our nurse or trained first aider will assess the condition of your child, follow school procedures and protocols where possible and adhere to the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH). Based upon the assessment, the medical team will decide if any immediate further medical treatment is required by paramedics. If yes, the emergency services and parents will be contacted. If not, the child will be dealt with by the school medical team and returned to class or advised to seek further medical treatments; parents will be contacted. Kindly, update your emergency contact numbers should any incident occur. In the event that your child must go to the hospital, he/she will be accompanied by the nurse/school staff and will stay with your child until you arrive. A Medical Emergency Incident Report will be completed by the nurse and a copy will be given to you.

First Aid Procedure

First Aid kits are distributed per classroom and first aid boxes are installed and kept in various strategic locations in school. First Aid contents are checked on a monthly basis and ensured that any missing items are replaced. All students have the right to feel safe and well, knowing that they will be attended to with due care when in need of first aid. If there is a situation or incident which occurs at school or a school activity which requires first aid to be administered to a student, this will be reported to the nurse or trained first aider as the child will be provided with the necessary care following standard safety practices. An incident report will be recorded in the student's file and a note will be sent home to the parent. If first aid is administered for a serious injury or condition, or in an emergency situation, school staff will attempt to contact parents or emergency contacts as soon as reasonably practical. If staff providing first aid determine that an emergency response is not required but that medical advice is needed, school staff will ask parents or an emergency contact person to collect the student and recommend that advice is sought from a medical doctor.

Student Illness

The Health Clinic and Reception team should be informed immediately of any change in telephone number/contact information so that our school is always able to contact a parent or guardian in the event of sickness and accident. In anticipation of both parents being out of contact or if the parents are traveling outside the country, an alternative contact number must be given to the Health Clinic (**clinic_aaq@gemsedu.com**) or the Front Desk (**reception_aaq@gemsedu.com**).

Sickness at school: When students become ill during the school day and feel the need to go home, they must go to the Health Clinic to discuss their health issue with the nurses. The best course of care will be decided then. If it is determined that the student should go home, the nurse will contact the parent/guardian and inform teachers. It is expected that the student's parent/driver will collect the student within an hour of receiving the nurse's phone call. A student may go home via taxi/ride sharing service, as per parent instructions to the nurse.

Sickness at home: A sick child cannot learn effectively and is unable to participate in class in a meaningful way. Keeping a sick child at home prevents the spread of illness in the school community and allows your child an opportunity to rest and recover. If your child is sick and unable to attend class, please inform the school by 8:00 am.

School medical examinations: The Supreme Health Council requires that students in selected grades undergo a school medical exam from our school nurses. If you prefer, your private family physician may conduct the medical exam and then submit the report to the Health Office for your child's file.

Medications and Allergies: If your child must take any regular medications during school hours (on a short- or long-term basis), kindly give these medications to the Health Clinic to be administered by our school nurses. Students are not permitted to keep medications with them, except in the case of personal inhalers to prevent/treat asthma attacks and *EpiPens* for students with life-threatening allergies. It is the responsibility of parents to advise the Health Clinic if their child has any allergies.

Fire Drill Procedures

Health and safety is the number one priority for GEMS Education. In order to facilitate the safe evacuation of all persons, a comprehensive fire plan has been developed for GEMS American Academy Qatar. The plan has been developed based upon the Qatar fire and life safety code, NFPA and ADEHSMS requirements. The plan must be reviewed on an annual basis or following an emergency event.

Lock Down Procedures

The main aim of a lockdown is to keep students and staff safe. Lockdown drills will be carried out periodically to familiarize students and staff with the correct protocol. This personnel will know when and how to react in the event of a potentially dangerous incident.

Personal Belongings

While students will sometimes bring personal items to school, it is in the best interest of students to leave their personal belongings, such as toys and other valuables, at home unless otherwise instructed by the teacher. If these items are brought to school, then please ensure that these items are labeled with your student's name.

Please note that the school cannot be held responsible if a student's personal belongings are lost, damaged or stolen.

Banned Items

Students are forbidden to bring any items on campus that are potentially harmful to any member of the school community. For example, items such as weapons, alcohol, tobacco, drugs and sharpened objects are strictly forbidden on campus, inside the school building or on field trips.

Please note: The above list is not an exhaustive list of all banned items. Rather, any items classified as a danger to the individual and others will be confiscated. As a result, the student will be subject to serious disciplinary actions such as suspension or expulsion from the school. In extreme cases, the police will be notified of the offense.



A Healthier Lifestyle

Nut & Allergy Guidelines

GAAQ has a nut policy to provide a safe environment for students that are extremely allergic to nuts and products containing nuts. Thus, students should not bring any food with nuts or nut derivatives into school.

While we continuously educate our school community on nut allergy, our school cannot guarantee that there will be no incidents of nuts in school, so we are asking for parents and children to be aware of the ingredients of the food brought to school.

Parents should make the school aware of any nut allergies during the enrollment process. If you have not already done so, please email/contact your class teacher and the school nurses as soon as possible and provide any necessary medication.

Plastic Water Bottles for Students

Please provide your student with a labeled water bottle that can be refilled at a school water fountain as we reinforce the impact of drinking water regularly throughout the day. Providing your child with a reusable water bottle supports our school's desire to promote global citizenship.

Because GAAQ is an Eco-Schools Green Flag school and we espouse the beliefs of environmental stability, we do not sell plastic water bottles to students.

Packed Lunch

Please note that the availability of the school cafeterias and Parent Café are subject to MOE and MOPH directives.

Students eat in designated areas during scheduled times of the day. Students have the option to bring a healthy lunch and snack from home, preferably food and drink items that are low in sugar and without nut or nut products. Additionally, based on the availability of school cafeterias, students can also purchase it from the cafeteria. Students are encouraged to bring their own labeled reusable water bottles that can be filled from school water fountains.

Students are not encouraged to share their food with other students in case of allergies.

Lunch / Food Services

An external vendor provides the food service program at GAAQ. The school works closely with the food services vendor to establish a meal program that meets the needs of the students and staff. Standards for these services are in compliance with the regulations of local authorities.

Classroom Celebrations

Please note that classroom celebrations will be held only during lunch time and after school hours (in an effort to not disrupt classroom learning).

Students are allowed to bring small food items to class for special celebrations, such as national holidays and birthdays. In advance, parents should discuss the upcoming event (including dietary concerns and policies) with their student's teacher. For a private party that will not include all classmates, invitations must be distributed outside of school - classroom teachers should not be asked to distribute invitations.

Lastly, food should not include nut or nut-based products. Moreover, please ensure that any food intended for classmates is halal and a healthier alternative.

Lost Property

If a student finds a lost item(s), he/she should check the dedicated Lost and Found area across from the health clinic. Items such as watches, jewelry and glasses are usually kept at the front desk for approximately one week and communicated to staff so find the correct owner. Any unclaimed items will be donated to charity at the end of the school year.

Please ensure that all student belongings and clothing are properly labeled with the student's full name.

Contact Details

Senior Leadership Team

Head of School/CEO | *Mark Lentz*
m.lentz_aaq@gemsedu.com
Principal, Upper School | *Eamonn Gregory*
e.gregory_aaq@gemsedu.com
Asst. Principal, Upper School | *Jeffrey Wessel*
j.wessel_aaq@gemsedu.com
Principal, Lower School | *Jordan Scheer*
j.scheer_aaq@gemsedu.com
Asst. Principal, Lower School | *Amber Rigdon*
a.rigdon_aaq@gemsedu.com
Student Services Coordinator | *Rebekah Lentz*
r.lentz_aaq@gemsedu.com








Key Staff

Front Desk | *Souhir Ayassi & Andreea Marin*
reception_aaq@gemsedu.com
Admissions Director | *Sima Hamadneh*
s.hamadneh_aaq@gemsedu.com





Admissions Secretary| *Meashka Naicker*
m.naicker_aaq@gemsedu.com



Finance | *Madan Gunasekaran & Seethapathi Chandrasekar*
finance_aaq@gemsedu.com





Cashier | *Anton Khanda*
finance_aaq@gemsedu.com



Parent Relations | *Justin Hamza Tyler*
j.tyler_aaq@gemsedu.com



Government Relations | *Hanaa Soliman*
h.soliman_aaq@gemsedu.com



Health Clinic/Nurses | *Susan Fernandez & Florites Llanes*
clinic_aaq@gemsedu.com





Bus Transportation | *Tharaka Madushan*
transport_aaq@gemsedu.com

Principal's Secretary | *Maureen Pitogo*
d.lastimosa_aaq@gemsedu.com



Attendance | *Maureen Pitogo*
d.lastimosa_aaq@gemsedu.com



Guidance Counselor, Middle School | *Dana Alshakarchi*
d.alshakarchi_aaq@gemsedu.com



Guidance Counselor, High School | *Engy Carniglia*
e.carniglia_aaq@gemsedu.com







More About GAAQ

GEMS American Academy QATAR

#WeAreGAAQ

MOST VALUABLE SCHOOLS TO WATCH IN THE MIDDLE-EAST

UCAS
We are a UCAS registered centre

One of the Highest Parent Satisfaction Rating in the GEMS Network

Languages Taught:
- English
- Arabic
- Spanish
- French



Highest NEASC Accreditation

1,200 Number of Students

71+ Nationalities

American Curriculum Culminating with AP Exams

3 - 18 Current Age Group

Recipient of the Eco-Schools Green Flag Award

AP CollegeBoard Advanced Placement Program

AP Capstone
Research, Academic Rigor, Distinction

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