



# 2023-2024 Elementary School Handbook

**GEMS**

American Academy  
QATAR



With more than 70 nationalities represented at GAAQ, our students are members of an incredibly diverse international school community. We believe that advocating, teaching, and respecting a student body representing so many world cultures fosters peace, justice, and global understanding. Visitors and new families to our school immediately sense and comment on our Culture of Kindness, a signature of our school community that reflects our core values and philosophy.

In academics, we recognize that the Elementary School years are crucial to laying the foundation for future success. Our teachers and administrators regularly collaborate to plan and present an enriched American curriculum that is intellectually challenging and socially rewarding for your child. We seek to create a climate that fosters self-esteem by celebrating the growth and development of each student, and we encourage an enthusiasm for lifelong education by making learning an enjoyable experience.

We warmly invite you and your child to acquaint yourselves with this handbook to learn about our school's policies, procedures, expectations, and opportunities.

Mark Lentz,  
Head of School

Jordan Scheer  
Elementary School Principal

Amber Rigdon  
Elementary Assistant Principal

## Table of Contents

<b>1.0 Mission/Purpose/Philosophy/Goals/Facilities</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Mission	7
1.2 Purpose	7
1.3 Philosophy	7
1.4 Goals	8
1.5 Facilities	8
<b>2.0 Campus Security</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3.0 Elementary School Program</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 The Elementary School Staff	9
3.2 Goals of the Elementary School	9
3.3 Organization	9
3.4 Elementary School Program of Studies	10
3.4.1 Core Subjects	10
3.4.2 Encore Subjects	11
3.4.3 School Hours	11
3.4.4 Assemblies	11
3.4.5 Learning Support	11
3.4.6 Guidance and Counseling Services	11
<b>4.0 Assessment</b>	<b>12</b>
4.1 Report Cards	12
4.2 Parent-Teacher Conferences	13
4.3 Externally Norm-Referenced Testing	13
4.4 Promotion/Retention	13
<b>5.0 Behavioral Guidelines</b>	<b>13</b>
5.1 Philosophy/Rights and Responsibilities	13
5.1.1 Philosophy	13
5.1.2 Rights and Responsibilities	14

<b>6.0 Elementary School Discipline</b>	<b>14</b>
6.1 Detention/Suspension/Expulsion	15
6.2 Playground Rules and Guidelines	15
6.3 Supervision Before and After School	16
6.4 Academic Honesty	16
6.5 Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) for Network Resources	17
6.7 School Uniforms	18
6.8 Attendance/Withdrawal	18
6.8.1 School Hours	18
6.8.2 Absences	19
6.8.3 Tardies	19
6.8.4 Planned Absences Other Than School Holidays	20
6.8.5 Withdrawal Procedures	20
6.8.6 Attendance Policy	20
6.9 Student Electronic Devices Policy	20
<b>7.0 Student Services</b>	<b>20</b>
7.1 Library	20
7.1.1 Expectations	20
7.1.2 Guidelines	21
7.2 School Health Office Services	21
7.3 English Language Learners (ELL) Program	22
7.4 Special Educational Needs (SEN) Program	22
7.5 Food Services	23
7.6 Lost and Found Services	23
7.7 Bus Transportation Services and Rules	23
<b>8.0 After-School Activities</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>9.0 Home-School Communication</b>	<b>24</b>
9.1 Academic Reporting	24
9.2 Newsletter	24
9.3 Back To School Night	24

9.4 Celebrations/Birthday Parties	24
9.5 Visitor guidelines	24
<b>10.0 Parent Support at Home and School</b>	<b>25</b>
10.1 Appointments with Faculty	25
10.2 Extended Parent Absences	26
10.3 Sharing Expertise	26
10.4 Field Trips	26
10.5 Homework	26



## 1.0 Mission, Purpose and Values

### 1.1 GAAQ Guiding Statement

Identity:

GEMS American Academy Qatar offers our multicultural student body a rigorous American curriculum from Pre-Kindergarten through to Grade 12. In addition to standards based academics, culminating with the Advanced Placement program, we also provide a robust extra-curricular program to support the development of the whole child.

GEMS American Academy Qatar equips students with skills to fulfill their potential and achieve their goals.

We value and foster:

**Respect**  
**Innovation**  
**Leadership**  
**Purpose**  
**Tenacity**

### 1.2 The Gems Mission and Vision

Mission

To put a quality education within the reach of every child.

Values

We aim to be good citizens who are:

Respectful and inclusive, celebrating diversity  
Aspirational and inspirational in pursuit of excellence  
Committed to the well-being of people and of the environment  
Open-minded, creative, resilient and reflective  
Passionate and determined in embracing and driving positive change  
Ethical in our actions and accountable for them

These values define who we are – the beliefs that guide our actions and behaviors. They influence the way the whole GEMS community works with each other and they are the foundation of the quality of a GEMS education.

Educational Purpose

GEMS is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and dedicated to

providing the best possible education for our students by developing the knowledge, understanding, skills and values essential for self-directed, life-long learning. We will develop in intellectually capable young people the creative minds, healthy bodies and ethical spirit needed to contribute wisdom, compassion, and leadership to a global society.

### Expected Learner Outcomes

In achieving our educational purpose, the teaching, curricula and learning environments in GEMS schools will produce successful learners who, by the time they graduate:

- I. are able to play an active role in their learning as life-long learners
- II. are literate and numerate
- III. are creative and productive users of technology
- IV. can think deeply and logically, and obtain and evaluate evidence in a disciplined way
- V. are creative, innovative and resourceful, and are able to solve problems in ways that draw upon a range of learning areas and discipline.
- VI. have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical well-being
- VII. exhibit the personal values and attributes of honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others
- VIII. can work independently and can accept responsibility for their actions as individuals; while also being able to collaborate with others and contribute to work in teams, accepting shared responsibility as a team member

### 1.5 Facilities

Our school opened its doors to a purpose-built facility in September 2014. We are situated in a 20,000 square meter building comprised of classrooms, science labs, indoor and outdoor play areas, rooftop sports field, libraries, cafeteria, ICT suite, dance studio, multipurpose gymnasium, and football pitch. All classrooms have interactive technology to make maximum use of multimedia facilities.





## **2.0 Campus Security**

School guidelines for safety and security are detailed in a Security Manual that is used by all GAAQ staff to ensure uniform, orderly, and timely responses to emergencies. Advisors teach emergency procedures for building evacuation and lockdown drills. Drills are practiced so that students know the appropriate responses in emergency situations.

Adults may not access the campus without a security badge.

## **3.0 Elementary School Program**

### **3.1 The Elementary School Staff**

The Elementary School faculty, administration, and support staff serve the needs of the children and parents in all aspects of each child's education. This team is comprised of the Head of School, the Principal, the Assistant Principal, the Guidance Counselor, Student Support Team, the teachers, the teaching assistants, and the administrative personnel.

### **3.2 Goals of the Elementary School**

Through an enriched American curriculum, GAAQ will:

- establish a firm foundation in the core subjects of Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science;
- enrich the curriculum through age-appropriate activities in classes such as Art, Music, Physical Education, Instructional Technology, Library, Arabic Language, Islamic Education, and Qatar History;
- enable students to gain an understanding of global issues;
- provide an environment that celebrates and promotes maximum growth and development of children;
- instill an interest in and an eagerness for learning that permits children to realize their fullest potential;
- recognize and respond to the individual intellectual, physical, emotional, and social developmental patterns of children; and
- provide a program of active, child-centered learning based on a progression from concrete to abstract thinking.

### **3.3 Organization**

The Elementary school includes students in Pre-K to Grade 5.

### **3.4 Elementary School Program of Studies**

Our program of studies is based on U.S. curriculum and national standards, and modeled on the American system of education, but we also embrace the cultural diversity our international student community offers.

The first years of formal schooling are critical. During this period, children develop lifelong attitudes towards learning and build a foundation in the core subjects of Literacy (Reading, Phonics, Grammar, Writing), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies alongside the additional curriculum areas of Health, Arabic and Islamic Studies, Qatar History, Information and Communication Technologies, and the Visual and Performing Arts. At the same time, children learn to work and play independently and within groups, develop collaborative and team skills, and also develop a sense of individuality as well as global connectivity.

#### **3.4.1 Core Subjects**

The Language Arts program in the Elementary School integrates skills that include reading (phonics/ word study), writing (grammar), speaking, and listening. The development of these skills is supported through a workshop model approach of instruction. Students receive a short phonics, reading, writing, and grammar mini-lesson daily and then are provided time to independently practice skills, with teacher support, at the individualized level appropriate for each learner.

The study of Mathematics includes basic computation, problem solving, and real-life applications with computers and calculators integrated appropriately. GAAQ uses the Everyday Math program, and the Creative Curriculum program supplemented by the use of manipulative materials, to provide concrete experiences that lead to conceptual understanding.

In Science, students are encouraged to exhibit an understanding of key scientific concepts and to develop their capacity for scientific thinking and processing. The Elementary School program uses the NGSS Standards to plan instruction and includes studies in scientific inquiry, physical science, earth science, and space science. Scientific concepts are integrated in literacy units of study with stand-alone science time built into the schedule for STEM activities or extended scientific-focused studies.

In Social Studies, students are prepared to become responsible and participating citizens in a global society. The Social Studies curriculum focuses four key strands: History, Economics, Geography, and Civics. Social Studies concepts are also integrated into the literacy units of study with additional time built into the schedule for direct instruction of Social Studies (C3) standards.

### **3.4.2 Specialist Subjects**

In addition to the core curriculum, various special classes are part of the Elementary School program, including Art, Arabic Language, Islamic Education, Qatar History, Music, IT, and Physical Education. Each special subject follows a specific curriculum that supports the development of the child at his or her grade level. It is understood that all students will participate in special classes as they do in core classes. All specialist subjects are taught by specially trained teachers in that discipline.

### **3.4.3 School Hours**

- Pre-K/ KG1 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m./2:15 p.m.
- Grade 1 to Grade 5 7:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.
- After-School Activities 2:30 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. (except Thursday)

**Note:** There will be early dismissal at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesdays to allow faculty and staff to take part in professional development programs.

Instruction starts promptly at 7:30. Students may enter the building from 7:10. Parents may not enter the learning areas in the morning and are requested to say good-bye to their children at the glass doors before entering the Elementary Wing of the school. All grade levels have a designated dismissal room. Students will not be released to parents during the dismissal transition. Parents must only pick up their children from that grade level's designated dismissal area after 2:15 (1:30 on Thursdays).

### **3.4.4 Assemblies**

Elementary or grade-level assemblies are held periodically. Assemblies allow us to celebrate our core values of world citizenship, universal values, leadership qualities, and forward thinking, and to promote school spirit. Assemblies allow our students to develop confidence and stage presence, and learn acceptable audience skills.

### **3.4.5 Learning Support**

We are committed to differentiated instruction to attend to the individual needs of our students. Learning support (Special Educational Needs and English Language Learners) is available for students starting in KG2, and is designed to assist students to achieve grade-level equivalencies in the mainstream classroom.

### **3.4.6 Guidance and Counseling Services**

The counselors manage the progress of each child by facilitating communication among students, parents, and faculty; supports the classroom teacher in managing the student's integration and continuing experience in the school environment; supports

teachers and administration to ensure the academic and behavioral success of each student; and works with students individually, in small groups, and at the classroom level.

#### 4.0 Assessment

The aim of assessment at GAAQ is to provide a positive, continuous, and supportive mechanism that promotes and improves student learning and achievement, guides instruction and practice, and evaluates program as well as instructional effectiveness.

#### 4.1 Report Cards

The purpose of the report card is to communicate with parents and students about the achievement of specific learning goals. It identifies student levels of performance with regard to those goals, areas of strength, and areas where additional time and effort are needed. Academic and non-academic grades are assigned using a four-point scale. GAAQ uses Standards-Based Grading, a system of reporting student proficiency in a number of specific learning goals (or standards). Rather than give students one grade on a test that assesses multiple skills, this system gives students a number of scores that represent



their proficiency in each of the skills assessed. The idea is that at the end of the class/unit, a student will have mastered the essential content necessary for the next level. The focus is on knowledge, not on points. Official report cards are sent home four times a year: November, January, April, and on the final day of school in June.

**Note:** Report cards will not be released if school-related fees have not been paid as per the payment schedule.

## **4.2 Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Parent-Teacher conferences to discuss student progress are held twice a year, in November, and April. Conferences may also be scheduled by request throughout the school year.

## **4.3 Externally Norm-Referenced Testing**

GAAQ collects data on students in Grades 1 - 5 in the Elementary School three times per year and in Grade KG2 twice per year through the use of Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) assessments. Grades KG2-1 are assessed in Reading and Math. Grades 2-4 are assessed in Reading, Math, and Language Usage. Grade 5 students are assessed in Reading, Math, Language Usage, and Science.

MAP reports assist teachers and administrators to:

- establish a student's precise instructional level;
- identify which areas to focus on for academic growth;
- compare a student's academic progress and growth with other students in the class, grade, school, or internationally; and
- track academic growth over time.

## **4.4 Promotion/Retention**

Students who successfully complete the objectives for a grade are promoted to the next grade level at the end of the year. Students who may need additional time to develop the skills needed for a grade may be retained. Discussions will be held with the parents and classroom teacher as soon as concerns about a student's success become apparent. The Counselor and Principal will also be involved in this decision where learning difficulties are evident.

## **5.0 Behavioral Guidelines**

### **5.1 Philosophy/Rights and Responsibilities**

#### **5.1.1 Philosophy**

We believe that all students should have the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential. We believe our teachers must guide students into becoming more self-disciplined and responsible learners who are able to work independently and cooperatively. We will provide a positive learning environment that is developmentally responsive to the social and academic needs of students. This environment, both inside and outside of the classroom, encourages a wide range of learning experiences. We encourage close collaboration and partnerships with students, parents, and faculty. The collective goal is learning for all.



### 5.1.2 Rights and Responsibilities

It is through mutual acceptance of responsibilities that rights exist. A right exists only to the extent that there is a responsibility on the part of others to respect that right.

Every student has a right to a relevant education.

Every student has a responsibility to:

- take materials to class
- complete and turn in assignments on time
- give every task their best effort

Every student has a right to be safe and secure in the school community.

Every student has a responsibility to respect the security of others and deal with conflict in an appropriate manner.

Every student has a right to expect reasonable, socially responsible behavior from others.

Every student has a responsibility to treat themselves and others with respect by speaking and acting in a socially responsible manner.

Every student has a right to a positive learning environment.

Every student has a responsibility to follow class rules by:

- being seated by the time class starts
- listening attentively
- following directions
- giving others an opportunity to learn
- remaining in class until dismissed by the teacher
- moving through the school in an orderly manner

Every student has a right to be part of a school of which they can be proud.

Every student has a responsibility to take pride in the school by helping maintain the campus, buildings, materials, and equipment.

Every student has a right to his or her good name.

Every student has a responsibility to respect the reputation of others.

### 6.0 Elementary School Discipline

GEMS American Academy Qatar is committed to ensuring that our school is a safe and productive learning environment for all students. To ensure that this environment is maintained, we strive to create a culture where all community members S.O.A.R:

- **Safe-** GAAQ students work collaboratively to maintain a safe school
- **Organized-** We learn how vital organization is in learning
- **Accountable-** Our students are accountable for their choices in school
- **Respectful-** Students that SOAR are respectful to their friends, staff, and teachers

We believe that supporting and promoting these positive behaviors are the most important steps to ensuring the safety and productivity of our school.

As in any school, despite these efforts, some students will still display behaviors that are problematic. GEMS American Academy is committed to dealing with these behaviors according to the following framework:

- **Timeliness:** We feel that it is important for students to receive feedback on negative behavior as quickly as possible. This approach helps students to better connect their negative choices with any consequences and ensures that issues are not allowed to linger and cause more damage to the school community.
- **Collaboration:** We strive to work with the students and their families together. This allows for both the school and the parents to better understand what may be causing the negative behavior and ensures that we are working together.
- **Matching our high expectations:** GAAQ sets high standards for our academic and behavior performance for all of our students and works to uphold these standards by addressing any behavior that falls short of our expectations.
- **Looking to the future:** With support students will be given clear expectations and guidelines in order to become productive members of our school community.

### **6.1 Detention/Suspension/Expulsion**

Disregard of school rules may result in detention, suspension, and/or expulsion. All infractions are referred to the office and recorded.

**Detention** may occur during break, lunch, or after school hours. The teacher and/or administrator will hold detention in a designated location.

**Suspensions** will be either in school or out of school and may vary in length. The student will be given an opportunity during the period of suspension to complete work given during the period of absence from class.

**Indefinite Suspension** may occur if limited suspensions have not been effective in changing the behavior in question.

**Expulsion** is the consequence for serious and/or repeated infractions and will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

### **6.2 Playground Rules and Guidelines**

- All children are to share the playground and equipment fairly with one another.
- All swings are to be pushed/propelled/moved only by those using them or an adult. Swings are to be used while in a sitting position and in a back and forth motion only. Children not using the swings are to keep a safe distance at all times.
- Tag and other chase games may be played on the ground only.

- Children must always get permission from a supervising staff member to enter the school for any reason.
- Children must be able to be seen by a staff member at all times.
- Equipment should be used for its designated purpose.
- Children should keep their hands to themselves and respect the personal space of others.
- Language must be appropriate.
- During hot weather, water bottles, hats, sunscreen, and reduced intensity of play are expected and encouraged.

### **6.3 Supervision Before and After School**

#### **Morning**

The school doors are opened to allow students to enter the building at 7:10 a.m. Students are able to go directly to their classrooms in preparation for the first lesson which will start promptly at 7:30 for all students. Parents may not enter the learning areas in the morning and are requested to say good-bye to their children at the glass doors before entering the Elementary Wing of the school.

#### **Afternoon**

Classes are dismissed at 2:15 p.m. on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Students should be picked up promptly by their parents (or designee) or proceed directly to their bus. In order to avoid disrupting learning, parents and drivers may only pick up their students from their designated dismissal area. Students will not be released to parents in the lobby area during the dismissal transition.

If a child is involved in an after-school activity, they should be met promptly at the completion of the activity. In the event that further use of school facilities is necessary, a student must be supervised by a parent or obtain permission from the Principal. Parents will be contacted if late pick-up from school becomes habitual.

Students who are not met within 15 minutes of dismissal times will report to the cafeteria and wait for their ride.

Please send a note to the teacher if your child is going home in a way that differs from their usual routine. Students should make arrangements to go home with another student the day before and inform the school of the change in plans. If any change in transportation plan occurs during the school day, please inform the teacher, school receptionist, and bus monitor (if applicable).

The campus is closed on Friday and Saturday, except for special events.

### **6.4 Academic Honesty**

Honesty in schoolwork requires that students do their own work. Students are expected to give credit to ideas, language, or thoughts which are not their own. To take ideas, writing, or thoughts

from someone else and pass them off as one's own is plagiarism and is a violation of academic honesty. Plagiarism can occur with print or non-print sources such as the Internet. Acts of academic dishonesty are a serious violation of the school community's trust, and students who commit academic dishonesty will face serious consequences. If the offense is repeated, a student could be asked to leave the school. Any violation or suspicion of violation of this academic honesty policy will be reported to the Principal immediately.

**Definition of plagiarism:** submitting words or ideas that are not your own without acknowledging the original author. This includes copying another student's paper, report, lab book, or assignment in whole or in part and submitting it as your own to a teacher or examiner. A superficial change of wording, structure, or conclusion is not sufficient to turn aside a charge of plagiarism.

### **6.5 Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) for Network Resources**

The intent of this policy is to give an overview of the acceptable and unacceptable use of these resources without exhaustively listing all possible uses and misuses. These guidelines are meant to define and enhance ethical, moral, and educational uses of the school Network and the Internet and provide procedural information.

We believe our school's technology offers vast, diverse and unique resources to both students and staff. While our intent is to make Network and Internet access available to further educational goals and objectives, students may find ways to access other materials as well. We believe that the benefits to students from access to the Internet, in the form of information resources and opportunities for collaboration, vastly exceed any disadvantages. Families should be warned that some materials accessible via the Internet might contain items that are illegal, defamatory, inaccurate, or potentially offensive to some people. Ultimately, parents and guardians of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using media and information sources.

The school and its staff will not be responsible for any damages suffered, including but not limited to the loss of data or interruption of services, nor is the school responsible for the accuracy or quality of the information obtained through or stored on the system. In addition, no responsibility will be taken for any financial obligations that come from the unauthorized use of the system.

### **Privileges, Rights, Responsibilities**

Access to the school Network and the Internet is a privilege and varies according to the age/grade of the student. All students will be required to complete a parental form prior to activation of the student's access privilege. The generally accepted rules of Network Etiquette will be followed. In brief, they are:

- a. Upon receiving your network folder, you will be given a password. Under no circumstances should you provide your password to another person.
- b. Do not violate copyright by distributing material owned by others over the Internet.
- c. Report any threatening or abusive communications you receive to a faculty member or

the IT specialists.

### Consequences of Violations

First violation	(minimum consequence) Consultation with Principal and parents and denial of access to network for a week.
Second violation	(minimum consequence) Consultation with Principal and parents. Denial of access to network for 3 weeks plus possible suspension.
Third violation	(minimum consequence) Consultation with Principal and parents. Denial of access to network for a length of time to be determined, and suspension or possible expulsion.

Some of the steps above may be bypassed depending upon the severity of violation committed.

### 6.7 School Uniforms

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

- light blue tailored shirt of an appropriate size, tucked in at the waist (old uniform)
- polo shirt (color specific to grade level)
- dark blue slacks for boys
- knee-length or longer dark blue skirts or slacks for girls
- dark blue tie with school logo (optional with old uniform)
- black shoes with non-marking soles
- black leather belts for slacks

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

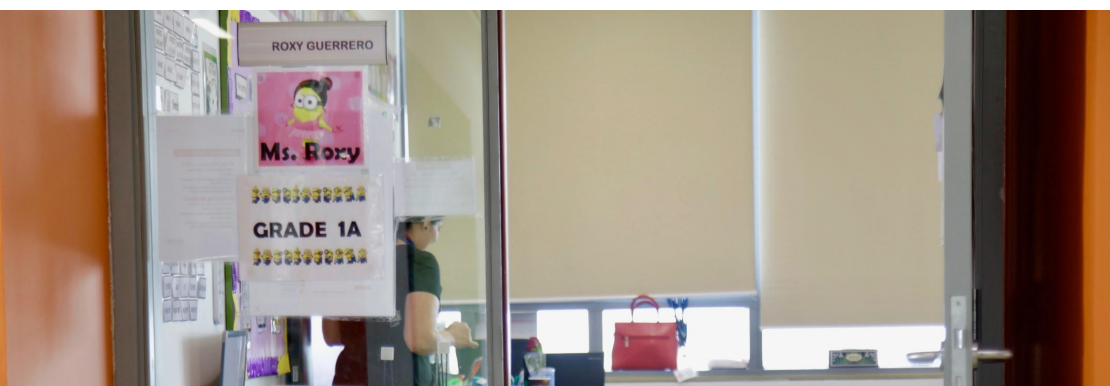
School administration has the final judgment on dress code violations. Students may be required to return home for the purpose of changing their clothes if what they are wearing is deemed unacceptable.

### 6.8 Attendance/Withdrawal

#### 6.8.1 School Hours

The school day is from 7:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. *except* on Thursday, when the hours are 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

After-school activities are held from 2:30 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. every day except Thursday.





### **6.8.2 Absences**

Every minute of a child's time at school is important. Children who are absent for even one day or who arrive later than their classmates miss valuable instruction time and can easily fall behind in school. They also miss important socialization time and fun with their peers. Satisfactory school progress is dependent upon regular attendance.

Parents are requested to plan vacations, trips, and absences for personal reasons to correspond with school holidays so that the education process is not disrupted.

If a student does not attend his or her assigned class or activity and has not obtained teacher approval at least one day in advance, then the absence shall be presumed unexcused. Students will receive consequences for unexcused absences, which may include detention, parent conference, or referral to school administration (see attendance policy 6.8.6).

If a student is sick, he or she is responsible for any and all missed assignments. The student should contact a classmate to get any important notes and assignments from classes missed.

If a student misses two or more periods in a day, with or without parental communication as to the reasons for the absence, then this will be recorded as a half-day excused or unexcused absence, as the case may be. Students on school trips (e.g., sporting or cultural trips) will not be recorded as absent.

Unexcused absence or tardiness may result in a student being unable to participate in activities the following day.

In order for a student to participate in an after-school activity, they must be in attendance during the last two classes of the school day. Elementary School students are not permitted to participate in or attend an Elementary School activity on a day they are absent from school. In order to participate in an activity, students must be present by no later than 12:00 noon on the day of the activity. The Principal will make the only exceptions to this policy.

### **6.8.3 Tardies**

Punctuality shows respect for classmates and teachers. Students are expected to be in their classrooms by 7:30 a.m. Students arriving after 7:30 a.m. will be considered tardy. Tardies will be recorded and will appear on student report cards. When a child will be late or absent from school, parents must notify the teacher.

If a student has excessive or frequent lateness, the school principal will meet with the parents to help to address this issue.

### **6.8.4 Planned Absences Other Than School Holidays**

It is the school's philosophy that attendance in class is of primary importance. There are times, however, when an absence is unavoidable. In such cases, the parent is responsible for advising the school. Assignments and examinations often cannot be given in advance and will have to be

completed upon the student's return. These absences are included in the attendance policy.

Please note that attendance during exams is mandatory and, barring an emergency, students will not be allowed to miss an exam.

### **6.8.5 Withdrawal Procedures**

- 1) Parents should notify the Principal and Registrar, and students should notify their teachers of the withdrawal date as far in advance as possible, preferably a minimum of two weeks ahead of time.
- 2) The Registrar will issue a withdrawal form that will be taken by the student to all concerned teachers and the library, and then the form will be returned to the Registrar. The Registrar will notify parents, the Principal, and the Head of School of any outstanding fees. Transfer certificates will be given to parents once all outstanding fees are settled and parents have met with the Principal and/or Head of School.
- 3) Parents who wish to pick up their children's records in person may be accommodated; however, they should notify the school of their desire to do this, and ample time must be given to assemble records. Issuance of report cards and records at the end of the year may be delayed due to scoring of exams. In that case, transcripts and/or records will be forwarded to the new school or to the parents by mail. (Parents should leave their forwarding address and a stamped envelope for this purpose.) Confidential student records and/or letters of reference will be sent directly to the receiving school. Records cannot be released until all outstanding fees are paid.

### **6.8.6 Attendance Policy**

- 3 absences in a row- classroom teacher will contact home and note the call
- 7 absences- Parent will receive an email notification from the school with the attendance policy
- 10 absences- Parent will receive a phone call from the school
- 15 absences- Parent will come to school to meet with SLT and sign a contract
- 20 absences- Parent will meet with the Head of School and recognizes that the student is eligible for retention

### **6.9 Student Electronic Device Policy**

Lower School students are not allowed to bring personal electronic devices (cell phone, tablets, smart watches, etc) to school. Any personal electronic devices that are brought to school will be collected by the teacher and returned to parents.

## **7.0 Student Services**

### **7.1 Library**

#### **7.1.1 Expectations**

- Students must be respectful of other students by using quiet voices.
- Food and drinks are not allowed in the library.

- Students are expected to return their books on time and in good condition.

### **7.1.2 Guidelines**

- 1) All students are welcome to come to the library to use the resources and borrow books.
- 2) Students in Grades 1st to 5th can check out two books for two weeks. Renewals may be requested prior to the book's due date; however, if another student or faculty member has requested an item, it must be returned.
- 3) Books and other items should be returned or renewed by the due date. Reminder notices will be sent on a regular basis for long-overdue materials. Materials that are long overdue will be considered lost and after several reminders, an invoice will be issued.
- 4) Report cards and transfer certificates will not be issued until all books and fines are cleared. Students who withdraw early must return library materials so their clearance form can be signed.
- 5) If damage makes a book unusable, the cost of the book plus a processing fee will be charged and the student will not be allowed to check out any more library materials until the amount has been paid. Damaged books remain the property of the school and will not be returned to the student.
  
- 6) A lost book should be reported as soon as possible to the librarian so a replacement can be ordered. The cost of the book plus a processing fee will be charged. If the book is found within six (6) weeks of payment, the amount paid will be refunded to the student, providing a replacement book has not already been purchased.
- 7) Parents are welcome to use and enjoy the library. Please see library staff to register.

### **7.2 School Health Office Services**

Health Office responsibilities include administering first aid, treating minor ailments, providing health education, maintaining health records, updating vaccinations and medical information, and liaising with the Supreme Health Council.

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

- Health Information Form
- Medical Consent Form
- Immunization Record (copy)

The Health Office and Registrar should be informed immediately of any change in telephone numbers/contact information so that we are always able to reach a parent or guardian in the event of sickness or accident. In anticipation of both parents being out of contact or traveling outside the country, an alternative contact number must be left with the Health Office and Registrar.

**Sickness at school:** When students become ill during the school day and feel the need to go home, they must go to the Health Office to discuss their health issue with the nurse. The best

course of care will be decided. 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's time of receiving the nurse's phone call. A student may go home via taxi, 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.

**School medical examinations:** The Supreme Health Council requires that students in selected grades undergo a school medical by 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:** If your child must take any regular medications during school hours, (either on a long- or short-term basis), kindly give these medications to the Health Office to be administered by our nursing staff. 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 Office if their child has any allergies.

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

The ELL program is fully committed to the academic achievement of all English language learners who attend the school. Language acquisition is a collaborative social process that takes place through meaningful interaction. Language learning is most effective when it takes place in the mainstream classroom where the content of the curriculum is the vehicle for acquiring English. The main objective of the ELL program is for students to attain a level of proficiency in the English language that will enable them to function successfully in all their classes.

### **7.4 Special Educational Needs (SEN) Program**

We realize that many of our students learn in different ways and have their own unique academic abilities. To address the needs of our Elementary School SEN students, the administrative staff, counselors, and teachers recognize the importance of implementing the following academic support:

- access to peer tutors for any subject;
- assistance with homework, essay reviews, and study preps;
- implementation of exam, homework, and project accommodations as required by the student's educational evaluation and their Individual Education Plan (IEP); and
- assistance with organization, time management, and study skills.

Our priority is to provide the best possible academic support to ensure the success of all students.

## **7.5 Food Services**

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

## **7.6 Lost and Found Services**

Lost and found items are kept on tables near the Health Office. Watches, jewelry, and glasses are usually kept at Security or Reception for the first week. Students and parents are encouraged to check the lost and found frequently. Any unclaimed items will be donated to charity at the end of the school year.

## **7.7 Bus Transportation Services and Rules**

Transportation to and from school is available through our school bus service. Information about the bus service is available through our Public Relations Officer and/or our Transportation Coordinator. Parents are in no way restricted to the use of the school bus service and are welcome to investigate alternative methods of transportation. Bus transportation information can be found on the school's website.

### **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.
- Do not change your seat while the bus is moving, parked at a traffic signal, or without asking the monitor/teacher.
- Do not throw anything while on the bus.
- Do not distract the driver. Please keep voice volume down.
- No use of music players, video games, or electronic items 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.
- Foul language, bullying, or any behavior that would not be tolerated while at school will not be tolerated on the bus.



## 8.0 After-School Activities

We believe our after-school activities program plays an integral role in our ability to positively impact students' academic, social, and emotional development by providing an array of opportunities for growth and learning outside of the regular school day and curriculum. After-school activities are offered during all three terms. School-sponsored activities are planned and led by GAAQ faculty and staff and offered free of charge. School-hosted activities are planned and led by outside professionals and usually come with an additional charge. The after-school activities program is offered at the following times:

Season 1: September to December

Season 2: January to March

Season 3: April to June

**Note:** Seasonal adjustments to this schedule may happen due to the observance of Ramadan and our shortened hours of operation during that time.

## 9.0 Home-School Communication

### 9.1 Academic Reporting

Our school uses an online academic reporting system. All GAAQ parents and students will be given access to the system until they graduate or withdraw.

### 9.2 Newsletter

Communication between parents and school is a high priority at GAAQ. Parents receive notices about school events on Thursdays throughout the year via classroom, grade level, and school-wide e-newsletters.

### 9.3 Back To School Night

Early in the school year, we hold a Back to School Night to introduce parents to classroom expectations, school policies and procedures, and the grade level's curriculum.

### 9.4 Celebrations/Birthday Parties

We do not permit Birthday Parties or celebrations in school. For students who would like to share their birthday with classmates, they can bring in individual treats such as donuts, cupcakes, brownies, or gift bags to distribute at the end of the school day. We do not allow any decorations or parents into the classroom. Any student having an outside birthday party must hand out invitations to all students in the classroom.

### 9.5 Visitor Guidelines

**Visitors have a right** to be safe and secure in the community.

**Visitors have a responsibility** to comply with reasonable staff and security requests, to respect

the security of others, and to deal with conflict in an appropriate manner.

**Visitors have a right** to expect reasonable, socially responsible behavior from others.

**Visitors have a responsibility** to treat themselves, others, and their surroundings with respect by speaking and acting in a socially responsible manner.

**Visitors have a right** to meet and communicate with school staff in a timely manner.

**Visitors have a responsibility** to make school appointments in advance in a manner that would be expected when scheduling meetings with any other working professionals.

## 10.0 Parent Support at Home and School

There are three main ways parents can get involved in supporting their children's learning at GAAQ:

### **Learning at home**

Parents are the primary educators of their children and, as such, are encouraged to work in partnership with teachers to discover ways to help develop and support learning at home, in the community, and at school.

### **Home-School partnership**

Our teachers invite the involvement of parents in the work they do and are open to finding many ways of providing information that will help parents engage with their children's school and education.

### **Parental representation**

All parents of GAAQ students are automatically members of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and are invited to get involved on the executive level or as a committee volunteer. *(Please see Section 10.4, below.)*

## 10.1 Appointments with Faculty

While parents are always welcome at school, if you would like to discuss a specific issue, please schedule an appointment in advance. When a parent has a concern regarding a teacher, the school administration will direct the parent to speak with the teacher first. Through open and honest dialogue between teacher and parent, most issues will be resolved in a mutually beneficial manner. If the issue in question is not resolved, then please make an appointment with the appropriate administrator.

## 10.2 Extended Parent Absences

Students should always have proper home supervision by a parent. If an occasion arises when you will be out of Doha/Qatar and your child will not be under your direct supervision, please send a written notice to the school advising as to the name and contact information for the person who will have guardianship responsibilities for your child.

#### **10.4 Sharing Expertise**

Teachers welcome parental expertise on topics related to the curriculum. Parents willing to be guest speakers or to share collections and artifacts should inform the classroom teacher of their areas of interest. Parent presentations at assemblies are greatly appreciated.

#### **10.5 Field Trips**

We believe that field trips provide students with important shared social experiences in which they encounter and explore new things in authentic settings. Field trips give our students hands-on and minds-on learning opportunities that will appeal to a variety of learning styles and needs. Your child's teacher will provide information about upcoming field trips.

#### **10.6 Homework**

Students in lower school are not assigned homework for a grade. All students are expected to read for at least twenty minutes each night. Occasionally, a teacher may provide students with extra practice in academic areas for growth or preparation for a test. Teachers may also provide students tasks to complete at home for a project.