

Where we explore and discover.



**CURRICULUM
HANDBOOK**

Foundation Stage 1

2025 - 2026

Discover
LEADERSHIP



مدرسة جيمس متروبول
GEMS Metropole School
MOTOR CITY

GEMS
EDUCATION



Introduction

Welcome to Forest School

On behalf of all of the staff at GEMS Metropole School, it is a pleasure to welcome you and your family this academic year.

In the Forest School, our focus is on leading learning through play and this is at the heart of everything we do. This takes place in our world class facilities; the forest school, farm and indoor environments. Beyond the school day, we provide opportunities for the students to develop extra curriculum interests which are also celebrated inside of school.

Parents are strong partners in our learning and it is a pleasure to invite you in to share our journey through the year to a variety of exciting events. We make no excuses for your children being confident, imaginative learners taking risks to lead change in our community.

Emily Shepherd
Head of Forest School



Welcome to Foundation Stage 1

On behalf of everyone here at GEMS Metropole School, I am delighted to welcome you and your family to our community within the Foundation Stage. We are excited for you to join us as we start our learning journey at GEMS Metropole school.

In Foundation Stage One, we understand the fundamental importance of learning through play, enabling children to explore with opportunities to explore, create, play, create using real-life learning experiences. This is done through carefully planned and tailored continuous provision areas, interest-based learning and our incredible Forest school and Farm. We design meaningful experiences that place your child at the heart of their learning journey—sparking curiosity, awe, and a sense of wonder every step of the way. Our passion lies in building strong, trusting partnerships with families, so together we can support, nurture, and unlock each child's unique potential.

We invite you to be involved in as much of our school life as possible, and we invite you to join us in the many events planned throughout the year including stay and play, mystery reader and many more! We look forward to working with our parents on this wonderful learning journey ahead!

Grace Lees
Head of Foundation Stage 1





Primary School Leadership Team



Emily Shepherd
Head of Forest School



Simon Longdon
Head of Values School



Lucy Nicholls
Deputy Head of Primary



Erin Nelson
Deputy Head of Primary



Lauren McAuley
Assistant Head of Primary



Debbie Simpson
Assistant Head of Primary



Melissa Sweeney
Assistant Head of Primary



Brendan Eveleigh
Assistant Head of Primary

The Metropole Curriculum Journey

At GEMS Metropole School, our programme of learning reflects the GEMS Education core values and is delivered through a creative and curiosity-driven curriculum. We are committed to providing a high-quality education within a happy, supportive, and nurturing environment where every child feels empowered to explore, take risks and think independently. Lessons are thoughtfully planned to be challenging, engaging, and purposeful - igniting imagination and inspiring a love of learning. Our approach encourages enquiry, critical thinking, decision-making and problem-solving, with students actively involved in shaping their own learning journey. Opportunities for leadership are embedded across the curriculum, and high expectations are upheld by all members of our school community, ensuring a culture of ambition, respect and continuous growth.

Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum – FS1

Children learning in Foundation Stage follow the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage framework (EYFS) for teaching and development. This stage is very important in a child's life as it helps prepare your child for school 'readiness' as well as for their future learning and successes. Children learn skills, acquire new knowledge and demonstrate their understanding through 7 areas of learning and development: Communication and Language, Physical Development, Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design. All 7 areas of learning are used to plan children's learning and activities. Teachers make sure that the activities are suited to your child's unique needs.

Prime Areas		Specific Areas	
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Building Relationships Managing Self Self-Regulations	Literacy	Reading Writing Comprehension
		Mathematics	Numbers Numerical Pattern
Physical Development	Gross Motor and Fine Motor Health and Self-care	Understanding the World	People, Culture and Communities The Natural World Past and Present
Communication and Language	Listening and Attention Understanding Speaking		Expressive Arts and Design

Ministry of Education Curriculum

Alongside the Early Years Curriculum and National Curriculum of England, students also study the Ministry of Education Curriculum. Through this, students learn Arabic, Islamic Studies and Moral, Social and Cultural Studies. The UAE leaders along with GEMS Metropole School promote the learning and using of Arabic language as it is considered a fundamental pillar of the Emirates national identity, its people's history and its deep-rooted traditions. The Arabic framework supports both native and non-native Arabic speakers. This framework illustrates the levels expected to be achieved by the learner in each of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Where Arabic is the student's non-native language, the curriculum links the achievement of these levels to the number of years spent in studying Arabic, regardless of the learner's current grade.

Sustainability Curriculum at GEMS Metropole School

At GEMS Metropole School, sustainability is a core focus woven throughout our Forest School curriculum. The school farm plays a vital role in bringing this to life, offering students immersive, hands-on experiences that highlight the importance of caring for the environment. From growing produce and composting to learning about resource conservation and animal welfare, students gain a deep understanding of sustainable practices in action. These real-life learning opportunities are further enhanced through leadership roles and enterprise initiatives, empowering students to take responsibility, make ethical choices, and actively contribute to a more sustainable future within their school and wider community.



Outdoor Learning - *Where we explore and discover*

In FS1, outdoor learning is 'Adventure Time'. It is a vital part of the early years curriculum, laying the foundation for curiosity, confidence, and communication. Daily outdoor experiences allow our children to engage in sensory-rich moments that spark imagination while also nurturing physical and social development. With daily access to our thoughtfully designed outdoor spaces, they freely engage in activities while using a range of natural materials, they observe seasonal changes; all of which support early language, physical and social development. A special highlight of their outdoor learning journey is regular visits to our onsite school farm. These experiences allow the children to interact with animals, learn about their care, and develop a first-hand understanding. Weekly farm visits help to nurture respect for living things and supports early learning in sustainability and empathy.

Our FS1 team play a key role taking on the roles as 'Play Patrols' and 'Adventurers' in extending learning by asking open-ended questions and supporting children to think critically about their discoveries.

Risky play is gently introduced in a safe and structured manner, enabling children to assess simple challenges, take age-appropriate risks, and develop resilience. These early outdoor experiences help children gain independence, make informed choices, and build the confidence to express themselves in a meaningful way.



Alesha Dublin
Director of Outdoor Learning

The Curiosity Approach

Forest School – *Where we explore and discover*

We are on a wonderful journey of discovering what awe and wonder is in Foundation Stage 1. We have successfully gained The Curiosity Approach Accreditation and are very proud to be one of the few schools in the UAE.

We use a play and child-led approach where the children become the centre of their own development and learning. They are encouraged to explore, experiment, and create, using engaging and open-ended resources. Their innate curiosity is awakened and sparked.

Following the EYFS framework the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning draws upon values shared by The Curiosity Approach.

These are:

Playing and exploring – where children investigate and experience things, and ‘have a go’.

Active learning – where children concentrate and keep on trying, even when they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.

Creating and thinking critically - where children have and develop their own ideas, and can make links between them, and develop strategies for doing things.



Forest School sessions are carefully structured to support developmental progression, nurturing the whole child through hands-on, child-led experiences in a natural outdoor setting. In the early weeks, children are introduced to the Forest School environment through sensory exploration and play. They learn to move safely within the space, follow simple routines, and develop an awareness of boundaries and expectations. Our Forest School teacher ensures throughout the lessons the children begin to investigate natural materials, listen to sounds in nature, and engage in small group activities that encourage turn-taking, observation, and communication. As the year progresses, children grow in confidence and begin to take more ownership of their learning. They engage in more purposeful activities under close supervision. Their fine and gross motor skills are strengthened through digging and carrying materials. Children develop curiosity by asking questions and closely observing changes in the environment. By the end of the year, FS1 children demonstrate a growing sense of responsibility and care for the natural world. They begin to talk with increasing confidence about what they see and do, reflect on their experiences. Through Forest School, FS1 children build strong foundations in independence, resilience, and care and responsibility for the natural world around them.



Termly Overviews

Term 1: Who are we?

As the children start their educational journey at GEMS Metropole School, during Term 1 they will begin to learn all about each other while exploring their new warm and nurturing learning environments, both indoors and outdoors. They look forward to building relationships with their new friends and teachers.

The children will be introduced to their class bear, who will accompany us throughout the year on all their learning adventures, and they will look forward to sharing and discussing these experiences as a class. They will start to explore and develop skills that support their learning and confidence in all areas of their development. The children will also learn how to collaborate in play and learning together.

During this term they will develop their communication and language skills; discussing their community, family traditions, and learning about the world around them. The children will learn to recognise and respect differences in beliefs and celebrations, promoting empathy and understanding, and fostering a culture of inclusivity.

As the children become comfortable in their familiar learning environments, we will invite their families to experience 'a day in the life' at Metropole in Foundation Stage One.

Term 2: What can you create and grow?

In Term 2, the children are encouraged to take ownership over their environment with lots of opportunities for self-selection. They will continue to engage in a rich and stimulating learning environment using both the indoor and outdoor environments. They continue to have the opportunity of exploring the wonders of the natural world in a collaborative way.

Children in FS1 will use and choose to play with intelligent resources. The use of loose parts and open-ended resources will provide them with endless opportunities for curiosity and play. They will be encouraged to pursue their interests, provided with opportunities that encourages them to be curious while sparking fascination with a focus on themselves and the world around them.

The children will continue to build confidence throughout all areas of their development, while learning how to collaborate in play and learning together. In FS1 the children will broaden their breath of understanding through communication and language skills as they explore while creating and building a love of learning in the discovery and joy in all sorts of ways.

Termly Overviews

Term 3: What adventure are you going on?

As we wrap up our final term in FS1, the journey keeps moving forward. They are continuing to build on their language and mark-making skills. The children in Term 3 are using all their senses in hands-on exploration, talking about what they see with a wide vocabulary, and starting to fully grasp questions. Encouraging the children to continuously and regularly express their feelings at different times. Discuss right and wrong behaviors and how their actions can impact others.

FS1 children are approaching every opportunity with a love for learning. They're now using the skills they've developed in new situations. These abilities and attitudes toward learning will help them get ready for Foundation Stage 2. By the end of this term, the children are excited to show the skills they've gained during their FS1 learning journey.

Foundation Stage 1: Curriculum

Communication and Language

In this area of learning in FS1 we focus on speaking, listening, attention and understanding. Communication and Language is an important and integral part of most learning experiences in FS1. As children develop speaking and listening skills, they are truly placing the building blocks for literacy and learning. On top of this they are learning key skills for example how to express themselves and make friends. For this reason, throughout FS1 we will be focusing on a plethora of different learning opportunities in order to develop these areas. We focus on rhyme and stories which involves the use of communication and languages, learning and developmental areas, such as listening and understanding the stories, learning language and new vocabulary. Throughout the day-to-day children are supported in responding appropriately to what people say, expressing their ideas and feelings using past, present and future tenses and to include conjunctions in sentences to extend speaking. This is done through play with peers and adults, teacher modelling and general language use both in the indoor and outdoor environment.



Foundation Stage 1: Curriculum

Physical Development



Physical development comes under one of the key areas of Foundation stage. At GEMS Metropole School Foundation stage, we aim to support our students in developing and strengthening their movement, understanding their own body, the handling of objects, tool use and accuracy and care when mark-making. Throughout the year students are encouraged and provided with different opportunities to develop the different physical development areas both indoors, outdoors and during P.E. lessons.

One predominant area is the strengthening and development of fine motor skills. We do this through providing different opportunities within the learning environment such as mark-making, playing with playdough, using tweezers, using and strengthening pencil grip and using small tools to make changes to materials and lots of different activities that involve our hands! Another important area within physical development is gross motor skills.

During the year, we offer the opportunity to demonstrate spatial awareness, strength, balance and co-ordination both during PE lessons, using the outdoor area and whilst playing in the classroom during continuous provision time.

Foundation Stage 1: Curriculum

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

At GEMS Metropole School, we place a high focus on our children's' personal, emotional and social development as we understand that this is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives and is fundamental to their cognitive development.

Our aim is to ensure all children have and feel happy and safe and feel a sense of belonging when coming to school. Strong, warm and supportive relationships with adults enable our children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others.

Our children are supported to manage their emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, and to persist and wait for what they want. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peacefully. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.



Foundation Stage 1: Curriculum

Literacy

At GEMS Metropole School, we want our children to develop a passion for reading and writing for pleasure from the start of their learning journey. Each topic, we use rich quality texts to develop our students vocabulary and build on their story telling skills. Throughout school, we use Drawing Club to support early stages of writing and storytelling. This supports their oracy, imagination and creativity. Our aim is for children to verbally retell stories through images and symbols that they are able to process independently and in their own way. We encourage children to make marks that can be expressed to give meaning, which then develops into children exploring initial letters from their name or things important to them. For example 'm' for mummy.

Phonics

At GEMS Metropole School, we believe that every child should have the opportunity to become a happy, fluent reader. The Read Write Inc (RWI) phonics programme offers a coherently planned sequence of lessons that supports the effective teaching of phonics within Foundation Stage.

Throughout Phase 1, young learners develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to discriminate between and use auditory, environmental and instrumental sounds. Phase 1 is taught in FS1 at GEMS Metropole School and in Term 3 the children begin to work on Set 1. Here, learners are introduced to phonemes/sounds and graphemes/letters informally.

The GEMS Metropole School RWI intends to not only provide children with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding essential for reading and writing, but also, to develop each child's confidence, resilience and engagement in phonics and a love for reading and writing ready for when they transition up to FS2.



What does music look like in FS1?

In FS1, music and movement are joyful, expressive parts of our day that support children's creativity, confidence, and physical development. Inspired by the Curiosity Approach, we provide open-ended opportunities for children to explore sound, rhythm, and movement in natural and engaging ways. Whether it's dancing freely to music, experimenting with instruments made from everyday objects, or creating soundscapes from nature, children are encouraged to follow their interests and express themselves without limits. Music and movement are woven into our environment and daily routines and with our music specialists, helping children develop coordination, imagination, and a deep sense of joy in learning.

What does Arabic look like in FS1?

In FS1 children will be exposed to the Arabic language through songs, play and engaging opportunities. This will help children to foster a love of the Arabic language and culture.

Foundation Stage 1: Curriculum

Mathematics

In Mathematics, we provide children with a high quality learning environment that supports children with ample opportunities to develop and enhance their skills in counting, awareness of shapes, patterns, understanding numbers and number problems. We use natural resources as manipulatives to help develop number sense and accurate counting. This year in mathematics, the children will be developing their understanding of numbers to 5.

In GEMS Metropole School, staff use their knowledge and expertise to support and facilitate mathematical activities in everything the children do whether that is inside or outside the classroom through practical hands-on experiences. We provide children with the opportunity to solve problems practically and with a purpose. Our highly skilled staff tailor learning to meet the needs of all children through addressing common misconceptions while supporting new concepts.

Understanding of the World

We are passionate about providing our children with the opportunity to explore and be curious. Our learning environments has been specifically created to enable children the space to create opportunities of learning and ask 'why' and 'how' questions. Children are learning key skills as they engage, observe and tinker to help them make sense of the world around them.

Throughout the Foundation Stage 1, our learning spaces provide children with open-ended opportunities to make links with other areas of the curriculum, while using the many resources that are readily available. We are exceptionally proud of how our children can find things out for themselves and share this independently.





Foundation Stage 1: Curriculum

Expressive Arts and Design

Children at GEMS Metropole School are encouraged to express themselves in a way that reflects their own personality, culture and identity. Children are exposed to a rich learning environment that encourages role-play, art and music. In Foundation Stage our teachers along with the children, adapt both the indoor and outdoor environment regularly to support children's interests. These adaptations encourage children to take on different roles where they fully immerse themselves through different means of expression.



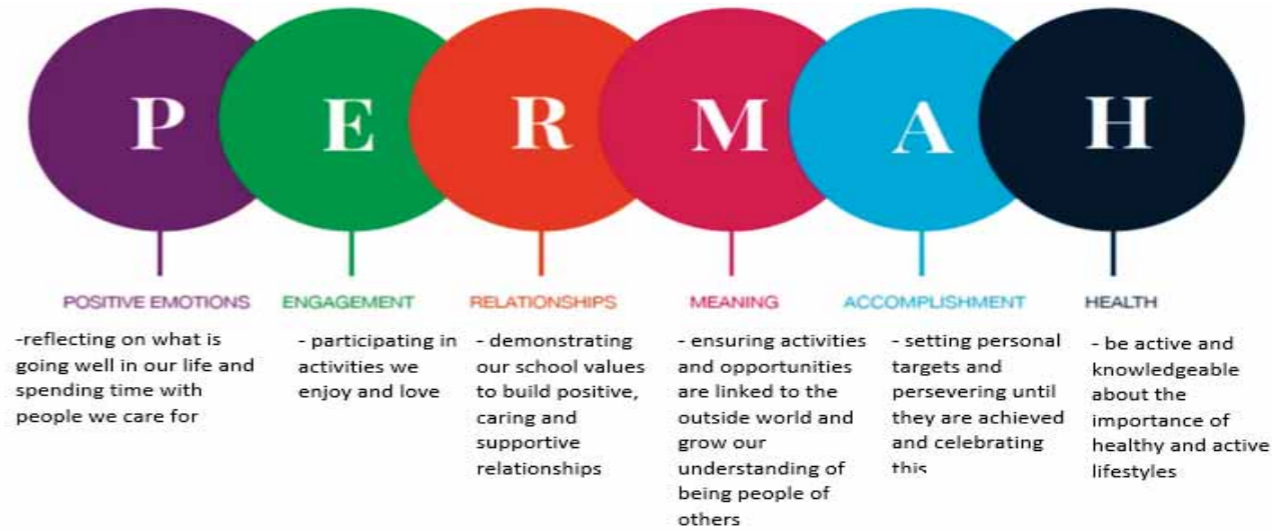
Student Wellbeing

At GEMS Metropole School, we are committed to promoting and supporting the positive mental health and wellbeing of our students. We recognise that mental health and emotional wellbeing is just as important as physical health. Individuals are better prepared for a happier fulfilled life when they are healthy, safe and thriving.

GEMS Metropole School supports the UAE vision for wellbeing by sharing the following vision:

'We are proactive in promoting wellbeing, allowing us all to personally thrive.'

This vision is based on a proactive, positive psychology model, reinforced through the PERMAH framework allowing our community to build their personal sense of happiness and wellbeing, rather than a reactive only approach. Across the school we achieve this through LEAD time, assemblies, happiness rooms, pastoral curriculum, school events, Metropole Mustangs, School Farm and through the 4 school model we have here at GEMS Metropole School.





Foundation Stage 1: Communications

Parent Workshop Information

This year, we will be sharing regular opportunities for you to learn more about what your child is exploring in FS1. From our key learning concepts to how we support development through play and curiosity, we will keep you informed and involved every step of the way.

Little Acorn's Creche

Little Acorns is a warm and welcoming afternoon provision designed especially for Foundation Stage children. Led by our experienced teaching assistant, this crèche offers a nurturing space where children can relax, explore, and enjoy a gentle afternoon of play-based learning. Little Acorns provides a calm and engaging environment that supports children's well-being while offering added convenience for families. Whether building, creating, or winding down after a busy morning, children are supported with care, encouragement, and plenty of opportunities to follow their interests.

FS1 Communication

Over the year, we will communicate with you in a variety of ways. You can expect to receive communication for your children in the following ways:

Class Email

Each week, your child's class teacher will email out information specific to your child's class. This will include learning that has happened that week as well as what will be coming up in the following week. It will also detail any upcoming events, trips or important communication.

Weekly Whole School Newsletter

Every Friday, you will receive the school newsletter, which contains important updates for the entire school. It includes messages from the principal, information on Care and Support, Arabic and Islamic studies, Al Noor Centre, and various ongoing activities.

Head of Forest School Newsletter

This will be received bi - monthly. This newsletter contains a wider view of what is happening within the school.


GO4Schools / School Reports


You will receive two reports each term which will be available on GO4Schools for you to review and download.







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