مدرسة جيمس متروبول
GEMS Metropole School
MOTOR CITY

GEMS EDUCATION

AL NOOR

Heritage and Culture Centre

Discover LEADERSHIP

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Introduction

Welcome to the Al Noor Heritage and Cultural Centre at GEMS Metropole School. It is a privilege to lead a space that helps our school community connect with the values, stories, and traditions that shape who we are.

A key purpose of the Centre is to raise awareness and appreciation of the culture and heritage of the United Arab Emirates. We want our students to understand the roots of the nation they live in and feel a strong sense of connection to its history and people. At the same time, we promote core Islamic values that guide good character and respectful conduct, as well as British values that support active, responsible citizenship.

Students are at the heart of everything we do. Whether they're leading heritage stalls, presenting assemblies, guiding guests through our events, or creating educational resources, we want them to take ownership of their learning and take pride in their identity. The Centre gives them a platform to lead with confidence and to represent the diverse voices within our school.

We also deeply value the role of parents and the wider community. Through initiatives like the Family First campaign and the Heritage Hike, families have the chance to contribute meaningfully to school life. Their involvement helps create a warm, inclusive atmosphere that supports student growth and builds strong relationships across generations.

Through a wide range of activities and events, the Centre creates opportunities for everyone to learn, lead, and contribute. From interfaith gatherings to themed cultural weeks, everything we do is designed to strengthen identity, build understanding, and bring people together.

This handbook offers an overview of our work and how you can be part of it. I hope it inspires you to get involved and support the continued growth of this important initiative.

Warm regards,

Mr. Mohammed Makda
Director, Al Noor Heritage and Culture Centre

Al Noor Leadership Team

Mohammed Makda
Director of Al Noor Heritage and Culture centre

Shaikh Abdullah Abo Shanab
Imam and Quran reciter

Mohamed Wasel
Deputy Director of MOE Subjects

Simon Longdon
Head of Junior School

Abdelrhman Mohamed
Head of Islamic Department

A Tour of the Centre

The Hall
The Centre itself hosts a multi-use area, primarily functioning as a prayer area whilst also being used to host events and workshops. Curriculum classes and ECAs are regularly held within this space.

Emirati and Arabic Heritage Library
Beyond the Hall lies a library with titles on Emirati culture and heritage and the history of the UAE and its esteemed leaders. Within the same library are classical and contemporary titles on Islam. Books are in both Arabic and English.

Female-Only Space
The first floor hosts a female only space for prayer, workshops and personal meditation and reflection. This space is easily accesible to students who wish for a few moments of peace within the day, as well as adjacent to classrooms facilitating ease of use for curriculum-based sessions or ECAs.

Overview of Activities

1. Assemblies and Presentations

Our assemblies and presentations are designed to raise cultural and heritage awareness across the school. These short but impactful sessions are delivered to different age groups throughout the year, often aligning with monthly themes or national celebrations. Whether it's a story from UAE history, a reflection on Islamic values, or a message of interfaith understanding, these sessions promote identity, respect, and belonging.

2. Cultural Days & Festivals

Cultural Days provide students with the opportunity to learn about different traditions through dress, food, language, and art. These events are interactive, inclusive, and celebrate the diversity within our school. From UAE National Day to International Day, students and families are encouraged to take part, share their heritage, and appreciate the rich tapestry of cultures represented at GEMS Metropole.

Overview of Activities

3. Guest Speakers & Exhibitions

We invite a range of approved speakers from across the UAE and beyond, both on-site and online, to share their insights and lived experiences with our students. These include Emirati historians, cultural ambassadors, artists, and community leaders. Exhibitions are also hosted within the Al Noor Centre, in classrooms or appropriate locations across the school, offering visual and interactive learning experiences on key heritage topics, Islamic history, or contemporary societal themes.

4. Staff Workshops & CPD

The Al Noor Centre runs professional development workshops for staff to deepen their understanding of Islamic values, UAE heritage, and cultural inclusion. These sessions form part of our wider CPD programme and are especially important during staff induction, ensuring new teachers are equipped to work respectfully and effectively in our unique cultural setting. Topics range from practical classroom strategies to deeper intercultural understanding.

Overview of Activities

7. Curriculum Enrichment

Cultural Enrichment sessions provide students with practical, hands-on experiences that bring classroom learning to life. By stepping out of traditional lesson settings, students engage in interactive demonstrations that deepen their understanding of key concepts in Islamic practice, heritage, and values. These sessions help bridge theory and practice, making learning more meaningful, memorable, and relevant to students' daily lives.

8. The Community Show on School Radio

Hosted weekly by Mr. Makda and Mr. Longdon, the Community Show is broadcast live on school radio and Instagram, bringing together students, staff, and families. The show features inspiring stories, cultural spotlights, student achievements, and special guests, all while promoting the values of unity, respect, and shared heritage across our diverse school community.

Qur’anic Pathways

The **Qur’anic Pathways** initiative at the Al Noor Heritage and Cultural Centre supports students’ spiritual, moral, and academic growth through meaningful Qur’an engagement. From early reading to advanced Tajweed and memorisation, it offers a clear progression for all learners. The programme strengthens recitation, deepens understanding, and nurtures a lasting connection to the Qur’anic message.

Qur'an Intervention Classes

Integrated into the Islamic curriculum, these classes support students who need additional help with fluency, pronunciation, and basic comprehension. The aim is to build confidence and competence in Qur’anic recitation as part of each student’s Islamic learning journey.

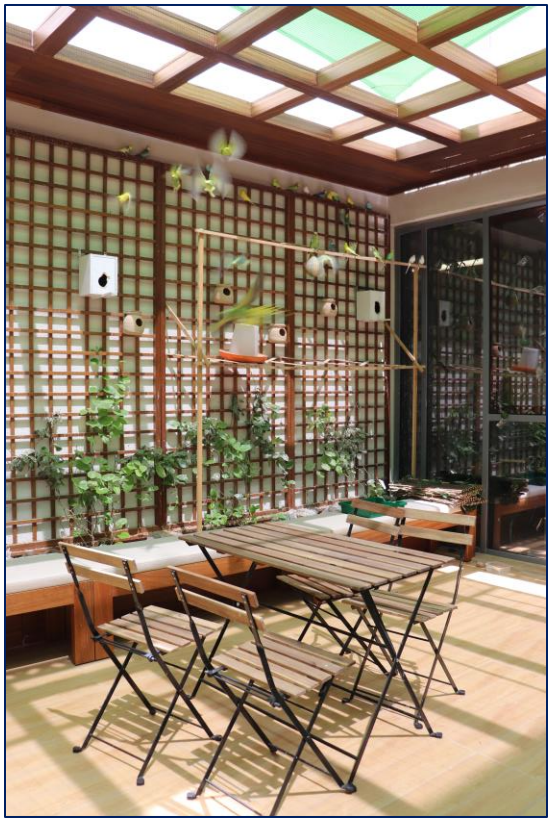
Advanced Morning Qur’an Classes

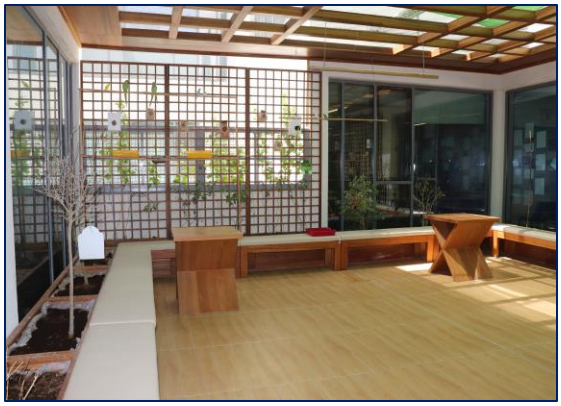
These early morning sessions are offered to selected high-achieving students from Year 2 to Year 13. The classes focus on advanced Tajweed, memorisation (Hifz), and expressive recitation. Students are also trained and prepared to represent the school in external Qur’an competitions held across the UAE.

Qur'anic Pathways

Qur'anic Park at GEMS Metropole

Our school features a dedicated Qur'anic Park containing all the plants mentioned in the Qur'an. It also houses a variety of birds and parrots, adding to the park's natural beauty and providing a richer learning experience. This unique space offers a hands-on environment where students can explore the intersection of nature, science, and revelation, deepening their appreciation of the Qur'an's references to the natural world.





Qur'anic Pathways

GEMS Metropole Annual Qur'an Competition

The Annual Qur'an Competition is a key highlight of our Qur'anic Pathways Initiative at GEMS Metropole, offering every student the chance to strengthen their connection with the Qur'an. Open to all students across all year groups, the competition encourages memorisation, fluency, and confidence in recitation, while supporting curriculum targets.

To ensure fairness and accessibility, students are grouped into native and non-native Arabic speakers. Each year group is assigned specific memorisation selections that align with both their current curriculum and what they have covered in previous years.

The competition is structured over the full academic year in three progressive stages:

- **Term 1 – Preliminary Round**: Initial assessment of memorisation and fluency.
- **Term 2 – Semi-Final Round**: Students are assesed for progress from the previous round. Students succeeding in this round pass to the final round.
- **Term 3 – Final Round**: Top finalists compete to determine the overall winners.

Winners compete for scholarships that recognise and celebrate their achievement. More importantly, the competition is designed to be inclusive—open to students of all ability levels, with the primary aim being spiritual growth and a deeper appreciation of the Qur'anic message.

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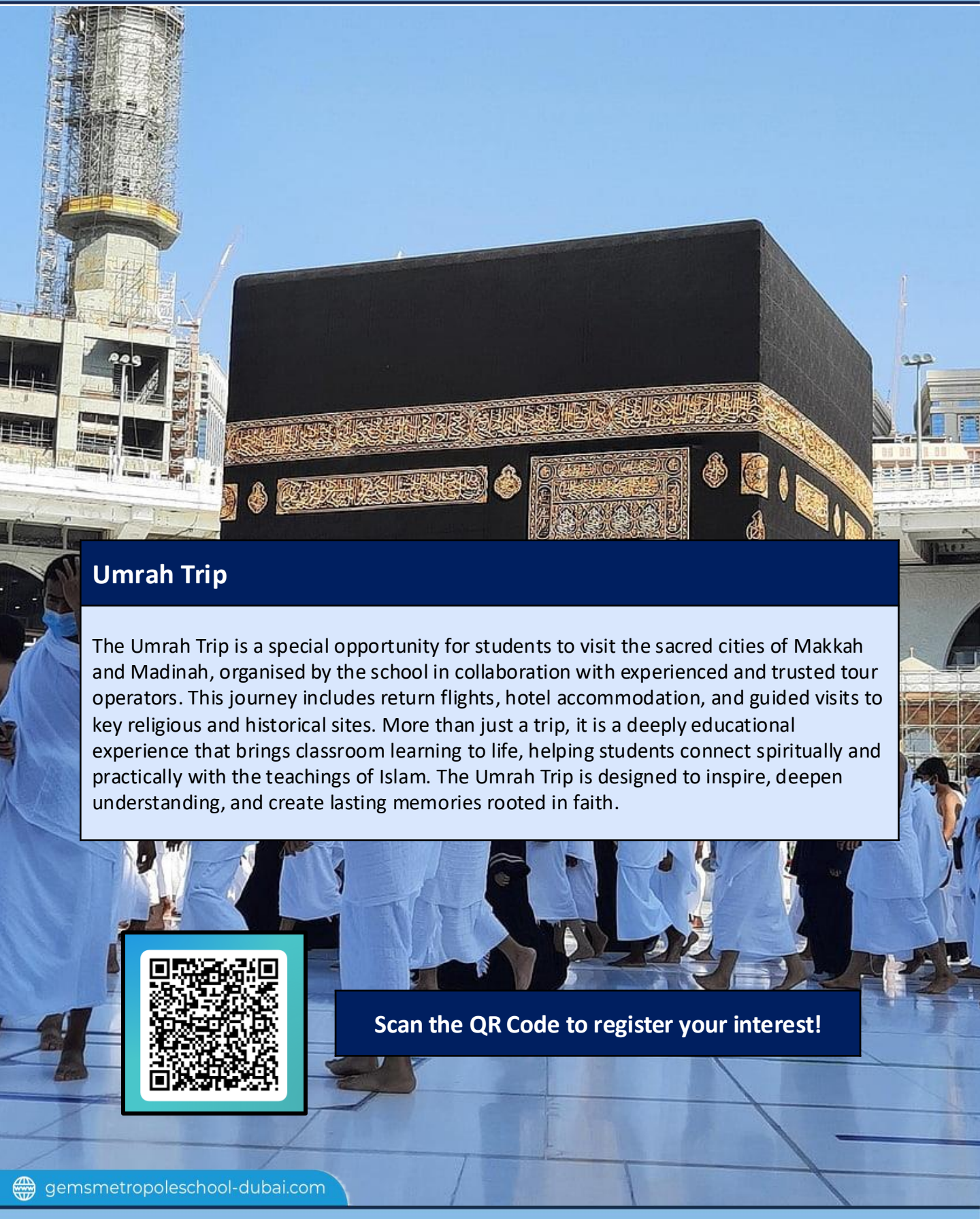


Umrah Trip

The Umrah Trip is a special opportunity for students to visit the sacred cities of Makkah and Madinah, organised by the school in collaboration with experienced and trusted tour operators. This journey includes return flights, hotel accommodation, and guided visits to key religious and historical sites. More than just a trip, it is a deeply educational experience that brings classroom learning to life, helping students connect spiritually and practically with the teachings of Islam. The Umrah Trip is designed to inspire, deepen understanding, and create lasting memories rooted in faith.

Scan the QR Code to register your interest!

Classes at the Centre

Over the academic year, a variety of classes will be held at the Al Noor Heritage and Cultural Centre in collaboration with different school departments. These sessions, run by various teachers, will be open to students, parents, and staff. Details and registration will be available through GEMS Connect. We encourage all members of the school community to take part, as these classes are an opportunity to engage with meaningful content beyond the standard curriculum.

Arabic Language Class for Parents

These classes are designed to help parents build confidence in spoken Arabic, with a focus on everyday vocabulary, useful phrases, and cultural context. Whether you're completely new to the language or looking to improve your basics, this course offers practical support in navigating daily life in the UAE.

Sign up will be via GEMS Connect.

Spanish Language Class for Parents

With Spanish being one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, these classes provide a great opportunity to explore a new language and culture. The sessions introduce key conversational skills in a relaxed and engaging environment, tailored for absolute beginners.

Sign up will be via GEMS Connect.

Classes at the Centre

French Language Class for Parents

These classes aim to provide parents with a foundation in spoken French, with emphasis on simple dialogue, everyday expressions, and cultural insights. They are suitable for beginners or those with limited prior experience.

Sign up will be via GEMS Connect.

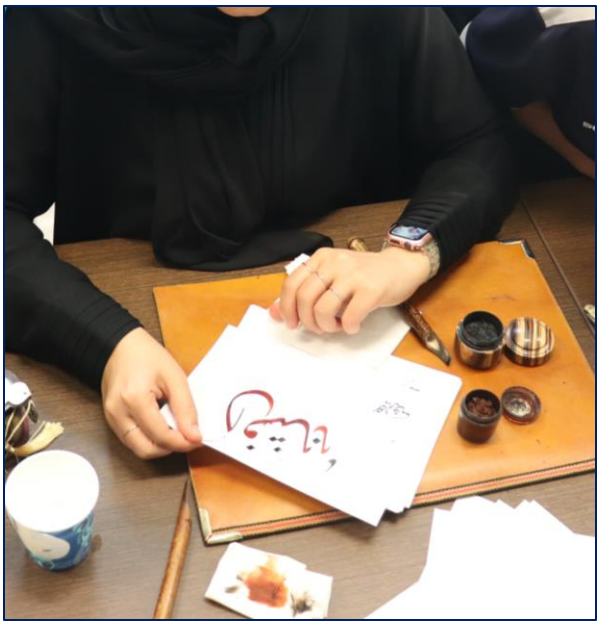
Calculating your Zakat Workshop

This session will be for staff and parents who wish to learn how to calcualte their Zakah effectively. This will be a one-day course held at the centre, with an opportunity to ask questions at the end. Details regarding sign up will be shared prior to the event.

Curriculum in Practice

The Al Noor Centre offers opportunities for students to experience parts of their curriculum in a practical and immersive way. Whether it's demonstrating how to perform wudhu or tayammum, practising Arabic speech delivery, or engaging in hands-on cultural activities, these sessions help bring classroom learning to life. Activities may take place within the Centre or around the school and are designed to deepen understanding through meaningful experiences.

Cultural Offerings

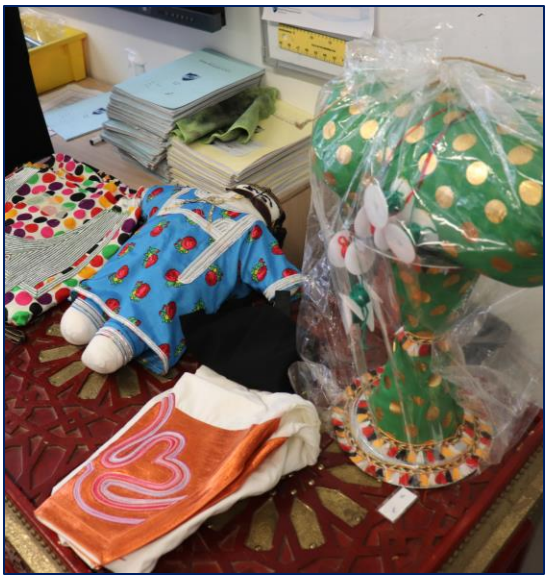


Calligraphy Workshop

Led by an expert in Arabic calligraphy, the session explores the historical and cultural significance of calligraphy in the Islamic world, with a special focus on its relevance within Emirati heritage. For secondary students, the Art Department collaborates to offer hands-on activities where students can practise writing in traditional scripts and experiment with their own creative pieces, blending history, art, and personal expression.

An Introduction to Talli

'An Introduction to Talli' offers students a chance to explore the traditional Emirati art of decorative embroidery. Through this session, they learn about the history, cultural significance, and materials used in Talli, and even try their hand at creating simple patterns.



Cultural Offerings

Emirati Culture Carousel

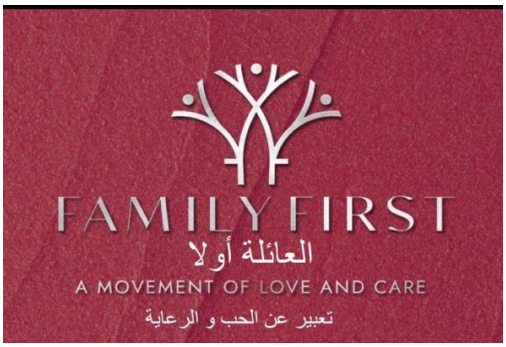
The Emirati Culture Carousel is an interactive experience where students rotate between a series of engaging cultural stations. Each station focuses on a different aspect of Emirati heritage—such as traditional dress, cuisine, music, customs, or daily life—offering hands-on activities and meaningful insights.

Oud Performance

The Oud Performance introduces students to the soulful sounds of one of the Arab world's most iconic musical instruments. Led by a skilled musician, the session includes a live performance, an explanation of the Oud's history and cultural significance in the UAE, and an opportunity for students to ask questions and interact with the instrument.

Community Events

Community is at the core of everything we do at the Al Noor Heritage and Cultural Centre. More than just a space for learning, the Centre is a meeting point for families, students, and staff to come together in a spirit of unity and belonging. Rooted in the GEMS-wide **Family First** initiative, our community events are thoughtfully designed to strengthen relationships, celebrate shared values, and create moments that bring our school family closer.



National Day Celebrations

Each year, GEMS Metropole proudly celebrates UAE National Day with a vibrant school-wide event that honours the nation's rich heritage and achievements. The day features traditional performances, cultural displays, and special guests from the community, creating a festive and educational atmosphere for all. In the lead-up to the celebration, elements of UAE history, values, and identity are woven into the curriculum, allowing students to engage deeply with the significance of the occasion both inside and outside the classroom.

International Day of Cultures

International Day of Cultures is one of the most anticipated events in the school calendar, bringing our diverse community together in a celebration of global heritage. Families, students, and staff all take part in showcasing their cultures through food, traditional dress, music, and hands-on activities. The school is transformed into a lively festival of colours and flavours, with stalls representing the various countries members of our community call home.

Heritage Hike and Run

The Heritage Hike and Run is a flagship community event held annually in the historic **Al Shindighah District** of Dubai—a location steeped in culture, tradition, and stories of the nation's past. Nestled along the banks of the **Dubai Creek**, the area offers a stunning backdrop with water on one side and restored heritage buildings on the other. The event invites our entire school community to step into the past, experience the soul of the UAE, and engage in meaningful cultural exploration.

Led and hosted largely by our **Emirati students and parents**, the Heritage Hike features a series of vibrant cultural stalls and stands that showcase traditional crafts, customs, clothing, and cuisine. Each station is thoughtfully designed to teach and inspire, with students taking on the role of cultural ambassadors. Complementing the hike is a community **run**, offering both a 2km novice route and a 4km expert route, giving families a chance to participate at their own pace. The day combines movement, learning, and togetherness in one of Dubai's most iconic settings.

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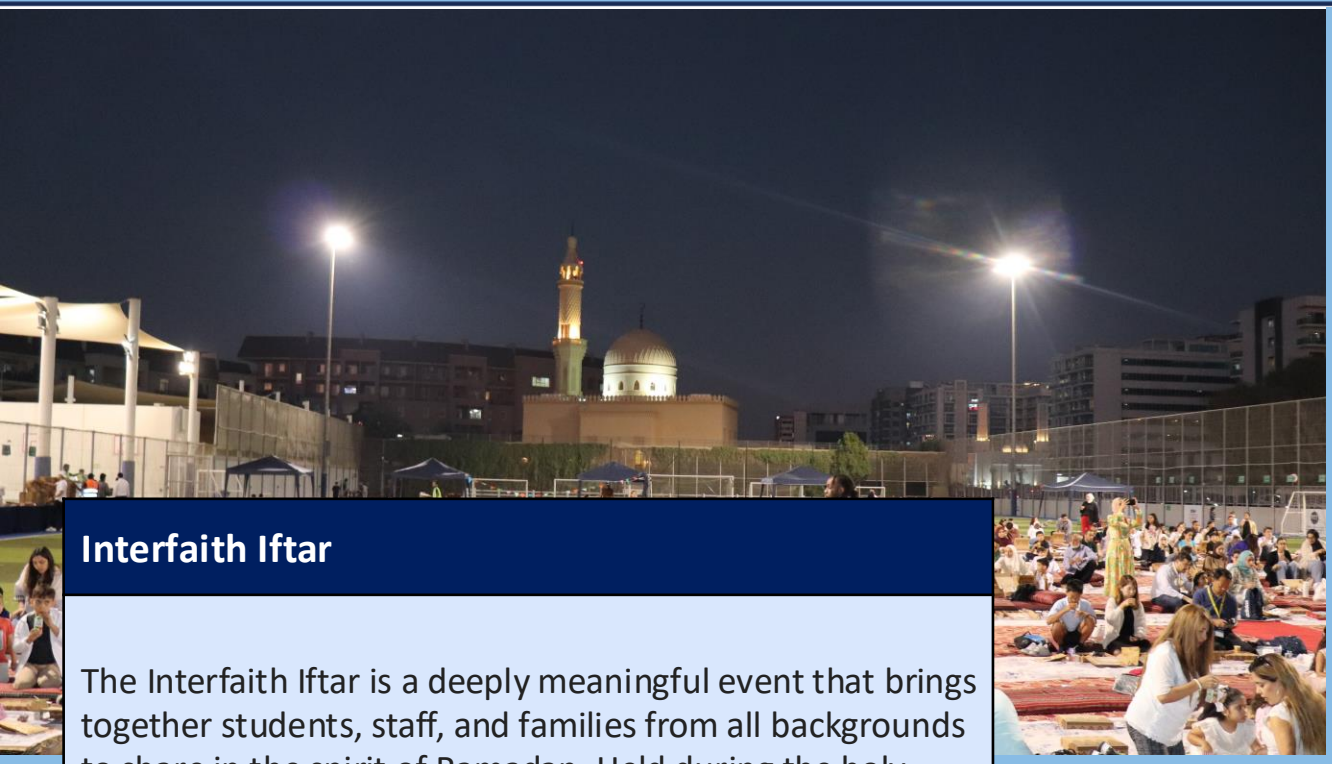
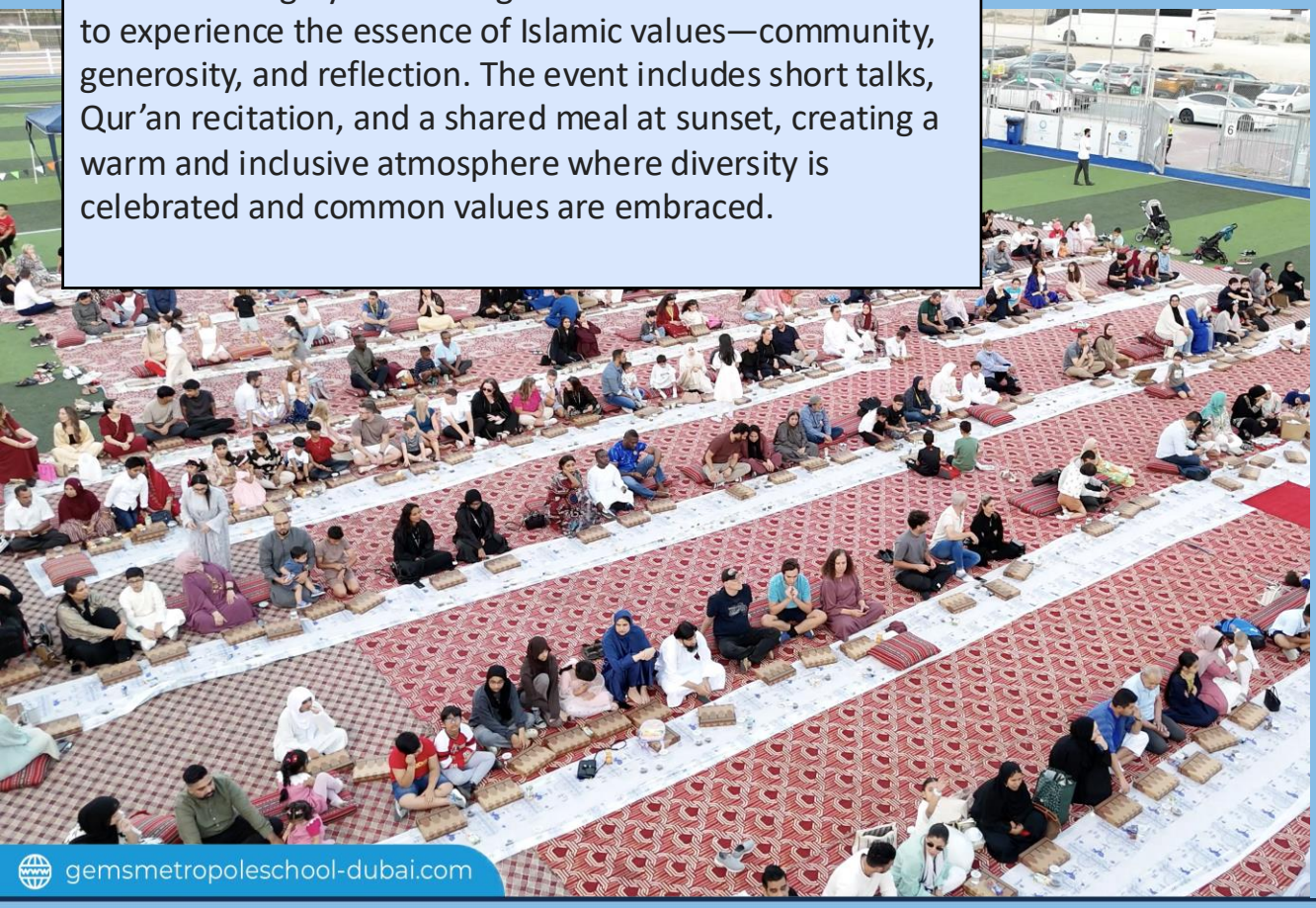


Interfaith Iftar

The Interfaith Iftar is a deeply meaningful event that brings together students, staff, and families from all backgrounds to share in the spirit of Ramadan. Held during the holy month, the evening encourages mutual respect and understanding by welcoming members of different faiths to experience the essence of Islamic values—community, generosity, and reflection. The event includes short talks, Qur'an recitation, and a shared meal at sunset, creating a warm and inclusive atmosphere where diversity is celebrated and common values are embraced.



Parent and Community Involvement

At GEMS Metropole, we believe that meaningful education involves the entire school community. We encourage parents and community members to take an active role in the many events and initiatives we organise through the Al Noor Heritage and Cultural Centre. Alongside our own programmes, we also work closely with other school departments throughout the year—creating even more opportunities for involvement. Here are some of the ways you can take part in school life:

- **Attend events and programmes:** Join us for a wide range of events throughout the year—from National Day celebrations to the Interfaith Iftar and the Heritage Hike—designed to bring the school community together.
- **Sign up for community classes:** Participate in sessions designed specifically for parents, including language classes (Arabic, French, and Spanish) and workshops.
- **Volunteer for school events:** Support our programmes by helping with setup, running stalls, or offering your own cultural or professional insights to enrich student learning.
- **Encourage your child's participation:** Motivate your children to take part in opportunities such as the Qur'an Competition, Cultural Carousel, and other enrichment activities taking place throughout the year.
- **Contribute your skills and experience:** Whether it's a craft, a career insight, or a cultural tradition, we welcome parents and community members to share their talents through talks, demos, or displays.
- **Engage with other parents:** Take the opportunity to build connections with fellow families by attending workshops and social events, strengthening the bonds across our school community.

- **Get involved with the school radio and community show! If you or your child have made a positive impact in the wider community, let us know—we'd love to feature you on our weekly radio segment.**

Emirati Students and Parents

At the heart of the Al Noor Heritage and Cultural Centre is a deep appreciation for the heritage, values, and voices of our Emirati students and families. As the hosts and custodians of the UAE's rich cultural legacy, their contributions are central to shaping the identity of our Centre. We are committed to ensuring that Emirati students feel represented, celebrated, and actively involved, and we invite Emirati parents to work closely with us in preserving and sharing their heritage with the wider school community.

Throughout the academic year, the school hosts a range of cultural celebrations and events, many of which highlight Emirati heritage. We warmly encourage our Emirati students and parents to take an active role in these occasions—sharing their traditions, guiding our understanding, and helping ensure that what we present is both authentic and deeply rooted in local culture.

Calendar

Term 1
Staff Induction and CPD
Language Classes
Qur'an Interventions
National Day Celebration
Curriculum Workshops

Term 2
Heritage Hike / Run
Umrah Trip
Values School Workshops
Interfaith Iftar
Language Classes

Term 3
Cultural Workshops
Annual Qur'an Competition
Language Classes

Honsho Rd. Motor City, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

+971 4 550 7200

registrar_mts@gemsedu.com

gemsmetropoleschool-dubai.com