

Frequently Asked Questions regarding School Reopening 2020/2021

When will my child attend school?

The first day of school will be August 30th either on campus or in remote learning depending on the grouping of the students. Orientation for new students to DAA will take place on August 26th (for High School) and August 27th (for Elementary and Middle School). More detail will follow in the coming weeks.

In order to comply with all social distancing measures, classrooms can accommodate students at 50% occupancy. Therefore, we will be dividing the classes (grades 1-12) into two cohorts - A group and B group. The rotation schedule will function as follows:

Week 1 - Sunday to Thursday AABBA.

Week 2 - Sunday to Thursday BBAAB.

As per the regulations, KG1 and KG2 can have no more than 10 students in each classroom. This coupled with the difficulty with the level of independence for remote learning, all KG1 and KG2 students will be in **every day**. Classes will operate between two classrooms with the teachers and teacher's assistant rotating with the groups.

You will be notified of your child's group by August 16th. We will make every effort to keep families together. Please understand with a school of over 2600 students and a robust comprehensive High School schedule this may not always be possible.

What will it look like when my child is not in the classroom?

The group not in school will access learning online through the use of webcams and numerous platforms used during remote learning. We have learned so much during our experience from March to June, and have taken that knowledge to further refine and enhance the remote provision. This summer we have installed over 230 webcams in the classrooms. This tool will allow students to experience the classroom environment, as well as work independently as directed by the learning plan.

What will be the school timings?

In order to minimize overcrowding during entry and exit times, a staggered timing has been set.

Division	AM	PM
KG 1/2	8.00	3.10
Gr 1-5	7.40	3.05
MS	7.30	3.00
HS	7.20	2.55

Upon arrival at school, students will pass through a number of designated entrance points. The entrance points will be fitted with 4 thermal imaging cameras, which will record each student and staff member's temperature so it is imperative that all students use these designated entry points.



A designated and trained security guard will monitor the system throughout the day. A process is in place to manage any students identified with a temperature greater than 37.5 degrees Celsius.

Elementary School

Kindergarten, grade 1 and grade 2 students will access the campus through Gate 1, and a thermal scanner will be set up at the Early Years reception area. Grades 3, 4 and 5 will access the campus through Gate 5 and will pass through a thermal scanner set up at the ground floor access door adjacent to the soccer pitch. Similarly, bus students will have their temperatures checked before getting on the bus and again before accessing the building.

Middle School

Middle School students will enter through Gate 3. There will be a temperature scanner at the Gate 3 entrance into the building, next to the health clinic.

High School

Students will be dropped off and picked up at the Pedestrian Gate fitted with a thermal camera where temperatures will be checked. If a car is not waiting outside Gate 3 for pick up, the student will then walk to his/her vehicle.

Anyone with a temperature of 37.5 will not be allowed entry. These students will be taken to a dedicated medical room within the school, where further temperature and medical checks will be made, and families subsequently notified.

Families are to drop off and pick up at designated areas only in designated timings with no interaction inside the school. There will be no access to the rest of the school facility by family members or visitors. Family members are given a maximum time limit of 10 minutes in the designated area to pick up / drop off with no crowding, maintenance of a 2 meters distance, and wearing masks at all times.

What protocols are in place to ensure the safety of our learning community?

The GEMS health and safety department has established a robust set of health, safety and operational procedures and protocols, in order to support the safe reopening of schools. Quality assurance checks will also be conducted to monitor the effectiveness.

Desks will be set at a safe distance apart of 1.5 meters, and physical markings will be used in classrooms to ensure desks remain in the correct locations. Teachers will be positioned at the front of the classroom area, at a distance of 1.5 meters from the front row desks.

Safety markings will be set up throughout corridors, the markings will dictate safe distances of 2 meters. Students will be monitored to ensure adherence. One-way pedestrian flows will be required and will be marked out accordingly.

Seating arrangements will be clearly marked out in canteen areas, no students will be permitted to sit directly adjacent or next to one another. Students from the same class must adhere to 1.5 meter safe distances, students from different classes must maintain 2 meter safe distances.

Schools will operate pre-packed lunch service, with no live cooking taking place at school. Students are also permitted to bring their own food from home. Water dispensers are not permitted to be used.

Will students and staff wear masks?

Teachers and students above the age of 6 are required to wear face masks. Face masks can be removed during strenuous physical activity. Face shields can be worn for those employees who are in direct contact with students. It is suggested that students bring two disposable masks to school per day or one re-usable option. It will be the responsibility of the students to ensure that they bring the required number of masks each day and ensure any disposable masks are washed in line with the manufacturer's guidelines.

What training will the staff have before school opens?

All staff will undergo specific Covid-19 training prior to the start of the new academic year. In addition, teachers will regularly communicate and provide information to students on the associated risks, safe practices and controls. All students will be briefed on this plan prior to the start of the academic year.

What are the cleaning and hygiene procedures?

Our school has conducted a review of all potential frequent touch points, including, door handles, light switches, handrails, taps and washbasins, etc. Increased cleaning and sanitization will be conducted across these areas throughout the duration of the day. A thorough cleaning of the school will be conducted each day by an approved vendor, using approved Municipality chemicals. A thorough deep clean and sanitization of the school will be conducted at the end of each week. Cleaning staff will wear the required PPE for all cleaning activities.

In the event there is a potential or confirmed COVID-19 case, how will it be handled?

Managing a potential Covid-19 case in school

If a student is suspected of being a positive Covid-19 case, they will be immediately removed to the school isolation room. Only the school medical and emergency services team are permitted to enter the isolation room and full PPE must be worn when entering the room. The students' parents will be contacted immediately by the school doctor and the required authorities will be notified. The school will strictly adhere to the health authority requirements for managing and transferring any suspected cases of Covid-19. All areas which may have been accessed will be thoroughly deep cleaned and sanitized following any suspected cases. These areas will be closed immediately until the deep clean is completed. Tracing will be conducted to identify those who may have come into contact with the student or staff member. Health authority requirements will be strictly adhered to. This may include additional testing and isolation of persons who have come into contact with a positive case. Each school will have a detailed medical procedure plan in place, which will detail the emergency procedures for each school. This will be developed in consultation with the GEMS Senior Medical Supervisor and school medical teams.

Managing a confirmed case

A confirmed case could be in the form of a student, staff member or contractor. In such cases the person will be in isolation for a period of time, this may be at home or in a medical facility. Upon receiving notification of a confirmed case, a tracing exercise will be conducted by the school. This will identify all other persons who may have come into contact with the positive case.

Any persons who have come into close contact with the confirmed positive case will be sent home from school immediately, with a potential isolation period of 14 days. Further advice from the authorities, including the health authority and education authority, will be required on this aspect. No persons who have tested positive will be permitted to return to school without first providing evidence of a negative test result, in line with authority requirements. All relevant areas will undergo a thorough deep clean and sanitization exercise.

Communication of a confirmed case

It is important that parents are provided with suitable information regarding confirmed cases within the school. It is also vital that people's individual privacy is maintained. Parents will be notified when there is a positive case to a class member or class teacher. The required procedures will be followed for notifying the authorities. A detailed GEMS medical manual has been developed and the manual complies with UAE health authority requirements.

Will school buses operate?

Bus routes will be revised based on the demand of parents wishing to continue to use bus transportation and to accommodate the new staggered start times.

- All temperatures are taken at the pick-up points and any cases will be documented and notified to the relevant parties
- Daily records will be maintained
- Bus will be disinfected before and after each use
- Adequate signage will be placed inside the bus
- Procedures are in place should a child display signs of COVID 19 while in the bus
- Marking will be on the seats for guidance

What will be the communication channels for families?

Our bi-weekly SPOTS newsletter is our primary communication channel.

Elementary School

A divisional weekly communication will be published and will focus on both academic and health/safety updates. Homeroom teachers will continue to use Seesaw as a communication platform for both students and parents.

Middle School

A grade level newsletter is sent to all MS parents via the Heads of Grade every Thursday, which focuses on student wellbeing, celebrations, and the learning and assessments across each discipline.

High School

A bi-weekly SPOTS newsletter is sent via DAA's Parent Relations Executive with a message from the Principal, accompanied by any important updates and highlights to be shared with parents.

Any brief reminders will be sent as needed via SMS through DAA's Parent Relations Executive.

We understand that you may have concerns about this reopening, but I want to reiterate that we are committed to our community's safety and also to providing our learners with an outstanding education. We will share further communication in the weeks to come.

On another note, almost all of our new staff have arrived in Dubai (2 more on August 11th). Our enrollment is strong and we welcome over 500 new students to the DAA family. Our Senior Leadership Team returns on August 9th; new teachers will begin their pre-service training during the week of August 16th; and all staff return on August 23rd.

Thank you for being a part of the DAA learning community and for your support during these challenging times.

Together we are better!