Teaching and Learning Policy

Academic Year 2026–2027

School	GEMS Cambridge International School – Abu Dhabi
Policy owner	Teaching and Learning Leads / Senior Leadership Team
Review date	September 2026
Next scheduled review	September 2027

1. Rationale and Vision

At GEMS Cambridge International School – Abu Dhabi (GEMS CIA), high-quality teaching is central to improving student outcomes. Teaching is evidence-informed, responsive to assessment, and centred on the needs, strengths and aspirations of every learner.

We aim to develop confident and articulate communicators; curious, resilient and independent thinkers; and respectful, compassionate and responsible global citizens. A coherent whole-school approach supports students to know more, remember more and apply their learning with increasing fluency.

This policy sets out shared expectations for curriculum, classroom practice, inclusion, assessment, staff development and quality assurance across all phases.

2. Aims of the Policy

- Secure consistently high expectations and equitable access to ambitious learning across all phases.
- Define clear, observable features of effective teaching through the Teach Like a GEM (TLAG) approach.
- Strengthen retention, understanding and transfer through purposeful retrieval, explicit modelling, practice and feedback.
- Use assessment and evidence of learning to adapt teaching and improve outcomes.
- Develop professional expertise through weekly Practice Clinics, coaching and collaboration.
- Maintain alignment with applicable ADEK expectations, school curriculum commitments and GEMS guidance; any statutory updates must be confirmed through the school's compliance process.

3. Curriculum Framework

The curriculum is underpinned by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework in Foundation Stage; the English National Curriculum adapted to the school context in Primary and Secondary; and relevant Cambridge International examination specifications (including IGCSE, AS and A Level) where applicable.

ADEK National Identity expectations are embedded appropriately across curriculum experiences. TLAG provides the shared pedagogical language and technique framework, rather than replacing subject-specific curriculum or professional judgement.

- Plan coherent progression in substantive knowledge ("know what") and procedural knowledge ("know how to").
- Provide a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum with meaningful local, UAE and global connections.
- Identify prerequisite knowledge and revisit key concepts over time to secure long-term retention.
- Adapt teaching and access routes for multilingual learners, students of determination (SEND), and students requiring additional stretch and challenge.

4. Pedagogical Approach – Teach Like a GEM

TLAG is the school's shared, evidence-informed approach to teaching. Its purpose is to establish predictable classroom routines, reduce unnecessary cognitive load and increase time spent on thinking and learning. Techniques are deliberately combined and embedded, not performed as isolated compliance activities.

4.1 Six GEMS Essentials – required in every lesson

- Do Now (retrieval practice): a short, purposeful 3–5 minute opportunity to recall prior learning from memory, normally ready on entry and reviewed promptly.
- Learning Outcome: one measurable, skills-based outcome for every student, expressed as "By the end of this lesson, you will be able to [one verb]...". Refer back to it during learning.
- To Know: a concise set of essential substantive knowledge components underpinning the Learning Outcome; statements begin with knowledge or concepts rather than task verbs.
- I Do, We Do, You Do: explicit teacher modelling and thinking aloud, guided collaborative practice, then purposeful independent application; adapt pacing responsively while keeping the phases clear.
- Affirmative Checking: strategic circulation with immediate, specific, actionable feedback, opportunities to self-correct and follow-up checks.
- Exit Ticket: typically 1–3 focused prompts checking progress towards the outcome and relevant knowledge; use findings to inform subsequent instruction.

4.2 GEMS Talk and GEMS Culture

Teachers habitually integrate GEMS Talk to deepen participation, reasoning and assessment for learning: Turn and Talk, Show Call, Show Me, Everybody Writes, Cold Call, Right is Right, Stretch It, and Habits of Discussion.

GEMS Culture techniques support an orderly, attentive learning environment: What To Do (directions and corrections), Whole Class Reset, Teacher Radar and Secure Student Attention. These complement the school's Be a GEM approach to behaviour for learning.

4.3 Consistency and professional judgement

All teachers use the school-approved Learn Like a GEM lesson presentation template and agreed TLAG terminology/icons. The six Essentials form the expected common sequence, while teaching within and across phases can be adapted sensitively to prior knowledge, inquiry and age-related needs. Staff use subject expertise and professional judgement in selecting examples, scaffolds and checks for understanding.

The school implements the agreed Global Goal for the Week (GGW), supported by aligned Practice Clinics, developmental drop-ins and instructional coaching. Current school GGW schedules and templates should be issued as controlled supporting documents.

5. Teaching and Learning Across Phases

5.1 Foundation Stage

- Maintain child-centred, play-based and inquiry-rich learning aligned with the EYFS.
- Balance adult-guided teaching and child-initiated learning through purposeful continuous provision.
- Use age-appropriate modelling, talk, exploration, observation and retrieval opportunities, applying TLAG techniques in developmentally appropriate ways.
- Develop language, independence, curiosity, relationships and early foundations in literacy and mathematics.

5.2 Primary

- Build secure foundations in literacy, numeracy and subject knowledge.

- Use clear explanations, worked examples, guided practice and frequent understanding checks.
- Provide structured opportunities for discussion, problem solving, collaboration and growing independence.

5.3 Secondary and Sixth Form

- Promote subject mastery, academic vocabulary, critical thinking and disciplined inquiry.
- Use carefully sequenced explanations, purposeful debate, analytical writing and independent practice.
- Prepare students for relevant external qualifications, future study and pathways, while maintaining inclusive teaching and high expectations.

6. Inclusion, EAL and SEND

The school is committed to high expectations, inclusive participation and appropriate individual support. The same ambitious Learning Outcome should ordinarily apply to all learners; the scaffolding, examples, accessibility and challenge may differ according to need.

- Use assessment and learner profiles to anticipate barriers and adapt teaching proactively.
- Employ visual support, explicit vocabulary instruction, bilingual resources where suitable, scaffolded talk and accessible worked examples for EAL learners.
- Provide appropriate support and reasonable adjustments for students of determination, informed by agreed plans and specialist advice.
- Provide deeper application, rich exemplars and purposeful extension for high attaining and gifted learners.
- Review the impact of adaptations and gradually remove scaffolding where students can succeed independently.

7. Assessment for Learning

Assessment is an integral part of teaching, not an event only at the end of a unit. Teachers gather evidence of what students know, understand and can do, then respond to misconceptions promptly.

- Use planned questions, Show Me responses, discussion, work scrutiny and Affirmative Checking to identify learning needs in real time.
- Use Exit Ticket evidence to identify individual and group patterns and plan re-teaching, retrieval or extension.
- Give specific, timely feedback that enables students to think, revise and improve their own work.
- Use summative assessment as appropriate to evaluate progression, communicate achievement and inform curriculum planning.
- Apply assessment consistently, fairly and accessibly in accordance with relevant school assessment and inclusion procedures.

8. Professional Development and Collaboration

Professional learning is collaborative, focused and rooted in repeated practice. TLAG is supported through the school's professional development and coaching structures.

- Protect weekly Practice Clinics, using the See It, Name It, Do It model with clear modelling, codification and deliberate rehearsal.
- Coordinate whole-school Practice Clinics and targeted drop-ins around the agreed Global Goal for the Week.
- Provide developmental, evidence-specific coaching focused on a manageable next step and an opportunity to rehearse and revisit it.
- Ensure coaches complete applicable GEMS coaching preparation before leading formal instructional coaching or feedback.

- Use professional learning communities (PLCs), joint planning, moderation and phase-specific development to address curriculum and assessment priorities.
- Use staff needs, student learning evidence and coaching trends to inform priorities, while respecting confidentiality.

9. Quality Assurance and Monitoring

Quality assurance is developmental, proportionate and focused on the impact of teaching on learning. Evidence is triangulated; isolated observations are not treated as a complete picture of teacher effectiveness.

- Undertake purposeful learning walks and lesson observations, including agreed TLAG GGW technique checks.
- Review student work, learning environments and agreed planning evidence.
- Analyse attainment, progress, attendance and other relevant learning indicators in context.
- Gather student voice and parent feedback, as appropriate, and act on identified themes.
- Share specific strengths and one proportionate development step where appropriate; support implementation through coaching and follow-up.

Senior and middle leaders will review monitoring findings for consistency, inclusion, curriculum coherence and student impact and use them to plan support and improvement.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Teachers

Plan and deliver ambitious, inclusive lessons using the agreed TLAG Essentials; monitor understanding; provide actionable feedback; adapt instruction; and participate in professional learning and coaching.

Middle Leaders

Support subject and phase curriculum quality, collaborative planning, moderation, coaching and consistent implementation; identify trends and provide practical support.

Teaching and Learning Leads

Coordinate whole-school pedagogy, TLAG implementation, Practice Clinics, GGW priorities and developmental quality assurance; evaluate impact and recommend improvement.

Senior Leadership Team

Set strategic priorities, protect time and capacity for professional learning, oversee implementation and policy compliance, and ensure schoolwide alignment with ADEK and GEMS expectations.

Students and Families

Students are supported to engage actively, reflect on feedback and develop independence. Families are partners in supporting positive learning routines and communication about progress.

11. Review and Evaluation

The policy will be reviewed at least annually, and sooner if changes to applicable regulations, GEMS guidance, curriculum or school priorities make this necessary. Review considers student outcomes, inclusion, quality assurance evidence, coaching impact and staff/student feedback.