

**Philosophy:**

At GEMS Modern Academy, we offer a selection of support services to guide all our students through any challenges they may face, helping them achieve a happy and successful school experience, from an academic perspective as well as for mental and physical wellbeing.

**Purpose:** To ensure every student works to their potential and is nurtured to thrive and be successful.

**Aims:**

- Support and enhance the learning experience of every learner in the school and provide a safe, caring and stimulating learning environment where no child is left behind.
- Enable all students to become active, responsible and caring members of the school and wider community.
- Eliminate barriers to learning through high quality education and personal care.
- Ensure GEMS Modern Academy is disability abled campus.
- Sensitize stakeholders to the issues around all special needs.
- Comply with the Federal Law No. 29/2006: The Rights of People with Disabilities and Law No. (2) of 2014 Concerning Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Emirate of Dubai.

**Objectives:**

- Identify the barriers to learning and make appropriate provisions to support the student's identified learning needs.
- Facilitate access to the curriculum through differentiated planning by class teachers, the Inclusion department, and support staff as appropriate.
- Provide a bespoke curriculum, matched to individual needs, within school for those students who have severe cognitive delay and even seek external curriculum alternatives where necessary.
- Design and implement a modified curriculum for students with learning challenges, and to improve accessibility to the curriculum.
- Involve and work in close partnership with teachers and parents in the identification and review of goals set in the IEP/BIP/LSP.

- Enable students to be independent learners and equip them with age and ability appropriate skills of literacy, numeracy, social independence, resilience, and confidence.
- Develop strong partnerships between all stakeholders so that the student's learning and emotional needs well-being are supported.
- Ensure student voice in planning and decision making that affects them.
- Maintain an open-door policy in support of students, staff, and parents.
- Consult with external agencies, where appropriate, to support the needs and provisions for students of determination.

### Definition: Students of Determination

A student of determination is one who has a long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairment which, in interaction with various barriers, restricts the student's full and effective participation in education on an equal basis with peers of the same age. In 2019, the Government of Dubai released a 'Revised Categorization Framework for Students of Determination' which is used within the school.

Common barriers to learning	Categories of disability (aligned with the UAE unified categorisation of disability)
Cognition and learning	1. Intellectual disability ( <sup>1</sup> including Intellectual disability - unspecified) 2. Specific learning disorders 3. Multiple disabilities 4. Developmental delay (younger than five years of age)
Communication and interaction	5. Communication disorders 6. Autism spectrum disorders
Social, emotional and mental health	7. Attention Deficit Hyper Activity disorder 8. Psycho - emotional disorders.
Physical, sensory and medical	9. Sensory impairment 10. Deaf-blind disability 11. Physical disability 12. <sup>2</sup> Chronic or acute medical conditions

### Inclusion Support Team

GEMS Modern Academy has a whole school community approach which is led by an Inclusion Support Team that includes the principal- Mrs. Nargish Khambatta, members of the Senior Leadership Team, Phase leaders-SEN, an Inclusion Champion-Mrs. Sreekala Kumar, an Inclusion Governor-Mr. Hemant Julka, Support Teachers, Learning Support Assistants, students, and parents.

**Overview of Responsibilities:***Principal and Senior Leadership Team (SLT)*

The principal, along with the Vice Principals and the SLT, is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of Learning Support provisions.

*Phase Leaders- SEN*

The school has four phase leaders who support the class teachers and SENCo in providing the effective operational delivery of focused intervention in their phases. The support team includes Learning Support Assistants, Teaching assistants-SEN, Special Educators, and Counsellors.

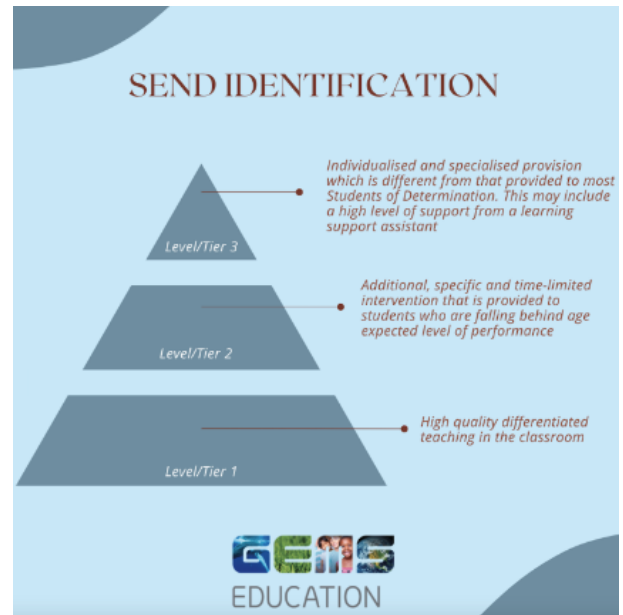
The team is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the learning support provisions:

- Conduct assessments to identify student's learning needs and share the finding with parents and teachers.
- Ensure timely and appropriate intervention strategies, in class and outside.
- Plan, develop and evaluate learning support programs to meet identified learning, behavioral and socio-emotional needs.
- Share strategies with staff and parents to support the implementation of the learning goals.
- Reinforce the inclusive ethos within the school by raising awareness and sensitization campaigns.
- Liaise with outside agencies whenever required.
- Contribute to the continuous professional development (CPD) of staff.
- Coordinate with the Inclusion council and PODS to cultivate diversity and inclusion by transforming the environment where individuals are valued for their talents and empowered to reach their full potential.

**Additional support provided by:**

- Teachers – in their respective subjects through enhancement classes.
- Student mentors- as designated by the SLT or the Learning Support Team.
- Parent volunteers working under the guidance of the Learning Support team.
- Learning Support Assistants for identified students- they may be with the child all the time or offer partial support during designated periods only.
- Student may receive extra support (Speech/ Occupational Therapy, etc.) outside of school, or receive the same in school from the visiting therapists identified by the school.

## Graduated Approach – Identification and Support Pathway



### **Step 1: Identification**

- Referred by Teacher/Supervisor/Parent
- Students scoring less than 85 in CAT4 or scoring repetitively low in other performance test reports.
- Identification of the new students during the admission.
  - The school follows the social model which means admission is not incumbent on a medical or formal psychological diagnosis. By and large all students even those who have special needs are admitted if the school can support their special educational needs.
- All new students who are admitted from grade (4-12) attempt the CAT4 assessment at the time of admission. The inclusion team meets with the student/parents if the child scores less than 85 in minimum two batteries, to carry out any informal assessment so an effective home plan/program and strategy for classroom support may be planned even before the student begins formal schooling.
- The same is applied for the student's seeking admission in KG-grade 3.
- Information from the previous school, if any, is sought if the special educator needs clarity on matters related to the student's learning (e.g. documents such as the IEP and/or professional diagnosis reports).

### **Referral**

- Teacher informs Supervisor and Learning Support Department.
- Classroom observation is conducted- strategies may be suggested OR further investigation may be recommended.
- Informal assessment with parent's consent.

- Self-referral by the students.

### **Step 2: Documentation**

- Plan the support program (IEP/ LSP/ IAP) for the student with teacher and parent input
- Share plan with Teacher and SLT
- Design Behavior Intervention Plan as required, in line with the school's Behavior Policy.

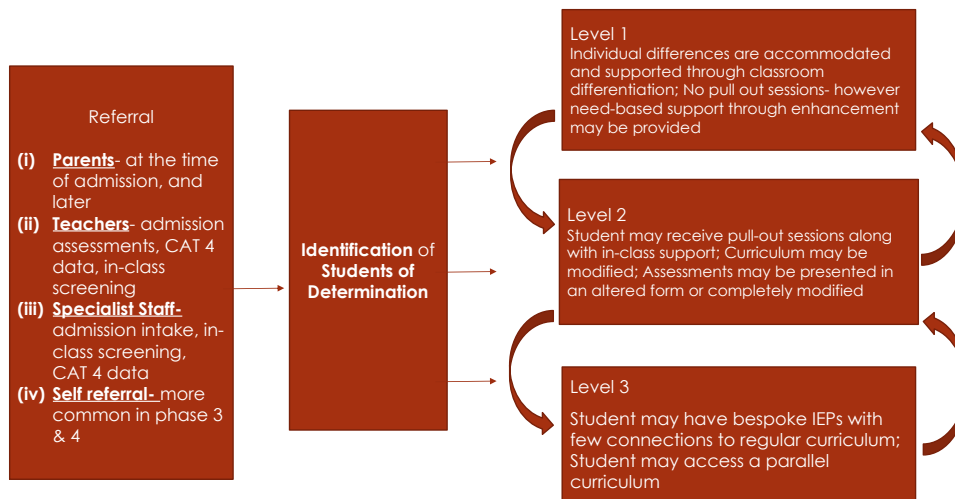
### **Step 3: Support**

- Push-in and Pull-out sessions with the Special Educators.
- Teacher/Class orientation by the team.
- Buddy support in class, if required.
- Learning Support Assistants may support the child in class full-time, or part time, only when recommended by the Special Educator/ Counsellor.
- Peer mentoring TSIP, senior students support students with learning challenges following the class curriculum.
- Enhancement classes- teacher goes over concepts with the student on a one on one basis or in a small group setting.
- Parent Volunteers or student volunteers (mostly ex-students of the school) may support the child in the regular class.
- Academic concessions/modifications granted by the school and the council.
- Scaffolding for independent learning.
- Modifying the curriculum and assessments, only if needed.

### **Formal Diagnosis**

- Student may be referred for a formal psycho-educational assessment to confirm or gain clarity about nature of difficulties
- Curriculum concessions, as required, will be requested for afterwards. However, learning support and in-class modifications will not be dependent on this.

## Flowchart of graduated approach



## Curriculum modification

- All students with learning challenges will be actively supported in their learning. They will be encouraged to access the regular curriculum with a scaffolded approach if required and offered alternate curriculum pathways when needed.
- Modified Curriculum may be offered to students who need a scaffolded approach to learning and meeting classroom goals. The modifications are arranged in a tiered system with effective tapering down, to ensure that the student learns and makes progress with his/her peers, and the student is readied to meet the assessment requirements.
- Alternative curriculum pathways are also offered to students with severe cognitive deficits so they may continue to learn in common learning environment.
- Concessions in assessments is in accordance with provisions granted by the Council for ICSE and ISC examinations and the International Baccalaureate Diploma examinations. However, there may be some internal allowances to ensure that the student's active participation in the learning process.

## Concessions offered during board examinations:

Both the Council and International Baccalaureate grants the following concessions to students who have been formally diagnosed as having Special Educational Needs:

- **Extra time for completing written assignments:**

The student gets extra time during written assessments and examinations (15 minutes per hour - 25% additional time). Students may be given additional time to complete homework, assignments, and projects.

- **Use of a Computer and Calculator:**

Students with severe physical or writing difficulty are allowed the use of a computer to

complete written work. Students are allowed to submit typed work in lieu of written work. Students with challenges in numeracy are allowed the use of a calculator.

- **Exemption from studying additional languages:**

Students with learning challenges, from Grade 8 upwards are exempted from learning the Second Language. Students are also exempted from learning Arabic on a case-to-case basis as granted by the Ministry of Education, Dubai.

- **Use of a reader:**

Students with reading difficulty can have the assessment/question paper read out to them. The questions must only be read out aloud and not explained to the student.

- **Use of an amanuensis:**

Students with motor or writing difficulty are allowed the use of a scribe during examinations. The scribe must be a student from a lower grade for e.g., if the student is from the 9th grade, the scribe should be from the 7th or 8th grade. The scribe and the student should have time to practice working together before the examination/assessment.

#### **Other Accommodations:**

- Enlarged print and/or change in font/ bigger question paper/worksheet may be used for a student with visual/writing issues.
- The language in the question paper/ worksheet may be rephrased for students with severe comprehension difficulties.
- Spelling errors are not penalized at every instance- content is looked for rather than presentation and neatness.
- Quantum of written work may be reduced for a student with writing difficulty or handouts may be given in lieu of copywriting.

#### **Step 4: Evaluating Progress:**

- Progress for students in KG will be evaluated on the IEP/LSP goals and teacher anecdotal records to assess effective transfer of learning.
- Students on level 1 and level 2 will be evaluated by tracking their progress on the skill-based Pupil tracker, assessing performance in formative and summative classroom assignments that may be conducted during and at the end of every term.
- Students on level 3, and those accessing alternate curriculum pathways will be evaluated on the progress they make in their IEP goals.

#### **Graduated Weaning-off Support**



All students who have identified needs and have intervention programmes are reviewed regularly. The graduated response is a fluid process and students can move between levels as necessary. All students' progress is reviewed annually for their placement on the register and when a student has achieved their targets they can be removed from the register.

The review is based on the following:

- Reflection and analysis by the inclusion team
- Assessment Data
- Teacher Feedback
- Classroom Observations
- IEP/IAP target reviews
- Parent Feedback
- Student Feedback

The Inclusion team will monitor the student and keep a record of the student for one term who has been weaned-off support.

### **Safeguarding guidelines for Students of Determination**

- Safeguarding the welfare of Students of Determination is everybody's responsibility and given that we know that these students are more vulnerable to abuse than other children, awareness amongst professionals about safeguarding them and what constitutes best practice, is essential.
- Training for all staff including the bus drivers and support staff to enable them to respond appropriately to signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect in children of SEN.

### **Communication**

Comprehensive communication is carried out with parents in both formal and informal ways through:

- Bi-annual Newsletter - Kaizen
- Calendared Meetings with the Inclusion Team
- Coffee Morning/Evening
- Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Meetings by appointment
- PULSE Calls
- Social Media Posts

*Last reviewed: September 2022*

*Next Review date: September 2024*