

GEMS Literacy Policy

This policy has been approved for operation within:	ALL GEMS Schools		
Status	Required		
Owner	GEMS Education		
Date effective from	February 2, 2026	Date of next review	August 2026
Review period	Yearly	Version	1.0

1. Introduction

The GEMS Literacy Policy establishes a clear and consistent whole-school approach to the teaching and development of reading, writing, speaking, and listening across all phases. Literacy is fundamental to academic success, inclusion, wellbeing, and lifelong learning. By embedding evidence-based practice, explicit language instruction, and inclusive teaching strategies, this policy strengthens literacy provision and ensures that all students can access the curriculum confidently and successfully.

In the UAE context, the policy recognises and values the linguistic and cultural heritage of all learners, including Emirati students. GEMS Education is committed to fostering a rich, inclusive, and language-aware learning environment where literacy is a shared responsibility. Through alignment with the *Read Like a GEM* playbook and *GEMS of the World*, schools empower every learner—regardless of language background—to develop fluency, confidence, and a lifelong love of reading and learning, while respecting and valuing home languages and identities, including Arabic, as a foundation for learning, identity, and cultural belonging.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a consistent, high-quality approach to literacy across all phases, enabling every student to develop secure skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It supports multilingual learners, including students learning English as an additional language and Emirati students, by setting clear, age-appropriate literacy expectations and promoting inclusive, language-aware teaching practices. Literacy is embedded as a shared responsibility across all subjects, ensuring that all learners are supported to access the curriculum, make strong progress, and achieve high standards.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

School principals/CEOs are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of literacy provision across the school, ensuring it aligns with the GEMS Educational Excellence Model, Read Like a GEM playbook and GEMS of the World. Leadership ensures that literacy practice is cohesive, consistent, and impactful across all phases, and that literacy priorities are clearly articulated, effectively implemented, and regularly reviewed to drive sustained improvement, within a culturally responsive framework that values Arabic language and Emirati identity alongside high-quality English literacy.

All staff are responsible for developing literacy in every lesson through the explicit teaching of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Staff implement the strategies outlined in the Read Like a GEM playbook and GEMS of the World, adapt provision to meet the needs of multilingual learners, and recognise students' existing language knowledge, including Arabic, as a foundation for learning. Assessment information is used to provide timely support and intervention to secure strong progress for all students.

Students are responsible for engaging actively in literacy learning across all subjects by participating fully in reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities. They are expected to apply feedback to improve their work and to use their full linguistic repertoire, including Arabic where appropriate, to support understanding, expression, and confidence as reflective readers and communicators.

Parents are responsible for supporting their child's literacy development by encouraging regular reading and language-rich activities at home in English and, where appropriate, in Arabic. Parents engage with school guidance and resources and remain informed through school communication platforms regarding literacy expectations, progress, and support.

4. Whole-School Literacy Vision and Principles

The school is committed to a clear and ambitious vision for literacy, recognising reading, writing, speaking, and listening as essential foundations for learning, communication, and success across all subjects. Literacy underpins students' academic achievement, confidence, wellbeing, and future readiness.

The following principles guide literacy practice across the school:

- Literacy is a shared responsibility, and all teachers are teachers of literacy.
- High expectations for literacy apply to all students, regardless of language background.
- Literacy is taught explicitly and systematically and embedded across the curriculum.
- Language-rich classrooms support access, engagement, and inclusion for all learners.
- Multilingualism is recognised as a strength, with students' home languages, including Arabic, valued as a foundation for learning and identity.
- Reading for pleasure, vocabulary development, fluency, and oracy are prioritised as key drivers of literacy success.
- Teaching approaches are inclusive and responsive, enabling students to participate confidently and make strong progress over time.

This shared vision ensures consistency of practice across phases while allowing flexibility to meet the developmental and linguistic needs of all learners.

5. Literacy Provision by Phase

Literacy provision is developmentally appropriate, coherent, and consistent across all phases, ensuring that students build knowledge and skills progressively while accessing high-quality literacy teaching throughout their learning journey.

Provision across all phases is underpinned by the Read Like a GEM framework, which establishes a strong reading culture through a clear Universal and Targeted Offer. Literacy teaching is inclusive and language-aware, ensuring that all learners, including students identified within the GEMS of the World cohort, are supported to access the curriculum confidently.

6. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Intent

To build strong foundations in spoken English, early reading, and early writing, recognising that many pupils are learning English as an additional language. Provision prioritises communication and language as the foundation for literacy development and ensures all children, including those within the GEMS of the World cohort, are supported to participate confidently in learning.

Key Approaches

- Language-rich environments with consistent visual and oral scaffolds that support comprehension, participation, and language development
- Daily systematic synthetic phonics delivered through a structured programme, such as Read Write Inc., to ensure consistency, progression, and fidelity
- Explicit modelling of language through play-based learning and adult-child interaction
- Strong partnerships with families to support early language and literacy development at home

Reading

- Phonics-led reading using decodable texts precisely matched to phonics knowledge, in line with Read Write Inc.
- Daily storytelling using rich, culturally inclusive texts to develop listening, comprehension, and enjoyment of language
- Adult modelling of reading for pleasure, supporting the development of positive reading behaviours in alignment with the Read Like a GEM framework

Writing

- Mark-making and emergent writing are explicitly valued as foundations for writing development
- Oral rehearsal is used to support early sentence construction and meaning-making
- Writing opportunities are embedded in play and meaningful real-life experiences to support engagement and independence

Oracy and Vocabulary

- Explicit teaching of Tier 1 vocabulary through daily routines, stories, and play
- Sentence modelling, repetition, and expansion to support language acquisition
- Use of talk partners and structured talk routines to develop confidence, clarity, and participation in spoken language

Monitoring and Impact

- School leaders ensure fidelity to the school's chosen systematic synthetic phonics programme, such as Read Write Inc., through regular monitoring, staff training, and consistent implementation
- Phonics and early reading outcomes are reviewed regularly using assessment information to inform teaching, targeted intervention, and professional development, ensuring strong progress for all learners

7. Primary Phase (Key Stages 1 & 2)

Intent

To ensure all pupils become fluent readers, confident writers, and articulate speakers, able to access the full curriculum in English. Provision builds on early literacy foundations and ensures consistency, inclusion, and strong progress for all learners, including those learning English as an additional language.

Reading

- Daily systematic phonics and early reading intervention where required
- Whole-class reading using high-quality, age-appropriate global texts
- Explicit teaching of reading fluency and comprehension strategies
- Reading embedded across all subjects, aligned to the **Read Like a GEM Universal Offer**

Reading instruction is underpinned by Teach Like a GEM principles, including explicit modelling, guided practice, and regular retrieval to strengthen fluency and comprehension. Pupils requiring additional support with decoding, fluency, vocabulary, or comprehension receive targeted intervention using evidence-based platforms such as **ReadingWise**, in line with the Read Like a GEM Targeted Offer.

Writing

- Clear progression in grammar, punctuation, and spelling across the phase
- Sentence-level accuracy taught explicitly and revisited through retrieval practice
- Writing opportunities across subjects for a range of purposes and audiences
- Oral rehearsal, modelling, and structured planning used to support writing, particularly for EAL learners

Writing instruction follows Teach Like a GEM approaches, including clear success criteria, teacher modelling, scaffolded practice, and retrieval of prior learning to secure accuracy and independence over time.

Vocabulary

- Explicit teaching of Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary to support comprehension, reasoning, and academic expression across all subjects.
- Pre-teaching of key vocabulary supports multilingual learners and reduces barriers to accessing new content
- Use of visual supports and dual-language resources where appropriate

Vocabulary development is strengthened through Teach Like a GEM retrieval routines, ensuring new vocabulary is revisited, practised, and applied across lessons and subjects. Structured practice and consolidation are further supported through platforms such as **ReadingWise**.

Oracy

- Structured talk routines and sentence stems embedded across lessons
- Explicit focus on academic spoken English
- Regular opportunities for presentation, discussion, and explanation

Oracy instruction reflects **Teach Like a GEM** expectations for high-quality classroom talk, including modelling, rehearsal, and accountable talk. Multilingual learners' spoken language development is further supported through targeted language acquisition platforms such as **FlashAcademy**.

8. Secondary Phase (Key Stage 3-5)

Intent

To develop disciplinary literacy, enabling students to read, write, and communicate confidently as subject specialists in English. Literacy provision ensures students can access complex texts, express ideas precisely, and succeed in internal and external assessments.

Reading

- Explicit modelling of how to read subject-specific and academic texts
- Activation of vocabulary and background knowledge prior to reading
- Structured support for reading complex texts and extended reading across subjects

Reading instruction is aligned to Teach Like a GEM strategies, including modelling expert reading, guided practice, and retrieval of key concepts and vocabulary. Students requiring additional support receive targeted intervention through ReadingWise, aligned to the Read Like a GEM Targeted Offer.

Writing

- Explicit teaching of subject-specific writing genres and conventions
- Modelling of high-quality responses and exam-style writing
- Scaffolding and gradual release to support EAL learners and Students of Determination
- Feedback that prioritises clarity, accuracy, structure, and improvement

Writing instruction reflects Teach Like a GEM principles of explicit instruction, worked examples, and retrieval practice, ensuring students internalise structures and conventions over time.

Vocabulary

- Explicit teaching of Tier 3 (subject-specific) vocabulary is prioritised to ensure students can access, understand, and communicate complex curriculum concepts across all subjects.
- Teaching focuses on morphology, etymology, and word families to support deep understanding, decoding of unfamiliar terminology, and transfer of knowledge across contexts.
- Vocabulary is revisited through structured retrieval and deliberate practice, enabling students to retain and apply subject-specific language accurately in reading, writing, and spoken responses, with targeted support provided through ReadingWise where required, particularly for students who need additional support to develop academic and disciplinary language.

Oracy

- Structured academic discussion and purposeful talk
- Opportunities for debate, justification, and explanation
- Consistent expectations for formal spoken language across subjects

Oracy expectations are aligned to Teach Like a GEM, ensuring high-quality talk, clarity of expression, and confident participation. For students new to English or requiring accelerated language development, **FlashAcademy** supports listening, speaking, and spoken academic language.

Cross-Phase Instructional Coherence

Across all phases, literacy teaching is aligned to:

- Read Like a GEM – establishing a strong reading culture and targeted support
- Teach Like a GEM – ensuring explicit instruction, modelling, retrieval, and high-impact classroom practice
- Evidence-based platforms such as ReadingWise and FlashAcademy to accelerate progress where needed

9. Inclusion, EAL & SEND

The school is committed to ensuring that all learners can access high-quality literacy teaching and make strong progress, regardless of language background or additional learning needs.

Students learning English as an additional language are supported through:

- Explicit vocabulary instruction and language modelling
- Sentence frames, structured talk, and oral rehearsal
- Visual, contextual, and oral scaffolds to reduce cognitive load
- Targeted language and literacy support informed by assessment

Multilingualism is recognised as a strength. Home languages, including Arabic, are valued and used strategically to support comprehension, confidence, and identity, while ensuring secure access to English-medium learning.

Students of Determination are supported through adaptive teaching, personalised strategies, and targeted intervention. Literacy provision is planned in collaboration with inclusion teams and informed by assessment data to ensure appropriate support and challenge.

10. Assessment, Monitoring & Review

Literacy provision is monitored regularly to ensure consistency, quality, and impact across all phases. Across GEMS schools, standardised reading assessment using **NGRT** is conducted three times per year to monitor reading attainment and progress. The use of NGRT provides leaders with reliable, standardised evidence to support accurate self-evaluation, inform targeted intervention, and drive continuous improvement in literacy outcomes across the school.

Assessment information is used to:

- Track progress in reading fluency, comprehension, writing accuracy, vocabulary, and oracy
- Identify pupils who require additional support or intervention
- Inform teaching, planning, and targeted provision

Monitoring activities include lesson observation, work scrutiny, assessment analysis, and pupil voice. Phonics and early reading outcomes are reviewed as part of this monitoring cycle to inform teaching, intervention, and professional development, ensuring strong progress for all learners.

11. Professional Development & Leadership

The school prioritises ongoing professional development to ensure high-quality literacy teaching across all phases.

Professional development focuses on:

- Effective literacy instruction across subjects
- Developing reading fluency, including prosody, to support comprehension and confident oral reading
- Supporting multilingual learners and EAL pedagogy
- Disciplinary literacy in secondary subjects
- Consistent implementation of agreed whole-school strategies

Professional learning is delivered through a range of approaches, including structured programmes, workshops, and coaching provided through the GEMS Talent Academy, ensuring staff access high-quality, research-informed training aligned to school and organisational priorities.

Staff new to the school or to the UAE context are supported through induction, coaching, and modelling of effective literacy practice. Leadership ensures that professional development is responsive to school priorities, informed by monitoring and evaluation, and focused on improving outcomes for all learners.

12. Subject Leadership & Vocabulary

Subject leaders are responsible for identifying and prioritising Tier 3 subject-specific vocabulary within their curriculum areas. They ensure that key terminology is explicitly taught, revisited through retrieval and application, and consistently reinforced across lessons.

Subject leaders monitor the quality and impact of vocabulary instruction and support teachers to implement effective strategies that enable all students, including multilingual learners, to access and use academic and disciplinary language confidently.

13. Impact & Success Measures

The impact of this policy is evaluated through a combination of attainment data, progress measures, and qualitative evidence to ensure that literacy provision improves outcomes for all learners.

As part of GEMS' commitment to world-class education, the organisation aspires to over 90% of students across GEMS schools to be fluent readers. This ambition reflects the belief that reading fluency is foundational to curriculum access, academic success, equity, and lifelong learning. Achieving high levels of fluency ensures that students can engage confidently with increasingly complex texts, access subject content independently, and succeed across all areas of the curriculum.

Impact is demonstrated through:

- Improved reading fluency and comprehension, evidenced through standardised and school-based assessments
- Improved accuracy, structure, and stamina in writing across subjects
- Consistent use of subject-specific vocabulary in written and spoken work
- Increased confidence and participation in spoken English
- Strong performance in internal assessments and external examinations
- Positive feedback from KHDA, BSO, IB, and other external evaluations
- Pupil engagement and voice further inform evaluation, ensuring that students' confidence, motivation, and attitudes to literacy remain central to measuring success.

14. Policy Review & Governance

This policy is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains current, effective, and aligned with school improvement priorities, organisational expectations, and regulatory requirements.

The policy is reviewed by school leadership in collaboration with relevant stakeholders and is shared with, and overseen by, the Local Advisory Board (LAB) as part of the school's governance and accountability processes.

Updates are made in response to evaluation findings, changes in curriculum requirements, organisational priorities, or inspection feedback, ensuring continued relevance and impact.