



AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL
OF ABU DHABI *SINCE 1972*



KG1 Handbook

2021 - 2022

Quick Checklist of Expectations For Self Reliance in KG1

To be comfortable, confident, and prepared throughout the school day, we expect your child(ren) in KG1 to have developed certain habits of self-reliance:

- To use the bathroom independently, your child should be able to: Pull down pants, put toilet seat up/down, sit on toilet, use toilet paper/wet wipes, flush, pull up pants, and wash and dry hands.

KG1 students are expected to be completely independent in using the bathroom facilities prior to entering KG1. While infrequent bathroom accidents are developmentally appropriate, students should demonstrate consistent toileting independence. Should a child demonstrate that they require one-on-one toileting support this will be discussed by the teacher, parents, and health office, and **may require a child to learn necessary toileting skills prior to returning to the school environment.**

- At Snack and Lunch Time, students should be able to: Open and close containers, feed themselves, use garbage bins provided, and repack snack bags after eating.
- To properly care for the classroom, your child should be able to: Clean tables and put materials away after use.
- To manage their own clothing, your child should be able to: button and unbutton shirts and zip pants/shorts, otherwise use elastic waist pants/shorts.
- These key skills will allow your child to independently fulfill important tasks throughout the school day with ease and confidence.

Dear Parent,

We are looking forward to welcoming your child to what we know will be the beginning of many positive learning experiences as members of our ACS community. It is a great honor to be your child's first guide through our Early Childhood Program. We value our partnership with you and plan to offer opportunities for you to become involved in your child's life at ACS.

KG1 is a time of wonder, excitement and discovery. In KG1 at ACS, our instructional planning and practice is guided by the Creative Curriculum™. We provide a content-rich, developmentally-appropriate program that encourages active exploring and learning through play and inquiry and promotes a child's progress in all developmental areas. We support each child to become a creative, confident thinker and problem solver, and offer many opportunities to enhance and extend his/her understanding of the world around him/her, through experiential thematic unit studies.

We are excited to share innovative changes to our early childhood program beginning the 2021-22 school year. Rest assured that these changes have been carefully considered and meticulously planned - all with the best interest of the children at the center of what we do.

We will continue to take utmost care of our students while providing them with a greater range of learning opportunities, including working with a wider range of adults. Students will have the opportunity to explore and learn in all KG1 classrooms which will offer a variety of inspiring environments. While students will have a homebase teacher they will also get to learn with and from each member of the KG1 teaching team.

Communication between home and school is an important part of building successful experiences for your child. Teachers communicate with parents via regular newsletters, emails, and conferences, and bi-annually through semester report cards. We have scheduled conferences to talk with each of you about your child as an individual learner as well as a member of the KG1 class. We welcome your participation and encourage you to make an appointment to speak with any of your child's teachers any time after school when we have time and a quiet environment in which to talk. These meetings can be done virtually, or, in person, as long as the safety requirements are met. Email is an excellent way to communicate with teachers, especially when a late night thought comes to mind!

Again, let us say how much we are looking forward to sharing this very important year with you and your child. It is certain to be a great year!

Sincerely,
The KG1 Team

Expectation Of Our Parents

Your child(ren) is expected to come to school ready for a day of learning activities, having had plenty of sleep, nine to twelve hours and able to arrive on time, by 8:00 am. Your child(ren) will be documented as tardy if he/she arrives after 8:05 am. After lunch, for the first couple of months of KG1, children are given the opportunity to nap or rest on mats, to assist with the hot climate and their transition into KG1. Please provide a small pillow and cover, both clearly labeled with your child's name.

Children should come to school in uniform. They also need a sun hat for outdoor recess. Keeping a sweater or sweatshirt at school is recommended as the classrooms can feel chilly after being outside. A change of clothing is also required to be kept at school in case of accidents or messy play.

We expect children to come to school wearing shoes suitable for PE lessons and general play, so they can safely climb, run and jump, etc. No Crocs or flip flops please. Children should be able to take their own shoes on and off and be able to fasten them independently; please choose velcro closures if your child is not able to tie laces yet.

We expect that parents send your child(ren) to school with a healthy snack and lunch, and a labeled water bottle with a nozzle. Please do not send candy, soda, nuts, or use glass container(s) that is/are not lined in plastic. Containers provided need to be easy for your child(ren) to open independently. Please include cutlery if applicable.

Your child will need to bring a backpack to school. **The backpack should be regular size and without wheels.** Please check the contents of this every day for completed work and any important notes that come home from school. Most important information is sent through Veracross, Seesaw, and email; do check in regularly to see photos and what is happening at school. The KG1 team of teachers are the first point of contact and appointments should be made with them, for before or after school, to discuss any concerns. The email for the full team of teachers is: kg1team-group@acs.sch.ae. The Elementary office should be called with urgent messages. Our Elementary Executive Assistant, Ms. Lone Wennestad, can be reached at 02 681 5115, ext 700, or by email at: lonewennestad@acs.sch.ae.

KG1 children must be picked up by a designated adult **no later** than 2:30 on Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and **no later** than 1:30 on Tuesdays. A parent or caregiver must walk up to the KG gate and wait under the awnings **on foot** until their child exits and joins them. All faculty, staff and adults in school are required to wear an ACS ID badge at all times. For your child's safety and well-being, please keep us informed of any change in his/her usual schedule for going home.

We expect that parents **inform the KG1 team of teachers and the Elementary office via email before 8:00 am when your child is absent for any reason.** Children who have a fever or diarrhea must stay at home for at least 24 hours.

Our Curriculum

In order to facilitate discussion, planning, and assessment, we follow the Creative Curriculum TM which is organized within four major developmental domains:

Social and Emotional Development is about socialization – the process by which children learn the values and behaviors accepted by society. It is also about becoming a competent and confident person. Making friends, solving social conflicts and regulating their own emotions are important focus areas for this age group. Because we know that social and emotional skills can be taught and nurtured most effectively when children are in their preschool years, this developmental domain is an important focus of our curriculum.

Physical Development includes both large muscle and fine muscle motor skills. We know from brain research that moving the body literally wakes up the brain, and we make sure that our children have time and space to move throughout the day. By developing physical strength and agility, children begin to feel a sense of confidence and independence as they gain personal responsibility for their own physical needs such as dressing themselves, packing up lunch containers and zipping up school bags. As children learn what their bodies can do, they gain self-confidence, and the more confidence they gain in what they can do, the more willing they are to try more challenging tasks like drawing, writing, and painting.

Cognitive Development involves how children think, how they see their world, and how they use what they learn. As children observe events around them, ask questions, make predictions, and test possible solutions, learning reaches beyond just acquiring information. Persistence and knowing how to apply knowledge expands their learning even further. Our children learn to think logically and to organize information by comparing, contrasting, sorting, classifying, counting, measuring, and recognizing patterns. They also learn to represent objects and think symbolically. Representations and symbols free children from the world of literal meanings and allow them to use materials and their imagination to explore abstract ideas.

Language Development includes understanding and communicating through words, spoken and written. Our children are immersed in a rich language environment. Their vocabulary develops dramatically as they interact with each other and their teachers, and the richer a child's vocabulary and language experiences, the more likely he or she will become an effective reader and writer. Language and literacy skills go hand in hand. As children learn to listen and speak, they gain control of themselves and their world, relate effectively to others, and gather and store more and more information. They begin to make sense of written language, understanding the purpose of print and how it works, gaining knowledge of the alphabet, and writing letters and words.

Monitoring and Communicating Progress

The KG1 System Of Assessment And Learning is our road map for tracking individual progress. There is a sequence of steps we expect to see as children progress toward reaching developmental milestones. Teachers document developing competencies and this documentation is the focus of parent conferences which are held twice a year – once in the fall and once in the spring. A copy of the 38 Creative Curriculum TM learning objectives, that guide our instructional planning and practice, is available for parents. Teachers use the sequence of steps from the curriculum to purposefully craft and plan instruction to promote individual growth and excellence.

The Learning Environment

Objective 10 Uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills

a. Engages in conversations

| Not Yet | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | |
|---------|---|--|---|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| | | Engages in simple back-and-forth exchanges with others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cries at adult who says, "Sweet! Jeremy is talking." He goes again, and adult imitates the sounds. • Shakes head for no waves bye-bye • Joins in games such as pat-a-cake and peek-a-boo | | Initiates and attends to brief conversations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Says, "Doggy," teacher responds, "You see a doggy." Child says, "Doggy woot!" • Asks teacher, "Home now?" Teacher responds, "Yes, I'm leaving to go home." • Looks at teacher and points to picture of car. Teacher responds, "No, I'm going to walk home." | | Engages in conversations of at least three exchanges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stays on topic during conversations • Maintains the conversation by recalling what the other person says or by asking questions | | Engages in complex, lengthy conversations (five or more exchanges) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers interesting comments with communication devices • Extends conversation by moving gradually from one topic to a related topic | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

b. Uses social rules of language

| Not Yet | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | |
|---------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| | | Responds to speech by looking toward the speaker; watches for signs of being understood when communicating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hears clin and goes to adult pointing, "Five back." • Looks at adult and says, "Ball," repeatedly until adult says, "Ball, you want the ball!" | | Uses appropriate eye contact, pauses, and simple verbal prompts when communicating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pays attention to speaker during conversation • Pauses after asking a question to wait for a response • Says "please" and "thank you" with occasional prompting | | Uses acceptable language and social rules while communicating with others; may need reminders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talks turn in conversations but may interrupt or direct talk back to self • Regulates volume of voice when reminded | | Uses acceptable language and social rules during communication with others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a softer voice when talking with peers in the library and a louder voice on the playground • Says, "Hello," back to the museum curator on a trip | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

See pages 28-22 of Child Assessment Portfolio.

Our shared classrooms are typically organized into interest areas: Writing Center, Building Blocks, Dramatic Play, Toys and Games, Puppets, Art, Library, Discovery and Technology. Cooking, sand and water play are also included. In each interest area, the arrangement of furniture and the materials involve children not only in learning but also in caring for the classroom and what is in it.

A Strong Sense of Community

A positive social climate helps children feel good about school and learning. Teachers and their assistants model appropriate social behavior, relating to each other and to children in positive ways and helping them do the same to others.

The Structure of our Day

We establish a daily schedule, routines, and procedures that help create a sense of order and predictability in our classrooms. Children know what to expect, and they understand what is expected of them. The order around them creates a sense of order inside them so that they can quickly and comfortably settle into learning and becoming a confident and responsible part of a positive learning community.

A Typical Day in KG1

Arrival: Children are greeted at the KG gate and are escorted to the hall for temperature check before entering their designated classroom for that day. They greet their teachers and friends with important news in their lives, unpack their bags, self-register and then move to an area set up with purposeful activities. Children begin the school day by standing to listen to the UAE National Anthem.

Morning Meeting: Children are invited to the morning meeting to greet each other with a song or movement, and/or share important events and experiences that have taken place during the last 24 hours. Children check the classroom job chart and plan for their own contribution to the smooth running of the class. The teacher guides the children through the calendar and the day's planned activities. She reads the essential question of the day and leads a group discussion.

Shared Reading: The teacher has chosen a poem, rhyme, or book that supports the essential reading strategy students are learning. The children interact with the print by using the context of the text and pictures to predict, infer, and draw conclusions as they read the book together.

Interest Areas: Since learning through play is the most powerful learning experience for children and choice based on interests is highly motivating, the children are given opportunities throughout the day to choose play and learning activities set up within a variety of interest areas like: Mark making/Writing, Library, Games & Puzzles, Building (blocks, Lego, shapes, magnetic tiles etc.), Dramatic Play, Puppets, Art, Mathematical exploration, Sensory experiences, Discovery and Technology.

Group Activities: Because children have unique learning styles and needs, teachers consider when it is most appropriate to use whole group, small group, or individual instruction. Sometimes child-initiated learning that takes place in interest areas during choice time is the best opportunity for promoting new learning. Routines and transition times are also used as opportunities for learning. Teachers and assistants work with large and small groups of children

on purposefully chosen activities to support the development of literacy, math, motor coordination and social skills.

Outdoor Play: Children need plenty of time for movement in fresh air and sunshine. The kindergarten playground is designed with their needs in mind with padded surfaces, slides, ladders, tunnels, tricycles, balls, sand and water trays.

Snack Time: Eating in KG1 is a social time. Children sit at small, child-size tables for a time of conversation, good manners, and nutritious snacks. Their favorites are usually small yogurt cups, bite-size fruits and veggies, sandwiches, and cheese and crackers. We do not allow candies, nuts, sugary drinks, or chips.

Lunch: A quiet time for eating and socializing with friends, teachers and teaching assistants. Opportunities are taken to teach and reinforce healthy eating, proper conversation, and appropriate manners.

Quiet Time: Time for listening to stories, gentle music, reading with a friend, quiet play, resting on pillows or cushions, or taking a quick nap.

Afternoon Meeting Time: This is an important part of our day as we reflect on the day's activities, plans for tomorrow, and read a story. It's also a good time for a group game such as Simon Says, Hide the Bean Bag etc. the children learn to follow rules, take turns, and enjoy the structure of a group activity.

Music, Movement, and Arabic Development: Specialized teachers work with KG1 children to develop their musical, artistic, movement, and Arabic skills. Students have opportunities throughout the school year to refine their skills, as well as, perform/present to an audience. The PE teacher works with children either outdoors or in the designated movement classroom. The PE uniform is optional, but strongly encouraged, for students in KG1.

Library: The children visit the Elementary Library according to a regular schedule so that they can listen to stories read by the librarian that compliment fundamental classroom literacy skills. They are also supported in choosing a 'just right' book to take home and share with family members for the week.

Social Emotional Learning: The early childhood counselor at ACS teaches classes weekly on social and emotional skills through hands-on learning. Children are regularly encouraged to express their feelings and to develop a rich social and emotional foundation in topics such as: personal space, effective communication skills, friendship, and managing emotions. Children who have these types of social-emotional supports learn how to be effective listeners, respectful and supportive to others, and are able to resolve small problems with increased independence. Children learn strategies to communicate their feelings and needs, empathize with others, and strengthen their relationships. The counselor also meets with children individually or in small groups as needed and offers parent consultation and support.

Dismissal: KG1 children must be picked up by a designated adult **no later** than 2:30 on Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and **no later** than 1:30 on Tuesdays. A parent or caregiver must walk up to the KG gate and wait under the awnings **on foot** until their child exits and joins them. All faculty, staff and adults in school are required to wear an ACS ID badge at all times. For your child's safety and well-being, please keep us informed of any change in his/her usual schedule for going home.

The Parents' Role in Supporting Learning at ACS

Parents enjoy the "wonder of newness" exhibited by their children as they develop emotionally, socially, physically and intellectually. We enthusiastically encourage parents to continue to participate in the joy of learning and development as their child(ren) begins the school experience. Our own experience guides us, and research confirms that the most successful students have parents who are involved in their school lives.

The parents' primary role is one of encouragement and support. When children are given a lot of time and encouragement to use and practice the new things they learn, they understand that what they are doing in school is important and they begin to communicate in more conventional ways. They will learn to read and write in a manner similar to the way in which they learn to speak. They will listen, watch, and imitate what they see and hear their parents and older siblings doing and saying. Those who see their parents talking, listening, reading, and writing with purpose and for pleasure will begin to do the same. By reading license plates, advertisements, food labels, signs and other environmental print, children learn that print is meaningful. They will try scribbling notes on scraps of paper, writing messages like, "I LV U," and reading what they have attempted to write to you. Admiration and appreciation for their developing interest in literacy by encouraging their efforts.

Important ways parents can help their children develop literacy skills:

- Provide your children with many firsthand experiences and give them the words that describe these experiences.
- Engage in frequent one-on-one conversations with your child.
- Sing songs, play language games and say rhymes together.
- Help your child acquire new words and use them to communicate with detail.
- Talk about words and help your child hear and pronounce words clearly.
- Provide a space and tools for your child to write and create including crayons, markers, paper, and tape, etc.
- Encourage your child to write his/her name.
- Notice text in the everyday environment (signs, tags, advertisements, packages, etc.)
- Talk about the illustrations in books and predict what the text might say.
- Read books that play with the sounds in words.
- As you read a book, ask your child to recall what happened and predict what will happen next.
- Model tracking the text, place your finger under the words as you read.

- Model how to handle books with care.
- Visit our Elementary Library often and help your child choose books that interest him/her.

Helpful Hints for a Successful Beginning

- Talk about the new school experience in positive ways.
- Your home atmosphere will influence your child during the school day. You may need to allow additional time for your young child to get ready during the first weeks of school.
- Routines are very important to your child's successful entry into school. Get up in time to have a good breakfast without being rushed.
- Arrive at school promptly between 7:45 and 8:00 am, and pick-up your child on time at 2:30, or 1:30 on Tuesdays.
- Provide a special place for your child to put the backpack, library book, and other needed items so they are easily found each morning and afternoon.
- Make sure your child always has a clean change of clothing in his/her classroom cubby and a packet of wet wipes.
- Help your child understand the importance of self-help skills like using the toilet, putting on and off their shoes and socks, and asking for help when needed.

Health and Wellness Center

The health office is open 07.30-16.30 Sunday to Thursday and is staffed by 2 HAAD licensed School Nurses. They support the health and well-being needs of the school population through delivery of the HAAD (Health Authority Abu Dhabi) School Health Program. This includes responding to minor injuries on the campus, prevention of ill health through monitoring communicable diseases, undertaking the School Health Screening for grades 1-12 (see school policies), childhood immunizations programs (G1+G11), health promotion campaigns, working to HAAD standards of practice to ensure the safety and well-being of all our children.

The American Community School of Abu Dhabi strives to be an allergen aware campus, and not an allergen free school. An allergen aware campus seeks to create an environment in which children with severe allergies can learn to make appropriate choices to keep themselves safe. Students who have chronic conditions such as allergies, asthma, diabetes will require their parent to complete a health care plan with relevant supporting medical reports/prescriptions so that we can ensure their health needs are met and considered throughout the school day (downloadable from our webpage).

- If a child requires a course of medication through the school day parents are required to complete the relevant consent form (downloadable form from our webpage).
- If a child becomes unwell during the school day he/she will attend the Health & Wellness Center where the nurses will document and assess if he/she needs to go home.
- A child who has had a fever or diarrhea/vomiting needs to be free of symptoms at least 24 hours without medication prior to returning to school per Health Authority directive even if they feel well enough to attend school. This reduces the risk of infectious diseases/ ill health to our community.

For any inquiries to either school nurse, please email nurses@acs.sch.ae or telephone 025084412. For any additional health information and guidance check out the Health & Wellness page under community links on the ACS website.

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