مدرستنا الثانوية الإنجليزية ، الشارقة ـ بنات
Our Own English High School, Sharjah-Girls

GEMS EDUCATION

Student Celebrations and Gifts Policy

Implemented : April 2014

Reviewed : May 2026

Next Review : May 2027

Compiled by : SLT & SMT

Approved by: Ms. Asma Gilani, Principal & CEO

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance regarding gifts, birthdays, and celebrations within the school community to ensure a safe, inclusive, equitable, and learning-focused environment.

This policy aligns with the **GEMS Safeguarding Policy** by ensuring that celebrations, treats, and gifts are managed in a manner that prioritises student safety, wellbeing, inclusion, effective supervision, and protection from avoidable health, allergy, social, and emotional risks. The policy also aligns with the **GEMS Gifts and Hospitality Policy**, which requires gifts and hospitality to be appropriate, reasonable, proportionate, and free from any actual or perceived influence, conflict of interest, or preferential treatment.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All students
- Parents and guardians
- Teaching and non-teaching staff
- Visitors participating in school events

3. Guiding Principles

The school is committed to:

- Promoting inclusion and equality among all students.
- Protecting students with allergies and dietary restrictions.
- Supporting healthy lifestyle choices.
- Minimising disruption to teaching and learning.
- Preventing unnecessary expenditure and social pressure on families.
- Ensuring celebrations reflect GEMS values and ethical standards.

4. Birthdays and Personal Celebrations

4.1 Birthday Celebrations

The school recognises the importance of celebrating significant milestones in students' lives. However, celebrations must not interfere with learning, health, safety, or inclusion. Students may celebrate birthdays through school-approved activities and permitted birthday treats in accordance with this policy.

4.2 Cakes, Sweets, and Party Food

To recognise birthdays and personal celebrations, students may bring individually wrapped chocolate treats for distribution to classmates, subject to the following conditions:

- Only commercially packaged chocolates with clearly labelled ingredients may be distributed.
- Homemade food items, cakes, cupcakes, pastries, party food, and beverages are not permitted.
- Chocolates must be free from nuts, peanuts, and any other allergens specifically identified and communicated by the school as restricted items.
- Parents are responsible for checking ingredient labels and ensuring that treats comply with the school's allergy and health guidelines.
- Teachers reserve the right not to distribute any item that may pose a health, safety, or allergy risk to students.
- Distribution of chocolates should take place at a time approved by the class teacher and should not disrupt learning.
- Parents should inform the class teacher at least one day in advance if birthday treats are being sent to school.

The school reserves the right to refuse, withhold, or return any food item that does not comply with this policy or that may present a health, safety, safeguarding, or allergy-related risk.

4.3 School-Based Recognition

At the discretion of the school, birthdays may be acknowledged through:

- Birthday wishes during class teacher period
- Birthday cards
- Classroom recognition
- Assembly announcements

5. Return Gifts and Student-to-Student Gifts

5.1 Return Gifts

Students are not permitted to distribute any of the below during school hours:

- Return gifts
- Party bags
- Toys
- Stationery packs
- Goodie bags
- Souvenirs
- Any other celebratory giveaways

5.2 Gifts Between Students

The exchange of gifts between students during school hours is discouraged.

6. Gifts to Teachers and School Staff

The school appreciates expressions of gratitude from students and parents. Parents and students are encouraged to express appreciation through:

- Thank-you cards
- Letters of appreciation
- Student-created artwork
- Messages of gratitude

These forms of recognition are strongly encouraged over material gifts.

7. Health, Safety and Inclusion

All birthdays and personal celebrations must be managed in a way that prioritises student health, safety, allergy awareness, inclusion, supervision, and minimal disruption to learning. Specific requirements relating to permitted birthday treats are outlined in Section 4.2.

8. External Celebrations

Any birthday celebration, social gathering, or event organised outside school premises and beyond school hours is a private arrangement between families. The school does not organise, supervise, endorse, or assume responsibility or liability for the safety, wellbeing, conduct, or outcomes of such events. Parents and guardians remain solely responsible for decisions relating to their child's participation in external celebrations.

9. Monitoring and Compliance

The school reserves the right to monitor compliance with this policy and take appropriate action where expectations are not met. Any items brought to school in contravention of this policy may be withheld, returned to parents, or otherwise managed in accordance with school procedures.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians are expected to support safe, inclusive, and manageable celebrations, follow the requirements of this policy, and ensure that any items sent to school comply with the approved guidance.

Students
Students are expected to follow the school's expectations for celebrations and gifts, participate respectfully, and avoid bringing any items that are not permitted under this policy.

Staff
Staff are responsible for applying the policy consistently, promoting inclusive practice, managing celebrations appropriately, and escalating any concerns to school leadership.

School Leadership
School leadership is responsible for overseeing implementation, communicating expectations, monitoring compliance, and reviewing the policy in line with school and GEMS requirements.

11. Policy Statement
The school values the recognition of student milestones and expressions of appreciation when managed safely, inclusively, equitably, and without disruption to learning. All celebrations, treats, gifts, and external arrangements must comply with this policy, the GEMS Safeguarding Policy, and the GEMS Gifts and Hospitality Policy, ensuring student wellbeing, fairness, and professional integrity are maintained at all times.