



المدرسة العالمية الأمريكية
UNIVERSAL AMERICAN SCHOOL

—
 Al-Futtaim Education Foundation

OUR VISION

TO BE THE LEADING AMERICAN
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN THE REGION

OUR MISSION

TO NURTURE A COMMUNITY
OF INTEGRITY AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

OUR VALUES

BELONGING, CURIOSITY, RESILIENCE, EMPATHY

INCLUSION POLICY

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RATIONALE

At Universal American School we value children as individuals and recognise the diversity of our students. A student with Special Educational Needs (SEND) is referred to as a Student of Determination and some may find it significantly harder to learn or to take part in activities compared to students of the same age. These students may require additional support or provision in order to access the same curriculum. All members of staff are committed to offering an inclusive curriculum to ensure the best possible support and outcomes for all students, regardless of their needs, abilities and aspirations. We promote a holistic approach and follow a social model rather than a medical model meaning we focus on the individual and their surroundings rather than their actual diagnosis. We believe all children deserve the opportunity to access an extensive, balanced and differentiated academic and social curriculum. Alongside adapting the curriculum to cater for all needs, we strive to provide a nurturing environment that develops the well-being of each student. The guiding principles for learning support are:

- Every teacher is a teacher of students with SEND. Teaching students with SEND is a whole-school responsibility, requiring a whole-school response.
- Classrooms offer a safe, stimulating and supportive learning environment that allow access and challenge for all.
- Teaching and learning is approached with active awareness of learning difficulties and barriers, learning differences and learning styles.
- Recognition of the importance of emotional well-being and focusing on the development of self-esteem and confidence as a fundamental contributor to achievement.
- Language and literacy are vital to successful learning in all areas of the curriculum.
- Supporting students during phases of significant transition.
- To create a community of inclusion that encompasses the needs of all students while focusing on links to real life learning experiences ensuring all students are equipped for independence in the future.

This policy takes account of the Inclusive Education Policy Framework Policy (2017). The Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework Policy has been developed to support the UAE's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) as well as federal and local legislation that calls for the inclusion of all learners, regardless of ability, in the education sector. The Dubai Inclusive Education Framework Policy (2017) states that a Special Education Need and Disability is "A need which occurs when a student identified with an impairment requires the school to make specific modifications or provide specific supports to prevent, remove or reduce any potential disability from occurring and to ensure that the student can access education on an equitable basis and within a common learning environment with same aged peers."

AIMS OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES POLICY

- To address the individual needs of all students with a SEND.
- To identify students with SEND as early as possible through admission procedures,



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- observation and diagnostic tests.
- To ensure that students with SEND have equal access to an extensive and balanced curriculum that suits their learning style and needs.
 - To work with the Executive Committee in continuously enhancing an accessible curriculum for all students.
 - To collaborate with class teachers to ensure that students with SEND have their lessons appropriately differentiated to enable students to overcome any barriers to learning.
 - To provide information and support to all teachers about students with SEND on their difficulties and recommend strategies for their educational provision, sharing examples of good practice.
 - To successfully track and monitor the progress of all students with SEND to ensure each student makes expected progress.
 - To ensure that parents are involved in their child's learning and gain an understanding of their SEND.
 - To involve students in the development and review of their own learning journey and 'Individual Education Plans' (IEP).
 - To liaise with outside agencies when specialist support is required.
 - To support staff in embedding inclusive strategies within the classroom.
 - Mandate an Inclusion Support Team to oversee SEND provision and exemplary practices across the school.

DEFINITION OF INCLUSION

UAS believes that inclusion is the careful and thoughtful marriage of educational excellence and equity. By this we understand that no two students are the same and every student should receive the support they need to be successful. Inclusion is a basic right of individuals and its objective should be to embrace everyone regardless of race, age, gender, ability, religious and cultural beliefs and sexual orientation. When we have true inclusion, it is when we have removed all barriers, discrimination and intolerance. When implemented properly, it should make everyone feel included and supported, whichever environment they are in.

COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The concept of inclusive education lies at the heart of effective education and aligns with the global UN Sustainable Development [Goal 4](#) - Quality Education. It encompasses the principles of diversity, personalization, equity, respect, acceptance and enrichment. When we improve the quality of inclusion within our schools, we improve education for all.

With our model of inclusivity we meet our vision of being the leading American International school in the region by fostering:



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- Acceptance that all students bring value to our community.
- Commitment to ensure that every student is engaged in various academic and social activities.
- An understanding that effective teaching practices are based on personalized consideration of the strengths and needs of each student.
- Establish a balance between learning with peers in a common learning environment and focusing on individual learning goals.

International research has shown that high-performing schools have the most success with inclusion. These schools prioritise equity and inclusiveness as key conditions for achieving educational excellence (Cologon, 2013; OECD, 2012; 2014; United Nations, 2016).

Willams's (2010) analysis of the 2009 PISA data shows that schools that adopt a more inclusive system of education, have higher levels of student achievement and better outcomes overall.

LEGISLATION

This policy aims to ensure that Universal American School is compliant with:

- [The UAE Federal Law 29 \(2006\) concerning the 'Rights of People with Special Educational Needs';](#)
- [The UAE Federal Law 2 \(2015\) against 'Discrimination and Hatred'.](#)
- [The Dubai Inclusive Education Framework Policy \(2017\);](#)
- [The UAE Federal Law 2 \(2015\) concerning the 'Protection of the Right of a Persons of Disabilities in the Emirate of Dubai';](#)
- [UAE Executive Council Resolution No. 2 of 2017 Regulating Private Schools in the Emirate of Dubai.](#)

INCLUSIVE ADMISSION

Universal American School is highly committed to being an inclusive school, which admits students with a variety of needs including those who are gifted and talented, students of determination, or have physical, emotional, social, cultural or language challenges.

We welcome families and students who share our American international educational philosophy and who are willing to fully commit to our approaches to learning and teaching, which are based on:

- Challenging international American and IB curriculum frameworks.
- Tolerant and respectful behavioral code.
- Supportive and collaborative home-school partnerships.
- Inclusive and diverse international community.



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At UAS we ensure:

- Students are not refused admission based on their exceptionalities.
- All applicants have the right to participate in admission assessment tests.
- All applicants are fairly assessed.
- Collaboration between parents and previous schools to ensure a successful transition.
- Students of determination are provided with appropriate levels of support, accommodations and curricular modifications in order to access the same educational opportunities as their peers based on the resources available.
- The Admissions team uses the information gained from admissions assessments, other educational assessments and school reports provided to Admissions by the parents at time of application to determine the type and level of support appropriate for each student.

PHILOSOPHY DRIVING OUR INCLUSIVE LEARNING PRACTICES

Common Learning Environment

At UAS we offer a common learning environment, which is an educational setting where students from different backgrounds and with different abilities learn together in an inclusive environment. Common learning environments are used for the majority of the students' regular instruction hours and may include classrooms, libraries, gym, performance theatres, music rooms, cafeterias, playgrounds and the local community. A common learning environment is not a place where students learn in isolation from their peers. Effective common learning environments:

- Enable each student to fully participate in the learning environment that is designed for all students and is shared with peers in the chosen educational setting;
- Provide a positive climate, promote a sense of belonging and ensure student progress toward appropriate personal, social, emotional and academic goals;
- Are responsive to individual learning needs by providing sufficient levels of support and applying student-centered teaching practices and principles.

Equitable Access to Learning Experiences

Studies have shown the benefits that inclusive classrooms offer for children. Hence, instead of pulling children out of the classroom to offer them specialized instruction, in an inclusive classroom teachers come into the classroom. This allows for our teachers and specialists to work together in the same learning environment, benefiting all students, who are offered additional resources and support. We believe that our response to intervention support results in greater academic gains for all students. Additional benefits include better communication skills and improved social skills for students with disabilities, as well as fewer incidents of disruptive behavior and absences.



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Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL), is an educational framework based on research in the learning sciences, including cognitive neuroscience, that guides the development of flexible learning environments and learning spaces that can accommodate individual learning differences. UDL drives our approaches to learning across all classrooms for inclusive instruction of all students, allowing general education students access to multiple ways of learning and creating a greater sense of belonging for students with special needs. UDL provides flexible approaches to instruction that can be adapted to the individual needs of students across the learning spectrum. Our teachers create a more nurturing, equitable and inclusive space by using five strategies. These include the three UDL principles (multiple means of representation, multiple means of action and expression, and multiple means of engagement) as well as reflecting diversity in teaching and supporting the social justice goals of fellow teachers.

Early Intervention

Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) Multi-tiered models of support is a decision making framework intended to give educators a platform to evaluate students examining data to identify strengths and areas of growth. This analysis determines what supports are needed for each student. These supports will be provided in both small group and individual settings, and measured to determine if these supports are making a difference in improving children's acquisition of essential developmental skills.

General Inclusive Learning Practices in Action

The overall services provided in our common learning environment include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Differentiated and or personalized instruction
- Various classroom accommodations
- Various responses to intervention (RTI) in the classroom
- Various testing accommodations
- Assistive technology
- Small group instruction
- Small group interventions
- 1:1 interventions
- 1:1 support from a Learning Support Assistant
- Modified curriculum and assessment
- Referral to The Child Development Center for supportive services including speech, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Psychological Evaluations

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

All our personalized learning services are gathered under one overarching umbrella, which we refer to as our Student Support Services. Our Student Support Team comprises specialist teachers (special education needs and English language acquisition experts),



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learning assistants, student counselors, our colleague counselor and is headed by our Inclusion Coordinator. Our Student Support Team is supervised by a Senior Leadership Team member (UAS Deputy Director) and supported by an Inclusion Champion from the Board of Governors. The Student Support Team works in close collaboration with all teachers and other educational staff to promote and implement inclusive education across the school by removing barriers to learning and ensuring an inclusive culture.

Inclusion Coordinator

Our Inclusion Coordinator is responsible for the day to day operation, strategic planning and oversight of inclusive education across the school. The roles and responsibilities of the Inclusion Coordinator include, yet are not limited to:

- Strategic overview of and the implementation of the Inclusion policy.
- The day to day leadership and management of the Student Support Team.
- Tracking the progress of students receiving support from the Student Support Team.
- Strategic leadership and direction for the Student Support Team.
- Liaising with and advising all teachers.
- Contributing to the continued professional development of all teachers.
- Liaising with external agencies (Educational Psychologists, Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists).
- Modelling best practices by actively teaching/supporting our learners and students of determination.

Student Support Team

Our Student Support Team assists our students with a range of educational needs:

- Completing interventions (within the classroom setting and outside the classroom setting) with students to improve their academic, social and emotional abilities.
- Offering support and guidance to teachers to ensure each student has access to a modified, engaging and challenging curriculum.
- Tracking the progress of students receiving additional support.
- Complete testing and specialist support to identify potential barriers to learning.
- Consultation with specialist agencies to ensure the level of provision is suitable to each student.

STUDENTS OF DETERMINATION DEFINITION

- A student of determination may find it significantly harder to learn or to take part in activities compared to students of the same age. These students may require additional support or provision in order for them to access the same curriculum.
- Special educational provision is additional to, or otherwise differentiated from, the educational provision made generally for children of the same age. The aim of the



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provision is to ensure the student can access education on an equitable basis and within a common learning environment with same aged peers.

- A student may be identified as having a learning difficulty if he/she:
 - Has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age.
 - Has a disability which either prevents or hinders the child from making use of educational facilities provided in comparison to children of the same age.

A disability is 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

CATEGORIES OF NEED

The following categories of needs are based upon the UAE unified categorisation of disability as outlined in the revised categorisation framework published by KHDA (2019). It provides an important structure to support the identification of students who qualify to receive tailored services at UAS, if it can be documented that the identified need adversely affects the child's academic performance.

Common Barrier to Learning	Identifying Descriptors
Cognition and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Intellectual disability (including Intellectual disability - unspecified)● Specific learning disorders● Multiple disabilities● Developmental delay (younger than five years of age)
Communication and Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Communication disorders● Autism spectrum disorders
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)● Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)● Psycho - Emotional disorders
Physical, Sensory and Medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Sensory impairment● Deaf-blind disability● Physical disability● Chronic or acute medical conditions



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English Language Learning (ELL) Support

As a leading American International School in the region, UAS aims to provide access to high quality education for a diverse body of learners from all over the globe. Our students represent close to 70 different nationalities and hence a variety of linguistic backgrounds. For many of our learners, English is neither their first nor second language at home. As an English medium school (English as the academic language) it is however generally expected that students entering into grade 4 and above arrive with some degree of English language knowledge prior to starting.

For English language learners an English language proficiency test, WIDA MODEL, is administered as part of the admissions process. In terms of placing students on a language proficiency scale we use based on the [English Language Development Standards \(ELD\)](#).

Our principal belief is that students who are English language learners shall be immersed in the mainstream classroom as this is the most conducive method of acquiring and improving English language proficiency. For some of our English language learners additional language support will be provided outside the mainstream classroom and/or monitored within classes to ensure progress, attainment and proficiency in English. These students will be on the Student Support register and accommodations will be monitored by the Student Support Team.

Students who are bi-lingual or multi-lingual in English and other languages are not deemed to be English language learners, as they are generally deemed to be sufficiently proficient in English to be able to access our learning and programming.

Gifted and Talented

Recognize among a wider variety of categories of special education (as per UAE inclusive education), to promote inclusive education, and to ensure equal access to educational opportunities for all students are also those that may be characterized as gifted and talented. Gifted and Talented are those individuals whose abilities are developed to a level significantly ahead of their grade level, and/or their talent/s and potential for accomplishment are so exceptional or advanced that special education and support services are needed for the student to meet educational objectives and goals in the general education classroom.

Note: Gifted and talented students should be distinguished from students of high ability.

IDENTIFICATION AND SUPPORT

Early identification of student needs is key in effective inclusion, provision and support of all students. All members of staff are accountable in the identification of barriers to learning for students in their care. Through our Student Support Services we provide screening and observation of students to support the students and teacher. Members of the Student Support Team work closely with all staff including the Admissions Team to



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ensure barriers to learning are identified as early as possible, parents also play a key role in working alongside the school throughout the identification process.

LEVELS OF SUPPORT

Students receive support based on their needs, there are 3 Levels of support:

- Level 1 – Inclusive Quality First Teaching
- Level 2 – Personal Support/Curriculum Modification
- Level 3 – Individualized Programs with 1:1 Learning Support Assistant

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

If a student is unable to access mainstream curriculum without additional support from a Learning Support Assistant/Teacher, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be put in place. Within the IEP, a student will have academic, social/emotional and/or physical/behavior/communication targets, which will be set by the Inclusion Coordinator (or his/her designees). These targets will be reviewed with the student's parents alongside the class teacher and any outside agencies working with the student such as Educational Psychologists or therapists, if this applies. All students who are placed on an IEP will still have full access to mainstream curriculum however it will be modified to ensure the student can access, progress and succeed at his/her own individual level.

Students who receive intensive Level 3 Support will be supported by a 1:1 Learning Support Assistant, which is parent funded. The LSA might be full-time or part-time, depending on the student's needs. Once an LSA is in place, parents will be asked to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to ensure there is clarity between the school and parents, whilst also outlining the purpose and ensuring compliance.