



Principal's Newsletter



18 September, 2026
Edition 02
Jacqueline Brooks Smith

Dear parents

We were delighted to open our Middle School this academic year - please see below for a few introductory words from our new Middle School Coordinator Mr Faraz:

Middle School: Growing, Learning and Taking Ownership

It has been wonderful to see our Grade 6 students settling into Middle School and beginning to grow in confidence, independence and responsibility.

Across English, Mathematics and Science, students have been working hard to strengthen important academic skills, including reading comprehension, problem-solving, scientific thinking, subject vocabulary and confidently sharing their ideas. We are especially proud to see students becoming more willing to ask questions, challenge themselves, and take greater ownership of their learning.



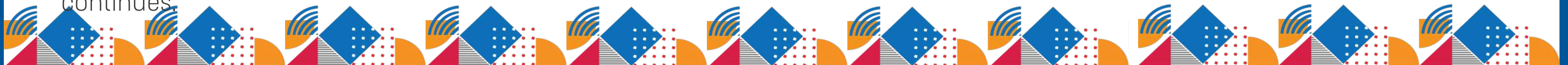
Building Strong Home Learning Habits

Home learning is an important part of this journey. It gives students the opportunity to revisit classroom learning, practice key skills, and prepare for upcoming lessons and assessments.

At Middle School level, we also want students to begin developing strong habits around organization, time management, and independent study. Regular reading, reviewing classwork, practicing key vocabulary, and completing assigned tasks all contribute to greater confidence and success in school.

We greatly appreciate the support of our families in helping students establish positive routines at home while encouraging them to become increasingly responsible for managing their own learning.

We are very proud of the positive start Grade 6 has made and look forward to celebrating many more achievements as the year continues.

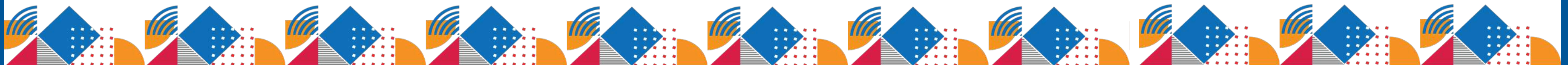


Assessments

Ms Laya our Head of data and assessment writes:

As we begin the new academic year, we will be conducting a series of external and standardised assessments over the next three weeks. These assessments are an important part of our beginning-of-year assessment process and will help us understand each student's current strengths, areas for development, and learning needs.

The assessments will be scheduled at different times throughout the school day so that students are not completing all assessments at once. Your child's teacher will follow the assessment schedule and will ensure that students are given appropriate breaks between assessments.



What assessments will students take?

During this assessment period, students will complete a combination of assessments:

Assessment	What does it assess?	Grades
CAT4 – Cognitive Abilities Test	Looks at different types of reasoning, including verbal, quantitative, non-verbal, and spatial reasoning. It helps us understand how students think and learn.	Grades 1–6
NGRT – New Group Reading Test	Assesses reading ability, including comprehension and students' ability to understand and interpret written information.	Grades 1–6
MAP Growth	Measures students' achievement and helps us identify their current instructional level and areas for growth in key academic subjects.	KG2–6
ABT Arabic	Assesses students' Arabic language attainment and helps us understand their current level of achievement in Arabic.	Grades 1–6

Assessments

Students will complete different MAP Growth assessments depending on their grade level:

- KG2–Grade 6: MAP Reading and MAP Mathematics
- Grades 1–6: MAP Reading, MAP Mathematics, MAP Science, and MAP Language

In addition to MAP, students in Grades 1–6 will complete CAT4, NGRT, and ABT Arabic as appropriate.

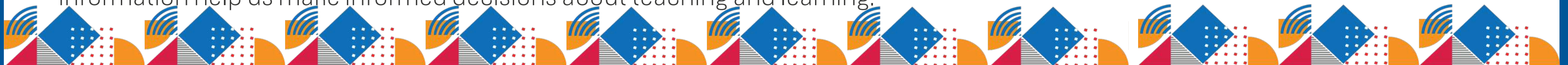
Why are we doing these assessments at the beginning of the year?

The beginning-of-year assessment period is not simply about giving students a test or assigning a grade. It provides us with a starting point for understanding where each student is academically at the beginning of the school year.

The results allow our teachers to:

- Identify what students already know and can do.
- Identify areas where students may need additional support.
- Identify students who may benefit from greater challenge or enrichment.
- Set appropriate learning goals for the year.
- Plan lessons and learning activities based on students' needs.
- Personalise learning and provide appropriate differentiation.
- Monitor progress throughout the year.
- Compare assessment information with classroom evidence to develop a more complete picture of each student's learning.

For example, MAP Growth helps teachers understand a student's current achievement and areas for growth, while CAT4 provides information about different cognitive abilities and how students may approach learning. NGRT provides detailed information about reading ability and comprehension. Together with classroom assessments and teacher observations, these different sources of information help us make informed decisions about teaching and learning.



The results are therefore used as a starting point and a tool for supporting your child's learning, rather than as a label or a judgement of your child's ability.

How will this benefit my child?

The information we gather will help teachers better understand your child's individual learning profile. This means that teachers can use the data to provide:

- Learning activities that are appropriately challenging.
- Additional support where it is needed.
- Opportunities for students who are ready to extend their learning.
- More targeted intervention and support.
- Individualised learning goals.
- Better-informed decisions about teaching strategies and classroom differentiation.

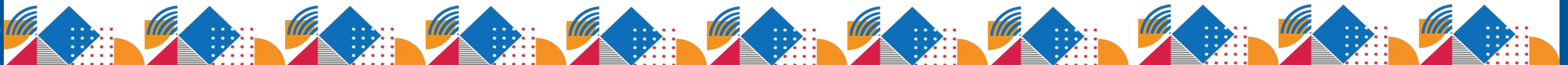
Most importantly, the assessments help us ensure that teaching starts from where the child is, rather than assuming that every student begins the year at the same level.

How can you support your child?

There is no need for students to undertake any special preparation or tutoring for these assessments. In fact, it is important that the results reflect their current abilities, so that we can accurately identify their learning needs.

Parents can support their children by:

- Encouraging them to get a good night's sleep before school.
- Ensuring they have breakfast and are ready for the school day.





- Reassuring them that the assessments are simply an opportunity to show what they know and can do.
- Encouraging them to take their time and do their best.
- Avoiding putting pressure on them about their results.
- Ensuring their iPad is fully charged each morning.

Important: iPads Required

As students will be completing assessments digitally, all students are required to bring their iPad to school every day for the next three weeks.

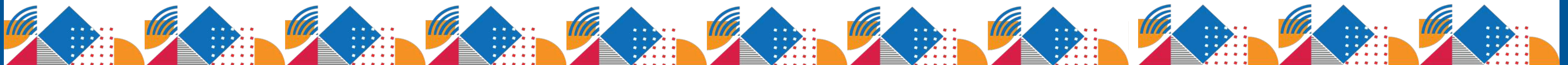
Before sending your child's iPad to school, please ensure that:

- The iPad is fully charged.
- The latest available software update has been installed.
- The NWEA MAP app has been downloaded and is ready to use.
- The iPad is functioning properly and can connect to the school network.

Having the iPad prepared and fully charged each morning will help us avoid interruptions and ensure that students can complete their assessments according to the planned schedule.

We appreciate your support and cooperation during this assessment period. The information gathered will be an important part of helping us understand our students, plan effectively for their learning, and ensure that every child receives the appropriate level of challenge and support throughout the academic year.

Thank you for your continued partnership in supporting your child's learning and progress.



Library Sessions

Ms Sharmila our librarian has started her library sessions as below:

Storytelling Session:

A storytelling session was conducted for Prek and KG's.

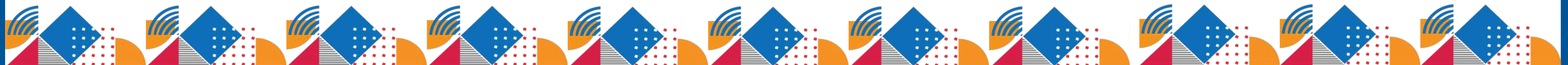
The students listened attentively to the story and showed great interest throughout the session.

At the end of the storytelling, an interactive question-and-answer session was conducted. The students participated enthusiastically and were able to answer the questions confidently.

Following the discussion, the students participated in a colouring activity based on a character from the story.

Across the school,

Our students were happily making colourful bookmarks and adding their own creativity to their reading journey!



Early Childhood Care and Education

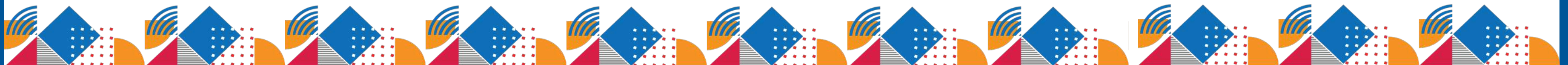
We are pleased to share the Parents' Guide to Quality Early Childhood Care and Education in Dubai provided by KHDA.

[Click here for Arabic Version](#)

[Click here for English Version](#)

The guide has been developed to help parents better understand what quality early childhood care and education looks like in Dubai and how they can work in partnership with educators to support their child's learning, wellbeing, and development. It introduces the key concepts of the ECCE Quality Framework in a practical, parent-friendly way and highlights the important role families play in bringing the vision of the Dubai Child to life.

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Weekly Assembly

Our weekly assembly round ups from Ms Fariha our Head of Well Being:

Kindness Starts With Us!

This week, our KG and Elementary/Middle School students came together for two heartwarming assemblies celebrating the power of **kindness** under the theme “**Kindness Starts With Us.**”

Through meaningful **Quran Recitation, the UAE National Anthem, engaging talks, and interactive activities**, our students explored how small acts of kindness can create a big impact in our classrooms, school, and community.

and encouraged everyone to take simple actions to spread positivity, respect, and care for others. Our students also enjoyed energizing exercise sessions and proudly celebrated their accomplishments through the presentation of **Certificates of Achievement**.

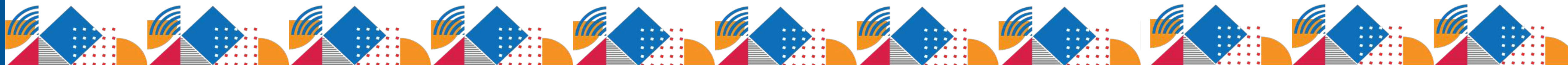
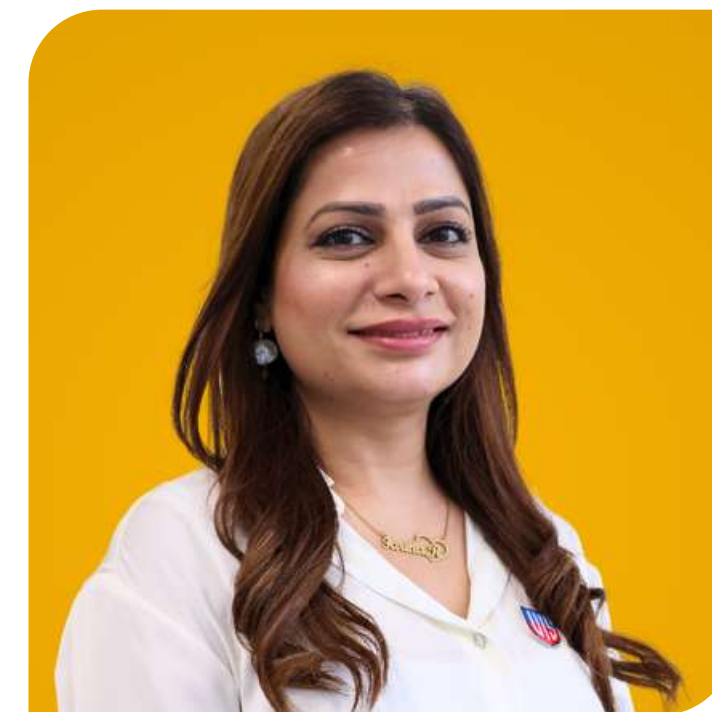
The assemblies reminded us of all of an important message:

A smile, a kind word, a helping hand, or simply including someone can brighten another person’s day!

Our Family Kindness Challenge

We invite our VIS families to continue spreading kindness at home! This week, challenge your child to complete one act of kindness every day—whether it is helping a family member, saying something kind, sharing with a sibling, or making someone smile.

Together, let’s create a community where kindness starts with each one of us! 🧡🌍



European LANGUAGES DAY

Friday, 25th September, 2026

Different languages, one world.
Let's celebrate the voices, cultures and stories
that bring us closer together.

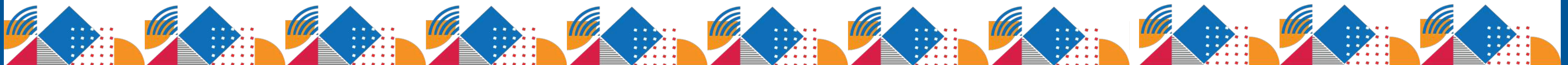


Parents in Partnership

We would like to start getting parents together and talking about our Parents Association and the organisation of Class Representatives so please join us next week for our Parents in Partnership session:



Thursday 24th September
01:30 - 2:30 PM





Vernus
International
School

Have a good week everyone

THANK YOU!



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