



Dear Parents

Ramadan Kareem,

All of you will have received a message from **KHDA** yesterday asking you to complete a survey. I would like to explain to you in more detail what the survey relates to and I am hoping that all of you can spare some time to complete it.

The survey you have been requested to complete is to provide KHDA with stakeholder feedback to inform their **Distance Learning Evaluations**. Similar to the way in which we have annual inspections, we have been informed that we will have reviewers conducting a remote 1 day inspection of each school in the UAE, to judge their distance learning provision. We, as a school, have to provide documentation of what we are doing and how we are adapting over time. The review team will also be dropping into a number of classes online to observe lessons on **Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May**. The leadership team will be interviewed by the team and they will use stakeholder survey data to inform those discussions. Therefore, I would ask you to **complete the survey** as soon as you can. Teachers and students also have surveys to complete. Students from Year 6 upwards have already completed them. Younger students are exempt.

**Phase 1** of the GEMS Relief Package has now been completed with a total of AED 75 million allocated to provide eligible parents with financial assistance. The Relief Package has benefitted over 26,000 GEMS students to date. School fee discounts range from 25% to 100% in cases of extreme hardship, with an average fee discount of 33% to date. **Phase 2** commenced on the 19th April. Parents who suffer a job loss, salary cut or unpaid leave going forward can use the same link to the Parent Portal as per the previous Relief Package Form. The deadline for submissions is 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020.

Over the last fortnight our **attendance** has remained at **98%**, clearly indicating your resolve to make sure your children continue to learn. During this fortnight, we have provided **over 6930 hours** of **synchronous** learning and **1555 of asynchronous** learning. The fortnightly GEMS survey has also shown that **97%** of parents are **satisfied** with the Distance Learning Programme that teachers are delivering for students. As mentioned previously, this does mean that we need to try harder to track down **135 parents that are finding it difficult**. Please reach out to us so that we can try to accommodate your concerns, keeping in mind the **collective family of CIS**.

As we hit that **Groove**, I can tell you all systems are operational at school physically and virtually. **We have continued** our weekly professional development with staff, Senior Leadership meetings happen twice a day, Middle leaders are also meeting twice or more times during the week and all of the 10 Teams we have during school time also continue to meet. **Wow its exhausting**, there now never seems to be a beginning of the day or end of the day. How I miss school!

Even our **garden has continued to flourish:**



We believe that the priority now is to ensure **continuity of education**; we must take into consideration the exceptional work that our teachers do, who now work beyond the call of duty to support students and families. We are **indeed thankful to parents** for their understanding and appreciation. We acknowledge the efforts that they make as parents in supporting their children with their education in these challenging times.

As we applaud our teachers and our parents, I want us to **shout out and applaud our kids**. These guys have stayed inside more than they ever have before, adapted to online learning overnight, been locked down so they cannot see their friends, listening to news reports that are sometimes not very positive and yet they carry on every day. **You guys are awesome** and we applaud you for your tenacity and ability to adapt so quickly as us **adults flounder** around trying to work out what instsnap is! What ever that is!

Last week I talked in my video that **bricks and mortar are here to stay** and that humanity cannot be replaced by a machine. We need each other. However, I'm also excited by what technology can bring. There is growing evidence that learning online can be more effective in a number of ways. **Some research shows** that on average, students retain 25-60% more material when learning online compared to only 8-10% in a classroom. This is mostly due to the students being able to learn faster online; e-learning requires 40-60% less time to learn than in a traditional classroom setting because students can learn at their own pace, going back and re-reading, skipping, or accelerating through concepts as they choose.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of online learning **varies amongst age groups**. The general consensus on children, especially younger ones, is that a structured environment is required, because kids are more easily distracted. Since studies have shown that children extensively use their senses to learn, **making learning fun and effective through the use of technology is crucial**. Clever integration of games has demonstrated a higher engagement and increased motivation towards learning. This is our aspirational goal as teachers and at **CIS to continue to evolve** ever so gently our delivery to keep learning and students engaged. But that's okay, right? After all, disruptive innovations start as primitive and then improve.

This week I leave you with this quote;

*"The most important principle for designing lively eLearning is to see eLearning design not as information design but as designing an experience."*

Cathy Moore

Sincerely,



Lachlan MacKinnon  
CEO/Principal

*Fortune Favours the Brave*