

GARDNER ACADEMY

Family Handbook

A shared guide for families, students, and staff so every child can learn in a safe, respectful, and joyful environment.

Draft for school review and website publication.

Welcome

Welcome to Gardner Academy. We are grateful to partner with families in the education, care, and growth of each child entrusted to us.

At Gardner Academy, we believe children thrive when school and home work together. This handbook explains our shared expectations, daily procedures, and educational philosophy so that every child can learn in a safe, respectful, and joyful environment.

The handbook is designed to help families understand how we work as a community. It should be read alongside the school's formal policies, enrolment agreements, fee policies, and official communications.

Our Mission, Vision, and Values

Gardner Academy exists to develop confident, curious, and compassionate learners who are prepared to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Mission: To provide a nurturing and academically rich learning environment where every child is known, supported, challenged, and encouraged to develop their unique strengths.

Vision: To be a school community where children grow as capable learners, ethical leaders, creative thinkers, and responsible citizens.

Core values: Respect, curiosity, integrity, resilience, empathy, collaboration, and excellence guide the way we learn and work together.

Our philosophy is grounded in five beliefs:

- Every child is capable.
- Every child learns differently.
- Relationships come first.
- Curiosity drives learning.
- Character matters as much as academics.

Our Educational Philosophy

Gardner Academy's approach brings together Multiple Intelligences, the Reggio Emilia philosophy, and the International Primary Curriculum. These approaches help us teach the whole child, not only the content of a lesson.

Multiple Intelligences

We believe intelligence is broader than marks alone. Children develop strengths in language, mathematics, science, music, art, movement, nature, leadership, and reflection. Our role is to notice those strengths, stretch them, and use them as pathways into deeper learning.

Reggio Emilia

Children learn by investigating, exploring, asking questions, solving problems, creating, and reflecting. Teachers guide learning rather than simply delivering information, and classrooms are designed as learning environments where children's thinking can become visible.

International Primary Curriculum

The IPC supports learning goals in subject knowledge, practical skills, conceptual understanding, personal growth, and international mindedness. At Gardner, these goals are strengthened through our own Personal Learning Goals.

Gardner Personal Learning Goals

The Gardner Personal Learning Goals describe the habits and character strengths we want children to practise every day.

Adaptable

Children learn to embrace change, try new challenges, and manage transitions. Families support this by encouraging independence and allowing children to attempt age-appropriate tasks before adults step in.

Thinkers

Children ask questions, investigate ideas, solve problems, and reflect on evidence. Families support this by welcoming curiosity and asking children what they notice, wonder, and think.

Respectful

Children respect classmates, teachers, families, school property, and the environment. Respectful behaviour includes careful words, responsible choices, and care for shared spaces.

Empathetic

Children learn kindness, perspective-taking, and compassion. Conflict is addressed by helping children understand impact, repair harm where possible, and make better choices.

Communicators

Students learn to speak respectfully, listen carefully, and express ideas with growing confidence. Families support this by modelling calm, clear, and respectful communication.

Collaborators

Students learn teamwork, shared responsibility, and constructive participation. Parents also model collaboration by working with the school in a spirit of partnership.

Ethical

Students learn honesty, fairness, responsibility, and integrity. We teach children that doing the right thing matters even when nobody is watching.

Resilient

Children learn that mistakes are part of learning. Families support resilience by praising effort, strategy, improvement, and courage rather than perfection.

The Gardner Community

Everyone belongs. Everyone contributes. Everyone deserves respect.

Gardner Academy is a partnership between students, families, staff, and visitors. The quality of that partnership affects children's learning and wellbeing, so we ask all members of the community to speak and

act with dignity.

- Students are expected to participate, show respect, care for others, and try their best.
- Parents and guardians are expected to support school values, communicate respectfully, and work constructively with staff.
- Staff are expected to treat children fairly, communicate professionally, protect confidentiality, and support every learner.
- Visitors are expected to follow school procedures, respect learning spaces, and model appropriate conduct.

Respect and Behaviour

Our behaviour expectations are built around respect, responsibility, safety, and restoration.

Students are expected to speak respectfully, follow teacher instructions, care for classrooms and school property, include others, resolve disagreements peacefully, and tell an adult when someone is unsafe.

Parents are expected to speak respectfully to staff, speak respectfully about other families, support school decisions, attend meetings when requested, and model appropriate behaviour.

Staff commit to treating every child fairly, communicating respectfully, supporting every learner, and maintaining confidentiality.

When behaviour does not meet expectations, the school may use reflection, restorative conversation, parent communication, behaviour plans, loss of privileges, or other age-appropriate responses. Serious or repeated behaviour concerns may require formal meetings and written plans.

Anti-Bullying

Gardner Academy does not accept bullying, harassment, intimidation, or exclusion. Children must be able to learn in an environment where they feel physically and emotionally safe.

Conflict is a disagreement or problem between students where both may need support to resolve it. Mean behaviour is unkind or hurtful behaviour that may happen once or occasionally. Bullying is repeated, intentional behaviour involving a real or perceived imbalance of power.

Gardner Academy's process:

- Report: A student, parent, or staff member reports the concern.
- Investigate: The school gathers information from students, staff, and other relevant sources.
- Communicate: Parents are contacted when the concern requires family involvement.
- Support: The school supports the student who was harmed and the student who caused harm.
- Follow up: Staff monitor the situation and review whether further action is needed.

Restorative practices may be used when appropriate. Restoration does not excuse harm; it helps students understand impact, take responsibility, repair relationships where possible, and make safer choices.

Inclusion and Learning Support

Gardner Academy welcomes learners with diverse learning needs whenever the school can reasonably provide the support required for the child to succeed.

Inclusion works best when the school and family communicate openly, share relevant information, and make decisions in the child's best educational interests. The school may recommend assessments, learning plans, therapy support, review meetings, or reasonable classroom accommodations.

Some disabilities or learning needs require specialised environments, staffing, equipment, or therapeutic support beyond what Gardner Academy can currently provide. In these cases, the school may recommend another placement when this is genuinely in the child's best educational interests.

Support may include:

- Early identification of learning, behavioural, social, or emotional needs.
- Parent partnership and regular review meetings.
- Reasonable accommodations where the school has the resources to provide them.
- Collaboration with external therapists or specialists when appropriate.
- Clear records of agreed support, progress, and next steps.

Daily Routines

School hours: Drop-off begins at 7:00 am. Children should arrive ready to learn. All children must be collected before 17:30.

Drop-off and collection: Parents and guardians must follow school traffic, sign-in, and collection procedures. Children may only be collected by authorised adults listed with the school. Students should be picked up promptly at 17:30 or before. There is no additional grace period offered to parents. The work day ends at 17:30, and all staff are off duty after 17:30.

Attendance: Regular attendance supports progress, confidence, and friendships. Parents should inform the school of absences, late arrivals, and early departures as soon as possible.

Emergency contacts must be kept up to date. If a child is not collected before 17:30, the school will contact the parent or guardian and then the listed emergency contacts. Repeated late collection may result in a meeting or late collection procedure.

Uniform and Appearance

Students should attend school neat, clean, and dressed in the required uniform or approved school attire. Uniform expectations help children feel part of the community and reduce unnecessary distractions.

- Uniform items should be worn correctly and kept in good condition.
- Footwear should be safe and suitable for school activities.
- Hair should be neat and practical for learning and play.
- Jewellery and accessories should be minimal and safe.
- Personal belongings should be labelled clearly.
- Valuable or unnecessary items should remain at home unless requested by a teacher.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of students is a shared responsibility. Families must provide accurate medical information and update the school whenever a child's health needs change.

Medication may only be administered according to the school's health and medication procedures. Children who are unwell should remain at home until they are well enough to participate fully and safely.

- Parents must inform the school about allergies, chronic conditions, medication needs, and emergency care instructions.
- The school will contact parents in cases of illness, injury, or medical concern.
- In a medical emergency, the school may seek urgent medical assistance while contacting parents or guardians.
- Visitors must follow sign-in and security procedures.
- Students and staff practise emergency procedures such as evacuation drills.

Communication

Clear communication helps children feel supported and helps small concerns become easier to solve. Gardner Academy asks families and staff to communicate respectfully, directly, and through appropriate channels.

Parents should contact the class teacher first for classroom matters. Appointments should be made for concerns that require a longer conversation. Urgent matters should be communicated through the school office.

- Email and official school channels should be used for important school matters.
- WhatsApp may be used for brief updates where approved by the school, but it should not replace formal communication.
- Staff may not always respond immediately during teaching time, supervision, meetings, or after hours.
- Social media should not be used to discuss individual children, staff members, or confidential school matters.
- Concerns should be raised respectfully and in a problem-solving spirit.

Technology, Privacy, and Artificial Intelligence

Technology can enrich learning when it is used safely, ethically, and purposefully. Students must follow school instructions for devices, internet access, passwords, digital work, and online behaviour.

Artificial intelligence tools may be discussed or used in age-appropriate ways under teacher guidance. Students should not use AI to misrepresent their own work, bypass learning, or share private information.

Families may not photograph, film, or record students, staff, or school activities in ways that compromise privacy, safety, or dignity. Recording staff meetings or classroom interactions is not permitted without prior approval.

- Use school devices carefully and only for approved learning purposes.
- Keep passwords and personal information private.
- Report unsafe or inappropriate online content to an adult.
- Respect copyright, privacy, and the work of others.
- Use AI and digital tools honestly and with guidance.

Academic Expectations

Gardner Academy values strong academic growth, but we understand that learning develops over time and looks different for every child. Assessment is used to understand progress, guide teaching, and support each learner's next steps.

Families support academic progress by encouraging reading, maintaining routines, supporting homework, attending conferences, and communicating when a child needs help.

- Homework should reinforce learning and build responsibility.
- Daily reading is strongly encouraged at home.
- Assessment may include observation, classwork, projects, oral tasks, written work, tests, portfolios, and teacher judgement.
- Reports and parent conferences help families understand progress and areas for growth.
- Additional support programmes may be recommended when a child needs targeted help.

Fees and Financial Responsibilities

School fees allow Gardner Academy to provide staffing, resources, facilities, and programmes for students. Families are expected to meet financial responsibilities according to the school's fee structure and fee collection policy.

This handbook references the separate Fee Collection Policy rather than repeating every financial term. Families should read the fee policy carefully and contact the school early if payment arrangements are needed.

- Fees must be paid by the stated due dates.
- A 5% discount applies to annual tuition only when the full annual tuition is paid on the January invoice, which is due by 15 December.
- Parents should communicate promptly if they anticipate difficulty meeting a payment deadline.
- Late fees or administrative steps may apply according to the Fee Collection Policy.
- Withdrawal notice must follow the school's official requirements.
- Academic and administrative services will be denied when there are outstanding balances. Fees are considered outstanding from the 5th of the month. Academic and administrative services include school attendance, report generation, and related school services.

Parent Partnership

Parents and guardians are a child's first teachers. The school and family do not play identical roles, but we share a common purpose: helping each child grow in confidence, character, and capability.

Parents are expected to:

- Read with children regularly and encourage a love of books.
- Support homework and age-appropriate independence.
- Ensure regular attendance and punctual arrival.
- Communicate respectfully and promptly.

- Keep contact, medical, and collection information updated.
- Attend conferences and requested meetings.
- Support school values at home.

Student Wellbeing

Student wellbeing includes emotional safety, friendships, confidence, identity, digital citizenship, conflict resolution, leadership, service, and character development.

Children sometimes need adult support to navigate friendship challenges, disappointment, worry, or conflict. The school responds by listening carefully, teaching skills, involving families when needed, and helping children practise better choices.

- Students are encouraged to ask for help when they feel unsafe, overwhelmed, or excluded.
- Families should inform the school of wellbeing concerns that may affect learning or behaviour.
- Leadership, service, and community activities help students develop responsibility and belonging.
- Digital citizenship is part of wellbeing because online choices affect real relationships.

Celebrations and School Culture

Gardner Academy celebrates learning, creativity, service, effort, and community. Assemblies, performances, sports, service projects, leadership opportunities, and community events help children experience school as a place of belonging.

Families are encouraged to participate in school life in ways that strengthen the community and model positive involvement for children.

- Assemblies and performances.
- Sports and movement activities.
- Community events and family engagement.
- Parent-teacher organisation opportunities.
- Service projects and student leadership.

Appendix

Families should keep the school's contact information, calendar, emergency contacts, and important dates easily available throughout the year.

For the most current information, families should refer to official school communications and the school website.

- School office: +264 61 308 476.
- Email: admin@gardner.edu.na.
- Address: 21 Pavlov Street, Windhoek, Namibia.
- Website: gardner.edu.na.