

# Al Falah Academy



## Student/Parent Handbook Revised Spring 2024

**Disclaimer: This Handbook may be subject to changes/revisions as needed throughout the school year. Parents, students, and staff will be notified by email of any substantive changes. During Admission/Re-enrollment, all families are required to sign that they agree to abide by the policies and procedures included in the most recent version of this document.**

# Contents

<b>GENERAL INFORMATION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Vision</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Mission</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Core Educational Values</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Alignment with our Vision, Mission, and Core Beliefs</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Non-Discrimination Policy</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Equal Employment Opportunity</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Management</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Accreditation, Licensing, and Certifications</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>ADMISSIONS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Financial Aid</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Age Requirements</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Tuition</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Textbooks, Supplies, Field Studies, and HS Chromebooks</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Uniform and Attire</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Non-Custodial Parents</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Class Placement</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>DAILY OPERATIONS &amp; GUIDELINES</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>School Calendar, Hours of Operation, and Holidays</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Attendance, Absences, Tardies, and Early Checkouts</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Arrival and Dismissal Procedures</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Tardy Arrival Procedures</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Early Dismissal Procedures</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Inclement Weather Days</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Async Digital Day</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>School Safety Protocols and Emergency Drills</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Student Health</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>A. Parent/Guardian Consent:</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>B. Delivery of Medication to School:</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>C. Special Considerations</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>D. Prohibition to share any medications</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>E. Other Protocols</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Early Dismissal for Dual Enrollment: Protocol</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Student Driving Privileges</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Healthy Lunch, Hot Lunches, Snacks, and an Allergy-Safe Environment</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Recess</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Lost and Found</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>In-Class Celebrations</b>	<b>22</b>

<b>ACADEMIC GUIDELINES</b>	<b>22</b>
Evaluation codes	23
Promotion and Retention	24
Al Falah Academy Homework Guidelines	25
Grade-Level Placement Policy	25
Academic Communications and Concerns	26
Intervention Program	27
Al Falah Academy Honor Code	27
Project-Based Learning, Field Studies, and Expert Visitors	28
<b>HIGH SCHOOL-SPECIFIC INFORMATION</b>	<b>29</b>
Graduation Requirements: 26 Units / 29 Units, effective for Class of 2026	29
Policies Regarding Specific Courses and Programs	29
<b>EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAM</b>	<b>34</b>
After-School Clubs, Civic Activities, and Competitions	34
Overnight Travel Policies and Procedures	34
<b>CONDUCT &amp; DISCIPLINE</b>	<b>37</b>
Behavior Violations	37
Electronic Device Policy	38
Consequences	38
Reporting of abuse	40
<b>PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT &amp; COMMUNITY</b>	<b>40</b>
Parent Mandated Service Hours	40
Opportunities to Communicate with Teachers and Administration	41
Meet Your Teacher Day	41
Celebrations of Learning	41
Whole-School Meetings with Board	41
Coffee Conversations	42
Annual Survey	42
Upon Request	42
<b>KEY DOCUMENTS</b>	<b>42</b>
AFA Board By-Laws	42
Al Falah Academy Honor Code	42
Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy	43
Acceptable Use	44
Security	44
Privileges	45
Sanctions	45
IT policy on malfunctioning chromebooks	45
AFA Email, Google Suite	45
Be a Good Digital Citizen	46
Practice Netiquette (set of rules for acceptable behavior online)	46

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## Vision

Al Falah Academy (AFA) is a learning institution based on the principles of Qur'an and Sunnah that nurtures, cultivates, and fosters creative and critical thinking skills, academic excellence, and strong moral values to develop in each student a positive identity as a Muslim who is prepared intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically for the betterment of family, community, and humanity.

## Mission

To effectively instill Islamic values and morals, while ensuring academic excellence through an integrated curriculum based upon the most effective and respected Standards in all subjects.

## Core Educational Values

AFA operates on a three-pillared foundation:

1. The first pillar is **the establishment of an Islamic worldview**. The community and the main goals are summarized in this verse of the Qur'an:

*The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give charity and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah will have mercy upon them. Verily, Allah is Almighty and Wise. (Qur'an 9:71)*

Al Falah Academy is founded on mainstream Islamic practices, also known as *Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l Jamaa'ah*. Students are provided an environment of Sunnah, and the staff integrates the Islamic perspective into their lessons when possible.

- Our calendar, celebrations, and character lessons revolve around the establishment of an Islamic personality, the guidance of which comes primarily from the Holy Qur'an and the practices of our **Beloved Prophet Muhammad**, (*peace be upon him*).
- Consistent with Al Falah Academy's goal of developing a culture of integrity and honesty, it is expected that staff, administration, parents, and partnering community members support the Islamic code of character and behavior as revealed in the Holy Qur'an, and as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad, (*peace be upon him*).

The following **Belief Statements** form the foundation of the policies of the school:

- a. As Muslims, we believe in **One God, Allah** (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*), whose greatest characteristic is His Mercy, in **His Books, His Messengers** (*peace be upon them all*), including the Last and Final Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*), **His angels**, the **Day of Judgment and life after death**, and

the **Divine Decree**.

- b. We believe that the **Holy Qur'an** is the infallible and final revealed message of Allah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*) to the world, and the **Sunnah**, or practices and statements of the Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*), are together the final authority of all matters of faith and conduct.
  - c. The implementation of Sunnah—in behavior, speech, attire, interpersonal relationships, stewardship of the natural world and the Earth, and worldview—is one of the goals of the Academy. We require adherence to the Sunnah on campus as well as during school after-hours events (graduations, fundraising banquet, field studies, competition events, athletics, PTO events, etc).
  - d. We believe that Allah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*) created man and woman as complementary equals and that sex is binary and biologically determined. Our faith also instructs us that sexual intimacy permissibly occurs only in the domain of marriage, and that marriage is the union of a man and a woman.
  - e. We are taught that Allah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*) made us human and knows that we will fall into mistakes. Hope in Allah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*) is at the heart of the Qur'an and Sunnah because Allah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*) loves to forgive. The core of our faith is to believe that He will forgive us, and the more we sincerely try, avoiding despair, the greater our status is in the sight of Allah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*). A believer shows gratitude in good times and patience in difficult times. Life is a test.
  - f. We believe that we must show justice towards all of Allah's (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*) creation. We must show fairness in our relationships, in our financial dealings, and in standing with others who are marginalized. We must take our place as stewards of the natural world, including the protection of animals and their habitats.
  - g. We exhibit and teach Islamic character, maintain a high academic standard, teach living a disciplined life through exercising self restraint and consideration of others, and support a spirit of collaboration as an Ummah, a community of believers from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, races, and experiences, bound together with a common purpose, to worship Allah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*), and with a common goal to advance the cause of Islam by promoting what is good and forbidding what is evil .
2. The second pillar is **the establishment of best practices in instruction and assessment combined with quality curricular materials and resources**. Key elements of our approach include universal teacher preparation in classroom management techniques that engage and challenge students, teacher participation and analysis in the selection of high-quality texts, teacher involvement in curriculum mapping and data analysis to ensure mastery of learning, assessment guidelines that assure fairness and balance, professional development in effective instructional techniques, and engagement through a variety of well-established educational organizations to connect us with a wider community of educators. Our staff is composed of division and department leaders with a high level of expertise, tasked with gauging consistency and quality in all the domains of education, which includes classroom management, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional ethics and responsibilities.

AFA applies a Project-Based Learning (PBL) instructional format. PBL is a teaching method in which students learn by actively engaging in real-world and personally meaningful projects, integrating multiple subjects, requiring critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, the use of technology, and

various forms of communication. PBL units involve “breaking down the walls of the classroom” to conduct Field Studies at off-campus sites aligned with our curricular themes, invite Guest Presenters, use higher-order thinking skills, and learn to work as a team. PBL is the foundation for curricular units in STEM as well as civic awareness of societal issues that develop citizen-scholars.

3. The third pillar is **parental involvement**. AFA implements a policy that is intended to build a vibrant, active community of involved parents. Studies have indicated that children whose parents and/or other significant adults share in their formal education tend to do better in school. Some benefits include:
  - Higher grades and test scores
  - Long term academic achievement
  - Positive attitudes and behavior
  - More successful programs
  - More effective schools

With these valuable ends in mind, AFA requires parents to fulfill a minimum number of hours per year in service activities needed by the school. These activities are organized or coordinated by the Al Falah Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), by the school administration, or by classroom teachers.

AFA operates as an extension of the family, and requires the parents’ commitment in order to achieve success. With our 20 mandated hours per year of parent service (10 hours for single-parent families), parents are obliged to take on roles in their children’s education and experiences that enrich all our students. Whether it be as officers on our Board, PTO members, or leaders and assistants in our athletic programs, clubs, or events, we invite parents to be active in our students’ lives. AFA offers service opportunities that can be accomplished at home, as well as at school. We celebrate the “Super Volunteers” who accomplish far more than the required 20 hours annually, and we connect with our wider community to join in with unique services and opportunities that enrich and engage our students.

## **Alignment with our Vision, Mission, and Core Beliefs**

Please read the **Vision, Mission, and Core Beliefs** section of the *Al Falah Academy Parent/Student Handbook* for more details. Please read the brief statement below.

Al Falah Academy practices fairness and respect for those who think and act differently than the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah, in our society. We are equally clear about our reason for being, to effectively instill Islamic values and morals, while ensuring academic excellence. Those who share and embody these values demand we stay true to our reason for being. We have a trust to preserve the teachings of Quran and Sunnah.

For violations or incompatibility with AFA's Vision, Mission, and Core Beliefs:

- The Qur'an teaches that only Allah (SWT) is perfect, and that humans make mistakes. The staff at AFA will do their utmost to provide guidance, compassion, confidentiality, and an ethos of forgiveness to students who violate the guidance of Qur'an and Sunnah. However, students who flaunt such violations, persist in them, prefer them to the behavior and worldview of our Qur'an and Sunnah, or who may even influence others to indulge in or accept such violations, will be called to account.
- If students persist in behavior or statements that go against AFA's Vision, Mission, and Core Beliefs, the situation will be escalated to a committee composed of the Principal, a board member, relevant staff, and the student and parents involved, in order to clarify and re-affirm the Vision, Mission, and Core Beliefs of the school, or to part ways if there is no longer a common purpose.

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**

Al Falah Academy admits students of any race, religion, sex, or national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school, on the basis of its admissions policies.

## **Equal Employment Opportunity**

Al Falah Academy (AFA) provides equal opportunity to all employees and applicants for employment in accordance with applicable laws. Personnel decisions are made on the basis of merit and business need. AFA will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, mental or physical disability, or age, unless the classification is a bona fide occupational qualification. AFA will take action to ensure that all employment practices are free of unlawful discrimination. Such employment practices include, but are not limited to, hiring, promotion, demotion, training, transfer, recruitment, selection, layoff, disciplinary action, termination and compensation.

## **Management**

Al Falah Academy is solely organized, owned, and administered by the Board of Trustees of Al Falah Academy, which is composed of individuals who meet the criteria of being a trustee established by the committee of Trustees. Board members are volunteers who obtain no financial or other material advantages in their role. Their service to the school is for the sake of Allah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*). AFA was established in 2010 as an academically advanced Islamic school without affiliation to any local, national, or international organization. The school is registered in the State of Georgia as a non-profit corporation and has a non-profit status with the IRS. The school has been in operation since the 2010-2011 academic year. AFA is located at 1835 Shackleford Ct, Norcross GA 30093. The phone numbers are (678) 502-7211 and (678) 380-0201.

The AFA Board By-Laws are located on our website, at <https://alfalahacademy.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Al-Falah-Academy-By-Laws-Rev-Feb-07-2021-1.pdf>

The role of the Board of Directors is to:

1. Ensure the financial stability of the school.
2. Set the school's mission with input from the administration, faculty, staff, and parents.
3. Set the school's policies based on recommendations of the Principal.
4. Support the Principal and Administration in their day-to-day operation of the school.

The Board of Directors meets regularly and welcomes input from the Parents, Faculty and Staff. Input may be forwarded directly to the Board via email: **board@alfalahacademy.com**. The Board follows the approved AFA By-Laws, which are published on the school website, and available in the Appendix of this document. Additionally, Al Falah Academy has an administrative staff that handles the day-to-day operations of the school.

## Accreditation, Licensing, and Certifications

Al Falah Academy is accredited nationally by **Cognia** (formerly known as AdvancEd), by the **Council of Islamic Schools of North America (CISNA)**, and locally by the **Georgia Accrediting Commission with Quality (GAC)**. Al Falah Academy is Certified by the **College Board**. AFA is also a member in good standing of the **Georgia Independent Schools Association (GISA)** and of the **Islamic Schools League of America (ISLA)**.

Al Falah Academy's PreK program has been granted an exemption by the state of Georgia, through **Bright From The Start**. Our PreK program is not required to be licensed by the state, and AFA follows all exemption rules as indicated at the following website: <http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/Exemptionrules.pdf>

## ADMISSIONS

### Enrollment

Enrollment in Al Falah Academy follows an application process for newcomers, as well as a re-enrollment process for returning students. The enrollment process is online only, and follows a strict chronological order, according to the stated time frames and deadlines. Prospective students in Grades 2 and above are administered an in-person academic placement test. To ensure that older students will adjust to our school, all new students applying to Grade 7 or above will be required to have a private interview with the school Counselor or other administrator.



Transcripts are reviewed for academic and behavioral criteria. Discipline records from previous schools are also reviewed. Al Falah Academy requires any Special Education, ESOL status, special needs, 504 Plans, or IEPs (Individualized Education Programs) to be reported and data submitted, in order to assure that AFA can meet the student's needs.

Enrollment for the coming new school year begins in February for re-enrollment of current students and their new siblings, and March for new student applications. Enrollment continues until classrooms are full, on a first-come, first-served basis. Mid-year enrollments—with the aim of joining in January—may be open depending on seats available. No student will be able to enroll after December 15 for the second semester of the current school year.

- Returning families must have paid all balances from the previous year to be considered for the coming year.
- Al Falah offers financial aid to families who can prove they qualify. If the “financial aid request” choice is selected, then the application package will **not** be complete until all required financial aid documents—the form, the two years of federal income tax forms, any applicable fees, and required supporting documents—are submitted together. If financial aid is requested after the submission of application forms, the date of ALL forms is changed to reflect the later submission date, thus possibly affecting the chronological order of seat reservations.
- If a grade level is considered closed due to lack of available seats, students will be placed on the Waitlist and parents will be informed of their student's status. If parents do not want to remain on the Waitlist, they may receive a refund of 50% of their application Registration Fee. Future applications will take the new application date into consideration. Families cannot receive their original application date after having withdrawn the application once.
- When a classroom opening becomes available, students on the enrollment waitlist will be notified in chronological order of their application date.
- The application fee is non-refundable. A partial refund (50%) will be given only in the cases in which Al Falah is unable to admit the student due to capacity limits, or a student fails to meet the academic or behavioral criteria.

Questions related to the registration policies or process may be directed to the school administration staff by emailing [admissions@alfalahacademy.com](mailto:admissions@alfalahacademy.com).

## Financial Aid

Al Falah Academy offers limited financial aid. The selection process is considered as an *amana*, a sacred duty to ensure the limited funds go to deserving families. For this reason, the required forms inquire about family income, lifestyle, and financial obligations, as well as evidence of income through the federal income tax forms. All forms must be received along with the application. The link to the financial aid form and process can be found on the Al Falah Academy website along with the other requirement details. Parents who reject the award amount are withdrawn from the registration process and 50% of their application fee is refunded.

## Age Requirements

Legal documentation of age, such as a copy of the birth certificate, must be submitted along with the application. Al Falah Academy has set **October 1st** as a birthday cutoff date. Students entering Pre-K3 for 3-year-olds, Pre-K4 for 4-year-olds, Kindergarten for 5-year olds, and 1st Grade for 6-year-olds, must be the appropriate age by October 1st of that year. In all other grade levels, students are admitted to the grade level that follows the level completed in an accredited school; otherwise, the cutoff date takes precedence. Placement tests may be considered in certain cases.

**NOTE:** Georgia public schools require that students entering Pre-K, Kindergarten, or 1st grades meet the appropriate age requirements by September 1, as opposed to October 1. **Therefore, your child may be subject to repeating the grade just completed, if the child's birthday is after September 1 and s/he is transferring to a public school after attending Al Falah Academy..**

**NOTE:** Students must be toilet-trained. We do not accept students who wear pull-ups or diapers, or who are not able to independently use the toilet.

## Tuition

Please refer to our website (<http://www.alfalahacademy.com>) for the most up-to-date information on tuition and related fees.

Tuition may be paid in 1 installment, 2 installments, or over a 10-month (starting August) or 12-month (starting June) period. Late payments will incur a late fee if received later than the 1st of the month.

Payments may be made using either a credit card or electronic check. Payment information must be provided to the school and will be drawn automatically on the first of the month when it is due. **If tuition is paid by credit**

**card, your card will be charged processing fees.** Credit card fees will be waived when the tuition is paid in one installment by credit card. A discount will be given if the tuition is paid in one installment by check. This discount does not apply to financial aid or otherwise discounted tuition. **Please refer to our website for the latest processing fees and discount rates**

Tuition will not be reduced for school absences (excused or unexcused), nor for partial days. The parent/guardian is responsible for the payment of the fees for the full school year. A withdrawal penalty of up to 3 months of tuition will be charged per student withdrawn during the academic year.

Failure to pay the penalty fee will result in withholding of student records. Al Falah Academy reserves the right to initiate any legal action including reporting to credit reporting agencies.

## **Textbooks, Supplies, Field Studies, and HS Chromebooks**

Each grade level has a list of required textbooks, purchased by AFA as bulk texts sold at a school-wide discount that is passed on to parents. The parents are responsible to pay for the full bulk text list for their child's grade level once enrollment is confirmed. Students receive the textbooks in the first week of school.

Additionally, please refer to the school website for the latest school supply details and requirements.

Field study day experiences, if arranged for a Unit, are **required**, and parents will have to pay for the fees relating to Field Studies and Expert Visitors. These experiences are considered as important academically as a textbook or lesson plan; it is part of the curriculum. Field study fees are **not refundable**, whether a student attends or not, as the experience is planned for the entire grade level in advance. If there is any financial inconvenience, please contact the organizer of the field studies experience.

All Al Falah Academy high school students are required to purchase a Chromebook that meets the required specifications given upon enrollment. The student and his/her family are responsible for any repairs or needed replacement. **A chromebook loaner is available for students waiting for repairs, for up to one week.**

Once obtained, the student Chromebook must be brought into the school at stated times to "authorize" the Chromebook. This means the device is registered on the school domain in the student's name, the security software is downloaded, and the textbooks may be downloaded. AFA will apply an official sticker to an authorized Chromebook, which must not be removed during the school year, to indicate that this device is permitted to be used in the building. **No unauthorized devices may be used by students in the school building.**

## Uniform and Attire

The goal and mission of the Uniform policy is to have all Al Falah Academy students dressed uniformly and modestly. All clothing must be Islamically appropriate and loose fitting. Please refer to the Al Falah Academy website with the most current and up-to-date uniform requirements and approved vendors. Students must be in school uniform daily.

As an Islamic school, our school culture is set to promote the Sunnah requirements of attire, even in off-campus or after-school activities. Students are expected to be dressed appropriately per Islamic guidelines at any school event, even when the uniform is not required. This includes the *awrah* (all but face and hands) with hijab and loose clothing covering for females (middle school ages and up), and loose clothing from knees up for males. Examples of off-campus or after-school events include graduations, fundraising banquets, field studies, competition events, athletics, PTO events, etc.

## Non-Custodial Parents

Official documents and communications generated by the school will be distributed to the custodial parent, step-parent(s) and the non-custodial parent alike, if their contact information is provided to us. Similarly, parents (as well as step-parents) will be granted permission to visit the student on school grounds or during local school-sponsored trips, or contact the teacher or other school officials regarding the progress of the student. Each family is responsible to provide to Al Falah Academy a copy of its current custodial agreement or other court orders so that AFA may be in compliance. If parents wish any other person to receive communication about the student, parents are responsible to notify the school in writing. Such requests must be signed by both parents if there is a custodial agreement, in case of divorce.

## Class Placement

In determining placement of Elementary School students within classrooms, the administration takes special care to consider each student's academic needs, in consultation with grade-level teachers. Every May, a survey goes out to parents to seek input on class placement. While specific requests for given classrooms or teachers cannot be honored, parents may at times have information regarding their child's academic needs that they wish to share with the administration. Such information will be taken into consideration at the time of class formation. Final decision in the assignment of Elementary School students to classrooms is made by the Elementary School Vice Principal. In Middle School, homerooms are single gender.

# DAILY OPERATIONS & GUIDELINES

## School Calendar, Hours of Operation, and Holidays

Al Falah Academy (AFA) operates 12 months of the year, with a break in the summer for building and campus maintenance. The academic year for students runs from August through May. Summer tutoring classes for Title 1-qualified students, as well as Summer Camp, are typically offered annually.

The AFA annual calendar enables families to celebrate the Islamic holidays, as well as to correspond as closely as possible to conventional American holidays so that families who have members who study or work in other settings benefit from time spent together. AFA closely follows Gwinnett County's School closures, with a few exceptions for observance of Islamic holidays and teacher workdays. Like all accredited schools, we provide the required 180 school days per year. You can find the latest calendar on our website <https://alfalahacademy.com/school-calendar/>

Hours of operation during the school year are 7:30am to 4:00pm. AFA offers a daily After School Care Program to 6:00pm, for an extra fee. Our Athletic Program of seasonal sports, and our Enrichment Program of clubs for different age groups, each take place at varied times after school, on weekends, or during lunch times. Title-funded tutoring is offered every summer. Summer hours, if offered, will be announced on our website every May for the months of June through August. Summer camp is offered some summers, depending on interest and staffing.

## Attendance, Absences, Tardies, and Early Checkouts

The Georgia Compulsory School Attendance Law (Ga. Code 20-2-690.1) states that children between the ages of 6-16 must attend school. At Al Falah Academy, we closely monitor attendance for all students. Good habits in attendance positively impact the learning experience where students can receive the maximum benefit in instructional activities. Students are expected to be in school each day unless there are legitimate reasons for an excuse.

An absence from school is considered **Excused** for these legal reasons:

- Illness
- Bereavement (up to 3 days, as necessary)
- Doctor, dentist, orthodontist, mental health counseling, etc... appointments
- Court order

- Hajj (not Umrah, because Umrah is not mandatory and the timing can coincide with school vacation periods)
- Hazardous weather or road conditions (in the case of specific area circumstances)
- Absences related to co-curricular or extracurricular school activities/events (determined by, and at the discretion of AFA)

Parents are required to notify the school of their child’s absence using the published *AFA Student Absence Notification Form*, which requires the reason for the absence to be stated.

**For both Excused and Unexcused Absences:** Assignments during absences are **not** excused. Students who are absent have the same number of days as the absence to make up assignments. The student is responsible for making up all assignments missed while absent.

**For Unexcused Absences** (reason stated is not on the above bulleted list): Students in grades Kindergarten and up receive **quarterly warning notifications** as reminders when unexcused absences (3 days or more per month) or tardies (5 or more per month) are excessive.

**Extended (3 school days or more) unexcused absences** are highly discouraged. An unexcused absence refers to any absence that is not on the above bulleted list of Excused valid reasons. Vacations and family travel during school days—including at the start or end of the school year, or before or after lengthy school breaks—are considered an "unexcused absence". The Principal must be notified of any extended (over 3 days) unexcused absences. This does not confer “excused” status on those dates, but it may prevent Withdrawal of the student on our part. Notifying teachers or other administrators, in writing or verbally, is not considered as official notification.

**IMPORTANT CONSEQUENCES OF UNEXCUSED EXTENDED ABSENCES:** Please understand we must comply with GA law, stated above, and we cannot legally condone, excuse, or disregard lengthy absences, yet provide promotions and diplomas as if students attended as required. The school year is 180 days, and with Winter, Spring, and Summer breaks, we encourage you to plan travel wisely. Absence does affect learning, grades, and school standing academically.

**Excessive or extended Unexcused Absences may lead to course failure, lowered GPA, retention, delayed graduation, denied re-enrollment, or withdrawal.** There is an **emotional toll on students** who are stressed because of make-up work and missed lessons.

- If a student does not attend the first week of school, without having completed the *AFA Student Absence Notification Form*, nor informed the Principal in writing, that student will be Withdrawn, and a student on the Waiting List will be admitted for that spot.
- If a student is absent for 10 consecutive days or more after the start of the school year, without having

completed the *AFA Student Absence Notification Form*, nor informed the Principal in writing, the school administration reserves the right to withdraw that student. Notifying teachers or other administrators, in writing or verbally, is not considered as official notification. All penalties for early withdrawal will be implemented.

- The student is responsible for making up all assignments missed while absent, and the teachers do not provide assignments in advance. Tests and quizzes may not be taken online or remotely.
- No make-up work nor tests/quizzes will be accepted if the extended unexcused absence takes place at the end of a grading period.
- Retention (Grades K-8) or Credit Recovery (Grades 9-12) may be applied, if the student fails courses due to missing assignments during an extended unexcused absence.
- A student in middle or high school who is registered for an athletic program will be removed from the team, with no refund for the fees.
- According to the Georgia Department of Education, if the student is between the ages of 14 and 18 years and has had ten unexcused absences within one semester, his/her eligibility will be impacted to obtain or retain an instruction permit or driver's license.

## Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

AFA sends parents a visual of the Arrival and Departure lane formation each year. Please follow the designated route so that our carpool line does not back up onto the main road. Parents receive two carpool tags at the beginning of the year. Each year has a different color tag and number for security..

- Families whose carpool cohort includes a PreK and/or Kindergarten student will enter Gate 1 to drop off and pick up their entire carpool group from the front sidewalk, following the designated route through the parking lot.
- Families whose carpool cohort is composed only of students in Grades 1 and up will enter Gate 2 to drop off and pick up their entire carpool group from the Cafeteria exits, under the canopy, following the designated route through the back of the school.

**Arrival time is 7:30-7:55.** At 7:55am, gates are closed and the student is considered Tardy. Please park and walk your child(ren) to the Front Lobby entrance, where students are provided a Tardy Slip or digital Tardy notification, to ensure accurate attendance is recorded.

Students need to be seated in their homerooms by 8:00 am to be counted present and on time.

Doors open at 7:30am; students must not be unaccompanied prior to that time. Aim to drop off your child(ren) by 7:45am, to allow them time to get to their locker and classrooms, especially on upper floors.

**Dismissal time is 3:00-3:30pm**, at the same areas of the building designated by grade level cohorts as indicated above at Arrival. Students are released to adults with the correct, current Carpool Number(s).

Carpool Number(s) must be displayed visibly in the car. **A student will NOT be released to anyone not holding the current Carpool tag;** instead, the driver should park in front, enter the Lobby, and ID will be checked for permission to pick up any student. Personal recognition will not be a factor; this is to ensure safety and security for all students, even in confidential cases of custody..

**After Dismissal, at 3:30,** all students remaining will be sent to the Cafeteria. Late parents must park in a legal space, and with their Carpool Tag in hand, walk to the first Cafeteria door to pick up their student(s). There is no curbside or Lobby pick-up of students. There is a Grace period from 3:30-3:45 pm for late pick-ups; then **parents will be charged a late pick-up fee of \$10 for every 15 minutes or fraction thereof beyond 3:45 pm.**

## **Tardy Arrival Procedures**

A tardy is when a student arrives at school after the beginning of the official school day (7:55am). Tardies are neither excused nor unexcused. We provide a Tardy Slip or a digital Tardy Notification only to alert the Homeroom Teacher that the student is actually Present. By 8:00am, the homeroom teachers have marked the student as Absent, and they must see the Tardy Slip or digital Notification in order to correct the record. Excessive Tardies are not acceptable as this interrupts the class during learning time. Students in grades Kindergarten and up receive **quarterly warning notifications** as reminders when unexcused absences (3 days or more per month) or tardies (5 or more per month) are excessive.

## **Early Dismissal Procedures**

**Early Dismissal** refers to the situation in which a student is removed from the classroom and leaves the school before the official end of the school day. Parents may check out their child no later than 2:15pm from Monday through Thursday and no later than 11:15am on Friday, in order to keep our Lobby Reception staff focused on security in the period just before Dismissal. Parents must enter the Early Dismissal into our *AFA Student Absence Notification Form*, in order for this early departure to gain Excused status in the final class(es) of the school day. Students will not be called into the Lobby until the parent enters.

## **Inclement Weather Days**

In case of inclement weather conditions, the AFA administration monitors nearby schools, road conditions, and forecasts, and communicates an announcement as soon as the decision is made. We decide on closure or delayed start independently from our neighboring school districts. AFA uses the below methods of communication to announce unscheduled school closings due to inclement weather or other emergency situations.



- Text message to parents' cell phone numbers listed on the official school communication portal
- Email to all accounts registered on the official school communication portal

## Async Digital Day

In the case of school-wide closures due to inclement weather or other emergency situations, or to utilize the day as a school day during a Teacher Work Day, AFA implements an Async Digital Day protocol. This means that the day is neither "lost" nor required to be "made up" because teachers will have prepared assignments that may be done at home during the situation. Async Digital Day is contingent on the functioning of the county and state electricity grid, thus permitting devices to communicate the day's assignments and plan of study. AFA does not plan synchronous (real-time) classes because each teacher has circumstances at home on an emergency day that may preclude availability in real time. Teachers and Administrators are expected to regularly check email throughout the day and reply within the work hours.

Teachers are requested to post Async Digital Day assignments by 9:00am, when parents and students are asked to check the parent communication portal for the day's assignments. Teachers assign classwork using digital products, such as digital texts, online subscriptions, or websites, in addition to handouts, texts/workbooks, and paper/pencil assignments. A variety of assignment formats help limit excessive screen time and make it easy for families that must share one computer or device.

Time Frame Guidelines: Each subject's assignment is designed to require:

- 15-30 minutes to complete, on average, in lower grades, or
- 20-45 minutes to complete, on average, in upper grades

By the end of the Async Digital Day, students would average working about:

- 1-3 hours in grades K-2, or
- 3-4 hours in grades 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>, or
- 4-6 hours in middle and high school grades.

## School Safety Protocols and Emergency Drills

AFA has incorporated all safety regulations and has designated protocols for emergency situations, which have been reviewed and approved by the Gwinnett County Fire Marshal and Gwinnett County Police Department. Per requirements, AFA trains and drill staff and students in a variety of emergency situations. The required personnel have received certification in Mandated Reporter protocols for child abuse; CPR, First Aid, and Stop

the Bleed lifesaving techniques; preparedness training for violent intruder situations; and trainings in “hard” and “soft” lockdowns in a variety of emergency situations.

Minor accidents or incidents affecting the well-being of students are reported to parents by the witnessing staff member on the parent communication portal. Students with any illness or significant injury are sent to our clinician for first aid, then the parent or guardian is called for immediate pick-up. AFA reserves the right to use our judgment to call 911 and ask for an ambulance for any situation that AFA deems is urgent and beyond our capacity to handle. AFA is not responsible for any fees that result from that decision.

AFA prohibits the possession or carrying, whether openly or concealed, of any firearms, knives, or other weapons within the school or on school property, except by persons authorized by the AFA administration.

## Student Health

### A. Parent/Guardian Consent:

Parents/guardians are required to complete emergency/health information forms during the Admissions and Re-Enrollment process of each school year. The forms request information about medical issues such as allergies, requirements to administer prescriptions, parent emergency contact information, and permission for the school to transport the student to the nearest hospital and/or medical facility.

### B. Delivery of Medication to School:

Al Falah Academy acknowledges that some students may require medication during the school day and designates a clinician to administer both prescription and nonprescription medications. However, it is highly encouraged that parents administer the child’s medications before and after school hours. If the child needs medication during the school day the parent needs to provide the medication to the front office in the original packaging, labeled clearly with the child’s name and directions for use. Bring a printed copy of the *AFA Medication Authorization Form* to check that all criteria are met.

The *AFA Medication Authorization Form* is located on Google Drive: **Please click on the hyperlinked title of this document, print it and bring it to the Clinic with the medications, if your child needs this service.**

Parents or guardians must provide all medication for their child to be used at the clinic. It is also the parent’s responsibility to pick up their child’s medication at the end of the school year. Medication will not be sent home with the child for safety reasons. If the medication is not picked up by the last day of school, the school clinician will dispose of the medications.

### C. Special Considerations

1. Students with medical needs requiring an asthma inhaler or an Epi-pen may be permitted to carry these items on their person, **ONLY** if the parent has completed the *AFA Medication Authorization Form* **AND** if the parent has provided a duplicate medication to be held in the Clinic, as a back-up.
2. Students in High School who may intermittently need **non-prescription** medications such as Tylenol, Ibuprofen, allergy medications, Midol, or similar, may be permitted to carry such items on their person **ONLY** if the parent has completed the *AFA Medication Authorization Form*.

### D. Prohibition to share any medications

Students, parents, and guardians should be aware that the sale, transfer (to include giving away, or making available in any manner), possession, or use of any drugs or medications except as outlined above is a violation of the *Student Code of Conduct* and such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

### E. Other Protocols

In case a student develops a non-emergency health issue, the school staff will attempt to contact the parent/guardian to inform them of the situation and discuss next steps. In case the student is ill and has the potential of spreading the illness to others, the staff will place the student in the clinic room until the parent makes arrangements to pick up the student. **Please make every effort to pick up your student as soon as possible**, to provide comfort to the student as well as to protect our staff and students in the Clinic from communicable illnesses. **If parents do not respond, the Emergency Contact numbers as well as Alternate Pick-Up adults will be called to pick up the student.**

In case a student develops a serious emergency health issue, the school staff will first call 911 and then contact the student's parents. If unable to reach the parent even after the arrival of Emergency medical personnel, the student will be taken to the nearest emergency facility.

If there is an outbreak of a communicable disease (i.e. lice, chicken pox, etc.), the parents of students in the class will be contacted through the parent communication portal about the contact and steps needed to prevent the spread of the problem. For COVID-19 and any other flu-type ailment, we recommend protocols including staying at home while symptoms are present, and wearing a mask upon the return to school. Fever or vomiting requires the student to be sent home immediately and to stay home for 24 hours after those symptoms disappear. Please be considerate to avoid the easy spread of viruses and illnesses in a classroom environment, and keep the other students and teachers safe.

## Early Dismissal for Dual Enrollment: Protocol

Parental consent needs to be given to students to leave campus to go to their Dual Enrollment (DE) classes. All students need to complete the Sign-Out Log. AFA is not liable or responsible for any students once they sign out and release themselves from school campus. AFA is not responsible for providing or monitoring transportation to and from school. It is up to the parent's discretion to make accommodations for their students.

## Student Driving Privileges

Driving to school is a privilege, not a right. Students can lose this privilege for improper conduct and/or violations of AFA policies. Violations will lead to consequences, from revocation of driving privileges to school, to suspension, expulsion, or police notification, depending on the severity of the infraction.

1. Student drivers must register their vehicles with the school. If a student drives multiple vehicles, registered to him/her or to parents or others, EACH vehicle must have a Parking Permit sticker and a form completed about the specifics of each vehicle. The fee for the sticker is paid just once, and the fee applies to all cars that the student drives to school.
2. Documents required upon registration: A valid Georgia State Driver's License and proof of insurance. Records checked: Attendance and Behavior. Excessive Tardies or Unexcused Absences, as well as multiple escalated Discipline referrals will result in denial of the parking privilege.
3. All driving laws and regulations apply: 5 mph speed limit, no cell phone use while driving, stay in marked lanes, observe pedestrian striping to stop and allow pedestrians to cross, etc. We are a school filled with children, so BE VIGILANT to prevent accidents.
4. Students are required to park in the marked Student Parking spots. Any violation will result in revocation of parking privileges. Parking violations may warrant a vehicle being towed off of school property at the owner's expense.
5. Students are NOT permitted in vehicles or parking lots during school hours. Students are NOT permitted to loiter in their cars before or after school. All students are to enter the school building immediately upon arriving at school and will leave the parking lot as soon as they are released from school for the day. Students may not leave the school during the school day without parental permission or a scheduled DE class.
6. The student acknowledges that he/she will be held personally responsible for any **contraband** discovered within their vehicle, regardless of ownership of the vehicle. Student drivers will ensure that no weapons, alcohol, tobacco products including vaping devices, illegal substances or any other items prohibited by school policy will be stored in any vehicle that he or she operates on school premises.
7. A student's vehicle may be searched by school officials or their designee, without notice or consent, if there is a reasonable suspicion that there is a violation of the law or of rules, regulations or policies of Al Falah Academy,

the city of Norcross, the county of Gwinnett, or the state of Georgia while the automobile is parked on school grounds.

8. Any violations of school, city, county, or state policy related to weapons, drugs, alcohol and/or any controlled substances/paraphernalia may result in police notification, legal consequences to the student, parents, and/or owner of the car, as well as suspension or expulsion from the school.

9. In Georgia, Joshua's Law states that a new driver age 16-18 may only drive with family members (no peer passengers) for the first six months following the issuance of a driver's license. During the second 6-month period, a new driver can have only one peer passenger in the vehicle. Any violation of this law will result in immediate revocation of the student's school driving privilege, along with in-school and possible police notification..

## **Healthy Lunch, Hot Lunches, Snacks, and an Allergy-Safe Environment**

We work hard to ensure that students' minds and bodies are ready for learning each day. In addition, we can also work to encourage healthy eating and physical activity, leading them to lifelong success. By helping them start healthy habits early in life, we can help reduce our children's health risks and increase their chances for longer, more productive lives. Students are discouraged from bringing in junk food items such as takis, candy, sugary drinks, etc. to school for their lunch or snack. **Parents are responsible for providing a healthy lunch and snack for each student daily. Students without lunch will be sent to the clinician, so the parents will be called to bring in lunch.**

AFAy does not permit the use of microwaves. If a lunch food is meant to be warm, please provide a thermal container to retain the heating done when you pack the food.

Our AFA Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) provides hot lunches on a regular basis on certain days of the week. Please read all emails from your PTO to follow their ordering and payment instructions. All meals are purchased online, by a designated deadline, and no cash or checks are accepted, nor last-minute orders.

Along with Lunch, please prepare a healthy snack for your child daily. On Fridays, a full lunch period is not provided due to our 12 pm dismissal. There is a 15-minute Snack time provided for students during the day.

Please provide up-to-date information about any food restrictions which your child may have. AFA promotes a Nut-Free environment, but we ask that you train your child in recognizing foods that are not permitted for them. Please adhere to classroom restrictions on donated food items, to ensure the safety of the students. Students with food allergies are noted in our School Information System and in substitute teacher plans. Their medical needs are included in the Emergency Bag that each homeroom teacher maintains, and which is taken with the teacher whenever an emergency evacuation or drill takes place. Classrooms with students who are

very sensitive to the presence of certain allergens will be designated an “allergen-free zone” and that allergen will not be permitted into the classroom, to the extent possible.

## **Recess**

All PreK-8th Grade students are expected to participate in daily recess activities. It is important for students to have a break, especially outdoors as weather permits, and to stretch and play. Recess is never taken away from students for a misbehavior consequence. However, anti-social behavior may result in a “controlled recess”, in which a student goes outdoors, but may not interact with other students, in order to reflect on the misbehavior, declare regret, work on restoring good relationships, and repenting to Allah (SWT) for the mistake, as He SWT is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

Students must have appropriate outerwear for each day. Students who lack appropriate outerwear for weather conditions will **not** be excused from outdoor recess. In cold seasons: Please ensure that students have jackets, sweaters, and hats on cold or windy days, or layer clothing with winter undergarments. Students may go outside for recess as long as the real or wind-chill temperature is 40 degrees Fahrenheit or above. In hot seasons: Please ensure that students have a reusable water bottle, to hydrate. Students may go outside for the 20-minute Recess if the temperature is 100 degrees Fahrenheit or below. Teachers will guide students to spend more time in the shade, and to slow down and hydrate to avoid overheating. There are designated locations inside the building if rain, inclement weather, or excessive cold or heat keep students indoors.

## **Lost and Found**

Please check the Lost and Found room of the school on a regular basis. The area fills up with hundreds of items per semester. At the end of each semester, unclaimed items will be given to charity. AFA seeks volunteers to manage the Lost and Found by delivering items with a name/grade written on them to their owners, if possible. Students should not bring valuables or large amounts of money to school; the school will not be responsible for such items, nor will resources be wasted on searching or investigating lost or missing valuables.

## **In-Class Celebrations**

Any in-class parties must be requested by a staff member on the appropriate *Event Request Form* and approved in writing by the Principal or a designee. Typically, permission is given only in cases in which the members of a class achieved a certain milestone or high distinction. All classes participate in the designated school-wide Eid celebrations.

No **birthday parties**, obvious or discreet, will take place at AFA. No cakes, gifts, or any other symbols of birthday celebration will be permitted.

## ACADEMIC GUIDELINES

Al Falah Academy strives for accuracy, consistency, and fairness in its Grading Guidelines for teachers. High academic standards are set, and support is provided for struggling students.

### Evaluation codes

All teachers from PreK to High School are oriented on the *Al Falah Grading Guidelines*, assuring consistent weighting of Homework, Classwork, Quizzes, Tests, appropriate grades for PreK-1st and Specials classes, and coherent interpretation of student progress into appropriate grade categories.

**Pre-K4:** Teachers use the GELDS curriculum and **checklists** to identify student progress. Qur'an, Arabic, and Islamic Studies are included.

#### Kindergarten and First Grade:

The evaluation codes defined below are guidelines for grading in all subject areas, conduct, and work habits. This is in line with the developmental stage of this age group.

**S – Satisfactory**—*Developing as expected or Advanced development.*

**N – Needs improvement**—*More development needed.*

**U – Unsatisfactory**—indicates concern about a student's progress. *MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) strategies may be implemented and documented.*

#### Grades 2-8—Core Subjects:

Numerical grades are required in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, Islamic Studies, Arabic language, and Qur'an for grades 2-8. All grades earned by a student should be recorded as the actual number grade or percentage the student answered correctly.

**A: 90–100** = Student demonstrates *consistent and independent* comprehension and application of subject matter.

**B: 80–89** = Student demonstrates *frequent* comprehension and application of subject matter.

**C: 70–79** = Student demonstrates *adequate* comprehension and application of subject matter.

**F: 69 or below**= Student demonstrates *little or no* comprehension and application of subject matter.

Grades for each quarter are averaged together at the end of the Semester. Thus, the average of Quarter 1 + the Quarter 2 Report Card grades = the student's Semester 1 Report Card grade. The average of Quarter 3 + the Quarter 4 Report Card grades = the Semester 2 Report Card grade. The two semesters are not averaged together.

If, at the end of the grading period, the total average is below 60, that number is removed and a 60 is to be recorded by the Student Information System administrator on the Report Card. This aligns with best practice in grading; a 60 equals an F yet constitutes an "equal difference scale" which allows students a fair chance at recuperating a failing grade.

### **Physical Education, Art, Tech, Study Skills, Conduct & Work Habits:**

**S – Satisfactory**—indicates progress/understanding at or above what is normally expected for the student's grade level.

**N – Needs improvement**—indicates concern about the student's progress/understanding. The teacher should describe the area of concern.

**U – Unsatisfactory**—indicates failure to perform at the expected grade level. *MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) strategies may be implemented and documented.*

### **High School - Core Subjects:**

Numerical grades are required in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, Islamic Studies, Arabic language, and Qur'an, PE/Health, Art and Electives for High School. All grades earned by a student should be recorded as the actual number grade or percentage the student earned.

**A: 90-100** Student demonstrates *consistent and independent* comprehension and application of the subject matter.

**B: 80-89** Student demonstrates *frequent* comprehension and application of the subject matter.

**C: 70-79** Student demonstrates *adequate* comprehension and application of the subject matter.

**F: 69 or below** Student demonstrates *little or no* comprehension and application of the subject matter.

Grades for each quarter are averaged together at the end of the Semester. Thus, the average of Quarter 1 + the Quarter 2 Report Card grades = the student's Semester 1 Report Card grade. The average of Quarter 3 + the Quarter 4 Report Card grades = the Semester 2 Report Card grade.

Al Falah Academy uses a 4.0 GPA scale for regular courses, a 4.5 GPA scale for Honors courses, and a 5.0 GPA scale for Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Enrollment (DE) classes.

## **Promotion and Retention**

- **Elementary School:** To avoid repeating the full grade level, students must earn a C or higher (N or higher in Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grades) for the Semester 2 final grade in both Reading and Math, along with a C



or higher in at least 2 of the following subjects: ELA, SS and Science. A summer remediation option is offered on a case-by-case basis.

- **Middle School:** To avoid repeating the full grade level, students must earn a C or higher for the Semester 2 final grade in all three of these courses: Reading, ELA, and Math, along with a C or higher in one or both of these courses: SS and Science. A summer remediation option is offered on a case-by-case basis.
- **High School:** Each Semester earns a final grade. Students must pass their Semester 1 and Semester 2 core classes (Literature, Social Studies, Math, Science) with a grade of C or higher. If the student fails (earns 69 or below) a semester course, s/he must recover that semester course within that school year (during Semester 2 or the summer) by registering for a course, online or live, for credit recovery. Students must pass all their Electives with a C or higher, or make up failed elective courses via an online or live summer course in a permitted Elective. Students must pass AFA Qur'an and Islamic Studies courses to fulfill the graduation requirements.

## Al Falah Academy Homework Guidelines

**Goal:** Homework reinforces learning, informs and involves parents, and develops student responsibility.

**Frequency:** daily, M-F

PreK4: none typically

KG: up to 15 minutes

Grades 1-2: up to 30 minutes on average

Grade 3: 30-40 minutes daily, on average

Grade 4: 40-50 minutes daily, as a total average of all classes' homework together

Grade 5: 50-70 minutes daily, as a total average of all classes' homework together

Middle School: 1-2 hours daily, as a total average of all classes' homework together

High School: 1½-2 hours daily, as a total average of all classes' homework together. Homework may take longer if a student is enrolled in an Accelerated or AP course.

Students are expected to review Qur'an memorization and Arabic vocabulary and structures 5-10 minutes per day at every grade level.

## Grade-Level Placement Policy

**School Philosophy:** AFA promotes the best interest of each individual child. Our teachers differentiate in the classroom by pre-testing, grouping, targeting learning at different levels, and assessing for understanding. Students at top levels in the class are challenged through many differentiated approaches and resources, and thus develop confidence in themselves as well as leadership skills for others in an age-appropriate setting.

- Students are placed into classes based on their age, with the grade-level birthday cut-off date set at October 1<sup>st</sup>.

- Students who have successfully completed a KG-11th grade level at a nationally accredited school will be placed at the next grade level.
- The Placement Test given to potential new students is meant to give more detailed information on the strengths and challenges the child may have at their grade level. The Placement Test may also indicate special needs that are beyond the scope of the school to take on. The Placement Test is not used for acceleration or retention.
- Acceleration (advancement of more than one grade level) will not be considered below the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.
- Students in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade or above will not advance more than one grade level ("acceleration") unless a thorough procedure is followed, which considers the academic, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical readiness of the child.

In order to thoroughly consider a request for acceleration, the following criteria must be met:

- a. The request for acceleration is made in a timely manner, by April 15 of the preceding school year
- b. The child has scored at least in the 97th percentile for both Reading and Math by the January MAP test season, maintains consistently high levels in both subjects in the May MAP test season, and consistently produces classwork that shows an objectively higher level of achievement.
- c. The child's acceleration has the recommendation of the relevant teachers, academic administrators, and the parents.
- d. The child is placed temporarily (perhaps 2-8 hours over a period of a week) in the next grade level near the end of the year of the request so that another teacher has an opportunity to observe the child and provide neutral feedback on social and emotional factors. This feedback will inform the recommendation of the child's current teacher, the principal, and the parents.

**IMPORTANT WARNING:** The GA public school system will NOT advance students ahead of their age group in Grades Pre-K, Kindergarten, or 1<sup>st</sup> Grade. They follow a birthday cutoff of September 1. This means that even if your child completed PK, or KG, or 1<sup>st</sup> grade at AFA, and their age was younger than the standard age for that grade level by September 1, they will be required to repeat the grade level if you choose to transfer your child from AFA to the public school system.

## Academic Communications and Concerns

The official school communication platform is designated. Contacting parents, including staff parents, by any other means, such as phone, written letter, text, whatsapp, or in-person during parent volunteer times, are **not** to be expected. Responses from school personnel should be within 2 business days during school hours.

Teachers must update grades at least weekly, and assign homework in writing on the parent communication portal by 3:30pm if it is required for the next class session. Parents are expected to check the portal at least weekly. The parent communication portal provides parent-initiated automated alerts for concerning developments including missing assignments, grades of C or F, unexcused absences, or behavior referrals.

Google Classroom is used in high school, and parents must access it through their child. Report Cards are distributed quarterly, four times per year by paper, and the distribution dates are noted in the official AFA Annual Calendar.

AFA provides parents with a Mid-Quarter Academic Concern protocol, in which each quarter, at the midpoint of the quarter, teachers update all grades, and the administration notifies—via Jupiterhe parent communication portal—parents of students who have earned an **F** in any subject at that point in time. These parents are urged to follow up by setting up an appointment to meet the teacher of each course that warrants concern, so that the situation may be remedied by the time the official Report Card grade is due at the end of the Quarter.

## **Intervention Program**

Children come to school at different stages of development and do not all learn at the same rate or with the same methods of teaching. When students fall significantly behind the average of their grade level cohorts, there is a concern that learning gaps will lead them further behind. The best practice is to close learning gaps with a tutorial setting, in which the teacher-student ratio is low, and meetings are frequent. Students often make tremendous progress when they are in small groups and have access to materials and activities which are adjusted to their pace and style of learning. AFA offers a program where students receive additional assistance in the core skill areas of Reading and Math. In this program, an Intervention teacher works in collaboration with the regular classroom lead teacher to provide small group instruction based on the needs of each student. With this additional daily practice in skill strategies, AFA makes the effort to increase your child’s skills closer to the average level or more for your child’s grade level.

Students are evaluated regularly by their teachers. Additionally, AFA administers the MAP (Measuring Academic Progress) assessments three times per year to monitor progress in the core skills of Reading, ELA, and Math from grades K-10. If a student’s result indicates below-grade-level performance according to the national grade-level average in Reading or Math, in addition to weak progress in class and with teacher recommendations, the student qualifies for our Intervention Program. In this case, the Arabic class is replaced with a Reading Skills or Math Skills class daily. Intervention placement is not an option; the core global skills of reading and math must be remediated to prevent further gaps as the content depth increases with time. Placement is reviewed in the next MAP test season, and students are Exited from Intervention when their performance reaches close to the grade-level average.

AFA employs two sets of teachers to tutor students in the Intervention program: our AFA teachers, as well as county-based Title 1 teachers. For AFA teachers, the fee is \$100 per semester for one subject. This low fee helps defray the cost of remediation resources. This fee is waived if the student qualifies for the Gwinnett or Dekalb Title 1 Program. Title 1 county coordinators determine such qualifications, based on address and other factors.

## **Al Falah Academy Honor Code**

Middle and High School students learn the Al Falah Academy Honor Code, inspired by the character of our Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*). The full text is posted in each middle and high school classroom, with relevant references to Qur'an and Hadith, and is available in the Appendices of this Handbook. Al Falah Academy has developed an Honor Code that is short, clear, and all-encompassing:

*I will not cheat, lie, steal, harm others, or tolerate those who do.*

It includes this **Honor Pledge**, to be included with signature on any Test in MS and HS (printed on the test or written by the student):

*On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this work.*

This statement reminds students that the work must be their own; that they must not copy from others or cheat in any way—by concealing information or by taking information from other people, from answer keys, or from technological devices without permission of the teacher or school. This also reminds students of the unethical practice of plagiarism, taking the ideas, words, or information of others without citing the sources, or copying the words of others. Additionally, Google Translate or other apps that provide an unfair advantage are not allowed. The consequences for cheating are decided on a case-by-case basis, with age and intention considered, but may reach to the severe level of earning a 0 for the assignment, and possible additional penalties in order to make the seriousness of the matter clear to the student, with the goal of changing his/her mindset and future behavior.

## **Project-Based Learning, Field Studies, and Expert Visitors**

Al Falah Academy promotes integrated thematic and experiential learning, known as Project-Based Learning (PBL). Part of that expectation involves off-campus experiences or invitation of experts from organizations involved in the theme of the unit. These experiences are closely linked with the thematic content of the grade level, organized into Thematic Units. Research shows that a focus on content is more engaging for students, and results in deeper learning. We encourage teachers to seek appropriate field studies related to unit themes. Also, Expert Visitors are invited to speak and teach students on an academically-related theme when available. These learning experiences are vital to students, as they open up the world of real life and work to them. In addition to learning regarding the theme, they broaden students' horizons about career possibilities, a mandated aspect of national College and Career Readiness initiatives. These experiences are required, and parents should expect to pay approximately \$50-75 per student per year for the fees relating to Field Studies and Expert Visitors. In some cases, the fee may be higher if an overnight visit or a lengthier drive is required.

Parent Permission Forms are distributed to confirm parent permission for the trip and to provide all the details of the trip, including purpose, day/time and cost. These experiences are required, and considered as important

as any other curricular resources. Students who are unable to attend due to an exceptional concern will come to school and obtain a worksheet and reading packet from the teacher, to complete a related standards-based assignment in a classroom supervised by another teacher.

Transportation for most trips involves travel by school bus. In cases in which staff or parents drive students, each driver must provide to our Front Desk Receptionist a photocopy of their valid driver’s license and a photocopy of their current driver's insurance coverage.

## HIGH SCHOOL-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

### Graduation Requirements: Current: 26 Units / 29 Units, effective for Class of 2026

English 4 Units	Physical Education ½ Unit
Math 4 Units	Health ½ Unit
Science 4 Units	CTE 1 unit (in 10th required and optional in 11th grades if on campus)
Social Studies 3 Units	Electives: 4 Units
Arabic as a Foreign Language 2 Units / 4 Units, effective Class of 2026	<b>Plus 50 hours of Service, recorded according to our requirements</b>
Islamic Studies/Qur’an 4 Units	<b>1 Unit = 2 semesters</b>

### Policies Regarding Specific Courses and Programs

In reviewing our programming, we made changes for several important reasons. First, noticing the effect of family income on student outcomes, we adjusted some policies to ensure more equity, so that family income is not a deciding factor, limiting the opportunities of some students. Secondly, we observed that student growth, leadership opportunities, and mentoring impacts were reduced when students left campus midday for Dual Enrollment (DE) in their 11th and 12th grades. We want to harness the achievement of our upperclassmen and women to give them experience in mentoring younger students, pulling up the rigor and quality of our programs, and deepening the effect of our Islamic programming to solidify their Muslim identity before graduation. Finally, we are still growing the high school in terms of numbers of students and staff, as well as in terms of programming options. As we add staff and courses, we need to fill those classes, so keeping our students on campus will have the outcome of developing a more mature and stable program, so all students can eventually fulfill all graduation requirements as well as options on campus.

1. **Students on campus must be enrolled in courses.** Students in upper High School grades (11th & 12th) have a variety of schedules, due to DE and other elective classes. To remain on campus they must be enrolled in a course.
2. **4th Year Science requirement:** AFA makes every effort to provide an onsite Science teacher for the 4th Year Science course requirement. All Seniors must enroll in it, in whatever domain is offered, and it will count as the state-required 4th Year Science course. They will be able to take other Science courses in DE or via Georgia Virtual School (GaVS) online courses (see below for more information) if we do not provide a 4th Year Science course.
3. **Precalculus:** Students must take the AFA Precalculus course, offered for all students at the AP level. Math courses sequenced above Precalculus may be taken online in the GaVS program or in the DE program, either online or off-campus.
4. **Auditing courses:** AFA students must enroll in a course to attend and participate. We do not offer auditor (non-credit) status in any course.
5. **Advanced Placement (AP) courses:** Currently, some courses offer only an AP section. In the future, we plan to offer both the AP and the Regular sections of certain high school courses. All students in an AP course are required to take the AP test at the end of the year. Parents will be charged for the cost of that exam when textbook purchases are made.
6. **Honors courses:** AFA offers Honors courses, as available. These courses are weighted at a higher level than Regular courses.
7. **Weighted courses:** In high school, certain more rigorous courses have a greater weight than others in terms of Grade Point Average (GPA). AFA motivates students to take on challenging courses by offering a weighted grading scale for difficult courses. Weighted grade systems give students a numerical advantage for grades earned in higher-level courses or more challenging learning experiences, such as Honors courses or Advanced Placement courses. A weighted GPA takes class difficulty into consideration when determining what grade each student receives, and taking on this challenge is rewarded with more points than regular courses. **Regular courses** in high school are graded on a 4.0 scale, with A = 4.0, B = 3.0, etc. **Honors courses** are given an additional 0.5 points, so an A = 4.5, a B = 3.5, etc., and thus are considered weighted courses with a half-point advantage. All **AP courses** and **DE courses** are weighted with a full point advantage. For example, in an AP or DE course, an A = 5.0, a B = 4.0, etc.
  - a. Additionally, Al Falah Academy offers a higher weight to certain courses, based on the challenge level. Our Arabic 4 course, which prepares students for higher levels on the AAPPL exam, as well as our Advanced Tajweed course, which prepares students for the rigorous oral and written international Tajweed exam, both offer the extra point (A = 5.0) in the grading system.
  - b. Colleges look at the challenge level of courses as well as the student's final grade. Different colleges have different admission policies in regard to grading. The AFA transcript, the list of all

courses taken in high school with their grades, includes both Weighted and Unweighted GPAs to accommodate colleges who prefer one format over the other.

8. **The Global Seal of Bi-Literacy Program:** Students study the Arabic language at AFA, from PreK onwards. By the time students reach the middle and high school levels, we assess their understanding in the four skills of Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking with the nationally recognized AAPPL exam. AFA students who passed 7th and 8th Grade Arabic will earn the high school Arabic 1 credit at the end of 8th Grade. We challenge students to progress to the achievement levels required to earn the 3 levels of the internationally-recognized Global Seal of Bi-Literacy, a credential that indicates recognition of a level of Arabic that can be put to practical use in one's career. The Global Seal is considered an enhancement on any resume for multinational companies and organizations who do business in or are otherwise involved in countries where Arabic is the primary language. The AFA Arabic 4 course is where the preparation for the AAPPL upper level exam takes place, and so **Arabic 4 is a Weighted course with a full point advantage**. We also plan to offer Arabic 5, which focuses on Speaking/Conversation, and provides an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) score. Typically, students who pass the AAPPL test after Arabic 5 are expected to earn the highest level of the Global Seal of Biliteracy Certification, known as Level 3: Professional certification.
9. **The Advanced Tajweed Program:** Students study the Qur'an from many aspects, including the science of applying the body of classic pronunciation rules accurately, also known as Tajweed. Students in high school are prepared for this course through their prior study of Noorania and basic rules of tajweed as well as the prerequisite course on Memorization. The final preparation for the Advanced Tajweed credential is in **the Advanced Tajweed course, which is a Weighted course with a full point advantage**. AFA partners with the **Preservation of the Holy Qur'an Society** in Amman, Jordan; we are the only Islamic school in North America to do so. Using their curriculum, students are prepared for the rigorous oral and written tests, which, if passed, provide them with a lifetime certification credential in teaching Tajweed anywhere in the world.
10. **GA Virtual School (GaVS) online high school courses:** AFA students must first register for AFA core classes to meet the requirements of graduation. Students are permitted to take GaVS courses, in addition to their AFA course load, to explore their interests. AFA will record only 1 GaVS course (A, B, or AB) per semester on the transcript, which must be communicated in advance for approval by the College Advisor. Anything beyond that amount will be recorded by the college, and that transcript will be the responsibility of the student to send to the colleges to which they apply. GaVS courses do have a fee, which is the responsibility of the student's family. There are opportunities for scholarships, which are also the responsibility of the student to apply for by the deadline.
11. **Restrictions:** The College Advisor must approve ANY course taken for high school or college credit in advance, whether it is for GaVS, any other online or in-person program, or for DE. The Counselor keeps an Individualized Plan in order to monitor and advise students on their course load and the acceptance of credits.

- a. **For Dual Enrollment:** If a student earns a grade of C in a core class at the time of applying for DE, they may take only up to 1 DE in the upcoming semester. Any final Quarter grade of F in any AFA HS class—core or specials—disqualifies the student from DE the upcoming semester.
12. **Credit Recovery:** Students who fail one or more semesters of any HS Core Course (requirements in Literature, Math, History, Science, PE, Health, Art) must register for a GaVS or similar course to recover that required credit. If they pass the repeated exact same level and topic course, the F will be removed from their transcript and the new grade will replace it.
- a. Students who fail one or more semesters of any required HS Qur'an course (Noorania), HS Arabic course (Arabic 1 or 2), or HS Islamic Studies courses (Fiqh, Seerah, Muslim History A, Muslim History B) must recover the required units by taking the exact same topic and course. If they pass the repeated exact same level and topic course, the F will be removed from their transcript and the new grade will replace it.
  - b. Students who fail one or more semesters of any Elective course must recover the credit for the required units of Electives. The original grade remains on the transcript, and the new, passed credit unit will meet the state graduation requirements.
  - c. Credit recovery must be completed within one year.
13. **Grade-Point Average (GPA) Calculation and Record-Keeping Format: Effective Currently through Class of 2026:** The student GPA will be calculated from courses taken at both AFA and through outside providers--this includes DE, GaVS, and other providers as long as they are approved by the Al Falah Academy College Advisor.
- a. Both report cards and transcripts will have DE, GAWS, or other approved courses on them.
14. **Grade-Point Average (GPA) Calculation and Record-Keeping Format: Effective for Class of 2027 and after:** **The student GPA will be calculated ONLY from courses taken with Al Falah Academy Teachers.**
- a. Courses taken outside of AFA--this includes DE, GaVS, and other providers--will not be limited in number, as long as they are approved by the Al Falah Academy College Advisor.
  - b. Courses taken outside of AFA--this includes DE, GaVS, and other providers--**will not** be included on the *AFA Report Card*.
  - c. Courses taken outside of AFA--this includes DE, GaVS, and other providers--**will** be included on the *AFA Transcript*.
15. **Valedictorian and Salutatorian selection:** AFA uses the Weighted GPA of 8 semesters of courses in its selection process of identifying the Senior with the highest GPA. The final GPA for Val/Sal Selection is determined no later than one week prior to the Graduation Ceremony. All AFA final exams results, eligible DE final grades, and eligible GaVS official final grades are due at that time, in order to calculate the final GPA. If such grades are unavailable, then the course is NOT included in the GPA calculation



for Val/Sal, but will be added later, with no change in the Val/Sal result for that year. The students with the highest and second highest weighted GPA to the third decimal will be selected as the Valedictorian and Salutatorian respectively.

**a. Tie-Breaker for the AFA Report Card GPA:**

- i. The scores of passed (scores 3, 4, or 5) AFA-provided Advanced Placement class assessments will be added up, and students who have an identical GPA plus a higher sum of AFA-provided AP test scores will be ranked and selected as Val and Sal.
- ii. This method is used ONLY in the case of an exact tie to the 3rd decimal point of the GPA.

**16. Leadership Award and Islamic Character Award:**

- a. These awards are open to any Senior. The method of selection is by an anonymous survey to all high school teachers and administrators.
- b. **Leadership Award:** The student who is the Best Leader has a positive effect on his/her classmates. She/he aspires for excellence and progress in the activities of the school. This student has a vision, and has the ability to bring other students to that vision of excellence. A leader reflects the importance of education by modeling good habits and displaying them in class, by exhibiting a positive attitude, participating frequently in class, completing all activities, and cooperating with teachers and classmates. The class leader helps others learn, and helps the teacher by keeping a positive, engaged spirit. She/He participates in extracurricular activities, like sports, clubs, or competitions, promoting teams and group work. A leader displays initiative in being among the first to volunteer or in starting up a new club. Other students enjoy being with this leader because they can be sure the activities will bring benefit and unity to the students as a whole.
- c. **Character Award:** The student with the best Islamic character is the one who demonstrates many of the characteristics of our Prophet, pbuh. She/he will love Allah and practice the Sunnah of our Prophet, pbuh. Treating all people with respect, and showing respect for the environment, are the top characteristics. She/he will pray regularly, not to be seen, or through coercion, but from the heart. She/he will be generous, even if it is in an inexpensive way, sharing or giving things to those in need. Modesty in thought, word, deed, and appearance is apparent in her or him. The student with the Best Islamic Character would not backbite about or embarrass another person. She/he is known to be a kind, smiling, and friendly person, thus bringing positivity and cooperation to his/her classmates and teachers.

17. **Other honors:** The College Board offers a variety of national recognition awards for students who have achieved high scores on college admission exams such as the SAT, or multiple passing grades in Advanced Placement exams. The reward for this comes to the students in the form of a greater chance to gain admission to selective colleges or universities, more opportunities for scholarships, and college credit, in the case of passing AP scores. There are many other honors that have been awarded to AFA seniors, such as full tuition or other significant scholarships, early admission approvals to selective

colleges, etc. Seniors also may display recognition for the amount of service, club leadership, academic and arts competition awards, athletic abilities and achievements, and other recognitions that they have earned in their high school years. AFA recognizes these high honors and achievements with specifically-colored cords at the graduation ceremony, as well as public announcement and celebration. The benefits gained for such a variety of awards will undoubtedly insha'Allah benefit the students earning them recognition in a myriad of ways in their college and career pursuits.

18. **Friday College Advisement class:** Seniors are required to take this class during their senior year, though there is no high school credit offered. It is mandatory in order to ensure that our seniors are performing the many tasks required of them to gain admission to colleges and universities. Our approach is to empower the student in college and scholarship selections and applications. AFA educates the students, so that they take "ownership" of their own future as adults in an organized and diligent manner, and parents are invited to meetings, as well as fully informed of all events and deadlines via the parent communication portal.

## **EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAM**

### **After-School Clubs, Civic Activities, and Competitions**

Al Falah Academy offers a variety of mission-aligned after-school clubs, competitions, service activities, and civic activities, for all age group levels, from kindergarten through high school. These are led by staff, parents, students, or community or contracted providers. We welcome new ideas from you.

### **Athletic Program: The Al Falah Lions**

Al Falah Academy has a vibrant athletic program for both boys and girls, at the middle and high school divisions, and at the Junior Varsity and Varsity levels. We compete with other public and private schools as well as masjid teams in Basketball, Cross Country, and Soccer. We are open to initiating more teams as interest and numbers increase. Our Athletic Director conducts an annual Athletic Banquet, showcasing our enthusiasm and victories with our Mascot. Go Lions!

### **Overnight Travel Policies and Procedures**

**School trips are a privilege**, and participating students are expected to behave in a manner that best represents the school. This policy is required for any experience that involves overnight travel, whether out-of-town, out-of state, or international. Such travel carries extra risks and responsibilities on the part of the student, parent, chaperones, and organizers. Travel that has been typical for AFA includes Senior Trips (both domestic and international locations), Model UN and Model Arab League national conferences, middle and high school conferences such as the Beta Club or the NHS Annual Conference, or team competitions like National History Day national competition.

Per our contractual obligations, one on-site person is designated as the main leader of the travel experience. This must be an executive employee of AFA, and all questions or disputes are designated to the final decision of this individual, known as Lead Chaperone. The designated Lead Chaperone makes final decisions, and consults the other staff/employed Chaperones as needed. Staff and Volunteer Chaperones are required to follow the directives of the Lead Chaperone, and to refer to him/her in any uncertainty or escalated matter. In case of wider implications, disputes, or complexity, the next person in this chain of command is the Principal, followed by the Board of Trustees. (by phone, text, WhatsApp, or email) to mediate as needed. In dire circumstances, such as may occur during weather emergencies, criminal situations, civil unrest, etc, every attempt should be made by at least one chaperone to contact the Principal so that all parents and relevant parties are apprised.

The Lead Chaperone will be contacted immediately by other chaperones or students in cases of inappropriate behavior. Violations of school policies/rules/procedures or the school Student Code of Conduct may result in a student being sent home at his or her parents' expense (if feasible), ineligibility for future school trips, suspension from extracurricular activities, and/or any other disciplinary action authorized at the discretion of the Lead Chaperone, or in escalated cases, the Principal.

## **STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

1. Students will represent AFA with honor by displaying Islamic etiquette, cooperation, patience in difficulties, and a grateful attitude at all times towards those around them, whether hotel personnel, travel coordinators, tour guides, fellow travelers, vendors, their chaperones and teachers, or others.
2. Students will be on time and prepared for leaving for the trip, following packing guidelines and cooperating with chaperone instructions.
3. Valuables should be left at home. School officials are not responsible for personal items. It is the students' sole responsibility to keep up with their money and personal property.
4. If passes or ID badges are provided, students must wear them at all times while on the trip.
5. Students will wear appropriate attire as defined by the school dress code or as deemed appropriate for the activity by the sponsor, such as, but not limited to, fully secured hijab at all times and loose-fitting modest clothing.
6. Islamic guidelines regarding gender separation will be implemented. There will be no mixing of genders, alone or in groups, in hotel rooms. Social activities will take place in public spaces, with chaperones present.
7. Students will not deface or otherwise damage property. Any damages to property or furnishings will be paid for by the individual student and/or his or her parents.
8. Students must keep the chaperone informed of their activities and whereabouts at all times; students may not leave the hotel unaccompanied by a chaperone.
9. Students will spend the night or nights at the assigned hotel/hostel/dormitory/residence in the assigned room(s). Except in the case of emergency or permission from the chaperone or AFA admin, students will remain in their rooms after curfew.

10. Students must be in their assigned rooms and quiet at the curfew set by the Lead Chaperone and AFA administration. Misuse of cell phones or other electronic devices is subject to the same disciplinary consequences as in school situations.
11. Students will stay with their assigned chaperone as designated. This is especially important in regards to traveling via public transport (plane, train, bus, boat, car/van, etc.)
12. At the end of all trips, students will arrange to be picked up at school or airport promptly at the designated time.
13. Consequences may be applied for failure to comply with the above guidelines, including cell phone confiscation, removal from an activity, or other logical consequences as necessary.

## **CHAPERONE REQUIREMENTS**

1. Minimum two chaperones, one must be an admin, per international trip.
2. Minimum of one admin for any domestic out-of-state trips.
3. Minimum of one chaperone per 10 students for international and domestic travel.
4. No more than two AFA admins are allowed on any out-of-state or international trip.
5. Chaperones must be 21 years old or above to provide sound leadership and guidance.
6. AFA employee chaperones reserve the right to determine/select volunteer chaperones from the parent/adult family member pool of willing volunteers.
7. All non-employee chaperones are required to undergo background checks.
8. Parent/family members who do NOT agree to student supervision requirements will NOT be permitted to join their minor on the trip, in order to ensure that the official itinerary and guidelines are followed uniformly.

## **CHAPERONE DUTIES**

1. Following the direction of the Lead Chaperone (as approved by the Principal or designee)
2. Reviewing medical records of their assigned students to ensure special recommendations are followed to the best of his/her ability, with the cooperation of the student (e.g. taking meds on time, avoiding certain dietary items, etc)
3. Documenting any health or safety incidents; reporting escalated incidents to the Lead Chaperone immediately; and contacting emergency response authorities as the situation requires
4. Maintaining confidentiality; no loose talk about individuals in front of others.
5. Setting clear expectations of behavior, addressing any infractions appropriately on the trip, and reporting any such infractions to the Lead Chaperone
6. Staying with the assigned group, directly supervising assigned students, and following the itinerary and only approved options.
7. Ensuring students remain in their assigned rooms for the duration of the trip
8. Ensuring that students are not co-mingling with the opposite gender inappropriately
9. Parent Chaperones will be assigned to their child plus a small group, depending on the gender of the students.

10. Parent Chaperones will not make exceptions for themselves or their child in regards to any of the guidelines.

## **CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE**

Al Falah Academy (AFA) is not only a place to learn and to practice various academic skills, but also a place for students to understand and observe appropriate Islamic behavior and conduct (*adab*). Teachers introduce students to the routines and procedures of the classroom in a gradual way, training them by interactively modeling the routine until students master the procedure. Teachers also invite students to discuss and participate in the establishment of classroom rules. They try to distinguish between lack of understanding on how to behave appropriately, versus willful disregard or disobedience of behavior norms. Teachers address students in a manner that models respect and care.

Behavior and conduct is based, to a large degree, on students' ability to exercise self-discipline and self-control. This includes learning to respect the rights and property of others, while doing what is necessary to follow rules and regulations. The disciplinary rules have been established to promote an Islamic character and to maintain an atmosphere that encourages learning for all students. These rules have been made to ensure fairness and equity among the students. Behavioral guidelines are derived from an Islamic perspective, to ensure our students continue on the straight path.

Teachers are responsible for the overall welfare and safety of all students; therefore, teachers are given the authorization to maintain proper student behavior as outlined herein. This authority is modeled by teachers with an approach that communicates respect and care. Students should show respect for all adults in authority by being courteous and cooperative, and by obeying their teacher's request, respectfully and completely. Students should show consideration, kindness, responsibility, and appreciation toward others. Courteous behavior and respect for the rights and property of others is expected of all students, throughout the school, on buses during field trips, and at all school activities. In doing this, students are respecting Allah's (SWT) provision for them.

### **Behavior Violations**

The distinction between minor and major infractions is necessary to clarify in order for consequences to be consistent in manner. However, it is impractical and impossible to list every type of offense. The faculty and administration reserve the right to address and discipline any behavior or attitude that is inconsistent with the mission, philosophy, and conduct standard of the school. Minor offenses are escalated to major offenses when committed frequently, or in defiance of teacher instructions in the moment. A list of offenses is on the School Information System and can be obtained upon request.

## Electronic Device Policy

Al Falah Academy has detailed our policy regarding the proper use of electronic devices as well as internet appropriate use, in our *Technology Acceptable Use Policy*, which is in the Appendix of this Handbook. In brief, students **in Elementary and Middle School** are not permitted to bring cell phones or smart watches to school unless parents deem such devices necessary due to after-school arrangements; in this case the device must be kept in the bookbag, for Elementary students, and in the classroom lockbox, for Middle School students. If a smartwatch, cell phone, or similar device is found on the person of the student, it will be confiscated and consequences will result. **In High School**, students may bring a cell phone, but it must be turned off during school hours, and it cannot be in view—it must remain in the purse, pocket, bookbag, or locker. Any violation of this policy will result in the confiscation of the cell phone to the principal. For the first offense, the student may pick it up at Dismissal time; for following offenses, parents will be the ones to pick it up, or it stays locked in school.

Parents are notified that they must contact the school front office (678-502-7211) in order to communicate with their child. Parents must not contact their child via text message, cell phone call, or smartwatch call; this disrupts the class, and the student ends up in violation of our no-cell-phone-use policy. Our front office staff will diligently follow up to bring your child to the front office for your urgent message, or will note any changes in the pick-up plan for the day.

## Consequences

Students in violation of school rules and policies will receive consequences. The goal of logical consequences is to take corrective action that will repair the damage done and improve student behavior. While students must learn to bear the consequences of their actions, they are encouraged to do supplication, du'a, and ask Allah (SWT) for forgiveness. Moreover, students will receive an in-school consequence to ensure they have reflected and learned from their mistakes. For chronic or serious offenses, parents will be notified.

Additionally, students who are victims of inappropriate behavior are warned not to retaliate, or else they will also be considered in violation of our rules. Our approach is to get students to think about how they could make a situation or misunderstanding better, or how they could solve an interpersonal problem. We remind students of relevant hadith or ayaat that guide our behavior. We consider how Prophet Mohammad (*pbuh*) would react or behave in a similar situation. We remind students that even if no witness sees an offense, Allah (SWT) is All-Seeing, All-Hearing, and that we must learn to accept accountability for our mistakes. We teach students to seek forgiveness, which Allah (SWT) gives in abundance to those who admit, regret, solve or fix the problem, and ask for mercy.

**IMPORTANT:** Students who feel they are victims of other students, or bullied, or who feel they have been unfairly treated by teachers, **must report these incidents, preferably first to the supervising teacher, or to another teacher, administrator, or trusted adult, or to their parents—for parents to report to the relevant school staff immediately.** The school should be notified of the incident as soon as possible, in order to investigate,

obtain facts, and apply justice and remediation at the soonest possible time. It is very difficult to investigate the facts of a matter after days, weeks, months, or even a year or more has passed after something may have occurred, and such issues often become tainted by rumor or faulty memory. Once an incident is investigated and it becomes clear who committed a misbehavior or a mistake, the consequence is applied to the perpetrator, or correction/restitution of an unjust action is applied. The school does not discuss any student with other students or parents except in the course of investigating the facts.

**Classroom-level consequences:** Such consequences may include (but are not limited to): reminders and redirections, alternative seating, reparations for damage done, apologies, student break in another classroom to reflect and regain composure, separation from other students during recess or lunch, or other appropriate classroom-level consequences. Teachers will make every effort to correct the misbehavior swiftly so that learning may continue. (Teacher or administrator discretion)

**After-School Detention:** Middle School and High School students who engage in chronic minor offenses will be required to stay after school for a one-hour detention. Process: If a student receives three behavioral notices/referrals (via the parent communication portal) from any of the students' teachers, the parent will be notified as soon as possible, and the student will then be required to stay after school for detention on the upcoming Wednesday (for girls) or Thursday (for boys). Detention will begin at 3:30pm and end at 4:30pm. (Teacher or administrator discretion)

**In-School Suspension (ISS):** Students who commit an escalated behavior violation will be removed from the classroom. The student will be assigned to do his/her classwork while supervised by an administrator for the remainder of the school day or for multiple days. This penalty is limited to the ability of the administrative staff to supervise the student at all times to ensure safety. (Administrator discretion)

**Out-of-School Suspension (OSS):** Students who display chronic escalated behaviors will be removed from class and their parents will be called to pick them up immediately. Violent behavior, threatening violent behavior, abusive language, outrageous social media violations, refusal to comply with teacher or administrator directions, etc., are examples of such escalated violations. This is a serious stage, and if the situation is not remedied, it may lead to expulsion. (Principal discretion)

**Expulsion:** Serious and chronic disruptions or misbehavior will result in expulsion from the school. Al Falah Academy reserves the right to expel a student for chronic and willful disobedience, if that student is unresponsive to efforts made by the staff of the school to rectify the problem. (Principal and Board consensus)

If a teacher notices that a pattern of inappropriate behavior is occurring, s/he will follow the Intervention Guidelines provided by the school. These guidelines require documentation, observation, the enactment of strategies to try to solve the causes of inappropriate behavior, administrator notification, and parent meetings.

Parents, guardians, teachers, administrators, and other staff are expected to work together to improve student behavior and academic performance. All efforts should be clearly communicated to the relevant staff members and parents but should be **held in confidence** to persons not involved in the supervision of the student.

When a student needs to be counseled regarding his or her behavior, s/he will be encouraged and guided to:

- a. REFLECT: Understand how his/her behavior affects himself/herself and others.
- b. REGRET his/her inappropriate behavior
- c. RESTORE or repair any situation caused by bad behavior when possible and apologize to those who have been affected. Follow up the bad deed with a good deed.
- d. REPENT: Seek Allah's forgiveness, and promise not to repeat.

## Reporting of abuse

By law, staff members at Al Falah Academy are required to inform the Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS), if school staff suspects child abuse, neglect, exploitation, or deprivation of any student at home or outside of the school. Abuse of any kind is prohibited at Al Falah Academy. Staff members undergo training on their role as Mandated Reporters, and will follow the guidelines of that process. That means that if a staff member suspects abuse of a child at home or outside the school, s/he must report it to the Principal. In consultation with the Principal, the staff member will report the suspicion to DFACS. Per Mandated Reporter guidelines, even if the Principal disagrees with the suspicion, the staff member has a right to report the suspicion on his/her own. The school will neither confirm nor deny any report to DFACS; it is outside AFA's authority to know who filed any particular report on a suspicion of abuse.

# PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT & COMMUNITY

## Parent Mandated Service Hours

Parents are required to perform a set amount of service hours for the school. The activities will take into consideration the variety of available times that parents can offer: school hours, before or after school hours, or weekends. The volunteer activities will also take into consideration the fact that some parents may not be able to be present at the school location at all, due to work schedule, or care for young children at home, etc. Accordingly, activities that could be done from home on the computer or phone will also be part of the organized effort to encourage volunteerism. As part of the requirements of enrollment, all families who wish to send their child(ren) to Al Falah will agree to the following terms:

- single-parent families will offer 10 hours of service to the school per school year
- dual-parent families will offer 20 hours of service to the school per school year



The hours will be logged using **HelpCounter**, a digital record-keeping system.

The hours are counted on a “per family” basis, not per child. In other words, whether a family has one child or multiple children in the school, the service hour requirement is the same: 10 or 20, depending on family structure.

While earning Parent Service Hours, parents are encouraged to offer their skills, talents, and service for a wide variety of opportunities, including Club leadership (chess club, soccer club, art club), Competition training (Math Olympiad, Science Olympiad, Spelling Bee Club, etc), chaperoning on field studies, story-reading, tutoring, hot lunch assistance, book fair administration, cooking for Eid parties, joining our Security Team at Arrival and Dismissal times, offering Career Day presentations...the list goes on!

**Increase effective 2023-2024:** If the hours are not met through the last day of school in May, the family will agree to pay \$20 per unfulfilled hour. This amount may be used to go towards hiring a substitute teacher to fulfill the service hours needed by the school. However, this is not the ideal situation, because the ultimate goal of mandatory service hours is to build the community. Re-enrollment will be on hold until all required payments are fulfilled.

## **Opportunities to Communicate with Teachers and Administration**

### **Meet Your Teacher Day**

Before the first day of school, administrators organize a Meet Your Teacher Day, in which parents and students may visit the new classroom, meet the teachers, learn about the scope and sequence of the curricular objectives, examine the resources to be used, and hear school-wide announcements regarding routines such as arrival/dismissal, lunch, daily schedule, and key points of the grading and homework policies. Middle and high school families receive the syllabi for each class, detailing expectations.

### **Celebrations of Learning**

Pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade Parents and others are invited to hear their child present their thematic unit learning with an in-depth presentation, product, or performance. Student attendance is required for a grade on their presentation skills and product quality. Relevant teachers will coordinate the dates and times for the celebration of learning events.

### **Whole-School Meetings with Board**

The Board and Principal schedule two to three Whole-School Meetings, typically on Sunday mornings, so parents can attend and receive important school-wide updates. School academic achievements as well as facility and financial updates, plus a report from our PTO, are typical topics.

## Coffee Conversations

Hosted by the Principal, these informal get-togethers provide parents a chance to learn in depth about a specific aspect of education at the school, or to discuss general concerns and ideas in an open forum.

## Annual Survey

We collect school satisfaction surveys frequently, at least every January from parents, teachers, and students from Elementary through High School, to identify areas of concern and to note areas of strength.

## Upon Request

Parents are encouraged and welcomed to contact their child's teacher(s) whenever they have questions or concerns. Please send your request via the parent communication portal. Please follow the Communication Directory for all your queries, located in the Appendix of this Handbook.

# KEY DOCUMENTS

## AFA Board By-Laws

Please refer to the school's website for the most up-to-date by-laws at: [AFA Board By-Laws](#)

## Al Falah Academy Honor Code

A true believer, one who is truly submitted to God, has many characteristics by which s/he can be identified. The most obvious of these noble characteristics are honesty of character and truthfulness of speech. Prophet Mohammad (saws) was a perfect example of honesty. Even before his Prophethood, he had earned the titles of *Al-Amin* (The Trustworthy) and *As-Sadiq* (The Truthful).

Students at Al Falah Academy are taught that honor comes from excellent character. The best of mankind, our RasulAllah (*pbuh*) is the perfect example of such character, and he stated, in an authentic hadith:

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "***You must be truthful. Verily, truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise. A man continues to be truthful and encourages honesty until he is recorded with Allah as truthful. And beware of falsehood. Verily, falsehood leads to wickedness and wickedness leads to the Hellfire. A man continues to tell lies and encourages falsehood until he is recorded with Allah as a liar.***" (Source: Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim)

Honesty incorporates thoughts, words, actions, and relationships. God commands that a Muslim be honest: "***O you who believe! Fear God, and be with those who are true (in word and deeds).***" (Quran 9:119)

With this in mind, Al Falah Academy has developed an Honor Code that is short, clear, and all-encompassing:

*I will not cheat, lie, steal, harm others, or tolerate those who do.*

### **No Cheating**

On all major assignments and tests, students will sign this **Honor Pledge** printed on or written on the test:

*On my honor, I have neither given nor received  
unauthorized assistance on this work.*

This statement reminds students that the work must be their own; that they must not copy from others or cheat in any way—by concealing information or by taking information from other people, from answer keys, or from technological devices without permission of the teacher or school. This also reminds students of the unethical practice of plagiarism, taking the ideas, words, or information of others without citing the sources, or copying the words of others.

### **No Lying or Stealing**

Students are reminded that all their actions are written in their Book of Deeds, and will be reviewed on the Day of Judgment by Allah SWT. The opportunity to admit one's sin and ask for forgiveness is here on Earth; if a student is caught lying or stealing, s/he should consider it a great blessing, because s/he is given the chance to accept his/her mistake and ask forgiveness. Allah is Ar-Rahman, the Most Merciful, and loves to forgive.

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, *"By the One in Whose Hand my soul is, were you not to commit sins, Allah would replace you with a people who would commit sins and then seek forgiveness from Allah; and Allah would forgive them"*. (Source: Sahih al-Muslim)

### **No Harming Others, or Tolerating Those Who Harm Others**

Negative comments (cursing, mocking, name-calling, or verbal slurs about sex, gender, ethnicity, race, or physical features) are all considered offenses. The Qur'an teaches us, *"O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule (another) people; perhaps they may be better than them..."* (Qur'an 49:11) Of course physical harm, or the threat of physical harm, is not permitted.

If we see or know that someone is being harmed in any way, we must report it to a school authority—a teacher, administrator, or another adult who is supervising students.

**We ask Allah (SWT) to bless our students with righteousness. Ameen!**

## **Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy**

Al Falah Academy's High School requires each student to purchase a chromebook. The chromebook is collected by our IT department, ideally before the beginning of the school year, to register it with our school network. The school network provides all its registered chromebooks with the digital texts, resources, and security

software (GoGuardian), along with identifying information of each chromebook owner. The chromebook is then provided with an individual sticker with the student name and school logo, indicating it is a chromebook that is authorized to be in the building.

The Internet is an electronic highway connecting thousands of computers and millions of individual subscribers all over the world. Students and staff have access to public libraries, museums, research institutions, government agencies, electronic mail, news, and much more. AFA believes that the Internet offers vast, diverse, and unique resources to students, teachers, and the community. Our goal in providing this service is to promote educational excellence through resource sharing, innovation, and communication. The Internet can enhance curriculum by providing collaborative learning environments, promoting higher-order thinking skills through real world problem solving, and serving as an effective communication tool.

This policy is a guide to ensuring the appropriate use as well as safety for all community members. While these technologies provide powerful learning opportunities, they must be used responsibly. We remind our students that even though there is some illusion of privacy in using a device away from the eyes of parents or teachers, it is important to keep in mind our core values that guide us, and the knowledge that Allah SWT is always watching us. This Acceptable Use Policy is intended to help guide and protect all of us so that we are accountable to Allah SWT.

## **Acceptable Use**

The use of the Internet must be for educational and research activities and be consistent with the educational objectives of Al Falah Academy. All illegal activity such as transmission of any material in violation of any U.S. or state regulation is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to: copyrighted material, threatening material, or any unacceptable or objectionable information, language, or images.

## **Security**

In order to protect students from misuses of the information service, filtering software (GoGuardian) that blocks objectionable sites is installed on the school network, and allows teachers to access and control the chromebooks of their students in class, in order to ensure students are working productively on classwork.

Security precautions enhance the quality of instruction for the student, improve student achievement, and protect staff and student interests. Even though Al Falah Academy has taken precautions to eliminate access to controversial materials, it is impossible to guarantee restriction of all inappropriate materials. It is the user's responsibility to utilize the Internet in an efficient, ethical and legal manner, as well as to immediately report all unacceptable behavior or site violations to Al Falah faculty or staff.

**Al Falah Academy retains the right to monitor user data and internet access and check the contents of any electronic device brought onto the school's premises or at any official school event.** This statement covers (but is not limited to) the use of electronic devices owned by the school or by students that are brought onto the

school's premises, or on field studies, camps, or other official school functions—including computers, laptops, tablets, digital video and music players, recording devices, chromebooks, mobile phones, and gaming devices.

Audits of any devices can be done by any staff member at any time on school premises or at official school events.

## **Privileges**

The use of the Internet is a privilege, not a right. Inappropriate use will result in a cancellation of those privileges as well as any school-based disciplinary consequence and/or legal action. The school administrators will deem what is inappropriate use of the Internet, and their decision is final. Also, the administration, faculty, and staff of Al Falah Academy may request a school administrator to deny, revoke, or suspend the Internet privileges of a student or group of students.

## **Sanctions**

Each violation will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

- Confiscation of the device for a defined period
- Withdrawal of the privilege to use electronic devices in the school
- Penalties removing the student from the group temporarily, such as detention and suspension, with severe violations leading up to permanent expulsion from the school
- Law enforcement officials may need to be involved in extreme matters

## **IT policy on malfunctioning chromebooks**

High school students must report a malfunctioning chromebook to the Al Falah Technology Specialist, so we may diagnose and repair it if this is possible. Simple repairs made by Al Falah Academy are free, but may require the purchase of replacement parts, in which case we notify the parents for payment before proceeding to attempt to repair. For more complex repairs or in case a repair is impossible, parents must be notified by the student to act immediately to repair via commercial vendor or to replace the device.

During the repair period, students may borrow an Al Falah-authorized loaner chromebook. This loaner has the security software installed, and is thus permitted for use in the school. Loaners are given **ONLY** for one week, unless written verification from the repair vendor demonstrates the need for extra time. **An unauthorized personal device may not be used as a loaner.**

## **AFA Email, Google Suite**

All K-12 students will have access to a school-managed email account and to the AFA Google Suite products (Google products such as Classroom, Drive, Calendar, Messages, and Hangouts) during the time they are enrolled at Al Falah Academy. Students may use these products to communicate with parents, teachers, classmates, experts, and friends around the globe. An email address with the suffix @alfalahacademy.com will

be provided to each student. This address is to be used for all school-related business. A student's private account should not be used for school assignments. Students are responsible for checking their school email regularly and often for messages from teachers or administrators. Users are reminded that electronic mail sent or received is not private. **System operators have access to all electronic mail.**

## **Be a Good Digital Citizen**

Accept the responsibility of using the internet in productive and socially responsible ways. The internet is not some new world in which anything goes, but rather a new dimension or extension of our existing society. In simple terms, this means that the values society has in place against such things as hate speech, bigotry, copyright violations, or verbal abuse remain intact. Likewise, values such as courtesy, kindness, and treating others with the same respect we wish to receive retain their importance in our online interactions.

## **Practice Netiquette (set of rules for acceptable behavior online)**

- **No Trespassing**
  - Do not touch another person's device unless invited by the owner
  - Do not play with, use, or change another person's user account
  - Do not access another person's files or resources
  - Only access areas of the network you have been given permission to access
  
- **No Hogging**
  - Do not take up bandwidth by downloading movies, music, pictures, or by playing online games not directly connected to your learning
  - Do not store movies, music, pictures, or files on the school network not connected to your learning
  - Refrain from downloading and installing programs to any school computer without receiving permission from the network administrator. This would include such items as music files, software demonstrations, upgrades, patches, plug-ins, etc.
  - Do not use your Internet access in a way that would interfere with others use or access. This includes, but is not limited to failing to log out appropriately, downloading large files at peak times, and printing large amounts of material from the Internet or electronic mail.
  
- **No Stealing or Vandalizing**
  - Do not download any illegal materials (e.g., pirated music or movies, copyrighted materials, or cracked software) or intellectual property that was not purchased by you or that you do not have the rights to use
  - Do not plagiarize, or present anybody else's work as your own
  - No spamming, hacking, hawking, or trolling

- o Do not forward or send any content not directly associated with your learning (e.g., advertisements, games, pictures)
  - o Do not deliberately or negligently spread viruses, malware, or spyware
  - o Do not run a business or seek to make profit using the school network
- **No Fooling Around on Social Media**
    - o Do not play games at school, unless agreed to by staff
    - o Do not access inappropriate websites (e.g., obscene, violent, etc.)
    - o Do not chat online or play music or videos
    - o Do not post or send any message, picture, sound, or video that is obscene, rude, harassing, or insulting to anyone.
    - o Do not reveal your last name, personal address or phone number or those of other students.
    - o Use appropriate language.
    - o Do not take pictures or post pictures of others without asking their permission, and for legitimate academic purposes (e.g., it is OK to photograph the authors of a student project with their permission. It is NOT OK to post a photo of a classmate and comment on his or her looks).
    - o Do not invite a non-school member into a chat or interaction with you or anyone else at the school.
    - o Do not invite strangers to interact with you, nor respond to strangers if they contact you first. Report any breach of our safety “fence” to prevent any harm from strangers to any student or to the school.
- **No Cyberbullying**
    - o Do not post mean messages, rumors, or embarrassing pictures of anyone.
    - o Do not set up fake profiles intended to tease anyone.
    - o Do not use obscene or abusive language; if you encounter such language, sign off and report it to an adult, so others are not exposed to bad language.
    - o When a chat becomes inflamed with insults, accusations, or blaming, do not respond. Instead, sign off and, if necessary, handle the issue with a parent or school authority to resolve it. If someone sends you a mean message or insults you, notify an adult, such as your parent if you are at home, or a teacher, counselor, or administrator if you are at school.
    - o Any staff member who observes students participating in such unlawful activity must report it as a discipline case. Students will be subject to appropriate discipline as defined in the school discipline policy.
    - o Any negative student interactions that may have started online off the campus, yet have an adverse impact on any students or the school, will be subject to investigation. Any device may

be examined for evidence of chats or other encounters that could be interpreted as insulting, obscene, harassing, or threatening, no matter if they originate on school grounds or off campus.

- o Al Falah Academy reserves the right to discipline any student for actions taken off-campus if they adversely affect the safety or well-being of a student while in school.