# Culture Playbook

The Star, Mirdif Way: To Go Beyond & Grow the future leaders and global citizens of tomorrow.



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# The Why

We need a shared understanding of our collective expectations for ‘how we do things here’ at Star, Mirdif. This is for both staff and students as it rest with all of us to consistently align our (Espoused) values and the visible culture (Artifacts) at Star, Mirdif.





We are 1300+ students strong with lots of students from other schools arriving year on year



Previously many students were 'home grown' so grew up in our culture



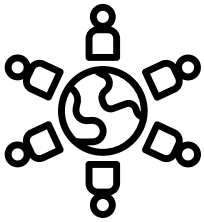
We have a lot of new staff joining as we grow year on year



We are now more evenly split amongst Arabic A/B when 6 years ago we were majority Arabic A. The cultural profiles have changed with 82+ nationalities



Elements of our visible culture day to day need to be more consistent



Without a strong culture, we all buy into, learning and teaching is impacted negatively

# WHY

## Its to ensure we Go Beyond
## Its because we care
## Its the Star Mirdif Way

At Star, Mirdif, we believe that culture is not what you say — **it's what you do**, especially when no one is watching.

It's how people feel when they walk through our gates. It's the shared language we use, the values we model, and the expectations we protect.

Without a **strong**, **codified culture**, even the best strategies fall flat. That's why we've built the **Star, Mirdif Culture Playbook** — to **define, live, and protect** the **habits, phrases, values, and mindsets** that shape the very best version of our school.

It outlines how we Go Beyond, The Star, Mirdif way

## In the words of our Principal, Neal Oates:

"Culture is the **heartbeat** of our school — it shapes how we **treat one another**, how **we learn**, how **we grow**, and how we *Go Beyond*. At Star, Mirdif, it's what brings our vision and values to life every single day."

# How do we behave?

## Teaching the Star, Mirdif Way

Teaching at Star, Mirdif means living the Star, Mirdif Way every day. It is how we ensure our vision and mission are brought to life in classrooms, corridors, staffrooms, and beyond.



### 01 Commit to our STAR culture and values

- We model and reinforce Self-Belief, Teamwork, Adventure, and Respect in every decision we make.



### 02 Accountability with kindness

- We hold ourselves and others to high standards with clarity, care, and fairness.
- We communicate with care and clarity, ensuring everyone knows what matters most.
- We lean into honest conversations with courage and compassion, even when it feels uncomfortable.



### 03 Go Beyond for our students and each other

- We inspire, challenge, and support every member of our Star Family to achieve their personal best.
- We own our own house and row in the same direction as one cohesive leadership team.



# Commit to Our STAR Culture and Values

We model and reinforce Self-Belief, Teamwork, Adventure, and Respect in every decision we make.

**Lencioni's 5 Behaviours of a Cohesive Team**

- Build trust through vulnerability.
- Engage in healthy conflict around ideas.
- Commit to shared decisions.
- Hold each other accountable.
- Focus on collective results.

**The Four Disciplines of a Healthy Organisation**

- Create clarity.
- Overcommunicate clarity.
- Reinforce clarity.
- Build team cohesion.

**Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence**

- Use self-awareness, empathy, and social skill to build strong, values-driven teams.

Leaders at Star, Mirdif Go Beyond by being culture-carriers who model STAR Values in every interaction.

**"Vulnerability is not weakness; it's our greatest measure of courage." ~Brené Brown**



# Accountability with Kindness

We hold ourselves and others to high standards, always with clarity, care, and fairness.

### Susan Scott's Fierce Conversations

- "The conversation is the relationship."
- Leaders create trust by engaging in honest, kind, and courageous dialogue.

### Brené Brown's Rumble with Vulnerability

- Vulnerability is courage, not weakness.
- Leaders lean into difficult conversations with compassion and strength.

### David Didau's Intelligent Accountability

- Set clear expectations.
- Support and challenge staff to meet them.
- Ensure accountability builds trust, not fear.

### The Stockdale Paradox

- Balance confronting hard truths with unshakable optimism about our success.

At Star Mirdif, accountability is never about judgement — it is about helping each other Go Beyond with clarity and care



# Go Beyond for Our Students and Each Other

We inspire, challenge, and support every member of our Star Family to achieve their personal best.

### The Good Struggle

- Help students embrace productive challenge while avoiding the "Glitch zone."
- Use desirable difficulties to deepen learning.

### GROW & ADAPT Coaching Models

- **GROW** → support holistic coaching for reflection and growth.
- **ADAPT** → provide instructional coaching that builds classroom practice.

### Celebrating the Go Beyond Culture

- Recognise effort, progress, and moments of going beyond — in classrooms, corridors, and staffrooms.

When leaders Go Beyond, they create the conditions for both staff and students to achieve more than they thought possible.

**"The conversation is the relationship. If the conversation stops, the relationship ends."**
**~ Susan Scott**

*At Star, Mirdif, we believe in going beyond*

**As Jim Collins writes in Good to Great:**

*"Good is the enemy of great. And that is one of the key reasons why we have so little that becomes great. We don't have great schools, principally because we have good schools.*

***in large part because it is just so easy to settle for good*

— ***Jim Collins, Good to Great (2001)***

This truth drives our **Go Beyond** mindset — a cultural refusal to accept "*good enough*" as our finish line.

We use this mindset to guide *how we lead, how we teach, how we support, and how we grow*:



**Not settling.**
**Not coasting.**
**Not doing "just enough".**

But **striving for excellence** — in **care, communication, challenge, and consistency.**

Going Beyond means choosing **aspiration over complacency.**
It means aspiring to be the school our students, staff, and families truly deserve — **one that dares to be great.**

# Why This Playbook Matters

- *It gives students consistency, safety and clarity*
- *It empowers staff to lead with pride, professionalism and purpose*
- *It helps families reinforce shared values at home*
- *It allows leaders to protect what makes Star Mirdif unique*
- *It shows our commitment to excellence, innovation and inclusion*

# *Core Influences*

*See the Glossary at the back of this Playbook for deeper insight and references. Alongside a Tescher Guide for use in the classroom*

- **Edgar Schein** – Culture exists on three levels: what we say, what we do, and what we truly believe.
- **Patrick Lencioni** – Trust, clarity, and accountability are the foundation of cohesive, high-performing teams.
- **Daniel Goleman** – Emotional intelligence shapes how we lead, learn, and connect with others.
- **Jim Collins** – Good is the enemy of great — and greatness comes from getting the right people on the bus, in the right seats.
- **Susan Scott** – Clear, kind, and courageous conversations are the key to building trust.
- **Brené Brown** – Vulnerability and courage are at the heart of brave leadership and team trust.
- **David Didau** – Intelligent accountability creates a culture of high standards without fear.
- **Richard Boyatzis** – The Self-Directed Learning Model shows how coaching and emotional connection power professional growth.
- **Michael Chiles** – "A strong school culture requires everyone rowing in the same direction." Shared language builds that alignment.
- **Bill Rogers** – Calm authority, preventative strategies, and consistency shape positive behaviour cultures.
- **The Stockdale Paradox** – Lead with hope and realism, even when facing difficult truths.

# Influential Voices on School Culture

*What the experts say — and why it matters more than ever.*

In building the Star, Mirdif Culture Playbook, we've drawn inspiration not only from research, psychology, and theory — but also from some of the **most respected voices in education.** Their words remind us that culture isn't an initiative. It's an atmosphere, a set of habits, a living, breathing commitment to doing things well — for the right reasons.



*"The culture of a school — what it feels like to be there — is more important than any policy document or improvement plan."*
**Sir Tim Brighouse**



*"Schools must be places where everyone belongs and feels they can succeed. That sense of belonging is the heartbeat of school culture."*
**Dame Alison Peacock**



*"School culture eats policy for breakfast. Without the right culture, even the best initiatives fail."*

**Professor Dylan Wiliam**



*"High challenge, low threat: that's the culture where staff and students thrive."*

**Mary Myatt**



*"Culture is what you do every day, not just what you say. It's how schools behave when no one is watching."*

**Tom Sherrington**



*"Culture is the engine of a school's success. Where there's high aspiration, belonging, and belief, young people thrive."*
**Dr. Tony Sewell CBE**

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# Culture Defined





*To grow the future leaders and global citizens of tomorrow, who will Go Beyond and change our world for the better.*

## Vision



*Through amazing learning opportunities and personalised pathways, our educators and students Go Beyond to ensure every member of our Star Family achieves their personal best both inside and beyond the classroom.*

## Mission



## Self Belief

### Believe in yourself, Go Beyond

We nurture a belief that every child and adult at Star Mirdif has the potential to grow, achieve, and make a difference. Self-belief means trying, failing, and trying again. It's about having the confidence to speak up, take part, and trust in your ability to learn, lead, and thrive — with support from those around you.



## Teamwork

### Together we shine

We are stronger together. Teamwork at Star means collaboration between students, staff, families, and our wider community. It means listening well, contributing with purpose, and celebrating each other's success. Whether in the classroom, the playground, or the staffroom — we lift each other up, and we never go it alone.



## Adventure

### Dare to change the world

At Star, Mirdif, learning is an adventure — full of curiosity, challenge, and discovery. We don't just explore knowledge, we explore ourselves and the world around us. Whether in the classroom or out in the community, we seek opportunities to grow, to connect, and to make a difference. Adventure means stepping outside our comfort zones, asking big questions, and believing that we can change the world for the better — starting with ourselves.



## Respect

### Kindness, always

We treat others how we would want to be treated — with kindness, fairness, and care. We show respect in how we speak, how we act, and how we support one another. At Star Mirdif, respect includes self-respect, cultural respect, and modelling the behaviour we expect from others.

It's how we build trust, consistency, and a safe place to learn and grow — together.

# THIS IS HOW WE *GO BEYOND* AT STAR, MIRDIF

**SELF-BELIEF**
Believe you can





**TEAMWORK**
We Grow Together

**ADVENTURE**
Dare to Change the World





**RESPECT**
Kindness. Always.

## #SISMGoBeyond

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# Dubai Education 33 Alignment

# Star Mirdif & Dubai Education 33

Building the future, aligned with national ambition.

The UAE's Education Vision 2033 outlines a bold and aspirational roadmap to develop a world-class, inclusive, and future-ready education system — one that empowers every learner to thrive in a fast-changing world. More on Education 33 can be found HERE

At **Star, Mirdif**, we are proud to be fully aligned with this vision — not just in our curriculum, but in our **culture, values, and ambition** for every student.

| Vision 2033 Theme | How we align at Star, Mirdif |
|---|---|
| **Future-Ready Graduates** | Our students develop skills for tomorrow through STEAM+, leadership, enterprise, global citizenship and the mindset to Go Beyond. |
| **Global Competitiveness** | We deliver a rigorous UK curriculum, underpinned by high expectations, powerful knowledge, and the belief that every student can achieve their personal best. |
| **Inclusive & Quality Education** | We believe in Attainment, not Ability. Every child can grow. Our inclusive, high-challenge culture supports every learner to thrive. |
| **Character & Values Education** | Our STAR Values (Self-Belief, Teamwork, Adventure, Respect) are embedded in everything we do — shaping students to lead with integrity, empathy, and purpose. |
| **National Identity & Language** | We celebrate the UAE's culture, heritage, and values. We proudly promote Arabic language, inclusive practices, and cultural respect in all we do. |
| **Teacher Empowerment & Excellence** | Our teachers live the Culture Playbook daily — with a shared commitment to research-informed, people-aware practice, emotional intelligence, and continuous growth. |
| **Innovation & Technology Integration** | With AI-powered learning tools and inquiry-based pedagogy, our students and staff use innovation to deepen thinking, personalise pathways, and stay ahead of the curve. |

*At Star, Mirdif, we don't just prepare students for exams — we prepare them to thrive, lead, and change the world for the better.*

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# Codifying our Culture



# Codifying our Culture

At Star Mirdif, culture isn't left to chance — we define it, live it, and protect it. These 10 core principles guide how we show up for our students, colleagues, and community every day.



## Culture in Action

Our vision, mission and values are more than words on a wall — they shape how we speak, act and lead each day. We all share responsibility for making them visible in our language, our decisions, and our culture.



## Praise and Positive Framing

We use praise and language purposefully — to build confidence, set positive norms, and strengthen trust. The way we speak shapes how people feel, how they act, and how they grow.



## Go Beyond - For everyone

We go beyond expectations — not just in outcomes, but in how we care, support and grow together. We look beyond the curriculum to spark awe, wonder, and deep curiosity. Every member of our community is inspired to achieve personal and collective success.



## Attainment, Not Ability

We believe no one is defined by a label. Every student can improve and achieve their personal best. We focus on progress and nurture potential — creating a culture where growth, effort and high expectations apply to everyone.



## Accountability with Kindness

We assume positive intent and support one another with clarity and empathy. We build trust by holding ourselves and each other to shared expectations — with honesty, kindness, and emotional intelligence.



## What You Permit, You Promote

Culture is shaped by what we challenge — and what we choose not to. We build trust by holding ourselves and each other to shared expectations. Respectful challenge, honesty, and follow-through protect the values we stand for.



## Teach to the Top

We plan, teach, and support every student to succeed at the highest level. No limits, no labels — just belief, ambition, and the right challenge for all. Through high expectations, knowledge that builds understanding, and inspiring learning, we grow curious, confident minds.



## Sweat the Small Stuff

Details matter. We notice, we care, and we act. When something's not right, we seek solutions — because shared success depends on shared responsibility.



## Research Informed, Wellbeing Aware

We use evidence to guide what we do — and we do it with people in mind. Great practice balances what works with what's right for our students and staff. We act with professional judgment, emotional awareness, and care.



## Safeguarding Comes First

We never compromise on safety. Everyone in our community — adults and students — plays a role in keeping each other safe. We stay alert, speak up, and look out for one another. A safe school is the foundation for learning, belonging, and thriving.

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# Star, Mirdif Shared Language



# Star Mirdif Phrases

● Self belief ● Teamwork ● Adventure ● Respect

●● **At Star Mirdif, we go beyond**
A mindset of awe and wonder. We stretch ourselves, stay curious, and aim to change the world — starting here.

●● **Show your Star self**
A daily reminder to bring your best: effort, kindness, pride, and responsibility. Builds identity and emotional intelligence.

●● **Good morning / Good afternoon – Sabah al-khair / Masa' al-khair**
Polite greetings model manners, respect, and cultural inclusion. We value warmth and connection at every door.

●● **Speak with pride**
We encourage confident, respectful voice — in reading, answers, and conversation. It builds self-belief and character.

●● **Let's speak to each other the way we want to be spoken to**
Promotes empathy, regulation, and peer respect. A shared language reset that protects kindness and calm.

●● **Keep to the right, calm and purposeful**
Supports safe, structured movement and minimises disruption. Everyone has a part to play in a calm school.

●● **See it, sort it**
Builds shared ownership of our space and community. Whether tidying or resolving a peer issue — we take responsibility.

●● **Uniform ready, future ready**
Uniform isn't just clothing — it's a mindset. Wearing it well shows professionalism, pride, and readiness for the wider world.

●● **Every minute counts**
Valuing learning time supports progress, punctuality, and a focused mindset. Every second matters — in and out of class.

● **Every day counts**
Regular attendance builds confidence, academic progress, and social belonging. Being present is powerful.

●● **Sort it with kindness**
Restorative and respectful. Students are taught to resolve issues calmly and constructively, not escalate them..

●● **You know what to do**
A confidence cue. Reinforces expectations, builds independence, and avoids over-prompting.

●● **Be brave, have a go**
Encourages risk-taking in learning. Mistakes are expected, respected, and part of growth.

● **Be here. Be switched on.**
Reinforces focus, presence, and emotional readiness. Students are reminded to engage fully.

●● **Embrace the good struggle — it's part of the adventure.**
A mindset cue that reminds students real learning feels challenging. It promotes resilience, curiosity, and a love for stretch — the "good struggle" is where growth begins.

●● **Eyes on me, eyes on you**
A transition and listening prompt. Builds habits of attention, respect, and shared focus in group settings.

●●● **We care, please share — tell 5**
If something doesn't feel right, it's always okay to speak up. Every student should know five trusted adults — at home or at school — they can go to for help, support, or someone to talk to.

# Star Mirdif Phrases



AT STAR MIRDIF, WE GO BEYOND



SHOW YOUR STAR SELF



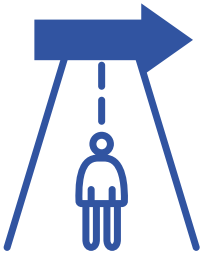
GOOD MORNING / GOOD AFTERNOON – SABAH AL-KHAIR / MASA' AL-KHAIR



SPEAK WITH PRIDE



LET'S SPEAK TO EACH OTHER THE WAY WE WANT TO BE SPOKEN TO



KEEP TO THE RIGHT, CALM AND PURPOSEFUL



SEE IT, SORT IT



UNIFORM READY, FUTURE READY



EVERY MINUTE COUNTS



EVERYDAY COUNTS



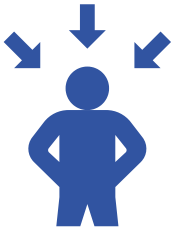
SORT IT WITH KINDNESS



YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO



WE CARE, PLEASE SHARE — TELL 5



BE BRAVE, HAVE A GO



BE HERE. BE SWITCHED ON.



EMBRACE THE GOOD STRUGGLE — IT'S PART OF THE ADVENTURE



EYES ON ME, EYES ON YOU

# Our Star, Mirdif Shared Language

## Student Guide

*These are the phrases we use every day to help us learn, grow, and go beyond — together.*

**At Star Mirdif, we go beyond**
We don't just do the minimum — we try our best, care deeply, and challenge ourselves to get better every day.

**Show your Star self**
This means showing the best version of you — kind, focused, ready to learn, and proud of your behaviour.

**Good morning / Good afternoon – Sabah al-khair / Masa' al-khair**
We greet each other politely in English and Arabic because it shows respect and builds a kind community.

**Speak with pride**
When you speak, use a clear voice. Be confident. Your ideas matter — say them like they do.

**Let's speak to each other the way we want to be spoken to**
Speak kindly and respectfully. If you don't like how someone spoke to you — don't copy it. Set the example.

**Keep to the right, calm and purposeful**
Walk calmly, safely and on the right side. This helps everyone get where they need to go without bumping or noise.

**See it, sort it**
If you notice something wrong — a mess, a problem, a person needing help — don't wait. Help fix it.

**Uniform ready, future ready**
Wearing your uniform properly shows you're proud to be here — and getting ready for the future

**Every minute counts**
Time in lessons matters. Don't waste a second — your learning is important, and it adds up.

**Every day counts**
Coming to school every day helps you keep up, build friendships, and get better at everything.

**Sort it with kindness**
If there's a problem, fix it — but do it kindly. Don't make things worse. Talk it out. Move forward.

**You know what to do**
We've practised this. You've got this. Think about what's expected — and do the right thing.

**Be brave, have a go**
Even if you're not sure — try. Making mistakes is how we learn. Being brave is part of growing

**Be here. Be switched on.**
Be ready. Be focused. Be in the moment. Learning starts when you're fully switched on.

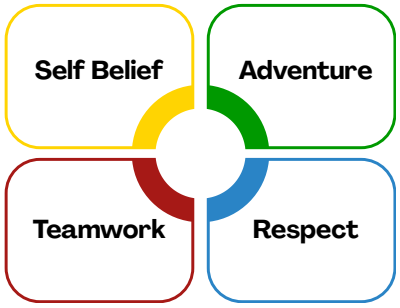
**Embrace the good struggle— it's part of the adventure.**
Sometimes learning feels hard — and that's okay. That's your brain getting stronger. If it's too easy, you're not growing. If it's too hard, you might need help. But when it's just right — you're in the good struggle.
That's where the magic happens.

**Eyes on me, eyes on you**
When a teacher says this, stop, look, and listen. It's how we show we're ready to learn and respect each other.

**We care, please share — tell 5**
If something doesn't feel right, you don't have to keep it to yourself.
You can talk to someone you trust. Try to think of five adults — at home or at school — who care about you and will listen.
You're not alone. We care, so please share.

GLOSSARY

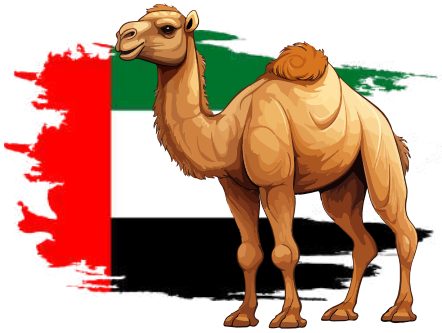
# EYFS Phrases






**Persistent Panda** ●

*Sit Up*



**Collaborative Camel** ●

*Track the Speaker*



**Active Ant** ●

*Appreciate other's responses*



**Respectful Rhino** ●

*Respect by Responding*

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## CHALLENGE ZONE

I am in a good struggle
It is challenging but I know what to do!



## STANDBY ZONE

I am waiting for challenge
I know what to do and its too easy for me



## GLITCH ZONE

I am struggling too much
I need support
It is too difficult

# Are you Embracing the Good Struggle?

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# *Go Beyond* - In practice



# *Go Beyond* - In practice

‘At Star, Mirdif, **“we go beyond”** is not a slogan — it’s an expectation. Staff bring it to life when they:

- **Praise students who exceed expectations**

“That was a *Go Beyond* moment — you really supported your team today.”

- **Encourage awe and wonder**

“Your curiosity really took us *beyond the curriculum* — that’s what learning’s about.”

- **Support challenge**

“That was tough — but you stepped into it. That’s what *Go Beyond* means.”

- **Use it as a restorative cue**

“Right now, how can *we go beyond* and make this right?”

**Go Beyond becomes real when it’s used daily — to inspire, support, and lift our community.**

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# Staff Culture



# Shared Purpose

### Go Beyond for Students and Each Other

We exceed expectations with passion, pride and purpose — in classrooms, corridors, and culture. We go beyond for each other too — because we're more than colleagues, we're a Star Mirdif family. We lift each other, show up with heart, and take shared pride in our collective success.

### Live the Vision, Mission and Values

Our core statements guide our language, choices, and leadership. They are the foundation of our school's identity. We live them with pride.

### Safeguarding First — Always

We stay alert, act quickly, and protect every child. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

# Professionalism & Consistency

### Polished and Professional

Our dress, tone, and actions model pride. We expect high standards because our students deserve them.

### Sweat the Small Stuff

Great teams notice details. We fix what's not right, take pride in our environment, and protect expectations. We come with solutions, and take initiative.

### Be There, Be Aware

Presence matters — in duties, meetings, and moments with students. We show up fully and reliably. We are on time and punctual.

### Consistency Builds Culture

At Star Mirdif, routines aren't rules — they're rhythms that help students feel safe, focused, and ready to learn. Consistency in routines, lesson timings, transitions, and the use of the Star Mirdif Learning Cycle is a shared professional responsibility. These habits shape calm, purposeful classrooms — and the culture our students deserve.

# Relationships & Communication

### Communicate with Care and Clarity

We speak clearly, email with courtesy, and listen well. Great communication shows emotional intelligence.

### Praise Loud, Challenge Kindly

We uplift others, hold them to account with kindness, and protect psychological safety. It's how great teams grow. We purposefully use praise and positive framing with our students.

### Rumble with Vulnerability

We embrace honest dialogue — even when it's uncomfortable. We speak with kindness, listen with curiosity, and lean into emotion. Vulnerability isn't weakness — it's courage. Feedback and challenge make us stronger as a team.

# Growth & Leadership

### Assume Positive Intent (Both Ways)

We believe others mean well — and expect the same in return. This mindset helps solve problems calmly and builds strong teams.

### Lead the Star Mirdif Way

Leadership is a behaviour, not a title. We own our own house, raise the standard, and model what we want to see. We build trust by holding each other to account with kindness

### Research Informed, Wellbeing Aware

We're guided by cognitive science, research, and grounded in context. We apply what the research shows works — but with empathy, flexibility, and care for wellbeing. We're evidence-informed, not evidence-led.

### Wellbeing Starts With You, Grows With Us

We take responsibility for our wellbeing and support others with care. It's a shared priority, not a side issue.

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# Parent Culture Guide



# Parent Culture Guide

*Helping Our Children Go Beyond — Together*

At Star, Mirdif, culture isn't just built by teachers. It's shaped every day at home too — in how we speak to our children, what we celebrate, and what we reinforce. This guide outlines how families can help protect and promote our shared culture, values, and expectations.

## What We Ask of Families

- **Reinforce Our Shared Phrases at Home**

Phrases like *"Every day counts," "Be brave, have a go,"* and *"Uniform ready, future ready"* support self-awareness, effort, and responsibility. When students hear them at school and at home, the message sticks.

- **Model Kindness and Respect**

Children copy what they see. Speaking kindly, showing gratitude, being punctual, and supporting teachers respectfully — these behaviours model emotional intelligence and trust.

- **Support Uniform and Attendance**

Help your child wear their uniform smartly, arrive at school on time, and attend every day unless truly unwell. This builds habits of professionalism and responsibility from a young age.

- **Use the Language of Effort and Growth**

**Ask**:

*"What challenge did you step into today?"*
*"What did you do to go beyond?"*
*"Who did you support today?"*

Celebrate effort, kindness, and courage — not just test scores.

- **Back the School, Respectfully**

If something feels unclear or difficult, reach out — but assume positive intent. We're here to work in partnership, and we're always listening.

# Parent Culture Guide

## The Role You Play

**Every time you:**

- Ask about your child's day
- Share a Go Beyond story
- Help with uniform
- Speak positively about staff and peers
- Show care in communication

You are reinforcing the culture we are building — one that grows confident, respectful, curious students, who *Go Beyond* and change our world for the better.

We are proud to work with you

# GLOSSARY

| English Phrase | Arabic Transliteration |
|---|---|
| Go Beyond | Tajawaz al-tawaqquʿāt |
| Self-Belief | Al-ʿīmān bi-nafs |
| Teamwork | Al-ʿamal al-jamāʿī |
| Adventure | Al-mughāmara |
| Respect | Al-iḥtirām |
| Good morning | Ṣabāḥ al-khayr |
| Good afternoon | Masāʾ al-khayr |
| Uniform ready, future ready | Ziyyun muntazim, mustaqbal wāʿid |
| Every minute counts | Kullu daqīqa tuḥtasab |
| Be brave, have a go | Kun shujāʿan wa ḥāwil |
| Speak with pride | Taḥaddath bifikhr |
| See it, sort it | Irahu, waḥillahu |
| Be here. Be switched on. | Ḥāḍir wa mustaʿid |
| Respect the ride | Aḥtarim al-rahla |

# Respect the Ride, Behave Inside



## Be on time and line up calmly

Arrive before departure time and follow adult instructions when boarding.

## Sit down straight away

Choose a seat and stay seated with your seatbelt fastened.

## Keep your hands, feet and belongings to yourself

Respect personal space — no pushing, touching, or throwing.

## Speak kindly and quietly

Use indoor voices. No shouting, singing loudly, or rude language.

## Respect the driver and bus monitor

Follow their instructions the first time — they're there to keep you safe.

## Look after the bus

No eating, littering, or damaging seats and windows.

## Stay in your seat until you are told to leave

Wait calmly to be dismissed — safety comes first.

## Model our STAR values, even on the move

Show respect, teamwork, adventure, and self-belief on every journey.

**#SISMGoBeyond**

# Flush, Wash & Go



**Respect for Others** –
Leaving the toilet clean shows care for your classmates who use it after you.

**Hygiene Matters** –
Washing your hands helps keep you and everyone else healthy.

**Time is Learning** –
The quicker you return to class, the less learning you miss.

**Responsibility Counts** –
Good habits show that you're mature and can be trusted.

**Avoid Crowds** –
Going straight back prevents toilets from becoming overcrowded or noisy.

**Set a Good Example** –
When you follow the rules, others will too.

**Stay Safe** –
Lingering around unsupervised areas is not safe or allowed.

**Model our STAR values, even on the move**
Show respect, teamwork, adventure, and self-belief on every journey.

#SISMGoBeyond

# At Star, Mirdif– we go beyond



**Show Kindness, Always** –
A small act of care can make someone's day.

**Support your Peers**–
We grow stronger when we lift each other up.

**Time is Learning** –
Respecting time shows you're ready to grow.

**Include everyone** –
No one should ever feel left out in our community.

**Be honest and own your truth** –
Integrity is at the heart of going beyond.

**Lead by example** –
Others are watching, and you have the power to inspire.

**Stay Safe** –
Lingering around unsupervised areas is not safe or allowed.

**Model our STAR values, even on the move**
Show respect, teamwork, adventure, and self-belief on every journey.

#SISMGoBeyond

# Influential Thinkers and Theories

A deeper look at the research, leadership models, and ideas that underpin the Star, Mirdif Way.

This Culture Playbook is not based on trends or intuition alone. It is deeply rooted in the work of some of the most influential minds in education, leadership, psychology, and school culture. The thinkers below have shaped how we understand accountability, emotional intelligence, motivation, feedback, teamwork, school behaviour, and the codification of culture.

## Edgar Schein

Key Idea: Culture operates on three levels: artifacts (visible practices), espoused values (what we say we value), and underlying assumptions (what we really believe).
Impact: His model forms the bedrock of our understanding of culture — explaining why shared language, routines, and values must be intentional.
Book: Organisational Culture and Leadership (2010)

## Patrick Lencioni

Key Idea: The five behaviours of a cohesive team: trust, healthy conflict, commitment, accountability, and results.
Impact: Directly informed how SLT and MLT operate at Star Mirdif — as cohesive, trusting teams that lead with clarity and shared purpose.
Book: The Five Dysfunctions of a Team (2002); The Advantage (2012)

## Daniel Goleman

**Key Idea**: Emotional intelligence (EQ) is more predictive of leadership success than technical skill or IQ.
**Impact**: Inspired how we manage behaviour, lead staff, and build emotionally intelligent relationships.
**Book**: Emotional Intelligence (1995)

## Jim Collins

**Key Ideas:** "Good is the enemy of great."
"Get the right people on the bus, in the right seats."
**Impact**: Our Go Beyond mindset, recruitment philosophy, and leadership development all reflect Collins' belief that discipline, culture, and focus drive excellence.
**Book**: Good to Great (2001)

## Susan Scott

**Key Idea**: Candid, caring, and consistent conversations are essential for trust and growth in teams.
**Impact**: Forms the foundation of how feedback, coaching, and middle leader development works at Star Mirdif.
**Book**: Fierce Conversations (2002)

## Brené Brown

Key Idea: Vulnerability, empathy, and courage are central to authentic leadership.
Impact: Influenced our inclusion of "Rumble with Vulnerability" as a leadership standard. Shapes our tone in meetings, line management, and peer support.
Book: Dare to Lead (2018)

## David Didau

**Key Idea**: Accountability works best when it's transparent, intelligent, and rooted in trust.
**Impact**: Influences our leadership philosophy of "challenge with care" and how we define high expectations for staff.
**Book**: Intelligent Accountability (2021)

## Richard Boyatzis

**Key Idea**: People change through emotionally resonant coaching and reflection — known as the Self-Directed Learning Model.
**Impact**: Shaped our teacher growth models and our belief in empowering personal development through reflection and values alignment.
**Book**: Helping People Change (2019, with Annie McKee and Melvin Smith)

## Michael Chiles

**Key Idea**: Clear, repeated shared language and visual cues build consistent school culture.
**Impact**: His work inspired our shared language structure — repeated phrases across phases that reinforce expectations.
Quote: "A strong school culture requires everyone rowing in the same direction."
**Book**: The Feedback Pendulum (2020)
**Article**: "Embedding routines and shared language" — SecEd (2023)

## Bill Rogers

**Key Ideas**: Behaviour is shaped by preventative, calm, consistent responses. Positive relationships and teacher clarity reduce escalation.
**Impact**: Core to our behaviour strategy: "What You Permit, You Promote" and "Sort it with Kindness" echo his guidance.
**Book**: Behaviour Management: A Whole School Approach (2011)

## The Stockdale Paradox (via Jim Collins)

**Key Idea**: True leadership is facing the brutal facts while never losing faith in the future.
**Impact**: Shapes our leadership mindset — honest about current gaps while being relentlessly optimistic about our future.
**Source**: Good to Great (2001)

## UAE Vision 2031 & Education Strategy 2033

**Key Idea**: Preparing future-ready, innovative, globally competent learners in a knowledge-based economy.
**Impact**: Shapes our commitment to student agency, powerful knowledge, STEAM+, global citizenship, and awe and wonder learning.
**Reference**: UAE Ministry of Cabinet Affairs – National Strategy Documents

# Star Mirdif Shared Phrases – Teacher Guide

## Introduction: Why These Phrases Matter

At Star, Mirdif, our shared phrases are more than scripts — they're culture in action. These 17 phrases are designed to bring consistency, calm authority, and clarity to how we communicate with students across our through-school setting.

Some phrases are rooted in the behaviour philosophy of **Dr. Bill Rogers**, whose work on calm authority, emotionally intelligent correction, and non-confrontational language continues to influence the world's best schools.

Others reflect our school-wide **Go Beyond mindset**, and are used to inspire, challenge, or support students in becoming the best version of themselves — as learners, leaders, and global citizens.

This guide helps you bring these phrases to life.

## Each one includes:

- The "Why" – what it promotes
- How to Use It – examples in different classroom and school contexts




GLOSSARY

### At Star, Mirdif, we go beyond

**Why**:

- Our cultural heartbeat. Reinforces care, aspiration, curiosity, and ambition.

**How to Use**:

- "You really went beyond on that project — love your extra detail."
- "What's one way we could go beyond in this activity?"
- "At Star Mirdif, we go beyond — is that our best effort?"

### Show your Star self

**Why**:

- Promotes self-leadership, emotional intelligence, and personal pride.

**How to Use**:

- "Are you showing your Star self right now?"
- "That's what your Star self looks like — well done."
- "Before we go into the corridor, show me your Star self."

### Good morning / Good afternoon – Sabah al-khair / Masa' al-khair

**Why**:

- Models respect, belonging, and warmth. Builds routine and professionalism.

**How to Use**:

- Morning greetings at the classroom door
- Teaching Arabic greetings and embracing UAE culture
- Restoring respect: "Let's try that again — 'Good morning, Miss.'"

### Speak with pride

**Why**:

- Encourages clear, confident communication. Builds self-esteem and expression.

**How to Use**:

- "Speak with pride — your voice matters."
- "Let's hear that again, louder and clearer — with pride."
- "When you speak with pride, people listen."

### Let's speak to each other the way we want to be spoken to

**Why:**

- A Bill Rogers-style, emotionally intelligent script. Prevents escalation. Promotes empathy.

**How to Use:**

- During disagreements: "Let's remember — we speak how we want to be spoken to."
- "That tone's not okay — reset it. Thanks."
- Reflection: "Would you be okay being spoken to that way?"

### Keep to the right, calm and purposeful

**Why:**

- Supports safety, flow, and mutual respect in transitions. Protects learning time.

**How to Use:**

- "Keep to the right. Calm and purposeful — thanks."
- Peer prompt: "We've practised this — show me how."
- Use during drills, changeovers, and stairwells. Pair with 'every minute counts'

### See it, sort it

**Why**:

- Builds responsibility. Encourages tidy, safe, and supportive spaces.

**How to Use:**

- Dropped rubbish: "See it, sort it — thanks."
- Classroom issue: "You can sort it, but kindly."
- Team clean-ups, end-of-lesson resets

### Uniform ready, future ready

**Why**:

- Fosters professionalism and pride. Supports clear, non-confrontational redirection.

**How to Use**:

- Morning checks: "Uniform ready, future ready — let's start sharp."
- Gentle prompt: "Tuck it in. Thanks."
- Assemblies, trips, picture days

### Every minute counts

**Why**:

- Builds a time culture. Encourages sharp starts, focused learning, and fewer disruptions.

**How to Use**:

- "Let's begin — every minute counts."
- "Back on task, we've got five — every second matters."
- As part of routines: books out, pens ready. Corridor transitions

### Every day counts

**Why**:

- Builds attendance culture. Promotes consistency, belonging, and academic growth.

**How to Use**:

- Start of week/class: "Fresh week — every day counts."
- Attendance rewards: "You've shown up every day — it shows in your progress."
- Conversations with parents: "It's the little routines that build big success."

### Sort it with kindness

**Why**:

- Restorative and emotionally intelligent. Helps students resolve without conflict or escalation.

**How to Use**:

- After peer fallout: "You can sort this — but kindly."
- "Sort it with kindness, not blame."
- Behaviour coaching conversations

### You know what to do

**Why**:

- A Bill Rogers signature phrase. Quietly prompts expected behaviour without confrontation.

**How to Use:**

- Off-task moment: "You know what to do." (Say it once. Let them act.)
- At lesson start: "You've done this before — you know what to do."
- Praise: "You knew what to do — well done."

### *Be brave, have a go*

**Why**:

- Inspires effort, risk-taking, and growth mindset. Normalises mistakes as part of learning.

**How to Use:**

- "Not sure? Be brave. Have a go."
- "That's what trying looks like — proud of you."
- "Having a go is how we grow."

### *Be here. Be switched on.*

**Why**:

- Promotes mental presence and learning readiness. Encourages focus.

**How to Use:**

- "Devices away — be here, be switched on."
- "Eyes on, ears on — let's switch on."
- Checking in: "Are we here... and switched on?"

### *Embrace the good struggle — it's part of the adventure.*

**Why:**

- This phrase is rooted in ISP's Language of Learning and our school's Adventure value. It reinforces the idea that real learning feels challenging — but not overwhelming. We help students see "struggle" not as failure, but as the zone where growth happens.

**How to use it:**

- In challenging lessons: "This might feel tricky — but it's the good struggle. Embrace it."
- To reframe frustration: "You're not stuck — you're in the good struggle. That's part of the adventure."
- When celebrating growth: "You kept going when it was hard. You embraced the struggle — that's how you grow."

### 🔴🟢 *Eyes on me, eyes on you*

**Why**:

- Gains attention without volume. Teaches listening with posture and eye contact.

**How to Use:**

- Say: "Eyes on me…" (pause) "Eyes on you."
- Reinforce with non-verbal cues
- Model calm, then praise: "That's excellent attention — thank you."

### 🔵🔴🟡 *We care, please share — tell 5*

***Why:***

- *Encourages students to speak up, build trust, and know they are not alone. Promotes emotional safety and helps embed a culture of care.*

**When to use it:**

- During induction or settling-in activities
- As part of PSHE, circle time, or wellbeing check-ins
- When supporting a child through a social, emotional or behaviour incident
- As a reminder during safeguarding or pastoral assemblies
- When a student seems withdrawn, upset, or uncertain

**How to Use:**

- Use a hand template for students to draw or name their five trusted adults
- Connect the message to the school's culture of kindness, respect, and emotional safety
- Reinforce that "sharing" isn't getting someone in trouble — it's how we protect and support each other
- Revisit the phrase regularly so students remember it's a normal and welcomed part of our culture

# A CULTURE TO BE **PROUD OF**

**Culture is not a poster. It's not a policy. It's a promise — to each other and to our students.**

It's built by the choices we make when no one is watching.
It's protected when staff speak up.
It grows when parents reinforce it.
It lives when students believe in it.

At Star, Mirdif, you are not just part of a school. You are part of a family. And every member of our family is expected to Go Beyond.

Let this playbook be your guide, your compass, and your call to action.

## Use it. Live it. Protect it.

Because when culture is strong — *everything else follows.*

STAR International School Mirdif | iSP International Schools Partnership



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Go Beyond with Star International School, Mirdif

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