



from the desk of the
Head of Academy

12 December 2025



Dear Parents,

Every morning when I open my Gmail, I find a message from OneDrive titled *Your memories from this day*. It brings up photographs from years gone by. My children appear at different stages of their lives, smiling, laughing or celebrating a special occasion. I am sure many of you receive the same reminders. They show us the moments we choose to keep.

There is an old saying that being human is like wearing a coat with two pockets. One pocket holds dust and the other holds gold. It reminds us that our lives and our children's lives contain things of worth and things of little value.

When it comes to our children, most of us only take photographs of the gold. We keep the photos of birthdays and other milestone events. These memories lift our spirits because they show our children at their best.

We don't keep photographs of the dust. None of us stores images of our children's tears or anger. Yet these moments are equally part of growing up. But they are harder to face and need patience and time to understand. They can also be messy and unpleasant. We would never choose to save them in an album.

Over the years, I have come to see value in the dust as well as in the gold. When young people struggle or fail, we often find the richest opportunities for growth. Some of the most positive changes I have witnessed in students began with a moment of failure or a poor choice that landed them in trouble. When guided with care, these moments become turning points.

Three truths stand out for me about the coats we wear:

No one is born with gold in both pockets. Our children's lives will not always consist of golden moments. There will be ups and downs, and there will be times when our hopes for them seem to collapse into dust. This is normal – and when we feel defeated and broken in the face of it, that is normal too.

Dust is lighter than gold. The moments of failure and pain are transitory; they will pass. The story is told of a Persian king who instructed his wise men to inscribe a ring for him with words that would be true in every situation and bring him comfort whenever he was sad. After many weeks of thought, the wise men presented him with a ring. Inscribed on it were the words, "This too shall pass." These words remind us of something we easily forget in the midst of a crisis - that all circumstances, positive or negative, are temporary: the sun will rise on a new day, hope will reappear, and a way forward will emerge.

The gold defines us. There's a reason why the photos we cherish of our children speak of joy and goodness. It's because this is the hope we have for them - that they will flourish

and that they will shine. The gold is their true value and their true greatness. Though failure and disappointment may help to shape our children, no child should ever be defined by their shortcomings and failures. We define children by their gold and not by their dust.

Best wishes,



Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



A MESSAGE FROM THE JUNIOR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL MS ARCHNA GERA

I hope the countdown to the end of the year has been exciting and filled with joyful opportunities for you and your families!

In recent communications, we have explained how the Junior School is working towards making student assessment qualitative, more informative and more closely aligned with our written curriculum. This remains a key focus as we move into the next chapter of the school's growth. Through several training sessions and ongoing collaborative dialogues, teachers have been implementing increasingly rigorous assessments in the classroom.

These have been shared with you through the Assessment Folders that go home at the end of every unit. Since this updated system was first introduced in Unit 2, you would have received the folders for the first time in early November and you will receive them again today.

We encourage you to review your child's assessments, including their levels of achievement, the evidence of their learning and the feedback provided by their teacher. We also encourage you to also complete the parent comment sheet included in the folder so that this can be returned to school on Monday, after which the folders will be sent home again at the end of Unit 3. As you look through the work, you will notice that the quality and rigour of the assessments have strengthened since Unit 1 and will continue to evolve. Our intention is to ensure that parents remain informed about their child's growth in a meaningful and ongoing way. Beginning next academic year, this system of collating and sharing assessments will shift to an online platform called Seesaw. We will be sharing more details about this transition towards the end of the academic year.

Since this body of work now provides a clear and comprehensive picture of student learning, we will not be issuing a mid-term report this year. However, if you would like to discuss your child's progress in greater detail or wish to understand the assessment tools more deeply, you are most welcome to reach out directly to your child's teacher to schedule an online or face-to-face conversation.

We wish you and your families a warm and joyful festive season, and we look forward to continued partnership in the months ahead.



SENIOR SCHOOL SPORTS DAY

This year's Senior School Sports Day was a resounding success. Excitement was high as students cheered on their Houses. Every House point was fiercely contested in nail-biting finishes. The relay races, in particular, provided some excellent entertainment for the spirited crowd. The day commenced with a well-choreographed and lively Zumba performance by our Grade 6 to 10 girls. Students then participated in a wide range of track and field events, including 100m, 200m, 400m, 4×100m relay, long jump and shot put. A new highlight this year was the introduction of the 2.5 km "Open to All" Run, which saw enthusiastic participation from both students and staff. The Sports Day was a celebration of athleticism, teamwork and school spirit. We extend our appreciation to all staff, coaches and participating students for contributing to the success of this memorable event. Kakatiya House is currently leading the inter-house competition with 181 points.



JUNIOR SCHOOL SPORTS DAY

It was a cold start to today's Junior School Sports Day and a good opportunity to warm up with some spirited events on the track! A fabulous turnout by parents added to the celebratory atmosphere. The programme began with a yoga display by our Junior School students. There was something quietly impressive about their focus and calm. It was also a helpful reminder that sport is not only about speed or strength. It is also about balance, breath and the ability to steady yourself before you begin. Congratulations to all our Junior School students for a memorable and energetic morning - and thank you to the Physical Education team who prepared them and to the parents who supported them. It was a good morning and it left us warmer in more ways than one!



BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS IN READING AND WRITING

Grade 1 students have been strengthening their phonics and spelling skills this term. By deepening their understanding of the letters and sounds they see and hear, they are developing greater confidence in reading, writing, and speaking. We are delighted to see the wonderful progress they have made. Our phonics lessons are designed to be engaging and interactive. Students learn through a blend of online games, digital activities, and hands-on group games that make the learning engaging. Their enthusiasm for learning has been evident throughout the term and we are confident that they will continue to grow through many more exciting and playful sessions ahead.



MYP PERSONAL PROJECT WORKSHOP 2025

Grade 10 students recently took part in a two-day Personal Project Workshop which gave them focused time and guidance to refine their reports and bring their work to completion. The Personal Project is a key milestone in the MYP. It asks students to take responsibility for an extended piece of independent learning that grows from a personal interest. Through the process, students plan, research, manage their time and reflect on their learning. The value of the project lies not only in the final product but in the habits it builds, including independence and academic integrity. During the workshop, students received targeted support and benefited from the presence of interns from the Teacher Preparation Programme who offered guidance and reassurance when needed. Over the two days, students worked with focus and maturity, and many gained a clearer understanding of their own learning strengths. With submissions now complete, students move forward with a sense of relief and pride. The Personal Project marks the end of the MYP journey and prepares students well for the challenges of the Diploma Programme and beyond.



STUDENT COUNCIL ASSEMBLY ON SCHOOL ETIQUETTE AND WELL-BEING

This week, our Junior School Student Council led a thoughtful assembly focused on strengthening our shared community values. The student leaders spoke confidently about the importance of everyday school etiquette. They also highlighted the need to make safe and considerate choices during play. A key part of the assembly was the launch of our “Be a Buddy, not a Bully” campaign. The Student Council encouraged all learners to choose kindness, show empathy and support peers who may need a friend. This initiative aims to build a culture where every student feels seen, valued and respected. The assembly concluded with an introduction to our “Your Voice Matters” box—a space where students can share ideas, concerns or suggestions. We are proud of our young leaders for taking the initiative to guide the school toward a more caring, responsible and inclusive environment.



REFLECTING ON KNOWLEDGE THROUGH A METACOGNITIVE LENS

As part of their Theory of Knowledge programme, DP 1 students recently attended a session titled DP 1 “Puducherry Trip A Metacognitive Gaze” led by two of their peers, Shresht Vadavalli and Sia Karmali. The session invited students to reflect on different ways of knowing and to consider how experience, context and perspective shape understanding.

The presentation raised questions around sustainability and wellbeing, compliance and radical approaches to life, worldview and audience. Drawing on her reflections from Sadhana Forest, Sia highlighted the value of ecological knowledge and explored the legitimacy of indigenous knowledge systems. Shresht focused on the complexities of Auroville, examining the role of spiritual knowledge and the influence of context in shaping acceptance or rejection of claims based on subjective experience. He also prompted discussion on the capacity of religion to address human challenges and the role of scientific development in enhancing the quality of thinking. Attended by the DP 1 cohort and their Theory of Knowledge teachers, the session deepened students metacognitive engagement with knowledge and encouraged them to think more critically about how understanding is formed and evaluated in the world around them.



LEARNING HINDI THE PLAYFUL WAY!

Junior School students are developing their Hindi speaking skills through well-known games such as Kabaddi, Duck Duck Goose and Green Light Red Light. Teachers have adapted these games so that students practise Hindi sentences and vocabulary while moving, listening and responding to one another. This approach reflects the pedagogy of play which recognises that young children learn best when they are actively engaged and emotionally invested in what they are doing. Through play students take risks with language, repeat structures naturally and build confidence without fear of making mistakes. Learning becomes social, physical and meaningful rather than purely instructional. As a result, Hindi lessons are lively and enjoyable and students are developing learning habits that will support them well as they grow.



CHRISTMAS AT FALAKNUMA PALACE

This week a small group of residential students had the opportunity to visit Falaknuma Palace for the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. Falaknuma Palace, one of Hyderabad's most iconic heritage landmarks, provided a beautiful and historic setting for the evening. Accompanied by Ms December, the girls sang a Christmas medley in the Palace courtyard, adding warmth and music to a truly special occasion. Performing in such a setting was a memorable experience and one that many of the students will carry with them for a long time. Our thanks go to Ms Faridah for organising the visit and to Ms Maha, Ms December and Ms Katy for accompanying and supporting the students throughout the evening. We hope there will be many more opportunities for students to take part in experiences like this that connect learning, culture and community.

THIS WEEK'S STAFF SPOTLIGHTS



CELEBRATING GLOBAL MUSICAL LEARNING

The Academy is proud to share that our Music Teacher, Mr Altamash Ansari, recently attended the Aga Khan Music Awards and associated workshops in London. The Aga Khan Music Awards celebrate excellence in music from diverse cultures and support artists who preserve, develop and reimagine musical traditions in contemporary contexts. Alongside performances, the programme offers workshops and exchanges that encourage deep listening, collaboration and reflection. Mr Altamash took part in these rich learning experiences, engaging with musicians and educators from across the world. The opportunity allowed him to explore new perspectives on music-making and teaching and to reflect on how tradition and innovation can sit side by side. By bringing this learning back into the classroom, students' musical understanding and appreciation will be enriched!

“The students at this institution will be distinguished not only for their academic capacity, but for their character and their commitment to citizenship.”

His Late Highness Aga Khan IV

Groundbreaking of the International Academic Centre of Excellence, Tanzania, 17 March 2005



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY
HYDERABAD
