



from the desk of the
Head of Academy

5 December 2025



Dear Parents,

One of the most dramatic sites on the British coastline is Portland Bill Lighthouse in Dorset. It is one of those places you can never forget. In fact, it is ranked by Trip Advisor as one of the top tourist attractions in the world. The iconic lighthouse rises 41 metres above the rocks and has guided ships through the dangerous waters of the English Channel for generations. Climbing the old steps to the top of the lighthouse gives you stunning views across the UK's famous Jurassic Coastline.

When my wife and I were living in Oxford, we drove to Portland Bill Lighthouse one day for a family outing. What I remember most is the atmosphere on the day we visited. It was miserable! The wind was howling and the waves were crashing against the cliffs below. Despite the powerful forces of nature, the lighthouse stood firm. It continued to shine a bright light across the sea for ships to navigate by. It did not force ships to take a particular route. It simply provided a constant reference point. It offered guidance without interfering.



I have often thought of that lighthouse as a wonderful metaphor for our work as parents and teachers. A recent article in *The Atlantic* used the same image when discussing what it called "lighthouse parents." The phrase may be new, but the idea behind it captures something many of us instinctively know. In a world that can feel overwhelming, children need the steadiness of a lighthouse in their lives.

You may have come across the term "helicopter parenting". It refers to a style of parenting where adults hover over their children and manage decisions or solve problems on their behalf. This differs from the "lawnmower parent" who removes obstacles before a child encounters them. It also differs from the parent who steps back completely and leaves the children to manage life on their own. Lighthouse parenting offers an alternative. It provides steady guidance while giving children the space to learn how to navigate for themselves.

A lighthouse is visible but not intrusive. It is strong but not overpowering. It offers guidance in rough weather but leaves each ship free to choose its own route. In the same way, children develop confidence when they grow up with a steady adult presence and enough room to spread their own sails.

Children need the adults in their lives to be "lighthouse steady". They need us to listen before we advise and to pause before we intervene. These are the moments in which confidence grows. When we let a child speak to a teacher themselves, or sort out a friendship concern or take responsibility for a forgotten assignment, we allow them to discover that they can cope with more

than they imagined.

At the Academy, we try to offer the same steady guidance that a lighthouse represents. We set clear expectations, but we also ask students to take responsibility for their learning and the choices they make. This is how they discover what they are capable of. As parents and educators, we share the same hope. We want our children to become capable and resilient young people who meet the world with curiosity rather than fear. That growth does not come from smoothing every wave or removing every rock.

The lighthouse image reminds us that our presence can matter more than our interventions. The well-known psychiatrist and neuroscientist, Dr Daniel Siegel, has shown that children's developing brains are shaped by the emotional state of the adults around them. When a child grows up in the presence of a calm and integrated adult brain, they are more likely to develop that same steadiness themselves. When children feel anchored in that kind of steadiness, they navigate life with greater confidence and a deeper sense of their own strength.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Long". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jonathan" and the last name "Long" clearly distinguishable.

Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



JUNIOR SCHOOL CAMPING ADVENTURES

Students in Grades 3 and 4 participated in an exciting camping experience last week. During the day they engaged in a range of outdoor activities that helped them grow in confidence. Grade 3 students pitched tents, joined team building games and enjoyed nature walks and quiet moments for reflection. The camp offered a welcome opportunity to connect with the natural world and learn in a practical, engaging way. Grade 4 students also supported a social service project where they helped repaint a government school building. They spent time with the children there, played games and shared conversations that built mutual understanding. The camps blended adventure with meaningful learning. Students practised cooperation and responsibility while creating joyful memories with their classmates!



MAJOR INTER-SCHOOL SPORTS MEET HOSTED ON CAMPUS

The Senior School was proud to host a very successful Inter School Sports Meet over two weekends, 22 and 23 November and 29 and 30 November. Meticulously organised by our PE and Sports team under the guidance of our Head of Physical Education Mr Ravi Kumar, the events followed a league format with knockout rounds. The statistics were impressive with 80 teams and 900 students from 16 schools taking part in boys and girls football, squash, swimming, tennis and cricket. Importantly, the event reflected the vision of the Aga Khan Academies. It created a setting where young people could strive for excellence, practise ethical leadership and learn to compete with integrity and respect. The spirit in which students played showed the character and resilience that the Academies aim to nurture in every learner.





EXPLORING MATTER AND MATERIALS

Grade 3 students recently visited the Secondary School science labs as part of their unit of inquiry, How the World Works. The visit gave them practical experience with different materials and how these respond to changes in temperature, force and other conditions. Students observed experiments such as rusting of iron, curdling of milk and reactions involving soluble and insoluble materials. These demonstrations helped them understand physical and chemical changes. They also explored reversible and irreversible changes in everyday materials which strengthened their ability to recognise which processes can be undone and which create something entirely new. The lab team guided students with care and encouraged curiosity as they made observations and recorded their findings. The visit deepened their understanding of matter and materials and helped them connect classroom learning with real world phenomena.



AN EXPLORATION OF TELUGU ESSAY WRITING

The Telugu department recently hosted a workshop on essay writing for all students. Led by Dr Ravi Chandra of Anantapur Central University, the session introduced students to the craft of essay writing and the techniques that shape strong Telugu essays. Dr Ravi explained how essays are structured, outlined different essay types and highlighted their place within Telugu literary traditions. It was an informative and well-received session and the department looks forward to offering similar learning opportunities in the future.



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY THROUGH PLURALISM

Personal Social Health and Economic education sessions on the Aga Khan curricular strand of Pluralism took place last week for students in Grades 6 to 10. These sessions encouraged students to examine their own cultural identities and to learn about the diverse backgrounds represented within their peer group. Pluralism is central to the vision of the Aga Khan Academies, which seek to develop young people who can engage thoughtfully with difference and contribute to more inclusive communities. Through discussions, role plays, games and movement-based activities, students experienced this vision in practice and considered how pluralism shapes the way we learn and live together. They also reflected on how they can express the spirit of pluralism in their daily interactions, both in school and beyond.



LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

This week, students in Grades 1 and 3 stepped beyond the classroom to deepen their understanding of their units of inquiry. Grade 1 students visited the Sudha Car Museum, where they saw cars shaped like shoes, cameras, burgers and cricket balls. They discussed how the creator transformed simple ideas into imaginative vehicles through creativity and strong problem-solving skills.

Grade 3 students visited a textile art exhibition at Dhi Art Gallery, which linked closely to their study of matter and materials. They explored how different fabrics are used to create artworks and reflected on how artists convey ideas and emotions through cloth. The visit encouraged them to think creatively and to believe that even a simple idea can grow into something remarkable.

Together, these experiences nurtured thoughtful, curious and principled young learners—embodying the Academy’s mission to develop leaders with purpose.



ALIGNING OBSERVATION FOR TEACHER GROWTH

Earlier this week, the Centre for Educational Research Innovation and Training, together with our teacher coach Ms Vani Vishwanath, led a capacity-building session on lesson observation for mentors of our *Teacher Preparation Programme* interns. Stakeholders, including mentors, buddy teachers, heads of department, curriculum coordinators and the Senior School Principal, worked together to consider what effective observation and feedback should look like. The session connected the school's current observation tools with the University of British Columbia framework and the Aga Khan Academy teacher profile. Participants mapped key focus areas and co-created a shared template to support consistent and evidence-based feedback. This workshop is the first in a series that will foster coherence and a strong sense of shared purpose in how the Academy develops its future educators.

THIS WEEK'S SPOTLIGHTS



GROWTH, GRIT AND ACHIEVEMENT FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

Congratulations to Rukmini in Grade 5 who won the gold medal in gymnastics at the Altus Sports Festival hosted by Chirec International School. Competing as the sole representative of the Academy she showed great focus and composure and we are very proud of her achievement. Isaac in Grade 4 also distinguished himself by securing second place in the Youth Roller Skating Foundation championship. His strong performance reflects many hours of dedication and practice and his success has been a source of excitement among his classmates. Arya, also in Grade 4, took part in a world record attempt in Chennai for the largest karate display. Participating in an event of this scale required discipline and commitment and it offered a memorable opportunity to be part of something remarkable. We are delighted by the accomplishments of all three students. Their effort and enthusiasm reflect the spirit of learning and personal growth that we encourage across the Junior School.



ON THE RUN!

Several members of staff have recently joined runners across Hyderabad, taking part in community events that promote fitness and wellbeing. Ms Elizabeth, Ms Sarah and Ms Kathryn participated in the Women's Night Run, the Green Heartfulness Run and the Equality Run and each achieved a new personal best. Their commitment and enthusiasm have been an inspiration to colleagues and students alike. Building on this momentum, we are planning extracurricular running groups for students. These groups will offer structured training and the chance to take part in local running events as school teams. We hope this will encourage students to discover the enjoyment of running, set personal goals and experience the sense of achievement that comes from sustained effort and healthy habits.



STRENGTHENING LEARNING AND COLLABORATION ACROSS THE ACADEMIES

My name is Joe Hamkari, and I am the Dean of Studies at the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka. I have had the privilege of spending a week with educators at the Academy in Hyderabad. Excellence in education is one of the Academy's mottos. Education today is a shared endeavour, and I came to learn from the practices in Hyderabad and consider what might support our work in Dhaka. I was warmly welcomed by staff and spent the week observing classes, speaking with educators and studying how the school plans its timetables and organises teaching and learning. I was delighted to see teams working together to provide a high-quality educational experience. My learning ranged from observing how the Junior School environment helps young learners grow in confidence to seeing how Theory of Knowledge enables senior students to think critically about how learning takes place. I am grateful to all staff and students for their hospitality and I am confident that this visit marks the beginning of deeper collaboration across the Academies.



FRENCH EMBASSY VISIT EXPLORES ACADEMY PARTNERSHIP

The Academy recently hosted delegates from the Embassy of France for a collaborative meeting with the Academy leadership team. The purpose of the visit was to explore partnerships that would strengthen academic pathways for students, particularly in relation to higher education in France. The delegates shared insights on French universities, scholarship options and programmes that support international students. The group also discussed ways to broaden collaboration related to the Diploma in French Language examinations. The meeting marked a promising step towards expanding international opportunities for our students and further discussions are planned in the coming months.

“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
