

from the desk of the
Head of Academy

17 July 2026



Dear Parents

Greetings from the Academy! During the school term, I write to parents each week to share highlights of Academy life, along with reflections on the opportunities and challenges we encounter in educating and raising young people. Next Friday, you will receive the first of these weekly newsletters, featuring news and stories from the opening days of term. I look forward to staying connected with you throughout the year.

Over the next few days, the Academy will come alive once again as the new school year begins. When school opens on Tuesday, 21 July, we will welcome more than 800 students from across India and around the world. The remarkable cultural, linguistic, religious, socio-economic and ethnic diversity of our students is one of the great strengths of our community and helps make the Academy such a distinctive place in which to learn and grow.



This weekend, we will hold our Orientation Programme for new students and their families. Organised by our Admissions Office, with the support of a wonderful team of student volunteers, the programme will provide our newest families with a warm introduction to the Academy and the community they are joining. We are delighted to have you with us.

WELCOMING NEW TEACHERS



As in leading international schools around the world, each academic year begins with a blend of familiar faces and new colleagues. This year, we are delighted to introduce an exceptional group of educators. Their appointment reflects the Academy's continuing ability to attract outstanding teachers from respected IB World Schools across India, Africa and Europe. Collectively, they offer rich international expertise and share our commitment to ensuring that every student feels known, supported and able to flourish.

Junior School

PYP Homeroom – Aishwarya Jatana

Aishwarya joins us from The International School Bangalore. She has a strong background in the IB Primary Years Programme and is passionate about inquiry-based learning and creating joyful classrooms.

Visual Arts – Harshitha Chauhan

A practising artist, Harshitha is committed to nurturing creativity, technical skill and confident artistic

expression in every student.

PYP Co-Teacher – Swarna Kumari Gadarla

Swarna is an Early Years educator with IB PYP training and a particular interest in nurturing children's curiosity, confidence and lifelong love of learning.

PYP Co-Teacher – Minu Maria Selvi M.

Minu has worked in both primary and inclusive education and is strongly committed to differentiated learning, student wellbeing and ensuring that every child receives the support they need.

PYP Co-Teacher – Swetha Emandi

Swetha returns to the Academy following previous service as a PYP homeroom teacher. She has considerable expertise in inquiry-based and inclusive education.

PYP Co-Teacher – Juhi Ramnani

A specialist in remedial education, behaviour support and psychology, Juhi is dedicated to helping every learner develop confidence and fulfil their potential.

Day Care – Jeedipally Spandana Reddy

Spandana will lead the Academy's Day Care facility with a warm, caring and child-centred approach.

Learning Support – R. K. Chitra

Chitra returns to the Academy after a career of more than thirty years in special education. She is widely respected for her knowledge of inclusive learning and her commitment to supporting children with diverse learning needs.



Senior School

Arabic – Adnan Farzat Fakhour

Adnan has taught Arabic across a wide range of age groups for more than a decade. His career has

also encompassed intercultural education and translation work with the Aga Khan Foundation.

English – Deepak D.

A graduate of the Academy's Teacher Preparation Programme, Deepak is an enthusiastic advocate for inquiry-based learning and student-centred English teaching.

English – Dr Neeti Chadha

Neeti comes to us from Indus International School. She holds a PhD in English Literature and has broad expertise in IB teaching, curriculum design and student leadership.

English and Individuals and Societies – Zakeeya Zahra Abbas

A graduate of both the Academy's Teacher Preparation Programme and Azim Premji University, Zakeeya has a strong interdisciplinary humanities background and a deep interest in inquiry-based learning.

French – Ange Cyrille Irie

An IB French examiner and former Head of Department, Cyrille has taught internationally for more than fifteen years.

Telugu – S. Prashanth Samudrala

A teacher of Telugu and Sanskrit, Prashanth is committed to developing students' confidence in language and deepening their appreciation of India's rich literary heritage.

Mathematics – Caleb Opiyo Wafula

Caleb's career as an IB Mathematics educator has included appointments at the Aga Khan Academy Mombasa, The International School of The Hague and St Constantine's International School in Tanzania.

Mathematics – Swathi Chiluka

Swathi has a strong record of teaching IB Mathematics in both the Middle Years and Diploma Programmes, with consistently impressive student outcomes.

Science – Roseline Awino

Roseline has taught Chemistry and Biology internationally for more than twelve years, working in schools across Kenya, Tanzania and the Netherlands.

Design – Indulakshmi V. G.

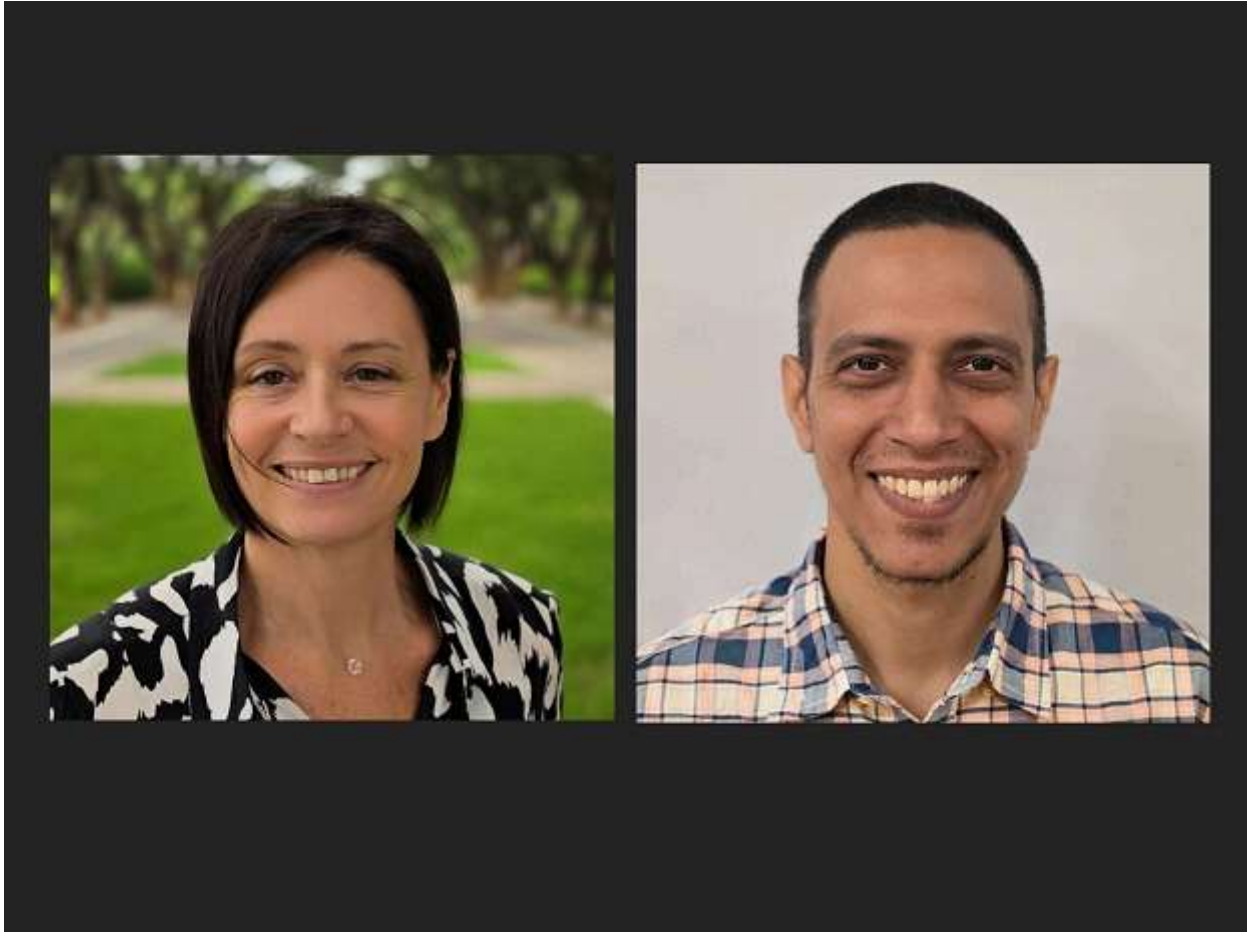
Indulakshmi has taught Design Technology, Product Design and Digital Design for more than thirteen years at leading international schools.

Theatre – Kapil Salunkhe

Kapil comes to us from École Mondiale World School, following earlier appointments at Oakridge International School and Scottish High International School. He has substantial expertise in IB Theatre and the performing arts.

STRENGTHENING STUDENT WELLBEING AND CARE

I am also very pleased to introduce two important leadership roles created this year to strengthen student wellbeing, pastoral care and safeguarding across the Academy.



Junior School Pastoral Care Lead – Jenai Sam

Jenai Sam joins us as our Junior School Pastoral Care Lead. Her career in pastoral care, counselling and student wellbeing has included work in leading international schools in Singapore and the UK. With a background in psychotherapy and particular expertise in children's social and emotional development, she will work closely with students, families and staff to help ensure that every child feels known, supported and able to flourish. Jenai will also serve as a member of the Junior School Leadership Team.

Dean of Students – Karl Pestonji

Karl Pestonji joins us as Dean of Students in the Senior School and as a member of the Academy's Senior Leadership Team. Most recently, Karl served at UWC Mahindra College, where he led student life and wellbeing and held responsibility as Child Protection Officer. As an IB educator and psychologist, he will lead student wellbeing in the Senior School and oversee safeguarding across the Academy, helping to ensure that every student learns and grows in a safe, caring and supportive environment.



Mr Farhad Merchant, CEO of Aga Khan Education Service (AKES), India, addressed staff as part of this week's staff training programme.

KEY DATES CALENDAR

This link provides a summary of the key dates for the 2026/27 school year: [Key Calendar Dates](#)

As the new school year begins, I wish you and your family every happiness and success - especially those for whom next week marks the beginning of an entirely new chapter in your child's learning and development.

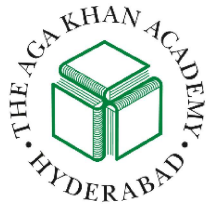
We value our relationship with parents as a genuine partnership, grounded in a shared commitment to the potential and wellbeing of every child. We look forward to working closely with you in the months ahead and to all that we will accomplish together during the year.

Best wishes,

Dr Jonathan Long



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY
HYDERABAD



from the desk of the
Head of Academy

24 July 2026



Dear Parents,

Reaching the end of the first week of a new school year is always a satisfying milestone! It has been wonderful to see our new students settle into Academy life with such enthusiasm and resilience. The first few days of a new school year are an important time to establish new routines, build relationships and resolve the small challenges that almost always accompany a fresh start.

It is during weeks like this that our vision of building a joyful community of learners who are reflective, compassionate, adventurous and creative is most vividly brought to life.

Thank you, too, for sharing your experiences with us and for letting us know whenever you or your children encounter difficulties. We value your feedback. It helps us to improve and ensure that every child enjoys the best possible start to the year. Together, we are building the kind of Academy community in which every child can flourish.

Saying goodbye to our children is still one of the hardest things I know. Even though my two daughters are no longer children, I still find every farewell an emotional experience and one I never get used to. I've heard people say that when our children turn 18, or when they leave home, we cut the bonds of childhood with them and set them free. That's not true. Our relationship with our children may shift and change as they move through life's various stages – but it does not stop.

I remember reading somewhere that being a parent is the only human relationship that has as its goal 'separation'. I found it very hard to believe at first, but over the years, it's made more and more sense to me.

My eldest daughter left home many years ago for university. My youngest daughter left home around the same time for boarding school. Every parental instinct in my body wanted to protect them, to constantly be in touch with them, and to bring them back! It was hard at times, but I soon looked back on it as a wonderfully formative experience.

I am sure that many of you can identify with these feelings – and especially in the past few days as your children have returned to school – and many of them away from home for the first time as residential students. As parents, we want to prepare our children for life – but our instincts want to protect them from life!

Research tells us that children learn the most valuable life lessons when we allow them to step into the world without constant supervision. That means allowing them to try and allowing them to fail. And it means that when they fail and look for our help, they sometimes need to hear the words, “You need to sort this out for yourself.”

The term we use for this ability for children to stand on their own two feet is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief that we can tackle challenges and overcome obstacles through our own efforts. Developing this confidence is one of the most important foundations for lifelong learning and wellbeing.

The concept was developed by Albert Bandura, one of the world's most influential

educational and developmental psychologists, whose research transformed our understanding of how children develop resilience and build confidence. As Bandura put it, "People who believe they have the power to exercise some measure of control over their lives are healthier, more effective and more successful than those who lack faith in their ability to effect changes in their lives."

I remember many times when my parental instincts fooled me into managing situations for my children. I thought I was doing them a favour; I thought it was an expression of love and care. What I now know for sure is that a child's success in life does not depend on our ability to solve their problems for them but on their ability to do that for themselves – and that means that sometimes we have to take the difficult decision to step back.

There will be times when we say to our children, "I will do this for you." There will be times when we say, "Let's do this together." But there must also be times when we say, "You can do this yourself!"

In the coming weeks, there will be times when you have to decide which of these three responses is the right one. I don't have a special formula or rule to help you decide. But what I have learned is this – the risks of holding on too tightly to our children's destiny and decisions are greater than the risks of letting go.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Long". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



MESSAGE FROM THE JUNIOR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL MS ARCHNA GERA

Greetings from Junior School! It has been lovely seeing some of you over the past few days. I am excited to have welcomed you all to another school year. I would like to highlight a few important points:

- The teachers have been making care calls to all new families this week, just to make sure we have **accurate contact information** for both parents. However, just in case you have not received any emails from your child's teacher, please call on the Academy's landline number to inform us: 040-66291313
- You should have already received **welcome letters** from your child's homeroom teacher and me.
- We also have an **official mobile number** for emergencies: +91-9177078822. This number will be active from Monday, July 27.
- If you haven't done so already, please let your child's homeroom teacher know about any **allergies or medical concerns** your child might have. Due to small numbers, we haven't had the need in the past, but this year, we are collating all this information and sharing it with all Junior School staff.

- All parents should have received an invitation to sign up on our online platform: **Seesaw**. Please do so, and if you have any questions, please email your child's homeroom teacher. The teachers will start uploading evidence of learning next week, and all announcements will be shared on Seesaw as well. You may also download the Seesaw app for ease of access and keep the notifications on.
- To make communication more streamlined and on a single platform, moving forward, Junior School will use **ManageBac** for attendance and reports only. All other communication will be through Seesaw.
- Earlier today, you would have also received a set of weekly announcements from the homeroom teacher and an invitation to the upcoming **Culture Circle**.
- We will be sharing all other updates for this year during the Culture Circle on **August 1**. Two major documents that will be shared with next Friday's announcements will be: **First draft of JS Handbook** and **Junior School Curriculum Overview** for all grade levels. Parents may review these documents and ask us any clarifying questions on the 1st.

Best wishes for the weekend and see you all in a week's time!



A JOYFUL START TO A NEW ACADEMIC YEAR

After a refreshing two-month summer break, the campus came alive once again as students returned for the start of the new academic year. At 8.00 am, the first buses began rolling into the roundabout, bringing students eager to see their friends and settle back into Academy life. There was a real sense of excitement across the campus as old friendships

were renewed, new ones began and teachers warmly welcomed both new and returning students. It was a joyful beginning to another year of learning, growth, discovery and shared experience.



A WARM WELCOME TO THE JUNIOR SCHOOL

The Junior School began the new academic year with its first assembly, warmly welcoming both returning and new students to the Academy community. Grade 1 students received a special cheer as they marked their very first day at the Academy. The assembly also introduced students to important expectations, including school values, safety guidelines and everyday dos and don'ts, setting a positive tone for a safe, respectful and successful year ahead.



A SPIRITED SENIOR SCHOOL ASSEMBLY

The Senior School welcomed students to the new academic year with its first assembly in the amphitheatre. Senior School Principal, Mr Christian Schmelz, invited members of staff onto the stage one by one, each joining a growing group playing a rhythmic beat set by Dr Sai Krishna Ranga. Using old plastic containers, metal tins and cardboard boxes as improvised instruments, each person added a new layer to the rhythm. As more teachers joined, the beat became stronger and increasingly energetic. It was a wonderfully creative way to introduce new staff and a vivid reminder that, by working together and contributing our individual strengths, we can build a dynamic and energetic Academy community this year.



BUILDING COMMUNITY: NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION WEEKEND

The Academy welcomed more than 150 new families during this year's Orientation Weekend, marking the beginning of an exciting new chapter in their lives. Designed to foster an early sense of connection and belonging, the programme included engaging sessions with members of the Leadership Team and teachers, interactive activities and a live instrumental performance that added a celebratory note to the occasion. Families joining the residential programme also had an opportunity to meet Mr Jeff, who heads up our residential programme, along with the dorm parents who will support and care for their children throughout the year. Thoughtfully coordinated by Ms Soumya, with the support of student interns and volunteers, the weekend set an enthusiastic tone for the first week of term. More than simply an introduction to the Academy, it offered families their first experience of the warm, inclusive and supportive community that lies at the heart of Academy life.



STUDY IN EUROPE FAIR OPENS THE UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT CALENDAR

The College Counselling Office began the new academic year with the Study in Europe University Fair, held on 22 July. The first university fair of the academic year brought together 23 universities from across Austria, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and the Republic of Ireland. The event was widely attended by students from MYP5, DP1 and DP2, as well as parents, who had the opportunity to engage directly with university representatives and explore a diverse range of higher education pathways. Through conversations with admissions teams, participants gained insights into academic programmes, entry requirements, student life and the opportunities available across different European destinations. As the geopolitical landscape continues to evolve and the aspirations of our student body become increasingly diverse, creating opportunities to explore a wider range of global destinations is more important than ever. University fairs provide students with the opportunity to move beyond familiar choices, discover new possibilities and make informed decisions about their future pathways. The Study in Europe Fair marked a positive beginning to the

Academy's university engagement calendar for the year. It reflected the College Counselling Office's ongoing commitment to broadening students' horizons, connecting them with universities from around the world and supporting each student in finding pathways that align with their individual interests, aspirations and goals.



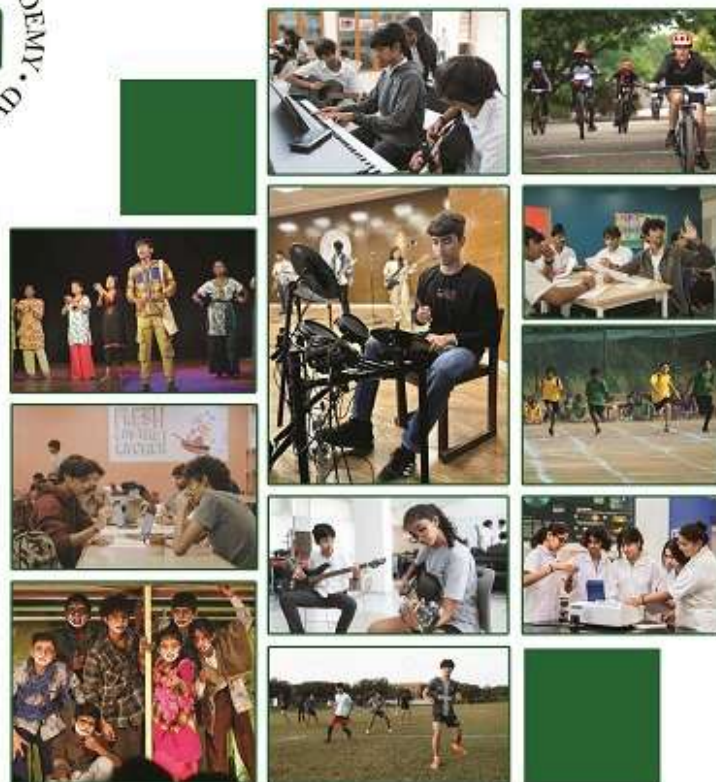
STRENGTHENING EXTENDED ESSAY SUPERVISION THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The Academy recently hosted an International Baccalaureate Extended Essay (EE) Workshop for 32 teachers as part of its ongoing professional development programme. The workshop explored key updates to the EE, effective student supervision strategies, ethical research practices, assessment approaches and ways to guide students through the research and writing process. By strengthening teachers' expertise in EE supervision, the workshop is expected to enhance the quality of student support and contribute to continued success in the IB Diploma Programme.



A JOURNEY INTO TELUGU STORIES WITH KATHA PALETTE

Junior School teacher Ms Radhika Bondada has launched *Katha Palette*, a collection of 24 original Telugu stories designed to make learning the language engaging and accessible for young children. Written primarily using *gunintapu guruthulu* (vowel signs), the stories help strengthen early reading skills through simple, captivating narratives. Each story is also available as an interactive visual flipbook, creating an immersive reading experience. Available at her website kathapalette.co, the collection invites children, parents and educators to explore the richness of the Telugu language and foster a lifelong love for reading.



STUDENT HANDBOOK

2026-27

SENIOR SCHOOL STUDENT HANDBOOK

The Senior School Student Handbook provides students and families with important information about Academy life, including our routines, expectations, policies and sources of support. We encourage all Senior School students and parents to read the handbook and refer to it throughout the year.

The handbook can be accessed [\[here\]](#)



Who's who



Dr. Jonathan Long
Head of Academy



Jeff Doerfler
Deputy Head of Academy and
Head of the Residential Programme



Archana Gera
Junior School Principal



Christian Schmelz
Senior School Principal



Smita Satyadevan
Dean of Admissions and Marketing



Karl Pestonji
Dean of Students



Jenai Sam
Pastoral Care Lead - JS



Shagun Guha
Student Counsellor



Usha Shivakumar
DP Coordinator



Meenakshi Joshi
MYP Coordinator



Lavanya Vadavalli
PYP Coordinator



Afiera Maryam
Head of Middle Years



Pragati Pandey
Head of College Counselling



Vaishali Purohit
Executive Assistant to HoA



Shabana Awadiya
Personal Assistant to JS Principal



Deepa Hritange
Personal Assistant to SS Principal

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

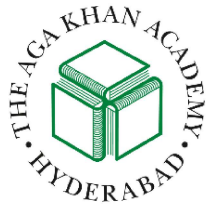
His Late Highness Aga Khan IV

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



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY

HYDERABAD



from the desk of the
Head of Academy

31 July 2026



Dear Parents,

I never saw it coming! I'd thought about it – but it was always something I imagined would be many years away. When the day finally came, nothing could have prepared me for the emotion. It began with a phone call from my youngest daughter. “Dad,” she said, “you’re going to be a grandfather!”

My first feelings were of immense joy.....quickly followed by sheer panic! A grandfather? Me? But I'm too young, I thought! A quick search on the internet revealed that the average age of the first-time grandparent is only 49. What a relief! Feelings of alarm lifted immediately. Mrs Long added a more sobering thought when she told me that she didn't mind being a grandmother at all – it was the idea of being married to a grandfather that worried her!

And so it was that little Molly came into the world – a tiny 9-pound bundle of life. Holding her in my arms I quickly understood the wisdom that grandparents have all the pleasure of being a parent but none of the anxiety.

Being so close to a new life reframes old questions. Many times, over the years, I've asked myself, “What do parents most wish for their children?” Research tells us that most parents wish for their children happiness. I agree with that. It's exactly what I have wished for my own children and grandchildren. I know it's probably what you wish for your children too.

But wishes, like dreams, do not come true through hope alone. They require effort and a clear sense of purpose. This is also true of the work we do at the Academy. We want our students to be happy - not with a superficial happiness, but with the deeper fulfilment that comes from living life to the full and discovering what matters to them, and finding meaning in what they do.

This is part of what makes an Aga Khan Academy education so special. Inspired by the vision of His Late Highness the Aga Khan IV, we offer an education that goes far beyond the accepted definitions of what it means to be educated. Writing in the foreword to *Excellence in Education*, His Late Highness put it clearly,

...we must look beyond the world which is passing from sight and turn our eyes to the uncharted world of the future. We must rise above the antiquated approaches of earlier days and instead infuse our students with what I would call three “A’s” of modern learning – the spirit of anticipation, the spirit of adaptation and the spirit of adventure. This will happen best in learning environments which are both serious and focused on the one hand, but which are also joyous and inspiring places, operating on the cutting edge of pedagogy and knowledge. To create such environments will be the central mission of the Aga Khan Academies in the years ahead.

This is our hope for every child: not simply that they will be happy, but that they will develop reliable values and discover a sense of purpose. As the psychiatrist and author Viktor Frankl wrote, “Happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue.” Lasting happiness is not something we can chase; it comes from living a life filled with meaning and purpose. Our task, as parents and educators, is to help our children build the foundations for such a life.

Best wishes,

Jonathan Long

Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



WELCOMING DR RAHIM SOMANI TO THE ACADEMY

The Academy was delighted to welcome Dr Rahim Somani, General Manager of Aga Khan Schools, for a short visit to Hyderabad this week. The visit gave Dr Rahim an opportunity to experience the Academy at first hand and to engage with students and teachers. Dr Rahim toured the Academy, visited classrooms and observed teaching and learning across the school. He also met members of the Student Council over lunch, providing students with a valuable opportunity to share their experiences and perspectives, and to speak with him about life at the Academy. After school today, Dr Rahim addressed staff and reflected on the work and wider mission of Aga Khan Schools. Dr Rahim was appointed General Manager of Aga Khan Schools in October 2025 and is based in Geneva. He brings more than 25 years of senior leadership experience in education, finance, strategy, governance and institutional development across several countries. Before taking up his current position, he served as Vice President for Finance and Administration at the University of

Northern British Columbia and, previously, as the founding Chief Financial Officer of the University of Central Asia, where he contributed to the development of a multi-campus university operating across three countries. Dr Rahim holds a doctorate in Leadership and Innovation from Arizona State University and a master's degree in educational planning, economics and international development from University College London. His work reflects a deep commitment to ethical and inclusive leadership and to the mission of the Aga Khan Schools. We were grateful for the opportunity to welcome Dr Rahim, introduce him to our community and share something of the learning, relationships and sense of purpose that shape life at the Academy.



A MESSAGE FROM THE SENIOR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL CHRISTIAN SCHEMLZ

ManageBac training sessions for Senior School parents

Since school started, our Data Manager, Ms Veni, led 6 six online training sessions with parents and introduced parents to our main learning and student information system: ManageBac. ManageBac is accessed by students and gets extensively used by teachers for sharing learning resources, tasks, feedback on student work, grades or level, deadlines and announcements. Parents can use ManageBac as a web-based service or as a mobile app to receive information, communicate with

teachers or submit excusal notes.

Any parents who would like to request additional support with ManageBac are invited to reach out to Ms Veni through email: veni.veeramachaneni@agakhanacademies.org

Senior School Student Handbook

Last week, the Senior School Student Handbook was published electronically. The handbook provides guidance for students and parents on various aspects of day-to-day activities at the Academy, including phone use. This year, the Student Handbook was updated to reflect that not only mobile phones, but smartwatches and smart glasses may not be used during the school day. MYP and DP Students who need to communicate with their parents on their way to or from school may bring a device but need to keep that in their bags and out of sight during all school activities, i.e., lesson time, breaks and after-school activities.



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN ACTION

The Experiential Learning Programme is an integral part of student development at the Aga Khan Academy Hyderabad, enabling students to explore their interests, discover new talents and extend their learning beyond the classroom. Club enrolment has now been successfully completed. During the first session, students can choose from 37 clubs, including music, theatre, photography, app creation and film appreciation. A further 33 clubs will be offered in the second session, ranging from Philosophy and TED-Ed to Robotics, the Young Investors Society and Hack Club. Particularly encouraging is the inclusion of 16 student-initiated clubs. By designing and leading these activities, students develop confidence, responsibility, communication and collaboration, while contributing to the richness of our learning community. In this way, experiential learning brings the Academy's vision and mission to life. It nurtures curious, creative and reflective young people and provides authentic opportunities to practise ethical leadership, embrace different perspectives and make a positive contribution to their community—qualities central to our values of pluralism, leadership and service.



THE JUNIOR SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL SELECTION PROCESS BEGINS

During this week's Junior School Assembly, students were introduced to the Student Council selection process and encouraged to reflect on the importance of student leadership. Through interactive discussions, they explored the purpose of the Student Council, the qualities of an effective leader and the importance of voting based on values, leadership and a commitment to serving the school community rather than friendships. The assembly also outlined the selection process, which includes campaign speeches, student voting, and interviews. The session fostered

an understanding of democratic participation, responsibility and ethical leadership while inspiring many students to step forward as future leaders and make a positive contribution to the school community.



DISCOVERING A WORLD OF LEARNING

The Senior School Library came alive with activity as MYP 1-3 students participated in the Great Library Explorer Challenge—an interactive orientation programme designed to develop confident, curious and independent library users. For MYP 1 students, this was their first opportunity to explore the Senior School Library through engaging games and hands-on activities. From Dewey Detective and Fiction Adventure to Spot the Lie, the AI Quiz and the ever-popular Spin the Wheel, students enthusiastically discovered the library's different zones, learned about the Dewey Decimal Classification System and explored how fiction is organised. The activities also introduced important principles of information literacy and the responsible use of artificial intelligence. Through teamwork, inquiry and critical thinking, students began to see the library not simply as a collection of books, but as a vibrant space for discovery, reflection and the exchange of ideas. The challenge reflects the Academy's commitment to nurturing thoughtful, informed and ethical learners - young people who

approach knowledge with curiosity, evaluate information critically and remain open to the diverse perspectives that shape our world.



COMMUNITY CAFÉ RETURNS

The much-loved Community Café has returned for the new academic year, once again bringing the Academy's residential community together every Saturday afternoon. Introduced last year as part of the residential programme, it quickly became a cherished weekly tradition and was highlighted by students as one of the most valued features of residential life. With live food stations, music, refreshments and friendly games, the café offers students and staff a relaxed and welcoming space in which to connect, unwind and enjoy one another's company. For returning students, it provides an opportunity to renew friendships; for those newly joining the Academy, it offers a warm introduction to residential community life. In a diverse residential community, belonging is built not only through formal programmes, but also through the simple, repeated moments of sharing food, conversation and laughter. The Community Café creates space for these moments, nurturing wellbeing, strengthening relationships and helping students from different backgrounds feel at home together. In doing so, it reflects the Academy's commitment to pluralism and to creating a caring community in which every student feels known, valued and included.



A CONVERSATION ON URBAN MOBILITY

A reflection by DP student Sahas

My name is Sahas, and I am a student at the Aga Khan Academy Hyderabad. Recently, a group of DP1 and DP2 students attended a panel discussion at the Goethe-Zentrum Hyderabad exploring the challenge of traffic congestion in the city.

The event gave us a rare opportunity to engage directly with government representatives, community stakeholders and experts in urban transport. The panel included Jayesh Ranjan, IAS, Special Chief Secretary to the Government of Telangana; R. V. Karnan, IAS, Commissioner of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation; Prashanth Bachu, a public transport policy expert; and Chaitanya Kanuri, an expert in e-mobility and urban governance. The discussion was moderated by Natasha Ramarathnam.

The experience involved far more than simply listening to the speakers. We witnessed first-hand how government representatives respond to the needs and concerns of citizens and seek to understand different perspectives within the community.

I found the discussion particularly eye-opening because the panellists actively welcomed questions from young people. This gave us the opportunity to share our perspectives and develop a clearer understanding of the complex issues affecting our city. Overall, the event was a valuable experience that enabled us to connect our classroom learning with a significant real-world challenge facing Hyderabad.

THIS WEEK'S SPOTLIGHTS



FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE CONFERENCE

DP2 student Spoorthy Kandarapu presented her chemistry research at the Eco Sustain Conference 2026, held at HITEC, Hyderabad, on 30 July 2026. Her research paper, *"Facile Storage Approach for Preserving Nutritional Value of Ice Apple,"* was presented under the conference theme "Eco-Innovation and Sustainable Industrial Process Redesign". The study explores a sustainable and innovative storage approach aimed at preserving the nutritional value of ice apples, contributing to environmentally responsible food preservation practices. Presenting at this prestigious event enabled Spoorthy to share her research findings with a diverse audience, engage in meaningful discussions with experts from academia and industry, and gain valuable insights into the latest developments in sustainable science and innovation.



CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE

The Academy congratulates Shiv Tummula on winning the MECO Meritus Cup 2026 in the Mini category during the holidays. This remarkable achievement marks his second consecutive championship title, following last year's victory in the Micro category. Transitioning to the faster and more competitive Mini category, Shiv demonstrated exceptional determination, discipline and resilience. We are proud of his success and look forward to cheering him on as he continues to excel in both motorsport and academics.



CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

We are delighted to congratulate Mr Afzal Sorathiya, Head of Information Technology at Aga Khan Education Service, India, on receiving the CIO Accelerator X Award 2026 in the Education category. Presented by Enterprise IT World as part of the CIO500 and Accelerator X Awards, this recognition celebrates CIOs and technology leaders who have demonstrated excellence in digital transformation, innovation and organisational modernisation. Mr Afzal's award recognises his outstanding leadership and commitment to harnessing technology to strengthen education and organisational effectiveness. Technology has its greatest value when it enables better teaching, more connected learning and stronger systems of support. This achievement therefore reflects not only Mr Afzal's individual contribution, but also the wider culture of innovation, collaboration and continuous improvement fostered across Aga Khan Education Service, India. The Academy warmly congratulates Mr Afzal on this well-deserved recognition and significant professional milestone.



NEW STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Meet Ms Aishwarya Jatana

As part of our series introducing new members of staff joining the Academy this academic year, we are pleased to welcome Ms Aishwarya Jatana, who joins the Junior School as a Grade 1 Homeroom Teacher in the Primary Years Programme.

A third-generation educator, Ms Jatana brings a particularly varied professional journey to the classroom, with experience spanning business, entrepreneurship and education. She has taught in PYP settings at Pathways World School, the American School of Bombay and The International School Bangalore. She holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning, a Diploma in Education and an MBA in International Business and Marketing. Ms Jatana believes that learning should be joyful, purposeful and rooted in strong relationships. Her teaching draws upon concept-based inquiry, drama, literature and creative expression to encourage curiosity, collaboration and student agency. She is committed to recognising each child's individual strengths and creating opportunities for learners to take risks, shape their own ideas and grow in confidence. Inspired by the Academy's commitment to pluralism and inclusion, Ms Jatana looks forward to creating a classroom in which every child feels seen, valued and supported—and develops the curiosity,

compassion and confidence to contribute positively to the world around them.



Meet Ms Indulakshmi V G

In the second of this week's staff spotlights, we are pleased to introduce Ms Indulakshmi V G, who teaches Diploma Programme computer science and Middle Years Programme design in the Senior School.

Ms Indulakshmi brings 14 years of experience across IB and IGCSE education, including roles in Computer Science, STEM, Design and academic coordination. She holds master's degrees in computer science and information technology and is an IB DP Examiner, Cambridge Assessment Specialist and IBEC-certified educator. Her educational philosophy is rooted in inquiry, creativity and real-world problem-solving. She encourages students to move beyond simply acquiring technical knowledge to develop computational thinking, intellectual curiosity and the confidence to approach complex challenges. She is particularly interested in helping young people understand technology

not only as a practical tool, but also as a means of ethical innovation and positive social impact. This approach aligns closely with the Academy's mission to nurture reflective, creative and compassionate young people who are equipped to contribute meaningfully to a changing world.

“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



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