

from the desk of the
Head of Academy

7 March 2025



Dear Parents,

Imagine two raindrops falling to earth during a storm. Swirling around thousands of feet above the ground, the storm had carried them together for miles. With only a millimetre between them, it seemed they were falling as one. There was no doubt they would hit the ground at the same time and in exactly the same spot. But then - a tiny shift in the air and a whisper of wind nudged them apart. Now, a whole centimetre separated them.

The first drop landed on the western slope of Triple Divide Peak in Glacier National Park, Montana, USA. It rolled down the rock face and into a tiny stream. The water carried it downward, past alpine meadows and towering pine trees. Eventually, it joined the rushing Columbia River, winding its way toward the sea and on into the mighty Pacific Ocean.

The second drop landed only a centimetre away, on the eastern slope of Triple Divide Peak. It

tumbled down a crevice, joining a creek that fed into the Missouri River. It drifted through golden plains, past cities and into the mighty Mississippi River. Weeks later, it reached the vast Atlantic Ocean.

A small breath of wind had changed everything. One raindrop travelled west to become part of the Pacific, and the other travelled east to join the Atlantic.

As parents and educators, we play the role of that invisible wind. The words we choose, the small but meaningful moments we create in a child's life can nudge them toward very different destinations. A conversation at the dinner table, a book left on a bedside table, a patient response in a moment of frustration – these small influences may not seem significant, but they can shape the course of a child's journey.

At school, we see this every day. A teacher's encouragement in a difficult subject can turn struggle into passion. A moment of kindness can help a child feel like they belong. An opportunity to reflect on a mistake, rather than simply being punished for it, can change the way a student sees themselves and the world around them.

The renowned psychologist, Haim Ginott reminds us: *"The way we talk to our children becomes their inner voice."* The smallest interactions matter. The way we respond when a child is upset, the way we acknowledge their feelings, the way we correct their mistakes – these become the foundation of their self-perception. They determine whether they see the world as a place of opportunity or limitation, of compassion or judgment.

Parenting and education are full of these invisible moments – so small they are easy to overlook, but powerful enough to shape a child's future. Like those raindrops on Triple Divide Peak, even the tiniest nudge can lead to an entirely different ocean.

L. R. Knost, author of the book, "The Gentle Parent" once wrote:

Every day, in a hundred small ways, our children ask, 'Do you see me? Do you hear me? Do I matter?' Their behaviour often reflects our response. When we ignore their bids for connection, they learn that their voice is unheard. When we respond with frustration, they learn that their emotions are unwelcome. When we meet them with patience and understanding, they learn that they are valued. The little things we do—the way we listen, the way we speak, the way we show up - become the foundation of their sense of self. Childhood is built on these moments.

Parenting and teaching aren't shaped by grand gestures but by countless small interactions. Each moment of presence – whether pausing to answer a child's question or responding with patience instead of irritation – sends a message: I see you. You matter. These tiny nudges, like the breath of wind that alters the course of a raindrop, shape the trajectory of a child's emotional and psychological journey in ways we may not fully appreciate until years later.

.....Further up the mountain, a third drop landed just a centimetre to the north. Unlike the others, it did not flow toward the Pacific or the Atlantic. Instead, it trickled into a stream that led to the Saskatchewan River. And so began an extraordinary journey toward Hudson Bay. Incredibly,

this tiny raindrop would continue on northward until it reached the icy waters of the Arctic Ocean.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Long". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'J' and a long, sweeping 'L'.

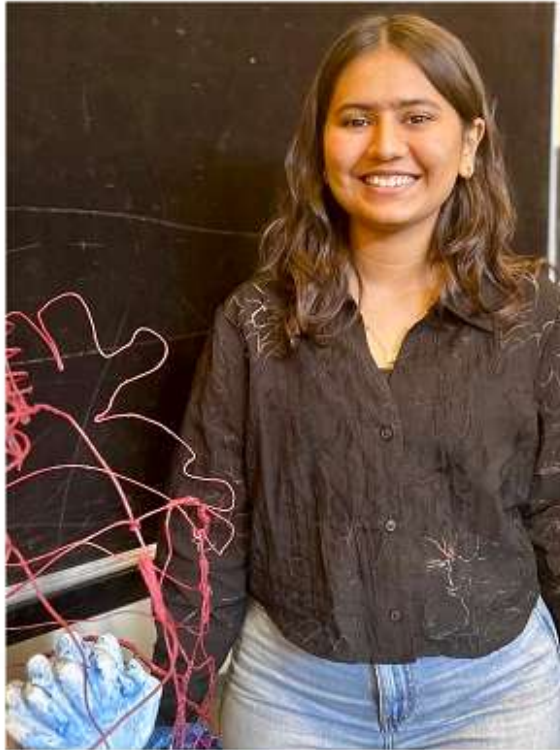
Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



STORYTELLING THROUGH ART

The DP 2 Art Exhibition is a pivotal moment in the IB Visual Arts programme, marking the culmination of a two-year journey of creative exploration. This exhibition is a testament to the students' ability to think critically, challenge perspectives, and communicate ideas through artistic expression. Yesterday, the IB DP 2 Art Exhibition was inaugurated with a captivating display of visual arts as students presented their work. This year's exhibition was an immersive experience expressed through 2D and 3D forms. With themes ranging from existentialism to explorations of female identity, human relationships, and the elemental forces of fire and water, each piece told a unique and compelling story. The variety of mediums - installations, clay sculptures, plasterwork, and acrylic paintings - added depth and dimension, engaging the audience in multiple ways. It was inspiring to see students push boundaries, redefining not only what art can be but also how we, as a community, experience and engage with it.





CAMPING FUN!

Last week, Grade 2 and 3 students went on an exciting adventure camp. While some Grade 2 students initially worried about missing their parents, the excitement quickly took over! The camp offered a range of engaging activities, but the unanimous favorites were the zip line and the rain dance. “The rain dance was a fun way of cooling down from the hot sun!” students exclaimed. For many, sleeping in tents with friends was a brand-new experience, marking their first step toward independence. Learning to be away from home, managing their belongings, and making decisions without parental guidance helped them grow in confidence and self-reliance. For Grade 3, this was their first adventure camp outside the Academy, a milestone they embraced with enthusiasm. Alongside Grade 2, they demonstrated courage and resilience, tackling a variety of adventurous challenges. These experiences are invaluable for young learners—not only do they foster teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability, but they also build a sense of responsibility and a love for the outdoors. What a fantastic foundation to build on for future camps and lifelong adventures!



WHERE NATURE MEETS INNOVATION!

The DP 1 Collaborative Science Project (CSP) visited the Akshayakalpa Organic Farm this week, a model of sustainable agriculture where innovation and environmental consciousness go hand in hand. Akshayakalpa represents a holistic approach to organic food production, integrating advanced technology with traditional farming wisdom to create a self-sustaining ecosystem.

Students explored the farm's circular economy, where every element serves a purpose in minimizing waste and maximizing efficiency. They witnessed the meticulous Farmyard Manure (FYM) preparation process, a key component in maintaining soil fertility, and explored the biogas production system, which converts organic waste into a valuable energy source. In the bustling cattle shed, they saw the automated milking process, a seamless blend of mechanization and traditional dairy practices. Students engaged in hands-on learning, collecting data for further experimentation and research. The experience concluded with a wholesome organic lunch, a direct product of the farm's sustainable practices!



LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

This week's Junior School assembly showcased the learning and growth experienced during our recent adventure camps! Our Grade 3 students took to the stage to share how their outdoor adventures connected to the core elements of the Primary Years Programme (PYP) and the Aga Khan Curricular Strands. The camp became a living laboratory where theoretical learning transformed into practical skills and valuable life lessons. Students actively implemented their knowledge in real-world scenarios. Students didn't just passively receive information; they actively engaged with it, transforming it into tangible skills and invaluable life lessons.



A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

For the past two weeks, the area outside the Arts Block has been transformed into a creative space where students engaged in Dhokra Casting, an ancient Indian metal art form. Two expert artists from a tribal village in Chhattisgarh introduced students to this 4,000-year-old lost-wax technique, guiding them through the entire process—from sculpting clay bases to casting bronze sculptures. This hands-on experience provided a deep appreciation for traditional craftsmanship, highlighting an art form at risk of fading. Beyond learning the technique, students gained insight into India's rich artistic heritage, reinforcing the importance of preserving and reviving indigenous traditions.



EXPLORING, LEARNING AND GIVING BACK

The Grade 4 students experienced a significant highlight in their educational journeys, as part of the Junior School Adventure Camps. These high-quality and enriching camping experiences were delivered by the experienced providers, Rocksport India, ensuring high standards of student engagement, safety and security and real-life learning. On the journey to La Forest, students stopped at Manneguda for a short interaction with Ms Kobita Das Kolli on the importance of protecting the Chevella Banyans. At the beautiful campsite, students spent two nights and participated in camp games, learnt survival skills like raft building and cooking a meal while on a trek through the forest. In addition, they visited a nearby UNESCO Heritage site where they picked litter to keep the place clean and pleasing to the eye. As part of their community service, they also volunteered their time at a nearby government school where they repainted their walls and blackboards. These experiences allowed students to develop their self-management and independence whilst being courageous adventurers.



BUILDING SKILLS, STRENGTH AND COMMUNITY

With its origins dating back to 1895, volleyball has grown into a globally celebrated sport, known for its fast-paced action and strategic gameplay. In India, the sport has gained significant popularity, with a strong presence in schools and national competitions. At the Academy, volleyball thrives as an integral part of student life through the Volleyball Club, offering a space for young athletes to enhance their agility, coordination, and endurance. Beyond the physical benefits, volleyball sharpens focus, strengthens teamwork, and builds confidence. It teaches students the importance of strategy, communication, and resilience - skills that extend far beyond the court. Volleyball at the Academy fosters a spirit of camaraderie and sportsmanship, bringing students together in a shared passion for the sport. .You can find a video about the club [here](#).



SHREEKAR AND AYAAN SHINE IN SDG DEBATE

Over the weekend, Shreekar and Ayaan (Grade 10H) took on a challenge at the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Debate held at T-Hub, finishing as 2nd runners-up. Competing against 64 teams, including experienced professionals, university graduates, and seasoned debaters, they demonstrated remarkable confidence, teamwork, and critical thinking. The debate focused on key global sustainability challenges, requiring participants to present well-researched arguments and think on their feet. Shreekar and Ayaan rose to the occasion, holding their own against tough competition and making a strong impression. Experiences like these sharpen students' analytical and public speaking skills, build confidence, and expose them to diverse perspectives, helping them grow as thoughtful, articulate global citizens. Congratulations to both of them on this fantastic accomplishment!

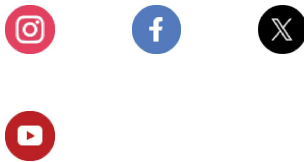


HONOURING SIR C. V. RAMAN AND THE SPIRIT OF SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY

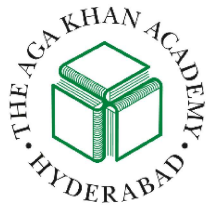
National Science Day, celebrated on 28th February each year, commemorates the groundbreaking discovery of the Raman Effect by Indian physicist Sir C. V. Raman on this day in 1928. His pioneering work in light scattering earned him the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930 - making him the first Indian scientist to receive this honour. His discovery laid the foundation for advancements in spectroscopy, which has since been widely used in various fields of physics, chemistry, and medicine. To honour his contributions and celebrate the spirit of scientific discovery, we held a special Science Day Assembly this week. Students actively engaged in experiments, demonstrations, and interactive sessions, exploring key scientific principles across physics, chemistry, and biology. The event encouraged curiosity, critical thinking, and hands-on learning—qualities that defined Sir C. V. Raman's legacy.

“One of the central precepts of the International Baccalaureate Programme is to honour world-class standards, while also respecting cultural diversity. In this respect, its approach mirrors that of the Aga Khan Academies – to help students combine a cosmopolitan spirit on the one hand, with a strong sense of cultural identity on the other.”

His Late Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV
Kampala, Uganda, 22 August 2007



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY
HYDERABAD



from the desk of the
Head of Academy

14 March 2025



Dear Parents,

Happy Holi greetings to those of you who are celebrating this special festival today. May a spirit of unity, renewal and happiness fill your hearts and homes!

We live in a time when everything is available on demand - whether it's entertainment, information, food, or even social interactions. We can watch entire TV series in a weekend, scroll endlessly on social media and have meals delivered to our doorstep with a simple tap on a smartphone. Life has become easier, faster and more convenient than ever before. Yet, research suggests that this convenience may come at a cost!

Our brains are wired to seek pleasure. When we experience something enjoyable, the brain releases a chemical called dopamine that gives us the feeling of reward and satisfaction. This is a good thing! But when we seek pleasurable experiences too frequently, our brain compensates by dampening our ability to feel pleasure at all.

Dr Anna Lembke, *Medical Director of Addiction Medicine* at Stanford University, explains in her book *Dopamine Nation* that our brain balances pleasure and pain like a seesaw. When pleasure is too frequent and excessive, our ability to feel joy diminishes. Whether it's video games, social media, or junk food, we need more and more stimulation just to feel the same level of enjoyment.

Unlike previous generations who had to wait for a favourite TV show or save up for a special treat, today's children have unlimited access to instant gratification. As Dr Lembke puts it, "*The smartphone is the modern-day hypodermic needle, delivering digital dopamine 24/7 for a wired generation.*" When pleasure is just a tap away, working toward a goal that requires long-term motivation can feel slow and uninviting. This is why many children today struggle with motivation and perseverance – if rewards are immediate, patience and sustained effort are much less appealing.

When the brain's reward system is out of balance, children can develop a dependence on quick dopamine hits. This makes it difficult to focus without constant stimulation. Studies show that excessive exposure to instant gratification not only reduces motivation but can also contribute to heightened anxiety, difficulty managing frustration and a reduced ability to cope with boredom. A well-regulated brain allows children to engage fully in life, build resilience, form strong relationships and experience deep satisfaction from their efforts.

There are things we can do to help children find this balance. One of the most important things is to allow them to experience more natural sources of dopamine. These sources come from real-world experiences rather than artificial stimulation. Here are a few examples:

- **Participate** in sports and outdoor activities. Nature-based activities like gardening (or working on the Academy's Organic Farm!) are excellent options. These activate the same reward system in the brain but in a way that builds resilience.
- **Practice** delayed gratification. For example, if your child wants a new gadget, encourage them to save up for it over time rather than buying it immediately. Learning an instrument or mastering a difficult puzzle also reinforces this skill.
- **Prioritise** human connection. Experts tell us that eye contact, laughter, and shared experiences release a chemical in the brain called oxytocin - a powerful hormone that develops trust, deepens relationships and brings lasting joy. It also reduces stress and enhances emotional well-being.

In a world of instant gratification, children need guidance to develop motivation, perseverance, and a healthy balance in their brain's reward system. As parents and teachers, our role is not to eliminate technology or deny pleasure, but to help them understand that true fulfilment doesn't come from the next quick dopamine hit. Instead, it is found in the richness of real-world challenges, meaningful learning and genuine human connection.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Long". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



BOOK OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

Two Book of Excellence awards were announced this week when Meher Patel from DP 2 and Farzam Fazelyar from DP 1 were honoured at a special Senior School Assembly. The Book of Excellence is the highest honour we grant to a student for exceptional work or service. The Book of Excellence records exceptional conduct in any aspect of school life. Students can be nominated by staff who feel that the work or contribution is so impressive that it deserves a very special recognition.

Meher Patel



Meher received the award for embodying His Highness the Aga Khan IV's vision through academic excellence, ethical leadership, diversity and service. As President of the Student Body and House Captain, Meher has fostered unity and respect within the school community. Her internship in Bangladesh led to the development of an affordable prosthetic arm, addressing a critical need for limb-loss victims in India. She has also championed women's health education through the Interact Club and used art exhibitions to raise awareness of humanitarian issues. Her commitment to sustainability through the "Reuse" initiative, aimed at reducing technological waste, reflects her environmental consciousness. Additionally, her contributions to the Admissions & Communications Internship Programme have supported key projects at the Academy. Meher's achievements exemplify the Academy's mission to nurture compassionate, responsible and innovative global citizens. Congratulations, Meher!

Farzam Fazelyar



We were also proud to honour Farzam with the Book of Excellence Award for his outstanding commitment to academic excellence, ethical leadership, pluralism and service – values at the heart of the Academy’s mission. As Secretary-General of AKAHMUN 2025, Farzam has demonstrated integrity, adaptability and resilience in guiding his peers. His work in the Admissions & Communications Internship Programme has significantly contributed to projects that amplify the Academy’s visions. His dedication to social justice shines through the Empower Her project, a finalist for the RISE Scholarship 2024, and his involvement with Dareecha and Teach for India, where he worked to empower marginalised communities through education. Beyond academics, Farzam’s leadership in football, including organising the Residential Football League and his contributions to music and dance highlight his holistic approach to learning and community well-being. Farzam’s achievements embody the Academy’s vision of nurturing principled, compassionate leaders. Congratulations, Farzam!



HIGH SPIRITS

In the days leading up to the March break, the Senior School celebrated the vibrancy of our community through Spirit Week. This joyful event expressed school spirit and unity, with students and staff enthusiastically participating in themed dress days – Cultural Day, Character Day, Twinning Day and Colour Day. Spirit Week reflected the Academy’s commitment to an inclusive, engaged and dynamic learning environment. As our Mission Statement puts it, “*The Academy will be a joyful community of lifelong, fearless learners who are culturally rooted and internationally minded.*”





SNOW WHITE AND THE BEAST

The annual Summer Production is an integral part of the residential experience at the Academy, offering students more than just a theatrical platform. It is a transformative journey of self-expression, collaboration, and artistic excellence. Beyond the stage, it fosters confidence, creativity, and personal growth, reinforcing the holistic learning environment that defines life at the Academy.

Last weekend, students took to the stage for Snow White and the Beast – a captivating fusion of classic fairy tales. Under the expert direction of Dr Chandrasekhar Indla, drama teacher and Head of Experiential Learning, this year's production enthralled the audience with its enchanting narrative, clever humour, and compelling storytelling. From stunning costumes to impeccable performances, the production was a testament to the talent, dedication, and collective spirit of our students. More than just a performance, it was a celebration of artistry, teamwork, and the vibrant creative energy that makes the Academy a special place to live and learn.



CELEBRATIONS OF LEARNING

This week, the Junior School celebrated International Maths Day with an engaging presentation of student learning. Designed to offer a unique perspective on mathematical exploration, the event brought together students from Grades 1 to 4, who presented their understanding across various strands of Mathematics in mixed-age groups. This interactive format allowed parents to gain insight into how mathematical concepts are introduced, developed and applied at different stages of learning. Meanwhile, Grade 5 students, currently preparing for the Primary Years Programme Exhibition, shared their learning journey and the progress they have made so far. Through thoughtful presentations and demonstrations, they highlighted their evolving understanding and problem-solving skills. The event celebrated students' mathematical growth and highlighted their transformation as confident, reflective learners.



A GLIMPSE INTO HYDERABAD'S HERITAGE

Grade 2 students recently had the honour of hosting Ms Lakshmi Devi Raj, a 92-year-old historian and daughter of the family doctor who served the 7th Nizam. Her personal connection to Hyderabad's past offered insights into the grandeur and traditions of the era. With vivid memories, she described visiting the Nizam's palace, the opulence of the royal court, and the warm generosity of the Nizam's family. She shared fascinating stories of Hyderabad's vibrant bazaars, traditional cuisine, and cultural gatherings. In an engaging Q&A session, Ms Raj emphasised the importance of preserving the city's rich heritage, leaving the students inspired by her heartfelt stories and unique perspective on history. Experiences like these bring history to life, allowing students to engage with the past in a meaningful and personal way. Direct interactions with storytellers and historians deepen understanding and encourage students to see learning as a living, evolving process rather than just facts in a textbook.



HAPPY HOLI!

Holi, the festival of colours, marks the arrival of spring and the end of winter. It symbolises renewal and the triumph of good over evil - themes deeply rooted in Hindu mythology. Holi is a time for togetherness and strengthening bonds as communities come together in a spirit of joyful celebration. Last weekend, residential students celebrated Holi and transformed the day into a jamboree of colour! Students and staff joined in the revelry, drenching each other in a riot of colours!



WORLD FRANCOPHONIE DAY

Observed globally, Francophonie Day highlights the linguistic and literary heritage of French-speaking communities and underscores the values of unity, diversity, and cultural exchange. On Monday, the French Department hosted a celebration of World Francophonie Day to honour the richness of the French language and the diverse cultures that embrace it. This was a chance to appreciate language as a powerful tool for communication and identity. Students recited French poems, sang songs, and performed dances representing Uganda, Congo, and Tanzania – revealing the global reach of the Francophone world.



PARENTING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

In an era where technology shapes every aspect of our children's lives, parenting requires a thoughtful and balanced approach. To support families in navigating this digital landscape, the Academy hosted a Parent Info Session on Parenting in the Digital Age, led by Ms Karishma Erraballi, founder of Soul Katha and a Conscious Parenting Coach. The session received an overwhelming response, with nearly 50 parents in attendance. Ms Erraballi facilitated meaningful discussions on the impact of technology on children's development, emphasising the importance of setting healthy boundaries, fostering digital literacy and modeling mindful technology use. The session reinforced the Academy's commitment to holistic learning and well-being, equipping parents with tools to support their children in making conscious and responsible digital choices.



RUN FOR A CAUSE

Junior School students from Grades 3 to 5, along with three other schools from the Hyderabad PYP Network, raised Rs 50,000 for charity by participating in a Cross-Country Run hosted by our Academy. The funds were used to purchase groceries in support of the NGO Sudheer Foundation. A brief assembly was held to mark the occasion, attended by our Head of Academy Dr Jonathan Long and Sudheer Foundation principal Ms Sunita. This event was a true celebration of authentic service, embodying the spirit of our school's vision.



EMPOWERING YOUNG READERS

The Senior School Library is transforming the way students engage with reading, turning books into gateways for exploration and lifelong learning. As part of this effort, a professional development session was held for the Aga Khan Boys Hostel staff, equipping them to create an inviting and purposeful library space for students. This initiative paves the way for the launch of the Inspire. Sustain. Reading Challenge, a specially curated programme for boys aged 11-17 that fosters critical thinking and a passion for knowledge. With a collection of books carefully chosen to align with themes of inspiration, perseverance and sustainability, the challenge offers students a deeper, more meaningful connection to reading. By nurturing a culture where stories spark ideas and books become tools for personal growth, the Academy reaffirms its commitment to holistic education and lifelong learning.



PARENT SURVEY 2025 – TAKEAWAYS AND NEXT STEPS

Thank you to all who participated in our Parent Survey 2025. Your feedback is invaluable as we strive to create the best possible experience for our students and families. The survey provided a helpful snapshot of what's working well at the Academy and where we can continue to improve.

What we're doing well:

We are delighted to see that the majority of parents trust the Academy's leadership (86%), are happy with their decision to enrol their child (81%), and would recommend the Academy to other families (75%). Parents also expressed strong appreciation for:

- Engaging teachers and advisors who go above and beyond for their students
- A safe and secure environment where children feel cared for (88%)
- Academic excellence, particularly in English (87%) and Mathematics (80%)
- Cultural inclusivity (87%), reinforcing our commitment to a diverse, welcoming community

We were especially encouraged by the thoughtful comments from parents, including:

"We appreciate how the Academy fosters not just academic growth, but also values, character, and confidence in our children."

"The teachers truly care. They don't just teach – they nurture, challenge, and inspire."

"The diversity at the Academy is a gift. Our children are learning to be global citizens in a community

that respects all cultures.”

Where we're committed to improving:

Your feedback has also highlighted key areas where we can do better:

Food Quality & Variety: Parents would like to see healthier, more diverse meal options that better reflect student preferences. We are working on enhancing student input in menu planning and improving food offerings.

Technology & Device Policies: While maintaining responsible screen time, we recognize that some parents feel that older students should have more access to technology for learning. We will review our policies to ensure they align with both educational needs and student well-being.

Parental Communication and Engagement: Some parents expressed a desire to be more informed about decisions affecting their children. We are exploring ways to improve transparency and keep parents better updated on school policies and developments.

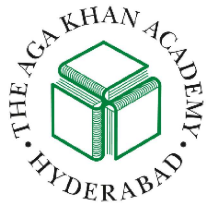
We appreciate these insights and will keep you informed about specific steps we take in response to your feedback. Thank you for being an engaged part of our Academy community.

“One of the central precepts of the International Baccalaureate Programme is to honour world-class standards, while also respecting cultural diversity. In this respect, its approach mirrors that of the Aga Khan Academies – to help students combine a cosmopolitan spirit on the one hand, with a strong sense of cultural identity on the other.”

His Late Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV
Kampala, Uganda, 22 August 2007



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY
HYDERABAD



from the desk of the
Head of Academy

28 March 2025



Dear Parents,

As the festival of Eid approaches, we extend our warmest wishes to all families in our community who are celebrating. We also send festive greetings to families celebrating Ugadi on Sunday! May this special time be filled with joy, reflection and togetherness. Please note that Monday, 31 March, will be a school holiday. Classes will resume on Tuesday, 1 April.

Over the years, I've had the privilege of meeting some remarkable people – individuals whose lives have quietly but profoundly shaped my thinking. One such person was my neighbour when I lived in Oxford in the 1990s. His name was Sir Roger Bannister. On 6 May 1954, he did something that people believed was physically impossible: he became the first person to run a mile in under four minutes. When he crossed the finish line in 3 minutes and 59.4 seconds, he didn't just set a new athletic record – he broke a psychological barrier. Remarkably, others broke the same record within weeks, a powerful reminder of how belief can unlock human potential.

After this historic achievement, Sir Roger chose not to pursue a professional sports career. Instead, he returned to his medical studies and went on to have a distinguished career as a neurologist and researcher. He became a leading figure in the study of the nervous system. He held senior academic and clinical positions, including Director of the National Hospital for Nervous Diseases in London and later as Master of Pembroke College at Oxford University.



I got to know Sir Roger well. He was in his seventies and working hard to stay fit after a recent hip replacement. To rebuild his strength, he had taken up cycling. At the time, I was competing in triathlons and would head out every Sunday for long training rides through the Oxfordshire countryside. One day, Sir Roger asked if he could join me – and so we rode together, week after week, our conversations covering everything from sport to education, medicine and science.

What has stayed with me most from those conversations wasn't the legend of the four-minute mile – it was Sir Roger's quiet wisdom about the barriers we build in our minds. For decades, experts believed the human body was simply not capable of running a mile in under four minutes. But once Roger Bannister did it, others followed within weeks. The limit wasn't physical, it was psychological.

The idea that our beliefs can shape and limit what we think is possible has great relevance for parents and educators. Limiting beliefs are quiet convictions we hold about ourselves or others: "*I'm just not good at maths,*" or "*She's the artistic one, I'm not creative,*" or "*If I don't succeed quickly, I'm a failure.*" These beliefs often go unspoken, but they shape how children learn and what they believe they can become.

As parents and educators, we play a powerful role in either reinforcing or dismantling these internal barriers. The labels we use, the way we respond to failure, the kinds of praise we give – all of these can either narrow a child's view of their potential or expand it. When we help young people see challenge as a normal part of growth and when we speak with faith in their potential, we help them rewrite the limits of what they believe is possible.

When a child says, “*I can’t do this*,” it’s tempting to jump in with reassurance or correction. But often the most helpful response is curiosity:

- “What part feels hardest right now?”
- “Let’s think about what helped last time.”
- “You’re finding this tough - and you’re still working at it. That’s real learning.”

Limiting beliefs can be unlearned. Children are wonderfully adaptable, especially when the adults around them provide the right kind of support. They take their cues from us - in how we handle setbacks, in the words we choose and in the expectations we hold. When we stay patient in the face of their frustration and when we frame mistakes as steps toward understanding, we help children build a mindset that is free of self-imposed limiting beliefs.

I remember Sir Roger telling me that his sub-four-minute mile was just one part of his life and that he most wanted to be remembered for his contributions to neuroscience. But the four-minute mile had taught him something profound – that limits are often not as fixed as they appear. And when that happens, the real learning can begin.

Sir Roger Bannister taught me that breakthroughs on the running track, like breakthroughs in life, begin with a breakthrough in the mind. We have the daily opportunity to nurture that shift in the young people around us – when we challenge limiting beliefs with curiosity and when we hold a steady faith in a child’s capacity to grow. The finish line is never fixed. And sometimes, the most important race we run is the one that teaches us we can go further than we ever imagined.

“Every morning in Africa a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must move faster than the lion or it will not survive. Every morning a lion wakes up and it knows it must move faster than the slowest gazelle or it will starve. It doesn’t matter if you are the lion or the gazelle, when the sun comes up, you better be moving!”
Sir Roger Bannister

Best wishes,

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

Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



DP 2 GETTING EXAM READY!

Our DP 2 students are only about four weeks away from the final, external IB Diploma exams. For the students and their teachers, this means that the focus needs to shift from the usual teaching and learning routines to intensive exam preparation. To enhance the students' experience during this crucial time, we have collapsed the timetable for DP 2 students and their teachers: instead of revising for 4 to 6 different subjects per day over rather short periods of time, students are working with teachers in a much more focused way that resembles workshops. Over a three-week period, students are spending two and a half days with teachers on revising their syllabus in each subject, practicing exam skills, answering past paper questions, and building their exam-readiness in an environment that creates the highest degree of focus and eliminates distractions. By introducing the DP 2 revision courses at the Senior School, we are adopting a revision model that has been used highly successfully in other Aga Khan schools and elsewhere in the world. The first revision course that followed this workshop-like format concluded today, and students and teachers reflected positively on the experience.



BACK TO SCHOOL

The Junior School students came back full of joy this week and got straight into their learning with enthusiasm! The classrooms were busy with conscientious workers, collaborating, sharing and supporting each other. Preparations for the swimming gala continued in PE lessons and the children were definitely enjoying the cool pool in the hot weather! A couple more months of exciting learning to go before we move on to the next academic year.



EXCHANGE PROGRAMME STUDENTS EXPLORE THE TAJ MAHAL

This weekend marks the conclusion of our latest student exchange programme – an initiative that allows Senior School students to study at another Aga Khan Academy. Living and learning alongside peers in a different country, our students deepen their understanding of other cultures, broaden their worldview and develop the adaptability needed for ethical leadership. Beyond the classroom, campus life plays a vital role in shaping these experiences, offering students the chance to learn and grow. During the March break, 22 exchange students from Mombasa and Maputo visited Delhi and the Taj Mahal in Agra. This unique cultural trip deepened their understanding of India's diverse cultural traditions.



U-18 FOOTBALL TEAM SHINES IN VARSITY LEAGUE

The Varsity Football League, which began in February, brought together 48 school teams from across the region in a highly competitive knockout phase. The Academy's U-18 boys' team made a commanding start, securing qualification to the league stage with resounding victories—5–0 against Suchitra Academy and 3–0 against Jhansi Academy. Now competing among the top 16 teams, our boys have continued their impressive run, winning all four league matches played so far. With strong performances in both attack and defence, the team has shown great discipline and tactical maturity on the field. With three crucial matches remaining in the league stage, the stakes are rising. The level of competition remains high, with several schools fielding well-drilled and ambitious sides. We're proud of the determination and spirit shown by our players and look forward to supporting them as they aim for a place in the final rounds of the tournament!



SPRING FESTIVALS

Grade 4 students presented an assembly on Spring Festivals celebrated around the world, linking their exploration to the transdisciplinary theme *How We Express Ourselves*. They connected their learning to the concept of communication, exploring how spring festivals are celebrated and expressed in diverse ways through various rituals and traditions. They recognised that through these cultural expressions, such as music, dance and art, people convey emotions, beliefs and shared values, strengthening their sense of identity and community. They reflected on how spring symbolises renewal and rejuvenation, offering a deeper understanding of life's impermanence and the importance of embracing it with gratitude and joy.



LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

Ram and Rukmini, siblings from Grades 2 and 4, respectively, recently teamed up to raise funds for the Cuddles Foundation — an Indian non-profit that provides holistic nutritional support to underprivileged children battling cancer. They organised a drawing event, creating beautiful artworks which they then sold to friends and family. Through this initiative, they not only displayed their artistic talents but also demonstrated the power of empathy and community action. Their efforts showcased a strong sense of leadership and made a tangible difference in the lives of other children, especially those facing difficult circumstances.

“Educating effective future leaders is a high responsibility. To do it well, 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.”*

His Highness the Aga Khan
Foundation stone-laying ceremony of the residential campus,
Aga Khan Academy Mombasa,
Kenya, 14 August 2007



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY
HYDERABAD
