

RISE 2025 MAGAZINE

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Raise STANDARDS
With RISE

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CONTENTS

- 04 PRINCIPALS MESSAGE
- 05 INTERVIEW
- 07 COMPETITIONS
- 09 SAT & AP BREAKDOWN
- 11 STUDYING IN KURDISTAN/ABROAD
- 15 CLUBS
- 17 CELEBRATIONS
- 19 TURKISH COMMUNITY
- 21 BOOK REVIEW

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Dear Students, Parents, and Esteemed Readers,

It brings me great joy to welcome you to this special edition of our school magazine—a vibrant reflection of the spirit, creativity, and commitment that define Rise International School.

As the principal, I am privileged to witness every day the enthusiasm of our students, the dedication of our teachers, and the support of our parents, all working together to create a nurturing environment where young minds grow into thoughtful, capable, and compassionate individuals. This magazine stands as a celebration of that journey.

At Rise, we believe education goes beyond textbooks and exams. It's about inspiring character, nurturing curiosity, and fostering a love for lifelong learning. Our classrooms are alive with critical thinking and collaboration, our halls echo with laughter and kindness, and our community is built on respect, diversity, and shared values.

This publication showcases student achievements, creative expressions, academic reflections, and a glimpse of the countless memories we create together. Whether it's a poem, an article, a photograph, or a class highlight, every contribution reflects the unique voices that make our school community so special.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to all the students and staff who worked tirelessly to bring this issue to life. Your talents and efforts remind us of what's possible when we dream big and work together. As you turn these pages, I hope you feel proud of our shared accomplishments and inspired by the bright future ahead.

With warm regards,
Fatih Elibol
Principal
Rise International School

INTERVIEW

Q Why did your parents pick Stirling schools out of all others?

A Because Stirling Schools take care of their students—in the way they act at school and outside of school. At Stirling Schools, religious values, life principles, and communication are prioritized above all. It's not just about education; it's about morals, and my parents cared deeply about that.

Q What's one of your favorite memories as a student?

A Being in the dormitory with all my friends and doing everything together.

Q If you could go back in time what would you do differently?

A I would go back and spend more time with the teachers and make more memories with my friends and teachers.

Q What's one piece of advice you want to personally give to all the students?

A One thing I always tell my students is to enjoy their high school life. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and nothing else is quite like it. I remind them not to be overcome by their mistakes but to learn and grow from them. I want them to look back at this time in their lives with fond memories.

Ms. Zina

Ms. Avin



INTERVIEW

Q When did you start attending Stirling Schools, and what made you choose it instead of other options?

A My first year as a student was in 2006, so 19 years ago. Technically, I didn't really choose it—this was the only option. The only private high school that taught in English back then was Ishik Boys School, so that's why I came here.

Q How would you say education has evolved since your time as a student compared to now, as a teacher?

A It's much more dependent on technology. When I was a student, very few things were online—not because they didn't exist, but because access to the internet in Kurdistan wasn't great. I remember being in grade seven when I first got internet for myself. In primary school, it just wasn't there.

I actually think it's harder for students now. We didn't have to practice as much self-control because the distractions simply weren't available. Now, students have every distraction at their fingertips, so they need much more discipline. Yes, access to information is easier, but that also makes it harder to stay focused and hardworking.

Q What's one piece of advice you want to personally give to all the students?

A Not during high school, but afterward: I didn't keep in touch. Out of fifty or sixty friends, I'm only still in contact with two. I wish I had stayed connected with more of them.



Mr. Harman



SCHOOL COMPETITION

Empowering Students Through Opportunity and Competition

At our school, we take pride in fostering an environment of equal opportunity, where every student is encouraged to explore their potential. From school-wide to nationwide competitions, such as the IBO and IMO, students are given platforms to showcase their talents and sharpen their skills. Signature events like Rise X, our annual Spelling Bee, and Stirling Talks not only promote academic excellence but also ignite student engagement, spark curiosity, and cultivate a spirit of healthy competition. These experiences play a vital role in enriching students' educational journeys and preparing them for success beyond the classroom.



▶▶▶ SPELLING BEE

THIS PAST DECEMBER, OUR SCHOOL PROUDLY HOSTED ITS EXCITING ANNUAL SPELLING BEE IN THE LIBRARY, GIVING STUDENTS A FUN AND COMPETITIVE WAY TO SHOW OFF THEIR ENGLISH SPELLING SKILLS AND EARN WELL-DESERVED RECOGNITION.



RISE X TALKS

This year, Rise hosted its annual take on the renowned 'TEDx Talks' in the school auditorium, where students took the stage to present powerful, thought-provoking topics—raising awareness and shedding light on global issues. The winners captivated the audience with compelling talks on Stoicism, Bioterrorism, and the potential dangers of AI technology.



- 1st Place: Rawa (9B) - Stoicism
- 2nd Place: Eman Sherzad & Viyar Farsa (11G) Bioterrorism
- 3rd Place: Inaya (9G) - The dangers of AI technology

STIRLING TALKS

In addition to RiseX, our school also takes part in a network-wide competition known as 'Stirling Talks,' held across all Nilufer and Ishik schools. Much like RiseX, any student can participate, but with the added excitement of advancing to compete against students from other campuses. This year's winners, Ranj Bukhari and Yousef Muzahim, impressed the judges with a captivating presentation



AP COURSEWORK & SAT BREAKDOWN

What is AP Coursework?

Advanced Placement (AP) & SAT Overview Preparing Students for University-Level Success

What is Advanced Placement (AP)?

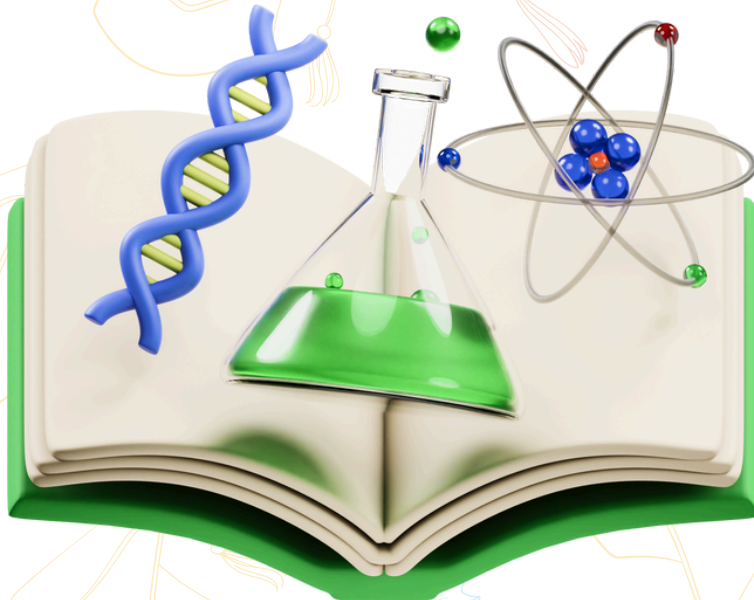
Advanced Placement refers to college-level classes offered in high school. These courses are more challenging than regular classes and allow students to earn college credit if they pass the AP exam at the end of the year. Taking AP classes can help students strengthen their college applications and prepare for university-level work.

Why is it important to take AP classes?

AP classes help you build essential academic skills and explore subjects related to your future career. They boost your GPA since AP courses are measured on a 5.0 scale, strengthen your college applications, and may make you eligible for certain scholarships. Taking a few AP classes shows colleges you're ready for a challenge and serious about your education.

What is AP coursework?

AP coursework refers to advanced, university-level study material that prepares students for AP exams. These classes require critical thinking, strong writing, and problem-solving skills.

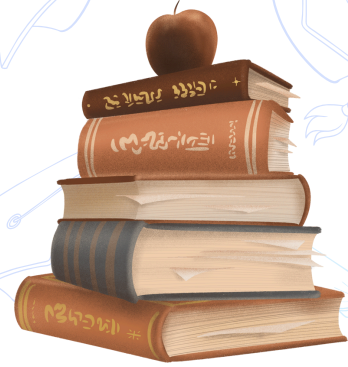


AP for International Students

As an international student, taking AP classes isn't required unless you plan to study abroad. However, choosing one or two AP courses can still be beneficial.

AP Courses Offered at Our School:

- AP Biology
- AP Physics
- AP History
- AP Psychology
- AP English Literature
- AP Calculus



Suggested AP Pathways

Medicine: AP Biology, AP Chemistry

Engineering: AP Physics, AP Calculus

Business / Law: AP History, AP English Literature

Tailoring AP choices to future goals helps students stand out and prepares them for university challenges.



SAT Breakdown

The SAT measures:

Reading & Writing – comprehension, grammar, analysis

Math – algebra, problem-solving, data analysis

AP coursework builds the academic foundation that naturally strengthens student performance on the SAT.



STUDYING ABROAD

Studying in the United States Choose Your University & Program



The U.S. has over 4,000 accredited colleges and universities, offering everything from liberal arts to tech and medicine. Popular options include:

- Ivy League (e.g. Harvard, Yale, Columbia – avg acceptance: 3.59% to 9.73%)
- State universities (e.g. UCLA, University of Michigan– avg acceptance: 40% to 80%)
- Private institutions (e.g. NYU, Stanford– avg acceptance: 4% to 90%)
- Community colleges (2-year programs; can transfer to 4-year universities– avg acceptance: 99%)



»» Understand the Requirements

Most U.S. universities ask for:

- High school diploma or equivalent
- Official transcripts (translated to English)
- Standardized tests:
 - SAT/ACT (undergraduate)
 - GRE/GMAT (graduate, depending on program)
- English proficiency test: TOEFL, IELTS
- Letters of recommendation (at least two and one from a school counselor)
- Personal statement or essay
- Resume (collection of your accomplishments)



Not required for international students but will strengthen your application:

Extracurriculars such as Sports, clubs, volunteering, debate, etc. Extra curriculars help admissions officers look past your grades and see your potential, seeing how you could help contribute to campus life. It can also help with scholarship programs, Ivy league applications etc.

Some universities are test-optional, (dont require SAT/ACT submission) but strong scores can improve your chances of receiving scholarships.

STUDYING IN KURDISTAN

Choose a University

Most or nearly all universities in Kurdistan accept international systems such as IGCSEs, American diplomas, IB, and APs. Top options include:

- University of Kurdistan Hewlêr (UKH) – British-style education; competitive admissions
- American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS) – U.S.-based system; SAT optional
- Tishk International University – Turkish-affiliated; offers English-medium programs
- Cihan University, Komar University, and others

Prepare Your Documents

- High school diploma or leaving certificate
- Final transcripts or predicted grades
- Proof of English proficiency (may be waived if your program is taught in English)
- Equivalency Letter from the Ministry of Education (only required in some cases)



Check Admission Requirements

- UKH may require a minimum GPA for competitive majors
- AUIS may request a placement test in English or math (SAT scores are optional)
- Most accept: IGCSEs, A-Levels, IB, SATs, or American diplomas

STUDYING IN BAGHDAD

A GOOD PLACE TO START



In Baghdad, the choice is between public and private universities. Public universities like the University of Baghdad, Al-Nahrain, and Al-Mustansiriyah usually follow Iraq's national curriculum and prioritize students who've completed the sixth-stage Baccalaureate. For international system students, getting into these public universities can be difficult unless you have an equivalency certificate from Iraq's Ministry of Education.

Private universities, however, are much more flexible and tend to accept international qualifications. Examples include Al-Rafidain University College, Al-Mansour University College, Al-Esraa, Al-Kindi, and the American University of Baghdad. These schools generally accept IGCSEs, A-Levels, the American diploma with SATs, IB, and AP courses.

To apply, you'll need a few documents: your passport or national ID, a translated and authenticated high school transcript, your graduation certificate, proof of English proficiency (depending on the major), and the equivalency certificate from the Ministry of Education. Getting the equivalency certificate involves a few steps: collecting your official transcripts, getting a letter confirming graduation from your school, getting everything authenticated by your school and Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and translating all documents into Arabic. You might also need a stamp from the Iraqi embassy in your country.

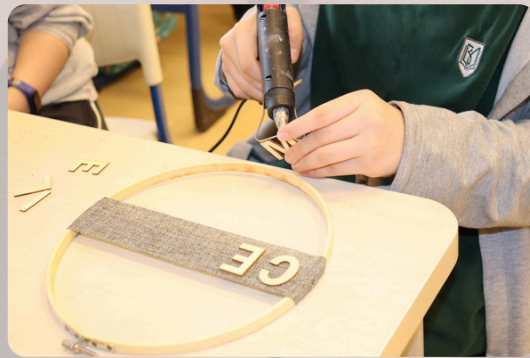
If you're applying for fields like medicine or engineering, be prepared to take additional placement exams.

In summary, understanding how your international qualifications fit into the local education system is important. With the right documents and preparation, studying in Kurdistan or Baghdad can offer you a solid education that's recognized internationally.

CLUBS

STUDENT CLUBS: DISCOVER YOUR PASSION

WE BELIEVE THAT STUDENTS SHOULD DEVELOP THEMSELVES THROUGH CLUB ACTIVITIES. THIS YEAR, WE EXPLORED A VARIETY OF CLUBS TO HELP STUDENTS DISCOVER THEIR TALENTS AND PASSIONS.



We believe that students should develop themselves through club activities. We held a meeting with all the teachers, including the Principal, to discuss this. In that meeting, we asked ourselves: What kinds of clubs can we create to encourage student participation and help them discover their hidden talents?

As a result, we came up with a wide range of options—from art to various sports clubs. I think we ended up listing about 27 different club names. Still, the number of students per club was important for proper placement. For example, some teachers said they couldn't run a club unless there were at least 8 students—like in the theater club. Each teacher had specific conditions for their club. In the DIY (handcraft) club, for instance, the teacher said, "I can't have more than 8 students. It should be between 4 and 8, because we'll be using serious materials like paints, and managing a larger group would be difficult."

We decided that clubs should last at least 6 weeks and could extend up to 10 weeks. Some clubs even continued for 12 weeks. Overall, this was an effort to help students grow and develop their skills in different areas.

»» CHARITY CLUB

THE HEART OF COMPASSION: RISE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL'S CHARITY CLUB

At Rise International School, the Charity Club continues to shine as a powerful example of real-world education. It serves as a natural classroom where students learn empathy, compassion, and the true meaning of giving. Active and impactful throughout the entire year, the club has offered our students unforgettable lessons through meaningful service.



One of this year's most touching activities was the visit to an elderly care home. Students spent time with the residents—listening to their stories, sharing moments of warmth, and distributing essential gifts such as clothes and daily necessities. For many of the elderly, it was a rare moment of joy and connection. Some individuals were too ill to join the group celebration, so our students visited them in their rooms, witnessing firsthand the difficult realities of aging and illness. This experience deeply moved our students and strengthened their desire to learn, serve, and grow with purpose.

Another powerful initiative was the visit to Nanakali Hospital in Erbil, where students met children courageously battling cancer. They brought thoughtful gifts, shared conversations, and created an atmosphere of care and comfort. Many students were emotionally touched, gaining a deeper understanding of compassion and the urgent need to support those who are suffering.

Earlier in the year, the Charity Club also organized memorable events such as inviting orphaned children to our school and taking them shopping for Eid at Family Mall—ensuring that they could celebrate with joy and dignity. These heartfelt moments created lasting memories for both the children and our students.

We are also deeply grateful for the continuous support of the Dilnawa organization. Their partnership, guidance, and assistance in preparing and delivering aid have been essential to the success of all these projects.

The Charity Club remains a source of pride for Rise International School. It is a space where students develop not only academically, but also emotionally and morally. Above all, it teaches them that true success lies in helping others and making the world a better place.

CELEBRATIONS

Kurdish Language and Culture Day is celebrated to honor and promote the Kurdish/other language, literature, and cultural heritage.

While not always officially recognized by governments, it has become increasingly observed by Kurdish communities and institutions across the world.



Arabic Day at our school is more than just a dress-up event—it's a lively dive into the heart of Arabic culture.

The halls come to life with the colors of traditional clothing, the aroma of homemade dishes, and tables filled with calligraphy, books, and artifacts that tell stories older than most textbooks. It's a day where history, language, and culture aren't just studied—they're experienced.



»» CULTURE FESTIVAL

RISE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL – CULTURE FESTIVAL 2025

Rise International School recently celebrated its annual Culture Festival, a vibrant event where each student selected a country to represent. Held outdoors with beautifully decorated booths, the festival brought together food, music, clothing, and traditions from around the world.



Students prepared traditional dishes, dressed in cultural attire, and presented historical and cultural facts about their chosen countries. The area was filled with colorful decorations, lively music, and the rich aromas of homemade food—creating an atmosphere full of energy and excitement.

Parents were invited to explore the different booths, tasting food and learning about various cultures. A panel of juries visited each display, listened to the students' presentations, and offered thoughtful feedback. Their presence added a sense of achievement and pride to the students' hard work.

The Culture Festival was not only a celebration, but also a meaningful learning experience. It allowed our school community to come together, appreciate global diversity, and enjoy a memorable day of cultural exchange and discovery.

TURKISH COMMUNITY



LIVING AWAY FROM HOME: A BITTERSWEET REALITY

We wanted a new perspective from one of our school's many Turkish students on the reality of living away from one's homeland—and the sacrifices made for greater gain.

“Right now, I live away from my home country. I’m in a place where there’s a strong Turkish community, and that definitely makes things easier. Living in a place with no Turkish people at all would be much harder. But even with many Turks around, being away from your homeland is still emotionally difficult. That’s something I find challenging.”

However, when you have a clear purpose or goal in life, you remind yourself that it's all worth it. You learn to be happy where you are. Even though life takes you far from home, your goals give you the strength to keep going.

LIVING ABROAD: FEWER DOWNSIDES, GREATER GAINS

Missing home, loved ones, and familiar places is one of the biggest challenges. The feeling of longing can be tough. Yet, the positives far outweigh the negatives.

Living abroad allows you to:

- Learn a new culture and pick up a new language
- Understand and work with students from diverse countries
- Collaborate with people from various backgrounds

All of these experiences help you grow—not just professionally, but personally. They also give you the confidence to feel comfortable almost anywhere in the world.

LIVING ABROAD: A BALANCE BETWEEN EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY

While living in another country comes with challenges, such as missing home, the rewards are invaluable. You gain cultural knowledge, study new languages, observe different student profiles, and interact with people from diverse backgrounds.

At our school, we've built strong friendships in a diverse environment, which helps us stay connected. Today, no matter where you are, being surrounded by people from different backgrounds is a part of life.

—Zeynep Balci



BEING PART OF A TURKISH COMMUNITY ABROAD: A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Living in a foreign country but still being part of a Turkish community is definitely a good thing for me.

But even better than that is being around people who are on the same wavelength as I am.

When we sit and talk, we often share similar ideas and interests. Since we are in the field of education, we usually talk about education-related topics. Having conversations on common subjects naturally makes people happy.

LIVING ABROAD: A MIX OF ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

Living in another country definitely brings both advantages and disadvantages.

One of the biggest advantages is getting to know different cultures and people. Also, working in a different country and in a different language helps me improve my language skills and grow professionally.

On the other hand, not knowing the local language well can sometimes be stressful. But thankfully, in the area where we live, this hasn't been a big problem. Since Turkish is commonly spoken here, it has made both my social life and work easier.

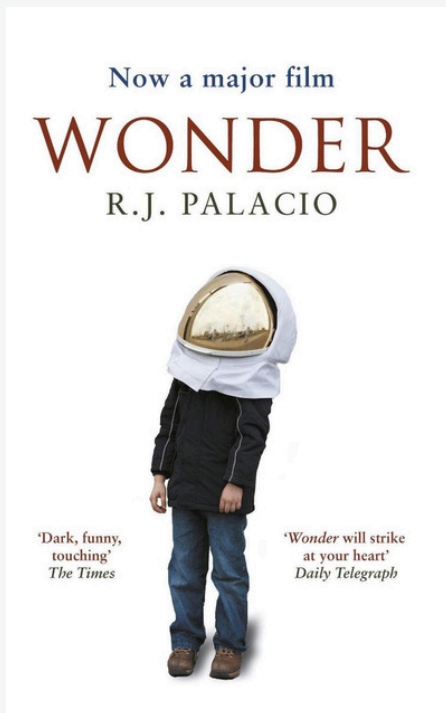
When it comes to family, this lifestyle also brings valuable opportunities for my child. I have an 8-year-old son, and I think the current environment is perfect for him.

He has Turkish friends he can speak his native language with, but he also has the chance to interact with local children and build friendships with them. I believe this mix supports his emotional and social development.

-Ahmet Çaykara

BOOK REVIEW

WONDER - R.J. PALACIO



If you've ever had a bad hair day and thought, "I can't show my face at school like this," meet August Pullman—a kid who literally can't hide his face, and yet somehow ends up being one of the coolest, kindest, and most unforgettable characters you'll ever read about.

Wonder by R.J. Palacio is the kind of book that hits you right in the feels—but in the best way. It tells the story of Auggie, a 10-year-old with a facial condition who's starting school for the first time. He's nervous (understandably), but he's also hilarious, smart, and shockingly good at not letting bullies ruin his vibe.

The genius part? The story isn't just told by Auggie. You get the perspective of his sister, his classmates, and even his friends—like a group chat of emotions and lessons about empathy. Everyone in the book is dealing with their own kind of "different," and somehow, it all comes together like a human version of a group project... that actually works.

As for how it all wraps up—no spoilers, but let's just say it sticks the landing. It's not over-the-top dramatic or unrealistically perfect, but it feels real. Like life actually got better because people made better choices. And honestly, that's pretty satisfying.

**EVERYONE IN THE
BOOK IS DEALING
WITH THEIR OWN
KIND OF
"DIFFERENT."**

if you like books that make you laugh, think, and accidentally become a better person—Wonder is the one. 10/10 would recommend, and 11/10 would totally be friends with Auggie.

MORE THAN JUST GRADES: HOW TO WIN AT SCHOOL AND STAY SANE

Let's face it—school can be intense. Whether it's keeping up with assignments, dealing with social pressure, or simply trying to figure out where you're headed in life, being a student today isn't easy. But there's more to success than just grades. Real success is about becoming a stronger, wiser, and more balanced person—in school and beyond. Here are some ways to help you stay focused, stay grounded, and actually enjoy the journey:



STAY ORGANIZED

Use a planner or a digital calendar to stay on top of deadlines, test dates, and responsibilities. Break big tasks into smaller ones so they don't feel overwhelming. A little structure goes a long way when you're juggling a lot.



STRENGTHENS YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH

Spiritual health isn't just about rituals—it's the foundation that strengthens your mind, your body, and your heart. When you stay connected to your purpose through worship, prayer, doing good deeds, and fulfilling your duties to Allah, you gain inner peace, strength, and consistency.

That spiritual grounding helps your mental health, too. Even reflecting on what you're learning in school—math, science, literature—can help you see the bigger picture: that everything has a purpose and is guiding you to a meaningful life.

Spiritual health is the foundation that strengthens your mind, your body, and your heart. It includes worship, prayer, doing good deeds, and fulfilling your duties to Allah—but it also connects deeply with your mental and physical well-being.



All of these work together, and when they are balanced, they give you clarity, strength, and consistency in life.

Spiritual strength supports your mental health by helping you see the bigger picture. Even school subjects like math, science, and literature can become more meaningful when you reflect on how they connect to a greater purpose and a deeper understanding of the world.

It also guides your physical health—encouraging you to live clean, protect your body, and avoid harmful habits like smoking and vaping. It's just as important to avoid spending time around those who use them, so your environment stays positive and your focus remains strong. A pure lifestyle feeds a focused mind and a strong heart.



HELP OTHERS AND WORK TOGETHER

Success isn't a solo mission. Helping your classmates, supporting your friends, or even just sharing a kind word can make a big difference. Teamwork builds connection, and connection builds strength. You grow more when you lift others as you go.



START WITH THE RIGHT INTENTION

Before anything else, ask yourself: Why am I doing this? When your goal is to learn, grow, and serve something greater than yourself, school becomes more than a task—it becomes a part of your purpose. With the right intention, even small efforts carry big rewards.



AVOID THE COMPARISON TRAP

Someone else's achievement isn't your failure. Everyone is on their own path, with different challenges and timelines. Focus on your own progress, no matter how small it feels. Your journey is valid and valuable.



CELEBRATE SMALL WINS

Got to class on time? Finished a tough assignment? Made it through a stressful day without giving up? That counts. Celebrate those moments. They build momentum, and they matter more than you think.

**"NOTHING WORTH
HAVING
COMES EASY."**

**But with clarity, faith,
and effort—it does
come.**

**OUR SCHOOL IS HERE TO
SUPPORT YOU EVERY
STEP OF THE WAY.
BUT WITH CLARITY, FAITH,
AND EFFORT—IT DOES
COME.**

Success isn't just about getting ahead. It's about becoming someone who stands firm in their values, supports others, and moves with purpose. And remember—our school is here to support you every step of the way. But with clarity, faith, and effort—it does come.

THE QUIET LEGACY OF MR. YUSUF

A tribute to service, sacrifice, and quiet dedication



It was a Monday morning, just like any other. The halls of the school buzzed with the usual rhythm—teachers preparing lessons, students rushing between classes, the gentle clatter of computers in the finance office. But that morning, the air felt a little heavier, the voices a little quieter. Word had reached the staffroom that Mr. Yusuf, the school’s soft-spoken accountant, had passed away suddenly in the night.

“The secret is sacrifice.”

He was not a teacher, nor did he stand before a class, but his presence had always been felt—steady, dependable, and kind. He was the man who ensured the school ran smoothly behind the scenes, greeting everyone with a warm smile even on his busiest days.

Mr. Yusuf came to Erbil from Turkey with his wife and two daughters. Together, they chose this city not only as a place to work, but as a place to serve. His wife taught in a nearby primary school, nurturing young minds with patience and care. One daughter walked these very halls as a student, while the other studied at a sister school. They were a family deeply rooted in education, service, and quiet purpose.

When Mr. Yusuf passed away, they had every reason to return home. But they didn't.

His wife remained, drying her tears each morning to stand in front of her classroom with courage. His daughters continued their studies with resilience beyond their years. And when it came time to lay him to rest, they chose not to take him back to Turkey. His grave now lies only a few kilometers from the school he helped sustain through his dedication—a silent testament to his loyalty.

People often ask what makes a school successful. Some say it is the curriculum. Others point to leadership. But those who know the story of Mr. Yusuf and his family understand a deeper truth.

It is found in the hearts that choose to stay when it would be easier to leave. It lives in families who plant roots in unfamiliar soil, in teachers who continue after loss, and in students who rise in the face of grief. The Yusuf family gave more than their time—they gave their lives to the mission of learning and teaching. Their story, though marked by sorrow, continues to light the way for everyone who walks through the school gates. Because behind every achievement, every graduation, every award, and every child who learns to dream bigger, there are people like Mr. Yusuf—people whose names may never appear in textbooks, but who will never be forgotten.

In memory of Mr. Yusuf
A quiet pillar of our school community