



North West Jerusalem, Palestine

Alqubaibah High Elementary Girls School

**Teaching students to treasure
water**



**WORLD'S
BEST SCHOOL**
Environmental
Action


accenture



**WORLD'S
BEST SCHOOL
PRIZES**

Table of Contents

02	—	Introduction
03	—	School Profile
04	—	Context and Challenge
07	—	Expertise and Approach
09	—	Outcomes and Results
10	—	Key Steps
16	—	Advice and Guidance



Introduction

After many years of displacement, Alqubaibah High Elementary Girls School established an "Environmental Science Club ". The club has brought together diverse members of the Al-Qubeiba community, with learners coming from multiple religious and cultural backgrounds. Many of the students' families have been displaced and found themselves living in an ecosystem very different to that of their upbringing. The school focused on making learners and the community environmentally aware, learning how to make a difference in a harmonious way. Learners planted ornamental trees, which require little water, and flowers to increase the green area around the school and surroundings, improving the local environment. They formed an environmental team which now helps to maintain the school garden and went on to create a science laboratory where students expand their knowledge of environmental sciences and plan projects to promote awareness and ecological protection. This was started by inviting a food processing specialist in cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture.



School Profile



Country:

Palestine



Region:

North West Jerusalem



School type:

Public school



Location area:

Semi-dense area



Student population:

201-300



Prize Category:

Environmental Action

“When we work with students, I take them outside the school and ask them about performing some actions that belong to the environment.”

**– Mervat Rayyan,
Teacher**



In-depth look

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE

Alqubaibah High Elementary Girls School, in the village of al-Qubeiba, Western Jerusalem in Palestine, is located on a mountain opposite the famous monastery of Emmaus. Members of the community come from multiple religious and cultural backgrounds, living in harmony and safe coexistence which is reflected by the diverse population of learners at the school. This gives way to an ethos of mutual respect and inclusivity which has now moved on to include their local ecologies. This way, students are allowed to live in safe coexistence exchanging religious and social occasions with each other.

The school was finally built after a long period of suffering for not having its own building where; students and staff were constantly moving between separate classrooms in several residential buildings around the community of Alqubaibah. It was built with funding from the European Union and German support, and it was delivered in the academic year 2018/2019.

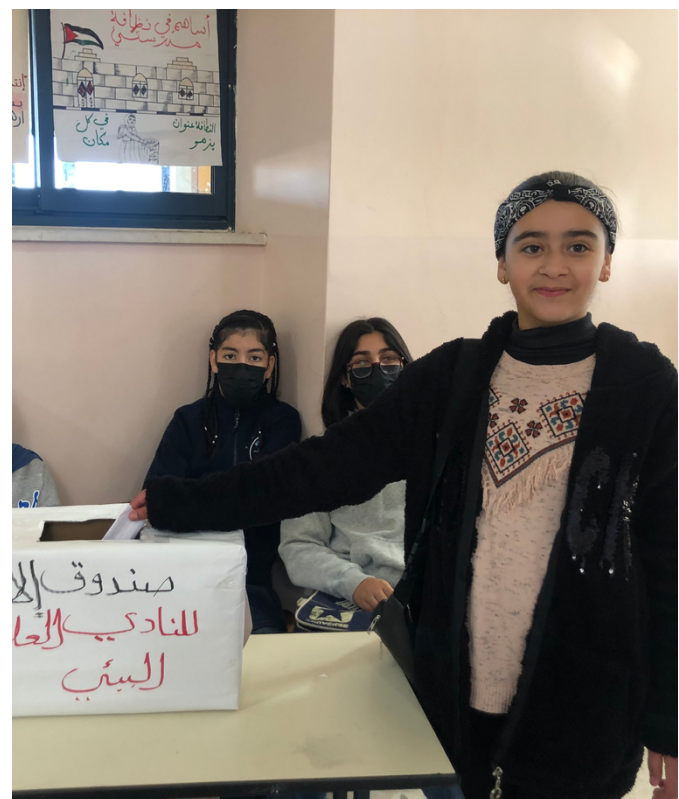
This school has many characteristics that qualify it to be a model school but has faced financial issues in recent times. They have strived to overcome this, aiming to become enablers of principles of sustainable development and envisioning a new way of teaching.

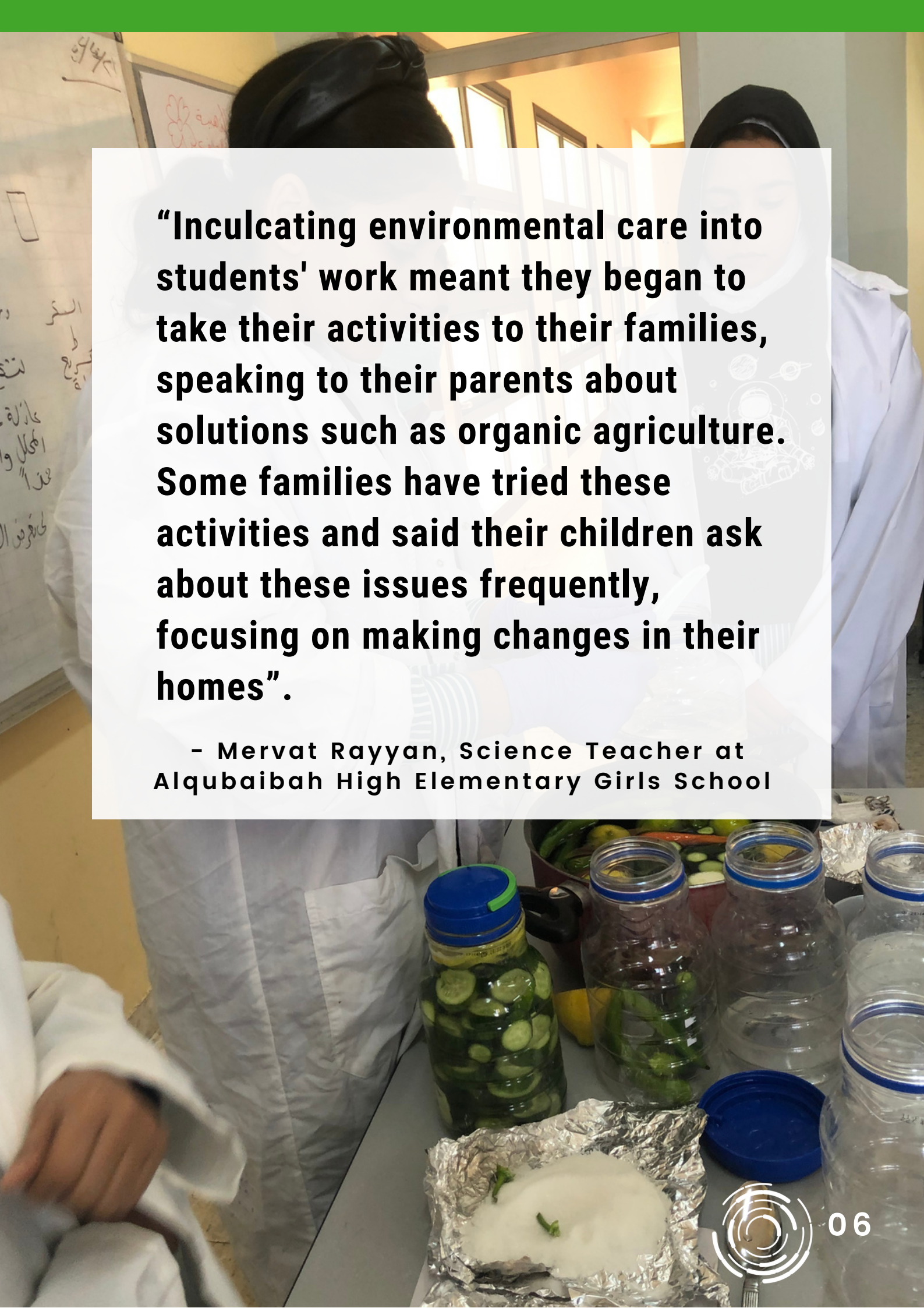


Science teacher, Mervat Rayyan joined the school in December 2021 and worked to establish an environmental science club to develop the school's commitment to sustainability. They managed to win the title of best environmental science club in the State of Palestine. Rayyan's 11 years of work in education and environmental studies have allowed the school's possibilities to advance rapidly. Rayyan introduced her 11 years of work in environmental education to the school – where she noticed this could bring forward many possibilities. Aside from this, her vision has also helped to address ecological issues which affect the school such as maintaining the numerous cesspits which populate the school yard, and reducing the safety risk posed to students.

The commitment made by learners and the community meant that the initially proposed timelines for their projects were reduced from months and years to weeks and days.

In order to spark interest, Rayyan began her mission by taking advantage of teachers' absences and getting students involved in the club projects. At this time, she mentions how she "spoke to students and explained why and how to establish a desire to protect and improve their local environment, linking problems to their real life. This sparked a deep interest in students, who went on to eagerly partake in the projects.



The background of the top half of the page shows a classroom setting. On the left, a whiteboard has some Arabic text written on it. In the center and right, there are students wearing white lab coats and black headscarves. A large white text box is overlaid on the center of the image.

“Inculcating environmental care into students' work meant they began to take their activities to their families, speaking to their parents about solutions such as organic agriculture. Some families have tried these activities and said their children ask about these issues frequently, focusing on making changes in their homes”.

- Mervat Rayyan, Science Teacher at Alqubaibah High Elementary Girls School

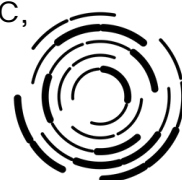


EXPERTISE AND APPROACH

The environmental science club was established via democratic elections which were designed over two months before launching the club. Elections now happen on an annual basis. Students on the club's committee were assigned objectives, creating projects based on the principles and activities carried out by Greenpeace. These sources were of great value to the school, which lacked access to local research. The club members negotiate the aims they seek to achieve every month, providing feedback for the activities to get the best results.

The school currently keeps a record of all the projects, to revise and improve them where possible. They began by recycling water to irrigate the school garden and promoting the concept of rationalising water consumption through educational meetings, and cooperation with specialised institutions, strengthening this through signboards and graphics that reinforce environmentally friendly behaviour. Implementation activities were further promoted through school radio, documenting, and disseminating their progress through social media. Their initiatives focused on food shortages, as well as water problems and pollution, all of which are regular issues faced by the community daily.

The school learned from other communities' new ways of solving issues around access to and preservation of clean water and later turned to learn about energy resources that are friendly toward the environment. With the research Rayyan and staff members conducted, learners began planting trees to create greener spaces and hopefully a forest and; an entire ecosystem. They also created spaces for bees at risk of extinction and decreased their use of chemicals in the production of food. This meant a deep focus on ecological agriculture and the production of richer, more organic, and healthier crops and fruits.



Students began using and recycling the school's gardening waste, creating agricultural terraces by burying garden waste and producing compost, biogas and liquid organic fertilizer through students' implementation of these activities. These took careful research, and communication through presentations and discussions which enhanced the spirit of cooperation and teamwork and provided students with concepts around good citizenship and skills suited to the issues faced in the twenty-first century.

In addition to cooperating with the local community by presenting these experiences and encouraging people to apply them, the school promoted the concept of food manufacturing and food security. They invited students' mothers and cooperated with institutions such as the Ministry of Agriculture and the Palestinian Environmental Quality Authority to achieve the principles of sustainable development in Palestinian society.

This provided students with environmental knowledge and further informed them of the environmental problems that surround them. The environmental science club's leadership structure is also made in the hopes that students learn how to collaborate and work together, maximising their strength and agency. As aforementioned, they currently focus on the concept of food security and the sovereignty of food production. Students were taught other environmental skills such as biogas production and the promotion of the concept of reducing pollution, preserving the environment, energy production, recycling, and producing compost and liquid organic fertiliser through the recycling of organic waste. The school participated in the competition for the best environmental science club at a national level and got a first place after the activities were evaluated by the Palestinian Environmental Quality Authorities.



OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

The school has established an environmental science class in order to be used by students and teachers to apply many environmental activities as well as enrich the curriculum. This space has encouraged students to acquire skills, like cooperative work and knowledge of sustainable development aspects. Also, the whole school started to know more about their context and the effects each of the actions on the environment, so cooperative environmental activities inside and outside the school including the whole community started to take place. These activities and initiatives helped students build their personalities and work on leadership skills. For example, preserving vegetation cover and various natural bee productions, and implementing practical activities that included the process of manufacturing caps and ointments from bee products.

Also, environmental paths to visit the wastewater treatment, organic environmental farms, a compost production factory and a hydroponics farm.

Activating the role of community schools through educational activities targeting students and their families was beneficial for all. The whole school was encouraged to participate in practical experiences that included recycling, beautifying the environment, ecological organic farming, and students' acquisition of agricultural skills through the small farm project and the production of foodstuffs that enhanced students'. This was very effective because teachers and students could raise awareness through their social media channels.

Key Steps



CREATING A HOME BASE

Before the establishment of the environmental science club, the school worked on the school environment. A meeting was held with the school administration and the school's teacher community to discuss the school's need to activate its social and environmental role, provide students with skills which help to tackle environmental changes, and ways to develop students' abilities. Based on this meeting, recommendations were identified, the most important of them being: the initiation of an environmental science club at the school, designed through an exemplary democratic model. This was taken forward by creating an electoral campaign run by students wishing to join the Environmental Science Club. These students would explain their desires for the club and the environmental projects they wish to put forward. They did this by promoting their candidacy through advertisements and running the electoral programme by students on the school radio and during breaks. The school set up a day for voting for the candidates and forming a team of observers and a team for counting the votes and announcing the results.



Implementing the election meant going through the voting and counting process, documenting all events, and publishing them through social media. The school then announced the results, sorting out the names that got the highest votes from the students, documenting their names and displaying them on boards in the school and in front of all the students. This formed the initial Environmental Science Club team, including the club's president, the vice president, and a committee.



ESTABLISHING FOUNDATIONS

The club committee and staff met to clarify the foundational pillars of the Environmental Scientific Club, the basics of the club's work, which fieldwork to focus on, and the topics that the club's activities should cover. They also discussed the importance of the club at local, national, and global levels, and how necessary it is to reach all three. This led to a procedural plan that today includes the main and subsidiary objectives of the club, the procedures to be implemented, the time period that the plan will cover, the necessary budget, and the tools necessary to activate the club's role. The topic of designing a logo representing the environmental science club in the school was discussed.



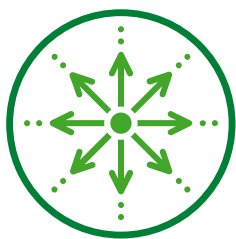
Agreeing on the logo that represents the scientific club in the school. Design an appropriate uniform that matches the role of the Environmental Science Club, the necessary budget, and the supporting bodies. A special meeting was held in the Environmental Department, where the students and club members swore that they would make every effort to take care of the environment, preserve and keep it out of harm's way.



ACTION AT SCHOOL

The third step was taken by beginning to actively work on the school environment. This started with a school garden and a playground. Upon working on the school environment, students were taught about issues around food shortage, and water, soil, and air pollution, which brought forward a new project, a small farming project where students prepared agricultural basins representing ecological organic agriculture. This was integrated into the garden by creating organic waste, replacing conventional chemicals to keep crops fertilised. Students also learned how to plant seedlings, watching out for water consumption while irrigating the school garden. This is followed by documenting activities and events through photography, circulating, and publishing them through social media. Thus, keeping photos and documents within an Environmental Science Club file.





EXPANDING ON PROJECTS

The next step included implementing agricultural activities, and planting ornamental trees with low water consumption and flowers to increase the green area in the school and improve the school environment. Next, students focused on recycling and painting car tires, using the items they recycled and produced in agricultural activities and making these more aesthetically pleasing in the process. Learners drew guiding panels to reduce water and energy consumption. Once again, these were documented through pictures and displayed on the school board for everyone to witness and want to partake in.



INTRODUCING SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

The school had already learnt that sparking interest and raising environmental awareness in students had been a key to their success thus far. So, they invited local community institutions such as the Water and Sanitation Department to educate students about the importance of water, ways to conserve it, and ways to rationalise water consumption. They also learnt about bees and the role that bees play in the continuity of food production for humans.



Moreover, students learnt of the impact of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, understanding better their harmful effects on humans, the environment, and animals. This led to the creation of a scientific laboratory in the school by inviting a food processing specialist in cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, where activities were implemented in cooperation with the local community. Students learned about the production and manufacture of food without the use of preservatives, the production of creams and cosmetics using natural materials such as beeswax and the production of ointment for burns and ointment for the skin from beeswax products.



COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY

An invitation was sent to the mothers of the students to partake and bring forward ideas. The purpose was to begin serving the community and involve families in this process. The collaboration of students and community members led to the implementation of ecological paths to familiarise students with the elements of nature. Students also visited environmental institutions and associations working on the recycling of organic waste and the production of compost, in addition to visiting ecological organic and hydroponics farms.



The school continues to communicate all their projects, seeking collaboration and community work where possible. This includes regularly sharing their projects on the school radio, making drawings and paintings, implementing environmental activities such as cleanliness campaigns for the school on World Cleanliness Day, planting forest trees in the school's vicinity, in addition to activating World Water Day through plays, performances and songs on the school's radio, making billboards and flyers and distributing them to students and families of students. They seek to continue expanding on their projects beyond the school grounds and towards the whole of Palestine.




Advice and Guidance

Rayyan mentions how the school deeply values respect, and cooperation and gives people, especially learners, a chance to work on things they are passionate about and share this with the world. The school believes this is the most valuable skill we can instil in children who seek to create a different, more ecological future. They mention inclusivity within this, ensuring students who suffer from learning disabilities are included in the process of designing and implementing projects. Rayyan's experience, passion, and dedication are perhaps the most valuable example to follow, despite all the hardships faced regularly by the community, the school and locals have managed to find innovative ways of turning things around and live in a safer, healthier, more abundant environment.



More information

 <https://www.forumpalestine.com/search/schoolalaqbibh.forumpalestine.com>

 Al Qubaibah

