

Introducing Malaysia's Kindest School

SMK Sanzac has come a long way from its 'notorious' days thanks to its headmistress and teachers.



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THE idea and drive started growing over SMK Sanzac students' volunteer activities and initiatives that inspired the celebration of the #StandTogether Malaysia project competition. From their beautiful and sustainable entry had feature on earth's LGBTQ entries to be named "Malaysia's Kindest School".

But it also marked a significant milestone in the school's journey. Just a few years ago, it was notorious in labels for being a "bullying" school, and headmistress (Dr Sharyn Iry) "When I first joined the school four years ago, children came to school with unhealed faces, they would just sit silently before enough to speak on stage, and we had to monitor battles and naughty kids," she said.

Despite setbacks with the school culture and brand, "We are actually doing things — beginning with our teachers."

"It was a big task," she said. "I had to ask my teachers to change how they approached the situation — to walk into an event and see us to look for solutions — and I'm very happy that they took up the challenge."

"We also initiated, I remember when we set back then and started to shift what we see in our school and I gave them," said Iry.

"With this new emphasis on love and compassion, the wheels of change started turning."

It's an emphasis to how far the school has come that students' courage are some new ways, classes, and sports.

The school had implemented various kindness projects during the #StandTogether Malaysia project competition. On the first week of April.

Over 100 schools had voluntarily registered on the #StandTogether website to participate.

In response students to take the lead during National Kindness Week, a competition was held for students to prepare "Kindness project" ideas. The top 30 ideas would receive RM1,000 in green funding, and SMK Sanzac was one of the winners.

One of their projects was a Speaker's Corner during events, where students could share out of kindness they had performed over the past week.

"The response was wonderful," said Iry. "Everyone was eager to hear what acts of kindness their schoolmates had done."

As a result of their #StandTogether campaign, the school had a significant improvement last week — and again, the students' own positivity and values drove it.

"Days when someone made a mistake in forgetting their books, or when students would show disrespect at times, I want to tell everybody



SMK Sanzac, Sabah, was crowned Malaysia's Kindest School at the #StandTogether Carnival on April 15, beating out over 100 entries from across the country. From left: SMK representative to Malaysia Malaysia Club Malaysia, Setia Foundation chairman Tan Sri Dr Alan Mohd Zahid, DG's principal of International and secondary Philip Ling, Star Media Group group managing director Dana Devi Wong Chuan Hui, Setia, Sanyo Lim and co-founder advisor Kati Yee. — @JAMM MANDOR The Star



The Speaker's Corner project encourages students to both speak up about, and be inspired by, acts of kindness that they and their fellow students have carried out. — Photo: Harshad



SMK Sanzac's projects seen because of their long-lasting effects. Among them is this kindness mural, which all great students carry day as they walk into school, encouraging them to be — and stay — kind.

about this because I'm so proud," she said with a slight smile on her face. "Sometimes I cry when I think about how they've come to be."

While celebrating on the site, the students also made sure to spread the positivity further through a short film competition. An 11:00, the entries were uploaded on the school's social media accounts.

"Despite all the hard work the students put in, winning the competition was far from their mind."

"We didn't participate for the prize," said Harshad. "Of course, we're so happy that we've brought glory to our school, but for us it was not the students also want to be kinder, better people."

Harshad also noted the huge improvement in the culture among her schoolmates, thanks in part to the #StandTogether campaign.

"I can see that everyone is kinder now," she said. "It shows in the little things. They say 'Thank you' to a cleaner, a staff, make a conscious effort to say nice things to each other, and if they see someone else being mean, everybody comes up to say 'Hey, don't do that!'"

"This is exactly the sort of change we saw last year. Last year had helped to see where the first became teacher advice for the school's #StandTogether Malaysia project.

"As teachers, we can't just focus on academics," she said. "We should be doing our part to develop our students' character and instill good moral values. That's why our team created these projects, sustainable projects we want to ensure that development of students happens beyond our year group."

"The school board also aims to keep the momentum of kindness," an administrator said to Iry.

Over 300 students and teachers will be participating in the (National International) Month, co-organised by the National Learning Club and United Malaysia, where they plan to spread a little on kindness projects.

"The school is also in the midst of preparing a series of presentations on part of its plans to spread word on National Kindness Week throughout schools in Sabah.

"We're going to do an outdoor presentation to pass on an important message," said Iry. "Many students come from underprivileged families and need a little about kindness and its positive impact."

"We will start with our teacher

