

Information for Academic Year 2019-2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As we are moving towards the end of this academic year, I wanted to take this opportunity to share with you a number of important pieces of information in preparation for August.

Following on from our successful accreditation to the Council of International Schools (CIS), we have been working tirelessly to implement the recommendations contained within the report which will further strengthen teaching and learning across the school. In addition, and as part of the post-accreditation process, all schools are expected to present interim reports to CIS and our first one is due by March 2020.

Much of our on-going review and subsequent development happens 'behind the scenes' and our students (and parents) often only see the final product. Over the last two years, we have considered and reviewed many aspects of our operation, which ranges from health and safety on campus, through to academic methods of assessment. Given below is a summary of some of these developments:

Campus Development. As I am sure you will have noticed, there has been considerable refurbishment, expansion and modernisation of the campus over the last three years. These improvements are part of a wider school development plan and are aimed at ensuring our students have access to the best possible facilities to enhance their learning experiences. The number of projects that have either been completed, are in progress, or are planned for the future are far too many to list in their entirety, but given below are some of the major ones:

The School Mosque - A new mosque is planned that will have an increased capacity.

Classroom Upgrades – The renovation and modernisation of the classrooms began in 2015 and continues to date. More upgrades are planned for this summer.

The Cafeteria - The original cafeteria was built when the school was much smaller and had fewer students. In addition to providing an exciting new environment, it will also allow us to revise and enhance other areas, such as the primary and secondary timetables.

The Running Track - Our new Olympic standard 400m track was completed in January and is undoubtedly one of the best in the region.

The Swimming Pool - By the beginning of the next school year, the pool will be completely covered, which means we will be able to use this facility throughout the year.

The Scholar's Boarding House - The new boarding house will be ready for our scholars in August and will give them a world class environment in which to live and work.

A STEAM Centre – This is our latest (and largest) project to date. Although it is still very much in the planning stages, we are working with a team of international architects to design an integrated

Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics Centre. Once complete, it will not only allow us to enhance the curriculum we have, but will give us the opportunity to introduce new subjects such as Design and Technology.

Educational infrastructure. Another development that has been taking place 'behind the scenes' is the planned introduction of a virtual learning environment (VLE) for our secondary students. Throughout last school year, we reviewed a number of different VLE and eventually decided to work with a company called Firefly. To help you understand how the VLE will work, once it is introduced next year, given below is some information taken from the Firefly website:

Firefly brings together what teachers need, from timetable, lesson plans and resource, through to homework setting, tools for marking and ways to track progress. Teacher develop a one-to-one personal learning conversation with each of their students.

Firefly empowers students to work in their own way and at their own pace, with all the resources they need wherever or whenever they want them.

Firefly keeps parents up to date with their child's progress and enable teachers to provide parents with the resources they need to support learning outside of the classroom.

Teacher Retention and Recruitment. I recently read a piece of educational research that suggested that the recruitment of quality teachers is one of the most important jobs a Principal will do during the school year. In schools like ours, the average turnover of staff is normally in the region of 20%-25%. However, I am pleased to report that over the last three years our turnover has been considerably less than this. With the continued growth of international schools (Dubai now has more international schools than any other city in the world) and the subsequent demands for an international education, there is little doubt that the recruitment (and retention) of quality teachers will be a priority for the school in the coming years.

As I am sure you will appreciate all these developments come at a cost. Over the last three years, we have been able to fund many of these projects through prudent budgeting over an extended period. Nevertheless, we have seen our expenses continue to rise in many areas.

Although, the school is acutely aware that any increase in the school fees will have an impact on our community, it was decided that we do not wish to lose momentum with regards to these developments, and so in October we made a request to the Ministry of Education to raise the school fees from the beginning of the next school year.

This request was approved on April 15th and as a result, there will be an increase of 7% in Kindergarten (KG) fees and 5% for Years 1 to 13 for next school year.

Should you wish to know more about any of the developments mentioned above or the school's finances, please do not hesitate to contact the Director of Finance and Administration.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Glenn Canterford
Principal