

# SJI International to open primary section

Starting next month, it will take in 200 boys and girls, all foreigners, and serve as feeder school for secondary section

BY JANE NG

SJI International, the privately run arm of popular boys' school St Joseph's Institution (SJI), will open a primary section next month, creating a feeder school for its secondary section.

The year-old co-educational school in Thomson Road now has a mix of Singaporeans and foreigners enrolled in its high school through to pre-university levels.

When its primary section opens, it will have places for 200 boys and girls, but all of them will be foreigners.

The school has applied to the Ministry of Education (MOE) to take in Singaporeans as well, but MOE regulations require Singaporeans below 12 to attend mainstream primary schools to build up a shared experience.

The school has yet to market itself but already has 15 pupils signed up.

It will offer the International Primary Curriculum, which has an emphasis on language, arts and mathematics.

SJI International is one of three privately funded schools under MOE and the first to offer primary-level education.

The other two are Hwa Chong International and Anglo-Chinese School International. All three now offer seamless six-year post-primary and pre-university programmes.

They come under MOE purview but do not get funding from it.

Principal Andrew Bennett said he hoped that the setting up of a primary section would bring more students into SJI International, which now has 350 students.

He added that parents have indicated that they liked the convenience of "one-stop education", with all their children attending the same school.

It will also give the school a sense of family, said Mr Bennett, who used to head United World College Southeast Asia (UWCSEA).

"At UWCSEA, the community became much richer in many ways when primary education was introduced," he said, adding that more teaching ideas blossomed as a result of the jump in the number of teaching staff.

School fees at the primary section will be \$17,000 a year, with an additional \$1,000 to be paid towards the school's building levy every year.

The fees are slightly lower than those at the Singapore American School and UWCSEA.

The building for the primary school, which will be located within SJI International's campus, is being refurbished, so pupils will use the



ST PHOTO: LIM WUI LIANG

**ONE-STOP EDUCATION:** The setting up of a primary section is expected to bring more students into SJI International, which now has 350 students. And it will give the school a sense of family, said its principal.

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high school's facilities when the semester begins next month.

The school's curriculum and culture appeal to parents such as Mrs Sujatha Palathinkal, 38, a housewife whose older son, Vinay, 14, is in SJI International. Her younger son Rohan, 12, will join the primary section next month.

She said: "I like the trips they take outside Singapore, which take them out of their comfort zone. I saw the change in Vinay after one year. He has opened up more."

Private schools like SJI International have more leeway in designing their curriculum and programmes than the other types of schools under MOE, like the independent or government schools.

janeng@sph.com.sg