

SJI to be open to all for school's first JC batch

It will take in just 80 students, and offer the IB programme

■ BY STACEY CHIA

ST JOSEPH'S Institution (SJI) students will not get priority when the school rolls out its junior college programme next year.

It will take in no more than 80 students for its inaugural JC1 batch, with places open to O-level students from all secondary schools.

In SJI, about 400 Secondary 4 students will sit the O levels this year.

The school will also admit girls at JC1, bringing co-education to SJI for the first time in decades. The all-boys school had girls studying for their A levels in the past.

It will offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma programme at JC level. These details were shared with about 300 parents and non-SJI students who turned up for an information session yesterday at the Malcolm Road school.

A spokesman said SJI boys will not get priority in JC1 admission so as to allow all students an equal chance to enter the school under Ministry of Education guidelines.

Admission will be based on O-level results, and about 10 per cent of the intake may come via the Direct School Admission scheme for those who are academically strong and demonstrate talent in fields such as leadership, service, sports and arts.

He said the initial JC1 enrolment will be kept small because of the interactive demands of the IB programme.

Class size will be maintained at between 10 and 20 students to facilitate student-teacher engagement.

Starting next year, SJI will also become an integrated programme school, offering both secondary and JC education.

Those who opt for the integrated programme from Secondary 1 next year will bypass the O levels and sit the IB exams at JC2.

There will still be students who will attempt the O levels.

The JC1 cohort will eventually grow to about 275 in 2017.

About 100 spots will then go to students – whether SJI or non-SJI – who have sat the O levels.

The IB diploma, awarded by the Swiss-based International Baccalaureate Organisation, is more broad-based than the A levels. It requires students to take six subjects and Theory of Knowledge, a course that combines philosophy, religion and logical reasoning.

It is also compulsory to take a second language. Students must also do research to write a 4,000-word essay and participate in arts, sports and community service.

Currently, Anglo-Chinese School (Independent), Anglo-Chinese School (International), St Joseph's Institution International and Hwa Chong International School offer the IB diploma.

During the session yesterday, SJI also revealed that seven teachers have been recruited from countries like Britain, Germany and Australia.

Eight Singaporeans will also join the faculty, and it intends to hire four more teachers from overseas.

The spokesman said many of the new teachers have experience with the IB diploma programme, and some of the foreign teachers have graded IB ex-

amination scripts.

"Having a significant number of international staff will also inject varied perspectives and enhance what is meant to be an international education," said the spokesman.

In the later half of the year, SJI plans to have trial lessons to let interested students get a feel of the curriculum.

For some students and parents, yesterday's session was their first time hearing about the IB programme.

Mrs Jayanthi Vijayan, 38, came with her son, an Anderson Secondary School student.

"Before he brought back the flier, I had not even heard of an alternative to the A levels," said the housewife. "It's good that we are here, so that he will be motivated to study hard for the O levels."

CHIJ Katong Convent student Ariel Campbell, 16, was interested to know more about the options after the O levels.

"I think it's important to keep my options open; people used to look down on students who attended polytechnic but so many students have done well for themselves," she added.

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St Joseph's Institution will admit girls at JC1 from next year, bringing co-education to the school for the first time in decades. The all-boys school used to have girls studying for their A levels. ST FILE PHOTO

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