

Resumé of parent meeting regarding transition from charitable status – 06.03.12

The meeting was chaired by the Headteacher, Mrs Angela Parry-Davies.

Introduction by Mr Andrew McEwen, Chairman of the St John's School Trust and Dr Nicholas Tate, Chairman, IES

When the school was in danger of closing in 2007 the parents who formed the 'Save St John's School' group only had a very short period of time in which to find and secure a buyer for the school. In view of the urgency and speed with which IES had to take over St John's the legalities and technicalities were, by necessity, kept to a minimum. A solution was found that would initially serve the required purpose in the tight time-frame given. An agreement was reached with the nuns and a charitable Trust was set up to run the school with IES as the Sole Member. This was done with a view to IES investing in the school and moving over time towards complete ownership. All the key bodies involved in the running of the school now feel that, five years later, the time is right for IES to complete this process. The school continues to run at a deficit, though this is diminishing, and the feeling is that, over time and under the new ownership, it will have a much better chance to move towards removing this annual operating loss.

The change of ownership can only take place with a majority vote in favour of doing so from the non-IES Trustees on the St John's School Trust. This is now in place. IES has shown that it is firmly committed to St John's International School. It has invested in the school significantly over the past five years and will continue to do so. Dr Tate, as the new full-time Executive Chairman of IES, has visited the school on many occasions and has come to appreciate its very special qualities. A subsidiary of IES will be formed (a name has yet to be decided upon, but it will include IES and St John's in the title) to run the school once the transfer has been approved by the Charity Commission. The advantage is that this new company will be unburdened by previous liabilities (all of which will be underwritten by IES itself). Numbers at the school are rising, the Sixth Form is set to start in September 2012, and there is a real sense of buoyancy. The original Trust will still continue, out of necessity, as the hockey field leased to the Trust is still retained by the nuns on a 50 year lease, after which it can be taken over by the school.

There will be no impact of this change on the daily life of the school. However, new contracts will have to be issued and signed by both staff and parents, as the name of the newly formed IES/St John's company will need to be included on the paperwork as a legal requirement. Arrangements for the consideration of the award of bursaries and scholarships will remain in place.

Points made in response to questions raised in the meeting or submitted in advance by parents

As a proprietorial school St John's will continue to give priority to excellence in the education provided by the school. It would be completely counter-productive for IES not to

do so. There is no conflict between aspiring to a modest surplus (which will not be achieved for a long time given the Trust's current liabilities which will be inherited by IES) and educational quality. St John's attraction is the atmosphere of community and family as well as the teaching and learning experience offered by the school and these strengths will be protected.

IES delegates its responsibility for its schools to an executive head to support and work with the school. This role is performed by Dr Nicholas Tate, Chairman of IES.

The school will still be answerable to all bodies that supervise the work of independent schools, and in particular the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) which inspects and monitors all aspects of the education, governance and administration of the school.

IES's objectives are to fill current gaps in year groups, with a view to boosting the school's overall numbers, to develop the Sixth Form (this will initially teach A and AS Levels, but once established would move to the IB Diploma), and to improve the boarding facilities (we are currently looking at acquiring new boarding facilities in the town). There is a commitment to creating an 'all age' school. There are no plans to build on the current school site, but over time to make improvements to the existing buildings.

IES schools are owned by a variety of companies and trusts. They are 'stand alone' companies which are subsidised and underwritten by IES.

IES will be keen to boost the numbers of boarders at St John's, but also the number of local students. There is complete commitment to the primary end of the school and the hope is that the local students in this phase will remain there in the secondary phase and continue into the Sixth Form. At the moment a key investment already being made by IES is with the introduction of the PYP curriculum into the primary part of the school. This is an expensive change to implement, but benefits the children enormously and gives St John's advantages over other local schools. St John's is one of the first candidate schools for this IB programme in the South West. Investment in another boarding house, if it goes ahead, will also free up some space for the rest of the school, in the same way that the purchase of more equipment for the Senior School also gives access to learning opportunities for the Primary children who will share it.

There should not be a conflict of interest with the PTFA, particularly if any funds raised are given to the Trust rather than IES. Funds raised can be allocated for specific purposes to benefit the children following discussion with parents. The PTFA organisation also encourages a sense of community within the school irrespective of fund-raising initiatives.

As a company run school, it will be easier to secure bank loans where necessary.

School fees are always reviewed annually against inflation and always have been. This will not change. The change of ownership will not create any new pressure on fees.