

## **Recent questions from a parent**

**25<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

### **Parent**

I really appreciate the efforts that both schools are making to ensure smooth transitions for employees, students and parents. I think this indicates that we are moving toward stronger, more experience and a more efficient education system.

Unfortunately, I didn't know about the previous parents meeting, so I was not lucky enough to attend and share my thoughts. Thus, I expressed my view as follows, hoping to consider it:

- Single-sex education
- School timing
- Homework
- Costs
- Teachers

#### 1. Single-sex education

From my religious, cultural and educational backgrounds perspective, I strongly support single-sex education classes after grade 5. I think this is essential to give our children in both genders the space to develop normally and enjoy their personal and social unique characteristics with their sex mates (i.e. Girls together and boys together). Especially at this, stage of life where variations become obvious among both sex in terms of their interest in learning/teaching skills and subjects; their level of academic achievements; and feeling of pressure to impress another gender.

For that, I believe the single-sex class often creates a more relaxed atmosphere to learn away from the stress of impressing another gender, which facilitates a dynamic, free, and bursting conversation with teachers. The debate of which educational system is better single or co sex educations is will continue because each has its pros and cons. In this case, I think the other aspects such as study context and culture should be considered to integrate a smooth, effective and successful educational system. Sur is the small conservative community where I believed single-sex class education will be more appreciated and regarded.

Single-sex education schools/classes have approved its effectiveness not only in the conservative community but also in well-developed countries. Statistics showed that both the United States and Britain have seen a growing promotion of single-gender schools/classes education in response to perceived underachievement by boys or to the persistence of gendered practices of subject take-up (Smyth, 2010). The National Association for Single Sex Public Education in the USA reported 34 single-sex public schools were in operation in 2004. Yet, this number jumped to 25-fold in a decade. The New York Times stated in 2014 that 850 schools nationwide had single-sex programs. Countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Ireland, continue to hold a respectable number of single-gender schools (Smyth, 2010). For all forth mentioned reasons, I would strongly recommend proceeding with single-sex education classes for our children in the new school.

## 2. School timing

I think leaving the school at 1:30 consistent with the governmental school is convinced and more appropriate for both younger children and teens as well as teachers. As this would give them, the chance to arrive home earlier to enjoy an early lunch, rest, and spend some valuable time with family before starting homework and assignments. Adopting a schedule like the following might work effectively and keep teachers and students attentive, focused and less exhausted until the end of the semester. Especially for those who live in distance from school and have to ride a bus with other 18 students to reach home. My children arrived daily from school at 3:10 pm.

## 3. Homework's

Would really appreciate a focused, meaningful and well-structured homework in a way that it is not stealing away family fun time.

## 4. School fees and exemptions

It's important at this stage to know how much it will cost us to enrol a child in the new school. Based on the designed fees parents should be able to plan next academic year for their children in advance taking into account that I have five children in the school.

## 5. Teachers and administrative staff

I'm confident that you are planning to get a qualified and expert teachers/staff for the new school. Having Al Najah in Sur is such a privilege and a great opportunity for our children future and the community as a whole. However, I would concur with previous parent's suggestions in retrieving the qualified teachers/staff from the old school.

In my opinion, these people are an asset for any future school in Sur. These people have joined the place when there was nothing here to entertain compare to the places there were coming from. Despite this, they were able to survive and managed to gain community respects and cooperation. Some of the teachers have lived here for more than 8 years. Living in a rural place for someone who used to live in big and modern community is another issue I thought to put on the surface. These people learned from us just as much as we learned from them, enjoyed our place and we enjoyed their presence despite the limited choices and restrictions, they were still interested to continue and give their hardest efforts for more years to come. Therefore, losing them at once is a very hard and difficult choice. I really hope that you consider giving the chance for such teachers/staff to continue, as they will be a good support and an informative resource for the newcomers.

## **Response**

*Thank you for your detailed points and also for the depth of research and consideration in your questions. I ask that you please give me authority to share your questions and my responses on behalf of Al Najah and OLNG with a wider audience in the school transition pages on the web site? This will be useful debate for all. If you could let me know and of course I will ensure that it is anonymized.*

*On behalf of Al Najah I respond in line with our advice to OLNG who ultimately will decide on the points you have made below.*

*There are many empirical studies that have looked at the positive and negative aspects in the contribution to academic outcomes either in line with single or mixed gender classes. This is a valid debate and opinion is mixed and healthily divided. Al Najah feel that HASIS should mirror practices at the best International Schools in Oman and other GCC countries. On the whole in these establishments the classes are mixed and we advise OLNG to do the same at all levels throughout the school. Clearly in PE this would not be appropriate in some cases.*

*The timing of the day is always critical and also sensitive to the context or the environment that the school is located. Al Najah advise OLNG to adopt a similar attendance pattern to other top International Schools. The priority is clearly academic outcomes, but also the holistic development of the child. Many top international schools have much longer attendance hours as there is time allowed in school for extra-curricular activities and extra study. We are not sure that this is right for now so the model will be in line with what other successful International Schools in Oman deliver. This is one of the deliverables on the lead in and is being considered but it is extremely unlikely that the attendance hours will be reduced. The holiday periods also need to be in line with other top International Schools to ensure that we secure the quality overseas teachers that we need. OLNG has aspirations to be a leading light in the country and internationally in the GCC region, and without these staff securing this aspiration would be impossible.*

*Homework is an essential part of education as it teaches children to learn with some independence and with some accountability. It also promotes involvement with the parents in this important area of a child's development. Al Najah support homework and will advise that the school continues to ensure that homework is set, but of course ensure that this is managed properly in line with the child's academic journey at that point. One would assume for example that as a child is approaching important examinations, the level of homework would increase.*

*I understand that school fees are met by OLNG for all staff who are employed by the company. A school fee is under discussion for use with overseas teachers who elect to join the teaching team, and perhaps in the future if OLNG decide to extend to allow places for children in the community. I understand that this is not going to happen in September, but will be reviewed for September 2019. School fees will be in line with similar standard International Schools in Oman, but as yet these have not been published.*

*There are a number of teachers who were successful in the transition selection process. We are doing all that we can to secure their services for your children next year as we value their expertise and experience. However, this process is not in the control of OLNG or Al Najah. The future of these teachers is in the hands of Omani Labour Laws which ensure that a certificate of no objection is issued by the previous employer. In this case it is the previous management agent and as I understand it, none so far have been issued on request. There is a deadline for this process to be finished within the next week so that we can move forward to ensure we have staff for September.*

*I am currently in the UK working extremely hard to secure an outstanding international teaching team for September. We are all confident that the quality of the education and the preparation required to ensure that students move seamlessly into outstanding lessons for your children are secured.*