

PDO School Update - Outsourcing and New Premises

A meeting was called on the 24th May 2011 to update parents on the current situation regarding the plans to outsource PDO School and the building of new premises. The meeting was led by Raoul Restucci, MD; Henk van Hout, Head of Shell Education Services; and Musallam Al Mandhry, HR Resourcing, Talent and Omanisation Manager (HRD).

Below is a summary of that meeting plus any relevant updates since May 24th.

Raoul structured the meeting around four key points:

1. Goal
2. Potential Operators
3. Timelines and Logistics
4. PDO School Design and Location

Goal

Raoul expressed that the vision is to provide a fantastic, best-in-class school that will have people 'queuing to get in'. It was stressed that, at present, the school is not cost effective and is currently operating at half capacity. It is recognised that this situation cannot continue.

Henk announced that Clive Rogers will be leaving at the end of May. On behalf of the PDO, we would like to thank Clive Rogers for his contributions to making PDO School the high calibre educational institution that it is today. We would like to wish him well for the future.

Clive's successor will be Peter Wassink, an experienced head teacher, who will be leading the school beginning the next academic year. Peter's biography will be posted to the PDO School website soon.

Potential Operators

At the meeting, Henk stressed that we are still in the 'exploration phase' of negotiations with two potential operators, the British School Muscat (BSM) and the American British Academy (ABA), and that the school operator outsourcing would not proceed unless they are confident that they have the 'right' operator. Additionally, at the meeting, Musallam mentioned that if the negotiations stall with these two potential operators then the next top-tier operators would be considered. It was also confirmed that the new awarded operator will have to provide provision for children with mild Special Education Needs (SEN) and those learning English as an Additional Language (EAL). However although the continuation of the current IPC curriculum is a consideration, Henk could not confirm it as a 'non-negotiable' at the meeting.

Since May 24th meeting, PDO has held in-depth meetings with the two potential operators and discussions are ongoing. Once negotiations are finalised and if one of the potential operators are selected, a complete proposal will be submitted to the PDO Tender Board for approval. Updates in the PDO School Newsletter will be provided when further details can be disclosed.

Timelines and Logistics

It was disclosed at the meeting that the originally communicated timeline to have a new operator in place for a transition year in 2011-2012 was ambitious; therefore, this is now more likely to be September 2012 (for the 2012/2013 school year). At the meeting, parents requested that the date for combining streams

(and ending the separate Dutch language stream) to take place at the end of the 2012/2013 transition year. Parents were informed however that the combining of streams is currently scheduled for September 2012, but this request would be considered but with no guarantee.

Following the 24th meeting, PDO is pleased to be able to offer parents more details with regards to timelines and logistics:

- PDO confirms that the aim is to have an operator in place for the school year 2012/2013
- Details of the plan to implement NTC from September 2012 will be further discussed using the PTA forum.

PDO School Design and Location

The architectural design of the new PDO School is currently in its early stages and will require the input of the awarded school operator. In the meantime, bulk earth moving work (around the golf driving range area) begins in mid-June in order to clear a significant area of land and hill rock that will accommodate the PDO School and other villas, townhouses and apartments (further details to be provided from the Ras Al Hamra Re-Development Project Team). The exact placement and configuration of the PDO School in this cleared area and the initial designs of the school will be communicated at the next PDO and School Parents meeting to be scheduled in September 2011. Additional communications on the overall Ras Al Hamra Re-Development Project will be issued by the Project Team in June and on a regular basis.

Q and A

Other issues were raised by parents, some relating to their own personal circumstances.

Karavaan, the current preschool provision provided on separate premises, will continue to have its own dedicated buildings, but the preschool education will not form part of the outsourcing operator negotiations – Karavaan will continue to be run “as is”.

Concerns were raised about recruiting and retaining staff and with a particular concern about staff for the September 2011 school start. Musallam confirmed that most of the current teachers will stay on for the 2011/2012 school year, and that for the small number of teachers leaving, PDO will hire qualified staff. Henk confirmed that current teacher:child ratios would continue.

Communication was felt to be an area that could be improved upon. Therefore it has been agreed that there will be quarterly meetings to keep parents informed (with the next one to be scheduled in September) as well as regular updates via the fortnightly newsletter and school website (<http://pdoschool.org>). This will include updates relating to curriculum, plans for the Dutch Stream, and timelines for the tendering process and transition to a new operator as well as those relating to the building of the new school.