



MALEK FAHD ISLAMIC SCHOOL

ABN: 41003 864 891

KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT & WORK IS WORSHIP

www.mfis.nsw.edu.au

COMMUNITY STATEMENT

FROM THE BOARD OF MALEK FAHD ISLAMIC SCHOOL

Friday, 8 May 2020

Assalamualaikum

Many in the School community will remember an anonymous online petition posted last year on a public website, www.change.org.

This community statement from the Board of Malek Fahd Islamic School is lengthy. It is important that your School Board addresses the relevant matters and informs you of the facts.

The anonymous petition directed serious allegations, claims and observations at the Principal, Mr Bruce Rixon.

The Board has thoroughly investigated and considered each allegation, claim and observation. Integral to the investigation was independent and external scrutiny from an experienced and senior education leader in Mr Terry Lidgard, Principal of Georges River Grammar School from 1994 to 2011. Legal review and advice on governance and procedures also was obtained. As a result, the Board is satisfied that the matters raised either did not occur or did not occur in the manner alleged.

All potential and perceived conflicts of interest are handled with absolute diligence and according to the school policy. With regards to the appointment last year of Mr Rixon's wife as Deputy Head of Campus at Hoxton Park, Mr Rixon immediately and properly removed himself from the selection panel when his wife – a teacher with 19 years of experience at MFIS – applied for the position. The selection panel comprised personnel of long and high repute in education. The panel unanimously chose her as the best candidate for the position. The required and correct process was followed.

Mr Rixon has the full confidence of the Board, as does the rest of his leadership team. He and his team have performed exceptionally and worked incredibly long hours over the past three years to help reform and consolidate Malek Fahd Islamic School. Their work and results deserve our gratitude.

The Board also is grateful to the company that manages www.change.org for promptly assessing the anonymous petition and removing it because, in its words, 'it violated our Community Guidelines'.

Senior appointments

Notwithstanding that the selection process was correctly followed, the Board has resolved to provide even greater transparency and accountability.

In future, a parent will be added to the selection panel at the second stage of the appointment process, panel members will formally record the extent to which they know an applicant and anyone with a potential conflict of interest will not be part of the panel.

This will apply to appointments in the range of Stage Coordinators (Primary), Heads of Department (Secondary), Heads of Wellbeing, Deputy Heads of Campus, Head of Learning Support and Heads of Campus.

The selection panels for the positions of Principal, Deputy Principal and Business Manager will continue to involve members of the Board and be supported by the independent advice of a human resource and executive search consultancy.

Islamic ethos

The Islamic ethos of Malek Fahd Islamic School is the cornerstone of what we do to prepare young people for fulfilling and positive lives in the community. Islam is the beating heart of the education offered at the school.

Mr Rixon and some other staff are not Muslim. Their appointments are supported absolutely and unanimously by the Board, most of whom are Muslim. The fundamental principle concerning any appointments at MFIS is to appoint the most suitable person for the job... the best available talent for the best possible education for your children. Every staff member has at the outset made an absolute commitment to willingly adhere to the Islamic ethos of the School.

Such is the Board's commitment to Islam that it is working closely with the *Centre for Islamic Thought and Education* at the University of South Australia and its Director, Professor Mohamad Abdalla AM, to explore Islamic pedagogy... the method and practice of teaching in an Islamic context. With Professor Abdalla and his team, we will come up with even better ways to incorporate Islam into the Malek Fahd curriculum and professional development programs for our teachers.

We also will host the next annual national Islamic Education Conference. It is all part of our exciting mission to be at the forefront of the best possible and most relevant way of teaching within an Islamic construct of a modern Australian society. We want our graduates to hold dear their Islamic beliefs and be equipped to excel and enrich the society in which they live.

Complaints procedure

There is no need, nor is there any excuse, for anonymous petitions if anyone has a concern or complaint about anything to do with the School. The School has a long-standing complaints process for parents, staff and others.

The Complaints Procedures have recently been re-drafted to make them easier to use and understand. It is essential that everyone knows and understands how to raise a concern, ranging from simple queries around a child's progress through to a formal complaint. Whatever it is, it must be handled properly, sensitively and effectively.

These procedures are on the School's website in the section 'Information', under the heading 'Making a Complaint'.

The school also has a Whistleblower policy and related procedures for handling matters that are covered by that legislation. These can be found in the 'Information' section under 'Policies'.

Improved communication

The Board recognises it must do more to communicate with parents and the School community. The Board wants to achieve two-way communication that enables parents and the community to ask questions and express views.

We have successfully resolved many dire issues that once threatened our School's future. We have moved into a period of development and change. Our Strategic Plan has identified and activated positive initiatives. We have begun the process of preparing a 20-year Master Plan to deliver a thriving and high-achieving school in a modern and caring Islamic setting.

You and your family are part of highly diverse School community. There often are conflicting views and tensions that must be raised, discussed and reconciled. All must be heard and all must be respected and valued.

With your commitment and collaboration, we will improve the way that we communicate with you. Initiatives in this area will be advised as soon as possible.

If you have any concerns or questions, please direct them to the Board at board@mfis.nsw.edu.au.

Jazakallah Khairan for your ongoing support.

Wassalam

THE BOARD OF MALEK FAHD ISLAMIC SCHOOL