



We have crossed out the word 'sons' in this picture from Victoria School magazine 1996 to reflect the proposed change.

Girls in Victoria School?

S'pore's last all-boys govt school wants to go co-ed. Some old boys upset

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IT is the country's last all-boys government school.

But Victoria School (VS) has decided to take a knife to tradition — it wants to go co-ed.

The school has submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Education in what looks like a move to play catch-up with some of Singapore's top schools.

It hopes that turning co-ed can make it the main feeder school for Victoria Junior College (VJC) with the possibility of merging into one Integrated Programme (IP) in the long run.

That would make it similar to the Raffles and Hwa Chong families, where the boys' and girls' schools are linked to their

respective JCs. Their students study a six-year course bypassing the O levels.

MOE confirmed receiving the proposal and said it had asked the school to submit a detailed proposal of its overall long-term plan for evaluation.

If it gets the nod, VS will leave behind a 129-year-old tradition of being an all-boys secondary school.

The school did have girls in pre-university classes from the 1950s until as late as the '80s.

Right now, it is the only government all-boys school left in Singapore.

PRINCIPAL'S E-MAIL

VS principal Ang Pow Chew, 46, is away on a school trip to China and could not be contacted.

But in an earlier e-mail to his staff, he said the school is suffering a brain drain following recent changes to the education landscape.

In 2004, 38 students, about 10 per cent of that cohort, left VS to join the IP offered by Junior Colleges and some of the independent schools.

The school predicts that the number leaving the school could go up to 100 or about a third of the cohort.

Said Mr Ang in the e-mail: "VS will experience a deep hollowing out effect. In anticipation of the challenges and opportunities generated, VS and Victoria JC see merits in both institutions working closely together to offer linked programmes."

VJC is already offering its own IP programme for students from Sec 3 onwards.

The plan is for VS to be the main feeder school for VJC. To do so at least 50 per cent of each Sec 3 cohort must meet the JC's cut-off mark. That may not be possible if it remains an all-boys school.

Said Mr Ang: "As it is unlikely that this target can be reached with VS remaining a boys' school, we believe that turning co-ed will raise the

Should JC anthem change?

SHE wants the school song changed.

At a school assembly earlier this year, principal of Victoria JC Chan Khah Gek suggested that a line in the song "Victoria, thy sons are we" wasn't sensitive to female Victorians and should be replaced.

Some current students and alumni however, were not enthusiastic about the suggestion.

"The anthem is part of a tradition — and I don't think we need to take the word 'sons' at face value," said one second-year female VJC student.

But some feel that a change makes sense if both VJC and VS are co-ed.

When contacted, Mrs Chan said "more structured feedback" is needed to find out if only a minority of students feel that the school song should be changed.

— LIEW HANQING

quality of the intake."

Eventually, both schools hope to run an Integrated Programme just as the Raffles and Hwa Chong families are doing now.

Many old Victorians were unhappy.

Old boy Chan Joo Peng, 27, said: "I don't think the aim is to bring about an IP programme at all. It is just to help VS climb the rankings ladder."

"While I am all for better performance, I am not for it to be at the expense of some strong traditions. I would rather see an all-boys VS moving up the ladder on its own steam."

Old Victorians Association president Aaron Tan said they would respond after a meeting on the issue.