



# Building on 50 years of impact and success

## Ray Holliday-Bersegeay charts the rise of St. John's International School in Belgium

Monday 8 September 2014 marked the anniversary of the founding of St. John's International School in 1964. Starting up from a small house with 114 students from 1st to 8th Grade, in an eight-classroom facility in down-town Brussels, St John's then moved to Waterloo in 1969 and has been there ever since. From those early days the school has developed to be a through 2-18 school offering the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP) and IB Diploma Programme. The school is located on a single site with exceptional, state-of-the art sports and arts facilities. There are currently over 700 students from 55 countries of the world. This really is an international school in the true

sense of the word, where students embody the school's vision of 'living our values to impact the world'.

The school is owned by the religious order of the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ) and is ecumenical in outlook, with children of all cultures and religious beliefs warmly welcomed into the student body. The school's values of companionship, respect and integrity are fundamental and underpin all programs and human interactions.

Students enjoyed a full day of activities to celebrate our 50th anniversary, beginning with a special assembly in the morning. Afterwards, all students – from our younger students to our 12th graders – as well as teachers, were



*Fiftieth anniversary celebrations at St John's, including Ray Holliday-Bersegeay at the legacy lecture on October 3  
The photograph above left shows Sr. Maeve Shannon, the first superintendent of St. John's (from 1966-1980)*

grouped into 50 teams (one for each of the 50 years) and enjoyed a day of activities together.

The community celebration of the 50th anniversary was then held on 20 September, with a mass, a reception and inauguration of the exhibition, a timeline, and Middle School students' jigsaw of key words that describe the St. John's experience. Also part of the celebration was artwork of 50 hand-crafted birds (one for each of the first 50 years of St. John's) of different species from all around the world, symbolizing the internationalism of our school and our role in giving wings to our students as they rise and soar positively and with confidence into their continued education and professional future. We were joined on this occasion by alumni, former teachers and former directors now living in many different countries of the world.

There will be events throughout the school year to celebrate the 50th anniversary, from an all-school musical to a community day, a grand gala to a concert and legacy lectures. The latter concept is of particular interest, in that

former students will return to give a lecture on what has become their passion and to work with all IB Diploma students on Theory of Knowledge in that particular area. Our first speaker, former IB student Nora Gietz, presented her doctoral thesis on how Napoleonic rule affected the artistic patrimony of Venice – an interesting link to our home base of Waterloo and Napoleon's ultimate defeat, especially in the 200th anniversary year (2015) of the Battle of Waterloo. The year of celebrations will end with a large alumni reunion weekend in June.

St John's has a marvellous heritage of 50 years of impact on generations of students who have gone on to make a mark and to begin to leave a legacy in their chosen fields. We are confident that the next generations will continue to further embed this trend.

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