

## The History of Sashegyi Arany János Primary and Secondary School



Our school is situated on Sas-hegy, called Eagle Hill, Buda side, Budapest /the capital city of Hungary/. It has an imposing, beautiful sight from all over the city. The rocky mountain with the Nature Conservation Park is located behind the school.



As we know, Notre Dame de Sion order was founded in 1892. There were schools all over the world this time. London, Rome, Vienna, Prague, Bucharest, Istanbul, Jerusalem, the USA and Brazil established their headquarters.

The first Sion school in Budapest was opened on Budapest Castle Hill in 1905. In 1910 they moved to another building. Finally the school moved to the present building in 1930. This place took after the surroundings of Mount Sion in Jerusalem. The stunning school building together with the neo-Gothic chapel were designed by Gustav Szörényi – Reischl. The neo-Gothic chapel has suffered a severe bomb attack in 1945.

So the school opened in 1930. The Nuns formulated their educational, instructional goals:

"The order's main aim was the moral and character education, in addition to the Hungarian girls being open-minded by thorough understanding of European literature in foreign languages, and being reared as their country loving women."

The school was built in the most modern way at that time and provided a high level of education and the freedom to spend meaningful freetime.

The main hall, the teachers' lounge, and a few classrooms were situated in today's busy downstairs. The well-equipped labs, gyms and locker rooms were on the first floor. On the second floor were the bedrooms. On the third floor were the soundproof music room and the nurses dormitories. The building had central heating, hot and cold water, medical facilities, so the comfort seemed to be above average at that time.

The large park consisted of groves of pine and fruit trees, walking paths and playgrounds. There were two tennis courts, where the girls could skate in winters. Each class had its own pergola, which they looked after. The language of teaching and conversation was French.

The building and the chapel were destroyed during the 2nd World War. The Nuns renovated the building, but did not enjoy school life long. In 1948, the maintenance of schools was taken over by the state, so in 1949, the Notre Dame De Sion nuns left their institution and the country.

In 1949, the school named after Oleg Kosevoj was a scholarship institution and moved into the building. Then the purpose of the training was to prepare students for studying in the Soviet Union universities. They learnt Russian language for 12 hours per week. Special classes were organized in which further studies, like engineering, economics, medicine, philosophy, were preferred. This institution functioned until 1954.

The Hungarian poet, Arany János gave the name to the present day 12-grade school. It is an 8-grade primary and a 4- grade secondary school, where the pupils and students are between the age of 6-19.

During the following years the hill was populated. This made it necessary, in 1980, to finish the boarding school running. The former dormitories were converted into classrooms.

Our present day educational program emphasizes language teaching, the teaching-learning of natural sciences by doing and experiencing, the healthy way of life, sports activities as well as educating for social justice.

A sports hall has been built in the courtyard and there are also three gymnasiums, Outdoor sports court and a covered one in winter provides students with regular physical activities in the clean, fresh air. Our students can play basketball, tennis, do gymnastics, go cycling, on

water tour and ski. Our students spend the summer in Szigetszentmárton camp on the river Danube.

We have a library with tens of thousands volumes, magazines and with Internet access. Computer science education is going on in two well-equipped labs, each student can work on separate PC-s.

We have a special teaching method of natural sciences. Big pharmaceutical companies, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Scientific Associations support our interactive, effective and efficient teaching method, which is based on experiments.

We promote social justice as we organize charity programs and social work with disabled children, elderly people, the Hungarian children in need beyond the borders of Hungary and help foster peer relationships in the developing countries. The mission of the school is to improve students' competencies, such as critical thinking, open-mindedness and the sense of responsibility. We promote the basic principles that the general national curriculum says. We know that social justice should provide equal learning opportunities for all students, help foster respect among individuals, and empower individuals to not only notice, but challenge the inequalities and injustices in society

Moreover, we are attempting to create our own curriculum to go beyond teaching the standards. Our methods include cooperative group work, and diverse group interactions. We think that students are now seen as active participants in the learning process in the modern educational realm of teaching and learning. We assume that clustered desks would enable peer collaboration as well as small group instruction. Therefore, the instructional design of material being learned would encourage peer-to-peer interaction. To that effect, the classroom serves as a community of learning.

In 2001 we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the existence of the building. Sion guests arrived for the anniversary from all over the world. Festive show and exhibition were organized in honor of the guests. Since 2001 we have been organizing Sion Meetings at school in the middle of May. We invite old, still alive Sion students, their descendants and nuns living all over the world to commemorate those days and talk about those years to the next generations. What is more we keep a mass in the great Hall.

The chapel crypt remained neglected for a long time and was used as a workshop. In the spring a local history exhibition is being opened in the neo-Gothic chapel crypt, where the treasured relics will be visible to the visitors.



It is significant that we are looking back to the past by keeping up Sion roots, traditions although our school is run by the Hungarian State. We think that having been a Sion school we are proud and we should re-discover and preserve their morals, values and educational principles. Teachers, parents and students will be able to cooperate, make up their future plans and live on if they can connect the past traditions, the present activities and the future dreams.

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Mr. Lajos Patkó

Principal of Sashegyi Arany János Primary and Secondary School, Budapest, Hungary

Ms. Judit Aszódi

Deputy Principal of Sashegyi Arany János Primary and Secondary School, Budapest, Hungary

In charge of Educating for Social Justice at school