

Penang Free School a national gem

- Saturday, 3 Feb 2018
- by [cavina lim](#)



Big milestone: A view of the entrance to the 202-year-old PFS in Jalan Masjid Negeri, Penang.

GEORGE TOWN: Let the aisles proclaim. Forever.

The title of the Penang Free School (PFS) song may have new meaning because the institution will now be protected for future generations.

The oldest English school in Southeast Asia has been declared a Malaysian heritage site and the whole 8ha of the grounds and all its venerable structures will be preserved.

“Yes, we will now protect our school bell and every brick too,” said PFS board of governors chairman Datuk Abdul Rafique Abdul Karim yesterday following the National Heritage Department’s recent announcement.

Its near-ancient bell can only be rung on Mondays as the principal enters the hall.



Former students ringing the school bell during a reunion.

Abdul Rafique expressed pride that just like the Unesco World Heritage Site in George Town, PFS would hold out against the tide of change for many generations to come.

“Even if big office towers appear across the street 50 or 100 years from now, Old Frees can rest assured that our school will remain the same.

“We must all embrace change, but if there can be one thing that is everlasting, let it be our school,” he said.

PFS is 202 years old now. Many luminaries had walked through its aisles as children, from the Raja of Perlis Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail, to Malaysia’s first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, legendary artiste Tan Sri P. Ramlee and former All-England badminton champion Datuk Eddy Choong.

“We thank the National Heritage Department for considering PFS as a heritage site and hope to work closely with the department to maintain the heritage status of the school.

“Any renovation or additional alterations will now have to follow the heritage guidelines.

“It has been a few years’ wait and of course, this is a big milestone for the school,” Abdul Rafique said.

The notice of designation of site as heritage site was dated Jan 18 and undersigned by Heritage Commissioner Datuk Dr Zainah Ibrahim for ‘Lot 2738, Section 6, Penang Free School, George Town’, which is owned by the Federal Land Commissioner.

The notice states that the commissioner received no objections against the designation and the consent of the state authority under Section 30 of the National Heritage Act 2005 was obtained too.