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Quality Assurance Department

Report Summary of the External Review by the QAD

**for
St Joseph Junior School
Sliema**

**External Review carried out from
3rd to 7th April 2017**

17th May 2017

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Introduction

The external review carried out in your school focused on Educational Leadership and Management, Learning and Teaching, and School Ethos. The following are the main outcomes resulting from the evidence gathered through questionnaires, school documentation, interviews and observations.

Educational Leadership and Management

Areas of strength

- The Head of School's vision is that of creating an environment conducive to learning while fostering a sense of belonging among all stakeholders.
- The Head of School practises a distributed leadership approach and shares successfully different duties with the assistant heads. This sense of coordination and teamwork within the Senior Management Team is also fostering collaboration among the teaching staff.
- Senior Management Team members support the quality of teaching and learning through formal lesson observations followed by feedback.
- Regularly held Professional Development sessions are addressing areas of development requested by the staff and related to the SDP.
- The teaching staff owns the SDP process and is implementing the action plans.

A way forward

The Senior Management Team should ensure that records of outcomes for Curriculum Time sessions are kept in order to strengthen the effectiveness of these sessions and to serve as a data collection tool to inform the SWOT as part of the internal review process.

Various research tools should be used to collect data from different stakeholders. These can include outcomes from lesson observations and Curriculum Time sessions, and feedback collected from focus groups of parents and learners. Exploring different ways to involve parents and learners in internal review processes would increase their sense of involvement in school matters.

The school is encouraged to extend the use of the school's online management system by including additional information such as homework given to learners, assessment records as well as the sharing of educational resources used in class as this would maximise the benefits of the system.

The school is encouraged to keep up with its plans of creating a handbook, and to ensure the involvement of different stakeholders in the process, in order to include all relevant school information and other important policies which are still being developed.

Learning and Teaching

Areas of strength

- The school curriculum reflects the vision of the National Curriculum Framework.
- Particular attention is being given to the development of literacy through various initiatives.

- The Ekoskola committee and students' council respectively are serving to promote sustainable development and to expose learners to roles of responsibility and democratic values.
- Collaboration between Learning Support Assistants and teachers/Kindergarten Assistants is enhancing the progress of learners with a statement of needs as well as the other learners in class.
- For the last two years, the school's median mark in benchmark results has been higher than the national median in English, Maltese and Maths.

A way forward

The school is encouraged to pursue their process of upgrading the library services, including digital equipment, since this would prove to be of further benefit for learners.

The school should consider to extend the service of guided reading throughout all grades and to explore the possibility of involving parents in the process. This is an excellent way to support learners of all reading abilities by helping to target the individual needs of learners.

While being encouraged to keep on holding vertical meetings at the end of the scholastic year, the school should explore possibilities for more collaborative work amongst teachers of different grades. This would enable teachers to build on the learners' previous learning and can be an opportunity to share good practices and resources.

Teachers are encouraged to explore ways to keep on developing a more learner-centred teaching approach. The use of pair or group work which allows for more collaborative tasks among learners, varied questioning techniques and more interactive use of the IWB by learners would help increase learner engagement and provide a further stimulating learning environment.

The utility of assigning grades reflecting a range of marks for subjects in the lower years needs to be evaluated. Due consideration can be given to the possibility of referring to competences acquired in the different learning areas when reporting to parents. The school is encouraged to keep up with its current work of developing an assessment policy as this would serve as guidelines for new targets in assessment implementation. Prior training and the necessary piloting of new assessment practices will facilitate this process. The school can consult an assessment specialist for more guidance and consider supporting teachers through different professional learning opportunities to address this and the other above-mentioned areas for improvement.

School Ethos

Areas of strength

- The school is building learners' self-confidence and self-esteem through various ways such as morning assemblies and award systems.
- The prevailing Catholic ethos and family-like atmosphere is making learners feel valued and cared for. Individual attention and complementary support are also contributing to this.
- A strong sense of collegiality prevails among the teaching staff and nearly all stakeholders would recommend the school.

A way forward

The Senior Management Team together with the teaching staff should discuss ways and means to develop further the needs of the gifted and talented learners.

The school is encouraged to explore ways to improve attendance for parental empowerment sessions. Furthermore, the role of the Parents Teachers Association may be extended to curricular matters, such as through sessions contributing to school development planning. Such initiatives can contribute to increase the parents' involvement in their child's educational experience.

Recommendations

Taking into account the external review's findings, these recommendations represent the development areas the school needs to prioritise in the post-review action plan.

- Various research tools should be used to collect data from different stakeholders. These can include outcomes from lesson observations and Curriculum Time sessions, and feedback collected from focus groups of parents and learners. Exploring different ways to involve parents and learners in internal review processes would increase their sense of involvement in school matters.
- The school is encouraged to extend the use of its online management system by including additional information such as homework given to learners, assessment records, as well as the sharing of educational resources used in class, as this would maximise the benefits of the system.
- The school should consider to extend the service of guided reading throughout all grades and to explore the possibility of involving parents in the process. This is an excellent way to support learners of all reading abilities by helping to target the individual needs of learners.
- Teachers are encouraged to explore ways to keep on developing a more learner-centred teaching approach. The use of pair or group work which allows for more collaborative tasks among learners, varied questioning techniques and more interactive use of the IWB by learners would help increase learner engagement and provide a further stimulating learning environment.
- Possibly with the support of an assessment specialist, the school should evaluate the way it is reporting to parents on the progress of their children especially those in the lower years.

Next external review

The next external review will take place on completion of this cycle of External Reviews. This may be reconsidered as a result of the follow-up visit as per Parameters of the External Review available at:

<http://education.gov.mt/en/education/quality-assurance/Pages/External-Reviews.aspx>

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