



ST FRANCIS SCHOOL SANTA LUCIJA

Manual of Policies and Procedures

2020 -2021

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Abbreviations

CoPE - Community of Professional Educators

CTP - Council for the Teaching Profession

DES - Directorate for Educational Services

DQSE - Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education

GDPR - General Data Protection Regulation

KG2 - Kindergarten 2

KGE - Kindergarten Educator

LOF - Learning Outcomes Framework

LSE - Learning Support Educator

MEDE - Ministry for Education and Employment

MQF - Malta Qualifications Framework

MUT - Malta Union of Teachers

NCF - National Curriculum Framework

NQT - Newly Qualified Teacher

OHSA - Occupational Health and Safety Authority

POMA - Public Order Management Act

QAD - Quality Assurance Department

SDP - Staff Development Plan

SfCE - Secretariat for Catholic Education

SLT – Senior Leadership Team

SWOT Analysis – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis

UN – United Nations

Introduction

St Francis School Santa Lucija is a kindergarten school belonging to the Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus. It is annexe to St Francis School Cospicua and comprises four KG2 classes. After being closed for extensive construction works and renovation, it has opened its doors once again for the scholastic year 2020-2021. This *Manual of Policies and Procedures* applies to those individuals who are engaged with St Francis School Santa Lucija. In this context, policy is understood as the course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organization or individual.

Human Resources Policy

1. Definition

Human Resources - Human resources refers to the workforce of an organization, in this case, St Francis School Santa Lucija.

2. Staff Recruitment

2.1 Call for Applications

When a vacancy arises, a call for applications is issued, allowing fifteen days for interested persons to apply. The call depends on the nature of the vacancy as this may be either definite or indefinite. Following this, interviews are held for all eligible applicants. All prospective candidates have to present their accreditation letter together with their qualification certificates during their interviews. Marks are given according to qualifications, professional experience, knowledge and expertise, aptitudes and abilities, personal qualities and values.

2.2 Recruitment of New Staff

As per *Capacity Building Manual 2019.2020* (DES, 2019, p.10), the new teaching staff is employed as a follow up of the capacity building exercise or as a temporary replacement of staff on approved leave. New Learning Support Educators are enrolled following the statement of needs of a particular student. For the approval of new staff, the school submits the documents required by DES.

2.3 Renewal of Staff

As per *Capacity Building Manual 2019.2020* (DES, 2019, p.10), supply grades are approved on a definite contract and therefore are to be renewed every scholastic year. For the approval of new staff, the school submits the documents required by DES.

As per the collective agreement between the Church Authorities and the Malta Union of Teachers (2018, p.12), *“the scholastic year for both learners and education grades shall mean the 12 months from 1st September till 31st August.”* Consequently, all supply grades approved for the scholastic year will be engaged as from 1st September, given that they

are at school on the first day of school and will be entitled to a salary up to the end of August of that scholastic year.

3. Staff Development

3.1 Community of Professional Educators (CoPE)

As per the *Collective Agreement Between The Church Authorities And The Malta Union Of Teachers For Education Grades In Church Schools And In The Secretariat For Catholic Education* (2018) all education grades are required to actively participate in Management-driven CoPE sessions and shall be encouraged to also take part in Self-sought CPD sessions (recognised by MEDE and/or accredited by a recognised authority) (p. 23).

The total hours of management-driven CoPE, hence continuous professional development and/or school development sessions, is 40, provided that:

- All 40 hours are to be held during the school year and school day.
- 28 hours out of the 40, need to be with no students on site (hence are to be held during days or hours additional to learners' school days/hours);
- 12 hours out of the total 40, need to be with students on-site (hence having students engaged in lessons and particular education grades participating in specific Departmental/Curriculum/School Development Meetings, and/or Professional Development Sessions).
- 12 out of the total 40 hours, irrespective whether these are held with students on-site or otherwise as explained in the previous points, need to be dedicated to school development planning sessions (SDP).

3.2 Upskilling of LSEs and KGEs

As per *Capacity Building Manual 2019.2020* (DES, 2019, p.11), an upskill is a promotion within the below mentions grades:

- (i) Learning Support Educator I (LSE I)
- (ii) Learning Support Educator II (LSE II);
- (iii) Learning Support Educator III (LSE III);
- (iv) Kindergarten Educator I (KGE I)
- (v) Kindergarten Educator II (KGE II); and
- (vi) Kindergarten Educator III (KGE III).

As per Church Authorities – MUT agreement (2018, para 24 & 25):

(i) Learning Support Educators I (LSEs I) in possession of a full qualification at MQF Level 5, in the area of facilitating inclusive education (i.e. Diploma in Facilitating Inclusive Education, MQF Level 5 or the 30-week course) will automatically progress into the grade of Learning Support Educators II (LSE II);

(ii) Learning Support Educators II (LSEs II) in possession of a full qualification at MQF Level 6 or higher, in the area of facilitating inclusive education will automatically progress into the grade of Learning Support Educators III (LSEs III);

(iii) Kindergarten Educators I (KGEs I) in possession of a full qualification at MQF Level 5, in the area of early childhood education and care, or comparable will automatically progress into the grade of Kindergarten Educators II (KGE II);

(iv) Kindergarten Educators II (KGEs II) in possession of a full qualification at MQF Level 6 or higher, in early childhood education and care, or comparable will automatically progress into the grade of Kindergarten Educators III (KGEs III).

Supply Learning Support Educators (SLSE) in possession of a certificate in inclusive education MQF Level 4 or who have successfully completed the first year of the Diploma in Inclusive education MQF Level 5 are eligible to apply for LSE I. In case of Supply Kindergarten Educators, they need to successfully achieve a Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care MQF Level 4 to be eligible to apply for KGE I.

For the upskill of staff, the school submit the documents specified by DES.

3.3 Accelerated Progression

The Accelerated Progression Scheme for Regular Teachers as per paragraph 26.5 of the Church Authorities – MUT Collective Agreement (2018) follows the explanation in Circular SfCE 002-2018 (SfCE, 2018).

4. Mentoring And Coaching

For mentoring and coaching, the procedures in *Induction Portfolio For Newly Qualified Teachers and Newly Recruited Teachers In their First Year* (SCFE, n.d.) and *Induction Portfolio For Newly Qualified Teachers in their Second Year* (SCFE, n.d.) are followed.

The Induction Programme for NQTs spans two consecutive scholastic years, from September/October till the end of the following scholastic year. The first year coincides with the probation year and the confirmation of the teacher in the service of the school. During the second year, the NQT continues to evaluate one's professional practice. This usually leads to the conferment of the teachers' warrant by the CTP.

5. Staff Recording Keeping

Staff files are organised according to their grade or year group with which they are engaged and stored in the office of the Head of School. Each file contains approvals, certificates and all important documentation related to the position occupied by the member of staff. Copies of certificates of professional development ensued by the educators are kept in their files. Attendance is kept daily in a separate record sheet.

Internal Quality Assurance Policy

1. Rationale

This internal quality assurance policy embraces the rationale of the QAD (MEDE, online):

The primary intention is that schools and their learning community are engaged in an ongoing, cyclical reflective process which is directed at improving educational outcomes for all their learners.

The following section describes the internal review procedure of the school.

2. Internal Review Procedure

The QAD (MEDE, online) specifies that:

An internal review process is pivotal to evaluate what is and is not working, and for whom, and then determine what improvements are needed, particularly to enhance equity and achieve educational outcomes. Internal evaluation involves asking good questions, collecting focused and fit-for-purpose data and feedback, then analysing and making sense of this information to inform school development planning.

The essence of the internal review process is to identify areas for improvement as priority targets and convert them into manageable, 'bite-sized' whole school development plan. These should be accomplished through a series of small-scale incremental projects and/or strategies that seek to build confidence and success. This will then develop a base for further projects and/or strategies for improvement. Meaningful and lasting change is based on a long series of small and achievable targets. This leads to an incremental approach towards continuous improvement. More is achieved in this way, over a period of time, than by trying to make hasty large-scale changes.

An effective internal review is always driven by the will to improve, to assist all learners to experience a meaningful and successful learning journey.

Therefore, the Internal Quality Assurance exercise takes place every year and follows the same arrangement and timeframe of St Francis School Cospicua.

During the Prep Days at the beginning of the scholastic year, the new action plans that were drafted during the last SDP day of the previous scholastic year, are revised and refined by the staff members. The final versions are then published. These are then compiled within the new Staff Development Plan, which is then distributed among the members of staff. At the end of the first term, an SDP day is organised to evaluate the action plans, monitor progress and plan the way forward.

During the second term, feedback about the school is collected through the survey exercise organised by the SLT. Different questionnaires are compiled for the different stakeholders: one for the KGEs, one for the LSEs, one for the parents/guardians, one for the ancillary staff and one for the experts who visit the school. All questionnaires are disseminated and collected over the same period of time, generally over two weeks.

The questionnaires are based on the five-point Likert-scale approach ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The participants have to reply by gauging each statement according to their agreement level. The statements in the sample provided by the DQSE are moulded to suit the school's context. Moreover, there are specific statements based on the action plans and initiatives taken by the school and pertinent to the school's educational programme during that particular scholastic year. There are also statements based on the feedback that the SLT receives from different stakeholders through emails, calls and so on. The final section of each questionnaire consists of an open-ended question in which the participants can include any other comment that they would like to convey to the SLT.

Following this exercise, the results are issued. The parents/guardians are sent the result of their questionnaire. The teaching staff members are given the results of all the questionnaires, generally before the Easter holidays with the intention of giving them enough time to think about them in preparation for the SDP day in the third term. The SLT analyses the results in detail straight away and takes action on those matters that could be addressed immediately. The other matters, which would require detailed planning, are left for the SDP day in order to discuss and involve the whole staff in their management.

On the SDP day of the third term, the progress of the action plans of that scholastic year is evaluated for the final time. Then, the survey results are analysed by the whole group of teaching staff members, leading to the SWOT analysis. This analysis leads to the drafts of the new action plans, which are then planned by the whole teaching staff for the coming

scholastic year. The drafts are sent to the staff during the summer holidays so that they can present their feedback during the prep days of the following scholastic year.

At the beginning of the following scholastic year, during the initial parents/guardians' meetings, reference is made by the Head of School to the results of their questionnaire. She discusses the positive results and explains how the concerns will be addressed during that scholastic year. She also explains the focus of the action plans for that scholastic year.

The internal review cycle sets off again as described throughout this section.

3. Staff Supervision and Monitoring/ Internal Review of educational programmes

The emergent curriculum is implemented, as recommended in the LOF Toolkit for Early Years (DQSE, 2015). The KG staff were all trained in the implementation of this new pedagogy, put it into practice at their previous schools (in Siggiewi and Luqa) and will continue on these lines at SFS Santa Lucija as well. Given the nature of the pedagogy, the programme cannot be presented in advance because it emerges according to the interests of the children. However, it is moulded by the KGE to ensure that the outcomes listed in the LOF are all reached throughout the scholastic year. The authentic assessment procedures also reflect our philosophy on the curriculum. Our staff is led, supported and monitored by the SLT in this regard, in particular by the Assistant Head responsible for the Kindergarten school. Regular meetings are held between the Assistant Head and the KGEs to discuss and address curricular matters.

4. Behaviour Management/Correct Implementation Of Discipline

Behaviour management is based on positive behaviour attitudes. Rather than imposing many rules, consistency and the modelling of manners and coping strategies are used to enable the children to learn positive behaviour. If it is necessary, meetings with parents/guardians and other involved professionals are held for the benefit of the child.

5. Assessment Policy

Assessment is the process of observing, recording, and documenting the work children do and how they do it, as a basis for educational decisions. Several methods may be used to assess children's learning outcomes. In our case, the school embraces authentic assessment.

The assessment takes place by documenting the children's learning in relation to the Learning Outcomes and their progress. These are kept on *Student Campus*. However, we argue that this is not enough. Thus, samples of children work in the context of their free or social play or the learning environment are gathered and compiled to enable reflection and further planning. Photos are taken to show the child's progress throughout the learning process.

There are many ways to document the learning process through observations such as anecdotal records, photos, videos and children's work. We argue that observation is the right way to gain insight into the child's learning and level of engagement, problem-solving and thinking skills, language and manipulative skills and responses to peers and adults.

The educators use the evidence to interpret the learning that the child gained through the observed event and plan further learning by thinking about the resources and learning provocations that they can provide for the child. The notes taken by the educators can serve as high-quality guidelines to discuss progression with the parents/guardians and how learning can be supported at home as well. In respect to the children's voice, it is crucial that they are involved in the learning process and the teacher jots down the thoughts that the children share during their learning.

6. Philosophy of Educational Programme

St Francis School Santa Lucija is one of the kindergarten schools on the islands belonging to the Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus. It is a co-ed, mixed-ability KG school for KG2 pupils that grounds its education on Christian values, the charism of our Foundress the Venerable Mother Margherita De Brincat and on the mandated NCF (MEDE, 2012) and policies. It aims at facilitating each child's holistic development and a love for learning.

7. Rationale

In line with the NCF (MEDE, 2012) and LOF (DQSE, 2015) we embrace an early years' philosophy grounded on the principles of the emergent curriculum (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 2012; Jones, 2012; Wien, 2014) and authentic assessment (Cooper, 2017; Zessoules & Gardner, 1991). We have already started to invest in our educators and trained all the staff at our previous KG schools in Luqa and Siggiewi according to these principles.

8. Mission Statement

The mission statement of the school is:

Faithful to the charism of our foundress - Mother Margherita De Brincat, we strive to educate the whole person in a value-rich environment, transforming students into true Christians, growing in wisdom, age and grace before God and the people of God, mastering academic skills so that they may contribute to and survive in a global neighbourhood.

9. The long term vision

The long term vision of the school is that of guaranteeing an education of high-quality to its young learners. We want to give our young learners an exceptional experience of education that would enable them to develop a love for learning. Our vision for this year is to consolidate and refine our practice of emergent curriculum (Edwards et al., 2012; Jones, 2012; Wien, 2014) and authentic assessment (Cooper, 2017; Zessoules & Gardner, 1991). In the coming years, we shall focus on other areas to further refine our educational programme.

10. Transition Policy

In the third term, the children are prepared for the transition to year 1 during Circle Time.

Transition meetings take place from KG2 to Year 1 for those children with a statement of needs or a psychological report. Accordingly, two documents are filled in advanced and used during these transition meetings. These are *Transition of Students with Individual*

Needs from Kindergarten to Primary Education (No official statement of needs) (SfCE, n.d.) and *Transition of Students with a Statement of Needs from Kindergarten to Primary Education 2020-2021* (SfCE, n.d.). The meetings involving the teachers and LSEs of both schools, their HODs for inclusion and the parents/guardians are organised to discuss these two documents. This is explained again in the Inclusion Policy.

11. Adequacy Of Human Resources

The SLT ensures that the adequacy of human resources is maintained. The educators are all qualified, with some of them having higher qualifications. The HOD for inclusion and the Social Worker linked with SFS Cospicua shall provide their support at SFS Santa Lucija as well. The Early Intervention teacher shall visit the school as necessary.

12. Adequacy of Physical Resources

The four classrooms have adequate space for the children to learn through play and reach the learning outcomes of the LOF (DQSE, 2015). Learning resources and learning provocations are provided by the educators according to the projects the children are engaged in. Besides, there is a large playroom with learning stations to facilitate free play. There is a large yard intended for break time and outdoor activities.

13. Referrals (E.g.: Child Abuse, Substance Abuse, Bullying, School Attendance)

Referrals are carried out in compliance with the guidelines in the official documentation regarding abuse, bullying and attendance as well as the SfCE document entitled *Safeguarding Children Guidelines and Procedures* (SfCE, 2019). The psychosocial team discusses the case and proceeds with the referral as necessary. The referrals are then followed by the team and the necessary support is provided to the child as indicated by the professionals involved.

14. Compliance With Applicable Legislation, Rules, Regulations, Policies, Procedures And Upholding Of Ethics And Values

The school adheres to all the mandated policies issued by MEDE. As part of the staff development programme, a specific session is dedicated every year to these policies to keep the staff members informed and updated. Moreover, the school revises its policies when a new official policy is issued by MEDE or SfCE.

Health and Safety Policy

1. Compliance with O.H.S.A. legislation

This policy demonstrates the school's commitment to providing a safe environment in accordance with O. H. S. A. legislation.

2. Child Protection

The protection of each child is our priority. Therefore, first of all, the school protects the right of each child to education in a safe environment. The SfCE document entitled *Safeguarding Children in our Schools Guidelines & Procedures* (SfCE, 2019) is used as a guideline for the protection of the child on several issues including concerns and allegations of abuse, bullying, inappropriate behaviour, the safeguarding of vulnerable children, reporting systems and suicide ideation.

Moreover, the children are protected with regards to their data by avoiding any disclosure of sensitive information as per GDPR legislation.

3. Accident Management

The Sister in Charge has to be informed of any accident so that she will officially report it in the *Injury Report File*. A full report has to be compiled indicating the people/items involved, a description of the incident, the action taken and the treatment given.

4. Fire Safety

The school has the necessary firefighting equipment as stipulated in the Risk Assessment Report. All the staff members are familiar with this equipment and its position in the school. This equipment is checked as stipulated in the Risk Assessment Report. Regular fire drills and training for staff in firefighting will be organised by the SLT. Fire exits are kept clear at all times. Smoking is prohibited within the school and in the area around the school in accordance with the legislation. In an event of a fire, the school has to be evacuated immediately as indicated on the instructions. Fire extinguishers are to be removed from their wall brackets only in a case of emergency. There is a fire blanket hung to one of the walls of the kitchenette. Any damage to such equipment has to be reported, damaged

items need to be replaced and action is taken. All the staff are aware of the designated assembly point outside the school premises. The local council is notified of this assembly point and is responsible for putting up the signage.

5. Electrical Safety

The school ensures that all electrical equipment is certified and checked regularly. Any damage to any item using electricity has to be reported for immediate action and the item should not be used. All plugs within the reach of children have to be covered. The electrical system of the school is a safe locked place with access given only to the people responsible for its upkeep and maintenance.

6. First Aid Procedures

First aid boxes are provided on the two floors of the schools and all the staff know where they are kept. All the staff is trained in paediatric first aid procedures. A copy of the first aid training cards of the staff is kept in the school's file. In case of any injury, the school first aiders are called to assist the injured person. Depending on the case, first aid procedures are followed. Any case has to be reported in the *Injury Report File*.

7. Sick Child Policy and Procedure

Sick children are kept in the sickbay, their temperature is taken and their parents/legal guardians are informed. They are picked up by their parents/guardians from the school. In the case of a serious emergency, first aid is given, parents/guardians are informed and the ambulance is called. A medical certificate has to be presented when the child returns to school.

8. Uncollected Child

Children are kept at school with the Sister in Charge until they are collected by their parents/guardians.

9. Healthy Lifestyle

Following the *A Whole School Approach To A Healthy Lifestyle: Healthy Eating And Physical Activity Policy* (MEDE, 2015) the school bans any activities involving unhealthy food. The children participate in the milk and vegetable government scheme. Activities are held as part of the learning process to promote healthy eating. Exercise is encouraged and integrated within the learning programme. The school also has a nut-free policy because some of its children have severe allergies.

10. Safety And Integrity Of Physical Infrastructure

The safety and integrity of the premises and its equipment are vetted through the Risk Assessment. The handymen carry out routine maintenance of the premises and its equipment. If maintenance requires major works, specialised workers are called to the school to carry them out.

11. Good Hygiene Practices/ Daily Cleaning Routines

The school is cleaned every day and according to the stipulated protocols. Besides normal cleaning, all surfaces are then sanitized. There are two part-time cleaners with an alternate schedule: one from 8:00 to 11:00 and the other from 11:00 to 14:00.

Code of Ethics

1. Rationale

The school expects all members to respect its mission statement:

Faithful to the charism of our foundress - Mother Margherita De Brincat, we strive to educate the whole person in a value-rich environment, transforming students into true Christians, growing in wisdom, age and grace before God and the people of God, mastering academic skills in order that they may contribute to and survive in a global neighbourhood.

For this mission statement to be fulfilled, the school has compiled this code of ethics that builds on *The Teacher's Short Handbook* (DES, n.d.) and *Safeguarding Children in Our Schools* (SfCE, 2019).

2. Responsibility

It is the responsibility of all members of staff to fulfil their duties as expected in their position. The SLT is responsible for the quality of the educational programmes and the management of the school. The parents/guardians/legal guardians are important stakeholders in the education of the children. They are expected to take an active role in the education of their children and collaborate with the school to ensure the children's progress and development. Thus, every stakeholder is expected to work hand in hand for the benefit of the children.

No one has the right to damage the property of the school or its equipment.

3. Respect

Respect between all stakeholders is expected at all times and in any type of communication used. The ultimate interest of the school is the children and their educational journey. Thus, any disrespect or lack of collaboration can hinder this process and it will breach the rights and entitlement of the child to education.

4. Conflict resolution

The school invests in the training for its members to work collegially. However, in the case of any conflict or disagreement among staff members or with other stakeholders, the concerned persons are to report to the SLT. The latter use conflict resolution procedures to solve the matters to eliminate any hindrance to the learning process of the children.

5. Inclusion Measures

The school ensures everyone's inclusion. The premises are physically accessible to all, having classes on the lower floor to facilitate the admission of children or the employment of staff with additional needs. This policy also ensures that the children with specific needs or educational needs are well catered for within the school to enable them to reach their full potential. Individual education programmes are tailor-made for these children following meetings between all the stakeholders involved. (Kindly refer to Inclusion Policy in this Manual).

6. Dress Code

All educators are expected to follow the guidelines in *The Teacher's handbook* (DES, n.d). The other staff is also expected to dress as expected in a Church School. The SLT reserves the right to draw the attention of any of its members when the dress code is not followed.

7. High Integrity And Competence Of Employees

All employees have to be approved by MEDE before their employment at the school. This ensures that all employees are qualified for their positions and are expected to fulfil their duties accordingly. POMA clearance is sought for all employees.

8. Commitment To Constant Quest For Quality

Monitoring of the learning process is carried out by the SLT regularly. Every term, the action plans are evaluated by the staff and the SLT. The internal review is carried out with

all stakeholders every year, generally during the second term. At the end of the third term, the action plans are again evaluated and the new SDP is planned. (Kindly refer to Internal Review Procedure in Internal Quality Assurance Policy in this Manual).

Educators attend all training that is organised for them both by the state sector and the Secretariat to ensure high-quality education. Support is given by the SLT, experts and professionals in the area of early years.

9. Prohibition Of Unethical Behaviour Both On A Personal And Professional Basis

The *Safeguarding Children in our Schools Guidelines & Procedures* Booklet (SfCE, 2019) is followed since it includes the procedures that have to be taken in the case of inappropriate behaviour between an adult and a student, from a student to a student and an adult to an adult.

10. Non-Discrimination On Any Grounds Whatsoever

The *Safeguarding Children in our Schools Guidelines & Procedures* Booklet (SfCE, 2019) is followed to ensure that there is no discrimination in the school, neither between employees nor between children. The stipulated procedures are followed should there be any reason to take further action.

11. Fairness and Equity

The *Safeguarding Children in our Schools Guidelines & Procedures* Booklet (SfCE, 2019) is followed to ensure fairness and equity in the school among all stakeholders. The stipulated procedures are followed should there be any reason to take further action.

12. Subordination Of Individual Interests To That Of The Employing Of The School

The school respects the rights of the child (UN, 1989). Albeit very young, their opinions and voices are respected and listened to. The children having a psychological report and/or statement of needs are supported accordingly. With regards to employees, the school respects all their rights and the rules as required by any educational institution.

13. Provision of Stakeholders' Involvement in Decisions

Staff members take an active part in all the decisions taken on the curriculum programme. They are trained in this area and thus, they are expected to take an active role. Other decisions are taken by the SLT and any other stakeholder, depending on the decision that needs to be taken. The Mother Provincial deserved the right to take any other decision that involves the school. The parents/guardians are consulted on those matters in which they can be involved.

Student Information
and
Support Systems Policy

1. Applicable Policies Launched By MEDE

The school informs the staff of the mandated policies listed hereunder:

- *A National Curriculum Framework for All 2012* (MEDE, 2012);
- *Early childhood education & care in Malta - The way forward* (MEDE, 2013);
- *Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024* (MEDE, 2014);
- *A National Literacy Strategy* (MEDE, 2014);
- *Respect For All Framework* (MEDE, 2014);
- *Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools* (MEDE, 2014);
- *Learning Outcomes Framework - Toolkit for the early years* (DQSE, 2015);
- *A Whole School Approach To A Healthy Lifestyle: Healthy Eating And Physical Activity Policy* (MEDE, 2015);
- *Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy* (MEDE, 2015) and
- *A National Inclusive Education Framework* (MEDE, 2019).

The staff is expected to be familiar with these documents. A specific session during one of the school's CoPE days is organised during every scholastic year to keep the teaching staff acquainted with these policies.

2. Record Keeping

Student Campus is the virtual platform used by the school for which all stakeholders have access. Attendance is recorded daily on this platform by the educators. The KGEs make use of the checklist on *Student Campus*, the journal they keep on each child's learning journey and samples of the child's artefacts to discuss the child's progress during Parents' Days. Records also serve the KGEs to suggest ways in which the parents/guardians can broaden the children's learning at home and plan further learning at the school.

3. Planned Communication between the School and the Parents/guardians

Regular communication is kept through emails/*Student Campus* between the school and the parents/guardians. The parents/guardians are informed of the school procedures and the curriculum programme planned for their children at the beginning of the scholastic year. Emergent curriculum and authentic assessment are explained in detail to facilitate the parents'/guardians' understanding of the programme that is intended to lead the children to achieve the learning outcomes for the Kindergarten years.

Parents/guardians' days are organised twice a year; in the first term and the second term. When necessary, meetings are always organised between the educators and the parents/guardians.

4. Child Admission And Dismissal Policy

The children can arrive half an hour early before the morning prayer and leave half an hour after the end of school activities. Supervision is provided during both times.

In the morning, the children are admitted from two entrances, depending on whether they are accompanied by their relatives or have arrived at school by van. They are welcomed by the staff on supervision and by the Sister in Charge. The children go to their classrooms where they can engage in free play until prayer time.

At the time of dismissal, the children going home by van are dismissed first and led into their respective van by the Sister in Charge and the supervisors. Then, the other children can leave school when their parent/guardian or designated relative arrives.

When a child arrives late or leaves early, the parent/guardian or designated relative has to show the ID card to the Sister in Charge. They have to sign the *Late Arrival/Early Dismissal Booklet* indicating the required information and their particulars.

5. Transition to Year 1

The parents/guardians are informed of Open Days and meetings organised by the primary schools in which the children will eventually attend to facilitate progression to Year 1. On the Open Days of St Francis primary schools, the parents/guardians are encouraged to attend together with their children.

Specific transition meetings for Year 1 are held for the children with special educational needs as is explained in the Inclusion Policy.

Inclusion Policy

1. Rationale

St Francis School Santa Lucija is committed to providing an inclusive environment in the everyday practice of the school. The school takes all the necessary measures to ensure that all children are well integrated and that their right to quality education is fulfilled. It commits itself to support all the children to develop their sense of being, their sense of belonging and to become reflective inquisitive learners.

2. Objectives

The personal wellbeing of each child is a priority for the school. The school aims to enable the children to develop their Christian values as the basis for their character formation. It aims at supporting them to build their self-esteem, foster their sense of responsibility and nurture their sense of empathy. The school wants its children to feel valued and secure.

Since the school caters for only four classes, the staff gets to know the children on an individual basis. Thus, individual needs can be better identified and the school can respond to those needs while taking into account the children's personalities and experiences. Thus, we aim to give every child the same opportunities to learn irrespective of gender, ethnicity, social background, attainment and needs.

We argue that parents/guardians are salient stakeholders in the learning journey of their children. The school aims to involve them as much as possible in its plans in addressing the needs of the children.

3. Supporting Inclusion

This policy defines the processes adopted by the school to dismantle the barriers that may hinder the learning journey of individual children due to different learning difficulties related to social and emotional development and/or any impairment that they may have. The phases followed by the school are described in the coming sections of this policy.

3.1 Identification of Needs

The school acknowledges that young children learn at their own pace. Our curriculum programme facilitates the children's learning journeys and helps them to follow their inquiries. Yet, practice indicates that some children may encounter difficulties that may hinder learning. Through observation, educators can identify such difficulties and provide additional support and learning material to support these children to overcome them. They assist each child to become aware that his/her input and cultural background are valued as much as those of the other children. Moreover, close contact is kept with the parents/guardians to verify whether these difficulties are also encountered at home and if any particular action is being already taken by the parents/guardians. To sum up, during this phase, the key questions are:

1. Are all children learning and progressing?
2. Is there any children who require additional attention?
3. How can we maximise their potential at school?
4. How can their parents/guardians support the learning process of their children?

3.2 Differentiated Provision for children with Special Educational Needs

In some cases, some children require differentiated provision. Some of them are admitted into the school already with a statement of needs or psychological report. In that case, a meeting is held between the educators and the parents/guardians to get to know the child and facilitate the transition. During the first month of the school year, the MAPS and IEP meetings are held to discuss the educational programme in detail. A differentiated programme may involve specialised interventions, particular resources and a series of scaffolded learning objectives to facilitate the attainment of learning outcomes. This programme is followed throughout the school year and is reviewed at the end of every term. If changes are required, meetings are again organised to make the necessary changes.

3.3 Higher Ability Children

The educators may notice that some children are advanced in their learning and can be challenged further. Thus, additional learning provocations are added in the setting to cater for these children. Their parents are also contacted and advised on how their children's learning can be supported at home.

3.4 Staff Development

It is crucial that the staff are always au courant of the developments in the educational sphere related to inclusion to provide an education of high quality to all its young pupils. In view of this, the SLT reviews the needs of the educators and organises staff development sessions accordingly. The members of staff are encouraged to engage in self-sought courses on inclusion as well. The HOD for Inclusion is also invited to discuss or hold a session with the staff whenever this is necessary.

3.5 Collaborating with Outside Agencies

The school welcomes the interventions of specialists working with outside agencies. These experts are generally suggested by the parents/guardians. Upon request, they are invited to the school to visit and observe the children in their learning environment. Follow-up meetings are eventually held with educators and parents to discuss ways in which the children can be better supported in their learning.

3.6 Transition of Students with Special Educational Needs

Transition meetings take place from KG2 to Year 1 for those children with a statement of needs or a psychological report. Accordingly, two documents are filled in advance and used during these transition meetings. These are *Transition of Students with Individual Needs from Kindergarten to Primary Education (No official statement of needs)* (SfCE, n.d.) and *Transition of Students with a Statement of Needs from Kindergarten to Primary Education 2020-2021* (SfCE, n.d.). The meetings involving the teachers and LSEs of both our school and the primary school, their HoDs for Inclusion and the parents/guardians are organised to discuss these two documents.

Appeals and Complaints Procedures

1. Rationale

These procedures refer to the right of appeal and course of action regarding complaints that may involve the school.

2. Definitions

An appeal may be defined as *'the process in which cases are reviewed by a higher authority, where parties request a formal change to an official decision'*.

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

3. Rationale

3.1 Appeals Against School Decisions

The right of appeal is generally related to the employment of new staff. Each call for applications denotes a section that explains the right of appeal of applicants and the procedures that need to be followed.

3.2 Complaints

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally. The school takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

Everyone's perspective is respected and everyone is given a voice. Complaints can be made in person or through the official channels of the school. The SLT listens to the complaints that the school may receive and calls meetings to resolve them. However, the school may ask for external support and guidance when the complaint cannot be resolved internally.

3.3 Anonymous Complaints

Stakeholders are always encouraged to seek information from the school's official sources and to verify matters with the school. In the case of an anonymous complaint, the SLT determines whether it should be investigated or not.

Administration Policy

1. List of Fees

As a Church school, fees are not collected as per State Vatican 1991 agreement.

2. Assurance of institutional probity

The salaries of the school’s personnel are paid by Government as per State Vatican 1991 agreement. Parents contribute through donations for the further development and maintenance of the school. The Head of School, Assistant Heads, Kindergarten Educators and Learning Support Educators are all qualified personnel as MEDE regulations and approved by MEDE.

3.0 Organisational Structure of the School

St Francis Kindergarten Santa Lucija is an annexe to St Francis Primary School, Cospicua. Hence the Head of St Francis Primary School, Cospicua has the overall responsibility of this annexe. An Assistant Head of St Francis School Cospicua is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Kindergarten. The subsequent diagram explains the organisational structure of the school:

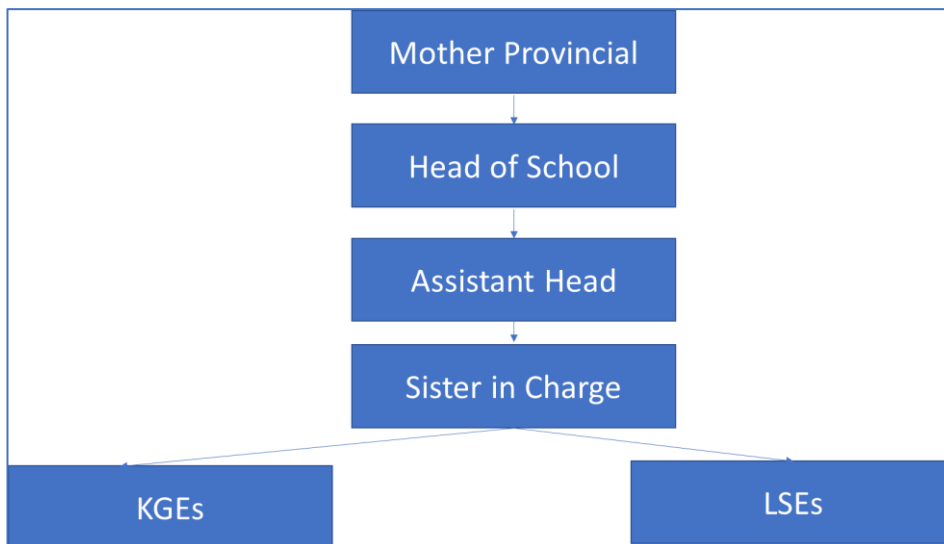


Figure 1

4.0 Provision of Stakeholder Involvement in Decisions

The Head of school is accountable to the Provincial of the Franciscan Sisters. Structural and prominent decisions are taken with the Mother Superior. Other decisions are taken by the SLT. Consultations are carried out with the staff and/or parents, depending on the issue.

5.0 Review of Manual

This manual is compiled for the opening of the school for the scholastic Year 2020-2021. It will be reviewed to reflect changes taken on a national, sector or school level at the end of every scholastic year, should there be the need.

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