



# ABSENTEEISM PROCEDURES

Mandatory education in Malta applies to all children between the ages of 5 and 16. By law, the Head of School is required to report absenteeism to the authorities. These procedures align with the framework established by the National Schools Support Services.

# ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE

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## 1. OBJECTIVES

- To record, excuse, monitor and follow up student attendance in order to meet the requirements of Education Act, Chapter 605, 2021.
- To provide a uniform reporting system and procedure to be followed by all schools.
- To facilitate the implementation of the policy amongst the various stakeholders.

## 2. REPORTING ATTENDANCE

### 2.1 RESPONSIBILITY OF HEAD OF SCHOOL

The Head of School has a pivotal role in the effective implementation of this policy. The final goal of this policy is students' attainment. Thus, it is of critical importance that the judgments taken for un/justified absenteeism be taken in a context of learning and attainment.

#### 2.1.1

The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that attendance records are maintained in the approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of students. If changes are to be affected, they must be up to date by the end of the week

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#### 2.1.2

The medical certificates presented by the parents must satisfy a list of validity criteria (Appendix 2). If this is not the case, the Head of School must refuse the medical certificate and inform the parent that it is not valid.

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#### 2.1.3

The Head of School is to ensure that parents of compulsory school aged students are to be informed of their legal obligations with regards to their son/daughter's regular school attendance at the beginning of every scholastic year.

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#### 2.1.4

Parents are to be informed about the procedures which are to be followed in case of absences and the consequences faced if these procedures are not adhered to (Appendix 3). It is being suggested that the non-attendance procedures are published in school diaries, newsletters, school websites and other platforms. It is to be made clear that there will be zero tolerance to unauthorised absences from school.

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#### 2.1.5

It is being recommended that a Medical Certificate Record Card (MCRC) is provided to every student. Parents are to take the MCRC when they visit the general practitioner (GP) who will issue a medical certificate to be submitted to the school when the student is sick. The GP is to fill in the MCRC (Appendix 4). The parent is to submit the medical certificate together with the MCRC to the school within the stipulated time frame (Clause 3.2). Hence, parents have the responsibility to make use of the MCRC properly. If lost, the MCRC, will be replaced only once, each scholastic year. Upon receipt, a school staff member will sign the MCRC, and input the date of receipt. In case of separated or divorced parents, an MCRC will be provided to each parent.

**Schools can also opt to develop an online system whereby parents can upload Medical Certificates. This can replace the MCRC system.**

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#### 2.1.6

Schools are to ensure that they have updated contact details of students. Parents are to inform the school immediately when any details change.

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#### 2.1.7

It is good practice to promote a culture of school attendance amongst pupils attending kindergarten classes (up to age 5) as regular attendance from a very young age will promote healthy development and good performance in later years in school. For this reason, parents with children up to age 5 are to be educated in the importance of schooling and in ensuring that their child attends school regularly.

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#### 2.1.8

During Parents' Day, an attendance report is to be part of the agenda discussed with the parents. In case of improved attendance parents should be praised for the effort.

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#### 2.1.9

It is the responsibility of the Head of School to detect, at the earliest, issues related to non-attendance. Heads are to organise supportive meetings with parents to come up with an Attendance Improvement Plan. Even in justified absences, the Head of School should reflect about the meaning of such absences and may refer to the SFCE Social Worker for consultation and intervention as necessary (Appendix 1).

## 2.2 THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SOCIAL WORKER

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#### 2.2.1

To initiate contact with the student and his /her family after the student is referred by the school and in cases where the school's attempts did not result in bringing back the student to school.

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#### 2.2.2

To assess and identify the sources leading to absenteeism.

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#### 2.2.3

To formulate an action plan to target sources leading to absenteeism in collaboration with the SMT and other professionals within and outside school.

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#### 2.2.4

To create a link between the student, his/ her family and the school.

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#### 2.2.5

To support the school with queries related to these procedures.

### 3. ELECTRONIC REPORTING OF ATTENDANCE

#### 3.1 MEDICAL CERTIFICATE

In the case of a student who is sick, a Medical Certificate is to be presented on the first day the student returns to school or sent before through email. If a medical certificate is submitted late the Head of School can make exceptions if valid justifications are provided. Nonetheless, the medical certificate is to be submitted within a maximum of three (3) scholastic days from when the student returns to school. If the student is sick for more than seven (7) consecutive days, the first medical certificate must be handed in by hand or sent through email by the end of the seventh day.

##### 3.1.1

Medical certificates must be renewed after a period of seven (7) consecutive school days unless the certificate is issued by a medical consultant or psychiatrist. In this case, the certificate is to be renewed every month. In cases where a GP issues an open certificate, this must be renewed after the period of ten (10) consecutive school days.

#### 3.2 UNJUSTIFIED ABSENCE

Students who do not attend school and have no justification should be marked as 'Absent'. If a student is present in the morning but leaves later during the day, this needs to be noted in the school records.

#### 3.3 EXCUSED ABSENCE

If parents inform the school that a student is sick, he / she is marked as excused on the school records on the first two (2) days and absent from the 3rd day onwards, until and if a medical certificate is provided within the stipulated timeframe (clause 3.2)

#### 3.4 MEDICAL ABSENCE

If a student was originally marked as 'Absent' and a medical certificate is presented within the stipulated time as indicated in Clause 3.2, the school medical record should be amended accordingly.

#### 3.5 JUSTIFICATION FOR ABSENCE

Parents can phone or send a note or email to the Head of School to explain their child's absence (Appendix 5) It is at the discretion of the Head of School to accept or reject the parents' explanation and parents are informed accordingly. If parents inform the school by phone, a written note or email should be forwarded to the school. If the Head of School deems the explanation to be reasonable the student should be marked as 'Excused'. Reasons include family health issues, hospital visits, death of family members, funerals and severe weather conditions. If the Head of School is not satisfied with the explanation given, students are to be marked as 'Absent' and parents are to be informed. The Head of School should not, in any circumstance, ask parents to produce a medical certificate to justify absences unless the student was reported sick.

### 3.6 TRIPS ABROAD

With regards to trips abroad lasting less than three (3) weeks authorisation will only be granted for the following reasons: medical, funerals, weddings of close family members, that is, parents or siblings, organised cultural and educational trips and renewal of VISA. Documented evidence needs to be provided whenever such a request is submitted to the school. **Requests to go abroad exceeding fifteen (15) consecutive scholastic days are to be forwarded to the NSSS Principal Social Worker** (Appendix 6). If the Head of School is not satisfied with the explanation given, students are to be marked as 'Absent' and parents are to be informed.

### 3.8 SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS

The Head of School closely monitors and assists primary students who miss more than 9 scholastic days: days without authorisation with the help of the assistant heads, class teacher and guidance teachers.

Assistance includes contact with student, phone calls and meetings with the parents/legal guardians and referral/s to appropriate services and practitioners.

### 3.9 SEWO7 FORM

The SMT shall fill in the online SEWO7 form (Appendix 9) by the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the following month for students who fail to attend school for more than three (3) days during a particular month without a valid justification within the stipulated timeframe. The Social Work Services within the National School Support Services will automatically have access to this data. It is important that parents are notified by sending a pdf copy of the SEWO7 form via email. The same procedure is to be applied with parents of students who miss 9 cumulative days without a valid justification. This monthly procedure is mandatory for all schools.

### 3.10 REFERRING TO SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER

If the Head of School notes that a student is habitually absent even if this long-term absence is covered by medical certificates, he is to refer the student to the SFCE Social Worker allocated to the school (Appendix 1). No parental consent is needed.

## 4. SPECIFIC RECORDING PROCEDURES

### 4.1 KINDERGARTEN

#### 4.1.1

Absent notes are to be sent to parents only if the school is concerned about the habitual absenteeism of the student concerned. Heads of Schools are encouraged to provide support services to families.

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#### 4.1.2

No medical certificate is required, but parents are encouraged to provide a copy.

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#### 4.1.3

Students who turn 5 in Kindergarten are legally obliged to attend school every day, in which case the procedures mentioned in the General section and in the Primary School Section will begin to apply.

## 4.2 PRIMARY SCHOOLS (YEARS 1 TO 6)

### 4.2.1

Attendance of students in Primary Schools must follow the official school calendar as issued at the beginning of each scholastic year.

### 4.2.2

The last day that is recorded for attendance purposes should match with the above calendar.

### 4.2.3

At the end of the third term the last day that attendance is recorded even for year 1, 2 and 3 students, should coincide with the last day of exams that are taken by Year 4, 5 and 6

## 4.3 SECONDARY SCHOOLS (YEARS 7 TO 11)

### 4.3.1 YEARS 7 TO 10:

#### 4.3.1.1

Attendance of students in secondary school must follow the official school calendar as issued by the respective school at the beginning of each scholastic year.

#### 4.3.1.2

The last day that is recorded for attendance purposes for each term should follow the above calendar.

#### 4.3.1.3

At the end of the third term the last day that attendance is recorded should coincide with the last day of annual examinations for students in Years 7 to 10.

#### 4.3.1.4

On those days when examinations are not held, students are to be recorded under 'Excused' (study days)

### 4.3.2 YEAR 11

#### 4.3.2.1

Attendance still must be inputted on a regular basis as with other grades in the case of students sitting for the MATSEC Examinations. The latter are marked as Excused to attend Oral Exams.

#### 4.3.2.2

Students turning 16 years of age after the beginning of Year 11 are still legally obliged to complete the scholastic year. Hence, these students' attendance is to be inputted and absenteeism reported accordingly.

#### 4.3.2.4

Year 11 students attending an Alternate Educational Programme such as the Adolescent Day Programme offered by the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) are to apply for a school exemption (Refer to 4.5). In such circumstances it is good practice to liaise with ADP regarding attendance patterns to this programme.

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#### 4.3.3 SERVIZZ GHOZZA – REPORTING ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

##### 4.3.3.1

A student who is pregnant is to be referred to Servizz Ghozza by the Head of School.

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##### 4.3.3.2

A meeting is to be organised between the school, Servizz Ghozza and other Psychosocial personnel involved, within two weeks from the date of referral to formulate an educational plan for the student, reflecting her present needs. Once the student starts attending Servizz Ghozza, the latter will inform the Head of School in writing and will also send the attendance from then onwards, once a week. Attendance is to be recorded by the school Administration, at the end of each week. Attendance procedures will still apply.

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##### 4.3.3.3

A student who gives birth can avail herself of three month's excused absence from date of birth. During this period an educational plan is formulated in liaison with the student and her family. If it is determined by the social worker in liaison with Servizz Ghozza that for the benefit of the student and her child, the student does not return to school, a school exemption will be issued. If not, the student is expected to return to school after three months from giving birth. In the second instance, an adapted and/or flexible time-table can be suggested if in the best interest of the student and the new born. General Procedures: Students attending Alternative Educational Programme/Service

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#### 4.4.1

Students attending an Alternative Educational Programme/Service offered by the Education Directorates outside school premises, including Home Tuition, part-time students at a Resource Centre, YPU classes Hospital classes or other programmes organised by the DES, are to be marked as 'present elsewhere' on the SIMS when they attend the respective programme or service. A comment is to be inserted specifying the programme/service the student is benefitting from.

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#### 4.4.2

Students attending an Alternative Educational Programme/Service provided in collaboration with entities/NGOs outside the Education Directorates during school hours are to be marked as 'present elsewhere' on the SMIS when they attend the respective programme or service. A comment is to be inserted on the SMIS specifying the programme/service the student is benefitting from.

### 4.5 WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL

If the school receive a confirmation letter that the student has been enrolled and is attending a school abroad, the student is placed on withdrawn list on the SMIS.

#### 4.6 APPLICATION FOR SCHOOL EXEMPTION

A student who has reached 15 years and wants to engage in employment during school holidays or after school hours is eligible to apply for a school exemption on the following link: [Request for School Exemption and Authorisation for Employment of Minors \(16-\) \(gov.mt\)](http://Request for School Exemption and Authorisation for Employment of Minors (16-) (gov.mt)). A temporary exemption will be issued following approval by the Department for Industrial and Employment Relations (DIER). Consequently, the parents/legal guardians of the student need to present the exemption to the Social Security Department (DSS) Regional Offices who will issue the NI Number.

A student who is 15 years old and completed Year 11 does not need to apply for a school exemption to engage in employment. The student is to present the School Leaving Certificate and Profile, or the Confirmation of Termination of Compulsory Schooling Form signed by the School (refer to Appendix 7) at the DSS Regional Offices who will issue the NI Number.

A student who is 15 years old but has not completed compulsory schooling can also apply for a school exemption only when this is recommended by both the school and an education psycho-social professional working in the respective school. In these instances, the application form which is found on the link provided above is to be accompanied by a report compiled by the psycho-social professional. A permanent exemption will be issued following approval by DIER. Consequently, the parents of the student need to present the exemption to the Social Security Department (DSS) who will issue the NI Number. This procedure also applies for students who will be attending the FSWS Alternative Learning Programme or Youth.Inc before they complete compulsory schooling.

### 5. FOREIGN STUDENTS

An analysis of attendance statistics led to the identification of an increase in foreign students who stop attending school without informing the school authorities. A leaflet with information regarding attendance procedures will be given to the parents upon registration. Leaflet will be provided in different languages.

#### 5.1 PROCEDURES FOR EU NATIONALS

- When the student misses 25 consecutive unauthorised days the Head of School is to refer the student to the school social worker if school fail to reach family by phone
- The social worker will conduct a home visit
- If the home visit is unsuccessful a registered letter (Appendix 8) will be sent by the school to the parents at the same address informing the parents that if they do not contact the school within 5 days from receipt further action will be taken
- If no contact is made with the school within the stipulated time frame the student will be moved to Probably Left Island Class. Such category needs to be added to the attendance reporting systems.

#### 5.2. PROCEDURES FOR NON-EU (TCN) NATIONALS

- When the student misses 25 consecutive unauthorised days the Head of School is to refer the student to the school social worker if school fail to reach family by phone
- The social worker will conduct a home visit
- If the home visit is unsuccessful a registered letter (Appendix 8) will be sent to the parents by the school at the same address informing the parents that if they do not contact the school within 5 days from receipt of letter student will be removed from official school register.

- If no contact is made with the school within the stipulated time frame the social worker will send an email with details of the student and his/her family to the contact person within the Malta Police Force asking for information on the family's whereabouts.
- If the Malta Police Force have no information about the family's whereabouts student is moved to Probably Left Island Class. Such category needs to be added to the attendance reporting systems.

#### 5.3. WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL: FOREIGN NATIONALS

If the school receive a confirmation letter that the student has been enrolled and is attending in a school abroad, the student is placed on withdrawn list on the school reporting system.

#### 6. CHANGES TO THE GUIDELINES

Any changes to procedures that are deemed necessary, with regards to these guidelines, will be communicated through a letter circular issued by the Directorate for Education.

## APPENDIX 1: SOCIAL WORK REFERRAL FORM

See referral on the next page or ask college social worker for a soft copy.



### Student Services Referral Form

**Note: (for school purposes only) Please fill in the details to the best of your knowledge. Kindly fill in student's personal details before filling in reasons for referral. DO NOT ASK the student for any of the information below.**

Name of School:		
Date of Referral:		
Person making referral:		
Role of person making referral:		
Email address:		

Name of Student:		
Class:		DOB/Age:

Contact Numbers:		
Parent /Guardian1:		
Parent/Guardian 2:		
Custodial Arrangements (if applicable)		Court Ruling Date:

#### Service/s being referred to professionals:

Anti-Bullying Team:   
Career Advisory:   
Therapeutic Support\*

Substance Abuse:   
Youth Work   
Social Work

*\*(Therapeutic support includes interventions from counsellors/psychotherapists/play therapists depending on the student's needs.)*

#### Presenting Issues:

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## APPENDIX 2: VALID MEDICAL CERTIFICATES

What constitutes a 'valid' medical certificate?

A Head of School shall only accept a certificate of illness if such certificate contains the following information:

- (a) the name, surname and registration number of practitioner;
- (b) the name of the student;
- (c) the date of the examination or the date of issuing of the certificate of illness - the school shall not accept a medical certificate that does not show the date of issue or consultation;
- (d) the exact period of recommended absence from school due to illness. Certificate must be renewed after a period of 7 consecutive days; unless issued by a psychiatrist or consultant. In this case the certificate is to be renewed every month

The certificate is submitted by not later than 3 days after the student returns to school. Nonetheless, if the student is sick for more than 5 consecutive school days, the certificate has to be handed in by the end of the fifth day when in primary and on the first day the student returns to school if he attends a middle or secondary school

## APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION TO PARENTS

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### Justified Absence

If a student is absent only one day, a written justification from a parent to the Head of School will be enough. If the student is sick and visits a doctor, the note or email can be replaced by the medical certificate. In each instance, the Head of School will inform the parents if the justification was accepted or not. If the justification is not accepted, student will be marked as absent.

When a student is sick for more than 2 days a medical certificate is then required.

A student is also excused with justified absence if the Head of School is presented with valid documentation (examples: in case of emergency family travel abroad, musical exams falling on school days, students representing the nation in activities abroad, bereavement, etc...).

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### Unjustified Absence

A student is habitually absent if he/she is absent for 3 or more days without any justification. In the interest of the student, the Head of School may not accept the justification by the parent and ask for a formal medical certificate when a student is sick.

When a student has been absent for 9 days (cumulative) without any justification, the Education Psycho-Social Services Personnel will intervene to address the problem at an early stage.

#### APPENDIX 4: MEDICAL CERTIFICATE RECORD CARD

For copies of Medical Certificate Record Cards please contact Social Work Service, NSSS on 25983422/67

## APPENDIX 5: SCHOOL ABSENTEEISM NOTE

See note on the next page.

## School Absenteeism Note

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Head of School,

Kindly note that \_\_\_\_\_ who is in Year \_\_\_\_\_ was absent from school on \_\_\_\_\_ due to: (tick where applicable)

Medical appointment (Hospital, dentist, SpLD ...)

*(to be accompanied by the appointment note)*

Minor illness (Headache, dizzy, light fever...)

Family emergency issues (Funeral, wedding ...)

Other (please specify)

Please note that this Note cannot be used for more than 2 consecutive DAYS since a medical certificate is required when the student is sick for more than 2 days.

Parent's/Guardian's name

Signature

ID Card Number

Approved / Not Approved      Remarks:

Nota ta' Assenteiżmu mill-Iskola

Data: \_\_\_\_\_

Għażiż Kap tal-Iskola,

Qed niktablek biex ngharrfek li \_\_\_\_\_ ta' Year \_\_\_\_\_ ma ġiex skola nhar \_\_\_\_\_ minħabba: (immarka fejn japplika)

Appuntament mediku (Sptar, Dentist, SpLD...)

*(trid tintbagħha in-nota tal-appuntament)*

Mard mhux serju (Uġiġi ta' ras, sturdament, deni ħafif...)

Emergenza familjari (Funeral, tieg...)

Raġuni oħra (jekk jogħġibok spċċifika)

Din in-nota tista' tintuża BISS għal 2 konsekuttivi. Jekk l-istudent ifalli aktar ġranet minħabba mard irid jippreżenta certifikat tat-tabib.

Isem tal-ġenituri/kustodju

Firma

Numru tal-Karta tal-Identita'

Approvat / Mhux Approvat      Rimarki:

## APPENDIX 6: APPLICATION FOR TRAVEL EXEMPTION

The Travel Exemption Form in English can be accessed following the link below:

<https://eforms.gov.mt/pdfforms.aspx?fid=est067e>

The Travel Exemption Form in Maltese can be accessed following the link below:

<https://eforms.gov.mt/pdfforms.aspx?fid=est067m>

## APPENDIX 7: CONFIRMATION OF COMPLETION OF YEAR 11 (FORM 5)

See note on the next page.

If school leaving certificate not issued – this form will be issued and signed by the Head



**SOCIAL WORK SERVICE**  
Confirmation of Completion of Year 11 (Form 5)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

I.D. Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby confirm that the student attended this school and has completed Year 11 (Form 5)

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Signature of Head of School

School stamp

## APPENDIX 8: LETTER TO FOREIGN STUDENTS WHO POSSIBLY LEFT THE ISLAND

College/School logo

Date:

Dear Parents/Legal Guardians,

Please note that your son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ (ID ) \_\_\_\_\_ has been absent from school for over 25 consecutive days ( insert dates). Over this period of absence, both (name of school) and the College Social Worker, attempted to contact you in order to establish whether or not your son/daughter is attending another school, locally or abroad. Notwithstanding the numerous attempts, no contact whatsoever could be established.

By means of this registered letter (name of School) is once again attempting to contact you in order to establish your son's/daughter's present school location. Please be informed that should there be no reply to this letter within five days from receipt of this letter, your son/daughter will be removed from the school list.

Regards,

(Signature of Head of School)

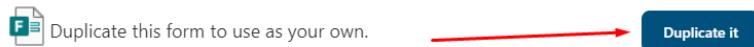
(Name of Head of School)

Head of School

## APPENDIX 9: SEW07 ONLINE FORM

1. Access the SEW07 online form via the link [SEW07 Template](#)

2. Click on the **Duplicate it**



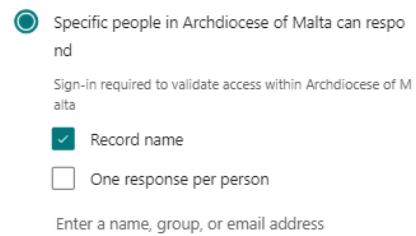
3. Edit the title to input the school's name, including the Primary/Secondary.

[School Name] Formola  
SEW07

4. Click on the **Collect responses**



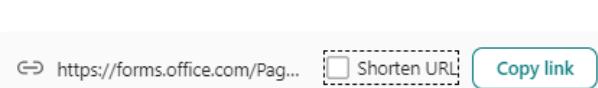
5. Select **Specific people in [School Name]** can respond and add your email address. The email address must be the head of school email address, hence it's important to make sure that the **Record name** is checked.



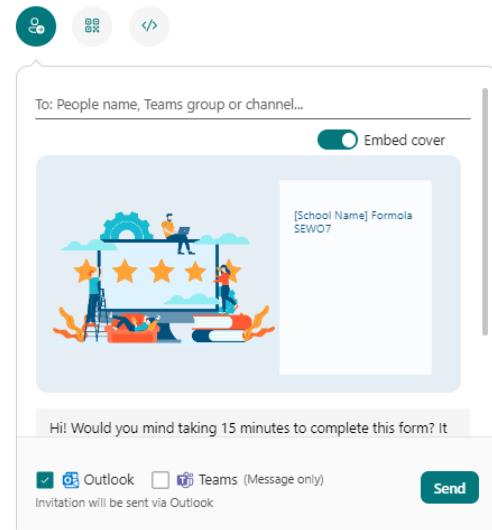
6. You can save the link by

a. Clicking on the **Copy link**,

paste it in an Internet browser and bookmark the link or by



b. Sending it to yourself via email

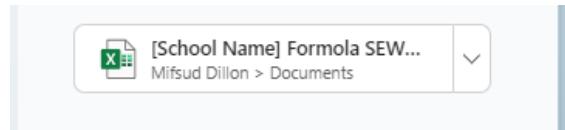


## Sharing the SEW07 Information

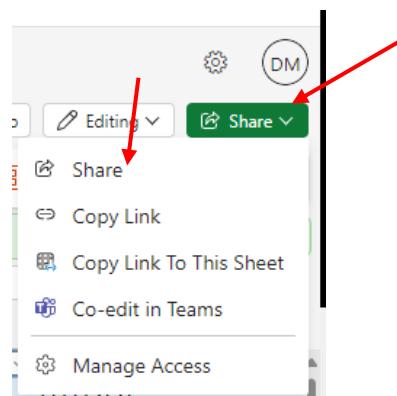
1. Click on Collect Responses



2. Click on the Excel Document



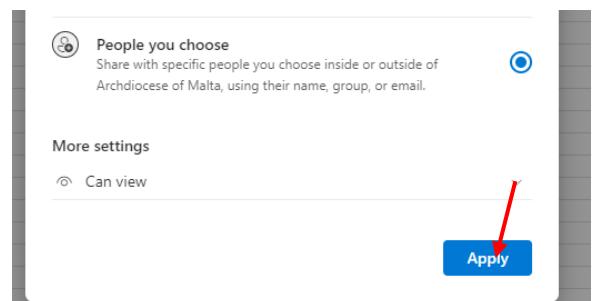
3. Click on Share and again on Share



4. Click on the Settings icon

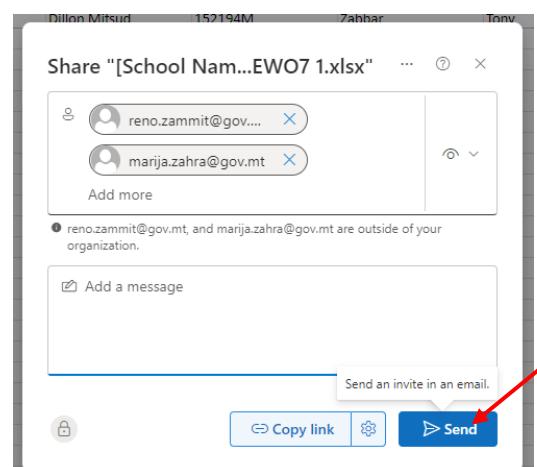


5. Select People you choose, set it to Can view and click Apply



6. Input the below emails and click Send.

- [reno.zammit@gov.mt](mailto:reno.zammit@gov.mt)
- [marija.zahra@gov.mt](mailto:marija.zahra@gov.mt)

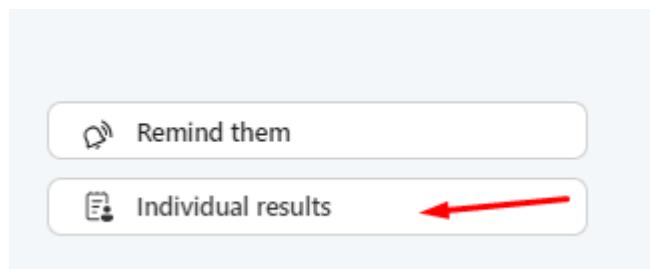


## Sharing the SEW07 Information with parents.

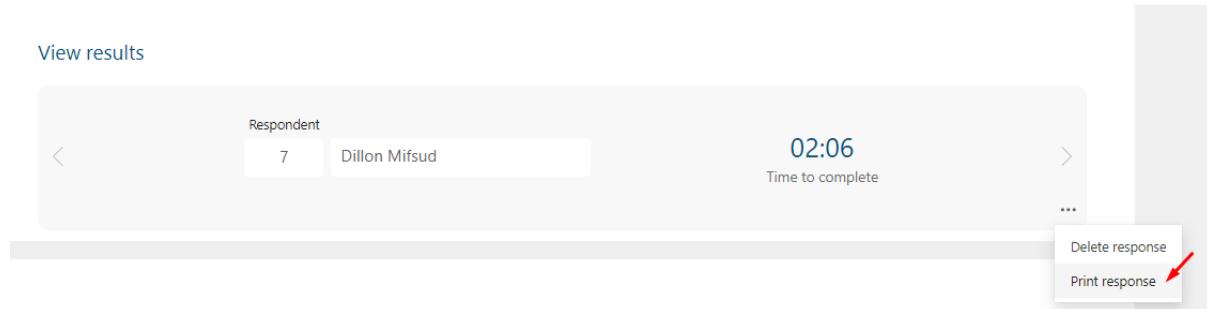
1. Click on **Collect Responses**



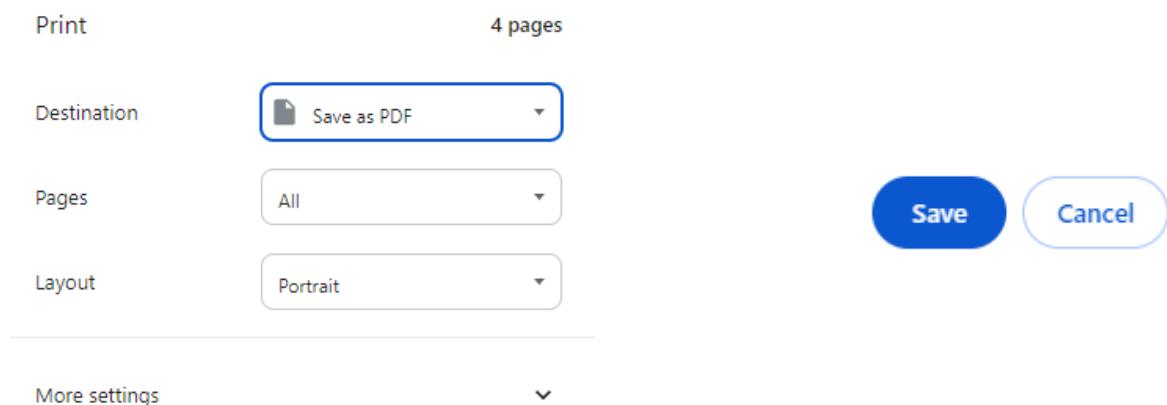
2. Click on the **Individual results**



3. Click on the 3 dots and click on **Print response**



4. The destination must be set to **Save as PDF** and click **Save**



5. Send the attachment on the parent's email address.