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**DIRECTORATE FOR
QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN EDUCATION
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Quality Assurance Department

Report Summary of the External Review by the QAD

for

**Maria Regina College
Dun Manwel Attard
Young Adult Education Resource Centre
Wardija**

**External Review carried out from
20th to 23rd March 2018**

12th May 2018

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Introduction

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

Educational Leadership and Management

Areas of strength

- The Head of School is proactive in advocating for the well-being of the learners and their right to have a quality education and an opportunity to work.
- The Head of School demonstrates strong organisational skills and has managed to bring about several operational and curricular changes.
- There is a strong sense of collegiality among the members of the Senior Leadership Team.
- The Head of School is committed to devolved leadership, with many staff members having a role of responsibility that goes beyond their core curricular duties.
- The Head of School has forged close collaborative links with external agencies and companies, thus helping learners gain work-based experiences and enhancing their self-confidence and employability skills.

A way forward

While the Head of School has been very insightful and proactive in cultivating a nurturing learning environment, he should now consider how best to manage the range of his duties so that these include more hands-on curriculum leadership responsibilities. His more frequent presence around the school premises, together with his support during formal and informal classroom observations would contribute to a greater awareness of the quality of learning and teaching. Additionally, his feedback to members of staff would also reinforce positive teaching and assessment practices and provide constructive feedback on areas for improvement.

The inclusion of Curriculum Development Session slots in teachers' timetables needs to be further explored in collaboration with and support of the College Principal and the Directorate for Educational Services since this is pivotal in the development of a professional learning community. The periodical purposeful presence of the Head of School and/or the Assistant Head in curriculum development sessions, as experienced in previous years, would strengthen their role as curricular leaders and would contribute further towards creating a more collegial school community.

The Senior Leadership Team is to seek further ways to carry out a Training Needs Analysis amongst all members of staff to identify the centre's professional development needs. A continuum of whole-school professional development which is regular, structured, collaborative and embedded in practice would enhance even further teachers' professional knowledge and specialised skills in responding to increasing learner diversity. The Senior Leadership Team should also seek to create more opportunities for members of staff to share their professional knowledge and skills. These would help to inform personal teacher development and continue to build on the knowledge and practices of all teaching staff as a whole community.

The Senior Leadership Team is encouraged to find ways to improve internal evaluative mechanisms so that the Centre Development Plan can effectively manage to identify, prioritise and address key issues through meaningful SMART action plans that lead to the centre's improvement. A more comprehensive SWOT exercise resulting from an increased range of research tools including

outcomes from lesson observations would enable members of staff to make more informed decisions on the selection of priorities. The teaching staff is encouraged to formulate actions which are broken down into smaller steps with specific timeframes for each Path of learning or for the different learning areas. Regular monitoring and evaluation of actions would further ascertain the success of the internal evaluation exercise.

Learning and Teaching

Areas of strength

- The three pathways offered at the centre aim to ensure that each individual's learning needs are respected and catered for.
- The learning climate at the centre is characterised by a sense of care, respect and attention to the well-being and holistic development of all learners.
- The collaborative and supportive team approach, together with a feeling of shared responsibility among members of staff, is helping to ensure that the curriculum offered meets the needs, abilities and interests of learners to achieve their full potential.
- The school is continuously exploring ways to extend learning and teaching beyond the boundaries of the classroom through various initiatives.

A way forward

The more widespread use of visual prompting and cueing, including the more consistent use of a visual representation of the daily routine, especially with non-verbal learners or with learners who have severe communication difficulties is recommended. Such communication aids may help learners to understand language used by others and to express their own needs, thoughts and wants.

Curricular goals for each subject in the Individual Educational and Vocational Plan (IEVP) should be established incrementally throughout the year to increase their relevance. Moreover, all IEVPs should be monitored and evaluated more frequently as this would help to extend the learning experiences of all learners. The support of external professionals to educators in the setting of specific, measurable, realistic and attainable individual goals and targets in learners' IEVPs would also be valuable. This would also guide teachers' lesson planning to be more focused and specifically linked to the priority needs of the learners.

While reviewers observed good practices in most learning experiences observed, educators at the centre should keep in mind to avoid prolonged explanations and/or focussing on learner productivity rather than the learning process so that the continuous and active learner participation in any given activity is not compromised.

The teaching staff is encouraged to consider keeping a more authentic system of recording learners' progress and achievements as is being presently done with learners following the Achieve programme. This can provide more evidence of each pupil's ongoing progress in relation to their IEVP, thus celebrating and valuing learners' learning progress and achievements.

School Ethos

Areas of strength

- The recently expanded and restructured premises are offering a welcoming, safe and tranquil environment to all learners.
- Learners' voice, together with their self-esteem and self-confidence, are being developed effectively in the centre through their engagement in both the student council and the EkoSkola committee.
- Parental involvement in all aspects of life at the centre is proactively promoted, encouraged, facilitated and valued.

A way forward

The Senior Leadership Team is encouraged to consider organising purposeful and meaningful whole school gatherings, such as assemblies, for learners to demonstrate their abilities and achievements, to voice their opinions and encourage further the learners' strong sense of belonging and pride in the centre. These gatherings can also serve as a platform where members of staff and learners can celebrate together.

External support by professionals within the College-based psychosocial team and those of the National School Support Services are significantly needed, especially when the growing diversity of the needs of learners is considered. In this context, the criteria by which learners are admitted to the centre also need to be evaluated.

Expert guidance and specific training regarding the management and follow-up of acute challenging behaviour is required.

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.

- The Head of School needs to manage the range of his present duties so that these include more hands-on curriculum leadership responsibilities. His more frequent presence and support during formal and informal classroom observations would contribute to his greater awareness of the quality of learning and teaching. His feedback to members of staff would also reinforce positive teaching and assessment practices and provide constructive feedback on areas for improvement. His periodical presence during curriculum development sessions when these are re-established, would continue to strengthen his role as a curricular leader.
- The Senior Leadership Team is to seek further ways to carry out a Training Needs Analysis amongst all members of staff to identify the centre's professional development needs. A continuum of whole-school professional development which is regular, structured, collaborative and embedded in practice would enhance even further teachers' professional knowledge and specialised skills to respond to the increased learner diversity. Intensive staff training regarding the management and follow-up of acute challenging behaviour is urgently needed.
- The Senior Leadership Team is encouraged to find ways to improve internal evaluative mechanisms so that the Centre Development Plan can effectively manage to identify, prioritise and address key issues through meaningful SMART action plans that lead to the centre's improvement.
- Curricular goals for each subject in the Individual Educational and Vocational Plan (IEVP) should be established incrementally throughout the year to increase their relevance. Moreover, all IEVPs should be monitored and evaluated more frequently as this would help to extend the learning experiences of all learners.
- The teaching staff is encouraged to consider keeping a more authentic system of recording learners' progress and achievements as is being presently done with learners following the Achieve programme. This can provide more evidence of each learner's ongoing progress in relation to their IEVP, thus celebrating and valuing learners' progress and achievements.
- External support by professionals within the National School Support Services and by the College-based psychosocial team is significantly needed:
 - The criteria by which learners are admitted to the centre need to be re-evaluated;
 - Their support to educators in the setting of individual goals and targets in learners' IEVP would be valuable. This would also serve well to guide teachers' lesson planning to be more focused and specifically linked to the priority needs of the learners;
 - The needs of the learners should be regularly reviewed so that the adequate placement and resources are identified for the learners' particular needs.

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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Appendix

Standards

- 1.1 The Head of School has a clear vision for the school and, in collaboration with the rest of the Senior Management Team, fosters and supports a professional learning community.
- 1.2 The school has effective internal evaluation processes that inform school development planning. The school development planning documentation (SDP) has appropriate structure, content and format facilitating effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- 1.3 Appropriate structures and good human resource management ensure effective school administration and consistency in all actions.
- 2.1 The School's curriculum satisfies learners' entitlement as outlined in the National Curriculum Framework.
- 2.2 Learners experience successful learning in a positive environment. Teachers deliver scaffolded lessons that motivate learner involvement, respecting different needs, abilities and learning preferences.
- 2.3 The school's assessment policy and practices sustain quality development at classroom and school levels through both formative and summative assessment.
- 3.1 The school supports learners to reach their full potential
- 3.2 A sense of mutual respect amongst all stakeholders prevails, promoting positive behaviour and fostering a sense of belonging.
- 3.3 Parents take an active part in the life of the school

Table indicating the average quantities referred to when the following terms are used:

nearly all	=	more than 95%, to under 100%
most	=	more than 80%, to 95%
many	=	more than 65%, to 80%
a low majority	=	more than 55%, to 65%
around half	=	45% to 55%
a minority	=	less than 45%, to 35%
few	=	less than 35%, to 20%
very few	=	less than 20%, to 5%
almost none	=	above 0%, less than 5%