

Report Summary for Parents:

External Review by the QAD for Gozo College Middle School

Educational Leadership and Management

Standard 1.1

How clear is the Head of School's vision for the school? How well is the Head of School collaborating with the rest of the Senior Management Team to foster and support a professional learning community?

Areas of strength

- The Head of School is aware of the strengths and needs of the school. She is addressing what the school considers to be the main challenge, which is the current transition from a girls' secondary to a co-education middle school.
- The Head of School practises a distributed leadership approach within the Senior Management Team.
- The Senior Management Team and all the teaching staff seek to have parents on board, in order to support a smooth learning process for their children.

A way forward

- The Senior Management Team is encouraged to continue conducting class observations, preferably with an amended observation sheet, discussed with the teaching staff, which is more in line with the particular needs of the school. Having clear, agreed upon objectives for such visits and giving the teaching staff suggestions for improvement would foster professional growth.
- The teaching staff members are encouraged to enrich their teaching experience by continuing to share good practice during subject meetings and also during Professional Development sessions.

Standard 1.2

How effective are the internal evaluation processes that inform school development planning? How well are the structure, content and format of the school development planning documentation facilitating effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of targeted actions?

Areas of strength

- The school internal review process involves all stakeholders.
- The school is working towards improving the School Development Planning process and it is eager to learn more about effective planning, implementation and evaluation.

A way forward

The school is also encouraged to use alternative forms of feedback, such as focus groups and informal meetings with all the stakeholders, thus complementing and triangulating the information obtained from the questionnaires. The SWOT analysis should be treated as a critical tool to inform the school of its current state and where it wants to head.

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Standard 1.3

How well are appropriate structures and good human resources management ensuring effective school administration and consistency in all actions?

Areas of strength

- The roles and duties of the different members of staff are clearly defined for all stakeholders.
- The school has an effective internal and external communication system.

A way forward

The Senior Management Team members should use the Professional Development sessions to tackle the main challenges of the school. It is advisable that training opportunities are discussed with the teaching staff and are mainly related to Learning and Teaching. Members of staff should view PD sessions as part of their professional growth and should suggest to the Senior Management Team their training needs and interests.

Learning and Teaching

Standard 2.1

How well does the school curriculum satisfy learners' entitlement as outlined in the National Curriculum Framework?

Areas of strength

- Learning through co-curricular activities is the hallmark of the school.
- The school provides learners with their curricular entitlement with respect to the learning areas specified in the National Curriculum Framework.

A way forward

The Senior Management Team and teaching staff can explore ways of how to better integrate the different cross-curricular themes within the formal curriculum. They can also consider ways how to promote learning through thematic and interdisciplinary approaches.

The Senior Management Team needs to proceed with its plans of ensuring that the student council establishes itself as a consultative body on matters directly affecting learners' life at school to further promote the sense of citizenship in the learners.

Standard 2.2

Are learners experiencing successful learning in a positive environment? How well is the way teachers plan and deliver scaffolded lessons motivating learner involvement whatever their needs, abilities or learning preferences?

- There is a positive atmosphere in class, which sustains learning.

A way forward

Including learning intentions and timeframes in schemes of work and taking into account the different learning preferences within the class at the planning stage would ensure that all learners are being targeted and make lessons more engaging and enjoyable for all.

Sharing learning intentions at the beginning of the lesson and revisiting them through an appropriate lesson closure would enable teachers to identify those learners who have not yet grasped the objectives set for that particular lesson and use this to inform planning. More creative approaches to learning would lead to a more child-centred approach. More productive interaction between learners including pair and group work would help to promote collaborative and cooperative learning.

Digital literacy is also to be further stimulated through the use of digital technology and resources in class. This core competence is not only essential in today's society, but it opens a gateway to lifelong learning. The more creative the teaching approach, the more students will acquire skills which prepare them for challenges later on in life.

Standard 2.3

How well are the school's assessment policy and practices sustaining quality development at classroom and school levels, through both formative and summative assessment?

Areas of strength

- Teachers generally discuss learners' homework and highlight common pitfalls during class correction.
- In many of the subjects studied at school, the learners' performance in SEC examinations is consistently and considerably above the national averages.

A way forward

The Senior Management Team and the teaching staff are to evaluate the current assessment practices and formulate a comprehensive assessment policy. The policy should make reference to formative assessment and to different assessment strategies in the classroom to facilitate learning. Moreover, the school might consider channelling teacher professional development in the area of Assessment for Learning.

More teachers are encouraged to assess learners formally through different means of expression, taking into account learner variability. This might include different media such as oral presentations, quizzes, use of digital media and project/practical based work.

The Senior Management Team and the subject departments are encouraged to thoroughly evaluate learners' performance in national examinations, identify trends and take concrete actions to sustain improvement.

School Ethos

Standard 3.1

How well is the school supporting learners to reach their full potential?

Areas of strength

- The school works hard to give learners the opportunity to develop their abilities, gain confidence and enhance their self-esteem.

- The school has an effective pastoral care team, who is sensitive to the needs of learners and offers support accordingly.
- In the absence of an Inclusion co-ordinator, the SMT is providing any support possible to ensure that LSA's files are in order and that IEPs are regularly revised.
- The school has a well-organised transition programme for new Year 7 learners, including learners with special educational needs.

A way forward

The school should continue exploring ways how to raise learners' self-esteem and to enable them to be confident in front of audiences.

Standard 3.2

How much does a sense of mutual respect amongst all stakeholders, which promotes positive behaviour and fosters a sense of belonging, prevail in the school?

Areas of strength

- The school has been proactive in its introduction of several measures that encourage and disseminate a sense of respect towards one another.
- The school Behaviour Policy celebrates positive behaviour and acknowledges learners' efforts.
- Parents and learners appreciate the supportive role of members of staff.

A way forward

The Senior Management Team is encouraged to conduct an evaluation of the existing procedures on behaviour. Standard 3.3

How much do parents take an active part in the life of the school?

Areas of strength

- Meetings for parents linked to the curriculum and to the learners' progress are well-attended.

A way forward

The school is encouraged to explore ways to improve parents' attendance for activities and talks aimed at facilitating their involvement in their children's holistic development. The Senior Management Team should evaluate why most parents claim that they do not feel well represented by the School Council. In the meantime, the school should find ways to promote the members of the School Council among parents so that parents get to know them and perhaps feel comfortable to approach them whenever they feel the need. It is also encouraged to seek more nominations for the parents' representatives on the School Council for the next Council elections in an effort to create a healthier balance between the teacher and parent members.

Recommendations

- The Senior Management Team members are encouraged to consult with the staff and devise observation procedures which are custom made and agreed upon by all. Having clear, agreed upon objectives for such visits and giving the teaching staff suggestions for improvement would foster professional growth.

- The Senior Management Team and teaching staff need to use a variety of research instruments to collect data along the year including data from classroom observations and the Head's vision for the school. This data is then represented in a comprehensive SWOT analyses which facilitates the selection of priorities and gives a more factual picture of the current situation within the school. The Head of School is to ensure that at least one of the priorities chosen addresses Teaching and Learning.
- Learning intentions should be presented at the beginning of the lesson, referred to throughout and revisited through an appropriate lesson closure. In this way, the teacher would be able to identify those learners who have not yet grasped the objectives set for that particular lesson and plan accordingly.
- Planning to cater for the learners' different learning preferences to better address learner variability is recommendable. Teachers should explore ways how to be learner-centred, using strategies that promote interactive use of digital resources and collaborative learning within classroom settings.
- The Senior Management Team and the teaching staff are to evaluate the current assessment practices and formulate a comprehensive assessment policy, which includes formative assessment and different assessment strategies that facilitate learning in the classroom.
- The Senior Management Team and teachers through their subject departments are encouraged to thoroughly evaluate learners' performance in national examinations, identify trends and take concrete actions to sustain improvement.