

**Inclusion in Practice:  
The Malta Experience**

Thematic Session 24<sup>th</sup> November 2011

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**Transition from a special school to a resource centre that aims at**

- providing an education which yields a better quality of life
- being partners with parents
- empowering parents
- promoting inclusion of San Miguel students in mainstream schools
- supporting mainstream schools to include pupils with PMLD

**The Resource Centre**

- San Miguel was opened as a special school in 1989. Officially it became a Resource Centre in 2009.
- At present, the school staff includes a Head of resource centre, an assistant Head, eight teachers and twenty learning support assistants.
- The school has also a full time nurse and an assistant care worker.
- A paediatrician comes to the school on a weekly basis.
- A professional part-time music therapist visits the school on a weekly basis
- There are four classes with an average of 5 students in each class.

**Mission Statement**

- *We at San Miguel believe in a caring, stimulating working environment for all, where pupils receive their entitlement to an education which yields better quality of life.*
- *We celebrate pupils' achievements; encourage partnership with parents and the wider community.*
- *We respect the dignity of each human being and acknowledge their value as individuals whatever their needs or their ability may be to contribute to society.*

**Some of the Aims of the Resource Centre**

- To provide a curriculum which is meaningful, enjoyable and enriching to meet the individual needs of each pupil.
- To facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes of each pupil so that he/she becomes as independent as possible and so that he/she can participate in the life of his/her family, the school and the wider community.
- To facilitate the inclusion of pupils with PMLD in mainstream schools.

**Education**

- Is based on the National Curriculum Framework.
- One of the overall aims is to move the pupil out of his internal world into an awareness of himself as an agent of his environment.
- This is done through communication and the curriculum is used as a vehicle for learning.
- The experiences provided are multi-sensory in nature.
- They seek to utilise any response as a channel for learning.

A clear vision together with recent developments in the Maltese Educational system have made it possible for San Miguel to make this transition.

The introduction of the college system and the Special Schools Reform in 2009 made it easier for five of San Miguel pupils to start attending mainstream schools on a part time basis.

It also facilitated partnership with other Primary schools and San Miguel Resource Centre.

### Support given by the Resource Centre

- Although San Miguel was still called a special school yet in reality it has been acting as a Resource Centre since 2002. This was the only special school with this vision and served as a pilot project.
- It provided support and advice to parents and mainstream schools mainly where ICT hardware and software were concerned. It also provided training to LSAs in the Halliwick method.
- It then started to offer ICT, hydrotherapy and multisensory sessions to a small number of students from the mainstream.
- In 2009 the centre became part of St. Clare College.

- Obviously services to mainstream pupils have increased since 2002.
- Today about 30 pupils from kindergarten and Primary mainstream schools attend San Miguel for services on a weekly or fortnightly basis depending on the individual need of the pupil.
- Early intervention is also offered.
- Eight babies and toddlers whose ages vary from 7 months to 3 years come to San Miguel for services together with their parents/mothers.

Worth mentioning also is the publication of the **Syllabus Supplements (Inclusive Curriculum)** in November 2007.

- Level descriptors were published in Malta for the first time for pupils functioning below Level 1 of the National Curriculum.
- These supplements provided a rationale and pedagogy of teaching the national curriculum to ALL pupils.
- This led to enabling pupils with individual educational needs and who attended mainstream schools to be truly included in their schools as now teachers were presented with practical examples of how to adapt the curriculum for pupils with a disability.

San Miguel Resource Centre aims at providing support to:

- Pupils
- Parents
- LSAs
- Mainstream schools.

San Miguel promotes the Halliwick Concept of swimming and rehabilitation in the water. A qualified lecturer who is also a member of the staff trains all the staff whether they work at San Miguel or in mainstream schools. This ensures that everyone feels confident to support pupils in the water during hydrotherapy sessions.

### PUPILS

Pupils are provided with individualized sessions according to their individual needs after an assessment is carried out.

- These sessions include
- hydrotherapy
  - multi-sensory,
  - Opti-music,
  - ICT,
  - Music therapy,
  - cognitive,
  - aromatherapy sessions.

### **PARENTS**

At San Miguel we have an open door policy and parents are encouraged to phone or call at the school if they feel that they have a suggestion to make or need to consult the Head, class teacher, staff providing services or the nurse.

This applies to parents of full time pupils as well as to those parents whose son or daughter attends on a part time basis.

The parents of babies and toddlers participate in the sessions and in this way they are empowered.

There are three parents on the School Council.

### **Learning Support Assistants**

When pupils from mainstream schools attend San Miguel, the learning support assistant (LSA) supporting the pupil is expected to accompany the pupil during the session so that he/she would learn how to facilitate and support learning at the mainstream school.

- Learning support assistants are trained in the Halliwick method before they start supporting the pupil in the pool. They also have ongoing training during the hydrotherapy sessions.
- They are supported, offered advice and trained by the staff at San Miguel when they attend for sessions with the pupils that they support.

### **Collaboration with Mainstream Schools**

- Since the scholastic year 2009-2010, pupils from Kindergartens and Primary schools, at first from St. Clare College but later from all over Malta started visit San Miguel together with their teachers.
- They participate in curricular activities together with San Miguel students.
- These activities include sensory circuits, Opti-music and interactive story telling in the classrooms.

### **The School Twinning Project**

This year we have introduced a new project to extend the collaboration between primary schools and San Miguel.

Two state primary schools have already joined this project and hopefully more will join this initiative

- St. Ignatius College Qormi St Sebastian Primary school:- a sports activity at the Cottonera Sports complex
- Maria Regina College Mellieha Primary school:- an activity which included a music session with a member of a local band.

The idea behind this project is to provide an opportunity to

- some of San Miguel pupils to spend a day with their peers in a mainstream class for curricular activities.
- pupils from San Miguel and from the mainstream to participate in extra curricular activities together, e.g. sports activities, cookery, drama.
- Teachers to collaborate. Teachers from San Miguel team teach with primary school teachers e.g. San Miguel teacher delivers an interactive story telling which is extended by the mainstream teacher for creative writing.

These initiatives have been welcomed by state, church and independent primary schools with a lot of enthusiasm.

We have received very positive feedback on the sessions and programmes we are delivering.

In fact this year requests for visits are already coming in.

We were struck by a particular student from St.Clare College who visited one of our pupils at San Miguel RC during summer school. She not only spent the day with her but also brought her a present.