



# San Anton School Ethos

*This policy paper has been prepared by the Advisory and Development Council for the Board of San Anton School and approved by the said Council at the meeting of the 9 July 1993. On approval by the School Board it shall become the official policy of San Anton School.*

## 1. Introduction

The type of school envisaged through the establishment of the *Parents' Foundation for Education* (PFE) is enshrined in Article Seven of the school's statutes. San Anton School was set up with a clear policy and a clear vision, intended to foster the best environment for the development of the child as a unique person so that he or she can eventually become an active and effective member of society in whatever walk of life he or she inserts him/herself.

The definition and clear understanding of the Ethos of the school is essential both for parents as well as for teachers. Parents who choose San Anton School must be fully aware of the standpoint of the school on issues of fundamental importance to their children. These range from Religious and Educational to issues of a purely administrative scope. Teachers who are engaged to teach at San Anton School, from the Heads down to part-time and substitute teachers must understand and fully internalise the Ethos of San Anton School as these are the instruments through which the school implements its ideals. This they do in the classroom, in administration, on the sports field and in the corridors: everywhere and all the time.

The clear understanding of the Ethos is also vital for the parent-educationalist joint venture effort which San Anton ultimately fulfills. The partners in the effort must know exactly what they are meant to be implementing as otherwise the relationship will be characterised by continual misunderstandings over goals. This will lead to failure of the joint venture.

All activities and efforts stem from the Ethos of the School. Parents, teachers and Heads must act as a team in its implementation, on the one hand, assisting each other where possible and on the other hand, monitoring each other over time, always ensuring a fuller and deeper understanding of a common mission.

## 2. The issues

The following are the more fundamental features of San Anton School's approach to Life, Education and Administration. It is hoped that all other policies can be derived from the broad guidelines stated herein. In the near future, the specific detail of each and every paragraph will need to be further amplified in the form of more specific policy papers to regulate the concrete implementation of the Ethos in all its aspects.

## 2.1 Type of Institution

a) *The school is a public organisation:* San Anton is not a school intended for any specific group of children in Maltese society. No child is excluded from attending the school on the basis of creed, political allegiance or social class. The school's activity needs constantly to reflect its social obligations to the development of society specifically by not discriminating against any individual or group.

On the other hand, it is recognised that the institution has been created and is being sustained by those who have voluntarily subscribed to its statute by making a financial contribution in terms of the Foundation Rules. The public mission of the School must ensure that the interests of those who sustain it in practice are respected.

b) *The school is a non-profit making organisation:* San Anton was not set up as a business organisation intended to make profit. It has been set up by parents as an organisation the primary aim of which is to make efficient use of all available resources to ensure the best educational environment for the children attending it. While maintaining high standards of education, costs have to be controlled to ensure that no unnecessary burdens need to be carried by the families of children attending San Anton.

c) *The school shall be a Catholic school:* San Anton was established and is being sustained in function of the duties of parents to promote Catholic Values in Education as endorsed by Vatican Council II. Accordingly, teaching at San Anton will seek to promote Catholic values. Teaching in Religion will be imparted more as a way of life than a mere acquisition of knowledge. Students will be gradually introduced to how a Catholic way of life will enable them to solve the most urgent problems of man, namely those related to ultimate meaning of life. Students will also be induced to understand the relevance of ecumenism and dialogue with believers of different creeds. The school will seek to create opportunities for the students to experience the Gospel as a way of life.

d) *The school is co-educational:* San Anton caters for the education of children of both genders at all levels. It will fully respect the fundamental equality of the person irrespective of gender ensuring full accessibility to resources. Its activities, both curricular and extracurricular, will engender a full appreciation of the diversity and mutual dependence of the two genders. It will seek to develop those social skills which will contribute to harmony in mature relations across genders. In the teaching of gender-related issues, such as those related to sex education, biology, and ethics, the school will seek to promote Christian ideals and values.

e) *The school shall seek to be an institution run on dialogue and free expression:* San Anton shall constantly seek to show the utmost respect for the views and opinions of all those involved in it, namely teachers, parents and students. As far as possible dialogue and democratic discussion should characterise the process of decision making, and decision

taking at all levels. Officials with responsibility will seek to ensure that any decisions taken by them are taken in full knowledge and understanding of the views of others, and that they are accountable to the established organs and principles of the School.

f) *The school is run in partnership by the educators and the parents:* San Anton will be characterised by continuous interaction between parents and teachers in full recognition of the different yet complimentary roles each have. Teachers and parents understand their role of stewards jointly responsible for the education of children.

g) *The school shall give due importance to the role of technology in the modern world:* San Anton will ensure that the students attending it will be made aware of the role of technology in the modern world, and will, to limits of what is feasible, be provided with first-hand access to technology, particularly to computer technology, and to its uses in the modern way of life.

h) *A voluntary organisation:* San Anton School is a voluntary organisation where non-professional tasks are carried out by parents and teachers on a voluntary basis reflecting the full commitment to the ideals of the school which has the child and its development at its centre.

## **2.II Institutional Management Principles**

a) *The school shall adopt personalised systems in its management and structures.*

At San Anton every person must feel wanted, cared for, relevant and important. In all activities the school shall encourage as wide participation as possible to ensure that individuals can discover and develop their personality to the full. At all costs, anonymity must be avoided.

b) *The school rejects excessive competition:* San Anton will seek to reduce the stress resulting from unnecessary competitiveness considered destructive to the development of the child's personality and to healthy relations with others. It will seek to encourage students to enjoy learning, and to inculcate the feeling that 'learning is fun'. It will seek to encourage students to produce their best and not to be satisfied unless they do their best.

c) *The school fosters excellence:* At San Anton, excellent performance will be reinforced through positive appreciation by teachers and through a merit system which will encourage rather than discourage all the students to work hard to reach an ideal. The School will use recognised and objective standards to set high goals for students to reach. Through a gradual process of controlled exposure to assessed competition, students will be better able and more self-confident when they have to sit for competitive public examinations and compete for jobs and positions later on in life.

d) *The school's system shall be open and fully verifiable:* San Anton will implement a system with full disclosure of all its activities, interests and accounts.

### 2.III Educational Principles

- a) *the school caters for the education of the full personality:* San Anton will cater for the education of all aspects of the life of the body and mind of the students by implementing a curriculum which will foster creativity and problem-solving approaches and which will include topics which are not necessarily narrowly academic but still relevant in daily life.
- b) *The school will promote a broad-based education:* San Anton will seek to provide a broad-based education which will ensure that children who receive their education there will develop their personality fully and therefore will be able to integrate themselves in a range of different occupations and professions later on in life. Modern society is characterised by the need for job mobility, and San Anton will seek to engender in its members the skills which are required for a person to be able to master new techniques and skills as these are created and become required. It will do so by emphasising, in the teaching of all the subjects, creativity, project work and interest to work across subjects as much as possible.
- c) *The school shall seek to imbue the teaching of all subjects with a high cultural content:* San Anton shall seek to expose students to as wide-ranging situations and notions as possible. It shall seek to ensure that students appreciate the cultural heritage of Malta (in stone, language, custom and the arts) in a wider context. Culture is to be understood essentially as a 'language' created by men living together to symbolically give expression to their unity and understanding of the meaning life.
- d) *The school shall be multilingual:* San Anton shall seek to ensure that students attending it will be able to be fully proficient in both writing and reading Maltese, English and another language by the time they finish their schooling. The teaching of yet other languages will also be actively encouraged and provided for in the school through the provision of adequate facilities for proficiency in the languages a student opts for from among those provided for by the school.
- e) *The school shall encourage teamwork and mutual respect:* At San Anton, physical education, sports, art, music and drama are to be considered an essential part of the curriculum. Through the participation in these areas and particularly in sports, students will be encouraged to internalise the values of disciplined teamwork and to learn those skills necessary for work and play in harmony with others.
- f) *An integrated approach:* in its educational programmes the school shall attempt to integrate knowledge so as to make it more relevant to life and to enable children to link areas of knowledge usefully.
- g) *An ordered environment:* the school shall have an ordered environment to teach children the necessity of respecting rules and the fundamental value of respecting others and their feelings. Discipline will be exercised in a constructive manner, shall not be retributive in nature and shall fully respect the dignity of the child.

## 2. IV School Management Principles

### *Teachers:*

a) *The school shall recruit highly competent staff:* In order to meet its objectives, San Anton must ensure that its staff is highly competent in their own field, and interested in imparting knowledge in a creative and transdisciplinary way. It must ensure that the staff they recruit can meet these standards, and that they actually do so in their professional activities.

b) *The school will provide continuous teacher training:* San Anton will actively provide for the continuous education of teachers so that these can benefit to the full from the latest developments in educational theory and practice, and in the way in which their respective areas are being taught. It is the policy of the school to develop systems of continuous education which will bind both school and teachers.

### *Students:*

c) *The school shall undertake a continuous assessment of students:* Without introducing unnecessary stress resulting from all too frequent testing, the school shall develop continuous systems of monitoring the performance and overall development of the students. The school must ensure that these systems are developed and that appropriate records are maintained for parents to be able to monitor the development of their children, and for remedial action to be taken as soon as a problem is detected.

d) *The school shall introduce formal testing after grade 5:* At San Anton formal testing of ability shall be in force after grade 5. In administering the test, and particularly in the preparation of the students for testing, emphasis must be made that such methods are being used to ensure that San Anton students can demonstrate that they have the abilities and the skills required in public life, and that they can, unaided and with dignity, face specific problems with self-confidence and a calm mind.

e) *The school shall undertake a periodic monitoring of its standards:* At established intervals San Anton will appoint special auditors to monitor its standards and educational approach to ensure that its objectives are being met, and that the teaching standards conform to the highest achievable in all areas. Relevant sections of Reports produced by these auditors will be available to those involved.

f) *The school shall enforce a healthy food and hygiene habits policy:* San Anton shall seek to ensure that students are actively exposed to a healthy food and hygiene policy both at school and at home. Induction in these areas will be organised as part of the curriculum and its practice is to be closely monitored by both teachers and Heads of Schools.

g) *The school will seek to support children with special needs:* San Anton will seek to ensure that children with special needs will find the necessary support. Such children can be of two kinds:

i *specially gifted children* who would benefit from additional care to ensure that their special gifts will be developed to their maximum potential; and

- ii *children with learning disabilities* who would similarly benefit from special care and support to minimise their disabilities.

In the provision of funds, San Anton will seek to ensure, within the limits possible to it, that these two kinds of special needs will be catered for.

*The Parents:*

h) *The school shall actively promote parental support and participation:* At San Anton, the joint responsibility shared by parents and teachers will reflect itself in the openness and trust teachers and parents demonstrate for each other, and in the close collaboration in the administrative and executive organs of the school, in the setting up and execution of projects and in all the activity organised by the school. The participation of parents will also extend itself, under careful guidance and within a set programme, to classroom activities when this is considered to be pedagogically useful. For this purpose specially planned and closely monitored programmes for direct parent involvement will be organised.

i) *The school shall act as a resource for parental development:* San Anton's facilities shall also serve as a resource pool for the development of parents in as many ways as possible so as to support the school's educational programme and their own development. For this purpose the school encourages the development of programmes that will allow parents to develop new skills and learn new ones using its resources.

### **3. Internalisation**

This Policy paper should be disseminated among the Teachers and Parents for careful examination and analysis.

During the Month of October, each year School Council is to invite the parents and teachers of the parents attending the particular sector to a half-day seminar with the specific aim of deepening one or more aspects of this paper.

Whenever an important decision is taken by the Heads or other Organs based on this paper, it should be documented that such a decision has been taken in the light of the principles of this paper. This paper should be continually referred to so as to become a source document for all school activities.

In the process of internalising the fundamental values on which the School is based, teachers are to refer to this document regularly. This will ensure that all the students at San Anton will develop a clear corporate identity and a clear mission of the role they and their school play in Maltese society with full knowledge and understanding of the guiding principles sustaining the school as enshrined in this document. The document will therefore be made available to students as a standard text every year.

#### **4. Implementation**

The implementation of the principles contained in this Paper is the duty of every person involved in the running of San Anton. Their implementation of these principles shall be primarily the duty of the Heads of School and the Managers. The Advisory and Development Council shall provide all the support required for this implementation, in particular by preparing or encouraging the preparation of policy papers applicable to all the sectors or to any one of them as appropriate as soon as possible. The School Board, the Heads and each School Council are to participate in this process by making their own proposals on policy matters as provided for in the Statutes of the school.

#### **5. Monitoring**

It is the duty of every parent and organ of the School to monitor the faithful execution of the principles in this paper. In the day-to-day running of this school, it is the duty of the Heads to monitor that the principles enshrined in this paper are implemented in the sector for which they are responsible, and for the School Board to ensure that these principles are implemented globally.

Should any decision appear to be in conflict with the principles of this paper, such matter should be raised at the appropriate level of each school sector and if need be referred to the Advisory Council for recommendation to the School Board.

In the official audit of the school, to be conducted regularly as provided for in the School's statutes, the implementation of these principles is to be specifically addressed.

This policy paper has been prepared by the Advisory and Development Council for the Board of San Anton School and approved by the said Council at the meeting of the 9 July 1993. On approval by the School Board it shall become the official policy of San Anton School.