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The Reach unit

At the St Ignatius middle school, the Reach classroom has been open for its second scholastic year. The class consist of eight students, one teacher and three learning support educators. The class is designed and provides an educational journey that will enable the learners with complex autism-specific needs to be educated in a smaller group within their local mainstream Middle and Secondary schools.

The class is set up in a way where the environment supports the learner's educational journey were having a calm, stable space is important to meet the specific needs of the learners including those related to social skills, emotional regulation, sensory processing.

The unit consist of 5 rooms, where you will find the main classroom, where the functional curriculum is done and where the student spends most of their time. We start our day with circle time. This time is an important part of the student's day as we greet each other, set up the calendar and the day's timetable. Having a routine for our learners gives them stability. As a class, we focus on subjects that will enhance our learners learning journey that will benefit them in the future and to become independent. Part of the learner's functional curriculum includes literacy, numeracy, cooking lessons, art and crafts, gardening, PSCD and independent living skills. The Reach Unit plans lessons accordingly for the learners to have access to a more meaningful and functional curriculum that allows them to develop to their full potential.



The second classroom is where one will find computers and the learners are able to use the computer and learn new skills such as creating a power point presentation, using the internet safely and sending an email. This is also where we show case the learners work on blue boards.



The third classroom is where we have our cooking lessons and prepare our lunch. The room is set up with kitchen equipment such as a kettle, a microwave, and sandwich toaster. Here the learner can prepare and heat their food during their school day. Once a week we prepare a meal or a snack such as apple muffins, a wrap and pies. Through the cooking lesson the learner will be able to be exposed to new food choices, encourage them to have a healthy diet, math practice, be safe while cooking and to become more independent.

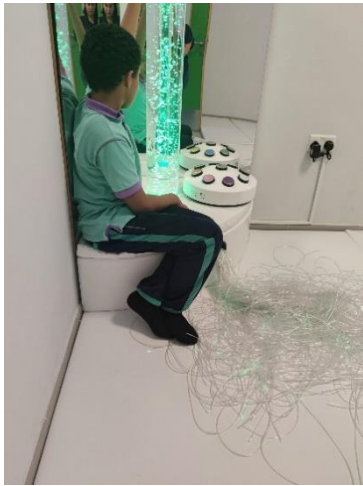


The last two classrooms are the white room and the gross motor sensory room. They have been planned in a way where the learner will be able to focus on emotional regulations and sensory processing. Learners on the spectrum need to re-charge during the day and such rooms will help them to do activities such as heavy work for them to be able to continue with their day.

The gross motor Sensory room (the Blue Room) provides learners with sensory stimulation and an environment where they can take part in self-directed play. In this room, we do gross motor activities such as running, jumping and skipping, thus enhancing the learners' motor planning and coordination.

The White Room is a safe space where learners can experience a calm and quiet environment. In this room, learners will learn to self-regulate their behaviour and engage in relaxation activities, therefore improving their behaviour and attention. The equipment in the White Room also provides learners with sensory stimulation such as visual and auditory stimulation. Such activities that are planned in the gross motor sensory room and the white room are all recommended from the department's and student's OT.

Overall the learners at the Reach unit are experiencing a more person-centered approach to learning and they will be able to use what they learnt to give back to society and to become independent young adults.



This initiative has been carried out under the NextGenerationEU Programmes by means of Malta's Recovery and Resilience Plan.