

Dealing with Autism in Gozo

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Autism is a condition which is characterised by challenges in communication, social skills and difficulty in emotional regulation.

Dealing with Autism in Gozo is an Erasmus+ project which Gozo College Sannat Primary School embarked on in June 2016. Students diagnosed with autism are continuously increasing in number and as a result, schools are facing new challenges. This project originated from the need of more awareness in schools, homes and communities. The first part of the project saw the setting up of a Focus Group meeting during which members including parents, teachers and other professionals discussed the current situation in Gozo and the way forward.

In September 2016, five Sannat School educators including the Head of School, Ms Pauline Grech, spent a week of training and observation at Westminster Special Schools in London. They learned and practised innovative ways of dealing with the needs of students with autism in the classroom. In September 2017 the Head of School, accompanied by another four members of staff, attended a course on SCERTS (Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support) delivered by Emily Rubin a world authority on the subject. They also had the opportunity to observe three different special schools in London. Following this, participants shared their knowledge and experience in a number of schools in Gozo. Teachers from special schools



Educators from the Sannat Special Unit during the training at College Park School in London.



The lifeskills room at the Sannat Special Unit.

in Malta visited the Sannat Special Unit to observe these new methods of dealing with autism in the classroom.

This project brought about other positive results including the opening of a lifeskills room similar to the one in College Park school in London, the creation of the Facebook page, Autism in Gozo, through which good practices are being shared, the creation of Pearltrees Autismgozo (<http://www.pearltrees.com/autismgozo>) where resources used at Sannat Special Unit can be downloaded for free as well as the drastic increase of students referred to our services.

During the closing seminar which was held on the 8th May 2018, parents and professionals agreed that we are changing the mentality of teaching students with autism. We are now changing the way we teach these students to the way they learn. All this is leaving a positive impact on students' behaviour, communication and social skills.

More information and links to project results can be found on our website <http://gc.sannat.skola.edu.mt/erasmus-project/erasmus/> under the heading Erasmus+ Projects.

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