



# Inclusion Policy

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### Philosophy:

**MHIS** believes that every student is unique on his/her own. All students have their own personal and educational needs and they should reach their best potentials. Therefore, an inclusion system for students with special educational needs is adopted to ensure students' needs are met to the best possible level.

All **MHIS** students have access to the SEN services provided regardless of gender, religion, background, and physical conditions. The SEN policy is aligned with admission policy, differentiation policy, paraprofessional's policy, and school's counselor policy.

The SEN services provided are not only aiming at the student's academic success, but also their success in life; by helping school staff achieve **MHIS** mission "... *developing future leaders who are tolerant, caring, reflective, creative, and disciplined lifelong learners who contribute in the development of their communities and serve effectively in a dynamic world.*" Or what Dr. Maria Montessori simply referred to as "*society of cohesion.*"

**MHIS's** SEN policy respects national legal requirements and regulations; providing its learners with assessment access arrangements, and classroom accommodations, that meet individual student learning needs.

**MHIS** is committed to work in partnership with all its stakeholders, especially parents/guardians, who are involved in all our practices. The SEN department collaborates with members of school staff- at all levels, and out-of-school experts. This collaboration is in-line with our mission, and it results in the development of an Individualized Educational Plan-IEP.

### Identification procedures:

Identifying students with special educational needs goes through the following procedures:

1. **Admission documents:** The school admission requests information of any past diagnosis of special educational needs. Parents are to communicate with the school any formal or informal concerns.
2. **Admission assessment:** The assessment procedure is designed to identify any physical, cognitive, language or social problem. The criteria set for teachers help them write their comments accordingly.
3. **Diagnostic assessment at the beginning of the year:** At the beginning of every academic year, homeroom teachers and subject teachers undergo diagnostic assessments that cover the needed skills and knowledge to start from where students are. The outcome of this assessment shows areas students need support with; this support may be in English/Arabic literacy and/or numeracy. Homeroom teachers, subject teachers and the Student support coordinator work collaboratively to develop an action plan for the student.
4. A percentage of out-of-class intervention sessions is decided for each student in place of non-core subjects.

### Referral procedures:

1. Teachers fill in a referral form mentioning the challenges they encounter with a specific student. The referral form is then sent to the respective H.O.D., the school counselor, and the L.D. specialist.
2. Class visits are scheduled to observe the student and detect the underlying problem. An in-class accommodations plan is then suggested as a pre-referral intervention procedure.
3. If the problem persists, the parents/guardians are asked to sign a consent form stating their approval for their child to be formally assessed. Parents not agreeing releases the school from the responsibility of optimizing differentiation methods in the teaching and learning of linguistic skills for their child, and the effort provided will only be limited to that offered during regular class time.

4. Psycho-Educational assessment battery administered, and a report issued.
5. The parents are called to a meeting to discuss the assessment results, and the individualized educational plan that follows.
6. Assessment reports, and IEPs are sent to all parties dealing with the child; parents, teachers, H.O.Ds., parents, and counselors - to deal with the accompanying behavior problems, if present. The reports are also shared and discussed with the support staff e.g. shadow teachers and/or private behavior coaches - if present.
7. The remediation process is documented by periodic progress reports; one report is issued per trimester for all enrolled students. Progress reports are shared with all parties.

### Intervention & Inclusion

**MHIS** recognizes its responsibility to offer strategies designed to meet the needs of students who have varying degrees of learning abilities. This includes those who are extremely capable, as well as those who have specific learning needs. This is basically done through differentiation.

Differentiation at **MHIS** is an ongoing process. To cater for student's individual needs in all subjects. Differentiation is adopted by all **MHIS** teachers. Differentiation helps the differently-abled to work and even excel at their own pace, while at the same time helping the high achievers reach their own maximum potential.

Differentiation is achieved in the following ways:

1. **Differentiating task** i.e. students are given the same content with less challenging tasks. And vice versa, for the high achievers.
2. **Differentiating outcome** i.e. assigning the same task to all students, but adjusting the expected outcome e.g. answer format.
3. **Differentiating through grouping:** Enforcing the importance of collaborative work among students, groups are formed so that the high achievers guide the challenged students, and reduce negative competition and frustration.
4. **Differentiation in resources:** Variation of resources are provided for different students according to their respective levels.
5. **Differentiation in pace** i.e. varying the time provided to complete the same task according to the abilities of students.

Besides differentiation, **MHIS**'s Student Support Unit services the students in:

1. Running remediation sessions: one-to-one classes are given to the SEN students. They include cognitive therapy, and pre-academic work. The remediation programs used are hybrid, custom-made, and multi-sensory. Both assessment and remediation is 100% non-profit; carries no extra fees.
2. Suggesting in-class accommodations plan for both SEN, and non-SEN students, and provide them with assistive technology as possible, e.g. colored overlays.
3. Raising awareness about Learning Difficulties among staff and students by running mini-awareness campaigns during school hours. During which examples of successful 'neuro-diverse' individuals are presented and celebrated. This helps students come to the realization that diversity is a fact of life, and that it is a virtue to keep one's authenticity in a world of conformity. These awareness mini-campaigns also aims at eliminating stigma for those suffering Learning challenges.

### Paraprofessionals Policy

Paraprofessionals e.g. support teachers, sometimes referred to as shadow teachers, are more than welcome at **MHIS** premises and sometimes requested. But what is a shadow teacher? A shadow teacher is an educational assistant who accompanies a single SEN Child during his/her school hours. Providing a shadow teacher allows the child to attend a mainstream class while receiving the extra attention that s/he needs.

Shadow teacher selection:

The decision to provide a shadow teacher for a student is made by a multi-disciplinary team that includes the school counselor, H.O.D., Homeroom teachers, subject teachers, SEN specialist, and parents. Here at **MHIS** all stakeholders are involved in taking such a decision; providing a shadow teacher for a specific student is taken seriously, and not as a quick go-to solution to please the already busy teacher!

Parents are eventually the ones responsible for hiring the shadow teacher. We encourage them to check the educational background of the candidates and make sure they understand a variety of learning disabilities and how to handle them accordingly, before deciding which one is considered the best fit for their child. Not only education that matters, but a previous classroom experience and personality traits of the shadow teacher are also criteria which are considered.

At school, training, and periodic meetings with the shadow teachers are held to ensure that they give the appropriate 'level of involvement' required by the teacher; meaningful teacher-shadow teacher relationships must be established to best meet the needs of the student. We also provide shadow teachers with materials and access to school facilities e.g. ICT room, to better engage the student during pull-outs.

The roles of a shadow teacher:

At **MHIS** we believe that the main role of the shadow teacher is assisting the teacher tackle the individual needs of the student of concern; It is always a teacher- student direct relationship. Shadow teachers might help manage undesirable behavior, assist with classwork, or help the student interact with others effectively, etc. as required by the teacher.

At **MHIS**, we understand that having an individual shadow teacher bears some negative outcomes; for example seating the shadow teacher beside the student all the time might make students more dependent on her and less perseverant, another disadvantage might be reinforcing negative behaviors instead of eliminating them, and this is often noticed when that student starts the early stages of a tantrum, the shadow teacher immediately removes him/ her from the class! Hence reinforcing the escape-maintained behavior! We do our best to reduce these disadvantages and make the best use of the presence of an individual shadow teacher.

### Documentation

**MHIS'** Student Support Unit is the responsibility of the Student Support Coordinator, who works in coordination with all the staff to develop, follow-up, and review IEPs, and accommodations plans for students with special educational needs. The IEPs, accommodations plan, and progress reports are then reported to the

PYP/MYP Coordinator and school Head. A documentation system of the support unit work is in place. This system works as follows:

1. Every student referred to the support unit at any time has a file.
2. The file documents all incidents that the student had to deal with in the support unit.
3. This file also contains all the student related documents e.g. referral form, Parent consent form, out-of-school diagnostic assessment report, IEP, progress reports, etc.

### **Standards and Practices:**

A: 9 the school supports access for students to the IB programme(s) and philosophy

B2:8 the school provides support for its students with learning and/or special educational needs and supports their teachers

C1:6 Collaborative planning and reflection incorporates differentiation for students' learning needs and styles

C3:10 Teaching and learning differentiates instruction to meet students' learning needs and styles

### **Inclusion Policy Review Cycle**

This Inclusion Policy reflects current practice in the school year 2020-2021. We acknowledge the fact that practices do change over time. Therefore, this Policy is a document that will be subject to review at least once a year. The next review of the policy will take place in August 2021.

### **References:**

Programme standards and practices

Meeting student learning diversity in the classroom

Inclusion and Diversity

Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate programmes

Language and Learning in IB programmes

What is an IB education?