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THE ARCHBISHOP'S SEMINARY PRIMARY SCHOOL WELCOMES ITS FIRST STUDENTS
THE CHURCH CONTINUES TO INVEST IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

At the beginning of the academic year, the Archbishop's seminary at Tal-Virtu welcomed its first students in the new extension which now houses the primary school. As announced in January last year, this is part of the reform process which serves to consolidate the transition of students from primary to secondary school, and leading to different initiatives taken by the Church.

The construction of the primary school took 12 months. The school is considered a Green School owing to a particular emphasis on environmental aspects with respect to its design and infrastructure. The new school, which occupies land which was already built-up, is spread over 9000 square metres split on two to four floors. Besides 24 classrooms, the building also includes a child care centre for children of teachers and other ancillary staff, a library, indoor playing hall, music room, laboratories, an auditorium with a capacity of 300 persons and an area designated for live-ins for students who attend the Vocations Centre at the Seminary.

The construction of the new school which involved more than 300 workers to build and finish, required an investment of eight million Euro, and for this purpose a loan was taken from APS Bank; the repayments of this loan will be spread over a period of years. This investment caters for the needs of a 21st century school which is equipped with interactive white boards and Wi-Fi connectivity and environmentally friendly measures such as intelligent lighting, insulation and solar heating. On the lower floor there is a plant room which contains technical equipment and large tanks for the recycling of water.

Presently at the Seminary, there are 563 students (300 primary and 263 secondary), 150 of which are students of St Augustine College. This is due to the fact that St Augustine College is still awaiting the MEPA permits in order to embark on the construction of their new primary school. In the spirit of one Church, the administration of the Seminary offered to welcome these students from St Augustine College until their new premises are ready. It may be noted that this academic year, besides the new Seminary primary school, another primary school was opened. St Paul's Missionary

College opened its doors to 100 students and over the next three years, they are expected to rise to 300.

Over three years the Seminary Primary school would have accepted students annually from Grade 1 to Grade 6, totaling 825. In order to educate these students, the Seminary requires the service of around 32 teachers of which 27 have already been employed. These include teachers, administrative staff and other employees. There were over 600 applications for these 27 posts.

According to Fr David Cilia, the Headmaster of the Seminary, there was widespread interest on the part of the public and the Administration was strongly supported in this project. This serves to demonstrate a great deal of trust on the part of the public. Many parents registered their children even before the premises were complete which shows that they trusted the institution to fulfill its obligations; the number of persons who applied for the vacant posts also demonstrates faith in the institution. Fr David commented that although it is facing financial difficulties, the Church in Malta has not failed to invest in the education sector in the best interests of children and society.