



Island Council Executive Council

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To: +Mgr. Luis A. Secco, SDB and Rev. Curtis Meris, JCL
Diocese of Willemstad
Julianaplein 5
Curaçao

Your number (letter):

Your letter of:

Our number: **411/2024**

Subject: Governance and Educational Reforms Needed at the Sacred Heart Primary School on Saba

Enclosures:

Saba, November 04, 2024

Dear Monsignor Secco and Father Meris,

We write to you on behalf of the Executive Council of the Public Entity Saba and the Island Council of the Public Entity Saba to address the current state of education at the Sacred Heart Primary School (SHS) on Saba. This letter is written with the endorsement of many of the people of Saba, who we represent, and reflects the collective concerns of the local government, the school community, and the broader Saban society.

It is with disappointment that we note the unfulfilled promises of support from the Diocese. Over the past several months, including during discussions in May and September 2024, there were assurances made that professional assistance would be provided to SHS. Unfortunately, to date, no representatives have visited the island with a concrete plan of action, nor has the community had the opportunity to meet with representatives to voice their concerns. As a result, the anticipated improvements in school governance and education quality have not materialized.

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SHS remains in a critical state, and the lack of progress has led to growing concerns within the Saban community. At this moment, residents of Saba are actively working on a petition to establish a new public school, aiming to ensure that the children are not disadvantaged during this transition. It is our shared responsibility to safeguard their educational future amidst these challenging circumstances.

The current board with the director in a dual role is not in accordance with the current statutes and with just one board member it is insufficient for decision making. Recruitment of additional board is crucial in adhering to the aanwijzing.

Considering these developments, we present the following way forward:

1. The Diocese shall relinquish its direct influence over the governance of SHS and take on an advisory role. This will allow the Diocese to continue guiding the school in maintaining its Catholic identity and principles, while ensuring that a current approach to governance is undertaken.
2. The SHS board restructuring will closely adhere to the recent directive from the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science (OCW). This directive outlines essential requirements for selecting new board members and emphasizes the importance of aligning with OCW standards to ensure that each candidate is committed to the mission and vision of education on Saba. Not adhering to the standards of the direction of OCW, can lead to loss of funding for the school and putting the children in the school system at an even larger risk.
3. A new governance structure will be implemented, designed as a two-tier model to promote transparency, accountability, and enhanced school management. This approach aims to create a stable and supportive governance framework for SHS, helping drive sustainable improvements for students, educators, and the community.

The Public Entity Saba and OCW are committed to working alongside all stakeholders to build a strong, accountable board that fosters the values and objectives of education on Saba whereby the children are central.

4. The statutes of the school will be amended in accordance with the current laws and regulations concerning good governance, as recommended by the Inspectorate of Education in their Aanwijzing dated 29 October 2024. These changes will strengthen the governance framework of SHS and align it with best practices for educational institutions in the Caribbean Netherlands.

Given the urgency and gravity of the situation, there is no longer room for diplomatic or gradual measures.

Therefore, we, as representatives of the Executive Council of the Public Entity Saba and the Island Council of the Public Entity Saba, hereby inform you of the redefined role of the Diocese at Sacred Heart School and the necessary changes that will be implemented within the coming two weeks.

We trust that these changes will lead to a better future for the children of Saba and the Sacred Heart School, and we look forward to your cooperation in this process of renewal and improvement.

Trusting to have informed you sufficiently, we remain,

Sincerely,

The Executive Council of the Public Entity Saba

The Island Secretary

The Island Governor

B. Streppel

J. G. A. Johnson M. Ed.

Registrar of the Island Council of Saba

A. M. Levenstone

CC: Ministry of OCW,

Inspectorate of Education

Schoolboard of the Sacred Heart School

School Participation Council (Medezeggenschapsraad)

EC-mbrs