

# Furniture and Equipment

## Purpose

To ensure that the school has adequate furniture and equipment and to ensure maintenance is carried out as planned.

## Responsibility

The Head Teacher is responsible for assessing school needs, ordering new furniture and equipment and ensuring that the school community takes care of school property.

## Policy

The Head Teacher has to make sure that the school has the right equipment. The Head should ensure that there are the right numbers of desks and chairs in the classrooms and that they are in good condition. The Head must find ways to repair furniture which becomes broken or worn out. There should be at least one blackboard for each classroom and enough chalk for a whole year. School buildings often need to be repaired and it is the duty of the Head to make sure that essential repairs are carried out.

## Procedure

The Head Teacher may need to organise the school committee for self-help or arrange help through the PEO on one of the PEO's regular visits to the school. The PEO will be in a much better position to help Heads if they are given as much detail as possible. If maintenance supplies are requested, exact quantities should be advised. As well as the buildings, there are fences and pathways as well as playgrounds and sports-fields that need regular maintenance if they are to be really useful. It is often easier to fix something the moment it goes wrong rather than leave it to get worse and worse. This need for urgency will sometimes mean that the Head or one of the staff will have to do the work themselves rather than waiting for outside help.

## School Furniture

Good school furniture is very important. It makes the school look more efficient and gives the children a sense of pride in their work. Children will often work better when they can sit in comfort. Old furniture made of wood can often be given a better appearance by a good sanding with sanding paper and then one or two coats of a liquid called 'Bondex' which is both a stain and a preservative. It costs about VT8000 but lasts a long time.

## How To Obtain Furniture

If there is an urgent need for new, extra, or replacement furniture, Heads should talk to the Provincial Education Officer to see if it is possible for either the Provincial Government or the Ministry of Education to help. A local Member of Parliament may also be able to provide some support either from his constituency fund or by asking for help in Vila.

Requests of this nature may be viewed more sympathetically if schools can agree to meet part of the finance locally. This would mean Heads and School Committees agreeing on a fund-raising venture, or the Provincial Government being prepared to meet part of the costs. If wood can be provided, local communities will often be willing to provide the labour. Rural training centres may be able to help in building furniture, and the provincial education maintenance supervisor can design it.

## WHAT FURNITURE IS NEEDED IN SCHOOLS

- a. Desks and seats for pupils
- b. Teacher's desk and seat
- c. Cupboards and bookcases or shelving
- d. Display-boarding
- e. Blackboards

### Desks and Seats (See details on next page)

Heads should take care to organize furniture of the appropriate sizes. A good height for a desk is just a little higher than the elbow of a person sitting at it. The height of a seat should be such that a person's thighs are parallel to the ground when his feet are flat on the ground. At the same time, a child or teacher must be able to get his legs under the desk with ease.

If a desk or chair is not properly matched it will mean that a child will not be able write properly. Perhaps more importantly, dangling legs or bent backs are very bad for a child's growing body.

With a proper match of height and proportion a child will be able to concentrate better on his tasks.

School furniture should be strong. It may have to last a long time. Heads will have to balance the need for strength in construction with the overall costs involved.

If there is enough money available and if the classrooms are large enough, it is best for children to be seated individually. The design of the desks should be such that they will fit together in various formations for group work. Double desks are second best but they will probably save money.

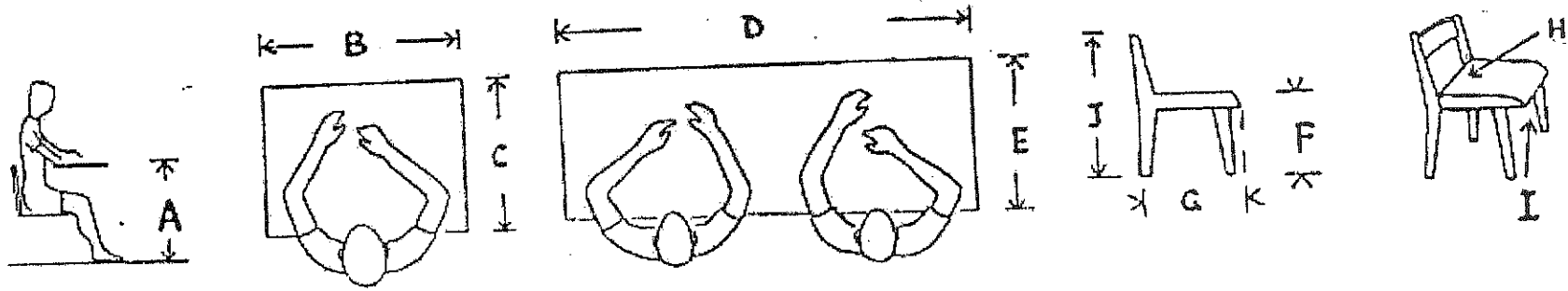
Heads should avoid ordering the sort of furniture which has the desk and chair joined together. Such furniture is not very versatile and there is no chance of adjusting the height of the seat to that of the desk.

Desks are best fitted with flat tops so that they can be used for practical work as well as writing. If they have a shelf underneath for books, this should be no lower than 100 cm above the height of the seat so that knees will go underneath comfortably.

Seats are more comfortable with back-rests but benches are acceptable if money is a problem.

Various suggestions for dimensions are shown on the chart on the next page.

TABLE TO SHOW  
SIZES OF DESKS & CHAIRS  
FOR YOUR PUPILS



Height of Pupils	DESKS					CHAIRS				
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
110 cm - 120 cm	53 cm	53 cm	35 cm	103 cm	38 cm	30 cm	32 cm	30 cm	35 cm	53 cm
120 cm - 130 cm	58 cm	58 cm	36 cm	118 cm	39 cm	33 cm	34 cm	31 cm	36 cm	58 cm
130 cm - 140 cm	63 cm	63 cm	40 cm	128 cm	44 cm	35 cm	36 cm	34 cm	39 cm	63 cm

## Teacher's Desk and Seat

Teachers' desks should not be too large as they can take up too much valuable space in a classroom. A desk 60cm wide, 105cm long and 45cm high should be adequate. Desks for teachers should have a drawer(s) and a cupboard with an adjustable shelf.

## Cupboards, bookcases and shelving

It is a good idea for each classroom to have a lockable cupboard. If this is too expensive, then a large lockable cupboard shared between classes can be designed. Cupboards should be large enough to accommodate all the books and equipment for each class. Bookcases and shelving provides less secure storage, but there are many things in school which are better displayed than locked up and never seen because they are in cupboards. Books which are not text-books are best left where the children can see them as often as possible. Bookcases or shelving should not be too narrow because large books will not be properly protected. A sensible depth for shelving for books would be between 20cm and 30cm.

## Display Boards

Soft-board or ceiling board makes good display-board because pins can be stuck in easily. Care should be taken about the height of the boards in relation to the height of the children. Class One boards should be set rather lower than Glass Six boards for instance.

## Blackboards

This is still one of the most important of the teacher's tools. Heads should do all they can to provide enough black-boarding for their schools. Plywood makes good blackboards. A full sheet measures about 240cm by 120cm and is a useful size. Two or three coats of blackboard paint (black or green depending on the prevailing sunlight) and a final smooth sanding will make a very serviceable blackboard.

Wherever possible blackboards should be fixed to walls with the top edge no higher than 2m from the floor so that it is going to be within reach of most teachers.

A few smaller boards are also useful as portable boards to be used with easels. Generally easels are a nuisance because they are unsteady and they take up useful space, but there may be special occasions when a small portable board is useful. In smaller schools which have to adopt the 'multi-class' method of organization, more small blackboards will be essential.

Small blackboards are often used by children in Year 1 before they are ready to use exercise books. Heads should remember that these boards will also need maintenance. A spare tin of blackboard paint is always useful.

## SCHOOL EQUIPMENT

It is important to have enough equipment in the school. If a school has enough of the right kind of equipment it will make the teacher's job so much more effective.

Equipment might include:-

- a. Text-books
- b. Exercise books
- c. Teaching-aids for various subjects
- d. Tools for gardening or craft
- e. Sports equipment
- f. First aid
- g. General equipment

### General Notes

Do not waste equipment supplied to the school. Money for equipment is very limited and Heads should do everything they can to protect and maintain the equipment that they have.

Text-books should be kept at school and not taken home, as a general rule. Text-books become damaged very quickly if they are allowed off the school premises. If Heads do allow books to go home, teachers should be instructed to make frequent inspections of books to make sure they are being properly treated. Children must learn to guard valuable books from small brothers and sisters, domestic animals and other dangers.

Order books and equipment early - months before your present supplies will run out.

### SUGGESTED LISTS OF EQUIPMENT

Getting books for classes is sometimes quite a problem. It is important to know what you need well ahead of time. Thinking carefully about the resources you need is time well spent. Put in your order early - many months before your present supplies will run out - and make occasional enquiries to see what action is being taken. Talk to your Provincial Inspector or PEO if there is a delay. Orders for exercise should be sent to the PEO in June or July at the latest if they are to be available by the start of the new school year. Locally produced text-books and other materials are best ordered in September or, at the latest, October.

#### Text-books

See lists at the end of the Handbook, updated annually by CDU.

#### Exercise-books

When children first start school in Year One, they may not need exercise books at all. They may use small blackboards or kitchen paper. For most children it may be some time before they are able to cope with pencils, crayons and books well enough to provide a permanent record of their work. When children are ready, perhaps the most useful books will be those called 'bulletin' books which are made of plain white paper in a fairly large format. These are very good books for drawings and a first attempt at writing.

When children can write a few sentences on their own, it is time to introduce books which have faint lines to help with handwriting. These come with various gaps between the rulings. Young children need large gaps (say 12mm) whereas older children will be happier with gaps of 7mm. Some of these books come with a printed margin.

Maths books follow a similar pattern. In Year One the bulletin book can be used for most work. But, when it comes time to set down maths formally it is perhaps best to use squared paper. Smaller children work best with large squares (say 10mm) while Years 5 and 6 will be happier with 5mm or 7mm.

## Teaching Aids

### General

As mentioned above, children in lower classes may be supplied with small blackboards for individual use. These can be made easily by cutting sheets of Masonite to a suitable size and painting them with blackboard paint.

Classrooms should have supplies of blunt-ended scissors and of colours (crayons for younger children and coloured pencils for older children). Not all children can afford to buy their own crayons or coloured pencils for use in school, and they are needed for a variety of activities in all subjects of the curriculum.

Schools can often obtain free supplies of paper for writing, drawing and artwork by asking businesses and offices in the towns or provincial centres to give them paper that has been used only on one side and is no longer required. Printing companies can also supply off-cuts of paper and card.

### Language

Each teacher should have a good dictionary for use in the classroom. Children in higher classes also need access to dictionaries of a suitable level, such as the School Dictionary for the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, published by Longman.

Other material for stimulating oral language is also valuable. Posters and pictures can often be obtained for free from travel agencies or airline offices, or from regional organisations such as the Pacific Community (formerly SPC) or SPREP.

### Mathematics

In the maths programme, children are expected to make use of local materials such as stones, shells, seeds, leaves, bush vine and sticks for a variety of activities. Teachers should encourage them to help collect these items for use in school.

However, schools need to purchase certain basic materials. Each child will need to use a ruler and, in higher classes, set squares, compasses and protractors. Each class will also need a blackboard ruler, access to balances and standard metric weights, and containers for measuring capacity. These may be shared between classes.

Other materials such as solid shapes may be made by the teacher.

### Social Science

From Year 3 upwards, maps are essential. All schools should have maps of Vanuatu, the Pacific Region and the World. Care should be taken when buying a world map to find one which has the Pacific in the centre. (Maps produced for use in Europe have Africa in the centre and the Pacific is shown in two parts, one on the left of the map and the other

on the right). Maps of Vanuatu and its individual islands are available from the Department of Lands Survey in Port Vila and maps of the Pacific and the World can be bought in stores in town.

Preferably the maps should be laminated, to give them a plastic surface which strengthens the map and can be wiped clean. This can be done in stationery stores in Port Vila. If care is taken in pinning up and taking down maps, it should not be necessary to buy one for every classroom.

Globes are also very useful but expensive. Great care should be taken of them.

### **Science**

Some special equipment is required for teaching the science programme of the unified curriculum. Refer to the new science texts for a list of materials required, many of which are ordinary every-day items available in rural areas or easily made by the teacher. Small specialised items such as magnifying glasses, magnets and a compass may be purchased quite cheaply.

### **Agriculture**

Simple tools for agriculture, such as spades or rakes, can be lent by the children's parents or bought by the school. Bush knives must be used under strict supervision. Most older children will know how to use a bush knife safely, but when children are working closely together care must be taken to avoid accidents.

### **Visual Arts**

Instructions are given in the visual arts programme for making materials for use in art lessons. However, it is recommended that schools buy whatever they can. Children will need paint and brushes. Paint is best bought in 'cake' form if it is available, as it is not so easily spoilt by mould and humidity. There is no need to buy a wide variety of colours. The essentials are red, blue, yellow, black and white. Children can be taught how to mix the other colours. If the school cannot afford to buy paintbrushes, the children can learn how to make their own.

Other equipment might include safety scissors (round-ended), glue, plasticine and coloured papers. In case supplies fail, a good supply of old newspapers can be used for painting on. They can also be used to protect desk-tops and for papier-mache work. Masonite can be cut and painted to provide small blackboards (slate-boards) for the use of Year 1 children.

### **Physical education and sports**

Traditional sports in primary schools require footballs, volleyballs, small balls and possibly basketballs and. Volley-ball will require a net, basketball requires backboards and rings, and football requires goalposts, all of which can be made if the school cannot afford to buy them. Small pieces of apparatus such as balls, ropes and hoops, needed for PE lessons can be bought or made.

### **First-Aid**

Every Head Teacher should know about first-aid. Heads should use their common-sense when dealing with injury. Leave the giving of drugs or medicine to nurses and doctors but be prepared to treat injuries. Clean (boiled) calico can be used for bandaging but some items will have to be bought or supplied by the local medical post.

Useful things to keep in a first-aid box include:-

- cotton- wool
- clean scissors
- razor-blade
- clean bowl
- antiseptic liquid
- notebook and pencil
- Elastoplast or Band-Aid
- tweezers to remove splinters
- matches to sterilize
- antiseptic cream
- soap
- notes on first aid

## General Equipment

- Attendance registers
- Admission register
- Receipt-book
- Chalk - white and coloured
- Blackboards
- Date stamp
- School log-book
- Lesson preparation book
- Record of work done
- Photocopy machine
- Fax machine
- Telephone
- Filing materials
- Pencils - black and coloured
- Paper, carbon, envelopes
- Pins, drawing pins , paper-clips etc
- Bell
- Clock

Care should be taken with all school equipment. It must be stored properly and well maintained .

## TEXT-BOOKS

Most of the text-books used in Vanuatu are produced locally in Vila. Some books have to be ordered from overseas. Responsibility for the production and distribution of text-books rests with the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU). All available materials are distributed to Provincial Education Officers and are then distributed to local schools.

See the Procedure "Ordering Text Books and Stationery" later in the Handbook.