

EDUCATION DIVISION
Department of Planning and Development

COMMITTEE ON THE HANDLING OF HEAVY SCHOOL BAGS 2000

REPORT

Committee On The Handling Of Heavy School Bags 2000

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- 3. Relative “load”**
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HANDLING OF HEAVY SCHOOL BAGS

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Terms of Reference

The working committee was set up by the Ministry of Education by letter dated 10 January 2000 from Director of Education (Planning and Development) with the following terms of reference:

- to research the problem of heavy school bags;
- to quantify the extent of the problem;
- to propose strategies for action.

1.2 Members

Ms. Mary Connie Borg Xuereb, formerly Education Officer, Member;
Mr. Andrew J. Buhagiar, formerly Director of Student Services and International Relations, Chairman;
Mr. Charles Camilleri, formerly Assistant Head of School, Member;
Mr. Albert Felice, formerly Head of School, Member;
Mr. George S. Grech, formerly Head of School, Member;
Mr. Charles Mangion, formerly Education Officer, Member;
Dr. Carmelo Palmier-Cecy, Education Medical Officer, Education Division, Member.

2. WORKING METHOD

The Committee members met on a regular basis to pool their experience of the problem and to formulate a strategy for the project. 13 meetings were held between 18 January and 9 June 2000.

After due consideration, the Committee agreed on the following working method:

2.1 Questionnaire

In terms of Educ. Letter Circular Ops/3/2000, the working committee formulated, sent, collected and processed a 23-item general and preliminary questionnaire to all State, Church and Independent Schools from Kindergarten to Secondary level. 197 completed questionnaires were received representing 88% of all schools, or about 95% of the pupil/student population.

2.2 Throughout, the Committee used an interactive approach whereby the views and recommendations of the Heads of School and of their staff were to form an integral part of the responses to the questionnaire. A section was devoted to the views of the schools.

2.3 **Meetings with Heads of School**

Additionally, Committee members met all Heads and Assistant Heads of School on 30 and 31 May 2000 during the Senior Staff Development Programme meetings and discussed the issues involved further.

Note: A copy of the questionnaire and relevant letter circular are at Appendix A.

2.4 **Visits to Schools**

In terms of the above mentioned letter circular, the Committee organised and carried out an exercise whereby:

- (a) a survey group of 1,505 pupils/students (about 2%) was picked up in random fashion from the ranks of 28 randomly selected “schools” (about 8.3%). For the purpose of the random selection, a school catering for more than one of the 3 main educational sectors (Kindergarten, Primary, Secondary) was regarded as 2 or 3 separate schools accordingly. The survey group included both boys (51%) and girls (49%), the sexes being therefore represented in very nearly the same proportion as in the general scholastic population;
- (b) each member of the survey group was physically weighed at school;
- (c) the “load” the pupil/student happened to have carried to school on the survey date was recorded to the nearest 0.5 kg using electronic scales. The term “load” was meant to include the school bag and its contents plus all the items carried outside the bag on the survey date;
- (d) the ratio of the “load” to body weight was calculated in percentage form in each individual case;
- (e) A summary of the results is at appendices D and E. These form the more factual and important aspect of this report. The school survey was co-ordinated and processed by Dr. C. Palmier-Cecy, Education Medical Officer.

See also the Guidance Notes at Appendix B and record chart at Appendix C.

3. **THE RELATIVE “LOAD”**

It is universally acknowledged that the ideal maximum “load” and the absolute maximum “load” to be carried by pupils/students should be related primarily to the individual’s body weight, but also, importantly, to other factors which cannot easily be quantified.

The Committee considered the ratio of the “load” to body weight and adopted the widely accepted values of:

- (a) 10% as the ideal maximum ratio, which cannot be rigidly applied to all, and
- (b) 20% or over as the value which must always be regarded as excessive.

4. **ARE THE “LOADS” REALLY EXCESSIVE?**

The mean ratio of “load” to body weight in the survey group was recorded in table D, from which it can be seen that in the primary sector, the ratio tended to be higher in boys, while, in the secondary sector, it tended to be higher in girl.

However, the range of the ratios cannot be judged from the mean ratios. It was, therefore, found useful to calculate the proportion of pupils/students with ratios at or above 20%, i.e. in the clearly unacceptable range; and this is shown at Appendix E. From this table, it can be seen that at least 6% of all children carried unacceptably heavy loads; this group included twice as many boys as girls, in an educational setting where the sexes are almost equally represented.

The survey results indicate that the educational levels where priority intervention should be directed are Year 4 Primary and Form 1 Secondary, where 15% of all children attending these two levels carried “loads” with a ratio of 20% or more.

At the extremes of the educational spectrum under survey, i.e. at Kindergarten, Year 1, Form 4 and Form 5, the proportion of children with ratios of 20% or over was 0.25% or less.

5. **WHY ARE SOME “LOADS” EXCESSIVE?**

5.1 There is no simple answer. Not enough attention is given to the fact that some bags are intrinsically heavy even when these are empty; and schools have stressed the need for parental involvement in this regard. Nearly all learners carried from home a lunch pack (171 schools) and water and drinks (148 schools). The vast majority of schools (163) reported that pupils and students do not drink tap water. At least two schools - there may be others - have invested in a water filtration system thus providing a purified water fountain and/or dispenser which also reduces school bag weight.

5.2 Even a moderately heavy bag can present problems during the student’s journey to school. The layout of the school premises presents additional difficulties once the student is at school, e.g. stairs, distances within the school. 92 of the reporting schools - almost 50% of the replies - confirmed the existence of this situation.

5.3 **Contents of Heavy School Bags**

The questionnaire returns point out that the following items contribute to excessive weight in the following order of importance:

- First are heavy textbooks;
- Second are thick copybooks followed by files;
- Fourth are lunch boxes followed by bottles and fruit juice cartons;
- Non-school materials followed by reference books rank next;
- P.E./Sports/Home Economics kits are rated last.

6. TOWARDS STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

6.1 The bag itself

This should be made of a light material, and should NOT have wheels. Its interior should be compartmented to prevent shifting of the contents from side to side. It should have two shoulder straps, which should be used so that the bag is carried squarely on the back. The shoulder straps should be padded, to prevent any “digging” effect at the shoulder. The length of the straps should be adjustable to suit the individual needs of different physiques.

6.2 The contents of the bag

6.2.1 A textbook based timetable

Once it is established that heavy textbooks rank first in school bag weight the most effective approach would be the formulation of, and adherence to, a balanced timetable that takes into account textbook weight. This ideal is not easily achievable.

- **Primary Level**

At the primary level only 68 schools claimed that they followed a textbook based daily timetable; 39 schools admitted that they do not. **This is a particular problem that needs attention: Some primary school Heads of School remarked that teachers’ attitudes on adherence to a timetable need changing since there are teachers who expect pupils to bring all their learning materials to school every day. This is unreasonable and should be remedied.**

- **Recommendation (Primary Level)**

The Committee recommends that at primary level a timetable that takes into account the combined weight of textbooks and copybooks be followed in Years 4, 5 and 6. This is to reduce the weight of school bags as well as to prepare pupils for the transition to the secondary phase of education.

- **Secondary Level**

At this level the problem of heavy textbooks is accentuated by the added difficulty of having a timetable that takes textbook weight into consideration. Only 6 post-primary schools considered such a timetable achievable. Schools have, therefore, sought other avenues:

- a locker facility to “selected” students was available in 20 schools, 55 other schools provided this facility for all;
- double sets of some or all of the textbooks are provided in 30 schools, the vast majority of the other schools made no such provision;
- sets of some textbooks were available in subject rooms.

Financial and other considerations apart, space for lockers is at a premium in several schools.

- **Recommendations (Secondary Level)**
 - **When more than one textbook for the same subject are prescribed, students should know which of the textbooks is to be used on any particular day. This information should form part of the official school timetable and is to be followed by both students and teachers.**
 - Early in the first term, once the subject timetable for a class is finalised, a member of staff delegated by the Head of School should be given the task of liaising among the teachers of that class to ensure a fair distribution of textbook weight per day at the student level. A beginning can be made with Form I Classes in Scholastic Year 2000/2001.
 - The use of sets of textbooks in subject rooms is a helpful measure.
 - However the purchase of double sets of textbooks for all students is not recommended. Financially, this measure may delay the adoption of a new and better textbook when this becomes available.
 - A plea for less textbook based teaching is repeated. There are lessons when the textbook is not used at all. With adequate planning, students should have advance notice by their subject teacher so that they can leave textbooks at home when these are not going to be used.
 - More judicious use of handouts especially when the main textbook has a reference role is helpful.
 - In the adopting of a textbook, the criterion of weight should be taken into consideration.
 - Wherever possible, textbooks leading to School Certificate examinations and covering the last three years of secondary should be purchased in two or three parts. Some publishers sensitive to this need bind texts in parts at a reasonable additional cost.
*Note: It is worth noting that a survey recently carried out at St. Aloysius College showed that their students normally carried to school an average of 7 textbooks weighing a total of 3.3 kgs per day (report dated 17 April 2000).

6.2.2 **Thick Copybooks**

After heavy textbooks, thick copybooks and files contribute most to school bag weight. Copybooks present problems at both the primary and the secondary levels. Thickness apart, the sheer number of copybooks is worrying. For example, in the St. Aloysius College survey quoted above, the number of copybooks averaged from 2 to 6 per subject (e.g. English) average weight 1.5 kg. Students are often not clear as to which copybooks are needed for a particular lesson; they tend to play it safe and bring all the subject copybooks to school.

6.2.3 **Files (Secondary)**

95 schools in the survey were of the opinion that the systematic use of files instead of copybooks would help reduce the weight of school bags. The keyword here is “systematic”. Before the move from copybooks to files is implemented, it is very important to be fully aware of the following attendant problems:

- In several instances students use both the file and copybook systems;

- Most subject teachers rightly insist that students keep at least a separate file for each subject;
- It is not easy for students to be taught in a practical and systematic manner on how to use “filing” rather than “files” in an efficient and intelligent way. As one school put it the utmost care should be taken so that “loose sheets do not become lost sheets”;
- **Only one working file need to be regularly used at school, once students are taught how to maintain subject files at home.**

The Committee is fully aware that at the secondary level this is not an easy task and that students’ files have to serve a variety of purposes including that of assessment and examinations (coursework).

The Committee, therefore, recommends that the replacement of thick copybooks by files be started gradually during the first year of secondary. The teaching of filing should be imparted in a structured way along agreed intra-school guidelines throughout the secondary phase. The Committee attaches great importance to this recommendation.

Teaching staff will therefore welcome detailed guidelines and practical information on how these measures are to be carried out, bearing in mind that a degree of uniformity is highly desirable among schools, particularly in Forms 3, 4 and 5 at the Secondary level.

6.2.4 **Other Materials and Reference Books**

The questionnaire survey on heavy items showed that reference material carried by students is not excessive. This is encouraging, although schools should continue to provide easy access to reference material at school, e.g. class and school libraries. Reference oriented tasks should be set wherever possible for homework.

In the category of non-school materials or “other items”, students continue to bring a variety of objects which include thick, heavy office type page diaries, library books, thick empty copybooks, piles of blank file paper, books and copybooks for private lessons which they attend after school, books, magazines and a lot more besides. No such list can be exhaustive. Cumulatively, these objects can add substantially to the weight of school bags. Students and their parents need to be reminded to restrict the contents of school bags to basic requirements.

6.2.5 **P.E./Sports/and Subject Kits**

Responses to the survey indicate that sports and subject kits contribute least to excessive weight. Many students now wear their P.E. kit to school on the days when they have P.E. lessons. The provision of lockers in the sports room has also been helpful. Overall, much progress has been registered in this area of subject kits and materials.

6.3 MISCELLANEOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

6.3.1 Awareness Raising

Many schools welcomed both the questionnaire and the school visits for they saw them as a useful exercise in awareness raising. The Committee wishes to point out that the questionnaire was intended to get a preliminary and general overview of the situation in schools. It must now be followed by a series of other more limited but specific questionnaires targetting particular phases or years of schooling, e.g. the last two years of primary, the first two or the second two years of secondary.

Similarly, the school visit exercise, could only monitor about 2% of the total school population. The results of the survey indicate which age groups need further monitoring.

In short, this information gathering process needs to be intensified for a more precise picture to emerge. Thus the awareness raising programme for parents and students utilising the media will be more factual and, therefore, more effective.

6.3.2 Use of Carriers

The use of carriers or school bags on wheels is seen by many schools as a solution. The Committee has considered this proposal and is against the use of heavy carriers on wheels. Carriers are positively dangerous especially when students are ascending and descending school transport as well as navigating stairs at schools. Besides, pulling (as opposed to pushing) a carrier repeatedly day in day out can itself cause pain at the shoulder. **The committee does not recommend the replacement of school bags by carriers.**

6.3.3 Spot Checks of School Bags at School

Nearly all schools advocate the use of this measure as an effective way of control. The Committee would rather stress the education of students and of their parents who should periodically check the contents of school bags for non-essential items.

In any case “loads” equivalent to 20% or more of the body weight should not be tolerated. Besides, any pupil/student who is seen to be labouring uncomfortably under the load he is carrying should be individually counselled by the school.

6.3.4 A School Bag Awareness Day

This can lend itself to a thematic approach exploiting not only weights, measures and graphs, but also interactive discussion based on practical demonstrations in the school. It should be preceded, supported, and followed up by extensive media coverage.

6.3.5 Concluding Remark

Finally, the most important strategy remains the education of the students and of the parents with the active co-operation and participation of the school staff and the support of the school council.

The school bag problem should be tackled as part of an ongoing comprehensive health promotion exercise aimed at enabling the pupils/students to take control of their lifestyles in order to improve their health.

Mary Connie Borg Xuereb
Member

Charles Camilleri
Member

Albert Felice
Member

George S. Grech
Member

Charles Mangion
Member

Carmelo Palmier-Cecy
Member

Andrew J. Buhagiar
Chairman

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MALTA

EDUCATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF OPERATIONS

Fax 21 245197

APPENDIX A

Information:

Action Required:

Ref: Ops /3/2000

From: Operations Department

To: All Heads of Primary/Secondary/Junior Lyceums/K.G./Trade and Special Schools (State and Private)

Subject: Handling of Heavy School Bags

Date: 15th February 2000

LETTER CIRCULAR

Further to Letter Circular Ops/49/99 of 1 November 1999, the Ministry of Education is carrying out an assessment of this problem as it affects pupils and students (ages 3 - 16). To this end a working party has been appointed to survey this problem at the national level and to propose measures to deal with it.

The working party is, therefore, seeking the help and co-operation of all Heads of School and their staff and, through them, that of parents and students by means of the following:

- visits to a representative number of schools *;
- the collection and presentation of information and suggestions submitted by schools.

* N.B. Schools chosen for a visit will be informed in due course.

Heads of School are to complete the enclosed questionnaire and, in consultation with other members of staff, to submit their suggestions and recommendations to:

Dr. C. Palmier Cecy
Education Medical Officer
Education Medical Service
By Sarria Church, FLORIANA.

Telephone and Fax: 21 248819

Since a consolidated report is to be submitted to the Minister of Education before the end of this scholastic year, you are requested to submit your replies as soon as possible and, in any case, **by not later than Monday, 6th March 2000.**

Thank you for your co-operation

Director Operations

LETTER CIRCULAR OPS QUESTIONNAIRE

3/2000

Please place a tick or number inside the box as applicable. Write N/A if the question does not apply to your school.

1. Name of School: _____
2. School Population
3. Is the handling of heavy school bags considered to be a serious problem at your school?
 Yes No
4. Have you received complaints about school bag weight during the present scholastic year from
 - the pupils/students?
 - the school council?
 - the parents?
 - the teaching staff?
 - others? (specify) _____
5. During this scholastic year, indicate if the school
 - has already taken action
 - plans to take action
 - is taking action now
 - is not taking any action
6. Action at your school means
 - staff meetings
 - meetings for parents
 - school council meetings
 - student activities
 - others: (specify) _____
7. Are your pupils/students regularly reminded by their teachers to keep the school bag as light as possible?
 Yes No
8. Does the majority of your pupils/students use dual-strap school bags?
 Yes No
9. Are these school bags actually carried squarely strapped to both shoulders?
 Yes No
10. Do pupils at primary level follow a daily lesson time-table that is textbook based?
 Yes No

11. At post-primary level do you think that the taking into consideration of textbook weight in the drawing up of the weekly timetable is
- impossible?
 - extremely difficult?
 - .achievable only with co-ordination?
 - very difficult?
 - achievable?
12. At secondary level, how many textbooks of 200 pages and over are meant to be used in more than one scholastic year?
13. Does the majority of pupils/students carry from home the following items
- water/drinks?
 - lunch pack?
 - toys/games?
 - full/nearly full files?
 - thick copy books?
 - P.E. kit?
 - sports kit?
 - home economics kit?
 - non-school/non-library books?
 - other unnecessary items?
14. Does the majority of pupils/students drink tap water at school? Yes No
15. Does your school have a tuck shop? Yes No
16. Does you school provide a locker facility to
- “selected” pupils/students?
 - all pupils/students?
17. Does your school provide double sets of
- some of the textbooks?
 - all the textbooks?
 - no double sets.
18. What is the approximate number of pupils/students who have been medically certified as unable to carry a heavy school bag during this scholastic year?
19. Enumerate, in order of importance, the items which, in your opinion, contribute to excessive weight, marking the most important as No. 1.
- heavy textbooks?
 - thick copybooks?
 - files?
 - PE/Sports/H.Econ. Kits?
 - lunch boxes?
 - bottles/juice cartons?
 - reference books?
 - non-school materials?

20. Does the systematic use of a daily file/s instead of copybooks help? Yes No

21. Does the layout of the school premises present additional problems, e.g. stairs, distances?

Yes

No

22. Does the majority of pupils/students come to the school

entirely by bus?

entirely on foot?

by car?

partly by bus and partly on foot?

SCHOOL'S OWN CONTRIBUTION TO THIS SURVEY

1. List a maximum of 4 issues that are relevant and important to this survey but which have NOT been included above (in point form, please)

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

2. Together with your teaching staff, you are invited to submit, in point form, suggestions as to how this problem can be eased. In **Section A** include suggestions which are applicable to your school; in **Section B** include suggestions of more general applicability.

2.1 Section A

2.2 Section B

Signature of Head of School

School Stamp

Date

SURVEY ON SCHOOL BAGS 2000

Guidance Notes for Committee Members

1. An appointment will be made by each Committee Member with each survey school.
2. “X students from this class” will be taken to mean “the first X students on the attendance sheet of the class.”
3. When any survey pupil/student is absent or not available, the next pupil/student down the list on the attendance sheet will take his/her place.
4. Electronic digital weighing scales (bathroom scales) will be used, with measurements being recorded to the nearest 0.5 Kg.
5. The body weight of the pupil/student will be recorded; followed by the weight of the “load”. Later, the ratio of load to body weight will be calculated in percentage form and recorded in the appropriate column.
6. The Committee Member will fill in a form (with additional sheets where required) for each surveyed school. There will normally be one line for each survey pupil/student.
7. The Committee Members shall not normally examine the contents of the school bags except where the pupils/students need assistance in specifying them; and then only with the pupil/student’s consent and preferably in the presence of a member of the school staff.
8. The column entitled “Comments if any” on the survey form is intended to carry any relevant remarks deemed necessary e.g. one or two items in remarkably heavy school bags.
9. The column “load” on the survey sheet shall be taken to refer to the total of whatever the pupil/student has carried with him/her to school on the date of the visit.

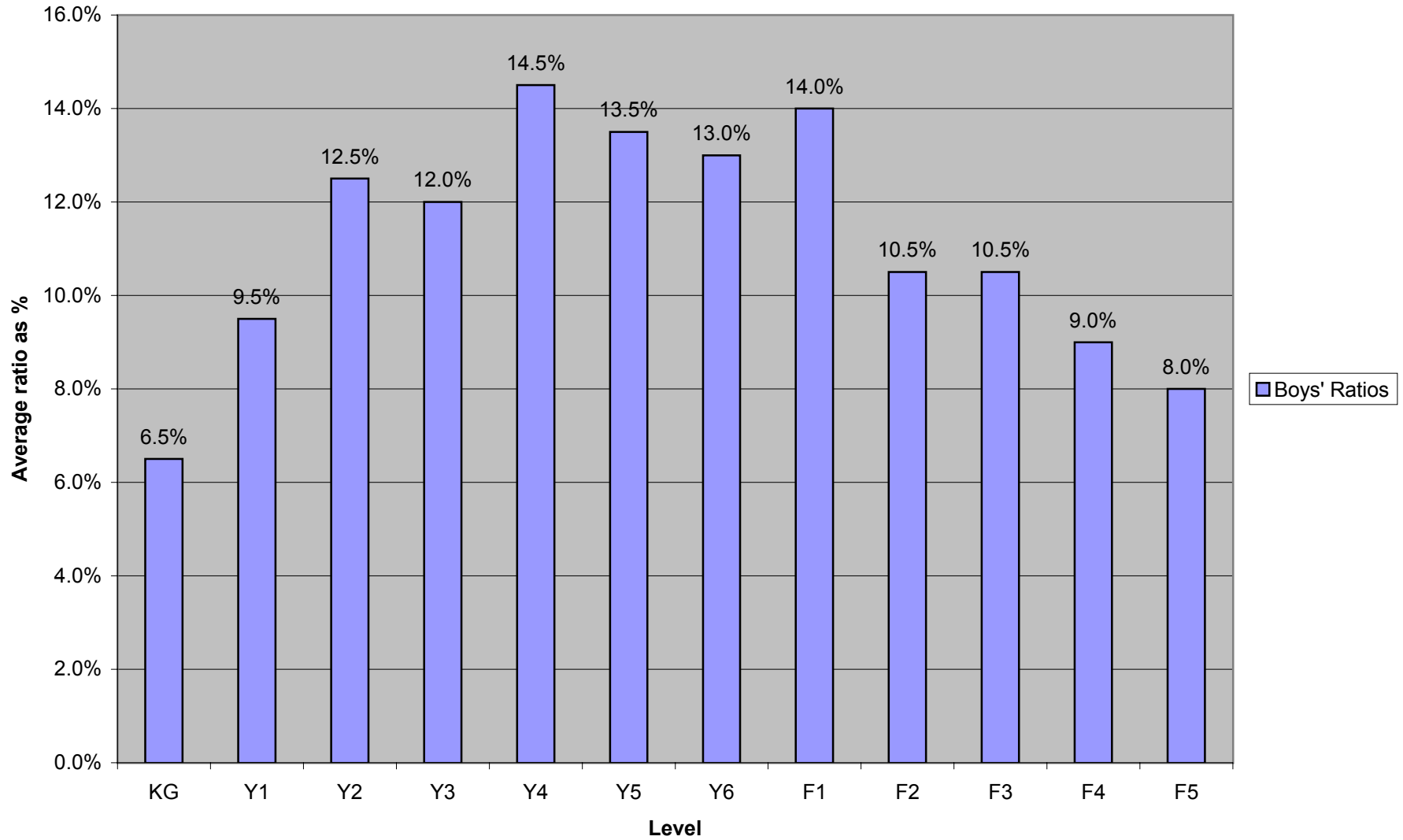
**AVERAGE RATIO OF "LOAD" TO BODY WEIGHT
AGAINST EDUCATIONAL LEVEL****(Figures recorded to the nearest 0.5)**

Level	Boys' Ratios	Girls' Ratios	Children's Combined Ratios
Kindergarten	6.5%	6.5%	6.5%
Year 1	9.5%	8.5%	9.0%
Year 2	12.5%	8.5%	10.5%
Year 3	12.0%	11.5%	11.5%
Year 4	14.5%	13.0%	14.0%
Year 5	13.5%	12.5%	13.0%
Year 6	13.0%	13.0%	13.0%
Form 1	14.0%	16.0%	15.0%
Form 2	10.5%	12.0%	11.0%
Form 3	10.5%	12.0%	11.0%
Form 4	9.0%	11.0%	10.0%
Form 5	8.0%	9.5%	9.0%

AVERAGE RATIO OF "LOAD" TO BODY WEIGHT AGAINST EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

BOYS

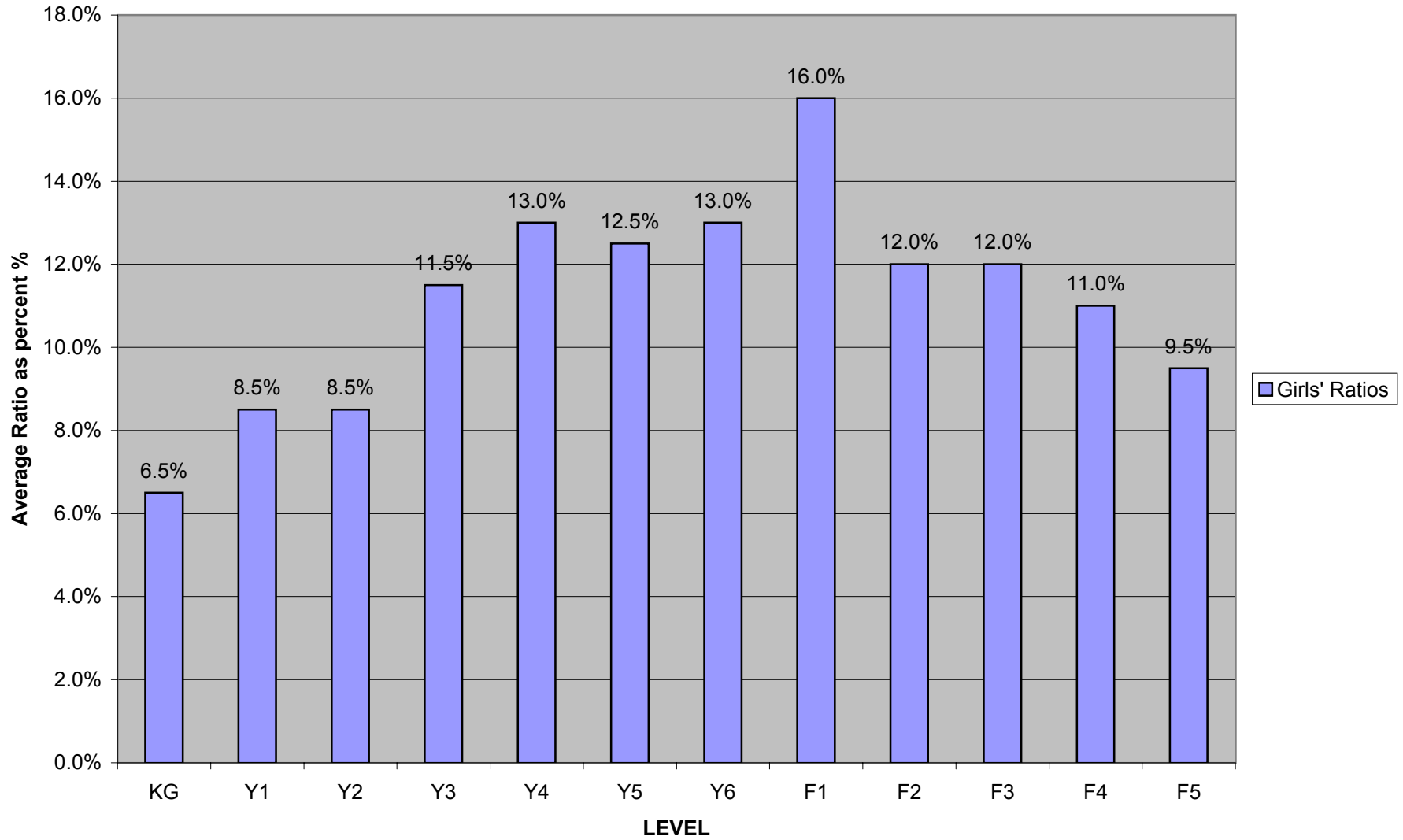
APPENDIX D (ii)



AVERAGE RATIO OF LOAD TO BODY WEIGHT AGAINST EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

GIRLS

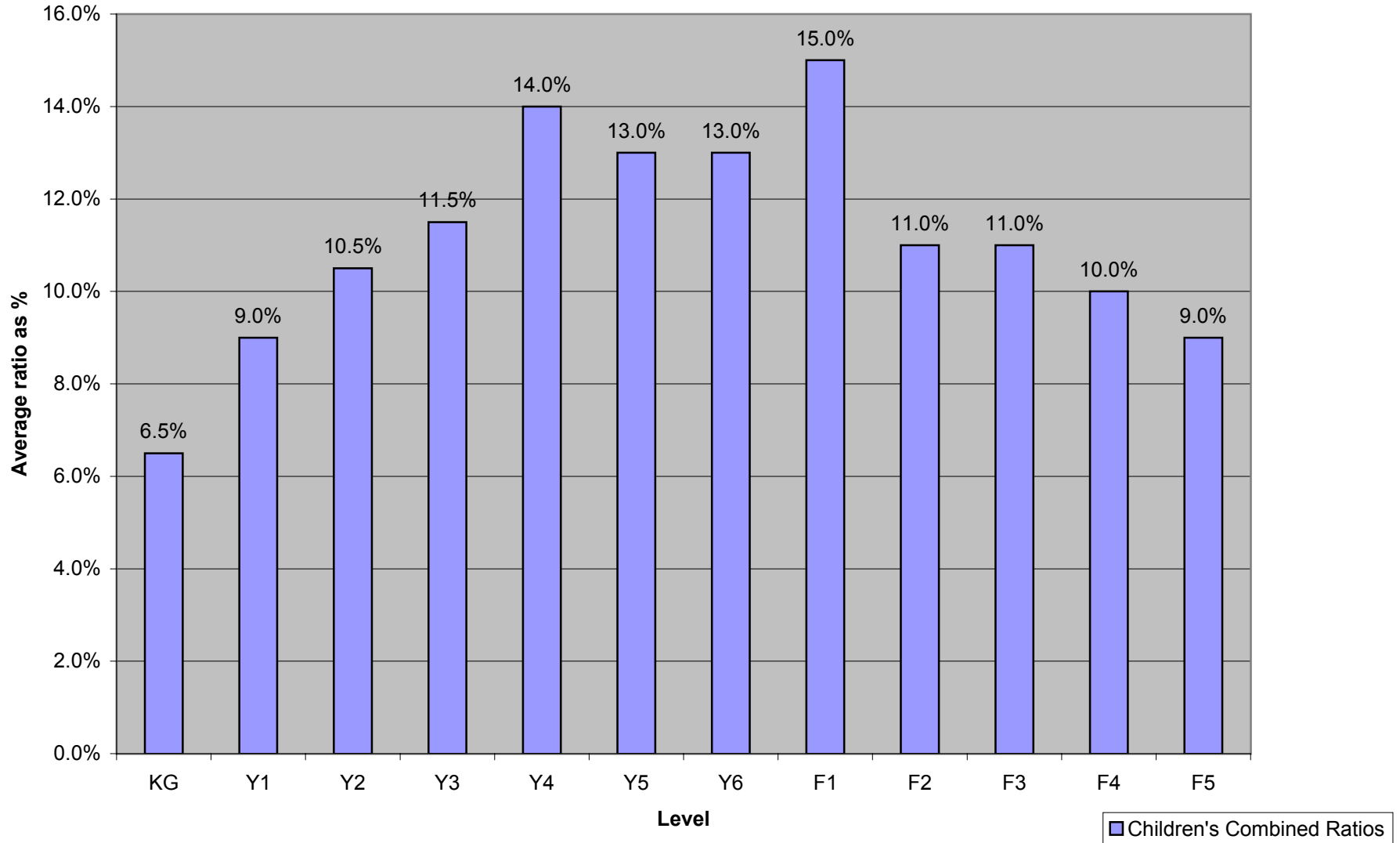
APPENDIX D (iii)



AVERAGE RATIO OF LOAD TO BODY WEIGHT AGAINST EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Children Combined

APPENDIX D (iv)



**PROPORTION OF CHILDREN WITH RATIOS AT OR ABOVE 20%
i.e. CLEARLY UNACCEPTABLE**

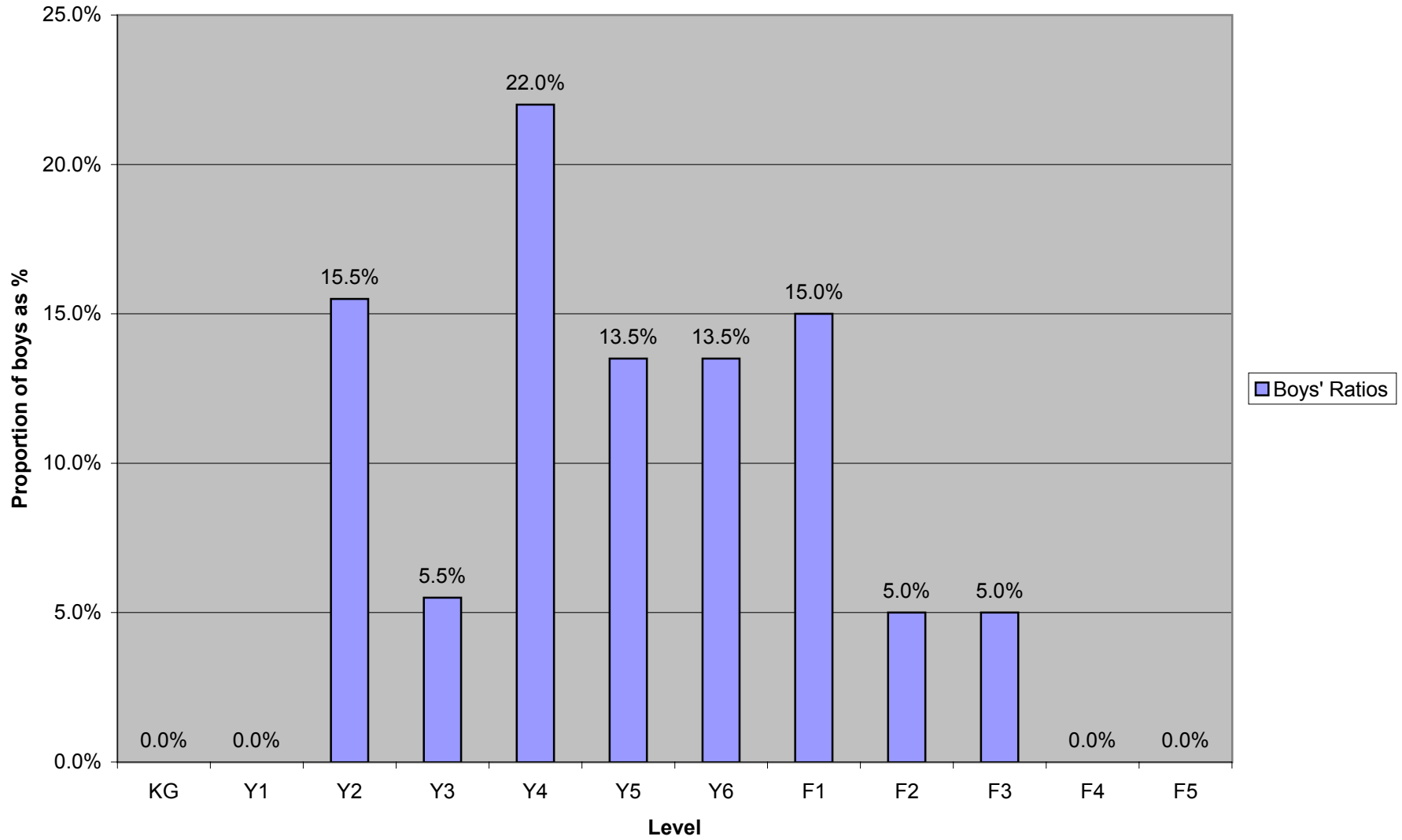
(Figures recorded to the nearest 0.5)

Level	Boys' Ratios	Girls' Ratios	Children's Combined Ratios
Kindergarten	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Year 1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Year 2	15.5%	0.0%	8.5%
Year 3	5.5%	4.5%	5.0%
Year 4	22.0%	7.5%	15.0%
Year 5	13.5%	7.5%	10.5%
Year 6	13.5%	3.0%	8.5%
Form 1	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%
Form 2	5.0%	7.0%	6.0%
Form 3	5.0%	4.0%	4.5%
Form 4	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Form 5	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
OVERALL	8.0%	4.0%	6.0%

PROPORTION OF CHILDREN WITH RATIOS AT OR ABOVE 20%

Boys

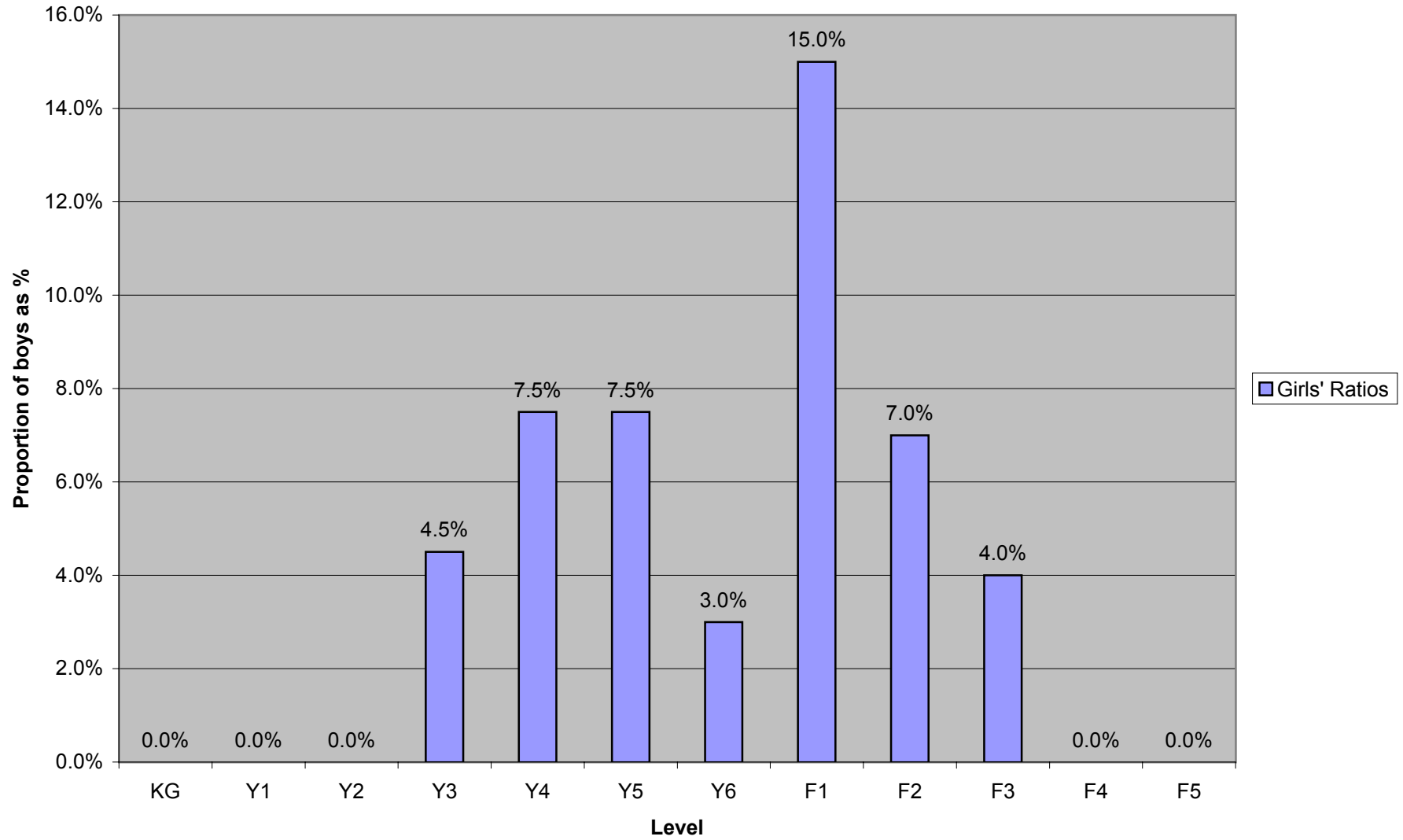
APPENDIX E(ii)



PROPORTION OF CHILDREN WITH RATIOS AT OR ABOVE 20%

APPENDIX E(iii)

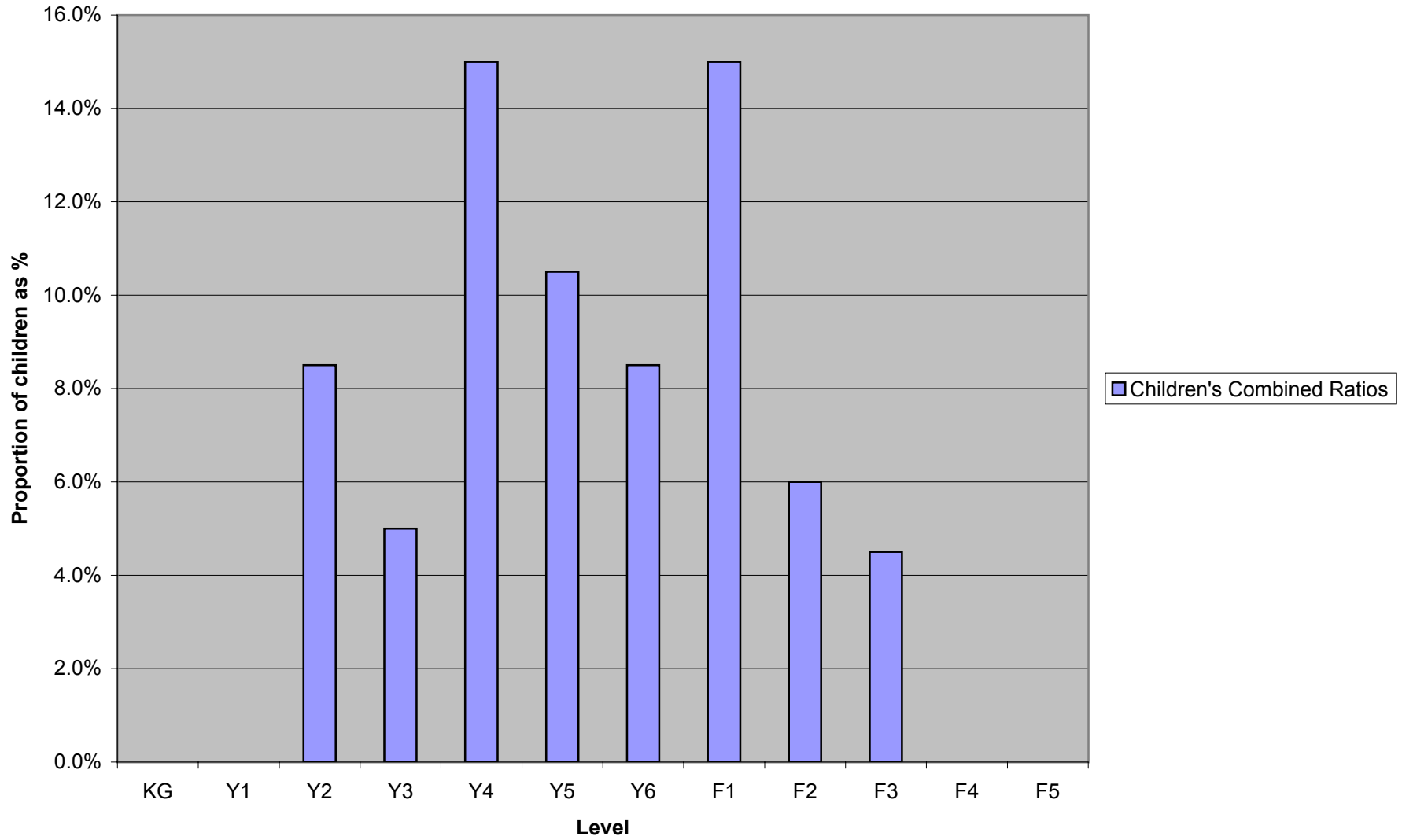
Girls



PROPORTION OF CHILDREN WITH RATIOS AT OR ABOVE 20%

Children Combined

APPENDIX E(iv)



Circulation List

The Committee recommends that a copy of this report be sent to the following for information and any necessary action:

Hon. Minister of Education
The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education
The Director General (Education)
The Director (Operations)
The Director (Further Studies and Adult Education)
The Director (Planning and Development)
The Director (Curriculum Development, Implementation and Review)
The Director (Finance and Administration)
The Director (Student Services and International Relations)

P.S. All the data sheets, including completed questionnaires, preliminary data sheets based on school visits, and other related materials are held in Educ. File 433/2000



STUDENT SERVICES AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

Tel: 25982464/5

Fax: 21 226103

Letter Circular

Information: ___ X ___

Action Required: ___ X ___

Ref: SIM SILC 43/00

Date: 20th October 2000

To: All Heads of Primary, Secondary, Junior Lyceums and Trade Schools (State Only)

Subject: Recommendations on School Bag Polices and Procedures

Following the publication of the report on *The Handling of Heavy School Bags*, by the Ministerial Committee set up to investigate the load which Primary and Secondary School students carry every day, the following information is being forwarded to schools:

The categories most at risk are: Year 4 pupils and Form 1 students

A safe guideline for schools to follow is:- 10% is the ideal maximum ratio*
20% or over is excessive.

Wheeled carriers should not be allowed, as these constitute a hazard to students during transportation. Constant pulling can severely damage students' health.

The bag itself, devoid of contents, is in some cases, unnecessarily heavy.

The Ministerial Committee, after having conducted investigations, has made a number of recommendations which are being reproduced overleaf.

M.R. Mifsud
Director
Student Services and International Relations

Recommendations on School Bag Policies and Procedures

These recommendations are being forwarded to schools for the necessary action.

- Bags should be light-weight, compartmented, with two padded and adjustable straps that can be squarely strapped to both shoulders. Wheeled carriers should not be allowed.
- The school should follow a textbook-based timetable. In years 4, 5 and 6, the timetable should take into account the combined weight of books and exercise-books.
- As part of their ongoing health-promotion exercise, schools are strongly encouraged to educate the students and their parents about:
 - School-bag weight and its consequences
 - Methods of decreasing the weight of the load carried by pupils

NOTE:-

* Ratio referred to overleaf = $\frac{\text{ratio of school bag and contents}}{\text{weight of child}}$



STUDENT SERVICES AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

Tel: 25982464/5

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- Bags should be light-weight, compartmented, with two padded and adjustable straps that can be squarely strapped to both shoulders. Wheeled carriers should not be allowed.
- The lesson timetable should indicate which book will be used on the day.
- A member of staff should be identified early in the first term to liaise with the staff in order to ensure a fair distribution of textbook weight per day at student level. During school year 2000 – 2001 this can be experimented with Form 1 classes.
- A set of textbooks could be available in subject rooms.
- Teachers should engage in less textbooks-based teaching and make a more judicious use of handouts.
- Weight should be taken into consideration in the selection of a new textbook.
- Files and thin exercise-books should be preferred to thick ones. From an early age, students should be given systematic training in the proper use of school files and home filing systems.
- Lockers for students to store and retrieve books and other items should be installed where possible.
- Whole-school approaches should be adopted to training students and parents in avoiding carrying irrelevant objects to school, and adopting a 'weight criterion' when buying such items as diaries, notebooks etc.
- A School Bag Awareness Day should be held during which students conduct investigations on their school bags and load-carrying habits.

The above recommendations could form part of a comprehensive school health-promotion programme aimed at enabling students to take control of their lifestyles.

NOTE:-

* Ratio referred to overleaf = $\frac{\text{ratio of school bag and contents}}{\text{weight of child}}$

Divizjoni ta' l-Edukazzjoni
FLORIANA



MALTA

Education Division
FLORIANA

STUDENT SERVICES AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

Tel: 25982464/5

Fax: 21 226103

Memorandum

Information: ___ X ___

Action Required: ___ X ___

Ref: SIM 18/02

Date: 29th March 2002

To: All Heads of Primary, Secondary, Junior Lyceums and Trade Schools (State Only)

Subject: School Bag Polices and Procedures

Reference is made to Memorandum SIM 13/01 dated 7th November 2000 entitled "Heavy School Bags".

Heads of school are being requested to once again address the implications of the Division's policy i/c/w heavy school bags and the need for parents to be informed on the subject. It is desirable that information and guidance be given in good time to parents before they purchase bags for the coming school year. Parents who have purchased wheeled carriers should be informed that the transition period will not be extended beyond the end of the coming school year.

Heads of school are kindly asked to fill in the information requested in the attached form and send it to the undersigned 'Att. Ms. V. Attard', by not later than April 20th 2001.

M.R. Mifsud
Director
Student Services and International Relations

School Bag Policy and Procedures

March/April 2001

Ref: Memo SIM 18/01

1. Name of School _____ School Stamp _____

Please tick ✓ as appropriate

2. Our School has drawn up a school bag policy YES NO

3. This policy was drafted in conjunction with the school council YES NO

4. All parents have been informed YES NO

5. Parents were informed

during a meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>
through the students	<input type="checkbox"/>
through written communication	<input type="checkbox"/>
by other means	<input type="checkbox"/>

Head's signature _____

Head's name in BLOCKS _____

Thankyou for your cooperation.

Divizjoni ta' l-Edukazzjoni
FLORIANA



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Education Division
FLORIANA

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Memorandum

Information: ___ X ___

Action Required: ___ X ___

Ref: SIM 18/02

Date: 29th March 2002

**To: All Heads of Primary, Secondary, Junior Lyceums and Trade Schools
(State Only)**

From: Ms M.R. Mifsud, Director, Student Services and International Relations

Subject: School Bag Polices and Procedures

Reference is made to Memorandum SIM 18/01 entitled "School Bag Polices and Procedures" and dated 29th March 2001.

Heads of school are reminded that the conceded transition period has now come to an end and as from September 2002, schools are expected to abide by the regulations governing school bags as explained in Letter Circular SILC 44/00, dated 20th October 2000.

M.R. Mifsud
Director
Student Services and International Relations