

Getting our pre-school centres to meet challenges

Jared Ng

Parish preschool centres will come under one centralised management and operation to ensure that they can remain competitive and sustainable for the future.

Through centralisation, “the Church will be able to enjoy economies of scale and professional leadership to upgrade these centres in terms of facilities, curriculum, staff and school leadership,” said Dr Koh Thiam Seng, ACCS Chairman and a member of the Catholic Preschool Education Task Force that was formed to study the upgrading of Catholic preschool education.

This decision comes as part of a review conducted by the Archdiocesan Commission for Catholic Schools (ACCS) three years ago on the state of Catholic preschool education.

The review was prompted by the new challenging preschool education landscape in Singapore where parish preschool centres are experiencing declining enrolments. This arose because of the many government funded centres that offer competitive salaries, facilities and school fees.

Dr Koh told Catholic News the change was necessary because “preschool education remains an important part of

the Church’s social mission ... and also a means of evangelisation.”

Based on the review, the task force recommended the centralisation of management of preschool centres as the “best way forward for the Church”.

To support the upgrading, the Church will provide a one-off funding for any necessary upgrading of facilities as well as for hiring personnel to manage and operate the preschool centres at the central office. The location of this office is yet to be determined.

The funding will also assist in making any necessary adjustment to staff salaries to ensure that they are competitive to the market.

In addition, the Church will be incorporating a company limited by guarantee (CLG) to manage the preschool centres.

The CLG, which will be a not-for-profit company, will be called “Catholic Preschool Education (Singapore) Limited”.

Dr Koh shared that the CLG is tentatively planning for “all the parish preschool centres to operate under the brand of ‘Little Shepherds’ Schoolhouse”. A final decision will be made in January next year when the CLG is officially incorporated.



Church to provide one-off funding for upgrading where required.

After the centralisation effort next year, the CLG will work with the various preschool centres to implement a common curriculum.

“We will implement the new curriculum after we provide the necessary professional development for all staff involved in the implementation. This implementation of a common curriculum will be consistent within our parish preschool centres,” said Dr Koh.

There are also plans to introduce

inclusive education in one or two centres which are ready for such a service.

Dr Koh said inclusive education refers to admitting children with mild to moderate special needs into the preschool centres, adding that “teachers will be given professional development on special needs education”.

The long term goal is to “roll out inclusive education across all our preschool centres,” he said. □

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Boys’ Town: Spending quality family time at fiesta

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Boys’ Town held its inaugural Family Fiesta for youth and children under its care to spend bonding time with their family members.

The charity helps children and youth from disadvantaged and disengaged families who have faced hardships resulting from troubled home situations, financial struggles, abandonment and abuse.

It serves both boys and girls, from infant to young adults and its services include residential, fostering, youth outreach, clinical intervention and family reunification.

Held within the Boys’ Town campus, the event included outdoor and carnival games as well as music and craft workshops. With the exciting carnival games, the fiesta was filled with laughter and

unending fun for all. Games such as escape room and archery tag allowed participants of all ages to bond and enjoy themselves.

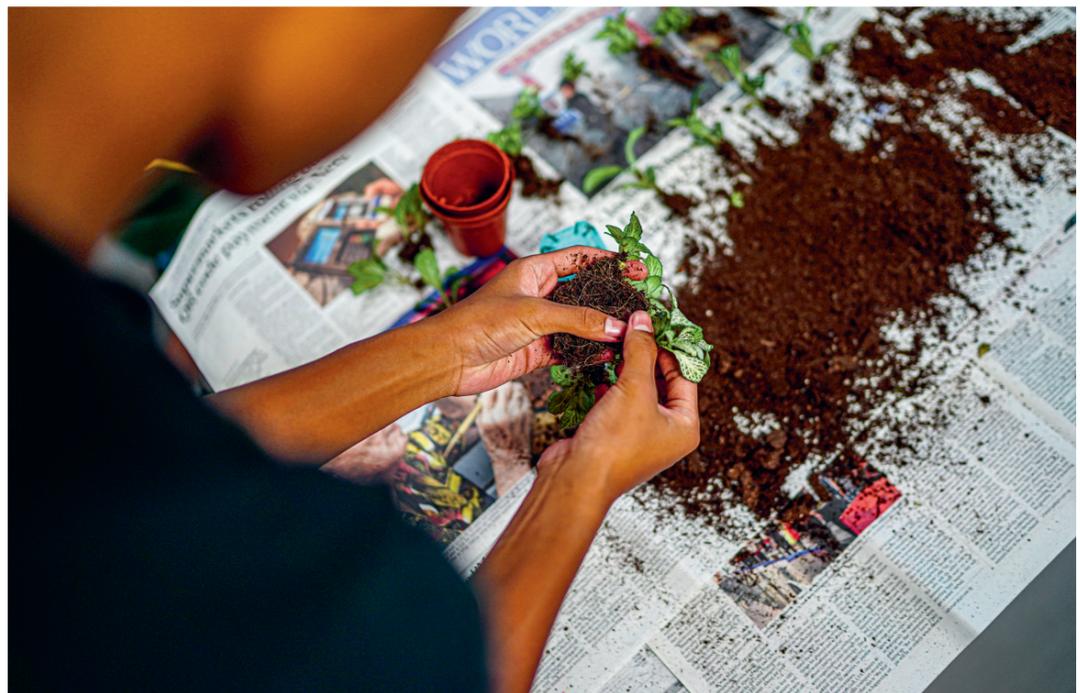
President Halimah Yacob was present to celebrate the special occasion, and commemorated it with the installation of the final piece of the Boys’ Town family painting.

The artwork depicts a family of elephants, with the 64 puzzle pieces painted by Boys’ Town clients, staff and volunteers.

Boys’ Town, which started as a residential home in 1948, also took the opportunity to showcase its newly designed logos for all seven services to strengthen their identity as a social service agency.

The logos are a standardised branding and image across all services to show unity. □

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There were plenty of games and activities for family bonding. Photo: BOYS’ TOWN