



REPORT OF THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ON THE EVALUATION CARRIED OUT IN OCTOBER 2005

QMS Committee

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1. Description of the school

Bishops (The Diocesan College) is an independent boys' school, established as a Christian foundation in 1849 by the Bishop of Cape Town, Robert Gray. After various arrangements for the governance of the school had run their course, the College was established by an Act of the Cape Parliament, and this Act laid out questions of ownership, governance and purposes. The School has an enrollment of 1300 pupils, in three sections; a Pre-Prep school (Grades 0 to 2; about 216 pupils); a Preparatory School (Grades 3 - 7; about 360 pupils) and the College (grades 8 - 12; 720 pupils). The School associates itself with the requirements of the National Qualifications Framework, and pupils enter the national Grade 12 state exams through the Western Cape Education Department's examination. There is also a Post-Matric unit which allows girls, and which prepares pupils for Cambridge A-levels.

The school requires all-round involvement from its pupils in its academic, sporting, cultural, societal and spiritual practices.

Full details of the School's activities can be found on the website at www.bishops.orfr.za

2. School sectors being evaluated

The Independent Quality Assurance Agency (IQAA) makes provision for a school either to conduct a whole school evaluation covering the five sectors identified by Umalusi as being the prerequisites, or else spreading the evaluation out over five years, and evaluating one sector at a time. The Committee decided at its first meeting that it would proceed in a staggered fashion, evaluating one focus area a year and completing the whole school evaluation over the five year period. Mr Roberts agreed that this was a legitimate way to proceed.

The five sectors which have to be evaluated are: Teaching and Learning; Attainments and Progress; Functioning of the school; Governance and management; and Values and society involvement. The Committee decided to conduct the first evaluation on the focus area called "Functioning of the School." The committee believed that this would be a good area to use as a first time effort, because the committee felt that the issues would be clearly seen and reported on, and this would provide on the job training and experience for some of the more complex focus areas.

3. Background

The Quality management committee was set up by the Executive Committee under the chairmanship of the Deputy Principal. The IQAA was approached and they appointed Mr Owen Roberts as the external mentor. A preliminary meeting of the Committee was held on 21 July and this was essentially a training session during which the Committee went over the evaluation process as outlined in "Looking in a Mirror", the handbook issued by the IQAA.

The first meeting of the full Committee including the mentor was held on 11 August 2005 and the scope and process was agreed on, and planning was set in place to deal with the sub-categories of the focus area. Various tasks were allocated, including the drawing up of the various questionnaires which had been agreed on.

A further meeting was held on 20 October during which final arrangements were made for the execution of the questionnaires, the compiling of the individual reports based on personal interviews, and the observations which were scheduled.

The evaluation day was set for 3 November, and the evidence that had been collected was tabled, presented, and then discussed. Following this, the committee evaluated the data, and reached a rating for each of the quality indicators in the focus area.

4. Description of collection of data

The following instruments were used to gather the data which we needed for the evaluation process.

Questionnaires: College parents, Prep Parents, Pre-Prep parents College staff, Prep Staff, Pre-Prep staff

College boys (Grades 11 - 8), Prep boys (Grades 7 - 6)

Interview and report Financial arrangements

Reports Arrangements for recording attendance at College, at prep, and at Pre-Prep

Arrangements for substitution of absent teachers at College, Prep, and Pre-Prep

Observation Punctuality of boys and staff at College, and at Pre-Prep

Client satisfaction survey questionnaires for College parents, Prep parents and Pre-prep parents.

5. Compliance Check list

(This section of the report is arranged according to the compliance indicators in the handbook. The relevant page is included as Appendix 1.)

The first evaluation exercise undertaken by the Committee was the Compliance Checklist. (See page 10 of "Looking in the Mirror".

The Committee concluded that Bishops was compliant in all areas except the item (No. 17) relating to the 'full set of legal documents and handouts needed for school administration', and the item (No. 19) concerned with the school's being a safe place 'complying with the relevant regulations'. While it was noted that the key legislations were available from the ISASA website, the exact nature of what might be regarded as information needed for school administration, or of safety measures complying with the relevant regulations was not able to be established within the meeting.

There was some discussion over item No. 6 as to the extent of detail required in the operational plan which would allow us to respond fully to this item.

The Deputy Principal was tasked with obtaining the clarification which would enable the Committee to be able to deal with these items during the next evaluation.

6. Findings

(This section of the report is arranged according to the quality indicators in the handbook. The relevant page is included as Appendix 2.)

6.1 Policies

The Committee's conclusion was that the school does run smoothly, and practices are well suited to the running of the school. Information from the parents' response showed that they held this position too. It does remain a task that the Deputy Principal must continue to address, to ensure that written policies reflecting accepted practice in the school are created and made accessible to whomever needs to refer to them.

As far as the laws and regulations go, it was felt that these must be provided and made available, and that in order to satisfy us that this has been adequately done, an audit should be taken of what exactly is covered in this terminology.

6.2 Finance

In general terms, the conclusion of the Committee was that the financial management of the school was as good as it could get, and the only changes we would see needing to be made were those relating to changing circumstances. The detail around the annual budgets was regarded as impressive, and the longerterm planning in place and being improved augurs well for future management of this area. Included in this was recognition of the future impact of the Development Office, and the role it will play in the provision of a more solid base for an income stream independent of fees.

An aspect of management which needs attention is the Asset Register, especially for larger items. There was some debate as to whether the school should be keeping inventories of each classroom. It was important that the Executive should identify areas of risk or where significant wastage could occur, for example in sports equipment. What happens to 'consumables' in sport, like used cricket or rugby balls? While it was accepted that provision for insurance of major categories had been made, there were some aspects relating to insurance which must be addressed, and the Committee understands that they are being addressed. These relate to transport, accident life cover, especially in circumstances when the school's public liability insurance would not cover pupils in accident situations. Most parents agreed that there was adequate cover, but there was a significant number who did not know, and it indicates that greater communication regarding insurance needs to take place. There does seem to be a need to address the question of maintenance of school buildings, grounds and facilities. We are not suggesting that systems need to be changed, but we do need to address the allocation of resources to ensure that the plant is maintained according to our stated world-class standards.

6.3 Orderliness

The evidence suggested that there was general acceptance of the rules and practices in place, certainly by boys and staff, with some doubts expressed as to the fairness of their implementation.. It was agreed that when the Bishops Charter document was in place, the situation would be clearer. The Prep needs to combine the various rules affecting the boys into one document and include this in their Orientation Document, which needs to be distributed to all parents next year, and not just the new parents. The level of ignorance by Prep parents regarding school rules shows up strongly in the evidence.

Punctuality was seen as a problem at the College and the Prep, and this is reflected in the evidence from boys, parents and the staff themselves. The problem exists both with staff and with the boys. The Committee considered the College questionnaires, the comments and the brief table that was the result of observation by three members of the Committee. There are a number of aspects which we must address, and that means setting targets and then getting them right. The Prep also saw the matter in the same light, with some reduction of the problem where teachers stayed with the same class for different subjects. The Pre-Prep had less of a problem, except that at the crucial times, especially at the start of the day, the level of punctuality was less than desirable. On the other hand, we need to be clear about the extent of the 'lateness'. In many cases, class starting times were delayed by only five minutes, so the problem is not a huge amount of time, but the cumulative effect of this. As far as the boys' punctuality goes, this was linked to staff, but if the staff have sorted themselves out, we believed the boys would be much better. Certainly, the issue at the Pre-prep was almost entirely a staff issue - the boys themselves were dead-keen to get into class.

The question of attendance was not seen as a major issue, with absentee rates seldom reaching 5% as the norm. The really important issues though, related to control of absenteeism, and in particular, what follow-up occurs, who does it, how is it recorded, and should it be better managed. It was recommended that for each of the schools, the Executive

should require an audit of the procedures to check whether there are improvements which can be implemented. Above all else, it was recommended that a common procedure should be set in place across the whole school, so that common practice can be achieved. This procedure must be developed and then communicated to all parents, and insisted on. In our discussion, we felt that the system was not flawed, but the Housemasters were often hampered by lack of accurate information caused by staff not doing what they were supposed to, and the most important difficulty which must be addressed is that we don't necessarily know when a boy is not at school when he should be, especially first thing in the morning.

With regard to the quality indicator, it was felt that the timetable was not the issue, but that the provisions that covered absenteeism among teachers did need some review. Procedures for the boys when faced with the situation of a teacher (or a substitute) not arriving had to be tightened up. Accountability lay with both staff and with the boys.

Behaviour and manners of boys and staff were regarded as being of an acceptably high standard, even though there were some aspects that needed to be improved.

6.4 Security and Safety

While the Committee agreed that in general the level of safety of buildings and facilities was good, there was concern about safety in the kitchen and in the laboratories. We would like to see a regular inspection taking place, and the Safety Certificate being issued regularly. This is more of a concern for the Prep, as we did not establish when last a Safety Certificate was issued for Prep buildings. There was concern expressed about fire precautions, and fire exits. There is outright concern across the board, from parents, staff and boys, that there does not seem to be any routine in place for fire drills, emergency procedures. We recommend very strongly to the Executive that regular drill be instituted and practiced.

There are also a number of areas where staff supervision of activities is not happening at acceptable levels. In certain circumstances this is very important. Swimming, field trips and outings, boys in school vehicles, sports practices, classroom supervision and aftercare must be reasonably policed so that untoward incidents can be prevented.

6.5 Health Care

There was general agreement that the necessary levels of support and provision for the needs of staff and students were in place, but there were indications in the statistics that social needs are less provided for than the other areas. The staff indication suggested that their emotional and social support could be improved. The general consensus was that people felt safe and cared for, but the indication came from the boarders that they felt less secure than the general expression of opinion. The Committee felt that this was probably the consequence of the recent burglaries, rather than bullying, and moves by the school to address this must be encouraged. The Prep seems to have a general problem with boarding, and the Committee recommends strongly that the whole boarding situation be dealt with, the causes addressed, and the tensions released. The comments from the boys throw some light on the situation. The other situation which the Prep must address appears to be the subway crossing, as this came up in a number of comments as well.

The Committee felt that the evidence showed a general sense that the policies around bullying, child abuse, drug and alcohol use were clear and were being implemented, and carried through. At the prep, the indications were that while the policies were clear, there was less confidence that addressing the problems and carrying through with reports was being fully handled. There was also a communication issue, with more information being needed to be more effectively handed out to more prep parents.

The key indication was the problem around Prep boarding, and the Committee recommends that this be fully investigated, and action taken to remedy the problems. This is not seen as a

short term issue either, because the bulk of the affected boarders would be moving up to College boarding next year.

7. Key strong points

The key strong points in the 'Functioning of the school' evaluation are: the smooth running of the institution (both on a day-to-day level, as well as more broadly) based on clearly understood practices; the strong management and control of school finances; and the clear policies relating to bullying, child, alcohol and drug abuse.

8. Significant weaknesses

The significant weaknesses are the lack of any practising of emergency procedures such as fire drill and accidents; the question of punctuality for both staff and pupils; follow-up routines for checking up on boys not at school when they should be; and the lack of supervision of certain situations which could become dangerous if unattended by responsible persons.

9. Recommendations to the Executive

The Committee makes the following recommendations to the Executive for implementation in the development planning for 2006.

1. The Deputy Principal should ensure exactly what the laws and regulations are governing school functions.
2. Carry out an audit of attendance routines and establish a clear practice across all schools as to what parents should do if their sons are to be absent for any reason.
3. Identify areas of risk or wastage with regard to control of assets, especially small assets like sports equipment
4. Identify questions of insurance and offer advice to parents
5. Ensure that the allocation of resources to maintenance of existing plant is adequate.
6. Finalise the Bishops Charter and ensure that the document and what it entails are properly communicated to parents, staff and pupils.
7. Deal decisively with the question of punctuality of staff and boys.
8. Procedures around the handling of non-attendance of boys must be clarified, rationalized and communicated clearly to all parents.
9. A more vigorous pursuit of Safety checks in all three schools
10. Fire drills must be regularly practised, as well as procedures for other emergencies as well.
11. Supervision of pupils' activities where these could lead to injury or inappropriate and harmful behaviours.
12. The prep school management must investigate the conditions of unhappiness among the Grade 7 boarders and resolve the disputes which are indicated in the data and in the comments.

10. Conclusion

The Committee is satisfied that the various activities undertaken during this evaluation were properly done, and produced valid information for it to work on. We feel that the procedures were rigorously undertaken, and the conclusions drawn are valid for the school to consider and act upon. We feel that undertaking only one aspect for evaluation has resulted in an efficient evaluation, while at the same time giving us a lot of insight into how to proceed next year with perhaps more challenging aspects of the school.