



REPORT OF THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ON THE
EVALUATION CARRIED OUT IN OCTOBER 2006

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. In 2006, the School has an enrolment 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; about 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. 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.org.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 six 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 six sectors which have to be evaluated are: Teaching and Learning; Attainments and Progress; Functioning of the School; Governance and Management; Values and Society Involvement, and Distinctive Features.

The initial evaluation conducted last year addressed the sector called "Functioning of the School". The mentor for last year, Mr Owen Roberts, suggested in his report that we should consider doing two sectors this year. Accordingly, at the first meeting of the Committee this year, we decided to conduct evaluation on the sectors called "Governance and Management" and "Distinctive Features". The scope of the "Governance and Management" sector was made clear in the IQAA instrument, but the Distinctive Features needed a discussion at the Committee to arrive at an agreed set of what Bishops' distinctive features were thought to be. From this discussion, a set of Quality Indicators was drawn up, which formed the basis for the questionnaires. The Committee agreed that the key method for gathering the data on which to conduct the evaluation would be questionnaires, with a separate report on the Council. The information to be gathered under Distinctive Features was to be addressed in two ways – the first being an individual response for each of the Distinctive Features, and then secondly, a ranking exercise to attempt to discover what the constituent groups regarded as being the most significant of them.

3. Background

The Bishops Quality Management Committee was set up last year and conducted its initial evaluation in November last year, with Mr Owen Roberts as the IQAA's appointed external mentor. The composition of the Quality Management Committee continued unchanged from last year. Our mentor (appointed by the IQAA) was Mr David Wynne. The Committee met three times before the Evaluation Day (6 November), and the activities in these meetings focused on agreeing on the Distinctive Features list, and then compiling the questionnaires for the various constituencies which we were going to approach.

An innovation which was launched was the use of on-line questionnaires at the College for boys, staff and parents. There were some technical issues which might or might not have affected the number of returns, and these will be addressed during the course of the year. The Prep and Pre-Prep used paper questionnaires and captured the results manually.

The Evaluation day was set for 6 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)

Interview and report Operation of the Council

There was a discussion on the quantity and hence the quality of the data received through the questionnaires. The numbers of returned questionnaires in all the constituencies was small, and our conclusion was that we would need to treat the data circumspectly. However, we did not feel that we could draw conclusions either way as to what effect this might have on the findings. We also believed that we needed to establish why the return was so small. Was it technological (at the College), or are our parents all 'questionnaired-out'? The boys' responses were also limited, and maybe that did have to do with their access to the on-line questionnaire. Maybe we need to resort to paper again – at least then one can require a class of boys to respond immediately (something one can't do electronically). Prep parents' responses were also small though, as were the Pre-Prep's, but again we did not feel that we could deduce anything from this.

However, what we were asking for in the questionnaires was not fact, but indications of perceptions held by the various constituencies. We need to treat the information accordingly, but remain respectful of indicators or warnings implicit in the data.

5. Compliance

The Chairman reported on his activities with regard to Umalusi, and explained the developments within Umalusi, and between Umalusi and the IQAA and ISASA during the past year. Umalusi decided during the year that they would no longer go on seeking to outsource their accrediting role to agencies, but would complete the process themselves. Because of the shift which has taken place, the work of our internal QMS committee becomes much more focused on questions of quality management within the school. The need to attend indirectly to questions of compliance with Umalusi through the IQAA have disappeared. However, changes within ISASA have now resulted in the need for ISASA schools to satisfy compliance with IQAA or an equivalent body in order to meet ISASA's quality management standards.

As far as Umalusi goes, it is gratifying to record that we have satisfied Umalusi's current requirements, and have been given "Accreditation Candidate" status. What this effectively

means is that once the Minister has signed the Bill into law, we will be able to proceed through the last process towards full Accreditation, which might be awarded for either three, five or ten years.

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 Review of last year's Recommendations

There had been twelve recommendations in last year's Report. In general, most of the recommendations had been fully followed up on, and where it had been possible, had been fully achieved. In some instances (punctuality, safety checks, supervision of pupils' activities), the recommendations would always be applicable. However, after examining what the school had done about these recommendations, there were four responses which the committee felt should be carried forward in 2007.

- 1) The Bishops Partnership document (formerly called the Bishops Charter), having been completed and incorporated into the admission process for 2007, should be made available to members of staff as well, so that they could see what sort of partnership was actually envisaged.
- 2) Although the question of punctuality had been addressed by management, committee members still believed that at certain times there was no urgency within the school about punctuality, and that the school management had not done enough to follow up on this aspect.
- 3) While it was agreed that proper procedures had been put in place with regard to the handling of non-attendance of boys, there were some queries about the effectiveness of these procedures.
- 4) Supervision of pupils' activities remained an issue to which attention must be given. Although this was seen last year as primarily a Prep and Pre-prep issue, some committee members felt that fuller investigations should be carried out in various of the College activities to check on the safety procedures of these activities.

Governance and Management

6.2 Governing Body

On the evidence supplied, the committee decided that we could not pass any comment on the governing body. The Report on Council prepared by the Chairman of the Committee and the Chairman of Council was regarded as being insufficient, and there were not enough questions in the current questionnaire dealing with Council issues. It would be more appropriate to ask all members of Council and subcommittees to complete a questionnaire. The information contained here should then be compared with perceptions held by boys, staff, and parents, which could be included in next year's evaluation. The Chairman was asked to ask the Council to do a self-appraisal questionnaire, and to include questions in next year's questionnaires to check these same issues with the 'client base' to arrive at a more balanced picture. We agreed to hold this section over to next year's evaluation.

However, it was felt on the evidence we did have that it would be a good idea to ask Council to set up an educative process to inform the Bishops community more fully on aspects of Council's structure, appointment procedures, their strategic role, the separation of governance and management, the code of conduct for Councillors, the skills necessary for Council, and the process of financial planning.

6.3 Principal

The general response from all constituencies was that the Principal was a good leader, competent and committed, with good relationships within the school and responsible for good teamwork among the staff. The Principal was seen to have good relationships with the Chairman of Council, and with the Bursar. There were one or two caveats which were sounded, with regard to perceptions of a measure of aloofness, and distance from some of the key activities of the school, and a suggestion that he should make himself more visible. However, it was understood that the role of the Executive should be seen as being equivalent to the Principal in terms of his presence around and about, and that the Principal was required to engage himself in a number of key strategic areas which necessarily took him out of the public eye. The balancing act he has to play is between his visibility and the time taken to carry out the tasks required of him.

6.4 Leadership and Management

There were some areas which called for attention here. The evidence suggests that the management structures are not fully understood by some parents and boys, and these should be communicated more clearly in the year ahead. There were suggestions that the motivational qualities of the management team need to be examined, and that more communication was needed, as also was a greater sensitivity to the strengths and weaknesses of the staff. Evidence suggested that staff were divided on whether the Executive members used praise and disciplinary action appropriately. The evidence showed that pupils received many opportunities to lead, to be consulted and to contribute to governance in the school. There was a slight doubt over the extent to which the Executive made decisions with sensitivity to the environment, to gender issues and to the interests of the community outside the school, and there was a suggestion that this should be addressed by the Executive.

6.5 Quality Management

The Quality management system in the school was definitely in place and functioning, but there were some issues with regard to the quality of the questionnaires, and the need to acquire information by other means. There was greater uncertainty about the new staff appraisal system – staff know what the process is, but are not clear about what the outcome of the process will be.

6.6 Communication

The evidence showed convincingly that communication is good across the school and the various constituent parts. Communication can always be improved, but there are not glaring inadequacies apparent from the responses. The committee did feel that the volume of communication from the school was enormous, and if parents were uninformed, it was not because the information was not available. The evidence also showed that in general, parents, boys and staff understood and approved the direction the school is taking – but the committee has had sufficient access to discussions and conversations around and about in which people do not seem altogether happy with some of the features of that way forward.

Distinctive Features

6.7 Academic

In general, there was strong evidence that respondents were happy with academic arrangements at the school. There were still some reservations about the technology rich

teaching environment, and there were still people who needed to be convinced that this was the right way to go, both from the parent body and the staff. Some boys expressed comments which were critical of the Open period in the middle of the day.

6.8 Resources

There was significant agreement here on the abundance of the school's resources (but with cautions about the lack of a Pre-prep library and the condition of the Mallett Centre), the support the school enjoyed from the parents, especially through the PA committees, and the intangible resources such as the OD Union, the school's reputation and its traditions. However, concern was expressed about the role of the Library at the College and the need for teaching staff not to neglect this asset. The opposite was true for the Prep, where the Library was regarded as a much-used component of the school's activities.

6.9 Pastoral Care

The evidence showed a strong indication of support for what was happening in the pastoral areas of the school, but it was felt that the boys need more information about the BSU and what it can offer.

6.10 Opportunities

The opportunities for tours, sporting and cultural and for exchanges were highly regarded, but a question could be asked whether the range of the exchange programme was wide enough to be of relevance to all boys.

6.11 Sport

Evidence showed a wide support for the wealth of sporting opportunities, but the number of comments about the lack of soccer in the school raises the question of whether the diversity of sports is wide enough. There was also a number of comments relating to coaching within the Prep being inadequate in the lesser teams of an age-group. Some pre-prep parent(s) felt that it was not adequate in that we didn't make enough coaching available and they were having to transport their sons to professional coaching regularly e.g. soccer. Once again there were Grade R parents too who perhaps would like to see more offered at that level.

6.12 Culture

There was general agreement that the cultural component of the school did represent one of its greatest strengths at the moment, with the Eisteddfod clearly one of the most prominent USPs (Unique selling point).

6.13 Funding and Growth

It was evident that this area needs a lot of attention and support from the school. There was clearly little awareness of the structure and role of the Development Office, and little awareness of the targets, and not enough is known or accepted about the targets. The Development Office needs to engage in a lot more communication with the various communities of the school, and needs to do a lot of persuading to get these constituencies on its side, to start achieving its purposes.

6.14 Ranking of the Distinctive Features

One of the biggest difficulties we faced here was how to interpret the evidence we had. There were a number of ways which we were aware of, but none really seemed to emerge unequivocally as the logical way forward. What did come through in a number of approaches

to the data was a sense that we could identify five or six aspects which were widely regarded as significant whatever the method of interpreting the data. These were:

- The balance between academic work, sport and cultural activities
- The technology-rich teaching environment
- The nurturing of the individuality of the pupils
- The excellent physical resources and facilities
- The school's reputation and traditions

7. Key strong points

The key strong points were the role of the Principal, the extent of communication, the resources and opportunities afforded by the school, as well as quality across the range of the school's activities, from academic, to cultural, sporting and pastoral growth.

8. Significant weaknesses

The significant weaknesses are lack of knowledge and acceptance of the role and purposes of the Development Office, and some aspects of the management style of the Executive. Other areas which need attention did not seem to be regarded as significant weaknesses. Indeed the key difference between this year and last year is that we found fewer areas which needed urgent attention, and fewer areas in which unrestrained jubilation was the best response.

9. Recommendations to the Executive

The Committee makes the following recommendations to the Executive for implementation in the development planning for 2007.

1. The Development Office needs to communicate more fully and more forcefully what it seeks to achieve, what its targets are, and how it plans to go about its activities. It also needs to persuade more people of the good it can do to serve the school. This is a responsibility which the Executive must share as well.
2. Academic staff in the College need to engage more fully with the Library and its resources.
3. Punctuality and the question of non-attendance of boys in class needs to be dealt with with greater vigour and more sustained attention.
4. The Bishops Partnership document must be made available to all staff and parents.
5. Council is to be asked to conduct a self-appraisal, and it needs to engage in an educative process with the parents to address a number of issues: aspects of Council's structure, appointment procedures, the strategic role of Council, the separation of governance and management, the code of conduct for Councillors, the set of skills necessary for Council, and the process of financial planning.
6. The Principal should be enabled to play his role with greater visibility, especially for the boys and staff within the school, and should be enabled to be free of some of the activities which might keep him deskbound. Equally, the role of the Executive as 'stand-ins' for the Principal must be made clearer to parents in particular.
7. The Executive needs to address the question of their role as motivational leaders for the school.
8. The question of a library for the Pre-Prep needs to be addressed, decided on and reported back to parents, whichever way the decision goes. (NB. The Committee is not necessarily recommending that the Pre-Prep needs a library: what is needed is a clear decision, and good communication of this decision to put the matter to bed.)

9. The BSU needs to provide more feedback and communication to the boys as regards its function and operations.
10. The Mallett Centre needs to be revamped.
11. The school needs to address the question of soccer in the school, and make a clear decision and follow through on it.
12. The Executive should investigate more fully whether there are College activities which need greater attention given to the safety procedures of these activities.

10. Conclusion

The Committee is satisfied that the discussions underlying the decisions taken during this evaluation were thorough, and produced valid conclusions 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 felt that undertaking two aspects for evaluation was fine, but felt that considering the sectors of the school that still need to be assessed, it would be more sensible in the years ahead to proceed on one sector as a time.