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REPORT OF THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ON THE EVALUATION CARRIED OUT IN NOVEMBER 2007

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 Anglican 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 2007, the School has an enrolment of 1323 pupils, in three sections: a Pre-Prep school (Grades 0 to 2; 214 pupils); a Preparatory School (Grades 3 - 7; about 371 pupils) and the College (grades 8 - 12; about 738 pupils). The school employs 220 people of whom 127 are academic staff. 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.

As a fee-paying school with relatively high fees, the school has been profiled as a privileged and elite school, with high standards and expectations, and a long tradition of excellence in a number of areas. The school has active diversity programmes and is making real efforts to broaden its social, economic and cultural profile. It has a long history of academic excellence, performing well in national exams, as well as in Olympiads and other competitions. It has a strong musical tradition, which exists side by side with a full range of sporting opportunities for all boys in the school.

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

2. Compliance

This evaluation was mostly a Model A evaluation, with the three IQAA questionnaires being administered, but with a further study of the teaching and learning sector being performed by the internal evaluation team, assisted by the IQAA mentor.

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 means in terms of full accreditation is still not clear because legislation still has to be finalised. We continue to provide Umalusi with their requested annual monitoring instruments.

3. Sector being evaluated

Bishops chose two years ago to engage in an annual evaluation in which one sector of the school would be evaluated so that after five years, the cumulative effect would be that a whole evaluation would have been performed. The initial evaluation conducted in 2005 addressed the sector called "Functioning of the School". The mentor for 2005, Mr Owen Roberts, suggested in his report that we should consider doing two sectors in 2006. Accordingly, at the first meeting of the Committee last 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. For 2007, the Committee addressed the key area of "Teaching and Learning."

4. Background

The mentor appointed by IQAA for 2007 was Mrs Sue Gardener, who started working with the Committee from the beginning of the third term. There was a change in the general procedures from the previous two years, aimed at bringing the procedures which Bishops had used previously more into line with those recommended by the 2007 version of *School in a Mirror*. The IQAA questionnaires were administered to staff (all three schools), parents (all three schools) and pupils (Grade 13 to Grade 2). Mrs Gardener made two visits to the school (Pre-Prep and College) independently of the committee, which allowed her to gain insight into the operation of teaching and learning at the school, so that she could with some basis of knowledge assess the soundness of the judgments which the committee was making on the Assessment Day. Four meetings of the Committee and Mrs Gardener were held before the Assessment Day on Monday 5 November and the evidence that had been gathered formed the basis for the discussion. Following this, the Committee reached a rating for each of the quality indicators in the focus area, and where appropriate, discussed some aspects of the recommendations that need to be made to the Executive.

5. Description of collection of data

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

IQAA Questionnaire and Comments

College parents, Prep Parents, Pre-Prep parents

College staff, Prep Staff, Pre-Prep staff

College boys (Grades 13 - 8), Prep boys (Grades 7 - 3), Pre-Prep (Grade 2)

Examination of the Curriculum by Dr Elizabeth Fullard (Pinnock Consulting)

Reports on Discussions of the Prep and Pre-Prep staff on the curriculum

Classroom visits (College, Prep and Pre-Prep)

Focus group discussions (College boys, Prep staff and boys, Pre-prep staff and parents)

The IQAA questionnaires received a good response, and a number of areas were identified as needing further examination, particularly by means of focus groups. There were also a large number of responses which showed very favourable perceptions of practices and procedures at school

Scores

Raw score Totals	Pupils	Staff	Parents
College	673	60	143
Prep	349	19	226
Pre-Prep	68	9	148
Percentages			
College	91%	91%	20%
Prep	94%	79%	61%
Pre-Prep	95%	90%	69%

6. Findings

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, and safety), some progress had been made but the recommendations would always be applicable.

1) The Development Office had made some effort to communicate its purposes in all three schools, and with the introduction of the Development Office Newsletter next year, this would extend to the parents as well. It was felt that there had been some improvement, but given the strategic importance of the Development Office, much still needed to be done.

2) The Library at the College reported an actual drop in the number of loans, even though it had appeared that certain subjects were using the Library's reference section to good effect.

3) Of significant concern was the report from the Executive of an increasing tendency from staff to excuse themselves from classes in order to do other things. Procedures in this area must be tightened up and the Executive need to take greater control over this next year.

4) The Council self-evaluation had taken place and it was clear that much good was following from that exercise. The main area of concern remains the method of appointment of Council members. However, the general sense from the IQAA results was that the Council was doing a good job.

5) The question of the place of soccer in the school had been addressed and decisions taken to extend the soccer season by reducing the rugby season, but there was a strong sense that feelings still run high on this score. Comments on the IQAA questionnaires (by the boys particularly) referred to this repeatedly.

6.2 Findings of the IQAA questionnaires: Major areas of concern

The IQAA questionnaires were administered in all three schools. The results were presented to us in tabular form for each school, with separate tables for boys, staff and parents.

In the College, the main areas of concern expressed by the boys were: security of possessions, homework, boredom at school, and a lack of assessability of the teachers for the boys. The staff also were concerned about security of possessions, a feeling that staff did not have an appropriate say in policy and decision making, and concern over the appraisal system. The parents were concerned about security of their children's possessions.

At the Prep school, boys were concerned about security of their possessions, bullying, homework, boredom, size of classes and assessability of the teachers. The staff felt that boys did not show proper respect, they were not sure that discipline at school was good, they were concerned about security of possessions, bullying, leadership and management, the school's facilities, class-size, staff's engagement with school policies and policy and decision making, and the appraisal system. The parents were concerned with security of possessions, bullying and the extent to which the school satisfied their sons' sporting needs.

At the Pre-Prep, boys were concerned with security of their possessions, bullying, homework, boredom and class-size. Staff were concerned about bullying, and class-size, and parents, bullying.

Focus groups were held at the College (with the boys), at the Prep (with staff) and at the Pre-Prep (with Staff and with parents). Reports on these discussions were available to the committee.

The committee had discussed these at length and came to the following conclusions.

6.2.1 Concerning possessions, it is widely acknowledged that boys are often careless about securing their own small possessions, which then unfortunately are 'borrowed' or taken (with or without an intention to return them). For instance, boys might either through carelessness or laziness fail to anticipate that a test might require them to use calculators and they would have left their own machines at home. Similarly, hockey sticks, or other sports gear. It was indicated that a strict no-tolerance policy should be introduced to bring about a greater awareness of the need for more responsibility on the part of the boys. It was unfortunate that theft did take place – but often, if greater care was taken by boys, it would be much reduced.

6.2.2 Bullying remains an issue, especially lower down in the school. Physical bullying was much less prominent, and verbal abuse and exclusion seemed to be where most bullying was perceived. It is vital that staff exercise constant vigilance to detect this and prevent it, and all boys do need to learn the value of being inclusive rather than exclusionary. However, it was also agreed that boys sometimes need to learn to listen and to understand that sometimes you have rights and sometimes you don't and that if you are told 'No', then you have to accept that. It was reported that Anne Macdonald does deal with these transactional processes as part of her teaching. Most importantly, it is necessary for the whole school to have clear common strategies and attitudes about bullying, to avoid sending out any mixed messages. If good disciplined environments are maintained, when authority is clearly in control, and limits are clear and enforced, bullying will be much less of a problem.

6.2.3 'Boredom' as described by the boys was commonly a reaction to classes which contained no variation, or classes which either did nothing to stretch the more able, or offered no support for the weakest boys who floundered without support.

6.2.4 Homework was described as problematic because of the inconsistency surrounding it. For weeks, there would be nothing given, and then suddenly (usually just before mark reports) there would be a glut. There is also a distinction which needs to be drawn between homework which is small enough to be manageable in one night, and 'homework' which is time allocated over a period of time to complete CASS projects, or group work, which requires quite a lot of organisation to achieve.

6.2.5 The College results showed a possible problem with apparently contradictory responses from staff and pupils about the approachability of staff.

6.3 Sector: Learning and Teaching

6.3.1 Curriculum

The general sense was that the curriculum was thoroughly and comprehensively dealt with, with strong approval of the relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the students, appropriate choice and a healthy balance between academic, sporting, cultural and spiritual activities in line with the school's mission. The two key areas which need attention are the extent to which the curriculum actually is implemented in the spirit of the South African curriculum statements, and the extent to which the lessons cater for the full range of skills and abilities present in the students. There should be a strong recommendation that all aspects of the curriculum should be more overtly linked to the outward manifestations of the curriculum statements, especially the critical outcomes, and the assessment standards for the various grades. This will require all learning programmes to be revisited and re-cast in such a way as to reflect not just what had to be taught, but more, what has to be learnt and what skills acquired. It was also apparent that while the middle range of skills and abilities was

well catered for, there was not enough differentiation of approach for either the very bright and gifted boys to be stretched, or the less able ones to be supported.

6.3.2 Classroom practice

Classroom visits had been introduced to the school during this year, and while not everyone had participated (at the College), there was a real sense that this activity was very beneficial, allowing for opportunities to reflect on teaching and learning practices, and giving much insight into other ways of going about teaching. The Prep had been very successful in introducing this, and both at Prep and Pre-Prep there had been 100% engagement with classroom visits. Even taking into account the caution that lessons taught in front of an observer might well be 'better' than normal practice, it was possible to obtain a view from the observation reports available than there were many excellent practices being used. The main areas of concern are the role and use of homework, as well as the quality and timing of homework; the variation of teaching methods employed to maintain interest in a class; the variation of approach to cater for the needs of all the students (strong, middle and weak); and the willingness of teachers to motivate their classes to take responsibility for their own learning. It was recommended that consideration of classroom practices and classroom management should be undertaken by the school during next year.

6.3.3 Staff Development

While it was acknowledged that much is being done in this area, there is more that needs to be dealt with. There are still some indications of disquiet about appraisal of teachers, and questions of load make opportunities for reflection and self-evaluation very difficult. Where some staff benefit from conferences and workshops, greater effort should be made to ensure that whatever is learnt by one should be made to be of benefit to all. Above all, a plan for skills development needs to be set in place, clearly identified and understood by all and carried through.

6.3.4 Assessment

There was common agreement that assessment practices in the school were as good as they needed to be, and whatever changes needed to be made would arise only because of external requirements.

6.3.5 Support

It was acknowledged that the school has many resources to support the teaching and learning that goes on, and that much benefit flows from the utilisation of these resources. It was agreed that attention be paid to the promulgation of a clear policy on extra lessons in all three schools, and that the provision which is made for students with barriers to learning be re-examined to ensure that there is greater consistency of approach, and that where provision is made, it is indeed taken up and is successful.

7. Key strong points

The key strong points were the comprehensive spread of learning programmes across the curriculum and their accessibility via the Intranet; the calibre of the teaching which was observed; the general excellence of the assessment practices, and the wealth of resources that could be and are being brought to bear on the teaching and learning activities within the school. The range of choice available to learners was also thought to be more than adequate. Reporting practices are full and comprehensive, with both students and parents having constant easy access to up-to-date feedback.

8. Significant areas of concern

The significant areas of concern are the lack of overt evidence of complying with the spirit of the South African curriculum statements; the lack of attention given to accommodating all ranges of skills and abilities both in the presentation of the curriculum and in teaching practices; common understanding and acceptance of the role and nature of homework; a comprehensive overarching plan for teaching skills' development throughout the year, and a clear understanding of the position of extra lessons.

9. Recommendations to the Executive

The Committee makes the following recommendations to the Executive for consideration, and then implementation during 2008.

1. Attention must be given to planning and producing a common understanding of what constitutes best practice in classroom management. This should include best practice in laptop classrooms, structuring of the lessons, attention to the various administrative duties regarding attendance and punctuality, ensuring variation of approach and activities (to prevent 'boredom'), and recognising the range of abilities within classes.
2. The practice of classroom visits should continue and become part of regular practice of teachers. The primary purpose should remain the improvement of teaching practice, and the opportunities for reflection and developing self-awareness.
3. The Executive must pay significantly more attention to the presence of teachers in classrooms. When absence from class is requested, there must be good reason for this, and there must be good substitution with purposeful activity laid down.
4. Given some of the difficulties of catering for such wide ranges of abilities and skills, an appropriate body in the College should revisit the question of mixed ability classes as against streamed classes. The Prep and Pre-Prep must examine more closely the extent to which their practices address the needs of children who experience barriers to learning, as well as the extent to which they really stretch the most gifted children.
5. The whole curriculum must be examined against the critical outcomes and the assessment standards for the different grades, and the learning programmes of all subjects must be annotated in such a way that the spirit of the SA curriculum statements is seen to pervade our practice more fully. This should be undertaken by departments in a review of their learning programmes, and co-ordinated by the Heads of Department committee.
6. While it is acknowledged that planning and co-ordination of activities does take place, there are many occasions identified by both teachers and students where workload fluctuates too wildly to be considered acceptable practice. Planning within departments must be improved so that implementation of the year plan can occur within the timescales originally envisaged. Overt statements of the duration of programmes and deadlines must be included within the learning programmes. Planning between departments must also be addressed and learning programmes co-ordinated so that the implementation aligns with the expectations.
7. The role and nature of homework needs to be better understood and commonly accepted. The HoDs should workshop this and departments should be clearer on how they expect homework to be understood and undertaken by students.
8. Attention needs to be given to improving the perception of and participation in the appraisal system, so that it can become a more useful formative instrument.
9. A Skills Development plan should be drawn up using the statements and requests for training resulting from the appraisal system and other sources, made widely available and then implemented throughout the year.
10. A policy on extra lessons should be set in place and widely disseminated.

11. The question of the security of possessions (even those of little value) must be addressed and more viable ways of dealing with this must be introduced. Boys must be made to show greater care for these possessions (books must be marked, clothing must be marked, possessions must be locked away and not left lying around) and boys and staff must be more vigilant in picking up and handing in lost items. The school must also continue to address the larger question of access to the campus by people not authorised to be here.

12. The education of boys around bullying (including what is NOT bullying) must be an on-going concern for all, but especially in the Pre-Prep and Prep schools where the comments seemed to indicate this as where the greatest problems were.

10. Conclusion

The Committee is satisfied that the surveys, investigations and observations underpinning 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. While shortcomings were noted, it should be said that the overwhelming sense from the various constituencies was very positive.

November 2007