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REPORT OF THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ON THE EVALUATION CARRIED OUT IN NOVEMBER 2008

QMS Committee

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Contents of the report

	Page Number
1. Description of the school	2
2. Compliance	2
3. Sector being evaluated	2
4. Background	3
5. Description of how the data were collected	3
6. Findings	3
6.1 Recommendations from 2007	3
6.2 Policies	4
6.3 The Reporting systems	4
7. Key points for consideration	6
8. Recommendations to the Executive	6
9. Conclusion	6

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 2008, the School has an enrolment of 1349 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

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 four 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." For the 2008 review, the Committee undertook an examination of the reporting systems which existed in all three schools.

4. Background

The request to consider the reporting systems came from the Executive, with the understanding that although the reporting systems were generally regarded as being very good, it would be prudent to pay close attention to their component parts to establish whether there were areas which needed attention.

It was agreed with IQAA that it would not be necessary for an IQAA mentor to be involved in this process. Three meetings of the committee were held in the months before the discussion day, and focus groups discussions were set up and written up. The discussion day was held on 11 November 2008, and the discussions did come up with certain ideas which need to be followed through.

5. Description of collection of data

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

Discussions with staff in Focus groups at all three schools

Discussion with selected parents from all three schools in Focus groups

6. Findings

6.1 Review of last year's Recommendations

The 2007 Report had listed twelve recommendations for action by the executives of the College and Prep. The Committee considered all twelve points and responded accordingly.

1. Best classroom practice – there had been attention paid to this by the executive and sessions of the Staff Development programme were devoted to it. However, the question of bottom up evaluation of staff by pupils was regarded as a next step by which staff could learn of their own classroom management practices and the extent to which they were successful.

The recommendation was made that a generic form should be set up which departments might customise for their own particularities, and then ask staff to administer the forms so that they might gain insight into what the boys think of their classroom practices. These would not have to be made public, but might form a point of discussion in the Appraisal interviews that Hods will be holding with staff from next year. It was further recommended that these evaluations should happen during the first part of the second term, so that changes could be made to what goes on while it is still possible.

2. Classroom visits. This practice had stalled, but must remain a desired practice, both for Hods to perform, as well as the peer-to-peer model which we were attempting to put in place.

3. Teacher presence in classrooms. The substitute system at the College had improved matters, but human fallibility still left unwanted gaps at various times. In the Prep, the improvement had been both significant and sustained.

4. Addressing the wide range of abilities. Nothing had happened at the College and the Prep. The Pre-prep felt that progress had occurred, and the attendance of Pre-prep teachers at the SAALED conference in June had given a solid boost to this as well.

5. Critical outcomes more embedded in programmes. Not much evidence of this to be found in the Subject Pages of the academic intranet at the College. At Prep, some individuals have taken this on and are assisting HoDs to achieve better co-ordination. The Pre-Prep feel that they are on track.

6. Planning and co-ordination of activities. We at the College are doing as well as we can, but we are also not convinced that the staff are properly thinking the matter through. At

the Prep, we are making good progress in the use of formal planning, and getting the term calendar out early has also helped a lot. The Pre-Prep is on track.

7. Homework. At the College, the situation in Grades 10 – 12 seems fine, but the grade 8 and 9 practices need more attention. Prep and pre-Prep are fine.

8. Appraisals. Following the training which was carried out at both College and Prep, the decision was taken to streamline the process significantly, and a new structure will be in place from next year, which should allow for better co-operation from staff.

9. Skills development plan. After all the management reports had been studied, only three mentions were made of any skills development needed, and they were non-specific, usually in the computer skills areas. The recommendation was that Hods should be prompted to address this question in their appraisal interviews.

10. The policy on extra lessons has been drafted, and has been through the HoD meeting, the Housemasters meeting and the PA, and it needs to go back to the HoDs for final approval. This will happen early in the new year.

11. The recommendation was that the Operations manager should be more particular about requiring contract workers to wear identification bibs at all times.

12. Bullying. It does appear that boys are far more aware of the policy with regard to bullying and are more willing to step forward to identify incidents happening to others. At the Prep, Ann MacDonald has addressed the issues fully in LO classes, and Greg has also addressed them in his assemblies. At the Pre-Prep, matters also seem to be much better, and Noell has also used her reading periods to equip boys with the skills to be able to deal with issues better.

As a final comment on this, it is apparent that a lot of these recommendations end up as being 'on-going'. What is needed is a greater breaking down of the generalised idea into achievable and measurable units which can be seen to have been addressed and can be measured as having made a difference. We must stress that when groups have been asked to look at certain areas, they must be required to indicate how they propose to proceed, so that progress can be made, and seen to be made.

6.2 Policy

6.2.1 There was general agreement that the organisation and presentation of the policies which did exist in the school was not useful as it lacked any systematic presentation. Policies were promulgated in various places, and it was not clear who the intended recipients were, or who controlled the various policies. Marcus's paper (attached) is regarded as a very clear exposition of the problems.

6.2.2 It was agreed that each of the schools should appoint a person who would be responsible for the maintenance of policies as they relate to that school, and that they conform with any general whole school policy. The Deputy Principal was asked to co-ordinate the actions of these policy controllers, and to ensure that the policies are up to date, appropriate, available to the right audiences, and as far as possible, covering the areas that need specific policy guidelines. There should also be a clarification of what were policies and what were procedures. These people should meet early in 2009 and get the process started.

6.3 The Reporting systems

Pre-prep.

6.3.1 The general feeling in Grade R was that there was plenty of good contact, while the Grades 1 and 2 felt there was more distance between parents and teachers, especially as

teachers often want the parents to move out of the classroom after they drop off the children. But all agreed that there was sufficient time and space to access teachers.

6.3.2 The teachers also did not favour frequent use of cell-phones during class-time, but accepted that they should be able to be contacted in emergencies.

6.3.3 There was a feeling that parents do need to have the reporting conventions explained to them, and that this should take place early in second term.

6.3.4 The general feeling was that the structure and layout of the Pre-prep reports was fine and did not need to be changed.

6.3.5 There was a long discussion about the variations in the point-scales that were used in the school. Pre-prep use a four point scale, which is laid out on each report. This needs to be reviewed in a process of deciding whether the school should adopt a consistent point scale across all schools.

6.3.6 The Pre-Prep are going to review the explanations and layout of the LO section of their report.

Prep.

6.3.7 The Prep will review the use of percentages which are included on their reports. This process will be assisted by the transfer from EduAdmin to Pencil Box, a move about which the staff are very positive.

6.3.8 There will also be a discussion about the timing of when the reports will be prepared and when delivered.

6.3.9 The Prep also need to review the matter of which point scale to use.

College

6.3.10 Staff- parent contact

While the sense was that parent-staff contact was good and easy to arrange, it was recommended that means be found to facilitate the two-way process (Parent to staff; Staff to parent).

6.3.11 Mark reports

The College will be asked to reassess the timing of Mark reports and Portfolio Reviews, and at the same time, review the practice of requiring three pieces of work for each assessment period.

The role and purpose of the Exam Industry symbol needs to be reviewed at a staff discussion and if necessary better communicated to staff. Or else discontinued.

It was agreed that on the electronic form of the mark reports and portfolio reviews, the point scale must be included so that parents can interpret the report correctly.

The question of the standardisation of results reported on in Mark Reports needs to be addressed for certain subjects (HoD Meeting discussion).

The introduction of a rolling average for marks as part of the Pupil portfolio was seen as highly desirable, and if Pencilbox was able to achieve this, it would be strongly welcomed.

6.3.12 Portfolio reviews

The process about getting the portfolios together and then returned still needs to be addressed to establish whether it can be improved.

The other aspect which needs attention is the second part of the Portfolio evening. How to get the parents to attend these, and then how to get the best practice established are questions must be addressed by the relevant bodies.

6.3.13 Midyear and end of year reports

The idea that our reports present a layered picture of the boy's activities and performance was seen as best practice.

1. Teacher on subject matter
2. Tutor on extra-curricular activities
3. Housemaster on academic and personal development
4. Head to sign the report off

Tutee's proforma. How seriously is this component taken? Whose responsibility is it to see that it is properly done? When is the best time for it to be done? These questions need to be discussed and a reasonable position adopted on this – but the status quo should not be allowed to persist.

The blurbs on the subject reports needs to be re-considered.

There needs to be discussion as to whether the hardcopy report should continue to be issued, or whether there should be either a gradual or total move to electronic transfer of the reports.

7. Key points for consideration

It was agreed that the bulk of the reporting system was excellent and did not need any amendment. There were some small tweaks which needed to be made in order to ensure better understanding by parents of what the information was that they were being provided with. The reporting systems were seen as being a significant part of the value add which the school provides, and attention should be given to ensuring that this remains the case.

8. Recommendations to the Executive

The Committee makes the following recommendations to the Executive for consideration, and then, hopefully, implementation during 2009.

1. The recommendations from 2007 had received attention, but in too many cases the wording of the recommendations did not provide sufficiently tangible actions to be followed which could then be measured for success. The executives of the schools are requested to re-examine these recommendations with an eye to establishing measurable actions which can be undertaken, for those areas which were regarded as still needing further attention.
2. The situation with Policies needs to be addressed as a matter of importance, and the committee that was suggested should meet during the first quarter, and draw up a plan of action. The presentation of policies must be made up to date by the end of the third quarter.
3. The executives of each of the schools is asked to consider the findings of the QMS Committee with regard to the various component parts of the reporting system. The Committee did not regard itself as having the final wisdom on these matters, but has put forward suggestions for heads of departments and housemasters to work through. The suggestions must be acted on by the appropriate committees, so that whatever changes are agreed on can be implemented by the midyear reports.

9. Conclusion

The Committee is satisfied that the discussions and focus groups reports that informed 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 various bodies within the school to consider and act upon.

February 2009