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REPORT OF THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ON THE EVALUATION CARRIED OUT IN NOVEMBER 2009

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 2009, the School has an enrolment of 1304 pupils, in three sections: a Pre-Prep school (Grades 0 to 2; 214 pupils); a Preparatory School (Grades 3 - 7; about 348 pupils) and the College (grades 8 - 12; about 742 pupils). The school employs 224 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 has yet to be finalised. We continue to provide Umalusi with their requested annual monitoring instruments.

3. Sector being evaluated

Bishops chose five 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 model we used was that contained in the IQAA's document called *School in a Mirror*. 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. For 2009, the Committee decided to investigate the last of the various sectors of the school referred to in the IQAA document *School in a Mirror* which was the area of Values and

Society Awareness. By doing this, we would then have completed a full evaluation of all sectors of the school as outlined in the document within the suggested five-year period. We also undertook an investigation into the position regarding extra lessons, in the form of a questionnaire to all College parents. This was an area of which we needed to get a better understanding.

4. Background

Three meetings of the committee were held in the months before the discussion day, and we agreed that we would call for reports from all the school groups which were engaged with activities reflecting the school's society awareness. We decided that for the rest of the evidence, we would conduct questionnaires across all three schools to establish perceptions of the areas raised in the Value statements which we would be testing. The questionnaires were sent out and a substantial return was received. The data were collated and distributed to the Committee in a variety of formats. The discussion day was held on 16 November 2009, and the discussion was fruitful, and a number of recommendations will be made at the end of this report.

5. Description of collection of data

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

- Reports from staff in charge of school activities reflecting the school's society awareness.
- Separate questionnaires for Boys, Staff and Parents in each of the three schools.

The following table indicates the returns for these questionnaires, and the number of written comments which were included with the returned questionnaires.

Group	Total number	No of returns	No of Comments
College Boys	588	481 (81.8%)	85
College Staff	73	52 (71.2%)	12
College Parents	588	167 (28.4%)*	53
Prep Boys	277	249 (89.9%)	94
Prep Staff	31	23 (90.3%)	6
Prep Parents	348	271 (77.8%)	106
Pre-Prep Boys	143	141 (98.6%)	51
Pre-Prep Staff	16	12 (75%)	1
Pre-Prep Parents	214	162 (75.7%)	42

* On the last occasion when College parents were asked to respond to a questionnaire, only 20% responded. This is a welcome improvement.

6. Findings

6.1 Review of last year's Recommendations

The 2008 Report had referred to the Recommendations made in 2007 which had not been satisfactorily dealt with during the year. While the Committee understood that many of these recommendations were not fully capable of being completely dealt with, there were still some issues which the QMS Committee felt the Executive Committees of the schools should be dealing with. We need to pay more attention to these things that keep recurring, because either we are not addressing them effectively, or else we are doing nothing about them, and they remain problem areas.

- a) It is important that the school culture change so that visits by other staff (both senior and peer) to classrooms become an unremarkable and common practice, rather than an exceptional occurrence. This applies to all three schools (although the Prep school seems to have made the best progress here, with classroom visits becoming much more frequent), and the executives should create opportunities for this to occur.
- b) The expression of Critical Outcomes through the curriculum still needs to be paid greater attention. The classroom practices need to reflect them, and the Learning Programmes on the Intranet need to include descriptions of them to draw attention to them. However, events on the national education level might make this less necessary in time to come.
- c) Appraisals. There has been some development here with the creation of an Appraisal Committee which will address the issue of developing appraisal systems in the school during next year. For this year, the situation has remained static while Vernon has established himself.
- d) Skills Development plan. Staff development takes place in a number of situations, but what seemed to be in question was the extent to which an underlying skills development plan shaped, particularly, the Wednesday morning sessions at the College, and their equivalents at Prep and Pre-Prep. The appraisal system has not assisted us much in identifying the skills which need development, but the executive committees and HoD committees would easily be able to identify them. These would include, for example, curriculum development for IT-based classes, use of interactive white boards and Mimio boards, computer skills (such as in PencilBox), as well as straight subject-based skills. The Committee was aware that such training might well be happening in departments, but it was felt that this needed better co-ordination. This must receive attention in order to ensure that our staff become even more skilled and competent.
- e) Bullying. There are still a large number of comments about bullying, especially at the Pre-prep and Prep, and there was a suggestion that we need to address the victims as well as the bullies, because much of the bullying that has been identified has been reactive bullying, where the victim needles others who in the end react and over-react. We also need to ensure that young boys develop a better understanding of 'bullying'
- f) Policies. The recommendations seem to have been fully met. There are now full lists of all school policies, which have been brought up to date, rendered uniformly, and displayed in various appropriate places. All policies are available on the Staff Noticeboards. Boys and parents can see all policies which directly affect them through the boys' profiles and on MyBishopsLife, and the general policies which display the value structures of the school are on the Bishops Website. The Prep MyBishopsLife portal has yet to be set up, so that Prep parents can see the parent-specific policies. There is now a Policies Committee made up of the Deputy Principal and the Heads of the College and the Prep, who will meet at least annually, and more often when necessary. The only remaining feature of this which needs to be addressed is making staff, boys and parents aware of the policies on a regular basis.

g) Reporting systems. The agreed changes had mostly been implemented at Pre-Prep and Prep. At the College, the introduction of PencilBox is making the Mark Reports (Occasional) reports redundant, as PencilBox allows for the rolling average of marks to be seen on the Pupil Profiles. Once this is in place, all that will be needed is an Industry Symbol update at specified times. Portfolio Reviews will continue, as will the practice of keeping portfolios, and there is still debate on how best to structure the second half of the Portfolio Review evenings.

As for mid- and end-of-year reports, apart from the Mock matric report, the status quo remains, with the elimination of the Tutee pro formas, and the increasing use of electronic notification rather than hard copy.

6.2 Values and Society Awareness

In-depth discussion of the data presented, and the consideration of how this data informed our understanding of how the school fared in relation to the Value statements. There is also a tabled scoring instrument for each statement, which assists with arriving at a position, and understanding what recommendations need to follow.

Below is a summary of the conclusions reached for each of the ten Value Statements which we considered.

Statement 1: There is a clear and well-communicated value system which governs policies, behaviour and decision-making.

The general perception was that there was significant agreement across all three schools with the value system in place at the school, but there did not seem to be sufficient understanding about the link between the value system and its implementation in the policies, behaviour and decision making of the school. These links need to be more explicitly explained and revealed when announcements are made. In the Prep, the gap was not seen as being as significant as in the College, and there was even less of a gap in the Pre-Prep.

Statement 2: The school has well-established aims in line with its vision and mission.

It was clear from the majority of comments that while the aims of the school as indicated in the 2010 Vision were known and agreed with, very little of the Next Wave discussions had filtered down to the parents and boys, and that this needs to be addressed with immediate effect at the start of the new year.

There was strong support for the notion that striving for all-roundedness remains a good aim that continues to deserve support. A further consideration related to the language policy of the school with regard to the place of isiXhosa in the Prep and Pre-Prep particularly. There was some support for the idea that isiXhosa should be introduced at the Pre-Prep, and a very mixed reaction to the suggestion that all boys should be taught in their mother tongue. There was support for the idea that there should be equal weight for Afrikaans and isiXhosa at the Prep.

Statement 3: Students and staff contribute to an ethos that is caring and work-oriented.

In general, there was a fair degree of consensus that an ethos of caring was well established in the school, with some groups (College staff in particular) not so sure; but College boys feeling quite strongly that there was a caring ethos. Similarly, there was agreement that the ethos was also strongly work-oriented. There was quite a strong set of responses which seemed to suggest that individual differences were not being catered for: our reading of the data suggested that these individual differences probably did not refer specifically to academic matters, but across a wider range of aspects of school life. However, this is worrying, as attention to the individual is often cited as one of Bishops' key selling points.

The caring ethos was however punctuated by too frequent references to bullying and 'dissing' especially at Prep and Pre-Prep, and this continues to be a matter that must be dealt with.

Statement 4: *The pride, morale and spirit in the school are good, with students and staff motivated to do well and seek improvement.*

A lot of the data showed clearly that pride, spirit and morale are good across all three schools, and across boys, staff and parents. There were some signals which need attention – first, that staff at the Prep enjoyed higher ratings in terms of spirit and morale than staff at the College, and secondly, some of the comments drew attention to an over-exuberance from College boys, with excessive 'spirit' leading to tasteless and unworthy actions, usually in terms of cheer-leading at sports fixtures.

Social awareness

Statement 5: *The values enshrined in the South African constitution are observed and promoted by the school.*

This statement goes to the heart of the school's diversity policy, in which we have adopted the approach that transformation will be achieved the more we support and pursue the values and ideals which the South African Constitution embodies. The data from the College was not conclusive in any way, not even to the point where a firm opinion was detected. The "don't know" figures are high, and there is at best a tentative indication of support for the statement. The recommendation from the Committee is that attention to the values underpinning the Constitution need to be revisited by the school, and more sharply etched into the policies, practices and ethos of the school.

Statement 6: *Diversity – religious, racial, cultural, linguistic and other – is welcomed and, where possible, provided for.*

The data were not as clear as they might have been, and it is possible that the questions were not well enough phrased to allow for this clarity. Without having indications on the questionnaire as to the race classification of the person answering, the responses became inconclusive. The majority of the data suggested that there was not a problem in terms of people being made welcome at the school, but this seems at odds with anecdotal evidence. In terms of the extent to which Bishops is perceived as confronting discrimination when it occurs, there was a very muted and inconclusive response from all groups except for Prep staff (who had just had to deal with various cases of racially based abuse and teasing). Certainly the comments seemed to display a significant impatience with these 'racially' directed questions, claiming that these issues were behind us as a nation now!

Statement 7: *Inclusiveness is welcomed wherever the school is equipped to handle it well.*

We did not deal with the statement in the questionnaire as Bishops does not have a policy of inclusion, and when we drew up the questionnaires, we left this out.

Statement 8: *The school promotes an awareness of environmental sensitivities in its curriculum and management of its plant.*

The general sense from the responses is that we know this is an important development, that we should be doing more than we are, and that we need to address it more pointedly in the new year. We need to set targets that we can achieve and in this way attend to the educative process which would accompany that. The Prep and Pre-Prep seem to be further ahead of the College because of the presence of recycling and other projects which are already producing results.

Statement 9: *Informed consciousness of the need for service to others within the school and in the community beyond is emphasized.*

There seemed to be strong support for the idea that service to others should be a part of the curriculum of the school, even though there seems to be a reluctance (on the part of some staff) to become engaged in this. There was also a comment that ideally service to others should go beyond fund-raising, and should involve the boys in more 'hands-on' experiences. There was also a suggestion that there was not a large buy-in by the pupils to get involved in activities – the school might have a good reputation for an active social awareness programme, but in actual fact, the numbers of boys involved is quite small.

Statement 10: *The attitudes and policies relating to gender are healthy in the school in both curriculum content and decision-making.*

There seemed to be a widely held view that the best person for the job should get it, whether it be teaching, coaching or being on the executive, and the one situation where this was not so was the appointment of Housemasters, although there was support for the notion of female Assistant Housemasters. For the most part, the responses were gender neutral.

6.3 Extra lessons

We had 41 responses, but it is very difficult to judge just how widespread the practice is, and it would be unwise to extrapolate even from the proportions in the various grades among our respondents.

In 11 of the 41 responses, neither the school's policy on extra lessons, nor the boy's class teacher, was consulted. In fact more than half of the respondents indicated that they had not seen the school's policy, usually because they did not know of it.

There are also 12 respondents who have never tried to take advantage of extra help already available at the school free of charge – in some cases they have said the boy is too busy to be able to attend those sessions!

Of course there were several comments along the lines that after having paid substantial tuition fees, parents do not feel it should be necessary for them to go outside at extra expense for assistance – the debatable issue is just how often that help is actually 'necessary'.

For the most part the extra lessons are seen to have brought about improvement: this is not surprising, since it is hard to imagine how a pupil could not benefit from extra one-on-one (by far the norm) help. Moreover, so long as CASS tasks done outside school contribute to an overall mark, and so long as it is possible for boys to have beside-their-elbow help while they perform those tasks, it is quite understandable that marks should improve – but is that sustainable in the long term?

It is galling to note that the improvement is usually attributed ONLY to the extra help.

Reasons cited for needing extra lessons are usually among the following:

- classes go too fast
- boy unable to concentrate in class
- boy can more easily ask questions of the extra lessons teacher
- boy needs confidence boosted
- gaps in his knowledge

The instigator of the extra lessons is half the time the boy, the other half the parent. The extra lessons teacher is as likely to be a qualified teacher as a student.

Apart from the advice already given in our policy document, we should stress that in the streamed subjects, getting extra lessons can actually perpetuate, rather than solve, a problem: if a boy is holding his place in set 4 only with the help of extra lessons, he clearly should be in a lower set, and if he were he would feel less out of his depth and would possibly need the extra lessons less.

The following actions need to be taken by the school:

- engender more awareness of the policy document and an understanding of what it means
- try to make parents more conscious of a responsibility to consult with the class teacher before making arrangements
- make parents and boys more aware of the help that they can access here at school
- consider whether it is possible to extend the range of extra help opportunities that we currently offer (e.g. start Science Support along the same lines as Maths Support).

That said, there have been a few negative comments about the pace of classes, the impatience of teachers and, in some cases, the lack of classroom discipline. It is also interesting to note that in most cases, at least for Maths, the boy has already been identified by us as having difficulties (so is in a low set), and perhaps having those classes too full is a part of the problem – although it is equally likely that the boy simply needs more help than this school can reasonably provide.

The Maths support sessions are frequently busy, but they do not provide one-on-one teaching: rather what happens is that boys are encouraged to work on problems with a teacher nearby to give the odd word of advice or help at particular moments: moreover it is always principle-based rather than directed towards any one example, so that when it generates an improvement in CASS tasks, that would be because the boy has learnt more rather than having simply acquired a better answer.

7. Recommendations to the Executive Committees of the schools

The Committee are proposing the following recommendations to be picked up by the executive committees of the two schools.

1. The links between the value system that the school holds and the policies, behaviours and decision-making practices must be more clearly revealed when announcements are made. The executives should look for ways in which their actions and decisions can be communicated in such a way that the link between values and actions can be seen to be congruent with the value system,
2. The 2010 Vision must be made public and a sustained programme of communication must be set up so that the school community can understand it and buy in to it.
3. The Executive Committees are asked to re-examine the language teaching policy of the school with particular regard to the teaching of isiXhosa at the Prep and the Pre-Prep schools.

4. Bullying at the Prep and Pre-Prep remains too visible in the comments and in some of the data. The prep exec is asked to re-assess its approach towards bullying and teasing ('dissing').
5. While pride and spirit are to be commended, excesses leading to boorish and uncouth behaviours must be tackled and stopped. This was particularly evident from supporters during sports matches, but could be evidenced in other situations as well.
6. Attention to the values underpinning the South African Constitution need to be revisited by the school, and more sharply etched into the policies, practices and ethos of the school.
7. Environmental issues including sustainability must be addressed and a programme of actions put in place, and the accompanying education around these must also be brought into the curriculum of the school.
8. The Executive committees of both schools should explore ways of increasing the number of boys involved in society awareness activities, for instance, considering the State President's Award model of hours outside of classroom time.
9. We should engender more awareness of the Extra Lessons policy document and an understanding of what it means; try to make parents more conscious of a responsibility to consult with the class teacher before making arrangements; make parents and boys more aware of the help that they can access here at school, and consider whether it is possible to extend the range of extra help opportunities that we currently offer (e.g. start Science Support along the same lines as Maths Support).

8. Conclusion

8.1 With the completion of this evaluation, we have now performed a full school evaluation according to *School in a Mirror* within the recommended five-year period. We discussed whether we should follow this next year with a full school evaluation conducted in collaboration with IQAA mentors. We decided against this, preferring to remain with the model of on-going evaluation on an annual basis. We also decided that we would branch away from the IQAA framework, and instead of looking at one of their recommended areas, we would approach the executive committees in May and request that they identify an area (or areas) in which they would like to see an investigation taking place. This evaluation would then take place during the third and fourth terms, as we have always done.

8.2 We felt satisfied that we had tackled an important area of the school's life, and that our findings are valid and in accordance with the reality of the school. The questionnaire enjoyed a good response (with one exception – the questions around diversity), and our procedure for dealing with the information following our previous practice, especially in terms of the rigour applied in our discussions. We were satisfied that our conclusions are valid and our recommendations will be of value to the executive committees to address the areas touched on by the recommendations.

8.3 The Committee would like to place on record its thanks and appreciation for the role that Rob Moolman has played in the Committee since its inception, and we wish him well in his future undertakings.

November 2009