

ST STITHIANS COLLEGE



INTERNAL EVALUATION TEAM REPORT

May/June 2013

REPORT: ST STITHIANS BOYS' PREPARATORY SCHOOL

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2. INTRODUCTION:

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DATE OF EVALUATION:

11 June, 2013

3. DESCRIPTIVE BACKGROUND: ST STITHIANS BOYS' PREP

St Stithians Boys' Preparatory is one of five schools that make up St Stithians College a Methodist church school situated in Randburg, an area just to the north of Johannesburg. The 105 hectares of ground offer an environmental sanctuary, sports fields and housing for staff in a village atmosphere, as well as the school buildings themselves. It is a growing, vibrant and thriving community - which offers a wide range of sporting activities, an academic curriculum and a cultural diversity which all contribute to ensuring that the pupils do receive the liberal education in a Christian tradition that the founders desired.

As one of five schools on the campus the Boys' Prep enjoys the best of both worlds, being independent and part of the greater Saints community. The Headmaster and Executive are responsible for the delivery of curriculum within the school while subscribing to the ethos and philosophies and beliefs which guide the entire College. Furthermore, this is done in accordance with the legislation which is defined at Provincial and National levels.

Values and Ethos

Strong schools value their roots while looking boldly to the future. This blend of tradition and innovation is particularly marked at St Stithians. In many ways we are and shall remain a highly traditional school. We aim for excellence within and outside the classroom reflecting our concern for a balanced education based on the enduring principles of Christian living. At the same time we are an innovative school. A school is at its best when leading the way.

The educational philosophy of the Boys' Prep is based on five pillars:

The Pillar of SERVICE:

- Boys are encouraged to examine the faith and teaching of the Christian church in the light of their own belief system and those of others in order to develop spiritual understanding in themselves and those around them.
- Boys are encouraged to develop a set of values and a code of ethics that will enable them to make valued contributions to the world of the 21st century.

The ACADEMIC Pillar:

- Boys are encouraged to develop a love of learning and to ensure that they possess the skills, resources and motivation to fully experience lifelong education so that they have the best foundation for their life beyond preparatory school.

The Pillar of SPORT:

- Boys are encouraged to participate in a wide range of sporting activities. The enjoyment of participation is paramount to our ethos.

The Pillar of CULTURE:

- Boys are encouraged to participate in a wide range of artistic and cultural activities. The enjoyment of participation is paramount to our ethos

The Pillar of LEADERSHIP:

- Boys are encouraged to develop a sense of servant leadership and to live the Saints Honour.
- Boys are encouraged to develop an understanding of community relationships where individuals will learn to listen and speak to each other in ways that will lead to a deeper understanding of human needs.

We strive to provide an environment in which boys can flourish. We hope and trust that you and your son will make the most of every opportunity and every challenge offered to him.

4. COMPLIANCE

St Stithians College is an Umalusi confirmed candidate. The school is compliant with the ISASA requirements for membership.

4.1 AREAS OF OPERATION EVALUATED

The areas evaluated in this report include the following areas of operation:

- 4.1.1 Teaching, Learning and Attainments
- 4.1.2 Functioning of the School

4.2 MEANS AND METHODS USED TO FIND EVIDENCE

- 4.2.1 IQAA Opinion Surveys: Parents, Teachers and Learners
- 4.2.2 Focus Groups – Parents, staff and learners
- 4.2.3 Additional Survey
- 4.2.4 Classroom observations

5. OPINION SURVEYS

The IQAA opinion surveys distributed by the school were used to gather information from parents, learners and staff.

5.1 IQAA PARENT OPINION SURVEYS:

The results from the IQAA parent's survey were extremely positive and an overwhelming majority of parents confirmed their confidence in the headmaster, school executive and teachers. The vast majority of parents also indicated that their children were happy and well-cared for at school. There is a welcoming atmosphere of mutual respect and the discipline process is fair. Confidence in the school's academic standard was evident and

parents are kept informed of their child's progress. The school's facilities were commended.

An area of concern was confusion with regards to the understanding of the role of the school's Parent Teachers Association and College Council. An additional survey was emailed to parents requiring clarification with regard to this issue.

5.2 IQAA LEARNER SURVEY

The result from the learners' survey was equally positive. Learners indicated that they were happy to come to school and that the atmosphere was caring and positive. They also felt safe and secure at school. They rated the academic standard and sporting activities highly.

Bullying was identified as an area of concern for the children as well as a perception that teachers were difficult to approach with their problems. We continue to monitor this through an extensive annual bullying survey which enables us to identify key areas and provide interventions. (eg. The Bully Helpline)

The second focus group addressed the question of the children finding it difficult to approach their teachers. This appeared to have been misinterpreted based on how the question was formatted.

5.3 IQAA STAFF OPINION SURVEY

A similar positive thread was indicated in the staff opinion survey. They indicated confidence in the management team and high academic, cultural and sporting standards. They felt that discipline was fair and that the children were in a safe, caring environment. There are substantial opportunities for growth and development at the school in the form of workshops, conferences and talks.

Although some individual issues were raised by the staff in this survey, the focus group dismissed a number of them as not an accurate reflection of all staff. However, pertinent comments and suggestions were taken into consideration and discussed at an Executive level for future implementation. The staff appraisal system was once again raised as a concern and was identified as a concern in the team's findings.

5.4 TEACHER ADDITIONAL SURVEY

Teachers also evaluated themselves using an IQAA Quality criteria document on Teaching, Learning and Attainment. These results were collated and averaged giving an indication of our key strengths and concerns.

5.5 CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

During the course of the intensive classroom evaluation week, all teachers in the Boys' Preparatory were observed by their colleagues and members of the IQAA team. An observation form pertaining to specific teaching and learning criteria was completed for all teaching staff and aftercare. The teachers shared that this was an extremely positive experience and that they gained valuable insight into teaching across the grades.

6. TEAM'S FINDINGS:

The quality targets listed in each operational area of school life, as well as the scoring rubric were used to inform the following team findings.

6.1 TEACHING, LEARNING and ATTAINMENTS

6.1.1 Curriculum

Sources of evidence:

- Classroom observations
- IQAA staff survey
- IQAA Teachers survey
- IQAA Parents survey
- Grade and grade Heads meetings
- Planning and preparation from each grade

Strengths:

- Staff understands the CAPS requirements well
- Critical thinking features high on staff agenda when planning lessons
- Well planned and stimulated lessons
- Layered curriculum has been implemented

Concerns:

- Technology is available but wi-fi connectivity is often not working as well as expected.

6.1.2 Learning

Sources of evidence:

- Formative and summative assessment results
- International and local benchmark examinations
- Year and term planners for all subjects
- Classroom displays
- Classroom observations

Strengths:

- Differentiated learning works well
- Boys with different learning styles are identified early in the year
- Assessment activities are of a very high standard
- Classroom activities engage most of the boys
- Overall grade results very impressive

Concerns:

- The busy nature of our programme leads to a lot of disruptions during lessons.
- Some staff still resort to the default of lecturing versus experiential learning

6.1.3 Resources and Support

Sources of evidence:

- Bi-weekly meetings with Operational Manager
- Month to date budget updates from the finance department
- Regular campus ICT meetings
- Campus Health Café meetings

Strengths:

- Well maintained facilities
- A cafeteria that has been endorsed by the Heart Foundation
- A well maintained ICT infrastructure
- A well functioning finance department
- A well functioning Operations department

Concerns:

- Under staffed Operations department
- Staying ahead of our competitors with regards to ICT infrastructure
- The cost of food at the cafeteria

6.1.4 Assessment

Sources of evidence:

- Copies of formative and summative assessments
- ACER and IEB results
- Grade 7 Shared assessments

Strengths:

- Fair but challenging to the boys
- The school participates in the IEB grade 3 and 6 core skills where excellent results are received
- The school participates in the local Gauteng IEB schools shared assessments achieving excellent results
- The school competes internationally using the ACER assessment with excellent results

Concerns:

- Negative comments about academics from a very small group of parents.

6.1.5 Attainments and Attitudes

Sources of evidence:

- IQAA Feedback from parents and boys
- ACER and IEB Core Skills results
- Shared assessment results

Strengths:

- Overwhelming majority of parents, boys and staff interviewed during the IQAA survey were positive about the school's attainments and attitudes.
- This is also backed up by ACER and IEB core skills results.

Concerns:

- The grade 3 English IEB core skills results are a concern.
- 2nd Language Shared assessment results

6.1.6 Teacher Development**Sources of evidence:**

- Teachers professional development plan
- Staff Development budget

Strengths:

- Staff attend the IBSC international and local conferences
- Staff attend the SAALED conferences. The school received an award for our commitment to excellence in Inclusive Education.
- Staff also attend in house workshops on curriculum development
- The school pays the tuition cost for staff who further their studies

Concerns:

- Staff mentor groups are not functioning at an optimum level yet.
- Not all staff have made use of the opportunity to study further
- The number of staff presenting at conferences is still low
- The nature of our busy programme is making the coordination of in house workshops difficult

6.1.7 Support**Sources of evidence:**

- Inclusion programme
- Dedicated prep sessions
- In house psychologist
- Round table discussions with parents

Strengths:

- The school has a dedicated team of staff who look after the inclusion programme
- The school has introduced a prep system which runs over 4 afternoons a week
- Extra lessons are provided on a consultation basis with staff
- Regular round table discussions with parents about boys progress
- Focus reports that are used to intervene when boys are struggling to cope
- A facilitator programme that aims to provide further assistance to boys believed to be at academic risk

Concerns:

- Still have difficulty convincing some parents about the benefits of the support offered by in house and external remedial institutions

6.1.8 Progress

Sources of evidence:

- Termly reports
- Feedback from colleges
- Scholarships offered to the boys

Strengths:

- Boys who go into the College achieve 70% plus averages in most subjects
- All boys get accepted into their Colleges of choice
- The top achievers achieve well in the scholarship exams

Concerns:

- Concerns around 2nd languages in particular Afrikaans
- Unfounded negative perceptions about the academic programme

6.2 FUNCTIONING OF THE SCHOOL

6.2.1 Policies

Sources of evidence:

- College policies available on school website

Strengths

- The policies and procedures related to all aspects of school is well structured, implemented and clearly communicated via the school and our website.

Concerns:

- Communication around where to find the policies needs improvement
- Not all parents and staff may have read the policies
- A small minority of parents and staff ignoring policies

6.2.2 Finance

Sources of evidence:

- Finance department
- Monthly budgets
- Council finance sub committee

Strengths:

- The finances of the school are overseen by the bursar who reports to the council Finance sub committee. This committee is responsible for approving school budgets and fundraising initiatives.
- An annual budget is drawn up. Subject coordinators formulate subject budgets. Department and subject heads manage their own budgets successfully.
- Deputies responsible for managing these budgets with the help of the various directors.

Concerns:

- Managing an ever increasing add on list in tough economic times
- Managing perceptions around the amount of paperwork needed for approval of financial decisions

6.2.3 Facilities**Sources of evidence:**

- State of campus facilities

Strengths:

- Well maintained classrooms and general school buildings
- Well maintained sport facilities
- Well maintained cultural facilities

Concerns:

- Communication with outsourced partners

6.2.4 Conduct**Sources of evidence:**

- IQAA survey feedback
- Formal and informal meetings with parents and staff

Strengths:

- A code of conduct is in place and accessible via our website
- Staff and learners are punctual for school, meetings and other activities.
- A well structured timetable as well as substitution timetable generated by a computer programme is in place.

Concerns:

- Parental confusion around conduct
- Inconsistent implementation of the Saints gentleman programme

6.2.5 Security and Safety**Sources of evidence:**

- Security presence around the school
- Regular feedback from security meetings
- A functioning school and campus Occupational Health and Safety committee
- Aftercare facility

Strengths:

- Security and safety in each of the areas within the school is managed by a safety officer who reports on a regular basis to the school OHS representative.
- A break duty list is issued every week.

- After care is available to parents at an extra cost for the supervision of boys in the afternoon.
- A 24/7 security presence

Concerns:

- Apathy from a minority of staff with regards to completing OHS reports
- The amount of boys who are not using the aftercare facilities that is available

6.2.6 Health Care

Sources of evidence:

- Bullying policy
- Availability of child psychologist
- Regular staff First aid training

Strengths:

- A permanent school registered child psychologist is available to parents and boys.
- Referral to outside therapists or agencies takes place when necessary
- A policy on bullying and a reporting help line is in place.
- Most staff have been on a First aid course

Concerns:

- Managing negative perceptions around bullying
- Convincing parents to make use of the in house psychologist
- Finding time to send staff to do First aid training

6.2.7 Communication

Sources of evidence:

- IQAA survey
- Boys prep communiqué
- Formal and informal meetings with parents

Strengths:

- Communication with parents, staff and boys is regular and effective.
- Academic progress and feedback to parents happens at the end of each term or earlier if intervention is required.
- A detailed communiqué about the Boys' Prep communication structures is sent out to parents at the beginning of the year.

Concerns:

- Over communication versus too little communication
- Getting parents to use the communication structures that are in place

7. KEY STRENGTHS

- Staff. A motivated, professional, dedicated staff (as witnessed in the Classroom Observation sessions).

- Staff is innovative and developing quality learning and teaching.
- Staff is very diverse in terms of sex, race and age
- Wonderful facilities set on unique grounds.
- School atmosphere: Learners are happy and fulfilled, in and out of the classroom.
- The ability to offer schooling to girls and boys – convenient and unique
- A committed and involved parent body.
- A strong focus on Community Development.
- Emphasis on Staff Development, including overseas tours and visits.
- Strong focus on transformation
- Very happy boys, parents and staff

8. AREAS OF CONCERN

- Sport – educating parents about the Rotational system
- Homework- consistent and standardised homework and homework book policy to be implemented.
- Discipline – need for consistent discipline through the grades. This must encompass theft and bullying.
- Staff Appraisal System specific to each school must be implemented. This must link remuneration to performance.
- Staff and Exec need to be more approachable.
- Exec to become less dictatorial
- Exec to take staff input more seriously and to be open to suggestions.
- Classroom visits / observations to be timetable and followed through.

9. UNIQUE FEATURES OF BOYS' PREP

The team noted the following features:

- Development Programme: The Grade Sevens participate in this programme. After meeting the required criteria they progress through five levels of development, culminating in the “rank” of Councilor.
- Public Relations: The Boys' Prep has their own PR team, which conducts tours of the school, welcomes visitors and assists with the running of various functions.
- Rock climbing: The climbing club trains weekly on the outdoor 8 metre high wall.
- Vegetable garden: A vegetable garden is tended by the pupils outside the staffroom, as part of Technology and Life Orientation curriculum.
- Ivory Park: As part of the outreach programme each class visits a school in Ivory Park once a term and is involved in projects to help the school. Each grade is assigned to a different school.
- Cultural Programme: The whole school is involved in this varied programme which includes choirs, marimba bands, individual music lessons, orchestra, rock band, public speaking and chess.
- Links to Cornwall: The school has strong links and reciprocal tours with schools in Cornwall, the home of our Founders.

- Penryn: Our sister school in Nelspruit – strong links have been formed.
- Saints Gentleman Certificate: A reward system awarded fortnightly in Chapel.
- Prize giving: Every boy in the school receives an award.
- Cross Campus: Termly mixed classes / activities with the Girls' Prep.
- Two choirs participate in regular festivals, and we run our own festival.
- Boys and girls participate in an annual Arts Festival.
- Annual Art Exhibition.
- Grade 3 and 4 Instrumental Programme.
- Annual over-seas tours. Cricket, Cultural, Maths.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT WITH TIME FRAMES (DEVELOPMENT PLAN)

Time Frames

Immediate Action	- IA
End of Term	- ET3 (2013)
End of Next Term	- ENT1 (2014)
End of Next Year	- ENY(2014)
When Funds/Time Permits	- WFTP

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	TIME FRAME
TEACHING, LEARNING and ATTAINMENT			
IT Technology working/available	Exec; IT Director to meet	Exec, IT Director	ET
Mentor Groups	Exec, Mentors to meet	Deputy	IA
Negative Perceptions of Academics	Meeting volunteer Parents, Deputies, Director Academics	Director of Academics	ENT
2 nd Language Results	Monitor Results	Director Academics, 2 nd Language Teachers	ENY
FUNCTIONING OF THE SCHOOL			
Staff Meetings/adhoc meetings	Enforce use of meeting time for staff discussion	Exec	IA
Staff Development	Staff encouraged to study further	Deputy Heads	ET
Staff/Parent Communication	Meeting Exec/ Volunteer Parents to discuss availability of Policies	Deputy heads	IA

.	Meeting volunteer Parents, Deputies, Director Academics	Deputy Heads	ET
Bullying	Communicate Structures implemented	Deputy Heads	ET
OHS	Meet with staff to discuss apathy over reports	Deputies, Staff, OHS Rep	IA
Outsourced Contractors	Exec meet with Ops Manager to discuss communication	Deputy Heads	ENT
Exec/Staff relationship	Barraza to discuss improving working relationships	Headmaster	IA
Staff Appraisals	All Staff to meet to discuss viable and acceptable Appraisal System	HR Director	ET

10. CONTINUING EVALUATORY PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES

The evaluation process allowed us to really interrogate all that we currently do in the Boys Prep. We have found the surveys; classroom visits as well as the focus group discussions have provided us with ample opportunity to discuss best practice with staff and parents. As a result of this process we would like to recommend the following to the school management team:

- That classroom observations become an integral part of our teacher development programme
- That the focus group concept be used more often to engage parents, staff and boys
- That we use the opinion survey techniques to gather feedback on a more regular basis

The spirit in which the process has been conducted has allowed us to build positive relationships with parents and staff, which we know will assist us in our future endeavors.