



ST STITHIANS COLLEGE

**REPORT: SCHOOL IN A MIRROR
An Evaluation of St Stithians College**

Overseen by the Independent Quality Assurance Agency (IQAA)

SEPTEMBER 2007

REPORT: ST STITHIANS BOYS' COLLEGE

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INTRODUCTION

1. St Stithians Boys' College has undergone the IQAA process in order to evaluate the quality of education provided at the school. The survey aimed to identify areas of strength and areas of concern and to establish what can be done to improve the service offered for the benefit of all stakeholders. External and internal evaluation was used to help the Evaluation Team to assess the quality of the education offered, and to enable the Management Team to develop a future plan for the continued growth and development of the Boys' College.
2. The members of the team were:
 - 2.1. Andrew Baker: Team Leader: Deputy Head - Biology
 - 2.2. Peter Wright: Director of Academic Extension - Science
 - 2.3. Janine Tessendorf: Grade 8 & Grade 9 Director - Science
 - 2.4. Lidia Upton: Director of Communications - English
 - 2.5. Silke Smith: Director Elect of Penryn - Biology
 - 2.6. Ryno Reichert: Grade 12 Director - Mathematics
 - 2.7. Heather Frankiskos: Head of Department Mathematics
 - 2.8. Herman Bezuidenhout: Director Elect of Mountstephens - Afrikaans
 - 2.9. Cheryl Read: Head of Department English
3. Peter Wright, Janine Tessendorf and Lidia Upton were co-opted by the Team Leader and the teaching staff elected the remaining members of the team.
4. External Mentor appointed by IQAA: Margaret Edwards
5. Date of Evaluation: September 2007
6. General Background on the Boys' College:
 - 6.1. 719 students of different races and creeds of whom 20% are boarders from more than eight countries;
 - 6.2. 65 members of teaching staff who are well qualified and experienced
 - 6.3. A monastic, faith-based school;
 - 6.4. The first school built in 1954 on a campus of 123hectares, which now accommodates five separate schools for junior and senior school boys and girls;
 - 6.5. Houses the beautiful Chapel which can seat all the boys for weekly services;
 - 6.6. There are two boarding houses which have very recently been fully renovated and refurbished.

FINDINGS

Focus Area 1: Learning and Teaching

7. Findings and recommendations based on:
 - 7.1. Classroom observations
 - 7.2. Staff, learner and parent opinion surveys
 - 7.3. Focus Group meetings on:
 - Academic feedback
 - Homework
 - Academic opportunities

8. Key Strengths:
 - 8.1. The school offers and implements a wide curriculum;
 - 8.2. Teaching methods are up-to-date and lessons varied;
 - 8.3. Good resources used appropriately;
 - 8.4. Exceptional provision for different learner needs through the Inclusion/Academic Support programme;
 - 8.5. Excellent examination results;
 - 8.6. A wide range of sporting and cultural opportunities offered;
 - 8.7. Excellent support structures for students who experience stress, trauma and who need drug counselling.

9. Areas of Concern:
 - 9.1. Homework – there is a lack of consistency in setting homework: too much or too little given depending on subject demands;
 - 9.2. Inadequate evaluation of, and a skills development plan for, teachers;
 - 9.3. Students need to be shown how to balance extra-mural activities with academic demands;
 - 9.4. Assessment needs to be developed in keeping with the new curriculum demands;
 - 9.5. Some classrooms are too small to accommodate classes comfortably;
 - 9.6. Not all classrooms have adequate Information Technology - IT equipment.

Focus Area 2: Attainments and Progress

10. Findings and recommendations based on:
 - 10.1. Classroom observations
 - 10.2. Staff, learner and parent opinion surveys
 - 10.3. Focus Group meetings on
 - Academic feedback
 - Homework
 - Academic opportunities

11. Key Strengths:
 - 11.1. Individuals and groups have opportunities to excel in cultural activities;
 - 11.2. Individuals and teams have opportunities to excel in sporting activities;
 - 11.3. Most students successfully complete the work of each grade and are well prepared to cope with post-secondary school demands;
 - 11.4. Students are given every opportunity to excel academically;
 - 11.5. Most students are actively involved with the learning process;
 - 11.6. Students work confidently in groups;
 - 11.7. Students speak well and express themselves with confidence.

12. Areas of Concern:
 - 12.1. The listening skills of a high percentage of students need to be better developed;
 - 12.2. Many students' reading and writing skills in Primary and an Additional language is only competent;
 - 12.3. Many students do not work well on their own;
 - 12.4. Many students have only an adequate ability to build on information previously learned.

Focus area 3: Functioning of the School

13. Findings and recommendations based on:
 - 13.1. Classroom observations

13.2. Staff, learner and parent opinion surveys

13.3. Focus Group meetings on

- Communication
- Safety of possessions
- Bullying
- Discipline
- School policies

14. Key Strengths:

14.1. The timetable is well-structured and fully implemented;

14.2. Most teachers are punctual for lessons and meetings;

14.3. A code of conduct is in place for students and for staff;

14.4. Behaviour and manners of staff and students are of a very high standard;

14.5. Standards of discipline are good and implemented well most of the time;

14.6. There is a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying;

14.7. There are many good systems of communication in place and they are effective most of the time.

15. Areas of Concern:

15.1. There are still some elements of verbal bullying amongst the junior boys;

15.2. Many students are not punctual for lessons, meetings and other activities;

15.3. Follow up of late comers and absentees is poor and requires urgent attention;

15.4. Safety of possessions from theft needs to continue to be addressed;

15.5. School policies on sport, in particular team selection, considered to be problematic.

Focus Area 9: Boarding

16. Key Strengths:

16.1. The boarding houses are regularly supervised and maintained;

16.2. Living quarters and accommodation excellent;

16.3. Extremely good provision of study times and areas for all grades;

16.4. Very good laundry facilities;

16.5. Good provision is made for religious observance;

16.6. There are suitable staff members who provide discipline and academic and pastoral guidance;

16.7. Outside contact with family and friends is allowed and encouraged;

16.8. There are adequate activities and supervision during weekends;

16.9. There are an acceptable number of recreational facilities provided;

16.10. The eating facilities and food are generally good.

17. Areas of Concern:

17.1. Insufficient access to supplementary learning material such as printers – either for a desk top or for a laptop - and reference books;

17.2. Health care needs to be more readily available;

17.3. Security and emergency measures and procedures need to be addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

18. Focus Area 1: Learning and Teaching:
 - 18.1. All teachers to attend the Assessor's Course offered by the Independent Examinations Board – IEB – this process has already begun and will be completed by the end of March 2008;
 - 18.2. More classrooms should be equipped with newer technology;
 - 18.3. All teachers should have classrooms big enough to accommodate all students comfortably;
 - 18.4. Students should be offered guidance through the tutor system on how to balance extra-mural activities with academic demands;
 - 18.5. A better system of staff appraisal should be developed;
 - 18.6. Change rooms for staff, day boys and for visiting teams and coaches need to be built;
 - 18.7. Easier access to the counselling department is necessary to enable students a greater sense of privacy.

19. Focus Area 2: Attainments and Progress
 - 19.1. More listening exercises to be given to students in all subjects, not only in the languages;
 - 19.2. Students should be encouraged through group work to develop greater respect for the opinions of others;
 - 19.3. The unacceptability of plagiarism should be reinforced by all subject teachers and through the Head of the Resource Centre.

20. Focus Area 3: Functioning of the School
 - 20.1. New system should be implemented as a matter of great importance to monitor absentees and latecomers;
 - 20.2. Reinforcement, through example and through instruction, should continue to be made by all members of staff on the necessity of punctuality;
 - 20.3. Workshops on bullying need to continue with the junior grades;
 - 20.4. Students should be encouraged repeatedly about the importance of using the lockers to house their belongings in order to minimise the risks of theft.
 - 20.5. Despite perceived problems with team selection in some sports, the team felt that parents and students need to respect the integrity and expertise of the coaches.

21. Focus Area 9: Boarding
 - 21.1. Laundry turnabout to be improved further;
 - 21.2. A survey to be held amongst learners, parents of boarders and staff in order to identify specific areas of concern regarding food and dining hall conditions;
 - 21.3. More internet access and access to other forms of technology, such as computers should be made available, to enable boarders to have better access to information that will assist them with their studies;
 - 21.4. Medication in the students' rooms should be made available: when a student is ill and has been prescribed medication by a licensed General Practitioner or medical specialist, they would like to be able to self-medicate in their rooms instead of having to go to sister for each dosage throughout the day and night;
 - 21.5. Have a prayer room in each boarding house for all denominations to enable boys to have a private and non-threatening space for private contemplation and reflection;
 - 21.6. Supervision available at the Aquatic Centre at the weekends;
 - 21.7. There should be more outside activities organised for the Boarders over the weekends.

- 21.8. With the re-vamp and renovation of the boarding houses, all emergency equipment and signage, which may have been removed, needs to be checked and where necessary, replaced.

GENERAL / OTHER FINDINGS

22. With reference to Focus Area 2, *Attainments and Progress* under **Progress**: Although we have some knowledge of the progress and success of some of our school leavers, most of the relevant information is traced through the Old Boys' Association. Measures are being put in place to attain a more reliable data base for the school and for the Old Stithian Association.
23. In the section 'Attainments and Progress', under 'Areas of Concern', the Team did not believe certain issues to be specific to the Boys' College: this refers to 'Listening skills' and 'Reading and writing'. Both of these issues will remain ongoing areas of focus owing to a shift of emphasis in social norms.

MAINTAINING EVALUATORY ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

24. The team has decided the following:
- 24.1. The IQAA team members will change from being Evaluators to being Validators in the ongoing evaluation process;
 - 24.2. All the staff will be included in the evaluation process;
 - 24.3. There will be ongoing classroom visits in order to create a culture of continuous assessment;
 - 24.4. There will be constant Assessment in terms of good classroom practice, specifically Teaching and Learning;
 - 24.5. All recommendations made by the Team from the evaluation process will be forwarded to Boys' College Executive Committee for implementation in a School Development Plan;
 - 24.6. In 2008 the school will be involved in the evaluation process with Focus Areas 4, 5 and 6, namely:
 - Focus Area 4: Governance and Management
 - Focus Area 5: Values and Society Involvement
 - Focus Area 6: Distinctive Areas

OTHER SIGNIFICANT POINTS

25. The team noted the following:
- 25.1. The Boys' College has an excellent Counselling Department with qualified, full time, professional counsellors to provide emotional and knowledgeable assistance and support to all the boys whenever needed;
 - 25.2. There is a full time Chaplain in attendance for any and all of the spiritual needs of both the staff and of the students;
 - 25.3. The Community Service Programme run at the Boys' College is multi-faceted and is compulsory in Grades 8 and 9, thus ensuring that every boy is involved in service to the community more than once throughout his tenure as a student;

- 25.4. The Boys' College has developed an excellent Pupil Leadership Programme that extends from Grade 8 to Grade 12. There is a dedicated time in the timetable allocated to the Leadership Development programme;
- 25.5. Upon entry to the Boys' College each student is given a Bezant, representing the bezants on the College crest, as a symbol of his arrival at the school. Upon leaving the College each student receives an African Knight, symbolic of his journey from boyhood to manhood.
 - The Bezants are the fifteen coins surrounding the cross on the school badge. They represent the ransom paid for the release of the Duke of Cornwall, who was being held hostage. The town of Stithian, from where the College's founders originated, is in Cornwall, England.
- 25.6. Both the Leadership Programme and the Bezants to Knights ceremonies form an integral part of the 'Rites of Passage' of each student in the Boys' College.

CONCLUSION

26. The team's conclusions are as follows:
 - 26.1. The Boys' College has welcomed the IQAA process and the opportunity for self-assessment and evaluation;
 - 26.2. We have found the identification of Key Strengths and Areas of Concern vital to our growth as an educational institution of the highest standing;
 - 26.3. We will use all our findings as a foundation for future progress;
 - 26.4. The IQAA process is the beginning of what will become a culture of assessment and evaluation by the Boys' College;
 - 26.5. The IQAA process has enabled us to focus on ensuring that we maintain the ideals of the Boys' College as 'A South African School making a World of Difference.'
 - 26.6. We would like to thank our external Mentor, Miss Margaret Edwards, for guidance and support throughout.