



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 GIRLS' COLLEGE

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SECTION 4: REPORT – ST STITHIANS GIRLS’ COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

1. Internal Evaluation Team:
 - 1.1. Marc Ancillotti Grade 10 Director, Mathematics teacher
 - 1.2. Loredana Borello Deputy Head – Academics, Geography teacher
 - 1.3. Linda Galanakis English Teacher, Campus Intern co-ordinator
 - 1.4. Marié Jacobs Head of Department - Afrikaans
 - 1.5. Mumy Malinga Head of Department - History
 - 1.6. Radha Pillay Grade 11 Director, Head of Department - English
 - 1.7. Leigh Pleass Head of Department - Mathematics
 - 1.8. Karen Prinsloo Deputy Head, Computer teacher (Team Leader)
2. Mentor appointed by IQAA: Libby Huggett
3. Date of Evaluation: September 2007

Background (general)

4. A relatively new school of 12 years accommodating 490 girls and 62 staff. Several of the staff are part time specialist teachers. Sports coaches, music staff and administrators form our support staff.
5. Distinctive features:
 - 5.1. One of five schools situated on a campus of 123 Hectares considered to be a co-ordinate model of education.
 - 5.2. The Girls’ College caters for girls from Grade 8 to Grade 12.
 - 5.3. The College is a member of the Round Square International organisation, ISASA and writes the IEB examinations.
 - 5.4. A distinctive feature of the Girls’ College is its vertical tutor group. Instead of register class teachers each pupil is assigned to a tutor teacher. A tutor group consists of approximately 10 – 15 girls consisting of two to three girls from each grade group As matric girls leave the tutor group they are replaced each year with grade 8 girls. This is an incredibly caring system.
 - 5.5. We also believe in the philosophy that all our girls can be leaders if they choose to be.
 - 5.6. We have a unique recognition policy, recognising all our girls’ achievements but choosing not to wear any symbols of outward recognition on our uniforms.
 - 5.7. We aspire to being: “So strong on the inside that we can be gentle to others.”

Report on Compliance (*Done by mentor at school, but included*)

MEANS AND METHODS FOR GATHERING EVIDENCE

6. The following methods for gathering evidence were used:
 - 6.1. Collection of policy documents
 - 6.2. Letters and correspondence (see IQAA file of evidence)
 - 6.3. Focus group minutes (see IQAA file of evidence)
 - 6.4. Opinion surveys statistics and comments
 - 6.5. Informal interviews were held with staff members on appraisals and development (see IQAA file of evidence for notes taken)
 - 6.6. Observations in the classrooms and playgrounds.

FINDINGS

Focus Area 1: Learning and Teaching

7. **Curriculum** –

The curriculum meets national requirements.

Opportunities are given to learners to go beyond the curriculum through career initiatives, outings, tours, life orientation, performances, and entrepreneurship and information technology. Time allocation per subject is according to specific subject needs, staffing and national requirements.

Gender issues and environmental sensitivities are well addressed through learning programmes, speakers, community service, recycling, chapels, assemblies and grade initiatives.

Due to the extensive curriculum, achieving a balance between academic and extra-curricular options continues to be a concern for both staff and learners.

8. **Teaching and learning** –

Teachers plan a range of appropriate lessons using annual, termly and weekly planners. Close adherence to national curriculum requirements makes it possible to address skills, knowledge, attitude and values.

Class observations revealed that activities were level appropriate, lively, purposeful and constructive. However there is the concern that some lessons are teacher driven.

Homework is used appropriately for reinforcement and enrichment. There are concerns that homework adds to the imbalance between curricular and extra-curricular activities.

The school continues to encourage learners to take responsibility for their learning.

9. **Teacher development** –

This is an area of strength due to a variety of professional development opportunities through conferences, user groups, workshops and courses. Lack of time to share the knowledge gained and self-reflection and self-evaluation is of concern.

The finalisation of a staff appraisal system is vital for professional and personal development.

10. **Assessment** -

The assessment programme of the school is of an exceptionally high standard covering formative and diagnostic analysis.

Regular and varied assessment is observed through a cycle testing programme, informal assessments, examinations and portfolio work.

A curriculum map assists in meeting the needs of the different subjects.

11. **Support** –

The use and availability of resources such as sporting, cultural, spiritual, laboratories, media centre, IT and AV equipment is highly effective.

Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCO staff) supervise and support the barriers to learning.

Extra lessons and the peer tutoring program address the learners with academic needs.

Counselling on all levels is outstanding. This includes peer counselling, one-on-one, tutor support and pastoral care. Referrals to external professional practitioners assist this initiative.

A chaplain is on hand to provide spiritual support.

Focus Area 2: Attainments and Progress

12. Attainments -

Our learners are confident and well-spoken in at least two languages. A number of language options are available.

Most learners are not afraid to ask questions as the atmosphere is safe.

Our learners are numerate and appreciate mathematical concepts in an academic and functional context.

The school achieves excellent academic and sporting results thus setting a high standard for the learners.

13. Attitudes –

Learners are naturally curious and seek new knowledge as is evident by their voluntary participation in debates, Olympiads, the tour de maths and drama performances.

Most learners are able to produce exceptional, well-formulated work using research skills.

Critical thinking and problem-solving underpin our curriculum.

On-going diversity workshops, interventions and discussions address the issues that may arise towards intolerance of cultural differences.

14. Progress –

The school prides itself on the students being successful in each grade. This is as a result of the broad and extended curriculum offered by the school.

Evidence suggests that most learners are successful in their chosen course at tertiary institutions or in their particular career. The correspondence from the universities from 2006 is found in the IQAA file.

Focus Area 3: Functioning of the School

15. Orderliness –

A code of conduct is implemented and we strive to uphold the expectations.

The policy at Girls' College is to encourage punctuality without the use of bells. This has led to some learners taking advantage particularly after breaks.

Attendance is regular and control systems are in place. The expectation is that learners will sign in at the office. Constant monitoring is required for this to be effective.

The timetable is well structured with a teacher allocated to every class and provision is made for absent teachers. Locum teachers and other helpful individuals assist with substitution.

Constant monitoring is required for this to be effective.

Learners generally know what the expectations are regarding behaviour and manners but a higher focus on greeting and assisting strangers is to be encouraged.

16. Security and safety –

The school is compliant in the following ways:

School buildings comply with safety laws and regulations and are in superb condition.

Regularly-practised emergency procedures ensure safety.

Health and Safety representatives and security personnel carry out regular checks on the facilities.

Emergency telephone numbers are clearly displayed.

Lockers and heavy duty padlocks are provided for each learner to secure their possessions.

Adherence to the use of these lockers requires constant monitoring.

17. Health care –

Trained first aid officers and a sick bay facility are available to all.

In addition the vertical tutor system and student centre takes care of the emotional and psychological needs of learner and teachers.

There is clear evidence that parents and learners feel safe and cared for.

KEY STRENGTHS

18. Wonderful opportunities are given to learners through our membership to the Round Square organisation.
19. Numerous opportunities are provided for through career initiatives, outings, tours both overseas and local, through entrepreneurship programmes, information technology and sport and cultural activities.
20. Teacher development is an area of huge strength due to the multitude of professional development opportunities through conferences, user groups, workshops, courses and teacher visitations.
21. New and exciting initiatives are often introduced by staff who have been given the freedom to pursue their passions.
22. Counselling on all levels is outstanding. This includes peer counselling, one-on-one, tutor support and pastoral care.
23. Our chaplain is on hand to provide spiritual support. There is a very caring attitude towards learners in the school and amongst teachers.
24. Our community service commitment is a pivotal part of who we are.
25. Our school prides itself on the students being successful in each grade and in particular the successful levels of progress that is attained by those with learning barriers.
26. Our learners are confident and well-spoken in at least two languages.
27. Our teachers have embraced the principles of Outcomes Based Education.
28. The school achieves excellent academic and sporting results.
29. There is a high level of positive energy present on a daily basis in our busy and involved school

AREAS OF CONCERN - WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

Focus Area 1: Learning and Teaching

	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS
30.	The expectations for learners and for staff need to be well planned and managed in order not to overload a particular grade or staff..	Thorough planning at the “end of year” strategic planning day for Heads of Departments & Directors should address this
31.	Teachers should workshop more learner-focused lessons and promote more independent learning in the GET phase. Academic council meetings should include teachers from Grade 7 in the planning and approach towards the senior phase.	Academic Council Chairperson is to invite the above teachers to a Council meeting before the end of the first term of 2008.
32.	Homework guideline documents outlining the purpose and expectations should be grade and subject appropriate and communicated to all stakeholders.	Academic Council to draw up this document at the Strategic Planning Meeting at the end of the year and implement it as soon as it has been adopted by the Girls’ College Executive.
33.	Through the phase planning, better communication will enhance the effectiveness of enrichment activities. .	A curriculum map drawn up for each grade will visually display overlap in subjects. These maps are to be drawn up during the course of term one 2008
34.	It is suggested that regular ‘health’ checks are implemented in order to remedy staff morale.	The Counselling department to be asked to host at least one staff meeting or briefing to test the “health” of staff.
35.	The criteria for staff appraisal should be formalised through the HR department.	This action is to be communicated to the HR Director who will be invited to address all staff at various staff meetings during the course of the first six months of 2008.
36.	There is a need to evaluate the existing reporting of assessment to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of results/feedback. The assessment policy should be amended to address this.	This is an action for the Academic Council to address at one of their meetings next year.
37.	A multipurpose hall and drama venue would enhance the effectiveness of educational needs.	The Chairperson of the IQAA team is to add this item onto the Campus Capex plan once approved by the Girls’ College Executive.
38.	Additional learning support staff is a necessity..	When staffing needs are addressed annually, the recommendation that additional staff are required, will be tabled.

Focus Area 2: Attainments and Progress

39.	Teacher feedback reveals that learners do not manage their time well and are reliant on supervision.	Time management skills and tips are to be developed by Grade Directors in order to provide guidance to those learners who require this. These skills are to be imparted at Grade Baraza meeting times scheduled on the timetable.
40.	Greater scaffolding of projects will help monitor the learning progress and time management. Learners need to have a clearer understanding of requirements of projects.	Curriculum maps will be drawn up for each of the grades in future by the teacher librarian and technology director and will be distributed to the girls at the beginning of each year.
41.	The staff and learner surveys highlighted a disparity over concern over teacher approachability.	This issue should be addressed at a suitable forum in the future but before the end of the second term.

Focus Area 3: Functioning of the School

42.	Disciplinary procedures must be followed carefully.	A workshop on disciplinary procedures should be held for all directors initially at the school.
43.	The consequences for a lack of punctuality require a more consistent approach to be effective.	The SRC – student representative council – are to be approached about a possible strategy to improve this expectation.
44.	A more effective system of recording lateness and absenteeism should be brainstormed.	This can be achieved through the SRC system.
45.	The substitution policy needs to be refreshed more regularly.	This item is to be placed on the staff meeting agenda at least once a year.
46.	The school should assist parents in their quest to promote good manners by rewarding those displaying this behaviour.	On going action.
47.	Parents are looking for assistance to understand technology to ensure their children's safety.	Guest speakers and Parent Connect groups will address this topical issue during the course of the next year.

MAINTAINING EVALUATORY ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

48. The whole evaluation process was seen in a positive light once clearly understood.
49. Classroom observations were found to be most beneficial to all participants. We aim to continue this practice on a termly basis.
The classroom observation process will be cascaded in future so that all of our staff eventually have the training in using this classroom observation tool for observation. Each team member will observe with a staff member who has not had the training, thereby becoming the validator in the process.
50. The Opinion Surveys and the technique of surveying has already been used by one of the team members post the evaluation process, for obtaining constructive feedback in their leadership style. We recognise that this will also be a process used by others on the staff in the future.
51. The Focus group concept proved to be very valuable and the team has already identified this method of gathering information and solutions to address an area of concern that needs further investigation as part of the school development plan.
52. The focus area Functioning of the School – will be addressed at the Strategic Planning conference to be held at the end of the year for all the directors at the Girls' College.
The focus area - Teaching and Learning as well as the minutes of the homework focus group and the staff appraisal focus group suggestions are to be used by the Heads of Departments at their strategic planning workshops.
53. One of the team members will also be presenting a session on Good practice – this evolves directly from the classroom observation good practice comments that were noted by the team observers.