

ST BENEDICT'S JUNIOR PREPARATORY SCHOOL



Truth in Charity

SCHOOL VISION

To develop St Benedict's as a distinctly Catholic school where there is caring and the pursuit of Truth and Love which guides boys to an ever-increasing appreciation of their ability to think, act, play and reflect; and an ever-deepening understanding that these gifts should always be directed towards the service of the world; its people and building the kingdom of God on earth.

IQAA Internal Evaluation Report July 2013

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2.2 INTRODUCTION

SCHOOL NAME: St Benedict's Junior Preparatory School

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MENTOR: Mrs Cathy Ablett

EVALUATION DATE: 25 June 2013

MODEL USED: Core Evaluation

3. DESCRIPTIVE BACKGROUND

St Benedict's, situated in Bedfordview, Gauteng, is one of South Africa's largest and most successful Catholic Schools. It operates as three separate schools under one umbrella and currently caters for 647 College, 390 Preparatory School and 403 Junior Preparatory School boys from reception in Grade R through to matriculation in Grade 12.

The school was founded by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1958 to cater to the educational needs of Catholic boys on the near East Rand. Today the school operates as a Catholic school for boys of all faiths and is owned by the St Benedict's Trust and is administered by a Board of Governors.

Day-to-day operations are conducted by an Executive Headmaster, College and Preparatory School Headmasters, Deputies and excellent academic and sports staff who are registered with the South African Council for Educators.

St Benedict's is an independent school. Although it is registered with the Provincial Education Department, the school receives no subsidy from the state: all costs, including staff salaries, are covered by school fees. The School is a member of the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa and the International Boys Schools' Coalition. The school also enjoys close ties with two local parishes, the Catholic Schools Office and the Catholic Institute for Education.

St Benedict's is in every sense a distinctly Catholic School, where Christian formation is seen as its fundamental purpose. It is a school with a proud academic tradition, consistently producing outstanding results in the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) matriculation examinations. There has been no failure at the Grade 12 level for more than thirty-eight years - and University Entrance pass rates are generally in excess of 95%.

The Junior Preparatory School is a vibrant part of St Benedict's catering for boys from Reception Year to Grade 3, based on its own site across the road from the main school campus. Facilities, which have been developed to meet the boys' educational and developmental needs, include a separate Grade R section with a wide range of indoor and outdoor equipment, as well as specialist facilities for Religious Education, Computers, Music, Art, Swimming and a well-equipped Media Centre. Sport is integrated during the school day, and extra mural sport activities are offered to boys from Grade 1 to 3, with most boys participating in the practices and matches. The extensive Cultural Programme includes Choir, Percussion, Nature Club, Brainiaks, Computers and Art. We currently have four classes per grade and a total of 21 teaching staff and 5 assistants and interns.

The ethos of the school is to recognise each boy as a unique individual, build his self-esteem and acknowledge both achievement and endeavour. A holistic approach ensures balanced opportunities for Academic, Spiritual, Physical, Social and Cultural development. Boys are encouraged to cultivate an attitude of social awareness and mutual respect.

As St Benedict's continues to grow and flourish within the new political and educational landscape of South Africa, the magnitude and complexity of diversity and transformation dictates that we broaden our perspectives and recommit ourselves to building a community in which equity and diversity are viewed not only as a moral and ethical imperatives but also as practical necessities. The school reaffirms the importance of diversity as a core value and encourages all its stakeholders to regularly undertake a critical self-examination of its approach to equity and diversity. This belief, together with the impetus provided by the publication of ISASA Toolkit for Diversity and Transformation has led to the establishment of a Transformation and Diversity Team at St Benedict's.

4.1. COMPLIANCE

1. EDUCATION DEPARTMENT: EMS Registration no: 161448

2. UMALUSI ACCREDITATION: Confirmed Candidate.

Accreditation number: SCH 001435 PA extended to 01/08/2013

3. ISASA: Compliant with Requirements for Membership

Implements the ISASA Principles of Good Practice

4.2. AREAS OF OPERATION

1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ATTAINMENT

- 1) Curriculum
- 2) Learning
- 3) Resources (indoor)
- 4) Resources (outdoor)
- 5) Support
- 6) Assessment
- 7) Staff Development

2. FUNCTIONING OF THE SCHOOL

- 1) Policies
- 2) Finance
- 3) Facilities
- 4) Conduct
- 5) Security and Safety
- 6) Health Care
- 7) Communications

4.3 MEANS AND METHODS

The following tools were used to gather and validate information:

- School policy documents,
- Mission and vision statements
- Records of health and safety inspections
- Audited bank statements and accounts
- Opinion surveys
- Timetables
- Minutes of meetings
- Current budget
- Maintenance plans
- Focus Groups
- Minutes of meetings
- School strategic development plan
- Code of conduct
- Labour laws displayed

5. OPINION SURVEYS AND FOCUS GROUPS

The Internal Evaluation Team analysed the results of the IQAA standard surveys completed by Parents and Staff, in conjunction with accompanying comments made by respondents, and additional surveys compiled by the Team. These results were further explored through a process of focus group meetings with Parents, Staff and Pupils.

A return rate of 86.3 % was received and the results of the survey reflected a high level of confidence in the standard of teaching, learning and functionality of the school, and all parents and staff surveyed agreed that the academic standards of the school were good.

STRENGTHS IDENTIFIED IN PARENT AND STAFF SURVEYS AND FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

- 1) Children are happy and making good progress at school.
- 2) The Headmaster and School's Management Team perform well.
- 3) The disciplinary processes are fair.
- 4) The school's facilities are good.
- 5) Both cultural and sporting needs are satisfied.
- 6) Children are well cared for and safe at school.
- 7) Teachers are approachable and treat children fairly.
- 8) Worthwhile homework is given.
- 9) There is good parent support.
- 10) Staff are offered many opportunities for professional development.

AREAS OF CONCERN IDENTIFIED IN THE PARENT AND STAFF SURVEYS AND FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

- 1) There is a perception that boys are bullied at school. Focus group discussions suggest that there is a disjuncture between the definition of bullying and normal rough-and-tumble play, suggesting that a parent education and partnership approach would be beneficial. The boys interviewed spoke positively about their playground interactions, and commented on some obstructive and over-boisterous behaviour rather than what would be described as bullying. Parents interviewed were satisfied that complaints about bullying had been handled to their satisfaction.
- 2) Teachers do not have sufficient say in the way the school is run. Although all staff agree that the Principal provides excellent leadership, and the management team performs well, there is a need to improve forums for staff to have more say in the way the school is run.
- 3) The teacher appraisal system needs further development.
- 4) Transition between grades is not managed as well as it could be.

6. THE TEAM'S FINDINGS

6.1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ATTAINMENT

1) CURRICULUM

Strengths:

- Evidence of thorough planning, preparation and record keeping.
- Child-orientated curriculum accommodating different learning styles, and suited to the developmental stages of the pupils.
- A theme approach is used to accommodate the interest level of the pupils, as well as integrate current events.
- Programme allows for both, freedom and guided activity, formal routine and informal spontaneity, active and passive experience.
- The programme caters for both gross and fine motor development, and appropriate apparatus are available to support this development.
- Both indoor and outdoor play are given and adequately supervised.
- A holistic approach is all-pervasive, where the timetable facilitates a range of activities incorporating an appropriate balance between academic, spiritual, sporting and cultural development in line with the school's mission.
- A comprehensive sporting and cultural extra-mural programme is available and well-attended.
- Parents are satisfied that their children's sporting and cultural needs are catered for.

Areas for development:

- The process of managing the transition between grades needs to be improved.
- Drama and movement are not adequately incorporated in the programme.
- Currently unsuccessful in our efforts to source a suitable full-time music teacher.

2) LEARNING

Strengths:

- Academic standards are good; all staff and parents surveyed expressed this opinion.
- Nearly all parents feel that their children are making good progress.
- Needs of different kinds of learners are met – auditory, kinaesthetic, visual and spatial.
- Children learn to work individually and in groups.
- Children are encouraged and motivated to learn.
- A stimulating Reading Programme is implemented across all grades.
- Worthwhile homework is given, with the purpose of reinforcing concepts taught in class and promoting self-discipline and drawing connections between home and school work.
- Children are taught to reject all forms of racism.
- Teachers communicate in clear appropriate language.
- A sense of fun and enjoyment prevails. Great value is placed on friendship and cultivating a happy and positive learning environment.
- All teachers feel proud to be part of the school, and this is reflected in their professionalism and commitment to maintain high standards.

Areas for development:

- We need to actively incorporate opportunities for boys to learn respect for and understanding of people with disabilities, as well as to reject all forms of gender and racial discrimination. This is not currently incorporated in the formal programme.
- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on group and collaborative learning activities.
- There is a need to incorporate more extension and differentiated activities.

3) RESOURCES (INDOOR)**Strengths:**

- All classes are equipped with computers, internet connectivity and projectors.
- Classrooms are well-planned with the children's needs in mind.
- Educational material and equipment is available, of wide range, age appropriateness and high quality. Equipment includes games, puzzles, Lego, THRASS material, Maths apparatus.
- Appropriate charts, e.g. birthday calendar, weather chart and notices are easily visible.
- A wide range of quality books are available for different purposes; Library Books, Theme Books, Graded Readers and Extension Readers.
- Additional consumables are available for teachers such as laminating and printing facilities and appropriate stationery and stickers.
- The budget supports the on-going upgrading and extending of resources.

4) RESOURCES (OUTDOOR)**Strengths:**

- There is constant maintenance and upgrading of equipment.
- A variety of good outdoor equipment and facilities are available and appropriately used.
- The Grade R section boasts a large variety of high quality outdoor equipment for the development of gross motor skills.

Areas for development:

- Better utilisation of the swimming pool is needed.

5) SUPPORT**Strengths:**

- There is appropriate academic support both during and after school. A specialist Academic Support teacher is available to assess and provide support, while teachers offer consolidation classes after school.
- All boys undergo a standardised Reading and Spelling test at the end of the year as a tool to monitor their progress.
- Independent Speech/Language and Occupational Therapists provide a service on the school premises.
- A Psychologist/Councillor is available to support pupils and teachers.
- Pupils in Gr R undergo a full Educational Psychological Assessment in preparation for their entry into Grade 1, so that timeous intervention can be initiated if necessary.

- Teachers are vigilant to notice barriers to learning in areas such as speech, hearing, vision and others, and to notify parents and recommend referrals where necessary.
- Teachers are well trained, approachable and focused on the children.
- There are structures for parents to communicate with teachers; parents may meet teachers before school for brief, informal discussions, or more formal meetings may be arranged should more time be needed.
- Pupils' progress is monitored closely and where necessary meetings are held with a Support Team involving parents and all professionals involved with the child to ensure that appropriate support and monitoring structures are in place.
- All parents are required to meet with the teachers during the first term, and teachers will request meetings with parents should there be concerns during the course of the year.
- Parents are involved where possible and appropriate through inclusion in school functions and volunteer groups.
- Parents are helped to understand their children's needs and act accordingly, through information evenings and parent/teacher interviews.
- The importance of friends and friendships is understood and acted on where possible by teachers and parents.

Areas for development:

- The School Psychologist is often in high demand and not always able to offer counselling timeously.
- There is a need to find better structures to attend to boys who need extra support within the classroom environment.

6) ASSESSMENT

Strengths:

- Children are assessed continually using a variety of assessment tools and detailed records are kept.
- Reporting to parents is regular and comprehensive. Parents receive a Progress Report at the end of the first term, and Formal reports are issued at the end of Term 2 and 3.
- Parents are kept informed on pupils' progress.
- Both formal and informal assessment strategies are employed
- Assessments reflect both marks as well as explanatory notes.
- Clearly defined rubrics and criteria are used to achieve standardisation.
- All records of promotion are stored electronically on PencilBox as well as hard copies which are filed.

Areas for development:

- The PencilBox report system does not fully meet the requirements of the Junior Primary School, and having remote access would further improve efficiency.

7) STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Strengths:

- The school encourages teachers to attend workshops, in-service training, lectures, conferences, cluster groups as well as study courses.
- A substantial staff development budget has been made available and is well utilised.

- Courses attended by staff include; International Boys Schools' Coalition, Proudly Primary, ISASA CAPS workshop, THRASS, Left-hand learning, First Aid, ADHD, Auditory Development, Concentrated Learning Encounter and iPad in Education presentations.

Areas for development:

- There is a need to improve the appraisal system to link better with staff development.

6.2. FUNCTIONING OF THE SCHOOL

1) POLICIES

Strengths

- The school runs smoothly with well-structured policies, codes of conduct, timetables, rosters and procedures, which are accessible and clearly communicated and implemented.
- The school is registered as a Combined Independent School and is a Confirmed Candidate with Umalusi accreditation.

Area for development:

- An on-going process of policy review to align the policies within the three sections of the school. This process is underway.

2) FINANCE

Strengths:

- An annual budget is drawn up, and approved by the Board of Governors.
- Good annual and long-term financial planning ensures the viability of the school.
- There is good management and control of finances, with books audited annually.
- There is adequate provision for insurance of every kind necessary.

3) FACILITIES

Strengths:

- The schools buildings and facilities are more than adequate for the school's purpose.
- The school's buildings, grounds and facilities are well maintained.
- Parents and staff agree that the facilities are good.
- The school was designed specifically to meet the developmental needs of boys from Grade R to 3.
- The Computer Centre is supported with a well maintained computer network, internet, Smartboard, printer, headsets and appropriate software.
- The Sports facilities available are of a high standard and well-maintained including tennis courts, soccer, hockey and rugby fields as well as an indoor cricket facility.
- Therapy Rooms provide facilities for boys to receive appropriate support.

Area for development:

- School buildings and facilities do not cater fully for those who are physically challenged.
- There is a need to expand the current collection of percussion and Orff instruments.

4) CONDUCT

Strengths:

- All cleaning, kitchen, administrative, ground and visiting support staff are treated with respect.
- Children and teachers are punctual for school, lessons and other activities.
- Values and manners in line with the Code of Conduct are reinforced on an on-going basis in class and at assembly, and acknowledged through the Star System.
- Attendance is regular and controlled, with lateness and absenteeism followed up with parents.
- The timetable is well structured with a teacher allocated to every class for every lesson and locums arranged for absent teachers.

5) SECURITY AND SAFETY

Strengths:

- Quarterly Health and Safety meetings are held and an appointed Health and Safety Officer is based on the premises.
- The state and safety of school buildings is good and complies with laws and regulations.
- Regular evacuation practice takes place.
- Staff members carry out duties to ensure safety, including playground supervision.
- Training of staff for First Aid certificates is an on-going priority of the school.
- A First Aid box is accessible and appropriately updated.
- Adequate provision is made for monitoring the gates, grounds and key areas by CCTV.

Area for development:

- On-going monitoring of safety and security procedures, to prepare for a variety of eventualities.

6) HEALTH CARE

Strengths:

- There is support and provision for the emotional, physical, social and spiritual needs of students and staff.
- Children feel safe and cared for.
- The school has a clear policy for dealing with bullying, and where necessary there is referral to outside agencies.
- Parents and staff feel that children and their possessions are safe at school.

7) COMMUNICATIONS

Strengths:

- Communication with pupils, staff and parents is regular and effective.
- Communication is good between teacher and parents with sensitivity to one another's opinions, concerns and complaints.
- Regular and meaningful progress reports are sent out to parents.
- Pupils' books are sent home for parents to view and the homework book serves as an additional communication tool.
- Parent information talks are held.

- Meetings are held in which every parent may meet with the teacher and be kept informed.
- Parents understand and approve the direction the school is taking and its ethos.
- Pupils understand the ethos of the school.
- Newsletters are published weekly.
- The Website and Twitter are informative forms of communication.
- All teachers have access to email.
- Communication structures between staff and management are very good.
- Minutes of meetings are available to be viewed by all staff.

8) SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

Strengths:

- In keeping with our Mission Statement, we strive to care for those who experience impoverishment, and build an awareness of those less fortunate.
- Outreach projects are successfully run on an on-going basis and involve both the boys and their families.
- Charity drives include; Easter egg collections, Madiba Day lunches, Barefoot Day shoe collection, food drives, weekly charity collections and support of organisations such as Guide Dog Association, Siloe School for the Blind and Sacred Heart Homework Centre.

7. MAJOR STRENGTHS AND AREAS OF CONCERN

MAJOR STRENGTHS

1. The school has high academic standards.
 - All parents and staff surveyed agree that the academic standards are good.
 - Parents feel that their children are making good progress.
 - Systematic structures are in place for effective curriculum planning and assessment.
 - There is a collaborative ethos between parents, pupils and teachers which is conducive to academic success; Parents are kept informed on academic matters, and both pupils and parents find the teachers approachable.
 - The curriculum is child-centred and accommodates the learning styles of boys.
2. Children are happy, well-cared for and safe at school.
 - This has created a positive environment conducive to learning.
3. The Headmaster and School's Management Team perform well.
 - The survey results confirmed that both parents and staff have expressed their confidence in the school leadership and management.
4. The disciplinary processes are fair.
 - The school strives to promote a culture of fair, consistent and positive discipline.
5. The school's facilities are good.
 - Capacity enhancement has been identified as a whole-school strategic imperative, and an appropriate budget has been allocated to enable access to

suitable educational and technological resources. These include the availability of substantial reading material, classroom equipment, outdoor apparatus and technology for both teaching and learning.

6. Both cultural and sporting needs are satisfied.
 - The extra-mural programme is structured so that boys have opportunities to participate in both cultural and sporting activities according to their interest.
7. There is good parent support.
 - The school places a high value on parental involvement because of the positive effects on pupils' academic and social development, and all parents interviewed confirmed that they support school events.
 - There are numerous forums in which parents are encouraged to participate, such as information evenings, parent/teacher meetings, volunteer groups, and invitations to all sporting, cultural and academic events.
8. Staff have good opportunities for professional development.
 - Staff development has been identified as a strategic imperative in order to keep up with the fast changing education environment.

AREAS OF CONCERN

1. Teachers feel they do not have sufficient say in the way the school is run.
 - It is acknowledged by all staff that the Principal provides excellent leadership and there is a good level of communication between staff and management; however, it is felt that there is a need to create opportunities for staff to have more say in the running of the school, and structures are being introduced to accommodate this.
2. The teacher appraisal system needs development.
 - The focus group discussions have provided insight into improving the current system and a consultative process will follow.
3. Transition between grades is not managed as well as it could be.
 - The policy is currently being reviewed to implement systematic strategies to formalise and improve this process.gover
4. There is a perception that there is a bullying problem.
 - Although incidences of bullying do occur, it is felt that the term is often incorrectly used for general playground altercations, thereby creating the impression that the problem is more prevalent than it is.
 - A whole-school Discipline and Pastoral-care Forum has been initiated, to evaluate the current structures, develop a standardised approach and provide in-service training to all staff.
5. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on collaborative and differentiated learning activities.
 - Although these methodologies are currently included in the programme, there is a need for greater integration into the daily schedule.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS - IQAA CYCLE 1 REPORT 2007		
	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPROVEMENTS
1	Staff development: There is a need to formalise the procedure and create greater opportunities for staff to attend workshops and conferences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality internal and external staff training has been identified as a strategic imperative. A substantial budget has been allocated to staff development. Available workshops and conferences are communicated. Staff have attended an extensive range of workshops.
2	Occupational Health and Safety Act: Full compliance needs to be achieved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school is now fully compliant and is in possession of the necessary compliance certificate.
3	Homework: The programme needs to be re-evaluated with defined objectives and parent given guidelines on their role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework policy has been revised. Information evenings are held to provide parents with guidelines on how best to support the homework process. Almost all parents surveyed agree that the homework given is worthwhile.
4	Structures for communication between management and staff need to improve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A variety of communication structures have been implemented. A recent survey confirmed that all staff are satisfied with the communication level between management and staff.
5	Purchasing of material and budget planning: The process and communication needs to improve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The budget allowance for the purchase of educational equipment has been significantly increased and the process for requests and approval has improved.
6	School security needs to be evaluated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant improvements have been made including 24 hour guard facility, CCTV cameras with remote data storage and upgraded alarm and armed response.
7	Locum teachers need to be made available when teachers are absent.	Locum teachers are now employed when teachers are absent.
8	Teachers need to be more involved in the implementation of school policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy reviews are discussed at meetings and staff have the opportunity to participate in the process.
9	Continue with a process of internal evaluation and reflection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff are encouraged to continually evaluate our systems and make suggestions for improvements, which are discussed at meetings.

9. QUALITY ASSURANCE CULTURE

The evaluation process has been enriching because it created the opportunity for us to pause and take stock of our current structures. The positive feedback received from both Parents and Staff was affirming, and enabled us to identify and celebrate systems that are operating successfully, and should therefore be preserved. It acknowledged not only effective leadership, resources and functionality; but also the quality of our Staff in providing a high standard of education in a caring environment; and our Parent body that supports and commends the school.

The Evaluation Team went through the process rigorously and was open to the challenge of looking at ourselves critically with a view to school improvement. All staff were involved in the process and provided constructive insight during the focus group meetings, and the parents who participated, appreciated being involved knowing their opinions were valued. The evaluation process has provided a formal structure to identify areas needing development as well as a forum to investigate these concerns and put intervention strategies in place.

We appreciate the role played by our mentor who facilitated the critical balance between the external and internal evaluation procedures, and value her contribution. The process has been deeply beneficial and actualised a culture of on-going self-evaluation.