



ST BENEDICT'S

A Catholic School for Boys



CONTENTS

AREA COVERED	PAGE
1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. DESCRIPTIVE BACKGROUND	3
3. COMPLIANCE	4
4. PRIMARY AREAS OF OPERATION	5
5. MEANS AND METHODS	7
6. OPINION SURVEYS	7
7. TEAM FINDINGS	8
8. MAJOR STRENGTHS AND AREAS OF CONCERN	15
9. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT	17
10. CONCLUSION	18

1. INTRODUCTION

This report is on the internal evaluation done at **St Benedict's Preparatory School** during July 2013. The internal evaluation culminated with a visit from the school's mentor on 9 July 2013.

St Benedict's Preparatory School is situated at the following address: Marcus Road, Bedfordview

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The **Internal Evaluation Team** consisted of: Deon Oerson (**Team Leader**)

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The **mentor** is Mrs Cheryl Kindon who was appointed to the position by the Independent Quality Assurance Agency.

NOTE: This is a core evaluation; the main focus of this report is on Teaching, Learning and Attainments and Functioning of the school.

2. DESCRIPTIVE BACKGROUND

2.1 BACKGROUND AND FOUNDING DETAILS

St Benedict's is an Independent Catholic School for boys and was founded in 1958 by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate on what is today a 35-acre site in Bedfordview, Gauteng. The school is owned by The St Benedict's Trust and is administered by a Board of Governors. The school is managed by an Executive Headmaster, Headmasters and Deputies, Academic-, Administrative-, Sport- and Support staff. The school is a member of ISASA, the Independent Schools Association of South Africa and the IBSC, the International Boys Schools Coalition. The school is also a confirmed accredited candidate with UMALUSI.

Although registered as one school, it operates in three sections and caters for 600 College (Grade 8-12), 400 Preparatory (Grade 4-7) and 400 Elementary School (Grade R-3) boys from reception in Grade R through to matriculation in Grade 12. There are currently 405 boys in the Junior Preparatory school, 395 boys in the Preparatory school and 652 boys in the College.

Weekly and termly boarding for boys from Grade 7-12 is offered.

Christian formation through the fostering of Gospel values is our most fundamental purpose. Although St Benedict's is open to boys of all denominations, it is a condition of acceptance that boys participate in all Catholic Religious Education classes and liturgical celebrations. It is the Catholic faith that is taught throughout. However, it is not our intention to convert boys to Catholicism.

Excellent academic standards and a commitment to teaching and learning is also a distinctive feature in the Preparatory School. Being a boys' school, however, the importance of participation in sport is regarded as a critical part of the holistic development of boys. Preparatory School boys are exposed to a wide range of sporting activities. From athletics, basketball, cricket, rowing, swimming, tennis and water polo in the summer season to cross country, hockey, soccer and rugby, in the winter season. An opportunity is created for each boy to participate and represent St Benedict's. The integrated day has largely been responsible for the great sporting successes we are experiencing.

Cultural activities play an important role in the life of the Preparatory School. Boys have an opportunity to participate in chess, choir, debating, drama, marimba band, public speaking, recorder group and variety of different clubs and societies. One of the Preparatory School's outreach programmes is our partnership with Special Olympics, specifically the 'SO get into it' programme. Special Olympics are an international organization which provides year round sports training and competition for people with intellectual disabilities.

2.2 HUMAN RESOURCES

Besides the Headmaster, the Preparatory School has an Academic staff of 16 home room teachers and specialist teachers in Academic Support, Computers, Design and Technology, Religious Education, Music and Zulu. The 16 home room teachers are divided into the four grades with four classes per grade. A Grade 4 nurture class has been created too. The maximum class size is 25. The academic programme is monitored by an appointed Head of Academics, as well as a Head of Pastoral care who oversees the pastoral affairs. In addition there are twelve permanent members of the Preparatory School sports staff whose responsibility it is to provide coaching and run the entire sporting programme for boys from Grade 3 -7.

2.3 FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

The St Benedict's Trust owns **Parnassus Farm**, a 250-acre property situated in Magaliesburg which is the school's Environmental Centre and is used for camps and leadership development. The Preparatory School hosts sporting activities on a 20-acre property in Linbro Park, Johannesburg. Named "**Ravens Park**" this property is also owned by the St Benedict's Trust. The school site has 7 sports fields, 8 tennis courts, 2 basketball courts, an indoor cricket centre/ multi purpose centre, an indoor and outdoor swimming pool, a rowing centre, an Astro turf, a Chapel, Oratory and a gymnasium. A library, auditorium, therapy rooms, computer centre, a tuck shop and an aftercare centre form part of the facilities available to the Preparatory School boys.

2.4 SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL PROFILE

St Benedict's is situated in Bedfordview which is regarded as an affluent suburb on the near east side of Johannesburg. The school is open for boys from all walks of life. Buses transport boys from Edenvale, Benoni, Alberton and Germiston, and the south of Johannesburg. The School Fees are:

FEEES FOR THE PREPARATORY SCHOOL	Grade 4	Grades 5 and 6	Grade 7
Annual	R53 761	R54 131	R62 993
Monthly over 11 months	R 5 028	R 5 053	R 5 891

BOARDING FEES	WEEKLY	TERMLY
Annual	R46 904	R50 336
Monthly over 11 months	R 4 264	R 4 576

3. COMPLIANCE

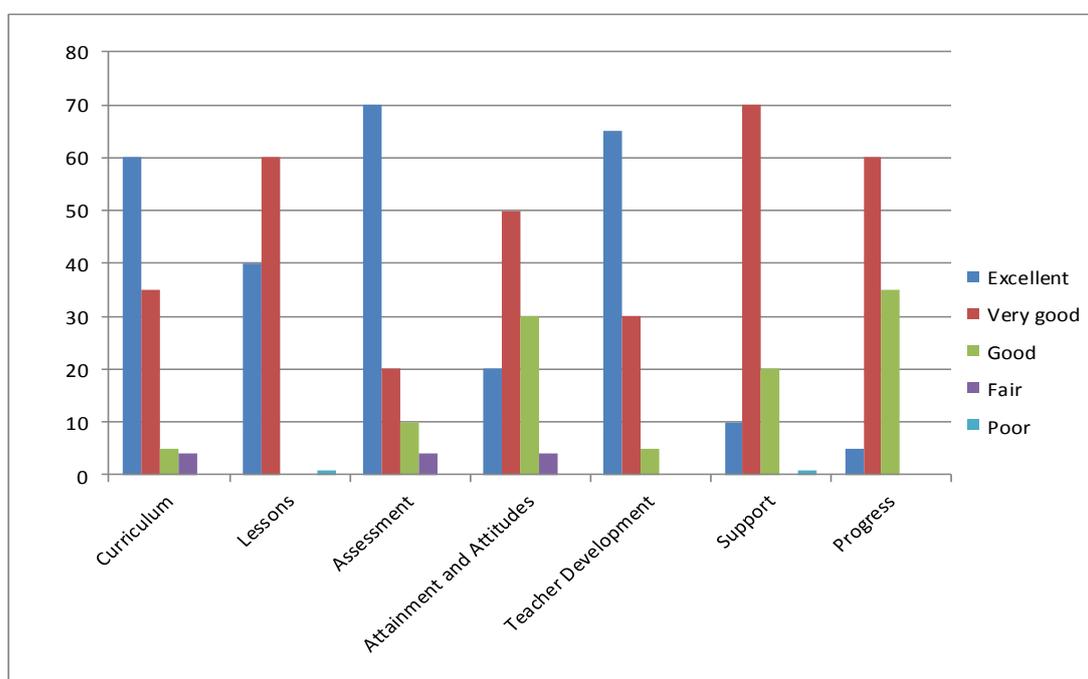
- COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST FOR ISASA MEMBERSHIP (See Appendix 'A')
- ACCREDITATION CERTIFICATE FROM UMALUSI
The accreditation number is **SCH 00 1435 PA**

4. PRIMARY AREAS OF OPERATION – QUALITY CRITERIA CORE EVALUATION:

TEACHING, LEARNING AND ATTAINMENT AND FUNCTIONING OF THE SCHOOL

The quality targets outlined in the Areas of Operation tool is set out to determine the staffs understanding of the teaching, learning and attainment levels as well as the overall functioning of the school. The schools' distinctive character was taken into consideration and the opinions are based on the individual staff members' experience.

There is a general sense of achievement amongst all members of staff. Questions posed in all four categories were interrogated by individual staff members and an overall view is presented in the graph. The following comments express individual staff suggestions and observations.



STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

4.1 CURRICULUM

Most staff members responded positively to the questions posed in this category. The following areas are being highlighted and this will be taken into consideration in the final recommendations and forward planning:

The availability of current versions of documents relevant to curriculum is available to all staff. The weekly timetable includes an Integrated Sports time for each grade on a weekly basis as well as Religious Education. The time allocation for most learning areas are in line with the CAPS guidelines, however, some adjustments have been made to accommodate our own contextual needs. The Academic staff are fully involved in the ISASA subject curriculum planning meetings and cluster meetings. At school level there are set curriculum planning meetings with the Heads of Departments as well as Subject meetings.

The Preparatory School is involved in the ISASA bench marking assessments for Grade 7. The IEB courses shed light on the expected outcomes and high-lighted the areas of weakness regarding our assessment processes. These workshops provide the opportunity to realign the curriculum according to CAPS.

Sport, Culture and Spiritual activities form an integral part of the curricular and co-curricular programme in the Preparatory School. There is a constant attempt towards finding a perfect balance between the different needs. Intergrated days provide the opportunity for all boys to participate in as many sporting codes and develop different skills and competencies. There is a deliberate effort to strengthen the music and drama departments in the school.

4.2 LESSONS

Although there are ample resources and opportunities for learning, it is often found that the IT and network capabilities are overloaded which leads to limited access to multimedia resources. The academic staff often experience that time constraints do not allow for extensive remediation. This highlights the need to improve on differentiation in the different learning areas. Teachers do motivate the boys to take responsibility for their own learning. In their experience it is found that parents are overly involved in homework and projects, thereby not allowing the boys to work independently. There is, therefore, a greater need for the boys to take on greater responsibility for their work.

4.3 ASSESSMENT

The Preparatory school has a well-structured assessment programme which is fully aligned to the CAPS guidelines and recommendations. The Skills report provides an opportunity for the teachers to report on the boys' attitudes and values relating to their work ethic and competencies. This report is linked to the Academic report.

4.4 ATTAINMENT AND ATTITUDES

In the language of learning, students listen, read and write fluently, and express their ideas confidently. Some of the boys are non-committal when it comes to time on task, which is experienced as a lack of good work ethic. There is in some cases a disparity between oral and written work, with the boys lacking writing skills. The general attainment in mathematics is commendable; however it is found that some of the boys are battling with problem solving. There is an awareness that more practice and learning opportunities should be created for the boys to practise in problem solving activities.

The boys in the Preparatory school are curious; they seek information and are able to build on acquired information. They are resourceful and can generate ideas. The high level of parental involvement is perceived as negative because the boys tend to become overly dependent.

There is an understanding and respect for people with disabilities. The Grade 6 boys do the 'SO Get into it' programme which is endorsed by Special Olympics. Funding is made available from Special Olympics and when distributed, the school hosts a Unified Games, which involves both able bodied and intellectually challenged athletes.

4.5 SUPPORT

As the school continues to grow, so does the need for additional classrooms. Provision is made for learning support for boys who experience barriers to learning. We have a Grade 4 nurture class for boys who experience these barriers. There is a proposal that all grades could benefit from such a class. Extra lessons are provided. Consideration is given to boys who are diagnosed with ADD/ADHD for example allowing for extra time on tasks. Extra lessons are planned and successfully implemented, however there is a need for a policy framework to clarify times and work allocation.

Guidance is given for academic, career and personal needs and the school provides excellent auxiliary services which affords support for the boys in all areas of need. There is a drive to structure these services in such a way that clear policies and practices are followed with referrals. There are necessary support structures for those experiencing stress, trauma, drug abuse and those affected and infected by AIDS. We have counsellors on site.

5. MEANS AND METHODS

The means and methods used to find evidence for this report are:

- Areas of Operation survey
- Opinion surveys – Learner, Staff and Parent surveys
- Class visits
- Focus groups

6. OPINION SURVEYS

This is a summary of the results of the opinion surveys conducted

6.1 STAFF OPINIONS

POSITIVE OPINIONS	%	NEGATIVE OPINIONS	%
Teachers are involved in school activities beyond the classroom	100	Possessions are safe at school	27
Learners talk to teachers about their problems	97	Learners are bullied at school	22
The teachers have opportunities for professional development	100	Parents do not show enough support for the school	15
The teacher appraisal system is effective	93	Classes are too big	15

6.2 LEARNER OPINIONS

POSITIVE OPINIONS	%	NEGATIVE OPINIONS	%
My teachers respect and care for me	95	I am bullied at school	17
Discipline is good at the school	91	I find it difficult to approach my teacher with problems	34
I find school work interesting	92		

6.3 PARENT OPINIONS

POSITIVE OPINIONS	%	NEGATIVE OPINIONS	%
The school keeps me informed of my child's progress	93	My child is bullied at school	20
I am able to approach the teachers about my child	99	I am critical of the school	25
My child is given worthwhile homework	98		
The school has high standards culturally, eg. in music , drama, art , dance etc	92		

For a full breakdown of the opinion surveys refer to Appendix B

7. TEAM FINDINGS

7.1 STAFF FOCUS GROUP

- a. Do you feel your possessions are safe at school?
 - The general feeling was that safety was not a major problem; however, it was better to err of the side of caution and not leave valuables lying around with so many people on the school grounds. The issue is being managed realistically.
 - Cameras are seen as a deterrent and when new cleaners arrive a supervisor accompanies them.
- b. Do you feel bullying is a problem?
 - Bullying is present in all schools but does not appear to be as severe as it is made out to be. There is a greater awareness because of all the initiatives from the Non Bullying Alliance.
 - Younger boys still battle to distinguish between bullying and “boys playing”.
 - There appears to be fewer incidents due to the NBA, Special Olympics and now

Brave Heart. LO, RE, circle time and skits in assembly are contributing to the awareness of the issue and allow the boys to open up and talk about their concerns and feelings. Boys are more accepting of each other.

- Hierarchy in sport can lead to what some consider as bullying.
- c. Do parents show enough support for the school?
- There is support for the sports teams on tours but decisions are sometimes changed as “parents won’t be happy”. There are misconceptions regarding “sponsorship” and making the team.
 - Regarding Academics, parents need to trust teacher’s professionalism and there is a fine line between support and the over-involvement of the parents. Parents support their children, but not always the school.
 - The sometimes arrogant and disrespectful attitudes of parents are a concern: (Inappropriate or negative comments about the school on and off the sports field or and parents leaving after Mass or Prize giving once their child has performed)
- d. Does classroom size affect the school negatively?
- Marking, discipline and the individual attention one can give to smaller classes is negatively affected by larger classes. Classes can be limited to 23 so extra boys can be accommodated when brothers join the other phases of the school.
 - If classes are too large, problems like value for money and adequate facilities arise.
- e. General
- Regulating classroom temperature needs to be addressed.
 - Our boys do need constant reminders of accepted behaviour and good manners. Teachers should expect and enforce and the male Sport’s Staff need to be positive role models for the boys.
 - Positive aspects of the school include: having a caring, committed and dedicated staff, efficient communication and open door policy, a well-developed support and care structure for boys and staff, outstanding sporting facilities, great transitional change between grades and solid grounding in preparation for the College.
 - We must continue to extend the academic thinking skills of our boys and include the Junior Preparatory school in this regard.

7.2 LEARNER FOCUS GROUP

- a. Do you feel your possessions are safe at school?
- Boys feel their possessions are safe at school and security has improved since camera’s have been installed, Concern over High School boys taking and damaging Preparatory boys belongings.
 - To improve this, boys suggested lockers or cages on sports field where possessions could be kept safe, hand valuables to teachers to safe guard.
- b. Do you feel bullying is a problem?
- Issues raised: cyber bullying and racism which was a concern, however since the formation of the NBA, bullying has decreased hugely.
 - To improve: further address that bullies are not always aware that they are in the wrong

- Cyber bullying can be traced and used as evidence.
- c. Do you find it difficult to approach teachers with problems?
- Teachers always say they will help all the time but they often don't, although they do help after school and when approached away from class.
 - A concern was that teachers are too often on their cell phones.
 - To improve this: More interaction with male or sports staff (boys feel they are better understood), splitting classes for certain lessons, circle time done in smaller groups.
- d. Do you feel that the lower teams don't get the same attention as A & B teams?
- Boys do feel this way. They feel the lower teams should be assigned a dedicated coach who is a constant throughout the season like the A and B teams.
 - A suggestion is made that one coach that remains with the same team throughout the Preparatory School.
 - Reserves for A and B teams can still be reserves but need to play for the team below that, coaches need to show same dedication to all boys not the boys who excel at that sport.
 - Issue of why so many sporting codes and reason some were compulsory was raised.

7.3 PARENT FOCUS GROUP

- a. Do you feel your child's possessions are safe at school?
- The parents attending confirmed that is found that some boys' possessions are stolen and that it is a problem, however not a grave concern. They suggested that this behaviour can be adjusted by emphasizing respect for possessions and the need for the continued reminder of the basic values of honesty and accountability. One of the parents suggested that discipline in this regard should be more severe.
 - A locker system is needed and should be introduced in lower grades. Boys can provide lock and key and are allocated a locker. The lockers need not be where their class is.
 - It is commented that parents do not check the boys' possessions, things are just replaced.
 - Possessions are sometimes left lying around and parents must get the boys to check lost and found not just replace it.
- b. Do you feel there is a healthy balance between academics and sport?
- The parents experiences that there is a good balance between sport and academics, however the communication between sport and academic staff regarding sporting fixtures, practices and academic projects is sited as problematic.
 - The experience is that the academic workload during sporting season as excessive. Homework is described as effective and sufficient for the boys. There was a recommendation from one of the parents that the projects should be spread over a longer period and clear communication and planning regarding spreading of projects to be communicated to the parents.
 - All the parents were in agreement that most projects could be completed at school and that the boys should be encouraged to plan ahead.

- Because we offer so many sporting codes we do sometimes have a busy period. A good idea was to start sporting activities at 15h00 to give boys a chance to complete homework.
 - Cultural aspect is good and forms a grounded introduction to cultural activities and music.
 - The boys need to balance their sport and academic.
- c. Do parents show enough support for the school and are parents critical of the school?
- The parents are perceived as very supportive outside the school environment, however it is noted that car park discussions can be critical.
 - The parents are very supportive at sport activities and fixtures.
 - One of the parents suggested that a PTA would be a good forum for parents to give their ideas.
 - The teachers are perceived as very accommodating when concerns are being addressed.
 - Criticism is perceived as fair.
- d. Do you understand the role of the Board of Governors?
- The parents were concerned by the fact that they do not know the Board of Governors.
 - This concern was noted and a suggestion was made that the Board of Governors can become more visible through regular interaction with parents at function and written communication.
 - Clarification was given as to who serves on the Board namely parents, trust, staff, and executive members. This information can be found on the school's website.
 - Parents were interested to know how Board members are elected to serve on the Board.
- e. General

A common thread that was woven throughout the focus group discussion was that effective communication between the Board and parents is lacking. Opportunities for regular interaction should be created and a greater awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the different members on the Board should be made more readily available.

It was reiterated that clear, publicised communication in the Preparatory school remains vital to accommodate the extensive Academic and Sport programme.

7.4 ACADEMIC REPORT

St. Benedict's Preparatory School has always been proud of the academic standard that we as a Staff strives for. Evidence of this is seen in the Opinion Surveys where the standards set by the school can be seen as a considerable strength with almost all (97%) the learners, most of the staff (97%) and parents (99%) agreeing that the school continues to set high standards academically.

Homework is a factor that relates directly to teaching and learning. Learners, parents and teachers are satisfied with the homework that the boys are expected to complete. The school's homework policy encourages daily homework in English, Afrikaans and Mathematics with assignments being set in other learning areas given over suitable time frames. These assignments are to reinforce and /or enrich learning within the learning areas.

With regards to approaching teachers with problems, many of the learners (66%) responded that they found it easy to approach teachers with problems. By comparison, all of the staff (100%) and the majority of parents (89%) responded that the teachers are approachable. This presents a fairly large variance in responses. The boys (95%), however, did feel that their teachers respected and cared for them and that they were encouraged to work at their best.

In keeping with this aspect, almost all (90%) of parents responded that the school keeps them well informed about their son's progress and almost all (96%) of parents responded that they felt welcome and included in most, if not all school activities. Academic reports are sent out three times a year and regular meetings are held with parents regarding academic progress.

7.4.1 FINDINGS FROM CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

a. Methodology

Every member of staff (including the Internal Evaluation Team) underwent classroom observation. The process of conducting the collection of teaching and learning evidence is outlined below:

- The Internal Evaluation Team (IET) made use of a "Classroom Observation Form"
- The team leader briefed the members of the IET, presented the processes and procedures and discussed the "Code of Conduct of the Evaluation team" with all members of staff.
- It was decided that the Subject Head of each learning area would be included in the evaluation.
- The staff was briefed on the process and the need for classroom observation as part of the Quality Assurance process. Confidentiality was assured; the rubric was presented and explained to all staff.

The process followed:

- ✓ Classroom observation occurs on a designated day, convenient for both parties.
- ✓ Brief feedback directly after the lesson.
- ✓ More detailed written feedback a day or two later.
- ✓ Submit findings to the leader of the IET.

b. Findings of Academic Classroom Observations

The four main areas observed are listed below:

1. Classroom Layout
2. Curriculum Assessment
3. Classroom Practice
4. Pastoral Care

The IET was required to comment on each of these aspects as a written commentary. Various findings as recorded are summarized below:

- Teachers are aware of the need to foster good relationships between themselves and the boys in their care.
- Teachers are very aware of the needs of the boys in their care and strive to meet these needs.
- With the introduction of CAPS, all teachers have enthusiastically worked on the implementation of the new curriculum immediately. All Year Plans and Schemes of Work have been up dated as the year progresses.
- Classroom Management takes on different styles as we are dealing with different learning areas and personalities, all methods are conducive to teaching and learning within the particular environment.
- Assessment is continuous, with formal assessment in the form of Cycle Tests and Exams.
- The technology that is available in the classrooms is being used and implemented and will become more popular with teachers as they become more comfortable with the technology.
- We are not yet a fully-fledged “thinking school”, but with the planned training and courses, our aim is to become a school that promotes “scaffolding” (building on previous learning) and “High Order Thinking”

7.5 Cultural Report

- **Music:** The school has formal music lessons from Grades 4 – 7. Extramurally, the boys can take part in the Marimba band, the recorder ensemble and choir. The school choir takes part in competitions and concerts and performs an evensong once a term. Peripatetic music staff is on site to offer the boys tuition in guitar, piano, drums. The new O'Brien block has tuition rooms and a sound proof drum room is also on site. A full time pipe band master has been employed to tutor our novice pipe band in the Preparatory school
- **Drama:** The school has drama as an extra mural. These learners take part in local and NEA Eisteddfods. The drama company, Confident Kids also works from the school. The school puts on biennial productions. These productions allow for every learner to be involved.
- **Public Speaking:** The school is involved in the regional Chatterbox (Speech competition) and Matterbox (Debating). The school also hosts an annual internal Speech Competition.
- **Chess:** The learners take part in the local chess league and Chess practises occur, on site, every Monday afternoon.
- **Robotics:** The can build, create and enter competitions with their robots.
- **Cubs:** The St Benedict's cubs meet on site, every Friday afternoon.
- **Cultural showcase:** The boys are encouraged to show their cultural talents once a term.

7.6 SPORTS REPORT

St Benedict's Preparatory School offers a wide range of sporting codes with quality coaching in a well-equipped environment. The boys are encouraged to participate in multiple codes and are offered the opportunity to develop a range of skills. The integrated sporting programme allows specialised coaching to all boys at St Benedict's as our coaches focus on maximum participation in smaller groups. The response in the opinion survey reflected that both the boys and their parents are satisfied with the sporting codes offer by the school. A total of 90% boys and 86% of the parents expressed their satisfaction in this regard.

It is compulsory at St Benedict's for all boys to participate in two summer and one winter sporting code during the integrated day. We also expect and strongly encourage commitment and participation to as many of the afternoon and team sporting activities as possible. The opinion survey reflected that 98% of the boys indicated that they are involved in activities outside of the classroom which is evident of the high level of participation.

The following codes are offered in a structured and co-ordinated fashion:

RUGBY: Our Rugby structures offer opportunities to as many boys who are keen to play with B teams in every age group. We have achieved excellent results over the past two seasons with our involvement in the Golden Lions Rugby Union. We host an annual U/13 Rugby Festival which allowed us to establish a strong rugby reputation and also offered endless opportunities for interaction between Golden Lions Rugby Union, Golden Lions Primary Schools Referee Association, Schools, boys and spectators.

SOCCKER: This sporting code includes two thirds of our boys from Grade 3 – 7 who participates in activities and matches. We are affiliated to the Johannesburg Primary Schools Football Association and also value our relationships with the local independent schools. We meet by playing Inter School fixtures with all our teams on Saturdays. We host an annual U/13 Soccer Festival which catered for 20 local schools which included under privileged teams from Masimbanbane College situated in the Orange farm area.

SWIMMING AND WATER POLO: These are two of our main sporting codes which allow many boys to participate in weekly swimming practices as they strive to improve their strokes and swimming times. We host internal galas which have always been very exciting for our boys. We participate in the Local Independent Schools' Water polo events and Festivals and our coaches as well as the annual Water polo tour to SACS in Cape Town.

CRICKET AND INDOOR CRICKET: The Cricket Centre affords all boys the opportunity and access to this unique facility as the centre is utilised firstly for cricket coaching during integrated day and afternoon sport sessions. The Cricket centre operates throughout the year, 1st and 3rd term. The cricket season runs from January to March and October to November. Our weekly cricket programme sees 25 cricket matches affording our A and B teams two cricket matches per

week and our C & D teams one match per week. In total we play 200 cricket matches per year from Grade 3 – 7. Our boys have also enjoyed very traditional annual cricket tours in the month of October for the last 7 years as our U/10 A, U/11 A, First and Second teams play against the top cricketing Schools in the Cape Town and Kwazulu Natal provinces.

Other codes offered are tennis, hockey, golf, basketball, rowing as well as athletics and cross country. All these codes are structured and formal league. All boys are encouraged to explore their talents in a competitive and non-competitive environment. Annual festivals are hosted and in all these sporting codes.

8. MAJOR STRENGTHS AND AREAS OF CONCERN

8.1 CURRICULUM

a. Strengths

- The appointment of the Head of Academics to manage the Preparatory Schools' academic affairs ensures proficient planning, preparation and record keeping.
- The curriculum is well structured and in line with CAPS. Curriculum management is effective and guidance is provided through regular interaction with Heads, Subject Heads and Peer interaction and review through Cluster Meetings.
- Learning is integrated and cross curricular teaching takes place. The opinion survey reflects that 95% of the parent body believes that the academics in the school are sound.
- The homework policy is well communicated and homework activities are meaningful and well monitored. An average of 85% of parents responded that their sons receive worthwhile homework.
- The academic staff are readily available to assist the boys and their parents with academic concerns.

b. Concerns:

- There is a small number of staff, around 9%, who believes that classroom sizes are too big. This raises a concern that class size impacts negatively on effective curriculum delivery.
- A perception is shared by some of the teachers that excessive homework support leads to over dependence in the boys. This concern was raised during the staff focus group interviews.

8.2 Learning

a. Strengths:

- The boys are enjoying their learning experiences and are confident, as reflected in the opinion survey in which 92% of the boys indicated that they find their schoolwork interesting.
- Learning is enhanced by the use of multimedia. An average of 91% of boys indicated in the opinion survey that they make use of the internet in class.

- The parents are confident that their sons are making good progress. This sentiment is expressed by 95% of the parents in the opinion survey.
 - Classrooms are well equipped and learning support materials are readily available. The school provides for learning space improvements in the annual budget.
 - Transitional change between grades provide for continuous support and solid grounding, making the learning experience meaningful for the boys.
- b. Concerns:
- There is a perception by some of the boys that the class sizes are too big. Around 15% of the boys sighted that their class is too big. This perception can be translated into negative learning experiences.
 - The boys are aware of their performance with 28% sighted that their teacher is complaining about their work.

8.3 Resources and Support

- a. Strengths:
- The classrooms environment is are well-planned and learner centred.
 - Specialised classrooms including the Computer. Science, Art and Design and Technology rooms provide for effective teaching and learning in the specialised subjects.
 - A well-equipped classroom promotes effective curriculum delivery.
 - Learning support materials are readily available. Language learning is supported with extensive reading books and class readers.
 - Facilities are well maintained and are suitable for the boys' needs. The opinion survey showed that 91% of parents believe that the facilities are good.
- b. Concerns:
- Ventilation and temperature control in some of the classroom was highlighted as a concern during the staff focus group interview.
 - There is an awareness that the school facilities should be more accessible to people with disabilities.

8.4 Ethos

- a. Strengths:
- The appointment of the Head of Pastoral care as well as a full time Chaplain supports the drive to preserve of the schools' ethos.
 - Fortnightly RE meetings ensures for a deliberate and organised programme to uphold the schools catholicity.
 - Gospel values are integrated into all aspects of the schools' programmes.
 - A whole school approach towards a common understanding of our unique identity is promoted by an annual thematic approach. This year we promote the value of caring with the theme "WE CARE".
 - A well-co-ordinated outreach programme leads to a greater involvement of the boys in the community and the awareness to sport and care for the indigent.

- The ethos of the school is enhanced by the schools' interaction with like-minded schools and the broader Catholic school community.
 - The school is racially inclusive and the boys are taught to make friends regardless of their skin colour, gender or disabilities as reflected in the opinion survey with 92% affirming this believe in the opinion survey.
 - Both parents and boys have responded positively to the fact that the teachers are approachable, which echoes the schools drive to create a caring school community. Teachers are aware of the need to foster good relationships between themselves and the boys in their care.
- b. Concerns:
- A concern is raised by staff during the focus group interview that the boy's behaviour is problematic and this sentiment is shared in the opinion survey with 9% the staff experiencing this.
 - Bullying is an on-going concern with 13% of parents, 17% of boys and 22% of staff perceiving this behaviour as prevalent.

8.5 Assessment

- a. Strengths:
- Academic reports are issued per term and regular meetings are held with parents concerning the boys' academic progress.
 - Parents generally feel that they are well informed of their sons' academic performance with around 90% of parents expressing their satisfaction.
 - Assessment is well planned and plans and programmes are communicated to the parents and boys on a termly basis.
 - Continuous assessment is practiced in the form of class test, cycle tests and formal examinations. Different forms of assessment are outlined in the Academic and Assessment Policy.
 - Parents are timeously informed on their sons' progress and the boys are encouraged to rate their own performance during cycle test and exams.
 - A Skills report reflects on the boys' skills and attitudes in each subject.
- b. Concerns:
- The staff focus group interview highlighted a concern that marking and timeous feedback on the boys' performance in class tests and cycle tests are hampered by big class sizes.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The recommendations from cycle 1 report have been worked on and these are the outcomes thus far:

9.1 SUCCESSES

- The changes in the composition of the **Board of Governors** and their inclusive style of governance have brought about a greater sense of understanding and buy in from

the staff. Around 91% of staff indicated that they have a clear understanding of the role of the Board of Governors in the opinion survey.

- **Transformation of the staff and learner representation** toward a more inclusive school community is a key focus area on the school's strategic plan. The establishment of a Transformation and Diversity Committee is evidence of the Commitment of the Board of Governors and School Executive Committee to become more inclusive. Scholarships are awarded to previously disadvantaged boys through the OMI Scholarship programme.
- **Teacher development** is more structured and a Staff Development Programme is in place
- The school provides ample opportunities for the boys to be involved in **Cultural activities** with an extensive tutoring programme for music, art and drama.
- Social interaction and behavioural change as well as pastoral care have been addressed with the appointment of the **Head of Pastoral Care**. Bullying is one of the current concerns that have been high-lighted. The establishment of the Non Bullying Alliance, made up of staff and boys is a strategy that is in place to address this need. The Brave heart badge gives merit to boys with compassion. The full time Chaplain forms part of the school's pastoral care team.
- A rigorous, consultative process has been followed to design a **staff appraisal system** that addresses all areas of operation. The current system proves to be generally accepted by staff with 93% of the staff indicating that they perceive the system as effective.

9.2 CHALLENGES

- The **safety of possessions at school is an area of concern**. Although there are many structures in place it is an on-going challenge high-lighted by parents, staff and the boys. There is a current investigation around implementing a locker system in the College and Preparatory School.

10. CONCLUSION

The core evaluation process with the main focus on Teaching, Learning and Attainments and Functioning of the school proved to be a valuable opportunity for the Preparatory school staff, boys and parents to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses in these areas. The internal evaluation process provided an opportunity for all to reflect on the core values and principles avowed in the mission of the school. This evaluation provides for us the opportunity to continue with the process of looking at ourselves with a critical eye.

This process was approached with a positive attitude and staff were encouraged to embrace all areas of the evaluation with the attitude of self-reflection and as opportunity for growth and development.

The strengths of the Preparatory school were highlighted and celebrated and the weaknesses are perceived as opportunities for growth and development. Both strengths and weaknesses are considered as key indicators in the strategic planning for the school as a whole.

It is noted that a spirit of togetherness is experienced by staff, parents and their sons. This spirit is strengthened by the ethos and charisma of St Benedict's.

Recommendations from this evaluation process are perceived as constructive and will be taken into consideration in the future planning of the curricular, co-curricular and governance of the school.