Guidelines for Schools

Self-Study

2025

OISESA

Office of Independent
Schools Evaluations
Southern Africa

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Copyright Note

1. Introduction

The Office of Independent Schools Evaluations, Southern Africa (OISESA) began operating in May 2022 to re-establish the process of quality assurance in ISASA schools. ISASA's vision, '*Boldly leading the independent schooling sector in its pursuit to provide quality education,*' holds its member schools to high standards and requires them to undertake a whole school self-study every six years. As the ISASA-appointed, independent quality assurance body, OISESA strives to establish positive partnerships with independent schools across Southern Africa, using a set of globally aligned *Standards & Indicators* to facilitate institutional reflection for continuous improvement.

OISESA was tasked by ISASA to run a pilot quality assurance programme across a diverse range of member schools during September and October 2022. The pilot programme focused primarily on the relevance and efficacy of the globally aligned **Standards & Indicators** developed by OISESA and sought to establish which types of evidence best enable authentic and reliable data collection. OISESA mentors gained valuable insights as to what works best for school visits during this phase.

During 2023, OISESA conducted 151 quality assurance visits in schools across Southern Africa. Survey instruments were introduced, and bespoke **Standards & Indicators** were developed for ECD and LSEN schools. More than 165 school visits were completed in 2024.

Ongoing revisions of the programme continue, with input from stakeholder schools and mentors.

2. The Value of Quality Assurance

OISESA believes that all schools can improve and should constantly seek ways of strengthening their educational programme. The quality assurance process promotes strategic thinking and encourages adaptability – vital for independent schools as they navigate the changing landscape of education in Southern Africa.

Research also shows that for any change to be effective, it needs to come from within. The self-study process encourages schools to examine the relevance of their mission and values by using the **Standards & Indicators** to ask important educational questions and review their current practice.

Working through a process of critical reflection and self-evaluation enables schools to affirm and celebrate their strengths and identify areas of vulnerability. Participation in the process also demonstrates the school's willingness to be held professionally accountable and enhances the school's credibility with its stakeholders and the wider community.

The mentors work closely with the school to verify the findings of the self-study and provide broad recommendations for improvement, where appropriate.

3. The Quality Assurance Process

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These are the steps in the six-year quality assurance cycle:

- ISASA notifies member schools at least six months ahead, via email, that a quality assurance visit will take place.
- Schools complete a reply slip to confirm their participation.
- OISESA communicates the exact dates of the visit to the school and shares a link to **the OISESA website** where the necessary resources are available, including the ***Standards & Indicators***, ***Guidelines for Schools,*** and the template for the ***Self-Study Report****.*
- The school confirms these dates with OISESA.
- The mentors are introduced, and they set up an initial online meeting with the head to clarify the process, at least three months before the onsite visit.
- The head, together with the senior leadership team, appoints their quality assurance team and the team leader, and they begin the self-study.
- The mentor works with the team leader to arrange online training for the team, at least two months ahead of the school visit.
- The school completes the ***Survey Information Form***, indicating any changes needed to the surveys. This is sent to info@oisesa.org.
- OISESA sends the live survey links to the school who run a brief check and request any further changes.
- The school sends the OISESA surveys to stakeholders at least six to eight weeks before the visit. Schools may also choose to do the surveys further in advance. Surveys are completed within five days. More detail around the survey process is provided in point 7 below. In addition, the full set of surveys can be found here.
- The school notifies OISESA at info@oisesa.org when they are ready to close the surveys. Schools may request a progress report to gauge the number of responses before closing.
- The school submits their draft self-study report to the mentor at least a week prior to the school visit, together with a link to a digital portfolio of evidence.
- The school prepares and shares the timetable for the mentor visit at least a week prior to the school visit.
- The mentor completes the onsite school visit over three days. If the school is very small, it is possible that two days may suffice. This would be discussed with the mentor.
- The school submits their final self-study report to the mentor two weeks after the onsite visit.
- The mentor may edit the self-study report and return it to the school for verification.
- The mentor completes and shares the mentor's report with the school.
- The mentor submits both reports to OISESA.
- A Quality Assurance Certificate is sent to the school by OISESA. In addition, schools may add the OISESA logo to their website / letterheads.
- This process may take up to six months to complete, from the time of submission of the school's final self-study report. Schools may begin implementing recommendations in the interim but may not publish the reports until they have the final certificate from OISESA.
- OISESA sends the final reports to ISASA.
- Schools complete a feedback survey for OISESA.

- After a period of three years, schools submit a brief interim progress report to OISESA. A template will be provided for this.

4. Terms & Conditions
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4.1 Notification & Deferment

- It is a condition of membership for ISASA schools to undertake the self-study evaluation every six years. ISASA notifies schools of an upcoming visit in the following year, and commissions OISESA to undertake a quality assurance evaluation with each school.
- OISESA confirms the actual dates with each school.
  NOTE: These dates are unfortunately not negotiable.
- Deferment may be requested by new member schools until the fourth year of their membership.
- Where a new head has been appointed, a deferment of six months may be requested. Schools need to communicate directly with ISASA, not OISESA, to request a deferment.

4.2 Confidentiality & Ethics

- During the online training, mentors will discuss the need for confidentiality with the quality assurance team. Confidential information is any information, relating or belonging to the school which is not known to the public and could reasonably be regarded as confidential, and includes information for example about employees, customers, finances, research, and survey data. Discussions in focus groups, interviews and meetings are also to be treated as confidential.
- As this is a self-study process, mentors do not need access to personal data or sensitive information in the shared digital evidence folders. Should the school wish to share any sensitive information, it is recommended that this be done in hard copy format, during the onsite school visit, and retained by the school.
- No individuals will be named in the self-study report or in the mentor's report, other than to outline roles in the quality assurance team.
- Mentors undertake always to act in the best interests of the schools they work with and take reasonable steps to ensure that the school's confidential information is not disclosed or distributed. They agree to certain confidentiality provisions as part of their contract with OISESA.

4.3 Cost

- There is no charge for the online training day or the onsite quality assurance visit, as this forms part of schools' annual ISASA membership fee.
- In addition, OISESA covers any travel and accommodation costs incurred by mentors. However, should a school cancel or change the dates of the onsite visit for any reason, they will be responsible for any additional charges impacting travel and accommodation.

- ISASA contracts OISESA to complete each quality assurance visit, for a finite period. For this reason, mentors are unable to provide ongoing support to schools.
- Should a school need further assistance with implementing some of the recommendations, they are encouraged to reach out to the relevant Regional Director or to the ISASA offices. Contact details are available on the ISASA website.

5. Setting Up the Quality Assurance Team (QAT)

- The process of the self-study should be inclusive and collaborative, using as wide a range of staff members as is feasible. The head, together with the senior leadership team, appoints the members of the quality assurance team.
- The head plays a key role and is included in all aspects of the process – as much as time will allow.
- The head elects a team leader to ensure the smooth running of the process, to arrange focus groups, and to coordinate the evidence collected by the team members for the self-study report. The team leader works closely with the mentor and is the primary point of contact between the school and OISESA.
- The head and the quality assurance team allocate areas of responsibility for evaluating each of the standards. This will vary widely depending on the school's capacity, and may for example involve the whole staff, or only the senior leadership team, or a mix of HODs, grade heads and classroom teachers.
- OISESA encourages the school to use this exercise as a rich professional learning opportunity for as many staff as possible.
- The head elects a report writer who will write and refine the final self-study report, using the template provided by OISESA.

6. Beginning the Self-Study

- The quality assurance team familiarise themselves with the *Standards & Indicators* and meet to discuss the school's alignment with each standard. They may suggest including other focus areas, depending on the mission and the needs of the school, the results from the surveys, as well as recommendations from previous quality assurance reports.
- The **standards** focus on the important aspects of the overall concept, whilst the **indicators** are used to show that a standard has been met. Schools might choose to use different indicators where appropriate or decide that a particular indicator is not relevant. Any variation must be discussed with the mentor and mentioned in the list of evidence provided.
- The standards use general terms like 'effectively' and 'appropriate.' These terms are applied within the context of the school's mission and values, as what applies in one school may not mean the same in another context.
- The school may decide to review their existing mission statement as needed.

7. The Surveys

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7.1 Purpose & Structure of the Surveys

The purpose of the stakeholder surveys is to provide direction for the school's self-study – highlighting strengths and identifying areas of vulnerability. Copies of the survey questions can be found in **Appendix H**, together with an example of a notification letter to parents in **Appendix C**.

There are currently five different opinion surveys:

- The Parent Opinion Survey
- The Staff Opinion Survey
- The Admin Staff Opinion Survey
- The Student Opinion Survey (from Grade 4 upwards)
- The Board Opinion Survey

The full set of surveys is also available in Afrikaans.

There are currently no surveys for service and ground staff. The mentor may request to run a focus group discussion with service staff during the onsite visit.

The parent survey makes provision for parents who have more than one child in a particular phase. Parents with students in more than one phase will be required to complete more than one survey. Parents who are board members and complete that survey must also complete the parent survey.

7.2 Implementation

- The school completes the survey information form (see **Appendix G**), indicating any changes needed to the surveys. This is sent to info@oisesa.org.
- Complex schools complete one separate form for each section of the school.
- Clear information is needed as to how phases are divided, e.g., 000 – 0, Grade 1 – 4, College or Preparatory, and so on.
- There is only one board survey per school.
- OISESA sends the live survey links to the school.
- The school sends the OISESA survey links to stakeholders at least six to eight weeks before the visit. Schools may choose to do the surveys much further in advance.
- Clear communication with stakeholders is needed regarding the surveys to ensure a high level of participation. We recommend sending out additional reminders as well during the process.
- The surveys are designed using Microsoft forms and can easily be answered on either a laptop or a cell phone. The respondent does not need to be a Microsoft user to complete them.
- The staff survey should take around 15 minutes to complete, the admin staff survey 10 minutes, the parent survey 10 minutes, the board survey 10 minutes, and the student survey 5 minutes.
- It is suggested that the surveys are run over a short, intense period (3 – 4 days). It may be useful to set aside slots for staff to complete their survey, e.g., in a staff meeting or during a break, and for students to use an IT lesson or form period to complete their surveys.
- The student survey can be used with students from Grade 4 upwards.
- Teachers may need to provide guidance for younger students.

- The school notifies OISESA via email when they are ready to close the surveys.
- OISESA sends through the results to the head, both as a pie-chart version, and an Excel document which allows greater flexibility in working with data.
- The results are shared with the mentors working with the school and will be treated as confidential.

7.3 Results

- Individual schools will decide how best to use the data provided by the multiple-choice responses as well as by the comments, noting questions that elicit negative or strongly negative responses, as well as those that are positive or strongly positive.
- When interpreting and reporting on the results, it is important to include information about how many respondents completed each survey out of the total number for each group. The higher the percentage of responses, the more credible the findings, for example, 91 of 100 students completed the survey, and so on. A table is provided in the self-study report for this.
- In analyzing the comments, schools would look for themes that may be useful to include in the self-study report or to address in focus groups or further surveys.
- *<u>Note:</u> Please do not share any comments which are of a personal nature.*

8. Collecting Evidence

The quality assurance team begin to gather and review evidence to ascertain the school's alignment with each standard.

- Data collected will consist of both **quantitative** and **qualitative** data. Quantitative data include, for example, the analysis of numerical data like test scores, rating scales, checklists, and surveys. Qualitative data include, for example, observations, interviews, and surveys, and are often more narrative in format. Existing documents and records are also relevant, such as attendance records, minutes of meetings, lesson plans, policies, student portfolios, and so on. A list of examples of evidence is provided in **Appendix A.**
- The quality assurance team is encouraged to use a variety of data collection techniques, to ensure that the evidence provided is authentic and reliable; however, it is not necessary to provide copious amounts of evidence for each standard.
- In addition, evidence collected via an alternative quality assurance process is acceptable, for example, a current NOSA Certificate would suffice, or recent Umalusi accreditation documents, where appropriate.
- Schools are encouraged to provide as much of the evidence as possible in digital format at least one week before the onsite visit. There is not sufficient time for mentors to check all the evidence thoroughly during the visit itself. This will also allow the opportunity for informed questions during the visit.
- It is not necessary for schools to share personal or sensitive information with mentors. For example, a letter from the school's auditors confirming a recent audit would suffice, rather than providing access to financial statements, and so on.

- Mentors will not check every individual policy – a signed statement from the head confirming that the relevant policies are in place and up to date will suffice. However, they may request to see a particular policy if it is needed as part of the discussion for a particular standard.
- Evidence needs to be provided showing the effective implementation of the school's policies.

9. Rating Strengths & Identifying Challenges

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- The quality assurance team meets to identify strengths and challenges and examine ways in which the school might strengthen and improve certain areas of vulnerability. The survey results are helpful here.
- Using the self-study report template, a summary of reflections for each standard should be compiled, together with an overall self-rating for that standard.
- Standards are rated using the following rating scale.

Rating	Description
5	Consistently exceeds expectations
4	Consistently meets expectations
3	Meets most expectations
2	Needs improvement
1	Not achieved yet
N/A	This rating would be discussed with the Mentor and with OISESA before the self-study process

Note: The use of half numbers is acceptable. These are written as 3,5.

Online Training

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- Mentors reach out to heads to set up a date for the online training at least three months prior to the school visit and obtain details of the team leader who will be the primary contact. The online training is run by the mentors.
- Please refer to **Appendix B*: OISESA Guidelines for Online Training*** before the session. A copy is also available for download on the website.
- The purpose of the online training is to establish contact with the quality assurance team and to begin discussing and reviewing the self-study process.
- The session takes around two to three hours, depending on the school's requirements. The school may elect to split this into two separate sessions, in discussion with the mentor.

- It is helpful for the quality assurance team to have read and understood the guideline documents thoroughly, as this reduces the amount of time needed.
- Having printed copies of the *Standards & Indicators,* the *Guidelines for Schools,* and the self-study report template to refer to during the online session is also useful*.*
- The timetable for the onsite visit will be planned to include meetings with members of the team, interviews, class visits, focus groups, and so on. A checklist is provided in Appendix D to assist with drafting the onsite visit timetable.
- The mentor will make a recording of the meeting, with permission, and share it with the school if required.

10. The School Visit

- The mentor undertakes a three-day in-person visit to the school, on the dates stipulated by OISESA. As mentioned above, smaller schools may request a two-day visit.
- During the visit, the mentor will confirm the findings of the self-study report and surveys and verify the school's rating alignment with the *Standards & Indicators*.
- The mentor will visit a small selection of classes to better understand the school's educational programme. Brief verbal feedback will be given to the teacher immediately after the observed lesson; however, the focus is not on individual teachers' performance, rather on *Teaching & Learning* across the school.
- Schools are encouraged to do their own lesson observations before the visit, to ensure effective feedback in the report.
- Mentors use the *Lesson Observation Template* in **Appendix F** as a guide.
- Mentors will not assess the religious curriculum in faith-based schools. However, an understanding of its impact on the school's mission, ethos, culture, and climate, and so on is helpful.
- Interviews, focus groups and meetings will also be held, in discussion with the Quality Assurance Team. Protocols for focus groups are provided in **Appendix E***.*
- The mentor writes a report affirming strengths and making recommendations for improvement once the self-study report is finalised, after the school visit.

11. The Self-Study Report

- ISASA requires a separate self-study report for each membership phase of the school. OISESA allocates a mentor to each membership phase.
- Stand-alone schools will only submit one report.
- Certain sections of the report may be repeated across phases, for example in matters of governance or admissions; however, schools need to ensure that each report respects the nuances of different perspectives in each phase.
- The self-study template provides clear guidelines regarding layout and format.
- In addition, an example of a section of a self-study report is included in **Appendix I**.
- The document is submitted as a Word document to the mentor who may make recommendations and changes before the final version is completed.

- The school's final signed self-study report is submitted as a pdf and no further changes will be made by OISESA.
- The report does not include actual evidence – this is presented in digital folders or in hard copy
- ***NOTE: Schools are encouraged to keep their reports concise, with a more strategic focus, rather than listing every detail. The report should ideally not exceed 35 pages, or in the case of a school with boarding facilities, 40 pages.***

12. Conclusion
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- Once the reports have been submitted to OISESA, and approved, a Quality Assurance Certificate will be emailed to the school within a period of six months.
- Schools may also publish the OISESA logo on their website / letterheads, to signify the completion of the quality assurance process.
- Schools are requested to share feedback with OISESA after the visit to help continue refining and developing the process to best suit the needs of schools in Southern Africa.
- After a period of three years, schools will be required to submit a brief interim report to OISESA, detailing their progress in terms of the recommendations, using the template provided. OISESA will contact schools ahead of this process.

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Appendix A: Examples of Types of Evidence

The following suggestions are merely examples of the type of evidence schools might provide. This list is by no means complete, nor should schools be expected to provide examples of all these types of evidence.

For all standards, the following examples of evidence apply.

- Notes and numerical data from any recent evaluation processes undertaken by the school itself, including focus groups, surveys, and interviews
- OISESA survey results from the board, parents, students, staff, and admin staff.
- OISESA focus group findings
- Examples of email communication with stakeholders

NOTE: **Where a policy is provided as evidence, there must also be reference to the ways in which the policy is implemented, and how the school ensures it is understood by staff, students, and parents.**

1. **Mission**
- Current mission statement (How often is the mission statement reviewed? Is it child friendly?)
- Statement of values / beliefs
- Current admissions policy
- Schedule of fees
- Current Umalusi certificate (confirming legal compliance)
- Example of a parent contract

2. **Governance & Leadership**
- Relevant information about the board, including ways in which board members are elected / evidence of self-evaluation / tenure / training provided
- Minutes of recent meetings
- Communication from the board regarding their activities and decisions
- Annual reports
- Current strategic plan
- Risk management matrix
- Management letter from auditors confirming that the school has the controls and systems in place to manage its finances appropriately
- A copy of signed annual financial statements or declaration of a 'going concern' from auditors to confirm the school's financial sustainability
- A letter from the relevant insurance company regarding adequate insurance cover
- A statement from the head confirming that the necessary policies are in place and reviewed regularly, over a 3 – 5-year period.
- Policies relating to board constitution or MOI; procedure for appointment of head; financial management policies; debt control, succession planning

- Environmental policy; curriculum documents; photographs of environmental projects; certificates from organisations like Green Flag, WESSA
- Initiatives for loadshedding and water supplies

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3. **Culture & Climate**
- Documents relevant to the school's culture and climate, and support structures
- Minutes from Employment Equity and Transformation & Diversity Committee meetings
- Policies relating to anti-discrimination; diversity and inclusion; employment equity; staff recruitment policies and procedures
- Evidence of staff training on issues of diversity and inclusion
- Evidence of effective reporting channels

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4. **Communication**
- Parent code of conduct / Parent contract
- Newsletters
- School magazine
- Website information (including processes for updating website)
- Examples of communication with parents
- Evidence of communication from the board
- Evidence of communication between leadership and staff; between and within different phases of the school
- Marketing communication and strategies
- Staff meeting minutes
- Assemblies
- Student reports
- Examples of communication with former students
- Policies relating to protocols for WhatsApp and other communication channels

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5. **The Education Programme**
   5.1 The Curriculum

- A copy of the curriculum statement
- Evidence of innovative initiatives
- The timetable
- Policies relating to the evaluation, design, and development of learning programmes; subject policies; examinations and assessments; moderation protocols; language of instruction, official languages, and exemptions
- Examples of assessment tools demonstrating student progress
- External exam and other benchmarking results
- Evidence of participation in external user groups / cluster groups / collaboration with other schools
- Effective integration of technology into the curriculum

- Evidence of extension and support, according to students' differing needs

5.2 Teaching & Learning
- Examples of student work: exercise books, tests, photographs, journals, portfolios, digital portfolios, recordings, and so on
- Class visits and observations
- Evidence of collaboration / co-operative group work / 21st century skills in teaching and learning
- Effective use of technology as a tool in the classroom
- Policies relating to learner support; guidelines for teachers; internal strategies for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning

5.3 The Co-Curricular Programme
- The co-curricular programme timetable
- Evidence from the school magazine, newsletter, website, showing activities
- Evidence of community service initiatives
- Policies relating to school excursions and sporting trips

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6. Staffing
- Staff code of conduct / Staff handbook
- Employment contracts
- List of staff qualifications
- A list of recent professional learning opportunities provided to staff
- Policies relating to recruitment; appraisals; staff well-being; grievances; retrenchment; retirement, sexual harassment; disciplinary measures; misconduct, remote work
- Policies relating to the management and mentoring of interns
- Process for onboarding and mentoring of new staff
- Minutes of staff meetings
- Job descriptions for staff
- Evidence of an effective performance appraisal system
- Evidence of a wellness programme / counselling availability / staff well-being activities

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7. Student Well-Being

- Student code of conduct / Student handbook
- Documentation outlining learner support services / counselling and guidance services / other support structures in place
- Evidence of counselling for further education opportunities / subject choices
- Policies relating to behaviour management; discipline; appeals and grievance procedures

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8. Safeguarding
- A statement from the head confirming current employees' compliance with the legal provisions outlined in the *Standards & Indicators*

- Policies: ISASA Child Protection Policy / Safeguarding; tour and camps; digital citizenship, substance abuse
- List of relevant services, authorities, and organisations with contact details
- Evidence of staff training in all aspects of safeguarding
- SACE registrations, Police Clearance, Sexual Offenders' Register; Child Protection Register
- Duty rosters for supervision of students
- Evidence of teaching safeguarding in the curriculum, e.g., Digital Citizenship, Social Media Policy, IT Responsible Usage
- Reporting structures as outlined in the ISASA Child Protection Policy

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9. Health & Safety
- Health and safety officer role
- Documents relating to *Health & Safety*, such as current inspection certificates (NOSA, fire extinguishers, municipal health and safety certificates, safety audit)
- Records of fire drills, evacuation procedures, and other safety protocols
- Minutes of committee meetings
- Crisis management plan
- Management of security companies, cameras, alarms
- Evidence of up-to-date contact information for students and parents
- Provision for medical emergencies
- Policies relating to Health & Safety; critical incidents; lightning; transport, roadworthy inspections, check lists for buses, driver safety checks

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10. Facilities & Infrastructure
- Documented facilities plan
- Maintenance procedures and plans
- Cleaning registers
- Playground audits (e.g., swimming pool access, storage of chemicals and cleaning sandpits, jungle gyms, provision of shade)
- Policies relating to POPIA compliance and evidence of training; data management (assessment records, records of students and former students, etc)
- Photographs / evidence of provision for differently abled people
- Information management system usage and restrictions regarding access

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11. The Boarding Programme
- Polices, handbooks and other material applicable to the boarding programme, as outlined in the *Standards & Indicators* above
- Notes and numerical data from any recent evaluation processes undertaken by the boarding house itself, including focus groups, surveys, and interviews
- OISESA survey results from parents, students, and staff
- OISESA focus group findings

11.1 Culture & Climate

- Evidence of a culture of respect

11.2 Communication

- Boarding House Parent Committee
- Examples of appropriate communication with boarders' parents from the boarding staff
- Minutes of boarding house staff meetings
- Policies relating to replying to complaints; reporting structures; cell phones (including at night); electronic media
- House meetings; announcements in the dining hall, student leaders' coms
- Guidelines for communication with / from academic staff

11.3 Staffing

- List of qualifications of boarding house staff; appropriate experience and age
- Job descriptions for resident boarding house staff
- Appropriate training for stooges / interns if they reside in the boarding house
- Appropriate number of residential staff to ensure adequate supervision

11.4 Well-Being of Boarders

- Evidence of training of leaders and senior students regarding responsibilities, duty of care
- Provision of a buddy/mentor system for juniors
- Evidence of provision for the academic needs of boarders, including study times and other support
- Provision of health care facilities and administering of prescribed medicines for boarders
- Evidence of appropriate leisure time activities
- Evidence of provision for the observance of different religions

11.5 Safeguarding

- A statement from the head of the boarding house confirming that current boarding house staff (and all adults who reside with them), including kitchen staff and cleaners, have undergone rigorous reference, background, and police clearance / criminal record checks
- Evidence of boarding house staff training in all aspects of safeguarding
- Safety provision against bullying, initiation, abuse of power and privileges
- Disciplinary procedures and appropriate sanctions
- Provision for positive rites of passage and induction processes
- Duty rosters for supervision and tracking of boarders; signing out procedures
- Policies relating to POPIA compliance and evidence of training for staff; searches; provision for the safe use of technology in the boarding house
- Reporting structures as outlined in the ISASA Child Protection Policy for students and parents to report concerns
- Provision for the safety and care of possessions

11.6   Health & Safety

- All *Health & Safety* procedures and policies apply

- A crisis management plan for the boarding house
- Evidence of provision for monitoring safety
- Evidence of up-to-date contact information for students and parents
- Provision for medical emergencies
- Provision for other emergencies, including fire drills

11.7   Facilities
- Documented facilities plan
- Maintenance procedures and plans
- Cleaning registers
- Design and layout of ablutions; privacy
- Kitchen facilities – appropriate storage, preparation, serving, washing up areas
- Records of students and former students
- Photographs / evidence of provision for differently abled people
- Information management system usage and restrictions to access

11.8   Catering
- Meal plans and menus
- Expertise sought in developing menus, e.g., dietician
- Evidence of provision for different dietary requirements
- Evidence of feedback channels / food committee regarding the provision of meals
- Supervision of meals – duty staff
- Provision of late / packed meals

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OISESA Guidelines for Online Training

Connecting meaningfully with others in an online environment can be challenging. We ask that you give your full attention to the presenter/s and ensure that you follow these guidelines for online interactions.

- Use your full name as your Zoom or Teams display name for easy identification.
- Camera on; microphone off during the training session.
  Camera off; microphone off during comfort breaks.
- Phone off or on silent. If you must take / make a call, step away from your computer into a different space.
- Please do not eat or engage in other distracting activities while in the meeting. Drinking a beverage is acceptable.
- If asked to give feedback, be brief and mindful of time so that others also get to share.
- Please respond when the presenter tries to communicate with you, either via the chat function or on video.
- Use the chat appropriately. If you would like to contact another participant directly, please use the private message function. rather than sending a message to everyone.
- If possible, ensure that each person uses their own device to attend the meeting. This reduces noise levels and makes it easier to respond to individual questions.
- However, if a school prefers to attend as one group, please check the following:
  - o Check noise levels / acoustics in the room.
  - o Keep background noise and sound echoes to a minimum.
  - o Limit background movement.
  - o Ensure that individual speakers can be identified and clearly heard by the presenter/s.

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Appendix C: Example of a Letter to Parents

Dear Parents

OISESA Quality Assurance Process

Our school has been selected by ISASA for a quality assurance evaluation during [date] this year. The evaluation will be conducted by the Office of Independent Schools Evaluations, Southern Africa (OISESA), an independent organization which specialises in evaluating ISASA member schools.

The evaluation process is guided by a set of globally aligned ***Standards & Indicators,*** covering the school's mission, governance & leadership, sustainability, culture & climate, communication, the education programme, staffing, student wellbeing, safeguarding, health & safety, facilities & infrastructure, [and the boarding programme].

We are in the process of compiling a self-study report ahead of the onsite school visit, examining each of these areas to celebrate what we do well, and to identify areas for improvement. Part of the data collection process involves the administration of stakeholder surveys for parents, staff, students, and the board. Links to the surveys will be shared [via WhatsApp / email] [on …] and can easily be completed on cell phones or on laptops. No log-in is required, to ensure that your responses are completely confidential. The surveys will be closed on [date].

We really appreciate your taking the time to complete the parent survey – your feedback will help us refine our focus on areas that need attention and ensure we continue improving our practice.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the OISESA quality assurance visit or the parent survey, please do not hesitate to contact our school office [provide details].

Kind regards

Joanne Bloggs

Executive Head

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Appendix D: Checklist for the Onsite Visit

The following points may be useful when drawing up the school visit timetable.

- The mentor needs to meet with the person/people responsible for each standard to go through evidence and discuss the report. Each meeting should be about 30 – 45 mins long. For the long standards – for example, Standard 4 (The Education Programme) and Standard 2 (Governance & Leadership) - an hour each may be necessary.
- It is important for the mentor to meet with the head and/or the senior leadership team / quality assurance team early on the first day of the visit.
- There should be three to four focus group meetings (teaching staff, service staff, students, parents, boarders).
- The mentor will create the questions in consultation with the team leader and once the team leader has confirmed what the topics will be, at least a day or two in advance.
- The mentor needs to observe about four lessons during the visit, preferably across a range of grades and subjects.
- A meeting is needed with the board chair or a member of the board. This can be held online, if necessary, but face-to-face is preferable.
- A meeting is needed with the bursar / financial manager to discuss sustainability and financial processes.
- A meeting is needed towards the end of the last day with the team leader and/or the entire quality assurance team to discuss the way forward.
- Please ensure at least one or two short breaks (15 – 20 mins) each day to allow the mentor time to catch their breath and reflect.

Optional

- A tour of the school, with one or two of senior pupils, if possible.
- An introduction to the staff soon after arrival.
- Access to any activities that would give an insight into the ethos of the school, e.g. assemblies, religious services, cultural or sporting events.
- Some of the tea or lunch breaks should be spent in the staff room to meet and socialise with the staff.
- If a small room is available for the mentor's use during the visit, this would be appreciated. It makes it easier to hold confidential meetings.

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Appendix E: Protocol for Focus Groups

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1. *Purpose, Scope & Size*

- The purpose of a focus group is to explore different perspectives and opinions to obtain qualitative information about a topic. During the visit, mentors will conduct 3 – 4 focus groups.
- The school sets up the focus groups and chooses the participants. It is important for the sample to be as representative as possible, to ensure authenticity and to prevent bias.
- If possible, participants should not hold more than one role in the school. e.g., a board member and a parent, or a staff member and a parent, and so on.
- Schools should provide a list of names of the participants, and an explanation of their roles in the school.
- The suggested size of a focus group is between 8 – 12 people.
- The survey results and the self-study report will help schools determine their areas of focus. Schools may choose to run some focus groups ahead of the school visit to refine their findings. Accurate minutes of these meetings must be kept.
- The relevant information that is gathered in the focus group will be used in the school's self-study report where relevant. Any solutions suggested during the meeting will be reviewed by management and may or may not form part of the school's development plan in the future.

2. *Planning & Recording*

- The mentor confirms the time and venue for the focus group with the QAT leader.
- The questions asked will be drawn up in advance by the mentor in consultation with the QAT leader.
- The school may choose to run a virtual focus group, e.g., with parents. The links for this should be shared well in advance, together with several reminders, to secure good attendance.
- A staff member must be appointed to record the minutes of the meeting. Consent must be obtained from participants before proceeding.

3. *Setting the Ground Rules*

The following ground rules will be explained by the mentor to all participants at the start of the focus group meeting. These rules are in place to provide a safe structure and to establish a feeling of trust in the process.

- A time limit will be set, and the group needs to adhere to that limit.
- All participants are asked to turn off their cell phones, or to put them on silent, for the duration of the meeting.
- Matters discussed during the meeting must be treated as completely confidential. No one may repeat any opinions or issues raised in the meeting. The discussion forum must provide a safe space for participants to share their opinions.
- The meeting must be recorded, with the participants' permission, so that the school can refer to anything said if they require greater detail than provided in the minutes. No other recordings of the meeting may be made.

- Everyone is encouraged to participate actively, to take turns speaking, to avoid private side conversations, and to treat everyone's contribution with respect. Please encourage the sharing of opinions, even if they differ from that of others – it is important to gather all points of view.
- Since the purpose of the meeting is to gather general information about a key focus area, participants are asked not to mention any individuals by name. Personal attacks on individuals undermine the integrity of the process. Any personal attacks will be stopped, and the conversation will be redirected.

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Appendix F: Example of a Lesson Observation Form

A copy of this form can be downloaded from the OISESA website.

OISESA Office of Independent Schools Evaluations Southern Africa	
Lesson Observation Form	
School	**Date**
Teacher	**Grade**
Subject	**No. of Students**
Topic:	
Planning & Context	
The lesson aligns with curriculum planning.	
The lesson is age-appropriate and carefully planned.	
Clear learning goals are communicated at the outset.	

Students are actively engaged and encouraged to participate.	
Students are encouraged to work collaboratively.	
A culture of respect is evident in classroom interactions.	
The use of technology enhances learning in the classroom.	
Feedback & Assessment	
Meaningful feedback is provided to students to strengthen learning outcomes.	
There is evidence of differentiation to meet varied learning needs.	
A variety of assessment strategies are used where appropriate.	
Students' workbooks show evidence of accurate marking and positive feedback.	

Appendix G: Survey Information Form

A Word version of this form can be downloaded from the OISESA website. Once completed, please email it to info@oisesa.org.

OISESA
Office of Independent
Schools Evaluations
Southern Africa

Survey Information Form

Please complete one form for each phase of the school,
e.g., the high school, the preparatory school and the pre-school.

Full Name of the School[1] e.g., Blue Hills Preparatory School	
Grades to be included in this set of surveys e.g., Grades 8 – 12	
Parent Opinion Survey (Please include the whole question and number for changes.)	
Changes to questions	
Questions to be omitted / Additional questions	
Staff Opinion Survey (Please include the whole question and number for changes.)	
Changes to questions	
Questions to be omitted / Additional questions	
Admin Staff Opinion Survey (Please include the whole question and number for changes.)	
Changes to questions	
Questions to be omitted / Additional questions	

Student Opinion Survey (Grade 4 upwards) (Please include the whole question and number for changes.)	
Changes to questions	
Questions to be omitted / Additional questions	
Board Opinion Survey (only one per whole school) (Please include the whole question and number for changes.)	
Changes to questions	
Questions to be omitted / Additional questions	

Signed .... Date ....

Appendix H: Surveys

OISESA Admin Staff Opinion Survey

Thank you for participating in this opinion survey. Your answers will help the school to celebrate what it does well and to identify areas for improvement.

- The survey is anonymous.
- This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.
- The rating scale provided is:
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - Neither Agree nor Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree
    - I don't know.
- A section for additional comments is provided at the end of the survey.

Mission

1. I understand the school's mission.
2. The school's mission is supported by the school's stakeholders.

Governance & Leadership, Sustainability

3. The school has an effective leadership structure. (The Head and the Senior Leadership Team)
4. The board acts in the best interests of the school.
5. The board communicates effectively and appropriately with the school community.
6. The school's policies reflect the core values of the school.
7. The school promotes the importance of environmental sustainability.

Culture & Climate

8. The school promotes a culture of diversity and inclusion of administrative staff.
9. The school promotes a culture of diversity and inclusion of students and families.
10. A culture of respect underpins interactions within the school community.
11. I am treated with respect by the Head of School and the senior management of the school.
12. I am treated with respect by the teaching staff.
13. I am treated with respect by the students.

14. I am treated with respect by the parents.
15. I feel included in the life of the school.
16. The school trains staff in current topics related to racism, sexism, discrimination, bias and other aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
17. The school has processes in place to recruit, hire, and support a diverse staff.

Communication

18. The school communicates important information clearly and effectively with me.
19. The school ensures I am aware of all communication going out to stakeholders so that I can answer questions effectively.
20. The school values constructive feedback.
21. There are clear and effective reporting structures for me to raise any concerns.
22. Appropriate feedback is provided should I raise any concerns.

Staffing

23. I have the materials, resources, and equipment to do my job effectively.
24. I have adequate time to complete my job effectively.
25. The hours I am expected to work are realistic.
26. I am able to take leave at appropriate times during holidays / term time.
27. There is an effective performance management process which provides opportunities for me to improve.
28. I am encouraged to improve the skills I need to do my job effectively.
29. The school supports the well-being of staff.
30. There is a code of conduct in place for all staff which complies with the ISASA Code of Conduct.

Facilities & Infrastructure

31. The school is a safe, well-organised place.
32. The school's facilities are clean and well-maintained.
33. The school's information management systems are effective.

Comments

34. Please add any additional comments here.

_____
_____
_____
_____

OISESA Board Opinion Survey

Thank you for participating in this Board Opinion Survey. Your answers will help the school to celebrate what it does well and to identify areas for improvement.

- The survey is anonymous.
- This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.
- The rating scale provided is:
  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Neither Agree nor Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - I don't know.
- A section for additional comments is provided at the end of the survey.

_____

Mission

1. The school's mission is clearly communicated to the community.
2. The mission effectively guides the school's educational programme, planning and decision making. The school does what it says it does.

Governance: The Board

3. The board is strategic in planning for the school's future, and this planning aligns with the mission of the school.
4. The board maintains a collaborative and effective working partnership with the head of the school.
5. The board delegates the operational and educational functions of the school to the head of the school.
6. The board has both a written contract and a performance contract with the head and regularly communicates their expectations to the head.
7. The board communicates strategic decisions effectively and appropriately with the school community.
8. There is a clearly communicated policy which governs the appointment and tenure of board members.
9. The board provides an orientation programme for new board members.
10. Board members have a clear understanding of the board's role and of individual expectations and duties, and always act in the best interests of the school.

11. The board engages in training and education related to best practices for the governance of an independent school.
12. The board has processes which ensure that it operates efficiently and effectively.
13. The board effectively maintains its fiduciary responsibility and engages an independent accounting firm to conduct an annual audit or review of the school's financial statements and practices.
14. The board has appropriate policies to manage conflicts of interest.

Leadership (The Head and the Senior Leadership Team)

15. The school has an effective leadership structure.
16. The board supports the head of the school to provide appropriate leadership and guidance.
17. The school plans effectively for leadership development and succession.
18. Policies are reviewed and updated periodically.

Sustainability

19. There is sound management of finances, ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the school.
20. Appropriate financial controls are in place to ensure sound management of the financial resources of the school.
21. The school has adequate insurance coverage and meets the minimum requirements to qualify for the ISASA umbrella insurance.
22. The school's risk management plan caters effectively for continuity and stability through periods of crisis.

Culture & Climate

23. The school promotes a culture of diversity and inclusion of students, staff, and families.
24. A culture of respect underpins interactions within the school community.

_____

Comments

25. Please add any additional comments here.

_____
_____
_____

_____

OISESA Parent Opinion Survey

Thank you for participating in this Parent Opinion Survey. Your answers will help the school to celebrate what it does well and to identify areas for improvement.

- The survey is anonymous.
- This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.
- The rating scale provided is:
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - Disagree
    - Neither Agree nor Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree
    - I don't know.
- A section for additional comments is provided at the end of the survey.

Mission

1. The school's mission is clearly communicated to the community.
2. The mission effectively guides the school's educational programme, planning and decision making. The school does what it says it does.
3. The school's admissions process is ethical and transparent.

Governance & Leadership, Sustainability

4. The school has an effective leadership structure. (The Head and the Senior Leadership Team)
5. The leadership team is committed to innovation and continuous improvement.
6. The board acts in the best interests of the school.
7. The school's policies reflect the core values of the school.
8. Policies are implemented fairly.
9. The school promotes the importance of environmental sustainability.

Culture & Climate

10. The school promotes a culture of diversity and inclusion of students, staff, and families.
11. A culture of respect underpins interactions within the school community.
12. I feel welcome in the school.

Communication

13. The school communicates important information clearly and effectively with me.
14. The school provides regular, meaningful feedback about my child's progress and well-being.
15. The school values constructive feedback.
16. There are clear and effective reporting structures for me to raise any concerns.
17. Appropriate feedback is provided should I raise any concerns.
18. I am aware of the school's code of conduct for parents.

The Education Programme & Staffing

19. The objectives of the school's curriculum are clearly communicated.
20. The school's academic programme meets the needs of my child.
21. The school's sports programme meets the needs of my child.
22. The school's cultural programme meets the needs of my child.
23. My child's teachers provide a positive learning experience for them.
24. My child's teachers encourage their growth and development.
25. The school maintains its commitment to manageable class sizes.

Student Well-Being

26. My child is happy at school.
27. The school supports the well-being of my child.
28. There are clear and effective reporting structures in place for my child to report any concerns.

Safeguarding

29. The school has safeguarding policies and procedures to protect students from harm.
30. The school provides appropriate adult supervision during school hours and on any trips and excursions.
31. The school teaches my child strategies for their personal safety and protection, including the importance of digital citizenship.

Facilities and Infrastructure

32. The school is a safe, well-organised place.
33. The school's facilities are clean and well-maintained.

The Boarding Programme Only applicable to schools with boarding

34. **If this section does not apply to you, please do not complete it.**
35. The school's boarding programme provides a positive, balanced, and enriching experience for my child.
36. My child is happy in the boarding house.
37. The boarding house staff support the well-being of my child.
38. The boarding house has safeguarding policies and procedures to protect my child from harm.
39. There is appropriate adult supervision at all times.
40. Boarding house staff communicate important information clearly and effectively with me.
41. There are clear and effective reporting structures for me to raise any concerns.
42. The boarding house is a safe, well-organised space.

43. The boarding house facilities are clean and well-maintained.

_____

Comments

44. Please add any additional comments here.

_____
_____
_____

_____

Year Group Information

This section will be adapted per school

My child is in the following year group. Tick more than one answer if applicable.

- o Grade 000
- o Grade 00
- o Grade 0
- o Grade 1
- o Grade 2
- o Grade 3
- o Grade 4
- o Grade 5
- o Grade 6
- o Grade 7
- o Grade 8
- o Grade 9
- o Grade 10
- o Grade 11
- o Grade 12
- o I would rather not say

_____

OISESA Staff Opinion Survey

Thank you for participating in this Staff Opinion Survey. Your answers will help the school to celebrate what it does well and to identify areas for improvement.

- The survey is anonymous.
- This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.
- The rating scale provided is:
  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Neither Agree nor Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - I don't know.
- A section for additional comments is provided at the end of the survey.

Mission

1. I understand the school's mission.
2. The school's mission is supported by the school's stakeholders.
3. The school's mission effectively guides the school's educational programme, planning and decision making. The school does what it says it does.
4. The school's admissions process is ethical, and transparent.
5. The school endeavours to meet the diverse needs of students accepted for admission.

Governance & Leadership, Sustainability

6. The school has an effective leadership structure. (The Head and the Senior Leadership Team)
7. The leadership team is committed to innovation and continuous improvement.
8. The board acts in the best interests of the school.
9. The board communicates effectively and appropriately with the school community.
10. The school's policies reflect the core values of the school.
11. Policies are reviewed and updated regularly.
12. Policies are implemented fairly.
13. The school promotes the importance of environmental sustainability.

Culture & Climate

14. The school promotes a culture of diversity and inclusion of staff.
15. The school promotes a culture of diversity and inclusion of students and families.
16. A culture of respect underpins interactions within the school community.
17. I am treated with respect by my colleagues.
18. I am respected as a professional by my students.
19. The school trains staff in current topics related to racism, sexism, discrimination, bias and other aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
20. The school has processes in place to recruit, hire, and support a diverse staff.

Communication

21. The school communicates important information clearly and effectively with me.
22. The school values constructive feedback.
23. There are clear and effective reporting structures for me to raise any concerns.
24. Appropriate feedback is provided should I raise any concerns.

The Education Programme: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning

25. The objectives of the school's curriculum are clearly communicated.
26. The curriculum is relevant, dynamic, and innovative.
27. There is effective provision for the learning of different official languages.
28. The school's academic programme meets the needs of my students.
29. I have the materials, resources, and equipment to do my job effectively.
30. The school has the capacity to implement a variety of effective learning formats.
31. The school's achievements in various external examinations meet stakeholders' expectations.
32. I use a variety of assessment strategies to affirm and evaluate student learning accurately.

The Co-Curricular Programme

33. The school's sports programme meets the needs of my students.
34. The school's cultural programme meets the needs of my students.
35. Opportunities are provided for students to engage in age-appropriate community service.

Student Well Being

36. Students are happy at this school.
37. The school supports the well-being of its students.
38. There are clear and effective reporting structures in place for students to report incidents.

Safeguarding

39. The school has safeguarding policies and procedures in place to protect students from harm.
40. The school provides appropriate adult supervision during school hours and on any trips and excursions.
41. Teachers strive to develop students' understanding of strategies for their personal safety and protection, including the importance of digital citizenship.

Staffing

42. I am encouraged to improve my own professional learning.
43. There is an effective performance management process which provides opportunities for me to improve.
44. Staff are appropriately included in decision-making.
45. The school supports the well-being of staff.
46. There is a code of conduct in place for all staff which complies with the ISASA Code of Conduct.

Facilities & Infrastructure

47. The school is a safe, well-organised place.
48. The school's facilities are clean and well-maintained.
49. The school's information management systems are effective.

The Boarding Programme (Only applicable to schools with boarding)

If this section does not apply to you, please leave it out.

50. The school's boarding programme provides a positive, balanced, and enriching experience for students.
51. A culture of respect underpins all interactions in the boarding house.
52. Students are happy in the boarding house.
53. The boarding house staff support the well-being of students.
54. The boarding house has safeguarding policies and procedures to protect students from bullying, initiations, and the abuse of power and privileges.
55. Provision is made for positive rites of passage and induction processes.
56. Disciplinary procedures and appropriate sanctions are clear and applied fairly.
57. There is appropriate adult supervision at all times.
58. Provision is made for the safe use of technology in the boarding house.
59. There are clear communication lines between parents and boarding house staff.
60. There are clear and effective reporting structures for me to raise any concerns.
61. Accommodation and facilities are secure and are age and gender appropriate to meet the needs of students.
62. The boarding house facilities are clean and well-maintained.
63. Meals provided are adequate in terms of nutrition, quantity, quality, choice, and variety.

Comments

64. Please add any additional comments here.

_____
_____
_____

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65. I work in the following phase/s in the school. Tick more than one answer if applicable.

This section can be adapted per school.

- o Grades 000, 00 ,0
- o Foundation Phase: Grades 1 - 3
- o Intermediate Phase: Grades 4 - 6
- o Senior Phase: Grades 7 - 9
- o FET: Grades 10 - 12
- o I would rather not say

OISESA Student Opinion Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your answers will help the school to celebrate what it does well and to identify areas for improvement.

- The survey is anonymous.
- This survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.
- The rating scale provided is:
  - o Strongly Agree
  - o Agree
  - o Neither Agree nor Disagree
  - o Disagree
  - o Strongly Disagree
- I don't know. A section for additional comments is provided at the end of the survey.

_____

1. I understand the school's mission.
2. The school rules are applied fairly.
3. I am treated with respect by my teachers.
4. I am treated with respect by other students.
5. The school's academic classes meet my needs.
6. The school's sports activities meet my needs.
7. The school's cultural activities meet my needs.
8. My teachers support and encourage my learning.

9. I am encouraged to think critically and participate in lessons.
10. There are ways in which I can get involved in community service.
11. The school teaches me about the importance of protecting the environment.
12. I am happy at my school.
13. I have good friends at school.
14. The school supports the well-being of all students.
15. There are teachers I can approach for help and advice.
16. There are teachers present to supervise me during the school day and on school outings and trips.
17. I know how to report an incident if something worries me.
18. The school is a safe, well-organised place.
19. The school's facilities are clean and well-maintained.

The Boarding Programme

If this section does not apply to you, please leave it out.

20. I am treated with respect by staff in the boarding house.
21. I am treated with respect by other students in the boarding house.
22. The boarding house supports my academic needs.
23. I am looked after in the boarding house when I am not well.
24. I am happy in the boarding house
25. I feel safe in the boarding house.
26. Rules are applied fairly in the boarding house.
27. I know how to report an incident if something worries me.
28. The boarding house facilities are clean and well-maintained.
29. The meals provided in the boarding house meet my needs.

_____

Comments

30. Please add any additional comments here.

_____
_____

_____

Year Group Information

31. I am in the following year group:

    This section can be adapted per school.
    o   Grade 4

    o   Grade 5

    o   Grade 6

    o   Grade 7

    o   Grade 8

- o Grade 9
- o Grade 10
- o Grade 11
- o Grade 12
- o I'd rather not say

_____

Appendix I: Sample of Self-Study Report

This is purely an example of the type of information included in the self-study. Schools are encouraged to present their findings in ways that apply appropriately to their own particular environment.

Culture & Climate

3. The school fosters a culture of diversity and inclusion of students, families, and staff and recognises their fundamental human rights and dignity, which is consistent with the Bill of Rights, and aligns with the school's mission.

School's Self-Study Rating 3	Final Rating 3,5

Evidence

- *Policies and Documents*
    - Anti-Discrimination Policy
    - Hair Policy
    - Minutes from the school's Transformation and Diversity Committee meetings
    - Curriculum statement incorporating examples of change

- *Communication with the Community*
    - A recent newsletter article addressing the importance of diversity and inclusion (date)
    - Invitation to a Parent Conversations Evening (date)

- *Professional Learning Programmes*
    - Evidence of senior staff attending the recent SATISA conference and sharing their learning with colleagues in a staff meeting, with a particular focus on transgender issues
    - Evidence of an external speaker workshop entitled 'Decolonising the Curriculum'

- *Meetings and Focus Groups*
    - Minutes of a pre-visit focus group held with students to discuss the current school climate and culture (dates)
    - Minutes of a pre-visit focus group held with parents to discuss the current school climate and culture (Dates)

Summary of findings

Bluehills College decided to focus particularly on this standard, as it is one that has not been evaluated before, and survey results from parents and from students indicated a need for further research into this standard. The school dealt with a challenging racial incident two years ago, and the senior leadership team have worked hard to establish effective structures to address issues before they arise.

The Transformation and Diversity Committee refined the school's Anti-Discrimination Policy to incorporate elements of the Anti-Racism Statement, and the Equity Policy shared by ISASA. Evidence of the steps involved are outlined in the minutes. Changes have also been made to the school's Hair Policy to recognise cultural differences.

A new Head of Transformation and Development has been appointed, and they have established the Transformation & Diversity Committee with representatives from all stakeholder groups. The school's staff demographics are not where they should be, and this remains a key focus of the school's strategic planning.

The staff professional learning programme has included several workshops dealing with racism, transgender issues, and the importance of decolonising the academic curriculum. Examples of resulting curriculum change include choice of literature setworks and appropriate topics chosen in the History syllabus. These workshops have proved beneficial, raising awareness of the need for inclusivity.

The student focus group raised the issue of more inclusive chapel services and the need for a more effective reporting structure to address any incidents of discrimination. The main findings of the parent focus group concentrated on the new hair policy which they feel still needs revising, and on the food served at school functions which appears not to cater for diverse cultural needs.

It is important to note that there was also a good deal of positive feedback in both focus groups about the changes the school has made over the past two years.

Commendations

- The school's policies are up to date and take cognisance of recent recommendations from ISASA.
- The appointment of a head of transformation and diversity has enabled a deep focus in this area.
- The staff professional learning programme is unique and has been effective in encouraging discussions about race and gender equality.
- Changes to the curriculum have been effective in attempting to decolonise some of the content taught in classrooms, whilst still retaining a global perspective.
- Communication with the community around matters relating to *Culture & Climate* is particularly good.
- Parent conversations evenings have proved worthwhile in opening up discussions about race and addressing concerns in a safe and collaborative environment.

Recommendations

- The school needs to continue recruiting diverse staff in new positions, particularly at the decision-making level.
- Reporting structures for students need revising.

- Chapel services need to consider being more inclusive of different languages and cultures.
- Whilst it has been revised recently, the Hair Policy needs further discussion, including parents.
- Consultation with stakeholders is needed to ensure food served at functions meets diverse cultural needs.

Contact details for OISESA

Email: info@oisesa.org

Phone: 010 1572317