

**Standards & Indicators
for
Quality Assurance**

LSEN Schools

2025



OISESA

Office of Independent
Schools Evaluations
Southern Africa

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Mission

1. The school has a clear and accessible mission which guides the school's admissions, educational programme, planning, and decision making.

- 1.1. The mission is supported by the school's stakeholders.
- 1.2 The school periodically reviews its mission.
- 1.3 There is an ethical and transparent admissions process.
- 1.4 The school endeavours to meet the diverse needs of all students accepted for admission. Should the school not be able to do so, they will assist parents in finding an alternative school.
- 1.5 The school complies with all applicable laws.
- 1.6 The school values feedback and is committed to institutional improvement and to the process of quality assurance provided by OISESA.

Governance & Leadership

2. The school has an effective leadership structure and an appropriate form of governance that assures the school remains true to its mission and that it has the necessary resources to ensure its long-term sustainability.

2.1 The Board

- 2.1.1 The board is strategic in planning for the school's future, and this planning aligns with the mission of the school.
- 2.1.2 The board maintains a collaborative and effective working partnership with the head of the school.
- 2.1.3 The board delegates the operational and educational functions of the school to the head of the school.
- 2.1.4 The board has both a written contract and a performance contract with the head and regularly communicates their expectations to the head.
- 2.1.5 The board communicates effectively and appropriately with the school community.
- 2.1.6 There is a clearly communicated policy which governs the appointment and tenure of board members.
- 2.1.7 The board provides an orientation programme for new board members.
- 2.1.8 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.

- 2.1.9 The board engages in training and education related to best practices for school governance.
- 2.1.10 The board has processes which ensure that it operates efficiently and effectively.
- 2.1.11 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.
- 2.1.12 The board has appropriate policies to manage conflicts of interest.

2.2 Leadership (The Head and the Senior Leadership Team)

- 2.2.1 The school has an effective leadership structure.
- 2.2.2 The head of the school provides appropriate leadership and guidance.
- 2.2.3 The leadership team critically assesses the effectiveness of current practices and is committed to innovation and continuous improvement.
- 2.2.4 The school plans effectively for leadership development and succession.
- 2.2.5 Policies are reviewed and updated periodically.

2.3 Sustainability

Financial

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

Environmental

- 2.3.5 The school actively promotes the importance of environmental sustainability and seeks ways of improving environmental stewardship.

Culture & Climate

3. The school fosters a culture of diversity¹ 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.

- 3.1 As an ISASA member, the school is committed to a democratic, non-discriminatory society and a school community based on fairness and diversity. (This is on the membership certificate.)
- 3.2 Principles of diversity and inclusion are defined and incorporated into the school's educational programme, policies, and decision making at both the operational and governance levels.
- 3.3 The school articulates the importance of diversity and inclusion to its staff, students, and community.
- 3.4 A culture of respect underpins interactions within the school community.
- 3.5 The school ensures an equitable, inclusive, safe, and just environment for its students, staff, and families, and one which creates a sense of belonging.
- 3.6 Staff are regularly trained in current topics, language, and academic content related to racism, sexism, discrimination, bias and other aspects of transformation, diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- 3.7 The school has processes in place to recruit, hire, and support a diverse staff at all levels.

Communication

4. The school communicates regularly and effectively with its community.

- 4.1 There is a code of conduct in place for parents, outlining expectations in terms of responsibilities, respectful interactions, and behaviour.
- 4.2 The school communicates regularly with its stakeholders about its mission, operations, as well as its education and co-curricular programmes.
- 4.3 The school regularly reviews the content and effectiveness of its communication platforms, including but not limited to the website and social media pages, should it make use of them.

¹ "Human diversity refers to differences among groups and individuals based on their race, gender, religion, culture, language, national origin, disability status, socio-economic status, age, ideology, sexual orientation, personality and life experience". *A Guide to Effective School Transformation and Diversity Management* (p 13) refers to the ISASA Anti-Racism Statement for details stipulated in Constitutions of the countries in which it has member schools: South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, eSwatini, Zambia, Botswana, Mauritius, Angola, and Mozambique. (p 2)

- 4.4 Regular meaningful feedback is provided to parents about students' progress and well-being.
- 4.5 Regular parent-teacher meetings are held to keep parents apprised of students' progress.
- 4.6 The school values constructive feedback and there are clear reporting structures in place for parents to raise any concerns.

The Education Programme

5. The school provides a documented education programme which aligns with the mission of the school and meets the needs of its students.

5.1 The Curriculum

- 5.1.1 The school clearly articulates the objectives of its curriculum to its stakeholders.
- 5.1.2 The curriculum is relevant, dynamic, and innovative, and informed by relevant research in remedial and special needs education.
- 5.1.3 The implementation of the curriculum is reviewed regularly.
- 5.1.4 There is evidence of effective collaboration in curriculum planning across grades and phases.
- 5.1.5 There is effective provision for the learning of different official languages, according to the school's context.
- 5.1.6 Teachers and therapists make use of various benchmarking initiatives, user groups and other resources to improve and strengthen their practice.
- 5.1.7 Technology is integrated effectively into the curriculum, and teachers and therapists are provided training to stay abreast of new trends, including the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- 5.1.8 The school has the capacity to implement a variety of effective learning formats as appropriate, including face-to-face, blended, and online learning.
- 5.1.9 The school's achievements in external examinations or school-leaving examinations meet stakeholders' expectations.

5.2 Teaching & Learning

- 5.2.1 Teachers and therapists have thorough subject knowledge, and they can apply developmentally appropriate pedagogical approaches for the phases they teach.
- 5.2.2 Lessons and activities are carefully planned and designed to encourage active student engagement and participation.
- 5.2.3 Teaching practices are reviewed regularly.

- 5.2.4 Lessons and activities are differentiated to meet the needs of all students.
- 5.2.5 Lessons and activities incorporate key 21st century concepts such as global citizenship, critical thinking, collaboration, agency in learning, and environmental sustainability.
- 5.2.6 The school has sufficient instructional materials, resources, and equipment to support the goals of the education programme.
- 5.2.7 Class sizes are manageable and align with the school's mission statement.
- 5.2.8 Teachers and therapists use a variety of assessment strategies to affirm and evaluate student learning and development.
- 5.2.9 Regular meaningful feedback is provided to students to improve learning outcomes.

5.3 The Co-Curricular Programme

- 5.3.1 Time is allocated appropriately to academic, sporting, cultural, [and spiritual] activities, according to the school's mission.
- 5.3.2 The school offers an appropriate co-curricular programme which incorporates a variety of sporting, cultural and other activities.
- 5.3.3 Opportunities are provided for students to engage in age-appropriate community service, where possible.

Staffing

6. The school is appropriately staffed to meet the requirements of the school's educational programme, operational requirements, and co-curricular programme.

- 6.1 There is a code of conduct in place for all staff, outlining roles, responsibilities, and expectations in terms of behaviour and respect for others, and which complies with the ISASA Code of Conduct.
- 6.2 Staff are appropriately qualified to fulfil their roles.
- 6.3 The school encourages teachers and therapists to pursue professional learning opportunities which align with the school's strategic academic goals.
- 6.4 In addition, teachers and therapists strive to improve their own professional learning, seeking out relevant courses, conferences, and other opportunities to learn, including reading relevant professional literature.
- 6.5 Staff have clear job descriptions and understand their key performance indicators.
- 6.6 There is evidence of an effective performance management process, which encourages self-reflection and provides opportunities for improvement.

- 6.7 The school supports the well-being of staff, including their social, mental, physical, and emotional health.
- 6.8 Staff are appropriately included in decision-making.

Student Well-Being

Student well-being refers to the overall health of a student, including their social, mental, physical, and emotional health.

7. The school supports the well-being of all students, including their academic needs and pastoral care, to ensure a positive school experience.

- 7.1 There is a clearly communicated code of conduct in place for all students, outlining expectations in terms of appropriate behaviour, manners, and respect for self and others.
- 7.2 The school is committed to all students achieving their academic potential and provides appropriate assistance or referral to support specialists, where necessary.
- 7.3 The school provides appropriate counselling and support services for students who may experience difficulties with mental health or well-being; or can refer students for external help, including suggesting online options for students should those services not be available on site.
- 7.4 The school provides appropriate counselling for further education opportunities for students at the relevant exit levels.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding refers to the process of protecting children from all forms of harm, abuse, or neglect.

8. The school is committed to maintaining a safe environment to protect students from harm.

- 8.1 The school has documented safeguarding policies and procedures which align with the ISASA Child Protection Policy to protect students from harm. These policies are communicated clearly to stakeholders and updated regularly.
- 8.2 Lists of relevant services, authorities and organisations with contact details are clearly communicated to students, staff, and parents.
- 8.3 The school educates staff in all aspects of safeguarding and in the legal requirements of mandatory reporting of incidents.
- 8.4 All teachers and therapists are registered with the appropriate authority, such as SACE, the Health Professions Council of South Africa, or an alternative professional registration body.
- 8.5 All staff have undergone rigorous reference and background checks, including Police Clearance, the Sexual Offenders' Register, and the Child Protection Register.

- 8.6 The school provides appropriate adult supervision during school hours and on any excursions, camps, trips, and outings.
- 8.7 Staff strive to develop students' understanding of strategies for their personal safety and protection, including an understanding of digital citizenship to ensure appropriate and ethical use of technology, and the use of AI.
- 8.8 There are clear and effective reporting structures in place for students and staff to report incidents, as outlined in the ISASA Child Protection Policy.

Health & Safety

9. The school's Health & Safety policies and procedures ensure that it is a safe place for staff and students.

- 9.1 The school complies with all health and safety legal provisions.
- 9.2 The school has a crisis management plan for a critical incident or emergency that is clearly understood by staff, students, and parents. (fire drills, transport accidents or other emergencies)
- 9.3 There is adequate provision for monitoring safety in key areas, such as entry points and playground areas.
- 9.4 The school ensures that all transport provided for off-campus activities is adequate and safe and complies with all legal requirements.
- 9.5 Facilities and staffing for food services are adequate and the quality of the food meets nutritional requirements, and health and safety standards.

Facilities & Infrastructure

10. The school's buildings, facilities and infrastructure effectively support the needs of the school's education and co-curricular programmes.

- 10.1 The facilities are clean, safe, and well maintained.
- 10.2 There is a documented facilities plan covering future needs, improvements, and additions, aligned with the school's resources.
- 10.3 Where possible, the school's facilities cater for the needs of differently abled members of the community.
- 10.4 The school's information management systems are effective.
- 10.5 The school maintains accurate records for both current and former students, and staff.
- 10.6 Data privacy and security are maintained according to the provisions of the relevant legislative framework.

The Boarding Programme

11. The school's boarding programme provides a positive, balanced, and enriching experience for students, and aligns effectively with the school's mission.

11.1 Culture & Climate

11.1.1 The boarding house is committed to a democratic, non-discriminatory society and a community based on fairness and diversity, as outlined in Standard 3 of this document.

11.1.2 A culture of respect underpins all interactions in the boarding house.

11.2 Well-Being of Boarders

11.2.1 Provision is made for the well-being of boarders as outlined in Standard 7 of this document.

11.2.2 Provision is made for the academic needs of students, including suitable study times and appropriate support.

11.2.3 Provision is made for the health care of students whenever needed.

11.2.4 Provision is made for leisure time activities that match the needs, interests, and age of boarding students.

11.2.5 Provision is made for the observance of different religions.

11.3 Safeguarding

11.3.1 Provision is made for the safeguarding of boarders as outlined in Standards 7 & 8 of this document.

11.3.2 Provision is made to protect students from bullying, initiation, and abuse of power and privileges.

11.3.3 Provision is made for positive rites of passage and induction processes.

11.3.4 Disciplinary procedures and appropriate sanctions are clear and applied fairly.

11.3.5 Boarding house staff (and all adults who reside with them) have undergone rigorous reference, background, and police clearance / criminal records checks.

11.3.6 Boarding house leaders and senior students are given training regarding responsibilities and duty of care.

11.3.7 Within reason, supervising staff can track the whereabouts of boarders at all times.

11.3.8 Provision is made regarding the safe use of technology in the boarding house, including access to Wi-Fi, appropriate use of cell phones, and other devices.

11.4 Health & Safety

- 11.4.1 The school's Health & Safety policies and procedures are effectively implemented to meet the needs of the boarding students and staff.
- 11.4.2 There is a crisis management plan in place for a critical incident or emergency that is clearly understood by boarding house staff and students. [fire drills, medical emergencies, security breaches]
- 11.4.3 There is adequate provision for monitoring safety in key areas, such as entry points, dining halls, and leisure areas. These systems comply with the relevant legal provisions for privacy.

11.5 Staffing

- 11.5.1 Boarding house staff are suitably qualified to provide pastoral, academic, and disciplinary care for each student.
- 11.5.2 An appropriate number of residential staff members are employed to ensure adequate supervision at all times.

11.6 Communication

- 11.6.1 There are clear communication lines between parents and boarding house staff.
- 11.6.2 There are clear reporting structures in place for students, parents, or staff to raise any concerns.

11.7 Facilities

- 11.7.1 Boarding house accommodation and facilities are secure, and age and gender appropriate to meet the needs of students.
- 11.7.2 Facilities provide adequate consideration for the privacy of students.
- 11.7.3 Boarding house facilities are clean and well maintained, including kitchens, toilets and washing facilities.
- 11.7.4 Provision is made for the laundry requirements of boarders.

11.8 Catering

- 11.8.1 Meals provided are adequate in terms of nutrition, quantity, quality, choice, and variety.
- 11.8.2 Meals provided cater adequately for special dietary requirements.
- 11.8.3 Boarders have appropriate feedback channels regarding the provision of meals.

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Resources

- [The ISASA Anti-Racism Statement](#)
- [The ISASA Equality Policy Framework](#)
- The ISASA Child Protection Policy (Circulated to schools in October 2022)
- [The ISASA Code of Conduct](#)
- [A Guide to Effective School Transformation and Diversity Management](#)
- [A Guide to Effective School Governance](#)