

## MARU-a-PULA

### IQAA MENTOR'S REPORT

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

School	Maru-a-Pula School
Principal	Andrew Taylor
Team Leader	Judy Brown
Team Members	Jonathan Laverick Chaha Phillime Amanda Williams
Report Writer	Neo Mokgwathi
Mentor:	Kevin Tait
Model used	Core Evaluation
Training Date	Tuesday 28 February 2017
Evaluation Date:	Friday 7 April 2017
Previous IQAA evaluations	None

#### 2. RECEPTION AND TONE

As I only knew of Maru-a-Pula by reputation and had never visited the school before, I was delighted to have been appointed as mentor.

Initially I thought that it might not be possible to conduct onsite training because of distance so there were many emails backwards and forwards until IQAA head office advised that it would be in order to travel to Gaborone and conduct proper onsite training. This proved to be an essential element of the ultimate success of the evaluation.

I was met at the airport and transport was on hand on both occasions to travel to the school where I was very warmly welcomed and hosted to lunch by the principal Andy Taylor along with the team on my training day visit and then again for dinner upon arrival for the observation day. I was accommodated very comfortably in the school's guest flat to enable me to get a full feel of the campus and be on time to attend the boarders' breakfast early the following morning.

All arrangements under the control of the school went off smoothly although the same could not be said for SA Express where lengthy flight delays seem to be standard fare!

#### 3. RIGOUR AND EFFICIENCY OF THE EVALUATION

All team members attended the onsite training including the Principal who was present for some of the time. There was excellent 'buy in' and commitment from the team to the IQAA process which augured well for the subsequent observation day.

- Compliance – Mr Taylor and I went through the standard ISASA compliance checklist and although not everything was directly applicable to a Botswana school there were no areas red-flagged.

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Independent Quality Assurance Agency

**Directors:**

Samuel Isaacs (Chairman)

Ebrahim Ansur • John Falconer • Michael King • Stephen Lowry •  
Sandile Ndaba • Anne Oberholzer • Mark Potterton

- Opinion Surveys - The rate of return for the student and parent surveys were unusually low. Possible reasons for this have been addressed in the report but in any event, the quality of the evaluation does not seem to have suffered. Results were carefully analysed and areas requiring further probing were included in the focus groups and development plans.
- Focus Groups – in addition to school-run focus groups I had the opportunity to conduct a student focus group with the Students' Advisory Council and was also time-tabled to meet separately with role players in the school such as the Estate Director, Deputy Principal (Operations) and Student Exchange Co-ordinator who took me on a tour of the campus including the hostels and then with the Bursar with whom I was able to compare notes. At these sessions there was a refreshing openness and willingness to express critical but constructive points of view by all participants.
- Quality Targets - These were rated by the academic departments and reported on in the Account of Preliminary Findings which was very thoroughly prepared. It is noted that there are very few areas that may be cause for concern. Anything significant was either explored in a focus group or addressed in the final report.
- Class Observation – there has not been a culture of class visits by colleagues at Maru-a-Pula so this process was novel for many staff. By all accounts the classroom observers were well-received and impressed by the high quality of lessons. If the lessons that I attended were a fair reflection of teaching at Maru-a-Pula, then the standards set are commendably high.

#### **4. ESTIMATION OF THE SUCCESS OF THE EVALUATION**

- Compliance – In the view of the mentor the school meets all relevant ISASA requirements for compliance.
- Buy-in from community - The school community has been supportive of the evaluation process.
- Report - The evaluation team has produced an outstanding report.
- Recommendations and timeline - These are considered to be comprehensive and realistic.
- Culture of ongoing quality improvement - The school is committed to ongoing quality improvement.

#### **5. GENERAL IMPRESSIONS GAINED BY THE MENTOR**

- While there is a great deal of which to be proud, Maru-a-Pula does not come across as a pretentious school. I see this as clear evidence of its values in action.
- Neither does it have an institutionalised feel – classrooms are spread out in subject-orientated clusters. Indeed it came across as a surprise that there are well over eight hundred students and staff on the campus during the day as well as boarders at night.
- Atmosphere - the atmosphere in the school is that of a focused academic institution but it did not feel unduly pressurising. It was obvious that staff saw themselves as professionals who take great pride in what they do.
- Comments on some of the opinion surveys alluded negatively to a drab exterior to some of the buildings but they are being upgraded in turn and will always need to fit into the ethos of the school. Similarly there was some criticism of the requirement for students for instance to wash their own dishes after meals but

this too reflects the values of the school and were this to be changed important principles would be sacrificed.

- Teaching and learning - there were also some concerns expressed in the opinion surveys about declining quality in the classrooms but no negative issues were observed regarding the rigour of classes visited and indeed the school's academic results speak for themselves as the overall results improve year after year.
- The comprehensive Service, Physical and Enrichment (SPE) programme which is intertwined in the curriculum is a unique feature of Maru-a-Pula – I have not come across any other service programme as well-developed and effective.
- But perhaps the most significant dimension of all is Maru-a-Pula's international footprint. One wonders how many other schools internationally could boast of the breadth of its international university placements as well as the range of reciprocal interaction of exchange programmes, internships and visiting students and tutors.
- Maru-a-Pula can also be justly proud of the opportunities it is granting to orphans and vulnerable children and refugees.

## **6. REFLECTIONS ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS EVALUATION**

- This was the first IQAA evaluation at Maru-a-Pula.

## **7. ENDORSEMENT OF THE INTERNAL TEAM'S EVALUATION REPORT**

*As the mentor I am pleased to associate myself with the internal School Evaluation Team's report and endorse its findings and recommendations. The process was openly and efficiently carried out, with appropriate rigour. The recommendations and timelines as set out in the School Development Plan appear to be practical and achievable.*

## **8. CONCLUSION**

Given its history and ethos Maru-a-Pula fulfils a unique role and truly embodies its vision of being one of Africa's leading institutions. In the words of the mission statement it is indeed a 'dynamic world-class school', a truly outstanding teaching and learning community.

I would like to thank the school evaluation team but especially Judy Brown, the team leader, and Neo Mokgwathi, the report writer, for their open, professional and graciously accommodating attitude and for all their efficiency and hard work. Special thanks too are due to principal Andy Taylor for the supportive, hospitable and collegial role he played together with his staff in making this evaluation such a success.

It will be clear from the above that I was very impressed with Maru-a-Pula and thoroughly enjoyed my visits.

**Kevin Tait**  
Mentor  
July 2017