



Independent Quality Assurance Agency

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Mr A. Taylor
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25 July 2017

Dear Mr Taylor

IQAA EVALUATION OF MARU-a-PULA 2017

“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” - Mentor

I have read all the relevant documents and reports pertaining to the evaluation of Maru-a-Pula and was so taken by the brief history of the school that I went online to learn more. What I found kept me fascinated for hours and left me deeply in awe of Deanne and Dot Yates and the many people who have followed them. They have ensured that out of Deanne and Dot’s abhorrence of apartheid has come a school whose influence now stretches across the world and yet has a significant impact on the local environment through the SPE programme. I would also like to acknowledge your significant role in the school too. It is not easy being the Principal of any independent school for over 13 years and yet still get a 94% approval rating from parents. You are clearly doing a good job of leading the school and I congratulate you for that. Well done for ensuring the original vision of the school continues to be fulfilled and yet rationally extended under your leadership.

It was a pleasant surprise to read that Maru-a-Pula have recently been through an internal process that seemed to largely complement the School in a Mirror (SIAM) process. I say “largely complement” because there were clearly issues revealed through the SIAM process which you already knew about and were already

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addressing. However, it is also clear that the process revealed additional issues that you could add to your strategic plan.

It's always interesting to look out for the unique features of a school report and the unique feature that stood out for me was the evaluation team's appreciation of developing a quality assurance culture in the school. This led your team to report that SIAM has provided you with a practical tool to assist in maintaining a quality assurance culture that will feed the School Improvement Plan (SIP). Very few schools see this opportunity and I hazard it is your having recently revised your SIP that created the environment for this realisation.

The concerns highlighted in your report make for interesting reading. I can't think of a school that is not grappling with fully integrating IT into the classroom so that it transforms the lessons and the type of learning a pupil is experiencing. I have done a tiny bit of reading around this issue of late and found various models that form a basis for understanding integration of IT into lessons on the internet. I found the work of Dr Ruben Puentedura a good place to start.

I am very pleased to note that the SIAM process led to teachers visiting each other in their classrooms and benefitting from the process. Developing a successful culture of peer evaluation, leading to professional growth, is arguably the most influential professional growth programme one can have in a school.

The evaluation team has certainly produced a substantial SIP which, I have no doubt, is an extension of the SIP you produced last year. It is clear from everything that I have read that the plan is manageable and that the school is determined to see it through successfully. Particular highlights in the SIP, in my opinion, are the determination to incorporate Entrepreneurship into the curriculum, intentional focus on critical thinking and avoiding too much focus on exams through varied assessment techniques. I have no doubt that dealing with everything on the SIP will be an interesting and exciting journey for the school.

Thank you for the hospitality extended to Kevin Tait for both his visits. His only complaint was SA Express, but there is nothing you can do about that! He did mention that he would have liked to spend a second day at Maru-a-Pula to have a deeper look at your SPE programme and so perhaps between us we can try to remember that the mentor stays for an extra day the next time we do an IQAA evaluation.

Please pass on our congratulations and thanks to the evaluation team for a job extremely well done and for the positive spirit with which they engaged with the process and with Kevin. Please pass on our particular congratulations to Judy Brown for her professional leadership of the team and to Neo Mokgwathi, who I believe is a recent alumna of the school on an internship, for writing an exceptionally well-presented report.

You may proudly share your report, and my concluding comments, with whomever you choose in your school community. A certificate confirming the successful

completion of this evaluation will be sent to you in due course, together with an IQAA logo to display on your website and promotional material.

Kind regards



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