



Independent Quality Assurance Agency

PostNet Suite 63
Private Bag X 18
Rondebosch
7701

EB01
Tannery Park
Belmont Road
Rondebosch
7700

Tel: 021 6854258
Fax: 021 6854195
Mobile: 0736997810
Web: www.iqaa.co.za

Mr Bruce Lindsay
Unity College
59 Runnymede Road
Chartwell North Estates
2191
Gauteng

12 June 2017

Dear Mr Lindsay

IQAA EVALUATION OF UNITY COLLEGE 2016

“Unity College is a welcoming school with a prevailing happy atmosphere. There is a general atmosphere of kindness and acceptance which the children welcome and value” - Mentor

I have read all the relevant documents and reports pertaining to the evaluation of Unity College. Collectively they reflect a school that is serving its niche market with dedication and professionalism.

A noticeable feature of the school’s twenty-seven year history is the number of times the school has had to move. While each move was a result of increased numbers or an opportunity to obtain better facilities, moving a school is never an easy exercise. I note your most recent relocation was in 2015 followed by an extensive building programme, some of which is finished. I assume that this move is considered a permanent move which will allow for a period of settling and an opportunity for your brand to become well known in the extended community it serves. Parents with Special Needs children often feel a sense of hopelessness and so I have little doubt your school provides a significant beacon of hope for them. I particularly compliment

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Directors:

Samuel Isaacs (Chairman)
Ebrahim Ansur • John Falconer • Michael King • Stephen Lowry •
• Anne Oberholzer • Mark Potterton • Confidence Dikgole
Vernon Wood (Executive Director)
Lynne Rivett-Carnac (Mentor Representative)

you on the extension to your programme to accommodate the needs of young adults. I am convinced that your parent community are deeply grateful for the assistance you render.

The findings of your team regarding the functioning of the school make for extremely positive reading. While budget constraints might limit further development at present, if one considers how much has been done in the twenty-seven year history of the school, and project that rate of development into the future, then there is much to look forward to.

It is pleasing to note the success with which you have tackled the recommendations of the 2010 evaluation. The only issue still unresolved has been highlighted in the 2016 report again: the desire of staff to participate in decision and policy making. Your commitment to making the evaluation practices employed during the Internal School Evaluation a part of the life of the school should go a long way to addressing this issue. One way of doing this is to ask the evaluation team to continue their work and to address one or more issues annually and make recommendations to management. Another way of doing this is to ask the evaluation team to facilitate teams in which every member of staff is involved and for each team to review an aspect of the school annually. I've seen this done in a school which called the teams "Quality Circles". Staff workshopped the topics for the Quality Circles annually and then joined the team in which they were most interested in the topic. Perhaps one of these methods could work for you?

I also note that staff feel that training and development opportunities for themselves is deemed inadequate and that financial constraints might limit opportunities for this to be adequately resolved. Again, if I may be so bold as to make a suggestion: handing the responsibility for professional development back to the staff, perhaps in the form of a dedicated Quality Circle, may cost nothing at all, especially if staff take on responsibility of sharing best practice with one another. There certainly is plenty of evidence of high levels of ability and professionalism amongst your staff.

I think the rest of the 2016 action plan is decidedly achievable although I'm not sure that the skills and competencies of teachers will be recognised appropriately through salary adjustments alone.

The major strengths of the school reveal that you have much to celebrate: learners are happy and respectful; staff members are dedicated to the entire educational process of the child and the school is rich in diversity. Such strengths are the envy of many other schools.

Thank you for the hospitality extended to Margaret Edwards. She was appreciative of the manner in which she was received, and for the full support and co-operation of the evaluation team, particularly their leader, Vanessa Smith. I note that you have not been well of late and trust that you have fully recovered.

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,



VERNON WOOD

Executive Director

T 021 685 4258

F 021 685 4195

M 084 6260 704

E ed@iqaa.co.za

<http://www.iqaa.co.za>