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Mr Chris Storey  
Somerset House  
Drama Street  
Somerset West 7130

25 July 2018

Dear Mr Storey

**IQAA EVALUATION OF SOMERSET HOUSE 2018**

“The atmosphere of Oakwood reflects happiness, safety, and purpose in activity, with attentive teachers, assistants and children moving confidently in their surroundings.” Sally Hall – Mentor

“There is a wonderful support system in place for (Foundation Phase) pupils who struggle ...” and “The use of technology across the (Senior) curriculum is a noted strength.” Jenny Masterson - Mentor

“So many opportunities for growth and development...” Parent

“This school is an exciting place to work.” Teacher

I have read all the relevant documents and reports pertaining to the evaluation of Somerset House and am left with the warm and contented feeling that what we have here is truly an excellent primary school. All the players in the evaluation from the school team and the IQAA team have described again and again how Somerset House is truly *More than a school, a way of life* where the virtues of integrity, respect, determination, unselfishness, and team spirit are alive and well.

The school’s history is a proud one and there appears to have been good leadership through most of it. The 2018 report reflects on the courageous leadership which is required to maintain the values and attitudes of the past while ensuring relevance in the much-changed South African environment and I wish you well in this endeavour.

It is clear that the recommendations from the IQAA report on the 2012 evaluation was the starting point for the 2018 IQAA evaluation, and it is gratifying to read of the progress made in the pursuit on continuous self-evaluation. In particular I have noted the attention to developing critical thinking in the Senior Primary classes which the report describes now as ‘creating an engaging, inquisitive environment’. To have children leaving your school with well developed critical thinking habits of mind is admirable indeed. I have also been very

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**Directors:**

Samuel Isaacs (Chairman)

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• Anne Oberholzer • Mark Potterton • Confidence Dikgole

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pleased to see the attention given to ensuring that the less able children are nurtured and led with individual educational plans being developed for both academic and behavioural development.

The major strengths described in the report are many, not least the apparently universal passion for doing things right. However, as has been noted a hard-working, high achievement environment inevitably leads to stresses, and this manifests in all players, teachers and children alike ... and indeed almost certainly also the leadership! The report notes concerns about inappropriate parent behaviour, teachers pointing out that orientation of new staff needs attention as do the appraisal mechanisms, a teacher feeling that there is not enough provision for staff well-being, and a call for the appointment of a Counsellor to support children and staff for serious issues. I in no way suggest that these important areas are being neglected, rather my intention is to further highlight the importance of recognising them and I am very pleased to see the attention being given to them in the Recommendations at the end of the report.

Thank you for hospitality extended to the IQAA team, Sally Hall and Jenny Masterson, both of whom enjoyed the time spent in your lovely school. Thank you also to the team leader, Jennifer Court, and to the report writer, for the most professional way in which this evaluation was managed. I would just dare to suggest that in the recommendations table the person responsible for ensuring sufficient attention to each item is noted. This may help to prevent any of the balls being dropped.

I suggest you consider retaining the team that you have used for this evaluation and ask them to regroup annually. They can initially be tasked with critically reviewing progress with these recommendations in a year's time. In the subsequent years, before your next IQAA evaluation, they can be encouraged to identify a distinctive area in the school each year that needs scrutiny and run a relatively minor evaluation process of their choice, but using the skills they learnt through this full evaluation, with the aim of ultimately informing school management around that issue. Ideally you would aim for topics that are quietly nagging you in the back of your mind.

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

**MICHAEL HOSTY**

Acting Executive Director

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