

St David's Marist Inanda — taking the lead in health and safety

A spark from a large and unsafe electrical distribution board is all it would take to ignite a cloud of flammable gases that have accumulated from neglected paint and thinners containers left open in an overcrowded paint store.

The potential consequences of such an accident to children in nearby classrooms or on neighbouring sports fields would be devastating to any school.

Potential threats such as this one mobilised Mike Boden, Business Manager and the Health and Safety Officer at St David's Marist Inanda School, to conduct a health, safety and environmental (HSE) audit of St David's last year. To this end, the school employed NOSA to undertake this audit.

"St David's has always been committed to the safety of its learners, staff and visitors to the campus, but the scope of this responsibility and the potential threats were made clear through the audit, which presented St David's with a range of



Mike Boden and Guy Swanborough

findings, from potential fire hazards to documentation non-compliances," said Boden.

Health and safety in a school environment is a challenging responsibility. A Business Manager usually has little extra time, and an effective health and safety management system requires active, ongoing management. "St David's had come to realise that the requirements of the (Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993) were not achievable without the support of specialists in the field

of health and safety. We thus sought out the services of NOSA," says Boden.

In a managed service agreement, NOSA was commissioned to assist St David's to establish a comprehensive HSE management system. On one day each month, NOSA consultant Guy Swanborough conducts occupational risk assessments, drafts policy and procedure documents, appoints representatives and completes equipment inspection registers. Much progress has been achieved and the work continues in this regard.

"We are committed," say Swanborough and Boden, "to get the health and safety of St David's up to that prestigious 5 Platinum Star rating!" This is the benchmark for any HSE management system in South Africa today.