External School Review Report

Carmel Pak U Secondary School

School Address: Estate Secondary School No. 1, Tai Yuen Estate, Tai Po, New Territories

Review Period : 25, 26, 27, 29 January and 2 February 2016

Notes on the External School Review Report

1. This report covers the current development of the school and the key External School Review (ESR) findings. Suggestions for improvement are also given for reference of the school.

2. The report is intended for the key stakeholders of the school, including members of the Incorporated Management Committee (IMC), teachers, parents and students.

3. The school should release the content of the report to the key stakeholders by making the ESR report available in the school premises for their easy access. Alternatively, the school may upload the report to its homepage for the reference of the stakeholders.

4. The IMC should lead the school to follow up the suggestions made in the report, in order to facilitate its self-improvement and enhance its continuous development.

Education Bureau
The Government of the Hong Kong
Special Administrative Region (2016)

1. External School Review Methodology

1.1 The ESR team conducted the review in late January and early February 2016 to review the school's self-evaluation and its impact on the school's development. Suggestions are made to facilitate the school's continuous improvement and development.

1.2 The ESR team employed the following methods to understand the situation of the school:

- Scrutiny of documents and data provided by the school before and during the school visit;

- Observation of 37 lessons taught by 37 teachers;

- Observation of various school activities, including morning assembly, lunch and after school activities; and

- Meetings and interviews with the School Supervisor, School Managers, Principal, Vice Principals (VPs), panel chairpersons, heads of functional committees, teachers, school social worker, parents and students.

2. Current Development of the School

2.1 The mission of the school is to provide Christian education for the development of students in moral, intellectual, physical, social, aesthetic and spiritual aspects.

2.2 The class organisation approved by the Education Bureau (EDB) and the number of students in the current school year are as follows:

Level	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Total
Number of Classes	4	4	4	4	4	5	25
Number of Students	127	128	134	137	142	160	828

2.3 The majority of students enrolled were of high learning abilities. In recent years, a tiny portion of students with special educational needs (SEN) are admitted.

2.4 All teachers and the school management are Christians. Many of the serving personnel are also alumni, including some of the School Managers, one of the VPs and some teachers. Majority of the teachers have been serving the school for more than ten years. One of the VPs and two senior teachers have taken up the role of Principal and VP respectively after the previous ESR.

2.5 In the previous ESR report (July 2008), the following recommendations were made: (i) building the capacity of the teaching staff in taking the school further (ii) fully realising the potential of students in taking the school ahead and (iii)

strengthening school self-evaluation to provide feedback for continuous development.

2.6 The major concerns of the previous (2012/13 to 2014/15) and current school development cycles (2015/16 to 2017/18) are the same. They are: (i) to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching, (ii) to carry on with the adoption of English as the medium of instruction (EMI) through various strategies, and (iii) to persist in providing life education, moral education and spiritual education in order that students' resilience and moral discernment can be boosted.

3. External School Review Findings

3.1 Building on strengths to enhance student learning and nurture positive values among students

3.1.1 With more than 35 years of history, the school has laid a solid foundation for its smooth operation and there is a steady development. The school takes pride in its achievements all along these years and treasures the tradition and culture built up. The IMC and alumni are supportive and render their expertise and provide financial resources to support school development. There is a shared vision between the school management and teachers to sustain a religious ambience in nurturing spiritual and moral development of students. Goodwill to the school is well established in the local community as parents appreciate the school's good ethos and strong emphasis on fostering students as caring, responsible and disciplined individuals who strive to excel. The Parent Teacher Association and parents are supportive and offer their help as volunteers in various school events. Students are diligent, respectful to their teachers and develop a strong sense of belonging to the school.

3.1.2 With reference to the recommendations of the previous ESR report, the school is well aware that ongoing enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching as well as teacher capacity building are two of the critical factors conducive to its further development. Succession planning is also an added factor. In view of the dynamic changes in society and advancement of technology in recent years, the school also attaches special importance to values education in helping students to cope with problems and discriminate what is right or wrong with moral principles. The school considers the above as its direction for development and simultaneously as challenges in terms of how to help students to outperform and grow up with moral and positive values to face adverse conditions courageously.

3.1.3 In this connection, clear targets have been set in the previous and current school development plans to enhance student learning and nurture positive values. Some of the targets such as review of senior secondary subjects to be offered and provision of enrichment class for gifted students are achieved with effective outcomes in the previous school development cycle. They are

then turned into on-going practices for sustainability and refinement.

3.2 Comprehensive curriculum planning suitably catering for student learning needs and interests

3.2.1　In line with the aims of education, the school has made sustained effort in providing a broad curriculum at junior secondary level with a good range of subjects covering the eight Key Learning Areas. This helps students build a broad knowledge base for smooth interface to their senior secondary studies. There is yet a need to make slight adjustments for the lesson time allocated to individual junior secondary subjects to restore an overall balance.

3.2.2　Apart from offering ten elective subjects at the senior secondary level, the school is commendable to network with other schools in the district to further widen the choices of subjects for their students. Students could select and study elective subjects such as Design and Applied Technology, Visual Arts and Music offered by other schools under the district's network. This well caters for their individual learning interests. To take a step further, school may also provide more details about Applied Learning Courses for students' information and consideration. In recent years, 'Core Subject Enhancement Programmes' and 'Subject Enhancement Programmes' are also purposefully arranged for senior secondary students taking Mathematics elective modules and students who only study two elective subjects respectively. With tailor-made individualised support given by related teachers through the above tutorial lessons, some students are benefited in catching up their studies while some students are better supported to accelerate their learning.

3.2.3　Instead of streaming students according to their learning abilities, the school has made good efforts to practise mixed ability grouping in recent years at junior secondary level to avoid a labelling effect. The following measures to cater for learner diversity are useful and help students improve their learning or excel to some extent. Early intervention and timely learning support are provided to S1 students based on their test results in the first two months of the school term. After-school homework remedial classes are arranged for some SEN students. Small class teaching is adopted to facilitate the learning of Chinese and English at S3. Students of very high learning ability are identified and nominated to join pull out programmes organised by external institutions which suitably unleash their potential. In addition, other outstanding students are also encouraged to participate in more local and international competitions to challenge themselves and excel. Rather than focusing mainly on winning awards, a further step could also be taken to provide more opportunities and encouragement to students of average ability level to join competitions with a view to developing their potential and guiding them to learn through the process.

3.2.4　To facilitate whole person development of students and follow up on the previous ESR recommendation regarding provision of a wider variety of

learning experiences, a diverse range of co-curricular activities has been provided covering areas such as debating, sports, music, interest classes and service groups. Mainland visits and overseas study trips as well as leadership training camps are also thoughtfully organised in achieving the purpose to broaden students' perspective and nurture their generic skills.

3.3 Providing effective support for student development and capitalising on the good network with alumni and external professional organisations

3.3.1　Programmes covering moral education, civic education, national education and sex education, life planning education programmes for all students are systematically implemented. They are in line with the related major concern on values education and serve the purpose of heightening students' awareness. Functional committees work collaboratively with class teachers and 'class tutors'. Individual career guidance programmes for senior secondary students are added by tapping external resources. IMC members and alumni are invited as guest speakers to share their work experience with students. A wide range of developmental, preventive and remedial programmes such as 'Form Assembly' with themes on positive values, 'Student Councellor Scheme' and 'Caring Group', leadership training camps are also suitably planned and co-organised with external agencies to strengthen the support of students' developmental needs at different key stages. Student leaders benefit from the related programmes and perform their duties well. Student Councellors also learn well and take good care of their junior counterparts.

3.3.2　In encouraging students to achieve a balanced and progressive development in school life, the school also continues the 'Carmel Pak U Award Scheme' which was introduced when the school was first established. Noting that students in recent years were less motivated to join the Scheme to challenge themselves, refinements have been made to relax some of the strict criteria. More students are thus able to attain the elementary and intermediate levels with a greater sense of achievement.

3.3.3　Reflections on nurturing students' positive values in religious context are shared at regular staff prayer meetings among the VPs, form coordinators and form teachers to identify good practices. In addition, there are regular daily morning prayers, weekly Biblical Knowledge lessons and Christian Fellowship meetings throughout the school year for all students as on-going measures to nurture their spiritual development and inculcate positive values towards life and challenges.

3.3.4　It was highlighted in the previous ESR report that a more positive approach could be considered when enforcing strict school rules. Students' concerns regarding some of the school rules still prevail as very little change has been made by the school management. Taking into consideration that students generally behave well with good self-discipline and honouring mutual trusts between the school and students, the school could review and refine the

credit award system with added credits for positive deeds and behavior valued by the school.

3.3.5   In line with the school's major concern on 'to persist in providing life education, moral education and spiritual education in order that students' resilience and moral discernment can be boosted', different events such as school assembly, discussion in class teacher periods and sharing through school newsletters have been organised. They serve the purpose of helping students understand more about combating adversity in daily life and cultivate positive values. Event by event evaluation has been made with emphasis mainly on completion and degree of satisfaction. However, a more holistic evaluation of the overall effectiveness with regard to observable attitudinal changes or behaviour of students and their depth of understanding has yet been made. There could be more in-depth discussion of the expected changes on individual classes or students. Evaluation tools such as the Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes (APASO) can also be used and complement with teachers' or parents' observations.

3.4   Leading with a supportive role but more concerted efforts needed among the middle managers and teachers to achieve synergy

3.4.1   Perceiving that playing a supportive role more than a steering and monitoring role as appropriate for school development, the IMC provides full autonomy to the Principal, VPs and middle managers to exercise their professionalism in planning and managing school matters concerning student support, curriculum, assessment, learning and teaching. The school management adopts a soft approach to sustain a harmonious working atmosphere. They manage by encouragement and emphasise self-monitoring by individual panel heads and teachers themselves. This is partially effective to some panel heads and teachers but not all. The vigor taken to implement school-wide strategies and the depth of evaluation on effectiveness of implemented measures vary. There is a need for the school management to strengthen the steering and monitoring role. For instance, in enhancing the professional capabilities of teachers and fostering a professional sharing atmosphere, a Peer Class Observation (PCO) mechanism has been set up as a platform for teachers to share and exchange their experiences and ideas in class teaching. Common free periods are allocated for teachers of Chinese, English, Mathematics and Liberal Studies to carry out Collaborative Lesson Planning (CLP) respectively. Individual subjects make good use of the PCO and CLP to sharpen their focuses on reviewing questioning technique and student learning performance for in-depth analysis. Such good practices can be further promoted by the school on one hand and on the other hand, the school management needs to suggest some common focus areas for subject panels to target on, such as tackling student learning difficulties and using diversified teaching strategies to cater for learner diversity. Clear guidelines for

conducting CLP can also be provided by the school. Panel heads also need to discuss with their members and agree on specific focuses for PCO to align with the school's major concerns. Evaluation of the effectiveness on student learning progress is necessary. This can also be used as a means for teachers to reflect on their quality of teaching.

3.4.2   In the current school development cycle, an e-learning working group, involving one of the VPs, the computer panel and a technician, has been set up to oversee e-learning development in the school. As a step further to strengthen teachers' ownership of the e-learning preparation work, each subject panel could be invited to nominate one representative to join the working group to solicit their ideas in formulating school level and subject specific e-learning work plans. Subject teachers could then identify related e-learning resources suitable for remedial or enriching purposes to cater for varied student learning needs and encourage self-learning among students.

3.5   A continual need to strengthen strategic planning for enhancing professional development of teachers

3.5.1   In following up the recommendations made in the previous ESR report concerning capacity building of teachers, the school management has taken suitable actions. The middle managers and teachers are involved in contributing their ideas to formulating the school major concerns and proposed implementation strategies through panel meetings and staff meetings. Some of them have grasped a better understanding of the rationale of school self-evaluation. However, there is a continual need to deepen their understanding of how to use evaluation data more effectively to inform planning.

3.5.2   A column on self-evaluation is included in the staff appraisal report to encourage teachers to reflect on their work and express their ideas on professional matters. In line with the principle of knowledge management, a Knowledge Audit may be conducted to understand individual needs of teachers and identify their knowledge gap. In other words, the school management can make better use of the compiled staff appraisal data as feedback to analyse teachers' needs as a whole for facilitating forward planning at school and subject levels.

3.5.3   To enhance the quality of learning and teaching, the school encourages teachers to participate in professional development programmes organised by the EDB and tertiary institutions. Teachers concerned are better prepared in implementing curriculum initiatives which in turn helps some students learn specific topics more effectively. However, professional development programmes concerning the use of qualitative data, assessment for learning and assessment as learning are deemed necessary. When analysing assessment results of students, the focus is largely geared to quantitative evaluation such as grade distribution in public examination results with little qualitative analyses. Conducting more frequent assessments and assigning

more drilling are the major remedial measures adopted for enhancing the performance of less able students. In this connection, curriculum leadership is to be further strengthened. Teachers should be guided to analyse assessment data in greater depth so as to identify and address students' learning difficulties through curriculum planning as well as lesson and pedagogical design. In addition, some of the staff development days should be used for organising programmes related to the school's major concerns on learning and teaching apart from spiritual programmes for teachers.

3.6 Implementation gaps in promoting "Language Across the Curriculum" (LAC) and enriching the English language learning environment

3.6.1   The overall effectiveness in enhancing the English proficiency of students in spoken and written English at junior and senior secondary levels is not explicit. Though the strategies such as weekly English Days, English morning assemblies, reading schemes and activities for promoting LAC stated in the school plans are all implemented in consecutive years, students show little interest and do not participate actively. Without a meaningful and authentic context, many students lack the initiative to speak in English with their peer English Ambassadors and teachers during recess or lunch time on English Days. Many students prefer to read Chinese books rather than English ones. They rarely go to the English Room during lunch time to play English word games.

3.6.2   In-depth evaluation to identify and analyse the reasons behind the low responses is necessary to inform better planning with strategies focusing on student motivation. In enhancing students' ability to use English to learn, more concrete expected outcomes could be defined with evaluation on the progress made and degree of proficiency. For instance, the reading schemes and circulation statistics could be reviewed to understand more about students' reading habit as well as their latest interest. In addition, a print-rich environment around the school is to be substantiated to expose students to different forms of using English. Learning activities and lessons which are tied to the display could then be designed to give students the purpose of reading the materials and use them to extend their learning.

3.7 Systematic lesson design and delivery with satisfactory learning outcomes

3.7.1   Teachers are responsible and build up good rapport with students in general. Most lessons are planned with clear learning objectives and lesson contents are delivered smoothly. Audio visual aids, realia, daily life examples and worksheets are suitably used to facilitate student understanding. Lecturing supplemented with questioning is the main teaching method. Questions asked are limited to a narrow range aiming to check students' understanding only. Lesson capacity is sometimes not adequate and thought-provoking or open ended questions are seldom asked to facilitate deep learning. In a number of lessons, teachers' expectations are low. Insufficient wait time is provided for

students to think and formulate their answers and the feedback given by the teachers is not specific enough to facilitate or improve student learning. At times, the pair or group work designed requires little discussion or collaboration among students to co-construct knowledge. Student participation or interaction in lessons is limited. Homework assigned at the end of lessons is mainly for consolidation purpose.

3.7.2   Students are obedient, attentive and possess high learning abilities. They are able to grasp lesson contents and communicate in English when answering teachers' questions and presenting their ideas. Some students speak fluently and are outspoken but many are not confident to speak up in front of the class. More interactive activities such as pair work and group discussion as well as student presentation could be conducted to further promote the use of spoken English among students where appropriate. Some students take notes while learning but their overall self-learning skills are limited.

3.7.3   In the more effective lessons, lesson objectives are more explicitly shared with students. Teachers' demonstrations and explanations are clear. Prompting and probing questions are used skillfully to help students scaffold knowledge and develop their higher-order thinking skills. Learning tasks are meaningful and well-designed with concrete and constructive feedback provided to help students to improve on their responses. Students have a clear understanding of the lessons' key concepts and learning points. They are also suitably guided to learn from their mistakes by reflecting on the feedback given.

3.8   Good student performances in both non-academic and academic areas

3.8.1   Students are courteous, sincere, responsible and conscientious in their learning. They participate actively in a wide variety of activities, award schemes and competitions in academic areas, music, sports and community service. Students perform very well and have won many individual and group awards in inter-school, district and territory-wide competitions such as choral speaking, debate, music and sports events in consecutive years. They have also received some awards in international competitions related to science and technology.

3.8.2   In the past three years, the percentages of students meeting the general entrance requirements for local undergraduate university programmes and sub-degree courses in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Examination (HKDSE) were above the territory averages of day school students. Taking into account the S1 intake, the school performed satisfactorily in the HKDSE Examination in the past three years.

3.9   Further strengthening of school self-evaluation (SSE) to accelerate school development

3.9.1   The school is making a steady progress in its development by

following the planning-implementation-evaluation principles under the school self-evaluation framework. Clear targets are set for its direction of development and some of them are achieved with effective outcomes. However, some of the strategies do not bring out the effects as expected. There are some implementation gaps. In-depth evaluation of the effectiveness of the overall strategies in achieving the targets is not prominent. To accelerate school development, a more thorough understanding of students' learning styles, interests and analyses of their difficulties at the planning stage is needed with reference to various sources of evaluation data. Innovative ideas are to be explored when refining the strategies and the focus of evaluation could also be sharpened pinpointing the overall impact on student learning.

4. Suggestions for Improvement

4.1　To achieve a synergising effect in leading school development, the school could strengthen its steering and monitoring role to facilitate teachers to have more in-depth reflection of their work and exploration of new ideas. When reviewing SSE work, the school could further streamline the targets and strategies and focus more sharply on the quality and impact other than the quantity when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the outcomes.

4.2　Professional capabilities and curriculum leadership of the teachers could be further enhanced in terms of knowledge enriching and pedagogical design. A wider range of teaching strategies can be adopted to cater for learner diversity. In view of the high learning abilities of students, teachers need to raise their expectations and lesson capacity to facilitate deep learning. They could also assume a facilitator role and provide more opportunities for students to raise questions, co-construct knowledge to deepen their understanding of abstract concepts. Students could also be guided to use more often a range of learning tools such as mind maps, graphic organisers and note-taking techniques to organise their ideas and develop their self-directed learning skills.