External School Review Report

St. Paul's Convent School

School Address: 140 Leighton Road, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong

Review Period : 8, 9, 11, 15 and 17 November 2021

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 School Management Committee (SMC), teachers, specialist staff, 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. To further enhance transparency, the school is encouraged to upload the report to its homepage for access by the public.

4. The SMC 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.

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1. External School Review Methodology

1.1   The ESR team conducted the review in November 2021 to validate the school's self-evaluation (SSE) 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 ESR;
   -   Observation of 52 lessons taught by 52 teachers;
   -   Observation of various school activities, including Form Teacher Period, Reading Period, Workshop on Ethics, Big Sister Scheme, Diversified Interest Programmes (DIP); and
   -   Meetings and interviews with the key stakeholders of the school including the school management[1], teachers, social workers, parents and students.

2. Current Development of the School

2.1   St. Paul's Convent School (SPCS) was founded in 1854 and is under the administration of the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres.   It is one of the oldest schools in Hong Kong.   The school changed the grant-in-aid status to a Direct Subsidy Scheme School in 2004 and linked up with its primary section to form a through-train school.

2.2   The school motto is OMNIA OMNIBUS, translated as "All things to all people" in English.   The school vision is "to provide a seamless bilingual education for girls in a happy and motivating learning environment so that they will learn to embrace the Paulinian heritage of truth, beauty, goodness, nobility and honour".   Its mission is to provide an all-round education, based on Christian values, that enhances the quality of life, both spiritually and materially, for Paulinians so that they can contribute positively to their home, profession and society with charity, conscience, confidence, courage, creativity, competence and commitment.

2.3   The class structure approved by the Education Bureau (EDB) and the number of students[2] in the current school year are as follows:

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[1] The school management generally refers to the SMC, school heads and deputy heads
[2] Based on administrative records kept in the Bureau's information system

Level	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Total
Number of Classes	6	6	6	6	6	6	36
Number of Students	242	216	195	157	149	139	1098

2.4 The school principal is at the same time the school supervisor. There are currently two vice principals, one newly joined the school the year before. Over 70% of teachers have taught in the school for over 10 years. Around 21% of teachers are alumnae. The curriculum offered in SPCS is as follows: local junior secondary curriculum and school-based curriculum for S1-2; International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) curriculum infused into the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) curriculum for S3-4; and HKDSE or General Certificate of Education/ International Advanced Levels curriculum for S5-6 .

2.5 The last ESR was conducted in 2017. The key recommendation was to further enhance the effectiveness of classroom learning and teaching. For both the last and current school development (SD) cycles (respectively 2018/19 to 2020/21 and 2021/22 to 2023/24), the school theme is Smart CITIES (Cradle for Integrating Technology, Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Sustainability). The major concerns of the last SD cycle were:

- To provide a diverse and innovative curriculum and assessment that offer multiple pathways to students to prepare them for successful entry into tertiary education, either locally or abroad;

- To prepare students for the fast changing technological world through STEM/ STEAM: fostering collaborative learning through an inter-disciplinary approach;

- To continue uplifting the academic ceilings of Paulinians through reading and challenging them with higher-order thinking questions;

- To take advantage of the One Belt One Road (OBOR) policy to broaden the global outlook of our Paulinians; and

- To strengthen the implementation of the school theme Smart CITIES by focusing more on the entrepreneurial aspect.

The above school major concerns remain in the current SD cycle, with the fourth one on OBOR updated as:

- To enhance Paulinians' sense of national identity and law-abiding awareness through a whole-school approach and cross-subject collaboration by implementing National Security Education in both formal and informal curriculum.

3. External School Review Findings

3.1 **Scaling up of school development is sustained through a visionary and dedicated professional leadership. Equal opportunities and all-round quality education have been provided for students.**

3.1.1   Based on the Christian values, the school has provided very good quality of education to the students. School's continuous development is sustained under the strong, visionary and dedicated professional leadership of the top and senior management. Students are given optimal opportunities to realise their aspirations, most notably the multiple pathways and the diversified school-based curriculum. Students' global outlook and broad experiences are greatly enhanced through the rich and cross-disciplinary experiential learning. The Paulinian heritage, with its core values of joyfulness, hard work and excellence, is upheld and manifested in students and teachers. The alumnae strongly support the school, and parents are highly appreciative of the ample opportunities and choices provided for their children. Living out the spirit of the school motto, solid action is taken to support students in need with the fee remission and maintenance fee. Equal opportunities are granted for all students to excel. Students are nurtured to be all-rounders, being confident, competent, responsible and taking pride in being a Paulinian. With the excellent networking established both locally and internationally, resources are well identified to unleash students' potential.

3.1.2   The school has been striving for excellence at all times, responding promptly to the fast-changing world and undertaking different initiatives, among which some most prominent ones are Information Technology in Education (ITE) and Science, Technology and Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education. To escalate the school development, the school could consider conducting a holistic review of the current development, including the coverage of the local curriculum at S1-3, the junior secondary (JS) level.

3.2 **Self-evaluation is well embedded in school's daily life. A reflective and learning culture is well founded at different levels.**

3.2.1   Being foresightful, open-minded and resourceful, the school principal has highly been esteemed as the mastermind of steering the direction of school development. The representation of different stakeholders, including elected teacher members, students, parent and alumni representatives in the School Advisory Board, has enhanced the transparency in the decision making of school policies, taking into consideration the interests and voices of various parties, such as teachers, students, parents and the EDB. School's sustained development is bolstered through the distributed leadership, with the setting up of different Teams, such as the Administration Team, Academic

Team, and Pastoral Care Team, each with clear roles and functions, taking good care of the various aspects of the school development. With the visionary leadership of the school principal and the close collaboration between the school management level and the teachers, prompt and effective actions have been taken to embrace needs and changes, like the advancement of STEM education and the launching of national security education (NSE).

3.2.2 The school has responded well to the recommendations of the last ESR report. The Wednesday afternoon is fruitfully used for subject department meetings to discuss curriculum-related issues to improve learning and teaching. Students' higher-order thinking (HOT) has been enhanced through task designs in lessons. On the other hand, the number of teachers to undergo professional training on special educational needs (SEN) is still an area to be worked for in the near future.

3.2.3 The school major concerns are addressing well to students' aspirations, learning needs, as well as the recent educational trends, such as the promulgation of NSE and entrepreneurship in the current SD cycle. The school development is evolutionary and with the participation of the whole school. School self-evaluation data, such as stakeholder survey and Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes, are regularly collected and appropriately used for the review of school development and subsequent planning. Based on the findings of the teacher survey, the priority development of the OBOR has been adjusted to NSE in the current SD cycle. With clear targets set and suitable implementation strategies, concertedness and close communication are evident among subject departments and functional committees in achieving the targets, borne in mind of scaling the Paulinians to new heights in various aspects.

3.2.4 A reflective and learning culture is clearly discerned. Reflections for further improvements are inherent in school's daily life at different levels, including the management, teachers and students. There are strategic measures before introducing new initiatives, including trial-runs and collection of feedback from parties concerned. Prominent examples are the implementation of NSE in the school curriculum and the introduction of thinking skills in the school-based Ethics curriculum. Upon rolling out of new initiatives, there are continuous review and refinements, with due attention to students' voice, sometimes collected via online means, so as to better address their learning needs.

3.3 **Teachers' capacity building aligns well with the curriculum trends and school's priority developments. The strong networking of the school has provided students with ample learning opportunities to excel.**

3.3.1 Teachers' capacity building is enhanced through teachers' professional development programmes which are well in line with the

curriculum trends and school's priority developments, in particular in areas of NSE, STEM education, ITE and HOT. Strong sharing and collaborative culture is found both within and across subject departments. Peer lesson observations for teachers' professional growth are common practices. Some panel heads proactively open up their classrooms for the sharing of good practices and effective pedagogies. Teachers evaluate own teaching by writing reflections on the Teacher Logbook, with constructive feedback provided by their direct supervisors on a regular basis. A culture of professional sharing in the school has been developed.

3.3.2 Strong and strategic networking has been established between the school with leading tertiary institutions, university professors and commercial enterprises. Extensive opportunities are provided to enrich students' learning experiences and develop their capabilities in real world contexts. Through good networking with local universities, support is drawn for the offering of foreign languages in the lower forms, the introduction of Life and Psychology course in DIP, and the escalated development of STEM education. Very unique partnerships are found with the launching of Professor-in-Residence and Scientist-in-Residence at school, accentuating students' knowledge and interest in research and development, environmental and scientific enquiry, as well as entrepreneurship. All these have enabled students to shine in related areas.

3.4 School is progressing from strength to strength in STEM education and ITE, with integration of entrepreneurship and promotion of students' self-directed learning.

3.4.1 The strong networking both locally and internationally have helped establish school's exemplary role in STEM education and entrepreneurship development among the Hong Kong schools. To nurture students' deep interest in STEM education, learning elements of STEM education are well incorporated into the JS curriculum. Students are provided with the mushroom cultivation programme jointly organised by the Science and Technology Education key learning areas (KLA). Students grow a mushroom pack at home and record the growth in a scientific way. They are also required to programme the automatic spraying devices in controlling the humidity of the growing environment. New initiatives have been brought in, and students' interest and aspiration in STEM-related disciplines are catalysed through the wide exposure to the latest scientific and technological developments, including Chinese medicine research and the unmanned store concept that relies on artificial intelligence technology. Resources from commercial enterprises are also effectively tapped to enhance student learning in authentic contexts. One such example is the green entrepreneurship programme for S1-4 students to participate in the hydroponic research and real business planning and execution.

3.4.2   Students who have special interest in STEM education are provided with ample opportunities to unleash their potential through DIP, Enriched Information Technology Programme (EITP) intended to cultivate young information technology (IT) professionals, and other life-wide learning activities.   In recent years, STEM education has been further connected with the inculcation of students' entrepreneurial spirit, well echoing the school theme and its priority development.   Students are enthusiastic in exploring innovative ideas to tackle daily-life problems so as to improve the quality of life, with some very impressive learning outcomes.   For instance, a group of students has investigated two new formulae of herbal tea that intend to mitigate the difficulties of finding all medicinal materials in the Twenty-Four Taste Herbal Tea.   The patent for marketing the new formula has been approved in the Mainland.   Students' entrepreneurial spirit is well cultivated through the learning experiences.

3.4.3   Students showing good interest in IT are provided with enrichment classes and workshops through EITP, which is very well received.   Students are exposed to advanced technology such as machine learning and plentiful opportunities to apply IT knowledge and skills in STEM-related learning activities and competitions.   Tapping the successful experience of EITP, the school has enriched its school-based Computer Literacy curriculum at JS, facilitating students to build a solid foundation in IT and computational thinking for their further studies.

3.4.4   The advantages of IT are well exploited to promote students' self-directed learning (SDL).   e-Learning platforms, including the self-developed E-Learning Multi-subject Online system, are extensively used to foster students' independent learning capabilities.   Students actively make use of different modes of e-assessment to reflect on and monitor their learning progress.   Upon resumption of face-to-face classes, students still make good use of the learning management system to seek more instant feedback from teachers, further enhancing their SDL capabilities.

3.5   Curriculum leadership is effective and reflective.   Proper plans are formulated in response to the recent optimising measures at the senior secondary level.

3.5.1   The curriculum leadership in the school is flexible and forward-looking, highly attributing to students' very good learning performance. Subject departments are given the trust and autonomy to formulate plans in line with the school's priority developments and subject-specific concerns based on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis.   Subject departments conduct holistic reviews, focusing on the achievement of targets set and making good reference to students' assessment data in both internal and public examinations.   Views and feedback from students are usually collected to gain a better understanding of students' needs and improving the curriculum.

Examples include the introduction of Life and Psychology course under DIP and the enriched school-based Ethics curriculum.

3.5.2   The close collaboration among different subject departments has helped students consolidate their inter-disciplinary knowledge and apply generic skills like creativity, critical thinking skills and problem solving skills, in multiple learning tasks.   This is reflected from samples of student assignments, in which learning tasks are thoughtfully prepared to strengthen students' knowledge, skills and attitude, as well as developing their HOT skills and multiple intelligences.   Students' work are conscientiously marked with clear feedback from teachers, effectively facilitating assessment for learning.

3.5.3   The school is highly responsive to the latest educational trends and curriculum initiatives.   Upon the optimising measures of the four core subjects at the senior secondary level, the school swiftly proposes strategic plans to enhance the curriculum.   These include integrating the Modules 1 and 2 of the Extended Part in Mathematics into the lesson timetables, and the launching of a new module on Chinese culture, Chinese history and China development for deepening students' understanding of our country.   To optimise such an opportunity, the school could consider making use of the released lesson time to further support the students in need.

3.6   A broad and diversified curriculum leading to multiple pathways is provided for students.   Review should be made to ensure the sufficient coverage of essential content of learning at the JS level for all students.

3.6.1   The school has provided a broad and diversified curriculum, and a wide range of learning opportunities to embrace students' needs and stretch their potential.   Outside the classroom, students' interests and aspirations are well catered for by the DIP, a broad range of learning activities, as well as different student-led clubs and societies.   The numerous opportunities to participate in local, national and international activities and competitions have boosted students' confidence, broadened their horizons, and enriched their learning experiences.   Students are nurtured to possess multiple intelligences and become citizens with global outlook.

3.6.2   To provide students with multiple pathways, they are offered and well informed of different curriculum options to make choices at different year levels.   In addition to the local and international curricula, other alternative options including foreign languages courses, the Business Technology and Education Council (BTEC) programmes at S3 and S4, and Applied Learning (ApL) courses in the senior secondary are offered to cater for students' different abilities, and with additional qualifications for multiple pathways both locally and abroad.   Six BTEC programmes covering different aspects, such as Business, Art and Design, and Information Technology are proffered. Commendable effort has been put to maintain a high standard through timely

review of the BTEC provision to ensure a broad coverage, with distinctive school-based programmes specially designed for the school, for example, Art and Design and Performing Arts (Cantonese Opera).   In addition to the six ApL courses currently offered, the school continues exploring different modes of operation and options to maximise students' experiential learning opportunities.   The school-based Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) curriculum enables non-Chinese speaking students to develop proficiency in Chinese to sit for the IGCSE Examination.   The school-based curricula including "Ming Yi", Ethics, and Personal, Social and Health Education are thoughtfully designed to foster students' appreciation of the Chinese culture, positive attitudes, and to develop self-understanding.   Through students' self-reflection of learning, adjustment of learning strategies and setting personal goals with teacher feedback, the Learning to Learn (L2L) programme is exemplary in promoting assessment as learning and cultivating the Paulinians to be active learners.

3.6.3   To infuse the ICGSE curriculum into the local curriculum at S3 and S4, careful and detailed mapping has been carried out to form an integrated school-based curriculum.   Yet, the coverage of essential learning elements in some KLA at the JS level, in particular the strands of "Energy and Change" and "The Material World" in the Science Education, and the Strands of "Time, Continuity and Change" and "Culture and Heritage" in the Personal, Social and Humanities Education (PSHE), have to be enriched to provide all students with sufficient knowledge base and skills for their progression to the next stage of learning.   While Chinese History is offered as an independent compulsory subject at the JS level, in close alignment with the EDB policy, the current integration of the Chinese History curriculum into the CSL curriculum has to be duly reviewed and adjusted.   The school could consider assigning KLA co-ordinators to escalate the overall curriculum planning and co-ordination at the KLA level.

3.7   Students demonstrate self-directed learning skills.   Design of learning tasks in lessons is effective to develop students' HOT and generic skills.

3.7.1   Students are self-directed learners with habits formed on setting personal learning goals and making self-reflections.   Most possess good time management skills and a growth mindset in taking failure as a chance to learn from mistakes.   The L2L programme, thinking skills courses, stress management workshops, and opportunities provided to engage students in research work have all contributed to such an enablement.

3.7.2   Students' SDL is also well reflected from their use of the cross-curricular reading log and the vocabulary book prepared by themselves. Students demonstrate excellent language abilities; and a strong reading culture is cultivated at school.   As observed, students are highly engaged in reading activities, and their reading scope is extensive, covering psychology,

enterprises and sports journals.

3.7.3   In lessons, students are highly-motivated in learning.   Self-learning strategies such as pre-lesson preparation and search of online information are commonly found.   Teachers mostly activate students' learning by building on their prior knowledge and experiences.   A variety of resources are well used to enrich students' understanding, examples include daily life events, videos and online materials.   Students participate actively in learning activities and are eager to complete the tasks assigned.   e-Learning tools such as the interactive whiteboards and learning apps are leveraged to help students grasp the key learning points, as well as to closely monitor their learning progress.

3.7.4   In addition to different levels of questions, prompting and probing are used by teachers in some lessons to elicit elaborations from students, effectively deepening their learning and developing their multi-perspective thinking.   The design of most lessons facilitates students' collaborative learning and exchange of ideas, enhancing self-reflection and peer learning. Students are able to give comments and raise questions to their peers, reflecting good critical thinking ability.   Good collaboration skills and high language proficiency are also displayed.   In lessons when diversified learning activities are provided for students to conceptualise and apply their knowledge, students' HOT is enhanced.

3.7.5   Teachers' feedback is concrete, pointing to areas for improvement and facilitating students' reflection of learning.   Measures to cater for learner diversity are observed.   Teachers in general provide individual support to students in need.   Some teachers are able to adjust their teaching pace and content according to students' learning pace, or prepare tailor-made tasks to suit students' different learning abilities.   For the latter case, choices are as well provided for students to select own tasks.

3.7.6   In a couple of lessons, teachers' input and guidance are not adequate enough to scaffold students' effective learning.   In a handful of other lessons, teachers focus too much on the learning content and its completion, with insufficient attention given to students' learning progress, thus lessening the impact of learning.   In very effective lessons, students' potential is fully stretched.   Their pre-lesson preparation is optimised for gaining a deep understanding of the topic covered through class interaction.   Opportunities are provided for students to integrate and apply knowledge and skills in authentic contexts, effectively developing students' analytical and logical thinking skills.   There is also use of inquiry approach enabling students' construction of knowledge and taking ownership of learning.

3.8   Core values of the school are upheld in students' daily life.   Students' national identity is enhanced through NSE and Basic Law education.

3.8.1   The school's core values of integrity, joyfulness, simplicity, hard

work and excellence are discerned in daily school life, generating a positive and caring learning environment for the students.   Emphasis has been put on developing students with gratitude and hope, with their lives living out the virtues of thankfulness and bringing hope to others.   In the Big Sister Scheme, some big sisters were themselves little sisters; they would like to show gratitude to their former big sisters through giving support to their juniors.   Students also bring hope to those in need through activities like Famine Lunch and paying visits to people in need.

3.8.2   In response to the increasing risk of cyber traps and faked information, together with the updated priority values promoted by the EDB, media literacy and law-abidingness have recently been introduced to the school-based Ethics curriculum.   With the enactment of the National Security Law, a NSE working group is formed to co-ordinate the NSE measures. Elements of NSE are incorporated into the school curricula, with a few subjects formulating detailed plans to integrate the elements organically in the lessons, including Life and Society, Economics, and Liberal Studies/Citizenship and Social Development.   Basic Law education is well advocated in school. Videos on the Mainland development are shown during the Form Teacher Period to enhance students' understanding of the motherland.   Before the COVID-19 pandemic, various exchange tours and excursions were organised to the Mainland to facilitate students' deeper understanding of the country and enhance their sense of national identity.   Basic Law Ambassadors are shouldered with promoting the Basic Law in school through co-curricular activities, such as organising online quiz on the Constitution Day for their fellow students and actively joining territory-wide competitions.   Students' perspectives are broadened and their national identity enhanced.

3.9   Students demonstrate remarkable leadership skills, with their voices and growth needs well heeded.   They can make well-informed choices in their life planning.

3.9.1   Student empowerment is remarkably strong, both at individual level and in student organisations.   Student leaders in the Prefects' Board and Big Sister Schemes, for example, are entrusted with the agency to plan, implement and evaluate their programmes, and they perform their leadership role with dedication and confidence.   They also organise leadership training for their fellow students and make succession planning, demonstrating distinguished leadership skills.   Students' views on school policies and matters are heard through the Prefects' Board, sometimes even at an individual level.   Student voice is valued and students are confident about their views being listened to.

3.9.2   Reflections for improvement are exercised among functional committees to better cater students' growth needs.   Upon identifying the need of stress management, prompt and proper actions follow, including introducing positive psychology in DIP, conducting talks and holding workshops to

enhance students' stress management skills. Students are also taught to practise meditation, mindfulness and develop resilience to empower themselves to face challenges and cope with stress. Students' well-being is closely kept track of through continuous observations and student surveys.

3.9.3 An inclusive school environment is created for all students. For the new S1 joiners, apt measures are well in place to help them adapt to the new learning environment, such as the Bridging Course that aims at identifying students' needs to facilitate a smooth interface. Students' sense of belonging to their classes and Houses is strongly developed at lower forms through team building activities and competitions, as well as the "same class, same house" policy. Harmonious and supportive peer relationship between the senior and junior form students has greatly been enhanced through the Big Sister Scheme, in which caring guidance is provided by the big sisters. Adjusted examination and assessment arrangements are properly made to students with SEN.

3.9.4 Students' aspirations on life planning, especially their further studies are very well addressed. A comprehensive life planning education commences systematically early at the JS level to help students better understand their own characteristics, abilities and needs. Students are progressively guided through the process, from self-understanding, own goal setting, to actualising their life planning. Students can make well-informed choices in their further studies and career pursuit through the multiple pathways and the abundant experiences open up for them, including firm visits, taster lectures from universities, and job shadowing in different fields.

3.10 Students lead a fulfilling life in school. The overall academic performance of students is very good. Students' non-academic achievements are outstanding.

3.10.1 Students are cheerful, confident, respectful and industrious. They demonstrate strong communication skills and high language proficiency. A harmonious and supportive learning environment is created, with very good student-student and student-teacher rapport. Teachers greatly care about students' well-being. Students love SPCS. They participate enthusiastically in different activities and have a heart to serve others and the community. With such a rich and nurturing learning setting, many students in SPCS have already developed clear career aspirations in their lower forms.

3.10.2 Students' overall academic performance is very good. 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 HKDSE Examination were above the territory averages of day school students. Taking into account the S1 intake, the school performed well in the HKDSE Examination in 2019 and 2020.

3.10.3 Students' achievements in the non-academic area are outstanding.

They participate fervently in a wide array of activities and competitions, including science, speech, essay writing, dance, sports, and music. Various group and individual championships and awards have been won, including the Schools Dance Festival, Inter-School Athletics Competition and the Hong Kong Schools Music Festival. Students have also obtained excellent results in many territory-wide, national and international STEM-related events, such as the Hong Kong Youth Science and Technology Innovation Competition, China Adolescents Science and Technology Innovation Contest and GENIUS Olympiad.

4. Suggestions for Improvement

4.1　At present, there is inadequate coverage of some essential content of learning in the Science Education and PSHE KLA in the JS curriculum. Deliberation needs to be made to provide all students with sufficient knowledge base and skills for their senior form studies. The integration of the Chinese History curriculum into the CSL curriculum should also be reviewed and adjusted.