External School Review Report

Law Ting Pong Secondary School

School Address: 8 Ma Chung Road Tai Po New Territories

Review Period : 18, 19, 23, 24 November and 1 December 2020

Quality Assurance and School-based Support Division
Education Bureau

April 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 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. To further enhance transparency, the school is encouraged to upload the report to its homepage for access by the public.

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.

Contents

		Page
1.	External School Review Methodology	1
2.	Current Development of the School	1
3.	External School Review Findings	2
4.	Suggestions for Improvement	12
5.	Appendices	13
	I. Overall Performance in Classroom Learning and Teaching	
	II. School Response	

1. External School Review Methodology

1.1 The ESR team conducted the review in November and December 2020 to validate 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 49 lessons taught by 49 teachers;
- Observation of various school activities, such as Resilience Coping Week, Academic Assembly, Life Education lessons, Flag Raising Ceremony; and
- Meetings and interviews with the key stakeholders of the school including the school management, teachers, parents and students.

2. Current Development of the School

2.1 It is the vision of the school that every student is a star. The school strives to provide students with experience that will enable them to grow spiritually, physically, intellectually, aesthetically, psychologically and affectively, and nurture them to become informed, sensitive and responsible members of society.

2.2 The class structure approved by the Education Bureau and the number of students[1] in the current school year are as follows:

Level	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Total
Number of Classes	5	5	5	5	5	5	30
Number of Students	177	148	146	120	112	71	774

2.3 The Vice Principals (VPs) have been changing frequently since the last Comprehensive Review (CR). The VP in charge of learning has been serving the school for more than a decade and took up the present post in 2018. The post of another VP leading the work of pastoral care was vacant in the last school year and has been filled by a senior teacher from another school in this school year. About one third of the teachers have teaching experience of 4 years or less. Less than half of the teachers have served the school for more

[1] Based on administrative records kept in the Bureau's information system

than 4 years. The number of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students has been growing in recent years.

2.4 In the last CR conducted in 2014, the school was recommended to: (i) strengthen the use of Planning-Implementation-Evaluation to secure continuous development; (ii) further strengthen school management and professional leadership; and (iii) improve curriculum planning and the quality of learning and teaching at the classroom level to boost the performance of students.

2.5 The school's major concerns (MCs) in the school development plan (SDP) of 2019/20 to 2021/22 are to (i) engage students in rigorous learning experiences; (ii) cater for diversity; (iii) cultivate a growth mindset culture; and (iv) sustain a competent and caring learning community.

3. External School Review Findings

3.1 The school develops in the face of an unstable teaching force. The multi-cultural atmosphere and provision of a diversified curriculum are sustained. Curriculum leadership and learning and teaching effectiveness could be strengthened for the sustainable development of the school.

3.1.1 With the support of the IMC, the leadership of the Principal and collaboration of the senior teachers, the school strives to develop in the face of high turnover of teachers and VPs. In recent years, the school succeeds in setting up the relatively stable School Leadership Team (SLT), which manages to ensure the continuity and smooth implementation of the school priority tasks. Over the years, the school has maintained an English-rich and multi-cultural learning environment as well as offering a diversified curriculum. Ample learning opportunities inside and beyond the classroom are provided to foster students' acquisition of knowledge and skills, as well as nurturing their positive values and attitudes. Students generally enjoy learning. Recently, learner diversity gets widened, and the school continues to maintain a harmonious, inclusive and caring atmosphere for students to enjoy their school life. While the students have outstanding performance in individual subjects, the school has put much effort to boost students' overall academic performance. For further development, the school has to strengthen the curriculum leadership at both school and subject levels as well as enhance the learning and teaching effectiveness with better design of learning activities.

3.2 Direction of school development can address students' needs. School self-evaluation (SSE) and use of data could be improved by specifying clearly the expected learning outcomes in the formulation of targets and

corresponding strategies.

3.2.1 The direction of school development is clear and address the needs of students as identified by survey findings and teachers' observation. The school is aware that the majority of the students are well looked after by families such that they are not keen to take up challenges together with their peers. Though students enjoy learning, they do not have high expectation of their academic performance, especially those who plan to pursue overseas studies. In the last school development cycle (SDC), one of the MC is to develop a curriculum to meet the needs of those students planning to study overseas. The focus of catering for learner diversity is extended to this SDC, with much emphasis put on enhancing students' academic performance. Another MC of the last SDC was to develop students to be interdependent and risk-taking student leaders for empowering them to face challenges. Building on achievements of developing students to be confident learners through various inside and outside classroom learning experiences, this MC is extended to two MCs in the current SDC, namely, cultivating a growth mindset culture to nurture students' positive values of being resilient and attitude of striving for the best possible self, as well as engaging students in vigorous learning experiences so that they would be serious in their academic work.

3.2.2 Based on the SDP, the school formulates its annual school plans, including the focus areas, corresponding priorities and targets. However, the connection between the MC of the SDP and the priorities of the ASP is not explicitly and clearly articulated to all teachers, thereby affecting their genuine understanding of the MC and the priorities, and undermining the effectiveness of implementation, especially when the turnover rate of middle managers and teachers is high. Most targets set in SDP and ASP are tasks to be carried out by the school rather than the outcome of or impact on students resulting from the tasks executed. Hence, evaluation generally focuses on reporting the tasks completed but leaving the effectiveness of student learning and development not aptly assessed. Some targets, such as motivating students to learn through different pedagogical strategies, are very general, which makes it difficult to identify the valid data to evaluate the extent to which the target is achieved.

3.2.3 At school level, evaluation is made against each target under the MC but an overall achievement of an MC in the SDP is seldom conducted. While teachers' views on the strategies and findings from lesson observations are frequently made reference to, little emphases is put on reviewing students' learning outcomes. By the end of an SDC, the school suggests follow-up actions for each strategy taken, which are usually a continuation or fine-tuning of the current strategies. In-depth analysis on the problems encountered or in what way the strategies should be enhanced is not much discussed. The use of evaluation findings for informing strategic planning is limited.

3.2.4 Most subject departments and functional committees echo the

school's developmental priorities in their work plans. However, for some strategies, alignment of subject work plans with the school plan varies across subjects. It is good to observe that some subjects devise more specific strategies to achieve the targets with due consideration on students' learning needs. As for student support services, flexible adjustment is made to the school plan based on students' needs derived from surveys, student interviews and teachers' observation. For instance, greater emphasis has been appropriately placed on taking care of students' emotional and physical well-being to enhance their positivity during face-to-face class suspension due to the COVID-19 epidemic and after school resumption. In evaluation, most subject departments and functional teams or committees focus on the strategies completed. For example, the evaluation on the target "Deepen the learning of the curriculum and build competence in students through different pedagogical strategies" is mainly on the implementation schedule of strategies, such as Independent Study Scheme (ISS), but not on the students' self-regulated learning (SRL) skills developed; similarly, some of the follow-up actions suggested by the student support related committees focus on the administrative arrangement of the programmes. Nevertheless, quality self-evaluation is observed in an individual subject, which places good efforts in identifying students' needs with reference to data collected from various sources when evaluating the effectiveness on student learning; it also makes appropriate subsequent refinements to the school-based curriculum and teaching strategies.

3.3 Leadership and Monitoring role of the school management has been improved. Curriculum leadership could be strengthened.

3.3.1 The leadership and monitoring role of the school management has been improved since the last CR. Both VPs are dedicated to leading and monitoring the implementation of curricula and pastoral programmes through regular meetings, observations of lessons and programmes as well as inspections of department plans and student work. Advice for improvement for middle managers' follow-up are provided in a timely manner.

3.3.2 Given the high proportion of new teachers with relatively few years of teaching experience, the school aptly provides them with comprehensive support which includes the mentorship programme, peer lesson observations and collaborative lesson planning sessions; their workload in their first year is also significantly lighter to leave them room for developing their pedagogical and classroom management skills. At present, the Head of Curriculum and Assessment is left vacant and the duties are taken up by the VP concerned. For sustainable and effective development, this area of work should be supported by a committee consisting of different subject heads to facilitate the holistic school curriculum development with advice on learning and teaching that suit the needs of different Key Learning Areas (KLAs) and subjects.

3.3.3 Some heads of subject departments are rather green. Their professional capacity for carrying out school-based curriculum review or fostering coordination and collaboration among different subjects could be strengthened. For instance, the school adopts STEM education as a means to cater for learner diversity instead of for all students. Though a few STEM activities have been arranged through procurement of services, there are inadequate learning experiences for students to apply their knowledge and skills across STEM-related KLAs in an integrative manner. With the support of the IMC, external professional consultants are deployed to foster the curriculum planning and pedagogy for some subject departments. To sustain and maximise the effectiveness of the support on the development of the subjects, due attention should be given to internalizing and transferring the experiences gained from the consultants for building up the subject panels' own curriculum leadership.

3.4 Broad learning experiences covering knowledge, skills and attitudes are provided to foster students' whole-person development. The learning content of some KLAs in the junior secondary level needs to be enriched.

3.4.1 A broad and diversified curriculum complemented with a range of life-wide learning opportunities is aptly provided to foster students' whole-person development. Besides the Technology Education subjects, Performing Arts and Spanish are school-based subjects at junior secondary level that cultivate students' creativity and equip them with communication skills to understand different cultures respectively. A wide range of subject choices, including Applied Learning courses and Spanish, are offered at senior secondary level to meet students' needs and interests. Furthermore, the school-based Creative Arts is arranged for all S.4 students to broaden their learning experiences in Art and Design. Ample co-curricular activities organised by subject departments and committees enable students to learn in authentic situations and explore their potentials. S.1-S.4 students could broaden their horizons and develop the positive values of caring for others through the local and non-local trips during the Experiential Learning Week, Creativity, Actions, Service (CAS) activities and exchanges with the sister school in the Mainland.

3.4.2 The balance of coverage of the essential learning elements of some KLAs at the junior secondary level should be enhanced. For instance, some essential learning elements of the Personal, Social and Humanities Education (PSHE) and Science Education KLAs are not adequately covered. The missing learning content not only affects students' acquisition of foundation knowledge and skills but also their development of the related values and attitudes, including Basic Law education and health education. The curriculum leaders should refer to the relevant Curriculum Guides for enriching the learning content and planning the school-based curriculum in alignment

with the latest educational trends.

3.4.3 Students' positive values and attitudes are mainly nurtured through the student development programmes including the Life Education (LE) lessons, assemblies, talks and extended activities. These programmes have broad coverage of priority values such as respect for others. In recent years, the school has set up the Flag Raising Team and suitably arranged monthly Flag Raising Ceremony, together with singing of the National Anthem and sharing on related topics by teachers and student leaders, for nurturing students' national identity. Other values that the school emphasises in accordance with students' needs are also covered, for example, the well-being of the students, environmental education and life planning education. The learning activities conducted in the assemblies and LE lessons help students understand and reflect on the positive values and attitudes although the design of materials sometimes does not provide sufficient input to foster students' in-depth reflection or discussion. Students are also provided with opportunities to put their values into practice through whole-school activities, such as the act of kindness challenges and community services. Positive impact of these programmes on students is observed. For instance, students have more empathy for the needy as exhibited in the community services. They also take the initiative to organise a waste reduction campaign after a sharing on the global environment issue. Some subject departments such as Humanities and Liberal Studies are aware of their role in nurturing positive values of students. This practice could be promoted to all subjects so as to strengthen the collaboration between subject departments and pastoral teams in the promotion of values education.

3.4.4 In response to the focus of the current SDC on nurturing students' resilience, positive education that focuses on the cultivation of students' growth mindset has been vigorously promoted to strengthen their skills to overcome adversity. Proper guidance is provided for students to develop the mindset of thinking positively about themselves and the skills to learn from their past experience for improvement through reflection. Besides learning the skills of setting process goals for facilitating them to be the best possible self, students are empowered to face failure and to take up challenges willingly.

3.5 An English-rich learning environment is created and appropriate strategies on the promotion of Language across the Curriculum (LaC) have been initiated.

3.5.1 An English-rich learning environment with ample opportunities for students to speak English both inside and beyond the classroom is created. English is commonly used for school events, announcements and presentations as well as the display of student development and subject information. Inside the classroom, students are provided with adequate opportunities to express their ideas and learning outcomes in English through presentations,

discussions, and drama. Students communicate well with peers and teachers in English in the classroom. LaC is promoted collaboratively by the Master of Teaching Team, the English Department and some other subject departments such as Mathematics and Humanities. The English Department focuses on developing students' language skills that are essential to the learning of respective subjects. As revealed from lesson observations and student work, students are able to apply the language skills in the subject context. The considerable momentum of promoting LaC should be maintained and further extended to other KLAs according to their readiness.

3.5.2 A reading atmosphere on campus and students' reading habit are being developed as a result of the continuous joint efforts of the English Department and the teacher-librarian in nurturing students' reading interest and skills. In the reading time, students are interested and absorbed in reading. A variety of platforms is provided for students to demonstrate their learning outcomes such as reading conservations with peers, teachers and parents. Collaborative efforts made by the teacher-librarian and subject departments in promoting reading are evident in a range of reading schemes, exhibitions and sharing. Since one of the school recent priority tasks is to further strengthen the promotion of reading, the school could explore other modes of collaboration among different KLAs for strengthening Reading across the Curriculum (RaC) through the provision of meaningful activities and contexts that students can apply, deepen and extend their spectrum of reading and literacy skills.

3.6 A range of measures are implemented to meet the diverse needs of students and cultivate an atmosphere of respect for diversity. More strategies to cater for learner diversity in curriculum planning could be further explored.

3.6.1 The school has successfully promoted an inclusive atmosphere in which students learn to appreciate and embrace diversity through various learning experiences collaboratively provided by committees and subject departments. It capitalises on the multi-cultural background of students and teaching staff by introducing cultural activities of different countries, such as the Diwali Festival and the Chinese Culture Day for students to celebrate cultural diversity. As observed, students feel interested in these activities. Besides, the experiential learning trips, both overseas immersion trips and local trips, offer invaluable experiences for students to learn about foreign customs and ways of living that may be unfamiliar to them. For example, the schooling of Cambodian children and the life of the elderly living in poverty in Hong Kong broaden students' exposure.

3.6.2 The needs of students with special educational needs (SEN) and talented students are aptly catered with the good collaboration among the pastoral teams. The school has created an inclusive environment where SEN

students get along quite well with their peers. Suitable accommodations to SEN students during assessment are well accepted and supported by all students and parents. Various support measures are suitably provided to improve their learning and interaction with peers. Reference materials for parents to know how they can support their children are available on the school website. Visits to workplaces are also thoughtfully arranged supporting the SEN students to better prepare them for their future. As for the talented students, various opportunities, such as joining external competitions, are offered to further develop their talents. Both pull-out programmes and enrichment programmes are available for students who perform exceptionally well in academics. For those who have outstanding performance in sports and music, they are further trained through sport teams and music programmes. At present, the talent pool is still being developed. To take a step forward to align with the school's developmental priority in nurturing students' leadership, the school could consider having leadership as one of the categories in the talent pool with extra training to students with outstanding performance in leadership.

3.6.3 The school-based Chinese Language curriculum for NCS students could be revised to better cater for their needs. At present, the aforementioned school-based curriculum mainly aims at helping students attain the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examination though considerable efforts have been paid to link the learning content with the real-life experiences to facilitate NCS students' understanding of the Chinese language. Nonetheless, the arrangement of having standardised expectation for all NCS students in learning Chinese would limit their opportunities and achievement. The school should appropriately adopt the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" and the "Chinese Language Assessment Tools for NCS students" to tailor-make a level-appropriate school-based curriculum and monitor students' learning progress so as to facilitate NCS students to learn Chinese progressively in a "small-step" approach and maximise their learning.

3.6.4 The school is well aware of the importance of catering for learner diversity as evident in the recent SDCs. Apart from the school arrangement of streaming and split classes according to students' performance, lunch-time remedial intervention is arranged to support the learning of less able students, while external co-curricular activities and competitions are offered to unleash students' potential. Besides, individual subjects, in alignment with the ASP, differentiate the curriculum for students of different abilities, and a few subjects attempt the use of graded worksheets. However, most subjects merely rely on repeated practices on examination questions and after class individual support. Hence, the Head of Curriculum and Assessment should consolidate the experiences of different subject departments and, in particular, foster the try-out of differentiated instruction as specified in the ASP.

3.7 Different teams have invested considerable efforts in life planning education (LPE) to help students of varied needs to make responsible and informed choices on their pathways.

3.7.1 The school-based LPE curriculum is well structured, through which students have better self-understanding, opportunities for career exploration and experience of career planning and management. Suitable focuses are also set for different levels based on students' needs, such as the selection of elective subjects for S.3 students and building personal curriculum vitae for university admission for S.4 students. Through various inside and outside school learning experiences, adequate information of multiple pathways is given to students to help them make responsible and informed choices. Students are usually required to make reflection on what they have learned. Some reflections of the senior secondary students are of good quality, showing their clear understanding of their own strengths and interests. Some also have concrete plans for achieving their goals.

3.7.2 To echo the target of nurturing self-aspired students, LPE has been suitably strengthened in this development cycle by providing more personalised counselling services and making use of the e-portfolio that keeps track on students' academic and pastoral development. With the guidance and personal advice from teachers, students have more thorough reflection on their achievements and areas for improvement, which is conducive to making an informed life planning.

3.8 Collective efforts are made to nurture students to be confident learners. Effectiveness of the measures for developing students to be self-regulated in learning remains to be reviewed.

3.8.1 To empower students to face challenges, ample opportunities are provided for them to demonstrate their learning inside and beyond the classroom with the aim of cultivating them to be confident learners. Academic assembly, together with the presentation or sharing about their learning in the Global Learning Showcases conducted after the experiential learning trips, comprises a series of KLA learning activities suitably organised to motivate students' learning by demonstrating their learning outcomes on stage. As observed in various learning activities, students present their views confidently in front of their peers.

3.8.2 Students' confidence is enhanced through the learning experiences gained from organising activities of different scales by student leader groups, such as Prefects and Student Association. With structured training, senior level student leaders support their junior counterparts to perform their duties properly. Junior level students are also invited to take up some supporting yet important roles in some committees. Some student leaders, Youthnity, are provided with the chances to join inter-school student conferences on student-initiated topics related to global issues, such as environmental protection.

School-based activities, such as waste reduction campaigns to raise their schoolmates' awareness of the issues are then organised by students. All these student-led activities contribute to developing students' self-confidence, generic skills and self-understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. They are also nurtured to be proactive and self-aspired throughout the learning process.

3.8.3 There are subject-based ISS, which aim at nurturing students' SRL abilities by enabling them to select learning content of their own interests and learning needs. However, the effectiveness of the subject-based ISS varies across subject departments. A few subject departments have successfully guided students to set specific goals according to their learning needs. Timely and appropriate feedback is also provided to facilitate students' reflection and improvement on their learning. Nevertheless, in some subject departments, either the design of ISS tasks lack SRL elements, or personalised and specific feedback for students' improvement are inadequate. To help students be goal-driven, academic conferences are organised among academic leaders, the targeted students and parents in this SDC. Ongoing support has been provided to the students for guiding them to achieve the academic-performance-related goals set. The overall effectiveness of this measure remains to be reviewed.

3.9 Sufficient learning activities are provided for students' participation and demonstration of learning. The design of learning activities could be improved for enhancing learning effectiveness and catering for learner diversity.

3.9.1 During the face-to-face class suspension caused by the COVID-19 epidemic, the school made concerted efforts to sustain student learning in a blended mode, with a combination of e-learning and learning of other means. Online learning resources, real-time online lessons and assignments were aptly arranged to support student learning at home and develop their self-learning skills. Teachers had been equipped with essential IT skills for this purpose. Building on the readiness of teachers and students, the school is encouraged to consider further promoting e-learning to extend students' learning and develop their self-learning skills.

3.9.2 Face-to-face lessons generally follow the key features of Formative Instructional Practices promoted by the school. Clear learning targets are shared with students at the beginning of the lessons. Teachers effectively activate students' prior knowledge at the beginning of the lessons to facilitate their learning of new concepts. Lessons are mostly organised by a sequence of learning activities for students to participate. Group and pair work activities are often adopted. Good teacher-student rapport is observed in most lessons. Students are largely attentive, displaying a good attitude towards learning, and they actively express themselves and interact with teachers in an

open learning atmosphere. In the more effective lessons, students demonstrate high motivation and exchange ideas with their peers in group work. Teachers, as a facilitator, effectively create a learning environment that fosters student interaction and develop their potential. Learning activities are well-sequenced and students' learning is scaffolded by a series of stimulating questions that facilitate them to think deep into the learning content step by step. Teachers can conclude the key learning points from the output of the students.

3.9.3 In some lessons, the learning activities are not aligned with the learning targets. Some learning activities are either too simple or too difficult, and the scaffolding is insufficient to support students to grasp the learning progressively, which undermine the learning effectiveness. A few lessons are particularly ineffective for several reasons. For instance, the learning objectives of the activities and the instruction provided for students to carry out the learning tasks are unclear. The teacher does not provide feedback on the students' learning or address their difficulties in the learning process. In an individual lesson, inaccuracy in concept is found in teaching, which greatly affects students' mastery of the subject knowledge.

3.9.4 Although streaming and split class arrangement are adopted, learner diversity within class is still obvious. Most teachers monitor the progress of individual students and provide support to those in need. Mixed ability grouping for the purpose of fostering peer learning is adopted in some lessons. Expected results were sometimes not achieved as collaborative elements of the group work are limited. In some lessons, the learning tasks are completed fast by the more able students, but no challenging tasks are assigned to extend their learning. Although questioning is frequent to check students' understanding of the learning content, and individual teachers provide thought-provoking questions, most questions are not sufficiently cognitively demanding to stretch the potential of the students. Teachers' feedback in most of the lessons is positive and timely but not specific for promoting student learning.

3.10 Students are well-disciplined and enthusiastic in participating in school activities. They have outstanding achievement in drama and satisfactory academic performance.

3.10.1 Students are well-disciplined and energetic. They are friendly and eager to offer help to their classmates. Students coming from different backgrounds get along with one another quite well. Good rapport has also been developed with teachers. Students enjoy school life and are enthusiastic in joining different school activities. They display confidence and serious attitude when they perform their duties.

3.10.2 In the past three years, the percentage of students meeting the general entrance requirements for local undergraduate university programmes in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education was below the territory average

of day school students. Students meeting the general entrance requirements in sub-degree courses were above, below and close to the territory average of day school students in 2018, 2019 and 2020 respectively. Taking into account the S.1 intake, the school performed fairly well in the HKDSE in the past three years.

3.10.3 Students actively participate in a wide range of co-curricular activities, covering arts and sports. Many of them take part in and receive awards in various inter-school and territory-wide competitions, including uniform groups, choirs, drama, football and swimming. In particular, students have obtained outstanding achievements in the Hong Kong School Drama Festival and choir competitions.

4. Suggestions for Improvement

4.1 The school should improve the effectiveness of SSE by setting the targets of its MC with respect to the expected learning outcomes of students rather than the tasks to be performed, and evaluating the achievement of its work with reference to students' performance in learning and development. The school could also analyse the problems encountered and factors contributing to success in executing their strategies in greater depth so as to provide fruitful feedback on its planning.

4.2 The school should strengthen the curriculum leadership at both the school and subject levels so as to provide students with balanced learning experiences and to align with the latest curriculum development trends. In particular, the school should enrich the curriculum content of some KLAs, better plan and implement the curriculum initiatives such as STEM education and e-learning as well as enhance the strategies for catering for learner diversity through curriculum planning and pedagogical approach.

4.3 The school should enhance the learning and teaching effectiveness through better design of learning activities and feedback on student learning. As some factors contributing to the quality of learning activities are subject-specific, besides broadening the expertise of the Master of Teaching Team, the school should enhance the professional capacity and the leading role of subject department heads. The professional exchange within and across subject departments need to be fostered as well so as to strengthen the pedagogical content knowledge of the subject teachers.