

# Comprehensive Review Report

## **St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section)**

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

**Review Period : 3, 9-12 & 15-16 March 2010**

**McGlynn-Ross Education (Hong Kong)**



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# **1. Undertaking the Comprehensive Review (CR): Our approach and methodology**

The Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) service agreement requires a CR to be conducted to review the performance of a school after it has operated for five years. The CR preparatory visits of St. Paul's Convent School (SPCS) were conducted on 3 February and 3 March 2010 while the in-school review took place on 9 to 12, 15 to 16 March, 2010. The CR team of fifteen reviewers evaluated the performance in four domains of school work: Management and Organisation; Curriculum, Learning and Teaching; Student Support and School Ethos; and Student Performance.

Before conducting the CR, the team scrutinised the extensive documentation provided by SPCS and information from various sources including the excellent school website and the Education Bureau (EDB) website.

On 3 February, the Team Leader met with randomly selected groups of students and staff to explore the theme *what it is like to be a student* and *what it is like to be a teacher* in SPCS. Team members visited the school on 3 March 2010 to explain the CR process to staff and respond to questions. The team met the School Management Committee (SMC) to listen to their views on the school while the Principal (who is also the School Supervisor) was invited to brief the team on the school's strengths and development priorities. An open parents' meeting, very well-supported by three hundred and thirty-three parents, was held in the evening to give parents the opportunity to share their views with team members.

The CR team used the following methods to review the performance of the school:

- Scrutiny of documents provided by the school before and during the review. All requests for information were granted.
- Observation of various school activities, including the daily morning assembly, the weekly morning School

Administration Team meeting, recess and lunch time activities with musical, dance, other co-curricular activities and the Diversified Interest Programme (DIP) on a Wednesday afternoon.

- Meetings and interviews with the Principal, Vice Principal, Committee Heads of Administration, Academic, Pastoral Care, Public Relations and members of Quality Enhancement and School Leadership Teams, panel heads, teachers, school social worker, support and janitorial staff, Alumni Association, and most important of all, with students (including the Prefect Board) and parents (including the Parent-Teacher Association).
- Scrutiny of samples of students' work across all subjects included in the review and examination papers.
- Observation of lessons: eighty-seven lessons were observed. In addition, six lessons (two in Information & Computer Technology, one each in Ethics, History, Music and French) were also observed to get a general impression of how these are taught but these lessons are not covered in this report.
- Almost 100% of school staff were observed in classrooms and/or interviewed. Ninety students (randomly selected, apart from the Prefect Board) representative of different stages took part in meetings with the team. In addition, team members engaged with students informally during recess and lunch times.
- Liberal Studies and the following subjects under the eight Key Learning Areas (KLA) were reviewed:

<b>KLA</b>	<b>Chi. Lang Ed.</b>	<b>Eng. Lang. Ed.</b>	<b>Maths. Ed.</b>	<b>P.S.H. Ed.</b>	<b>Sci. Ed.</b>	<b>Tech. Ed.</b>	<b>Arts Ed.</b>	<b>P.E.</b>
<b>Subjects reviewed</b>	Chinese Language, Chinese Literature, Chinese Language & Culture, & Putonghua	English Language & Use of English	Mathematics, Additional Mathematics, Pure Mathematics, & Mathematics & Statistics	Geography, Economics, & Religious Studies	Integrated Science, Physics, Chemistry & Biology	Principles of Accounts	Visual Arts & Media Education	Physical Education

- The student population stands at 1320 with a teaching staff of 90. Approximately 190 Form 1 students come from the Primary Section via the *through-train* mode. The remainder gain entrance through open competition. The class organisation and student population for 2009-2010 are as follows:

<b>Level</b>	<b>S1</b>	<b>S2</b>	<b>S3</b>	<b>S4</b>	<b>F.5</b>	<b>F.6</b>	<b>F.7</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Class</b>	6	6	6	6	6	4	4	38
<b>Students</b>	231	239	230	217	187	114	102	1320

- The findings and evaluations presented in this report are derived from the corporate judgement of the CR team based on a rigorous and objective scrutiny of the evidence and the information gathered through the above-mentioned methods during the review period.

## **2. What does St. Paul's Convent School stand for? Motto, Mission, Vision and Ethos**

It is no surprise given its history to find that the school motto is taken from the Bible (I Corinthians, 9:22): *Omnia Omnibus*, which means *being all things to all people, irrespective of race, religion and social status*. SPCS is a Catholic secondary school for girls from the age of eleven to eighteen, sponsored and administered by the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres, an international congregation founded in France in 1696. One of the oldest and most famous schools in Hong Kong, SPCS was a grant-in-aid school until 2004 when it joined the DSS. The DSS has given the school greater flexibility to be directly linked as a *through-train* school with its primary section. The School Sponsoring Body set out clearly its vision and mission for the future in its application to join the DSS.

The vision is to provide a seamless bilingual education for girls in a happy and motivating learning environment so that they learn to embrace the Paulinian heritage of truth, beauty, goodness, nobility and honour. This provision is exemplified in the *through-train* whereby a child can progress from kindergarten to primary to secondary. In keeping with the founders' mission to raise the quality of life of the people near Chartres, the mission today is to provide all-round education, based on Christian values, for Paulinians so that they can contribute to life and work and serve as global citizens. The values are encapsulated in the seven Cs: charity, conscience, confidence, courage, creativity, competence and commitment, which have become an integral part of school life.

The development of the whole-person is evident in the core values that are realised through the seamless scope of the curricular and extra-curricular activities (ECA) that the girls experience. This experience extends into students' life within the home and family and globally through a combination of hosting cultural exchanges to strengthen international networking and practical support to less well-off school communities in China. Since the re-unification of Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, the school has successfully helped students

embrace the *One Country, Two Systems* concept through intellectual understanding and practical action in establishing their roots and identity as Chinese. In all of these ways, the school breathes life into its vision and mission, keeping alive its commitment to *being all things to all people*.

The hustle, bustle and excited activity that is Causeway Bay gives way on coming through the doors of SPCS to *an oasis* – an aesthetically-pleasing colourful garden, and a welcoming reception beckoning the visitor to venture further to discover a *fertile* spot in the educational landscape of Hong Kong. The daily greeting from the Principal is followed by a short assembly led by students. In and out of class, there is an unconstrained harmony as well as a spontaneous sharing in an ethos of mutual support and togetherness captured in the words of students who told us: *we love to come through the school doors every day and this is our second home*. The ethos underlines the development of the whole-person, captured in the quote from teachers: *our school is not just about academic success but nurtures social, personal and moral values in a wholly supportive atmosphere*. This supportive ethos is evident in the way the school responds to student needs, best summed up in the way it was put to us by students: *if we have a problem, it will be handled properly and with care*. The Mentorship programme for new teachers fosters the caring and family ethos. The following quote captures teachers' feelings: *our students are respectful and while the school is competitive, our students are up to the challenge and really enjoy aspiring to achieve high standards both academically and in ECA*. The school's illustrious history of outstanding achievement and service has inspired an ethos of high expectations today with priority to the continuous uplifting of the ceiling of achievement for Paulinians by improving its environment, technology, pedagogy and special programmes for building a sustainable future.

There is a strong bond and a great sense of belonging within the Paulinian community which inspires quality learning and teaching and the sharing of a global vision and citizenship world-wide.

### **3. How good are Management and Organisation?**

#### ***How good is school governance?***

The strong and committed Sponsoring Body, through the SMC, has endowed the school with a rich heritage of Christian values and made available the resources to fulfil the vision and mission set out in the DSS application. The smooth transition to DSS has exemplified the advantages of the Government scheme to a school seeking to provide all-round excellence in learning in an innovative and flexible style to meet students' needs in the twenty-first century. The SMC has been central to the success of the DSS transition and is fully supported by the School Advisory Board (SAB), which has three elected teacher representatives. We recommend that the SMC should consider expanding its size by adding members of the Paulinian community with different backgrounds and experience in education and management who would add an extra dimension as well as an awareness of the school's rich heritage and culture.

#### ***How good is school management and administration?***

Management is characterised by a belief in team work. We found that teachers and support staff feel that their views and contributions are valued and taken account of. The successful consultation process on the pros and cons of DSS led to a united front and accounts, in large part, for the impressive success under DSS. A similar approach is enabling the school to manage successfully the change to the new senior secondary (NSS) curriculum. Another characteristic of school management relates to introducing change through *evolution rather than revolution* in a step-by-step approach. The school's pre-eminent position in educational technology is just one of the successful outcomes of the *evolution rather than revolution* style of management.

The links and communication across the key teams are effective and reinforced by overlapping membership in some cases. The Principal chairs SAB and the School Leadership Team (SLT), both



of which hold at least two meetings per year to discuss issues related to school development. This structure gives teachers a channel to make suggestions through their elected teacher representatives at SLT, which serves as a *think-tank* and which has been revised to include experienced teachers of different rankings and different specialisms. Four *functional committees* relate to SLT with the job of implementing school policies and practices, namely: Administration, Academic, Pastoral Care, and Public Relations. The four committees are co-ordinated by experienced teachers who also have operational responsibilities. They relate well to the experienced leaders of sub-groups with the minimum of fuss, ensuring that the work runs smoothly. The School Leadership Team prepares drafts of the school plan, annual report and school self-assessment report. The Quality Enhancement Team provides data for analysis and support in monitoring and self-evaluating key tasks and concerns.

The ongoing management is facilitated by the Administration Team, which meets every Monday morning before school and brings together the Principal, Vice Principal and the four Committee Heads. Effective arrangements are in place to ensure that the operations associated with managing a large school run smoothly. The well-run Finance Section advises the Principal on financial planning in line with good practice for DSS schools. A former senior and highly-experienced building manager provides advice on infrastructure on a part-time voluntary basis. Procedures to comply with legislation and contingency matters are well-organised. School records and documentation, including the information made available to the review team, are exemplary and easily accessible.

Our attendance at one of the Monday morning meetings, together with records of past meetings and discussions with staff, confirm that school business is conducted efficiently and effectively with a focus on *people*, teamwork, good communication and things that really matter.

## **4. How good are School Planning and Self-evaluation?**

### ***How good is school development planning?***

The annual school theme of 2009-2010 is *Healthy Living, Happy Life* featuring health education programmes supported by HKSAR Health Department and Caritas with the aim of ensuring that all Paulinians develop a healthy mind, body and soul. The introduction lays out the context for the detailed tables (targets, strategies, time scale, criteria, method of evaluation, person responsible and resources required) in a user-friendly style that focuses on overall school goals: pastoral, spiritual, community and social services, academic, technology, learning support, administrative, professional, social and cultural and self-evaluation. The three priorities (preparing for NSS, quality enhancement of performance, and nurturing an all-round education) are set out in manageable tasks coupled with an equitable distribution of responsibility for action. The drafts are discussed widely before being finalised. The plan is a key management tool that guides and monitors progress during the year.

The five-year plan is a visionary document entitled *Building a Sustainable Future*. A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis prepares the way for the detailed tables. Nine themes for future development are set out with the declared aim of seizing the opportunity to launch the NSS curriculum and an international curriculum, International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), to provide students with diverse education pathways. The links between SWOT and the themes might, in some places, be more explicit. Sustaining the future and the continuing pursuit of excellence shape the planned development, for example, the focus on e-learning platforms, students' electronic portfolio, enriching students' experience through cultural exchanges, and working with tertiary institutions to provide accredited staff development opportunities. The plan is to be commended for its focus on the successful implementation of NSS along with IGCSE in a coming together of curriculum, learning and teaching.

## *How good is school self-evaluation?*

In the annual report, achievements and reflections on major concerns point up issues to be considered in preparing the annual plan. The priority given to evaluation and openness is to be seen in the colourful and accessible booklet that houses both report and plan with an emphasis on evaluative, as opposed to descriptive, reporting, with a focus on progress and areas for improvement. Self-evaluation, built around the EDB School Development and Accountability Framework, is a long-established culture in SPCS and has contributed greatly to the school's continuing very high achievements. The feedback system, including findings of departmental and school SWOT analyses and self-reflection from teachers (including the end of term survey and the new log book) leads to refinement and assessment of the school plan. The organisation structure is reviewed annually with adjustments reflecting developments, for example, in curriculum, technology and survey findings. The subject panels (including panel heads' self-appraisal) and functional committees undertake detailed reviews, which are followed up in meetings and one-to-one sharing with the Principal. Regular staff meetings and development days, and stakeholders' voice meetings help to ensure that self-evaluation is transparent to the Paulinian community. A varied range of activities, including classroom observation, appraisal (including observation by visiting consultants) and feedback from students (including meetings of Prefect Board) further inform self-evaluation. Teachers point to feedback from a parent population that takes a keen interest in the overall welfare of students.

The school self-assessment report for the past is exemplary with a detailed evaluation of management, learning, teaching, and curriculum, student support and school ethos, and student performance and scrutiny of the results of the surveys of students, staff and parents and *Assessment Programme for Affective & Social Outcomes* (APASO). The report rightly celebrates successes but there is no sign of complacency given the emphasis on reflection leading to improvements. The school ethos is one that embodies the concept of school self-evaluation and self-improvement.

## **5. How good are Leadership and Staff Management?**

### ***How good is school leadership?***

The Principal, a Paulinian from school days, is also the school Supervisor and has led the school for the past eighteen years. She is an inspirational and exceptional leader who embodies, and gives life to, the school motto *Omnia Omnibus*. Not afraid to take risks, she leads by example particularly in curriculum, learning and teaching. She believes that everyone is a leader and her charisma cajoles and empowers both staff and students *to uplift the ceiling of achievement* in the pursuit of individual and collective excellence. She practises teamwork which, along with a knack of bringing out the best in people, has created a school in which leadership is spread or distributed throughout. This has created strength in depth at all levels across the school to undertake assignments and ad hoc tasks.

The Vice Principal possesses an endless supply of energy and an enviable awareness of the school's myriad developments. He leads by example on curriculum, learning and teaching as well as deploying sound management and inter-personal skills to bring out the best in both staff and students. The Principal and Vice Principal bring complementary skills to the business of leading and form a strong partnership in managing the school.

The heads of the functional committees work alongside leaders of sub-groups to support successful partnerships. Subject departments, with a lead from the experienced panel heads, collaborate well with an emphasis on improving curriculum and cross-curriculum learning and teaching. There is a similar approach in all the support services. The Prefect Board drawn from F6 is quite inspiring and of huge value to the school. In discussion, it shows a readiness to collaborate and identify student leaders for particular tasks while united by a common desire to do the best for their school and the wider community. The challenge is to continue to groom future leaders in the Paulinian tradition to plan smoothly for succession in

order to build the sustainable future set out in the five-year plan.

### ***How good is staff development?***

Teaching staff possess very good academic qualifications with 50% holding Master's degree or above and all holding a Bachelor's degree. A consultative process setting out procedures for allocation of duties ensures that account is taken of staff views. Teachers are assigned to several classes of the same level to build up expertise and economise in preparation time. There is good joint preparation of teaching materials across all panels. The school has capitalised on DSS status to recruit an additional twenty-two teachers and four teaching assistants at a time of demanding curriculum change. Teachers enjoy quality service from committed support staff.

The school has been nominated by EDB as a Professional Development School since 2005, and a Centre of Excellence on Information Technology (IT) in Education on Hong Kong Island since 2002. It is collaborating with the Open University of Hong Kong to pursue the International Global Cohort-based Professional Doctorate Degree, an innovative programme adopted by six countries as a pilot for the teaching profession. The average continuing professional development (CPD) hours for staff in 2008-2009 were around ninety-five, which compares favourably with the Hong Kong average. Rich and diverse activities are giving teachers confidence in preparing for the NSS and IGCSE, including many in-school workshops. The DIP on Wednesday afternoons *frees* most teachers from teaching to engage in collaborative sharing and development in panels. CPD in IT has been a *role model* in how to enhance the professional competence of teachers, for example, in using mobile technology, use of iPod and Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) for interactive learning and teaching. Peer observation is regarded as a motivating factor in professional development as well as the insights from external *critical friends*. The practice whereby the school finds substitute teachers to allow teachers to attend courses in school time, underscores the commitment to CPD, and is valued highly by the staff. A well-

planned induction programme, including a year-long mentorship, is in place for new staff. Staff development is well-balanced, reflecting both school and staff needs, and driven by the mission to enhance professional and personal growth.

### ***How good is staff appraisal?***

Teachers find that the appraisal system is conducive to their professional development. They like the emphasis on the positive aspects of performance while encouraging rigorous self-evaluation to improve their learning and teaching skills. The procedures and assessment criteria are clear and understood by teachers. The system is facilitated by the uploading of all the appraisal forms to the school intranet for easy access. Panel heads and leaders of functional aspects self-evaluate performance against their objectives agreed earlier in the session as the basis for appraisal discussions with the Principal. The practice is to be commended in terms of its openness and readiness of teachers to self-assess quite objectively. They are prepared to do this as they have confidence in the system and in the follow-up action. Similarly, panel heads offer a view on the quality of teachers' performance in an interview that is conducted in an atmosphere designed to encourage self-improvement. From September 2009 teachers have been asked to reflect on their daily teaching in their teacher log book with the aim of encouraging a self-evaluation culture at classroom practice level. Teachers are given freedom, in this the first year, to use the log book to suit their own style. Lesson observation is becoming an established practice allowing panel heads and external critical friends to discuss strengths and areas to improve on an individual basis. Peer observation serves as a good starting point and, while less formal, it is conducted in a professional manner. The approach is fairly similar for support staff. The Principal invites teachers and parents to contribute their views on her performance and shares the results quite openly. SMC evaluates her performance on an informal way based on outcomes and the *general feel* around the school. The school approach to appraisal with its emphasis on fairness, openness and self-improvement is working to the benefit of staff and students.

## 6. How good are Learning and Teaching Resources?

*How good is the provision and management of learning and teaching resources?*

The school enjoys its own excellent facilities while adjoining the Primary and Pre-school Sections and St. Paul's Hospital. Facilities include: a spacious school hall; an indoor all-season swimming pool; a covered playground; two netball/basketball courts; and a garden ideal for *alfresco* discussion (and eating). Teaching facilities are extensive including a multi-media self-access learning centre, an IT learning centre, a dance studio, a video-broadcasting studio, a micro-teaching room, a Café Cyber de Qualite, a Chinese culture chamber, a synergy corner and *a quality home in a quality kitchen*. The new seven storey block includes a student activity centre, language laboratory, art room with an exhibition area, music room with a band studio, roof garden and Hong Kong's first-ever *Classroom of the Future* proffering an innovative and adaptable learning and natural lighting environment. The forty-five degree sky-light slope feature allows solar panels to be placed on top of the roof to demonstrate the function of re-usable energy. It is superb for video-conferencing and multi-media presentations.

With strong support from the Quality Education Fund (QEF) and EDB, the school has built an impressive infrastructure, initially on optical fibres in the 1990s and now a complete Wi-Fi campus to provide wireless connectivity throughout the school. Classrooms are well-equipped with IT facilities such as computers and projectors. All KLA and special rooms have SMART Boards (interactive white boards combining the simplicity of white board with the power of a computer). Resources include latest technology like iPod for mobile learning, campus TV for broadcasting, together with commercial and school-based e-learning platforms for Mathematics and Science subjects. Plasma display panels at the entrance broadcast school news, daily spiritual sharing and students' activities and work.

The superb physical environment and state of the art resources contribute greatly to the creation of a learning atmosphere.

## **7. How good are Curriculum Organisation, Implementation and Evaluation?**

### *How good is curriculum organisation?*

The school's broad and balanced curriculum aligns with best practice to provide students with flexibility while maximising their learning opportunities. It provides a solid base for knowledge, skills and attitudes that foster critical thinking and desire for life-long learning. The curriculum is well formulated and emphasises: the formation of spiritual, moral and religious values; development of positive life values and attitudes; pride in national heritage; and a global outlook.

The junior secondary curriculum is school-based while drawing on the Curriculum Development Council's (CDC) advice and EDB curriculum framework. Special, accelerated programmes are designed for junior students to develop individual talents. Preparation for NSS features prominently in all staff development activities. The school has made provision for an alternative curriculum and international assessments in order to allow students to widen students' opportunities to continue studies abroad, provide multiple pathways to complete secondary education, and enter local universities through the non-Joint University Programmes Admissions System (non-JUPAS). IGCSE, offered as an alternative to Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE), has been implemented in full in all F3 classes. Students are allowed to take the IGCSE in F4 at their own choice. They can then opt for the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level if they so wish.

The formal curriculum is enhanced by an informal curriculum through which students are exposed to an impressive variety of other learning experiences (OLE). The informal curriculum embraces the morning assemblies, ECA offered by over fifty school clubs and societies and participation in, for example, inter-school festivals for speech, music, dance, athletics meetings and



swimming galas. DIP supports twenty-five activities to help develop individual interests and multiple talents to the fullest and broaden learning experience. Arousing great interest is the *Reaching for the Stars* project in which the students, under the guidance of a pilot, are assembling an airplane which seats two.

The four key tasks – project learning, IT for interactive learning, moral and civic education, and reading to learn – are an integral part of the school curriculum. The very strong reading culture is also promoted in the informal curriculum, for example, silent reading in form periods, e-learning platforms *English Builder* and *a Passage a Day* and the various activities organised by the Reading to Learn Team. Enterprising School-based Learning Programmes, for example, Chinese Medicine, Ming Yi, Creative Media and Film and Video Production, are offered to better equip students for further studies and job opportunities.

The school is at the forefront of curriculum planning with well planned school-based courses and the innovative approach that integrates NSS and IGCSE. The informal curriculum is equally impressive and reaches out to provide opportunities for all in the spirit of whole-person development.

### ***How good is curriculum implementation?***

Each subject department develops a detailed year plan to guide its curriculum implementation. Teaching objectives and targets are stipulated clearly in the schemes of work, taking account of the four key tasks described above. Progress and annual evaluation reports are prepared and thorough SWOT analyses are conducted to check how well the curriculum is functioning and whether any changes need to be made. Ample opportunities, including time *freed* by DIP, are in place for staff to engage in collaborative planning for NSS and school-based curriculum development. There is positive collaboration among KLAs through cross-curricular projects and a strong cross-disciplinary approach to curriculum implementation.

To cater for individual learning differences, a *learning to learn* programme adapted from the UK has been implemented successfully in the F1 curriculum. Extra classes providing learning support for some students are available in English, Chinese and Mathematics. In 2009-2010, split classes are arranged to support learning of Mathematics and English in F1. Teachers offer individual and group tutorial on a regular basis for students who are experiencing difficulty in some aspects of learning. A bridging programme is offered to prospective F1 students to smooth the transition to secondary schooling.

The firm grasp of curriculum planning and implementation with the focus on staff development bodes well for the implementation of NSS alongside the option of IGCSE for students. The learning support initiatives are recognition of the diverse needs of the student population and offer opportunities for further development.

### ***How good is performance assessment and curriculum evaluation?***

Assessment criteria are embodied in comprehensive marking schemes which are moderated at different stages of the assessment process to enhance validity and reliability within and across KLA subjects. A variety of assessment modes are adopted and formats are diversified, including open-ended questions that focus on higher-order thinking. Formative assessments, such as presentations and class discussions at the class level, are usually delivered promptly to give students feedback and guide improvements. Peer assessment and self-assessment encourage students' independent learning and generic skills development. An inventive e-portfolio system built on the *Moodle* platform stores student learning profiles, helping students track their own progress (*Moodle* is a tool for creating dynamic web sites for students, often called *Virtual Learning Environment*). Summative assessment results help students to self-assess how well they perform in different subjects at different levels of the school. Performance assessment has many strong points to promote learning and could be broadened further to include more specific teacher commentary in some cases to help students better identify strengths and aspects

to improve.

## **8. How good are Learning and Teaching?**

The school uses English as the medium of instruction (EMI) for its formal curriculum apart from Putonghua, Chinese Language, Chinese History and Chinese Literature. In order that morals, faith and life are rooted in Chinese traditions and values, Chinese is sometimes used for teaching of morals and ethics as well in Family Life Education.

St. Paul's Convent School is *truly an EMI school* – it is a remarkably rich English-speaking environment in all aspects and at all times. School meetings, records and curriculum and teaching guides are in English. English is also the language used in staff development activities. The Principal and senior staff set the tone for the school along with the high-performing English Department. Teachers and students are at ease with, and communicate fluently in, English in class, in group work and meetings, and Cantonese is seldom heard. Students' writing skills are of a very high standard, especially in senior forms. Teachers are very effective in communicating in English, giving clear and systematic instructions in lessons.

Students are respectful, engaging and enthusiastic about learning. They articulate their thoughts clearly in English. The vast majority of them participate actively in lessons, demonstrate good collaboration skills in group work, show initiative and readiness to brainstorm ideas, and give constructive feedback in peer evaluation. Students are at ease in applying learning approaches, such as mind-mapping to organise concepts, solicit opinions and analyse issues when undertaking learning activities. The strong reading culture in the school has fostered students' excellent reading habits. An examination of their work across all levels shows that they are creative in tackling projects and assignments. There is a secure and supportive learning atmosphere across all departments with excellent rapport between students and teachers, which is conducive to sustaining quality learning.

Teachers in SPCS, like their students, are passionate and wholly committed to their students. Students' learning achievements are consistently high across all departments. In almost all lessons observed, organisation is sound, aims are well-structured and logically sequenced coupled with appropriate exploratory and meaningful learning activities. Teachers build on students' prior learning to arouse interest and employ a stimulating variety of learning methods to stretch students' minds and thinking. Impressive use is made of the *Habits of Mind*, which is skilfully interwoven into lesson topics. A good start has been made by teachers to the new log book by which teachers are encouraged to keep a daily record of their teaching with the emphasis on reflection and improvement.

Learning is enriched beyond the classroom by immersing students in challenging extra- and co-curricular ventures, such as the Stanford University Programme, the Beijing Learning and Cultural Experience, National Chemistry Olympiad and Winter Camp, Budding Poets, and HK Science and Technology Invention Contest.

The school's ability to see into the future has placed it at the forefront of IT in and beyond Hong Kong. Its prowess has been recognised by EDB (serving as a Centre of Excellence on IT in Education since 2002 to support other schools in IT) and nominated by Microsoft Corporation as *Innovative School of the Future*. The extensive range of IT facilities is covered in Chapter 6 above.

School leaders, teachers and students are to be commended for making full use of the information technology such as iPods and other hand-held mobile devices, web-based video broadcasting facilities and e-learning platforms to illuminate learning and teaching. As a result, IT is infused extensively in and across the curriculum with improvements and additions continuing to be developed including e-learning platforms with self-access materials. The applications of IT have clear curriculum and pedagogical goals which facilitate curriculum planning, foster students' self-directed and independent learning skills and cater for learner diversity.

In common with practice in school reviews in Hong Kong, a four point scale – *excellent*, *good*, *acceptable* and *unsatisfactory* – with city-wide criteria was used to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching. We judged eighty-six of the eighty-seven lessons observed in the range *excellent* to *acceptable*. The percentage of lessons (over 80%) in the *excellent* to *good* category and, in particular, in the *excellent* category (31%) demands special mention, and is quite exceptional in the experience of the corporate judgement of the review team in and beyond Hong Kong schools. There is a sense of joy in learning and teaching with teachers and students *in search of excellence* to scale new heights in learning and teaching, as reflected in the quite outstanding academic results right across the school.

## 9. How good is Student Support?

### *How good is student support?*

A comprehensive, whole-school approach to pastoral care and whole-person development delivers successful developmental, preventive and support services for all students throughout the different stages of their school life. The Pastoral Care Committee co-ordinates the work of, and collaborates with, the various teams including the Prefect Board, Discipline Board, Careers/Further Studies Team, ECA Team, Counselling and Guidance Team, Paulinian Award Team and Religious and Moral Education Team. Students' needs, always to the fore in the work of the teams, are identified through the multiple channels listed above as well as: ongoing contact with Form Teachers; interviews with students and their parents; contacts through the House system; the *Big Sister Scheme* (a commendable volunteer scheme whereby senior students befriend junior students); and through other sources, which are alert in SPCS and sensitive to students' behavioural patterns. Very good use is also made of the APASO findings and students' views when identifying strengths and aspects to monitor and take forward.

The positive school ethos is conducive to optimal intellectual and psychological development of students and the harmonious atmosphere underpins pastoral care. Form teachers are good role models and, in SPCS, they make a significant contribution to the well-being of students providing daily coaching as well as keeping an *informed* eye on students. Many students commented favourably on their relations with the Form teachers. The school has put explicit emphasis on providing an all-round education under the theme *Healthy Living, Happy Life* based on Christian values with an emphasis on its 7Cs and five core values - integrity, joyfulness, simplicity, hard work and excellence. The school encourages students to encounter problems in a positive and constructive manner with the aim of leading them to be confident and objective in their attitude to life. The aims are supported by an impressive range of educational and developmental programmes including

Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) activities for junior students, community services, Christian events, DIP and *Students' Voice in Action*. The Prefect Board, comprising F6 prefects, meets monthly and at other times as needed to ensure that campus life runs smoothly. Its members give sensible and well judged feedback to the senior leadership on behalf of their fellow students. Student leaders also participate actively in the *Student Voice in Action*, a British Council (Hong Kong) initiative in which the school has been a leading participant, including an exchange visit to schools in Portsmouth, UK and hosting the city-wide Forum sponsored by the British Council in March 2010.

The planned activities, formal and informal, have realised the school vision and mission as students seek to cultivate the core values, social commitment, national identity, self-management and multiple intelligence skills. The *Habits of Mind* are introduced at junior forms and as the students move upward and onward they have opportunities to sharpen their leadership skills through serving as a prefect, a *Big Sister*, a social service volunteer, a library prefect, a club committee member and the many other ECA opportunities. The bridging course for incoming F1 students, along with the Principal's personal interviews with F1 students and their parents, ensures that pastoral care gets off to an excellent start by making students feel welcome and at home, as well as being supported. The positive pastoral care approach is evidenced by the way in which students with behavioural and/or emotional difficulties are looked after. There is no place for the *iron rod* as the emphasis in the school is on self-reflection and self-correction in line with Christian beliefs. Students with personal and emotional problems are well-supported, for example, by Form teachers and an experienced and resourceful school social worker in a sensitive and confidential way. The school is a *through-train* school and no students from primary are denied the opportunity to study in the secondary school. In the same way, as a caring and Christian school, SPCS follows through on its commitment that no student should lose out on economic grounds with the result that a significant percentage of students receive financial help/scholarships to support their studies in SPCS.

The present excellent spectrum of student support services is a credit to the way in which the school has adapted over time to changes in society while adjusting the focus in response to emerging needs of the student (and parent) population in the new millennium. The school should continue with its enlightened approach to supporting students with special educational needs and awareness-raising among teachers of how best to prepare their students to meet the academic, personal and emotional demands of a changing curriculum and societal pressures.



## **10. How good are Public Relations (PR) - Parents and External Bodies?**

### *How good are public relations?*

Coordination of the PR Committee, one of the school's four functional dimensions, is the responsibility of a member of SLT, supported by a number of colleagues. Between them, these members of the PR Committee take charge of the PR remit: home-school co-operation; hospitality, Alumni Association, official school functions; Contingency Team; international exchange and partnership; and publicity and recruitment. The smooth functioning of the different areas bears tribute to the clear envisaging and successful co-ordination of these aspects of the interface between the school and the wider community. At SPCS, the extent to which students not only see, but become fully immersed in, a global perspective is quite exceptional. In keeping with its forward-thinking and green philosophy, the school is bidding to develop the *Old Tai Po Police Station* as a green global village to be accredited in line with the internationally recognised *Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Award*.

The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is seen as a supportive platform in facilitating communication between home and school. Workshops to acquaint parents with their daughters' school programme as well as promoting parent education are organised, for example, cultivating *Habits of Mind* and *Positive Thinking*. The PTA is very active in the school's environmental awareness programme. SPCS is enriched by the Parent Volunteer Programme (PVP), which has a membership of almost two hundred parents. Divided into five teams, each with its own leader/co-coordinator, this group assists in a number of ways, including accompanying students on visits and during the Hong Kong Schools Speech Festival.

There are regular meetings with parents to include them fully in partnership and these include the F1 Catholic Parents Day, a

meeting for F3 parents on NSS and a F4 evening on higher education. The Principal devotes a whole week in November each year to interviewing every F1 girl and her parents to gain feedback on how well students are adjusting to secondary school life. Parents are also kept informed via their own PTA notice board, email, the excellent school and PTA web pages and school publications. The parents themselves express great respect, affection and respect for the school, its leadership and teachers.

The Alumni Association (SPCSAA) regards highly its link with the school and the committee includes a teacher representative. It has its own information web site and keeps contact with Paulinians in different parts of the world. It contributes by providing a platform for linkage with the graduates of the school and organising mentorship programmes for interested students annually.

The list of visitors each year is quite exceptional, in terms of the range of backgrounds from whence they are drawn, and their stature within their respective domains. The school is engaged in programmes with each of Hong Kong's higher education institutions and connects with leading educators from Mainland China, Singapore, the USA, Korea, Australia and the UK. Hong Kong's Chief Executive and Chief Secretary, as well as Secretary for Education, Permanent Secretary for Education, Under Secretary for Education, Deputy Secretaries for Education and a number of EDB's Chief Officers have been recent visitors. The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools of UK (Lord Andrew Adonis), the Academic and Linguistic Attache of the French Consulate General, PRC Senior Consultant of Ministry of Education (Ms Tian Shulan), Vice Director of Basic Education Department of Ministry of Education (Mr Gao Hong), Director and Deputy Director of Shanghai Municipal Education Commission (Dr. Shen Xiaoming and Mr. Zhang Minsheng), Vice Mayor of Shenzhen (Dr Tang Jie) and the Chief of Education Bureau of Shenzhen Municipality (Ms Guo Yurong) have also brought their experiences to SPCS. Major partnerships with the world of business include the nomination of a Microsoft *Innovative School of the Future*, collaboration with Town Gas on the school's model Home, Panasonic's contribution

to the *Classroom of the Future* and the Regal Hotel in connection with the *Synergy Corner* and recycling.

CPD of teachers features prominently in external relations with, for example, major links with UK teachers of English, immersion visits in Putonghua, French and Spanish to Beijing, France and Spain, Mathematics and Science are the focus for an annual visit to Stanford University. The rich and extensive domain of its external relationships is, without doubt, one of the key factors in the success and widespread recognition of the school as a centre of excellence.

## **11. How good is Student Performance?**

### ***How good is attitude, affective and social development?***

As described in some depth in the chapters on school ethos (Chapter 2) and learning and teaching (Chapter 8) respectively, students are joyful and happy to be students in what they describe as a *second home*. Smiling faces are a common sight around the school. They are committed to achieving success in both academic and ECA and are motivated by the school vision and mission to be caring citizens upholding the school's 7Cs. They have high self-esteem, a great attitude to school life and work, and relate very well to fellow students and staff. There are no signs of arrogance among the student population in this school. The APASO findings are very encouraging, comparing very favourably with similar schools in Hong Kong. The school has been successful in developing students' positive self-concept in all aspects, including for example, a readiness to help and serve others with many students volunteering their services to care in the community, and a desire to learn and a respect for the family.

Attendance and punctuality rates are almost 100%. Students are very self-disciplined and observe school rules, which they regard as being constructive and considerate of the needs of a girls' school. They have a favourable attitude to, and outstanding participation in, school events and activities. Student participation in uniform, social and voluntary service groups is very good and the numbers taking part compare very favourably with those of Hong Kong overall.

### ***How good is academic performance?***

In public examinations the school's performance is excellent in all aspects.

Over the past years, students achieved a much higher credit-and-above percentage and passing percentage in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) as compared with

the Hong Kong-wide percentages. For the past three years, the average percentage of students awarded fourteen points or more in the best six subjects was 87%; the average percentage of students with six Grade E or Level 2 in subjects, including English Language and Chinese Language was 99%. Over the past three years, 31 students gained admittance into local universities through the *Early Admission Scheme*, an excellent achievement.

EDB has developed a sophisticated set of Key Performance Measures (KPM) to help schools evaluate performance. *Value-added* information is one of the items in the set and allows schools to compare student performance in the HKCEE with schools with *similar* S1 intake. SPCS has attained the highest value-added results in the HKCEE, both in the three core subjects and the best six subjects, for the past ten years – an exceptional and sustained achievement.

In the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE), almost all subjects achieved a higher credit-and-above percentage and passing percentage as compared with the Hong Kong percentages. For the past three years, the average percentage of students awarded the minimum entrance requirement for local degree courses was 96.3%. For F7 students, 100% gained entry to either a local or overseas tertiary institute to continue their studies. In comparison with schools with similar S6 intake, students' performance in almost all subjects is better than or has met the expected level in the HKALE in the past three years.

The examination results in IGCSE and GCEAL are also excellent with students receiving many distinctions and credits.

Students' participation rates in academic-related competitions are equally impressive with many successes. Some examples from 2008-2009 are: 2008首屆國際青少年(香港區)才藝大賽語言類青少年初級組新詩冠軍; National Chemistry Olympiad and Winter Camp 2<sup>nd</sup> Runner-up; The Standard and RTHK 2008 Short Story Competition (Junior Section) and Short Story Creative Prize (Senior Section); National Championship in the *Fly to Beijing, Fly*

to Space 2009 National Youth Aerospace Model Building Competition; and Championship and Best Script Award in the *Think Again Documentary Making Session* organised by Wiseman Education and EDB.

### ***How good is performance in other aspects?***

The overall performance in other aspects is excellent as evidenced in the following two components:

#### *Comprehensive coverage and balanced choice of activities*

There is a balanced variety of ECA covering religious, community service, performing arts and sports. The enterprising DIP described earlier in the report is a major contributor alongside whole school functions, clubs/societies and class-based competitions. Life-long learning experiences are promoted through, to list just a few: follow-up action to support schools post-Sichuan earthquake; Paulinian Lunar New Year Talent Show; English and Chinese debating competitions; Anti-drug video-making competition; USB Design Competition; and Killer Sudoku Contest.

#### *Students' opportunities to participate and excel*

There are over fifty clubs. With the introduction of the *one sport and one art for all* and *one service for all* policies in 2005-2006, participation in cultural, physical, aesthetic activities and social service has been at a high level. The school's participation rates in territory-wide inter-school competitions are way above the territory averages.

The *Paulinian Award Scheme* encourages students to embrace an all-round development and participate actively in day-to-day school life in order to realise their full potential in academic performance and ECA, and enhance their emotional development, self-management and life skills, self-esteem and social relationships. There are *Gold*, *Silver* and *Bronze* awards to recognise students' achievements based on a comprehensive marking scheme.

## 12. What are the Main Strengths of the school?

The support and guidance of the Sponsoring Body and SMC have enabled St. Paul's Convent School to deliver an education experience that fully meets the mission and vision set out in its DSS submission to EDB. It is providing an excellent all-round forward-looking education, based on Christian values, which enhances the quality of life, both spiritually and materially, for Paulinians so that they can contribute positively to their home, profession and society in line with the school's 7Cs.

The main strengths of the school are:

- High quality learning and teaching in a dynamic and invigorating environment of high expectations and enriching ethos, nurtured and sustained by the unstinting commitment and motivation of confident teaching and support staff. The percentage of lessons graded *excellent to good* (over 80%) and *excellent* (31%) is quite exceptional in the experience of the corporate judgement of the review team.
- Friendly, courteous, confident and articulate students who work and bond together with a huge sense of belonging and self-esteem in a harmonious atmosphere and who *love coming through the doors every day*. They enjoy amicable relations with their teachers whom they regard as: *caring, truly professional and committed to the school*.
- Outstanding academic achievements in all subjects in public examinations and exceptional *value-added* results in the HKCEE across all subjects when compared with schools with *similar* S1 intake.
- A strong focus on curriculum, learning and teaching to maximise opportunities for students and cater for diversity of needs through an integrated curriculum and e-learning programmes.
- IT is embedded in all aspects of learning and teaching, leading to the school's designation as a *Centre of Excellence* by EDB since 2002. Furthermore, SPCS has been nominated

by the Specialist Schools Academy Trust of the United Kingdom to be the first ICT International School in 2005, and selected by Microsoft to be an *Innovative School of the Future in 2007*. The school harnesses emerging technology to extend and enrich students' learning experience and life-long learning.

- A whole-school caring and positive approach to student support which embraces all students and staff, all-round student development enriched by innovative development programmes, and a diverse and exciting range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and cultural exchanges.
- A *truly* remarkably-rich English-speaking environment with outstanding use of the language by both staff and students, in and out of classrooms.
- An innovative, forward looking and risk taking school reaching out to Hong Kong and beyond and receiving strong support from committed parents. The rich and extensive domain of its external relationships is one of the key factors in the successful and widespread recognition of the school as a centre of excellence.
- A visionary, inspiring and strong Principal who embodies the school motto: *Omnia Omnibus*. An exceptional leader, she empowers both staff and students to *uplift the ceiling of achievement and scale new heights* to sustain the school as a learning school in a learning world for a learning century. Her teamwork has created strength in depth at all levels across the school.

In the corporate judgement of the review team, St. Paul's Convent School is *truly* an outstanding school excelling in all four domains of school work: management and organisation; curriculum, learning and teaching; student support and school ethos; and student performance.



### **13. What are the Main Points for Action?**

Aspects to be included in post-review action should include:

- SMC should consider enlarging its size to bring in new members with experience in different aspects of education and management as well as knowledge of, and commitment to, Paulinian traditions and culture.
- The School Leadership Team should continue to groom future leaders at all levels to capitalise on Paulinian traditions and achievements in aspiring to build a sustainable future.
- School leadership should continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of extra quality time made available to teachers in planning and implementing curriculum change.