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Differentiated teaching and learning

The school places a high priority on ensuring that, in their day-to-day teaching, classroom teachers identify and address the learning needs of individual students, including high-achieving students. Teachers are encouraged and supported to monitor closely the progress of individuals, identify learning difficulties and tailor classroom activities to levels of readiness and need.

The assessment of this domain includes consideration of the extent to which:

- teaching practices across the school reflect the belief that, although students are at different stages in their learning and may be progressing at different rates, all students are capable of learning successfully if motivated and given appropriate learning opportunities and necessary support;
- teachers work at understanding where students are in their learning – including their current knowledge, skills, learning difficulties and misunderstandings – to identify starting points for teaching;
- teachers work to ensure that all students – including high-achieving students – are appropriately engaged, challenged and extended by designing classroom activities to meet students' learning needs, levels of readiness, interests, aspirations and motivations;
- teachers consult with parents and with students themselves to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to meet the needs of students with disabilities, including through the development of individual learning plans;
- teachers closely monitor the progress of individual students and continually adjust their teaching in response to the progress that individuals are making;
- teachers encourage and assist students to monitor their own learning and to set goals for future learning;
- communication with parents and families provides information about where students are in their learning, what progress they have made over time, and what they might do to support their children's further learning; and
- tailored, early and sustained interventions are in place for students identified as requiring additional support, including students returning to school after a period of absence/disengagement.

Outstanding

The school leadership team actively promotes the use of differentiated teaching as a strategy for ensuring that every student is engaged and learning successfully. It is recognised throughout the school that some students require significant adjustments to their learning programs (eg, accelerated programs, special support) if they are to be optimally engaged and challenged, and individual learning plans have been developed for those students requiring them. Differentiation is a priority of the school and a feature of every teacher's practice.

Regular data on the achievements, progress, strengths and weaknesses of individual students are used in all classrooms to make judgements about individual needs, to identify appropriate starting points for teaching and to personalise teaching and learning activities. Reports to parents and carers include details of how learning opportunities have been tailored to individual needs and of the progress individuals have made.

High

School leaders explicitly encourage teachers to tailor their teaching to student needs and readiness. This includes the systematic use of assessment instruments (standardised assessment tasks and teacher developed assessment tools) to establish where individuals are in their learning and to identify skill gaps and misunderstandings. Teachers also are encouraged to respond to differences in cultural knowledge and experiences and to cater for individual differences by offering multiple means of representation, engagement and expression.

Planning shows how the different needs of students are addressed, and how multiple opportunities to learn are provided, including multiple pathways for transition to external studies (eg, apprenticeships) for students in Years 10-12. Students' workbooks also illustrate differentiated tasks and feedback.

Reports to parents show progress over time and include suggestions for ways in which parents can support their children's learning.

Medium

School leaders are committed to success for all, but do not drive a strong classroom agenda to assess and identify individual learning needs or to differentiate teaching according to students' needs.

Some use is made of assessment instruments to identify individual strengths and weaknesses and starting points for teaching, but this appears to be at the initiative of individual teachers rather than a school-wide expectation.

Some use is made of differentiated teaching (eg, differentiated reading groups in the early primary years), but in most classes teachers teach the same curriculum to all students with similar levels of individual support.

Regular assessments of student learning are undertaken, but these often are summative and disconnected (eg, relating to different topics) rather than exploring long-term progress in students' knowledge, skills and understandings over time.

Reports to parents generally do not show progress or provide guidance to parents on actions they might take.

Low

School leaders do not place a high priority on teachers identifying and addressing individual learning needs, but are more focused on ensuring that all teachers are teaching the core year level curriculum.

Little or no classroom use is made of assessment instruments to establish starting points for teaching. Assessments tend to be used only to establish summatively how much of the taught content students have learnt.

Teachers tend to teach to the middle of the class, with the expectation that some students will not master the content, and finding ways to occupy more able students who finish work early.

Reports to parents tend to be summative reports of how students have performed, with little guidance on what parents might do to assist in their children's learning.