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Effective pedagogical practices

The school principal and other school leaders recognise that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning throughout the school. They take a strong leadership role, encouraging the use of research-based teaching practices in all classrooms to ensure that every student is engaged, challenged and learning successfully. All teachers understand and use effective teaching methods – including explicit instruction – to maximise student learning.

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

- the school leadership team keeps abreast of research on effective teaching practices;
- the school leadership team establishes and communicates clear expectations concerning the use of effective teaching strategies throughout the school;
- school leaders, including the principal, spend time working with teachers, providing feedback on teaching and, where appropriate, modelling effective teaching strategies;
- school leaders actively promote a range of evidence-based teaching strategies, including:
 - creating classroom and applied learning environments in which all students are engaged, challenged, feel safe to take risks and are supported to learn
 - connecting new material to past learning and assisting students to see the continuity in their learning over time
 - demonstrating explicitly what students are to do, discussing this with students, and then questioning and checking that learning is occurring
 - promoting deep learning by emphasising underlying principles, concepts and big ideas that are developed over time
 - setting high expectations for every student's progress and ambitious targets for improving classroom performances
 - working to build students' beliefs in their own capacities to learn successfully and their understanding of the relationship between effort and success
 - providing regular and timely feedback to students in forms that make clear what actions individuals can take to make further learning progress
 - routinely evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and using these evaluations to make adjustments to practice; and
- school leaders provide teachers with ongoing detailed feedback on their classroom practices.

Outstanding

The principal and other school leaders have accepted personal responsibility for driving improvements in teaching throughout the school. They demonstrate a strong conviction that improved teaching is the key to improved student learning and have clear and well-known positions on the kinds of teaching that they wish to see occurring.

All teachers and leaders are committed to identifying, understanding and implementing better teaching methods, and a high priority is given to evidence-based teaching strategies (strategies that have been demonstrated through research and practice to be highly effective).

School leaders spend time working with teachers to improve their teaching practices, including modelling, evaluating and providing feedback on classroom teaching.

High

School leaders are committed to continuous improvement in teaching practices throughout the school and expect team leaders and teachers to identify ways of doing this, although the principal and other senior leaders may not themselves have clear positions on the kinds of teaching they wish to see occurring across the school or be 'hands on' in driving improved teaching practices.

There is a particular focus on improved teaching methods in reading, writing, mathematics and science, and professional learning activities are focused on building teachers' understandings of highly effective teaching strategies in these areas.

Clarity about what students are expected to learn and be able to do, high expectations of every student's learning, explicit teaching of skills and content, individualised attention as required, and timely feedback to guide student action are key elements of the school's push for improved teaching and learning.

Medium

School leaders are explicit about their desire to see effective teaching occurring throughout the school, but are less clear about what this might look like. They do not appear to be driving a strong agenda to improve and/or enhance teaching practices across the school, except perhaps indirectly through a focus on school results and targets. School leaders take a close interest in the school's literacy and numeracy results, but generally do not engage in discussions with staff about effective teaching strategies.

Discussions of specific teaching practices are rare and generally occur only in the context of concerns about a teacher's performance.

There is some clarity about what students are expected to learn, but a lack of balance in teaching methods (eg, over-reliance on whole-group teaching or very little explicit teaching).

Low

School leaders do not appear to have strong views on the characteristics of highly effective teaching. There is little evidence that they are driving an agenda to change or enhance teaching practices across the school.

The principal and other school leaders spend very little time on issues related to teaching. Questions of pedagogy appear to be viewed solely as the responsibility of teachers. There is little obvious school-wide discussion or consideration of highly effective teaching methods.

There may be a lack of explicitness about what students are expected to know and be able to do as a result of classroom activities, very little explicit teaching, limited attention to individual learning needs, or low expectations on the part of teachers that all students in the room will master the content of lessons. Classroom activities frequently have the appearance of 'busy work'.