

SPECIMEN HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL



Application for Accreditation Term 4 - 2005

Principal: Doug Jones

School Context

Established in 1874, Specimen Hill Primary School is located in Inglewood Street (Golden Square) in the provincial city of Bendigo. Situated on a hill in a quiet, pleasant locality which has a rural outlook, our grounds and gardens provide a country atmosphere in a city locality.

Specimen Hill Primary School currently has a population of approximately 290 students. Our enrolment has more than doubled over the past ten years or so. We have a good balance of staff lead by a Principal, Assistant Principal & two Leading teachers.

The school has students from Prep to year 6. Currently the school is organized into two Professional Learning Teams – Prep to Year 2 and Year 3 to Year 6. These teams are lead by our Leading teachers.

We are in the 'Like School' 7 group for comparison of school data.

The school has a history of being at the forefront of Educational initiatives and was the first school in Bendigo to locally appoint a principal in 1985. In 1994 Specimen Hill P.S was one of 250 schools chosen to pilot the 'Schools of the Future' model. The school was chosen because it was proactive by setting strategic direction with the development of school goals and programs for major & minor works. The school community had also documented its teaching practice and management programs as policy statements, established an assessment & reporting program, adopted program budgeting as a financial management tool and introduced a School Council structure to give parents a greater say in the school's operation.

A Performance and Development culture has continued to grow through strategic planning and reflection on practice as the school embraced the self management era. As a new principal to the school this year I have been impressed with the professional approach taken by staff and the extent of collegiality. We have continued to strengthen our Performance & Development culture and this year have provided a new structure to sharpen the focus of professional interactions and conversations toward improving our practice.

The solid history of performance & development at Specimen Hill Primary School and more recent enhancements, form the basis of a school with a strong culture of performance and development.

Element 1:

Induction for teachers new to the school

1.1 Description

Specimen Hill's Induction Program really begins in Term 4 of the previous year. A day has been set for the whole school as well as for each Professional Learning Team and their individual class groupings (eg. Prep, Year 1/2, 3/4 & 5/6) to plan curriculum for the following year. Thus staff new to these areas are invited to attend and participate/familiarise themselves with the team members and organisational structure as well as shared planning. At the end of the each year new staff are invited to attend for a short session where they will meet with their allocated grade for the following year. At the commencement of the new school year the first day for staff is spent familiarising all members with school procedures and organisational matters. Timetables and school operational folder are given to each staff member & discussed. All new teachers and graduates are linked to a mentor (mentors for graduates have or are VIT trained with necessary skills). The mentor is timetabled to work in the classroom with the new teacher to provide support via modelling and team teaching for two hours per week. This is overseen by the Assistant Principal (AP). The AP role is to hold regular meetings with new teaching staff & their mentor/s. It is here that the new teachers and their mentors are able to discuss any matters that they wish. It is also the role of the AP to communicate any issues to the relevant personnel to help solve/support the new teachers with any problems that might arise. An extension to this is the VIT Support Group. The VIT registration procedures are covered with the mentors and timelines for completion of portfolios are put in place. The review process links to VIT competencies and the portfolio. Experienced teachers new to the school are linked to a support person who has an understanding of school procedures and thus the 'school culture'. Our Performance and Development teams (explained in Element 3) are held each Term enabling all staff to share their goals, successes and frustrations. PLTs meet each fortnight and a focus issue is set for each meeting. In addition, teachers from specific year levels meet at least weekly to plan, monitor progress and share both successes and frustrations.

1.2 Evaluation

Our programs allow teachers to meet on a daily, weekly and each term to plan, discuss / share practice, look at various forms of data and review their goals. We have received positive feedback from teachers through various forums with regard to our comprehensive and inclusive induction program. The induction program undergoes continual review and development. This year we have upgraded our relief teacher induction material. As we reviewed our current induction practices this year towards accreditation we found that in previous years staff new to the school who were experienced teachers were not allocated a support person. This is reflected in the data of the PDCQ. The role of AP in overseeing this program is vital in not only supporting the new teacher but their nominated mentor. Our consultative committee will ensure staff have input and are given opportunities to provide ideas to enhance programs and the processes we offer.

Since its inception, all current graduates at our school have achieved full VIT registration. The Full Diagnostic Staff Opinion survey (Organisational Health Questionnaire) demonstrates that our school is operating well above the state mean. The PDCQ survey supports level four of the accreditation framework with the average in Element 1 of 80%.

The following documentation is attached to support this Element.

- Specimen Hill P.S. Operations Manual – Index page
- Induction Program Planning Checklist (DE&T 2005)

The following documentation is available to support this Element.

- Specimen Hill P.S. Operations Manual
- DE&T Planning for an Induction Program 2005
- Staff Opinion Survey
- VIT process
- Staff meeting & interaction schedule (Terms 1 to 4 – 2005)
- The results of the PDCQ survey
- Documentation for staff *Performance & Development* process 2005 including: Advice to staff; Dimensions of teaching; Professional standards; Goal & PD planning proforma; Graduate reflection sheet & giving and receiving feedback.

Element 2:

Use of multiple sources of feedback on teacher effectiveness for individual teachers and teams of teachers.

2.1 Description

At the beginning of the new school year the Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) are given a copy of the School Level Report for analysis. Aspects are then discussed at a whole staff meeting. Each PLT discusses the data and focuses on how to use the data to plan for improvement. Teacher & team goals are planned, in order for this to happen. The analysis of this data is published in our Annual Reports.

We target students working below or above their indicative level with support programs and where appropriate, Individual Learning Plans (ILP) are used to clearly identify the nature of this support. A section is provided on the students' written reports for specific future and their learning goals. As we plan for the year, we discuss practices & programs which will have the most leverage to support these students. Currently we are discussing how to use staff for intervention in 2006 and budgets to support extension programs such as Tournament of the Minds.

The staff, student and parent opinion surveys are discussed at team meetings and again as a whole staff. Staff are encouraged to consider the data when planning their individual goals and professional development. Strategic planning for improvement in PLTs is put in place. For example, in 2005 extra support in the Prep to 2 areas was based on supporting literacy groups using the Reading Recovery teacher while in Year 3 to 6 smaller numeracy groups were achieved by providing an extra teacher daily to reduce class sizes.

Whole school units of work and assessment schedules are set out clearly for each grade and team. Planning & moderation take place regularly throughout each term in Year level groups & PLTs. Apart from formal moderation sessions, (in PLTs & Year levels), it is commonplace to see and hear teachers discussing and sharing student work. This feature has been formalised in our new Performance and Development groups. Moderation sessions are timetabled each year for all teachers to assist Year 3 and 5 teachers assess the AIM writing samples. The Year 3 – 6 staff have used the PAT maths data and worked with other schools in our Innovations & Excellence cluster (primary & secondary) to analyse strengths and areas for improvement. Moderation of this *Middle Years* (Years 5 to 8) cluster data has enabled staff to track students thus providing them with an additional feedback source. We believe in working in Professional Learning Teams, which take responsibility for the progress of all students and work for the improvement of their learning outcomes.

In the Early Years P-2, all teachers are given the previous year's reading levels, for reference at the beginning of the year. Reading Recovery data, P-2 end of year benchmarking, Observation Survey and AIM data are discussed and analysed at team meetings. Moderation of students' running records takes place regularly at team meetings, and follow up of students working below or above

the indicative level occurs throughout each term, as well as discussions concerning best practice and strategies for assisting all students.

Student opinion data has been gained through the DE&T *Attitude to School* survey of Year 5 & 6 students and our school has used the *PoLT Early Years* student survey for Years Prep to 4.

In Prep – 2 the Numeracy Interview data is computerised to enable information to be easily accessible for all staff. Strengths and weaknesses are also analysed for future planning to take place. Discussions at PLT meetings focus on strategies to improve learning outcomes. This year they have focused on writing and attended Regional workshops throughout the year.

2.2 Evaluation

At our Performance & Development team meetings each term teachers discuss their goals as well as student data and work samples. Plans are adjusted with the support of the team and often teachers are pointed in the direction of a staff member who can help. Teachers gain colleague feedback during these sessions and also with their PLT, year level team or with their mentors. This is perceived as a valuable learning experience and helps to increase each teacher's skills and strategies.

The results of the PDCQ for Element 2 are as follows:

Statements are in relation to how useful teachers felt it was to have:

Other teachers sitting in on their classes – 94.2%.

Formal feedback about their teaching from the students - 100%.

Receive systematic data from students about their assessments of themselves as learners – 87.5%.

Receive feedback about students' learning outcomes in relation to standards & benchmarks - 100%.

Gain feedback from colleagues after discussing student work – 94.1%.

Receive objective feedback from parents – 86.7%.

Gain feedback based on an analysis of students' rates of class or school attendance – 86.6%.

Our teachers learn how to discuss and interpret data as well as how it can be used to drive their teaching practice. They are well equipped to both understand and utilise the multiple sources of data presented to them. Regular professional meetings have ensured greater consistency of judgments and the acceptance of both individual and collective responsibility for student outcomes.

The following Documentation is attached to support this Element.

- Years Prep to 2 Professional Learning Team (PLT) term 3 planner
- Sample of Year 3 to 6 PLT meeting minutes

The following Documentation is available to support this Element.

- School Level Report – (containing: CSF, AIM, Early Years, Attendance Data)
- Parent Opinion Survey
- Student Opinion Data (Year 5 & 6 – Also Years Prep to 4 PoLT data)
- PAT maths data (Years 3 to 6)
- Performance & Development team meetings & individual staff plans.
- Staff mid-year reports – PLT analysis of current data / progress
- Student mid-year reports – student goal setting

Element 3:

Customised individual teacher development plans based on both individual development needs, student learning and school priorities.

3.1 Description

The development of customised individual teacher development plans at our school has been transformed during this year. We have moved from the use of the Departments model of staff reviews to what we call our Performance and Development groups. The approach has been designed to get all staff to plan their goals taking into account the school data, their PLT goals, the Charter (soon to become our Strategic Plan) and to encourage our teachers to have the confidence to articulate professional needs through a plan which focuses on improving their professional skills and thus the learning outcomes of their students.

Staff have been divided into 4 teams with 6 staff in each group, including SSO's, teachers, Leading Teachers and Principal Class Officers. The teams have consisted of a mixture of people from different PLTs.

New staff are spread across the teams. Each team allocates a mentor or advocate for each new staff member. The mentor and advocate is expected to ensure that the new staff member is supported throughout their first year in the school. If the new staff member is an SSO, the mentor should, where possible, be an experienced SSO. The mentor and advocate will support graduate teachers in meeting VIT requirements.

The middle week of each Term is designated as Performance & Development Week. In the designated Performance and Development Week, each team gets together at a time and place of their choosing for a performance and development team meeting. There are no other meetings scheduled for this week.

Every member of staff is provided with a copy of the Professional standards relevant to each staff member. This includes the Roles and Responsibilities, Dimensions of Teaching and Professional Standards for their classification (Leading Teacher, Expert Teacher, Accomplished Teacher or Graduate Teacher). For SSO's, this information is replaced by the Performance Standards, the School Charter objectives & a list of professional expectations for all staff at Specimen Hill P.S. are provided.

A Performance and Development Planning Sheet is provided for setting professional goals. For Graduate Teachers (apart from first year teachers), a reflection sheet is provided for submission at the end of the year. Teachers in their first year have a separate VIT application to complete towards gaining full registration.

Student outcome data for the previous year (2004) is used for comparative purposes or to identify areas for improvement in new school year (2005). Staff members are also provided with data from the previous year and current year in relation to student feedback from the *Attitudes to School* survey (Years 5 & 6) & *PoLT – Early Years* (Years Prep to 4) attitudes to school survey as well as parent feedback from the *Parent Opinion Survey*.

3.2 Evaluation

A Professional Development program and meeting schedule are formed to support team and individual goals. Individual requests for PD must be in line with goals set at the beginning of the year. Each teacher's plan documents the actions to be taken and their professional development requirements.

The Full Diagnostic Staff Opinion survey (Organisational Health Questionnaire) again demonstrates that our school is catering for teacher development. Benchmarks for *Professional Growth*, *Participation in Decision Making*, and *Professional Interaction* elements are all well above the state benchmarks & support our opinion that teachers professional development is being catered for.

At Specimen Hill P.S. we develop common beliefs & understandings via whole staff development and then break it down into meaningful units in our Professional Learning Teams. Thus the implementation strategy fits with the appropriate level of development. We also believe that teachers learn best when they can relate their professional development to the year level they teach and practise skills or see practice in a real school context. Our PLT & Performance & Development groups encourage professional conversations and sharing practice. These team meetings encourage accountability. Where colleagues can, in a non threatening manner, give rewards and recognition to the teacher and encourage participation in professional learning. Documentation is provided to the group and the principal by each staff member, it details their plan, progress, success and frustrations. At the end of the year a *Positives, Minus and Interesting* (PMI) sheet as well as planning for 2006 is completed by staff. Our Performance & Development groups are evaluated annually via a feedback survey. Professional Development needs are ascertained via plans, PLT goals & Charter (Strategic Plan / Annual Implementation Plan). This process is currently in progress for 2006.

The following Documentation is attached this Element.

- A copy of our Performance and Development procedure
- Sample - A teachers Performance and Development Plan 2005 showing professional development focuses and proposed action

The following Documentation is available to support this Element.

- Staff role descriptions
- Performance and Development Plans for all staff
- Initial Planning and end of year cycle review documentation for all staff
- Performance and Development proposal & package
- Performance and Development meeting schedule with team (see Term meeting schedule)
- Protocol for Performance & Development meetings
- The results of the PDCQ survey
- Staff opinion surveys (2004 & 2005)
- Feedback from staff about the Performance and Development process 2005

Element 4:

Quality professional development to meet the individual development needs.

4.1 Description

Each teacher's individual plan / goals are reviewed on a term by term basis through the Performance & Development teams. Staff also reflect on their own goals and school data through their PLTs and year level planning groups.

The school's consultative committee recommend to the principal the overall professional development direction for the year. This is done with support from the PLTs and the knowledge of individual goals from the Performance & Development process.

For example, as a result of data analysis the Prep – 2 PLT identified writing as a focus for the year and engaged Kerrie McMillin. Kerrie is currently working directly in classrooms modelling best practice to staff with a whole grade then spending time with staff while they reflect on practice. The Year 3 to 6 PLT has worked with the Innovations & Excellence cluster initiatives in writing (poetry), Thinking Skills & Numeracy – particularly monitoring / tracking student data using PAT Maths & Open ended Maths tasks (AGQTP – Peter Sullivan). A whole school focus has been trialling the Performance & Development review model in multi staff groups. Staff were given the opportunity to set personal goals and then share these with other staff in their team. Professional interaction and development needs were discussed, shared and supported to achieve personal goals. These were gained by the group directing each staff member to exemplar PD from within our school or external to it. Feedback from groups has helped to fine tune this PD model. In PLTs and performance & development groups staff reflect on the relevance of the professional development undertaken and its impact on teaching and learning processes, student outcomes and school effectiveness. Professional Development approval is linked to staff plans & goals and is not usually approved unless it fits with these plans, current issues or school priorities.

4.2 Evaluation

The effectiveness of our program is apparent through the significant developments in program provision and efficiency as a result of Professional development. This year has seen changes in teaching strategies and the implementation of new knowledge and understandings gleaned through targeted professional development. An example of this is our ongoing numeracy PD, which has resulted in the development of a wide range of challenging *open-ended* tasks, better use of the *numeracy interview* and *thinking* skills. Our Performance & Development teams have increased communication, sharing of ideas and good practice amongst staff.

We believe that our professional development planning and implementation processes are consistent with the principles of effective professional learning. Our activities focus on improving student

outcomes by embedding best practice into everyday learning and teaching practice. Performance & Development in our school is collaborative, it involves reflection and feedback, and importantly, it is needs based and school specific, related to our data and impacting on our outcomes. Professional Development is fully integrated into the operations of the school. Crucially, all staff members recognise that effective professional development is the individual and collective responsibility of all staff members.

We aim to embed our professional development program into our Annual Implementation Plan to ensure we achieve school, team and individual PD needs. We will continue to monitor our data, have professional conversations and be receptive to new learning and understandings. Professional development will continue to be generously funded, focusing resources into priority and goal areas. Professional Development will be a priority in our budget.

Currently we are planning our Professional Development / interaction for 2006. Information is being gathered from Performance & Development groups, PLTs and individual consultation with staff. This is to be linked with the goals of the Annual Implementation Plan and plans for professional learning in our Innovations & Excellence cluster.

The following Documentation is attached to support this Element.

- Copy staff member: Performance & Development – End of year review (Goals & Achievements)
- Staff: *Professional Interaction & School activities schedule* (example – Term 4)

The following Documentation is available to support this Element

- Performance & Development: Staff professional plans & End of year reviews
- Staff Opinion Survey
- The results of the PDCQ survey
- Staff: *Professional Interaction & School activities schedule* (Terms 1 to 4 – 2005)
- School Charter
- Documentation – Performance & Development process 2005
- Professional Development Policy
- Staff skills register (OH&S)

Element 5:

Belief by teachers that the school has a performance and development culture.

5.1 Description

We have strengthened our professional learning community by introducing Performance & Development groups. We believe that there is a need for continued improvement in teacher learning and that Professional Development is linked to the needs of the students and the long term aims of the school. We believe that improved pedagogical practices and an appropriate wellbeing/welfare programs improve student learning.

The process we have put in place aims to ensure that teacher's feel valued and supported as they develop professionally. Positive collegiate interactions are expected to continue and a professional approach to all we do is valued collectively as a staff. Teachers are encouraged to be innovative, take calculated risks and try out new practices through an individual plan that is supported by two professional learning teams

Our performance & development culture is evaluated annually via recognised surveys and also via Strategic Planning components designed by our school specifically to monitor our progress towards the achievement of a community of active, ongoing learners.

5.2 Evaluation

The results of the PDCQ for Element 2 are as follows:

Our school demonstrates characteristics of a professional learning community –

'I have a sense that education in this school is improving (100%),

I have a sense of continuing professional development (100%),

Teachers in this school are willing to share their teaching practices and ideas with colleagues (100%)

Our teachers believe that the climate of professional accountability has been established in our school –

Teachers I work with regularly evaluate how well programs meet students' needs (94.1%),

Teachers are expected to be accountable for their practices (100%),

Teachers maintain high standards in their teaching (100%)

Our teachers feel supported to take calculated risks and try new things –

'I have opportunities to learn new things in this school' (100%)

I feel supported by the leadership team to try out new things' (100%)

Our school's leadership team is responsive to teachers' ideas and concerns –

'There is a variety of opportunities for teachers to give feedback about school planning (94.1%),

'The school leadership team is responsive to staff suggestions for changes (94.1%)

Teachers at our school feel valued and supported –

'I feel supported in my teaching' (100%),

'My abilities are recognised and used effectively' (100%)

Over the past decade our school has grown and developed to become a professional learning community engaged in ongoing learning. The school has an agreed process for communication between staff and we have a term planner identifying meetings, whole school professional development & interaction. All staff have opportunities for involvement in decision making processes through their PLTs, their representatives on the school consultative committee & through membership of school council sub committees. **Performance improvement** is encouraged, supported actively by a variety of means and clearly celebrated. All staff are viewed as leaders and leadership development forms a strong focus for learning for all, regardless of seniority. Younger and less experienced staff members are encouraged to take on major leadership roles and make highly valued contributions to the overall culture of continual improvement in our school.

Active learning is modelled by senior management and all staff participate in whole school professional learning – demonstrating the value placed on continued professional growth at Specimen Hill P.S.

The following Documentation is attached to support this Element.

- Staff meeting memo (demonstrates staff are acknowledged and valued)
- Staff feedback re Performance & Development teams (sample)

The following Documentation is available to support this Element.

- School newsletters
- Staff Opinion Survey
- Parent Opinion Survey
- The results of the PDCQ survey
- Staff feedback re Performance & Development teams
- Student Attitudes to School Surveys (Prep to 6)
- Professional Learning Team minutes & Term planner
- Staff meeting & interaction schedule (Terms 1 to 4 – 2005)
- School daily communication book (Red Book)
- Staff memos