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School- community partnerships

The school actively seeks ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with parents and families, other education and training institutions, local businesses and community organisations. Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their children's education. Partnerships are strategically established to address identified student needs and operate by providing access to experiences, support and intellectual and/or physical resources not available within the school. All partners are committed to the common purposes and goals of partnership activities. Procedures are in place to ensure effective communications and to monitor and evaluate the intended impacts of the school's partnerships.

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

- the school builds partnerships with parents, families, local businesses and community organisations (including allied health, family support, counselling and rehabilitation services) to improve opportunities and outcomes for students;
- the school identifies potential community partners on the basis of their capacity to contribute to improved student achievement and/or wellbeing;
- identified partners are involved in collaborative planning and are committed to the purposes and objectives of the partnership;
- the senior leadership teams in the partner organisations are involved, committed and play a role in achieving staff commitment and participation within their organisations;
- there is clarity around partner roles and responsibilities;
- major partnership decisions are made collaboratively and partnership activities are designed to make best use of partners' expertise;
- goals, progress and achievements are systematically and regularly monitored and refined as required;
- adequate resources are committed to ensure the effectiveness and success of partnerships;
- the school collects evidence to evaluate whether partnerships are having their intended impact in improving outcomes for students; and
- the school's partnerships are sustainable and have become an accepted part of the culture of the school community and partner organisations.

Outstanding

The school leadership team makes deliberate and strategic use of partnerships with families, local businesses and community organisations to access intellectual, physical and/or other resources not available within the school for the purposes of improving student outcomes. There is a range of currently operating partnerships, each carefully planned and designed to enhance student outcomes (for example, to broaden student knowledge, build new skills, develop more positive attitudes, increase engagement levels, create applied learning opportunities for students, or facilitate successful transitions to work or further education or training).

Each partnership has been established in response to an identified need. Considerable effort has been put into understanding students' needs, identifying appropriate partners to address those needs, planning the details of partnership programs and clarifying partner roles and responsibilities.

Careful consideration has been given to the benefits of the partnership to each participating partner. Explicit processes are in place to ensure ongoing and effective communication – sometimes across networks of partners – and there are documented plans for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of each partnership.

The school's partnerships are being successfully implemented and appear to be adequately resourced and sustainable. There is clear evidence that partnerships are having their intended impact.

High

The school has established one or more partnerships with families, local businesses and/or community organisations with the express purpose of improving outcomes for students. Partnerships have generally been initiated by the senior leadership team and have their support.

Each partnership brings staff and students of the school together with external partners such as families, other education or training institutions, local businesses and/or community organisations. All partners have a high level of understanding of, and commitment to, the purposes of the partnership and clear objectives have been set, expressed in terms of improved outcomes for students.

Attention has been given to communication and to the sharing of experiences within the partnership; however, there may be no formal plan for reviewing the partnership's outcomes and effectiveness.

There is evidence that the school's partnerships are being implemented as intended. However, there may be limited evidence of improved student outcomes as a result of partnership activities – possibly because there has been insufficient time for them to demonstrate an effect.

Medium

The school has external 'partnerships', but rather than being built around a coherent, jointly planned program of activities to improve outcomes for students, these 'partnerships' tend to be mutually convenient arrangements (eg, exchanges of expertise or the sharing of facilities between institutions or organisations). Such 'partnerships' often are established by individual members of staff and have limited whole-school support or engagement.

The student needs that partnerships are designed to address may not be made explicit and, rather than being carefully planned, individual partnerships tend to be opportunistic in nature. Communications between partners are largely unplanned and infrequent.

No plans exist to systematically review the effectiveness of partnerships, which typically are very dependent on the efforts of a small number of individuals and so have limited sustainability.

Low

There is no evidence of planned, deliberate partnerships with other institutions or organisations. Contacts with families, other education and training institutions, local businesses and community organisations, when they occur, are limited to isolated events. Although references may be made to 'partnerships', these partnerships are not based on collaboratively planned programs of activities with clear goals, roles and responsibilities.