

Section 1:

#1 Strengths: ■ Your vivid sensory details create a powerful image of the playground's deterioration. ■ You effectively use personification to bring inanimate objects like trees to life.

Weaknesses: Overuse of metaphors → You use too many metaphors in this paragraph, which makes it difficult to understand what's actually happening. Phrases like "trees that bend melancholically" and "gleaming white constellations that are awoken" are poetic but make the reader work too hard to visualize the scene. Instead, try to balance creative language with clearer descriptions.

Exemplar: ***The once-majestic trees surrounding Penrith Public Nature Reserve now droop sadly, as if weeping over the rubbish piled beneath their branches. Even at night, the stars seem to stare down in shock at what has become of the playground.***

#2 Strengths: ■ Your dialogue effectively shows different perspectives on the playground issue. ■ You create emotional impact through the children's personal stories.

Weaknesses: Underdeveloped characters → The quotes from children and staff feel disconnected from each other. While Sadie's quote is touching and Karl's is concerning, there's no follow-up or connection between these characters. The janitor's quote is powerful but brief. Consider developing these perspectives more fully or connecting them to show how they relate to each other.

Exemplar: ***"I used to climb the bright yellow monkey bars every lunchtime," said Sadie, a Year 4 student celebrating her eighth birthday today. She wiped away tears as she pointed to the equipment, now covered with debris. "All I wanted was to enjoy my special day at my favourite spot, but now it's ruined."***

#3 Strengths: ■ Your personification of "The Ooze" creates an effective villain for your story. ■ You build tension by suggesting the leachate is affecting the staff as well as students.

Weaknesses: Unclear narrative focus → The introduction of "The Ooze" as a character shifts the article from realistic reporting to something more fantastical. While creative, this shift might confuse readers about whether this is meant to be taken literally or metaphorically. The suggestion that Principal Corine's hands are "quite remarkably green" and that the leachate might not be leachate but "the playground crying black tears" leaves readers unsure about the actual situation.

Exemplar: ***The toxic leachate seeping through the playground has become so notorious that children have nicknamed it "The Ooze." It moves through cracks and under equipment, claiming toys and ruining play spaces. Alarmingly, there are reports of this***

hazardous liquid reaching the staffroom, though Principal Corine remains silent on the matter.

■ Your feature article shows impressive creativity and emotional power in depicting a playground crisis. The personification of the playground environment helps readers connect emotionally with the issue. However, the narrative sometimes loses focus, shifting between realistic reporting and more fantastical elements. Also, try to make your characters' stories connect more clearly to create a cohesive narrative. Consider organizing your article around a clearer timeline - perhaps showing the playground's decline, the current crisis, and what might happen next if nothing changes. You could also strengthen your conclusion by suggesting what actions might save the playground, giving readers hope rather than ending on the playground's "black tears." Additionally, balance your vivid descriptions with more straightforward explanations so readers can easily follow your main points. Your article has great potential to move readers and inspire action.

Score: 40/50

Section 2:

THE PLAYGROUND'S CRIES FOR HELP: MUFFLED BY JUICE BOXES AND SHAME

Feature article: 10th [10th] of May, 2063

What the students of Penrith Public vision now is not a kaleidoscope of beautiful baby blue padding with waves of pompous pink slides, but rather a droopy grotesque gravel grey backdrop with nothing but devilish red debris. Children's laughter fades as they view what once was a playground; now a plague ground. Juice boxes, lost property, stacks of fallen chips that pigeons peck on, they all reek of obnoxious rotten egg. Littering is still constant. Pupils who before longed for lunchtime now dread it, knowing that the smell of Gordon's leftover mashed potato would crawl secretly into their mouths. Yet, students insouciantly climb over rubbish chaos just to go down a slide.

Children's whispers and murmurs engulf the landfill site, creating imaginative stories, unaware they were the true creators of this disgusting pile of gunk. Parents listen attentively to their kids, finding out the state of the school. Many carers are disturbed, hearts shattering into mere shards of disbelief as they learn that instead of a serene, tranquil, and safe environment, the children are met by distracting beasts of litter that haunt them throughout school days. Teachers, ignorant and arrogant, neglect any accusations of horrid wellbeing procedures. ~~Principal Corine sits, unbothered, in his office, fingers dancing on his phone. No one takes authority, every staff member wanders around, heads tilted in unison to run endlessly on a hedonic treadmill.~~ [Principal Corine sits, unbothered, in his office, fingers dancing on his phone. No one takes

authority; every staff member wanders around, heads tilted in unison as if running endlessly on a hedonic treadmill.]

#1 Trees that once surrounded the Penrith Public Nature Reserve bend melancholically, eyes droopy and smiles disintegrating with every lunch order thrown under its branches. Gleaming white constellations that are awoken consequently light up the dark abyss of midnight; they stare, bewildered at the immense amount of slop dunked onto every green corner of Penrith Public. The stench of mouldy bread dances into the clouds' noses, pursuing them until they leave, with a curse in their scent identifiers. What good is a clear dazzling blue sky if the horizon is anything but beautiful? The children might twirl enthusiastically to school; but this artificial happiness is not able to lurk around anymore.

Last Monday, a School Inspection Report (SIR) was conducted due to countless pages of complaints sent by concerned parents. Paediatrician Spark tagged along with the team, hoping to see crowds of interested students. Instead, he met children whose slouched backs and miserable faces left Spark petrified. Paediatrician Spark commented: "Wellbeing is not accounted for in Penrith Public. Severe cases of scent destruction had been found to be present in one of two students."

Principal Corine argued: "We had a very recent clean-up. This is the result when parents don't teach children manners nor how to properly dispose of food."

His statement was iconic because their last clean-up was a decade ago, when he as principal was not even active in the school.

Hazmat teams were called ~~for~~ [in] due to the toxic chemicals found in the life-size compost bin. Teams in full gear began testing the toxic waters of the playground, working frantically to contain the lethal lurid liquid; leachate, a clumpy sludge of bacteria. Leachate, a significant danger to children, has been irritating lungs. Leachate seeps like a villain in disguise, slinking under benches, sneaking into cracks, lurking by the seesaw. It froths in sunlight, as thick as split yogurt, with a vinegar, metal, and old-tears smell. The children call it "The Ooze." It has stolen their jump ropes, their soccer balls, even their innocence.

#2 Children wanted to have a say about this issue.

"I used to climb the bright yellow monkey bars. Now a dead pigeon ~~smashed~~ [is smashed] against it, and there's red paint smothered underneath it. Today's my birthday. I just wanted to revisit my happiest moments, but I can't." Sadie, a year 4 student, turning 8 today, cried.

"I haven't seen my best friend Jasper ever since. People are gossiping that maybe he drowned in the puddle of rubbish. They say the leachate hums lullabies in the night, and cradles him to sleep every day. Hehe, imagine the rubbish talking about politics." Karl Noir, kindergartener in Class KJ laughs innocently.

The school janitor who wishes to remain anonymous states: "I used to mop up simple apple juice spills. Now I mop up regret and sanity."

The final bell tolls, but no one rushes out eagerly anymore. Kids creep out slowly, heads hung low, backpacks dragging like anchors of despair. The bright chalk paintings that once sparkled with joy are now twisted by stains and sludge. Even the hopscotch squares quietly mourn under layers of grime.

#3 There have been reports of "The Ooze" seeping into the staffroom, but Principal Corine says nothing. Nevertheless, his desk was found rather damp this morning. His hands, quite remarkably green.

Mums have started sewing gas masks onto school caps. Dads sit ~~nervous-circles~~ [in nervous circles], discussing transfers. One child asked their mum, "If I bin my sandwich wrapper, will the trees forgive me?"

The leachate didn't just poison the ground. It poisoned the future. Some even say it's not leachate.

It's the playground crying black tears.