

BASELINE INSPECTION REPORT

Clifton Hunter High School

20 to 23 January 2015

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Recommendations

Introduction

The Honourable Tara Rivers, Minister for Education, has requested an inspection of all government schools during the 2014-15 academic year. The purpose of these inspections is to provide a baseline assessment of the quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning, the progress students make and the standards they achieve, the effectiveness of the leadership and management of each school, and the standards being achieved in English and mathematics.

The resulting inspection report provides a clear understanding of each school's particular strengths and weaknesses, and makes recommendations for improvement where necessary.

Information about the school and the inspection team

Information about the school

Type of school:	Government high school
Age range of students:	11–16
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	824
School address:	Clifton Hunter High School Frank Sound Road Grand Cayman KY1-1508 Cayman Islands
Telephone number:	345-949-9488
Email address:	pbeckford@chhs.edu.ky
Name of Principal:	Pauline Beckford

Clifton Hunter High School is a comprehensive, co-educational community and has been in existence for four years (since 2011). It was named after the first Education Officer in the Cayman Islands. It is an average sized school, located in the Eastern District at Frank Sound of Grand Cayman. The school was officially opened in August 2012, having relocated under a new educational restructuring process, from the capital George Town. The new building was designed with open-plan learning spaces and students nurtured through an academy system. The three academies occupy separate buildings. Heads of each academy are responsible for the pastoral care of their students, and a significant proportion of the teaching takes place inside the academy. At the same time, the school saw the appointment of a new principal, who is still in post.

There are currently 824 students on roll, comprising 395 girls and 429 boys. The structure of the catchment is rural, with a low socio-economic base. There are higher rates of unemployment than some other areas of the island, particularly in North Side, East End and parts of Bodden Town. The exception is the Savannah area where the parental body is largely working professionals.

Over 90 percent of the students are either Caymanian by birth or by status. The remainder are students from other English or Spanish speaking territories in the vicinity. Around 3 percent of students speak English as an additional language (EAL), with very few at an early stage of fluency. About a quarter of students have special educational

needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and this group mainly includes students identified as having emotional and behavioural difficulties or moderate learning needs.

The school believes that all students have the right to enjoy their education, to succeed in the classroom and in their environs to become confident, engaged and ready to play a key role in society as Caymanians and global citizens, underlined in the school's motto *Nil satis nisi optimum* – 'nothing but the best'.

The principal is ultimately responsible for the day-to-day management of the school and is line managed by a senior school improvement officer (SSIO). The SSIO role is to act as a 'critical friend' to the principal and is the link to the Department of Education Services (DES). The Chief Education Officer (CEO) is responsible for the implementation of educational policies as determined by the Ministry of Education.

Information about the inspection team

Lead: Stephen Cole

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Karen Jamieson
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This inspection of Clifton Hunter High School took place from 20 to 23 January 2015 and involved a team of eight inspectors. The following aspects of the school's work were looked at.

- Standards achieved and progress made by students, particularly in English and mathematics
- The effectiveness of teaching and its impact on learning
- How well the school is led and managed

The inspection team gathered evidence in the following ways.

- 114 lessons, or parts of lessons, were observed, particularly in English and mathematics
- School documents, including teachers' planning, curriculum guidelines and school policies were looked at and students' work was scrutinised
- Discussions took place with teachers and with the principal
- Discussions were held with students, and their activities in lessons and outside the classroom were observed
- Comments by parents and staff were taken into account from the pre-inspection questionnaires

Inspectors use the following grading scale to describe aspects of the school's work:

Grade		Description
1	Very good	Good in all respects and exemplary in some significant areas
2	Good	Good in most respects. Weaknesses are minor and not in significant areas
3	Adequate	No significant weaknesses, but no major strengths. Improvement needed
4	Unsatisfactory	Some significant weaknesses that have a negative impact on learning and achievement. Cause for concern

Executive summary of the report

The overall effectiveness of the school

The overall effectiveness of the school is unsatisfactory.

Clifton Hunter High School provides a modern environment in which to work and learn, although the open-plan nature of the classrooms is a barrier to improvement. Over the last two years, there has been an overall improvement in the achievement and behaviour of students, although attainment in level 2 examinations is still below the levels predicted by baseline tests. Results in mathematics and English are improving, although attainment in science remains a cause for concern. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades is to some extent limited by the policy of entering candidates a year, and sometimes two years, early.

The principal and senior team have a clear vision for the school. The self-evaluation and school improvement plan is well informed and precise. The senior leadership has identified as a core objective the need for improvement in the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. It has introduced initiatives but these have not been consistently implemented by staff. There are examples of good teaching, but much that requires improvement or that gives cause for concern. Often teachers talk too much in class, require students to copy down notes, fail to challenge the more able, and the marking of books is sporadic and does not contribute to students' progress.

The monitoring of teaching is less effective than it could be. Lessons are observed by non-subject specialists and the judgement of the effectiveness of teaching is often generous. Because heads of subject are not part of the formal process they have no accountability for raising standards, and the academy-based teaching limits professional dialogue and the sharing of ideas. There is no process to take action in relation to teachers who continually under-perform.

The lack of oversight and training in relation to those that teach students with SEND impedes their progress, and this is not tracked by the school. Data collected by the school is sent to the Ministry of Education, and so its analysis and use at a school level are diluted and delayed as evidence to evaluate and improve.

The quality of care is good. The principal is highly respected by the students and the vice-principals have a visible presence during the school day. Behaviour in school and in class is good.

What the school does well

- The senior leadership team have a consistent vision for the school that focuses clearly on the improvement of teaching and learning.
- Overall attainment in the school at the end of Year 11 has been improving over time.
- Where teaching is good lessons provide a variety of learning activities that engage and interest the students; and teachers manage behaviour effectively to create a purposeful and productive working environment.

- The day-to-day management of the school is good. Communication about daily activity is clear.
- The academy structure is used effectively to support the pastoral needs of students.
- There has been a significant improvement in student behaviour over the last two years.

What needs to improve

- Students' achievements in examinations are below their potential as suggested by the predictions of cognitive abilities tests.
- In a quarter of the lessons observed, unsatisfactory achievement is a cause for concern.
- Standards of achievement in core and additional science are unsatisfactory for the ability of the students.
- There is no consistent and reliable baseline that the school can use as a starting point to track the progress of individual students and subjects.
- The analysis and use of progress data need developing to validate the targets set and evaluate students' progress more robustly.
- There is no centralised tracking of the progress of students with special educational needs and and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Support for students with SEND is adequate but there is inconsistency in the way in which teachers make specific and appropriate provision.
- Support assistants work effectively alongside the class teachers to support individuals and small groups of students but there are insufficient assistants to provide the levels of support needed across the school.
- The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. In about a quarter of the lessons observed, it needed improvement and in another quarter it gave cause for concern. At Key Stage 4 about two-thirds of the teaching was at least good, but at Key Stage 3 the proportion was only one-third.
- Where teaching requires improvement, expectations give cause for concern. Teachers do not offer sufficient challenge to students. Poor time management is a feature of many lessons so that valuable learning time is lost. Poor or insufficient levels of marking often fail to provide the guidance that students need to make greater progress.
- The quality and impact of professional development are a cause for concern.
- The observation of lessons is often undertaken by non-specialists, and the grades awarded often over-estimate the quality of teaching.
- The senior leadership has not been successful in ensuring that new initiatives and approaches have been uniformly accepted by staff.
- Teaching and Learning Co-ordinators (TLCs) managing a range of subject leaders removes the accountability for improvement.
- There is no strategy from government / Department for Education Services (DES) or school to address the problem caused by the open-plan class layout, which limits the range of teaching styles that can be used, and adversely affects students' concentration.

Commentary on inspection findings

How well students achieve and make progress

The quality of the students' achievement is unsatisfactory.

Overall attainment in the school at the end of Year 11 has been improving slowly over time. In 2012, 26.7 percent of students obtained five or more level 2 passes including mathematics and English; by 2014, this figure had increased to 34.7 percent. Similarly, the proportion of students who have obtained a level 2 pass that does not include mathematics and English has increased from 41.2 to 46.9 percent over the same time period.

In mathematics and English, students enter for the regional Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) examinations. In 2014, 62 percent of students obtained a level 2 pass in English, which shows a slight decline from 2013 but is still higher than the 2012 percentage of 52.7 percent. In 2014, the number of level 2 passes for mathematics was lower than English at 42.2 percent; this is an increase from the 2012 mathematics result of 30.9 percent.

For science, the large majority of students are entered for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations in core science or additional science, although more able students sit GCSE separate sciences in physics, chemistry and biology. Fourteen students sat separate science examinations in 2014. Although all students obtained a level 2 pass for the three subjects, only one entry was awarded the highest A* grade, and eight more entries were awarded an A grade. Standards of achievement in core and additional science are unsatisfactory for the ability of the students. The percentage of level 2 passes in core science showed a decline between 2013 and 2014 from 14.2 percent to 4.5 percent, which represents five students out of the 133 who were entered. Correspondingly, in 2014, 50 percent of students achieved a Level 2 pass in additional science, which represents a decline from 71.4 percent in 2013.

In Year 9, all students take cognitive abilities tests which provide GCSE attainment predictions in the majority of subjects for the year group at the end of Year 11. Predictions are not available for all GCSE subjects with a small number of entries. Although the overall attainment of students with five or more Level 2 passes has increased every year since 2012, students' achievements in examinations are below their potential as suggested by the predictions of cognitive abilities tests.

In other subjects, the attainment of Year 11 students varies considerably between subjects and examination boards, although attainment is generally lower with GCSE examination specifications. In 2014, a range of subjects show a decline in the percentage of students obtaining a level 2 pass in comparison with the previous year, including building technology, child development, electrical and electronics technology, information technology, leisure and tourism, music, office administration, performing arts, principles of accounts, religious studies, social studies, Spanish, statistics and technical drawing. Improvements in overall attainment were seen, however, in art, design and technology, electronic document preparation and management (EDPM), English as an Additional Language (EAL), food and nutrition, geography and media studies. There were no history entries in 2014. It is difficult to compare further between subjects as the size of the group or the number of entries for particular examinations varies and this

reduces statistical reliability. However, analysis of Year 9 scores in cognitive abilities tests for the 2013 and 2014 candidates shows that statistically the 2013 year group cohort is the weaker, with 71 percent of students achieving below average results compared to 62 percent in 2014.

The school enters a number of its most able students early for public examinations in Year 10 and, in some cases, in Year 9. The majority take English, mathematics or EDPM examinations for the CXC board. From the 135 early entries taken in the school by 68 candidates, all students have obtained a Level 2 pass, although not all of these are at the highest grade that could be awarded for the qualification. Six students sat the GCSE statistics examination early, and one student obtained an A grade.

It is difficult to gain an accurate measure of students' performance in relation to expected local, regional and international benchmarks for their age. Although attainment at GCSE can be compared to some extent with standards reached by other students in UK schools, GCSE is not taken in the majority of subjects. There are no statistics available to make a reliable comparison of the school's performance in CXC with other schools in the region which have similar entries, as no comparative data was available at the time of inspection. However, in art, leisure and tourism, additional and core science, child development, media studies and religious studies, the level of attainment is below UK norms.

It is not possible to be accurate in measuring the progress of students because of the unreliability and incomplete nature of much of the data available. Year 6 scores in cognitive abilities tests and Cayman Islands National Curriculum levels are generally provided by feeder schools and the Ministry of Education to act as baseline data for most students entering into Year 7. Progress in Mathematics (PiM) data also contributes towards baseline data for some students, although Progress in English (PiE) assessment data is no longer used by the school. However, as the school does not receive full information at transition, data arrives late in the following school year and information is not available for students who are new to the Cayman Islands, this information does not always provide a reliable baseline for measuring future progress. Some of the subjects within the school carry out their own baseline tests for new students coming into Year 7, but this is not taking place in all subject areas. As a result, there is no consistent and reliable baseline that the school can use as a starting point to track progress of individual students and subjects or make comparisons with other schools nationally or internationally.

As students move up through the school, a wide range of data is collected on students' progress and a management system is used to store data and track students. A new electronic departmental tracking system has recently been introduced and is viewed positively by staff. Some teachers also used the tracker as a part of their lesson observation planning. In Key Stage 3, progress is measured using Cayman Island National Curriculum sub-levels and students are expected to make two sub-levels of progress a year. In Key Stage 4, progress is measured using performance against examination board criteria. This information is used by teachers to plan subject teaching, create groups and sets, agree targets for students, inform parents and set year group predictions for attainment. The school aims to give current and target attainment levels to all students to help them to make progress, but discussions with students showed that not all students know their targets or how to reach them. In addition, reports to parents show that many targets are not subject-based and do not provide specific guidance on ways to improve work.

On a whole-school level, improving the analysis and use of progress data held is an area for development. There is no central point within the school for the analysis of data and it is not used for long-term or strategic planning. On a subject level, it is difficult to confirm the robustness or accuracy of some of the attainment levels which are assigned, given that a number of staff come from schools outside the Cayman Islands and have little or no experience of target setting using levels. Although departments do formally meet to discuss progress and results and evaluate their work with regard to student achievement, inconsistency between departments and subjects is also a concern and is identified as a weakness by the principal. As a result, it is difficult to use the progress data available to make judgements on students' overall progress.

There is no centralised tracking of the progress of special educational needs and and/or disabilities (SEND) students, although 'provision maps' and systems to monitor the effectiveness of SEND provision are being developed. The number of EAL students is small and the EAL co-ordinator maintains records on their progress. There is no whole-school able, gifted and talented register or centralised tracking of the progress of more able students, although some departments do make provision for gifted and talented students in their subjects and track students' progress. At the time of inspection, no significant differences were noted in lesson observations in the achievements of boys and girls, and the 2013 results in Key Stage 4 attainment showed no marked difference between the attainment of boys and girls overall.

The level of achievement in lessons varies considerably. In some lessons, achievement is very good and careful planning, use of peer assessment, group and pair work and interesting and stimulating activities allow students to achieve at a high level. For example, in an English class, there was very good achievement in practising summary writing with a creative focus. In science, the level of the work observed in a single science class included constructive feedback given which identified how work could be significantly improved. In a mathematics lesson, working with a learning buddy allowed students to work co-operatively and make very good levels of progress. In a music class, students explored samba by all of the class playing instruments themselves as a band and then reviewing their own performance through lively class discussion.

In a quarter of the lessons observed, the lack of achievement is a cause for concern. This is due to a range of factors, including poor behaviour management, late starts to lessons, work that is inappropriate for the age range of the students, lack of pace and challenge and lack of constructive feedback from teachers. In a further quarter of lessons observed during the inspection achievement in lessons was judged as adequate but requiring improvement. Shortcomings included uninspired teaching and slow progress, students not completing any work for a long period, repetitive work and students losing interest, a low level of challenge resulting in no achievement being made, excessive input by the teacher, and closed questions allowing no improvement in learning to take place.

Poor or insufficient levels of marking often fail to provide the guidance that students need to make greater progress. For example, some books were found with no marking and limited work. On occasion, the work that was present was not of an appropriate level for students working towards CXC examinations.

Students have good musical skills, but their work in art shows little variety. Opportunities are missed for practical work in science resulting in poor practical skills for their age.

The effectiveness of teaching and its impact on students' learning

The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory.

In about a quarter of the lessons observed it needed improvement and in another quarter it gave cause for concern. At Key Stage 4, about two-thirds of the teaching was at least good, but at Key Stage 3 the proportion was only one-third.

The school has implemented a range of teaching and learning initiatives with the intention of improving students' levels of achievement but these measures are not consistently applied in classroom practice and are not having the desired positive impact on achievement.

Where teaching is good, lessons provide a variety of learning activities that engage and interest the students. Such stimulation and encouragement enables students to learn and achieve their goals. Excellent planning by the teacher provides not only pace and challenge but also encourages students to think for themselves and demonstrate higher level thinking skills. They are encouraged to ask questions, to work in pairs and small groups and share ideas. There were lessons in which students worked well in pairs in a good quiet atmosphere conducive to learning or the pace of working challenged students and excellent questioning extended learning and encouraged students to think for themselves and to demonstrate high levels of understanding in constructing questions that showed excellent knowledge and subject understanding. Notably this is seen when students are able to solve problems, predict outcomes and communicate their ideas to the rest of the class in a clear and articulate manner.

When it is present, thorough and regular marking with constructive comments helps students to improve the quality of their work, and regular oral feedback provides timely direction and encouragement. Teachers supply the necessary structure and support to take students' learning forward and set high expectations and meet the different learning needs of students. Teachers take into account the recommended strategies for students with SEND, make effective use of support teachers and match tasks appropriately to individual needs. Excellent time management is a feature of lessons where students make the best progress, with time allocated for a productive plenary session that facilitates reflection and consolidates learning. In good lessons, teachers manage behaviour effectively to create a purposeful and productive working environment.

Where teaching requires improvement, the level of expectation about what the students can achieve gives cause for concern. Teachers do not offer sufficient challenge and rely on conveying basic information through a process of extended presentations by the teacher and the asking of simple closed questions that limit learning. A reliance on the copying of notes from the board takes up the bulk of available teaching time and contributes to the under-development of independent learning skills. An over-emphasis on discipline and sanctions, in an attempt to manage students' behaviour, often stifles interest and involvement in lessons that are slow paced with a single task. Students become disaffected and disruptive. For example, the passive acceptance by students of a repeated lesson offered little challenge or opportunity for students to demonstrate their own level of knowledge and understanding. A lack of attention went uncorrected by the teacher and severely limited the progress of the majority of the class when students lost focus and purpose. Teachers often provide low-level, unchallenging, mechanical tasks that fail to engage and motivate students. Excessive noise levels are commonplace. Behaviour deteriorates when students become bored and disengaged, noise escalates

and in the open-plan classrooms this can have negative consequences not only for themselves but also for learners in adjacent lessons. Irregular and cursory marking and the inconsistent setting and recording of targets further contribute to the low motivation and poor achievement of students. A feature of poor and irregular marking is that unfinished work often goes uncorrected even when it contains inaccuracies. Poor time management is a feature of these lessons and valuable learning time is lost.

In many lessons there is inappropriate provision to support SEND students. A common approach is applied to all students in a class in the form of a set task that takes no account of individual need or styles of learning. There is insufficient emphasis on times for students to work independently or in small groups, and in some lessons the sharing of ideas and the asking of questions is actively discouraged because teachers are preoccupied with controlling behaviour in the lesson. The impact of this practice is that students have no opportunity to display the knowledge they have or develop co-operative learning skills or value and appreciate the opinions of others. A significant concern is the amount of teaching time wasted in the day. Students do not move quickly to lessons, many of which start late. Poor time management by the teacher leaves insufficient time to complete lesson objectives and little time for students to think beyond the narrow tasks they are set.

Support for students with SEND is inconsistent. Although information is given in the SEND register and individual education plans that should be taken into account in the planning and teaching of lessons, some teachers do not make specific and appropriate provision. Although training has been provided, some teachers lack understanding in addressing particular learning needs, such as dyslexia, and there is no coherent whole-school approach to meeting individual need. An example of this is that SEND students are expected to do a lot of copying and writing that they find difficult to complete. There are insufficient support assistants to provide the level of support for SEND students across the curriculum. EAL students are well supported by the EAL co-ordinator and a teaching assistant. However, in mainstream lessons, there is patchy provision of work tailored to individual need. At its best, some teachers provide bi-lingual dictionaries, translate for the students and send key vocabulary lists to the EAL co-ordinator so that she can ensure they know it. In other lessons there is no such provision.

How well the school is led and managed

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

The senior leadership team has a consistent vision for the school that focuses clearly on the improvement of teaching and learning and ensures all students are making good progress. A self-evaluation has been produced by the principal which identifies many of the issues facing the school and in many areas realistically evaluates improvement. However, the school's assessment of progress against issues relating to teaching and learning is more positive than that seen by inspectors, and it also fails to acknowledge the weaknesses in teaching and learning in science.

The principal has introduced a number of systems to drive improvement which have resulted in some improvement over the last two years. However, there still are clearly identified key issues in teaching and assessment that are affecting the pace of learning and hence the progress that students make during lessons and over a longer period. As

a result the achievement of students has not been as good as it should be for their ability. Students' behaviour and staff attitudes to work have improved considerably and there have also been some modest improvements to the quality of teaching and learning and overall outcomes for students in Year 11. However, the senior leadership has not been effective in ensuring that new initiatives and approaches have been uniformly accepted by staff. This leads to a disconnection between the policies and procedures and the practice seen in the school, and as a result the various initiatives that have been introduced have had a variable impact; for example, in raising the quality of teaching.

There is a detailed lesson observation scheme, which the school claims to focus on teaching and learning. However, lesson observations are not always carried out by subject specialists, which limits their efficacy. Joint observations between school senior leaders conducted during the inspection show that the school observers are able to identify the key issues, but the regular programme of observations focuses too little on the impact of teaching on learning, and the grades awarded are often over-generous.

The management structure of the school with Teaching and Learning Co-ordinators (TLCs) managing a range of subject leaders and teaching staff from disparate areas does not enable a focused drive to improve the quality of provision in subjects. Subject leaders feel disempowered because they are held accountable for results but they do not have the necessary tools or information to enable them to drive improvements in their areas. They do not receive information about the outcomes from the lesson observations in their area and their job description explicitly states that they do not line manage the teachers in their area. This results in the varying impact of the strategic initiatives in classroom practice.

The day-to-day management of the school is good. Communication about daily activity is clear, enhanced by a loudspeaker system. Deputy principals have a high visibility between lessons. The academy structure is used effectively to support the pastoral needs of students. Learning mentors provide good support for students in their academy. There is some flexibility in the arrangements for subjects across the three academies to enable efficient use of resources and enable more refined aspects of setting. There are clear policies and procedures for behaviour management. The school records of incidents and exclusions show that there has been significant improvement in behaviour. However, there is no strategy to address the urgent problem caused by the open-plan class layout, which limits the range of teaching styles and adversely affects students' concentration.

Equality of opportunity requires improvement. The school does not analyse data for different groups of learners, so that the school is not able to identify any gaps in progress for specific groups. Support for students with SEND is well organised but there are inadequate resources to support the large numbers of students who require support. The needs of students are identified by individual educational plans but there is limited evidence that teachers are using these to support the individual needs of students, and no records to show that its effectiveness is being monitored. The quality of support for the small number of students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is good and as a result students' progress compared with their starting points is good.

The quality and impact of professional development is a cause for concern. Leaders have identified the key areas of teaching and learning which require improvement to be suiting provision to individual needs, lack of high order thinking skills and insufficient discussion in lessons, but the continuing professional development offered does not

satisfy the needs of staff. Their perception is that much of the programme comes from outside the school and only a short amount of time is spent concentrating on the key deficiencies identified from the teaching and learning observations. The school is constrained in the extent that it can deal with staff who are failing to improve. It reports that often the best teachers are transferred to other schools, and are replaced by underperforming teachers, without consultation.

The quality of the assessment of students' attainment is weak. The school identified this as an issue last year and has made some movement towards training staff in diagnostic marking. However, some teachers have been slow to take this up and cannot see its relevance to teaching and learning. A recent audit of Key Stage 3 classes by the leadership demonstrated that two-thirds of books are up to date with some form of marking and a third have some feedback. An audit by the inspection team suggested that the conclusion is generous, and even where marking had taken place it seldom was thorough or gave specific targets for improvement. An effective tracking system has been introduced to determine the progress made by students towards their targets in lesson. The system is well supported by teachers and subject leaders but there is no monitoring of its validity.

The analysis and use of data requires improvement so that it can be used reliably to evaluate. The data for overarching success is not reported clearly and data varies across the school. Targets are set using Key Stage 2 National Curriculum results and outcomes related to cognitive ability tests, but are not always accurate. The school generates a great deal of data but it is not analysed effectively to enable it to make consistent judgements about the progress of students. The recently introduced tracking system has been well received but teachers do not always use data effectively to meet the needs of all learners.

The quality of teaching and learning in English

The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is adequate.

In English students enter for the regional CXC examinations. In 2014, 62 percent of students obtained a level 2 pass in English, which shows a decline from 2013 but is still higher than the 2012 percentage of 52.7 percent.

The students are articulate and keen to communicate their views in class. They are given activities to do this so that they grow in confidence and subject knowledge is re-enforced. Pair and whole-group discussions were observed and these are a regular feature of many lessons, enabling the students to share ideas and learn from each other. Following a drama presentation or a speech, their peers feed back to the students, in a mature manner, with points of praise or practical suggestions for improvement. The school was the national champion in the oratorical competition last year. Lively question and answer sessions are a feature of some lessons. Students are given time to synthesise ideas and present a cohesive viewpoint to the class individually. However, the open-plan nature of the classrooms severely constrains the teaching approaches. Teachers are aware of disturbing other lessons with what, in an enclosed classroom, would be considered normal levels of noise experienced during an enthusiastic exchange of views. Thus it is difficult for students to produce the required volume of sound, and teachers shy away from such things as role playing activities.

Many students enter the school with a very low reading age, some at a level several years below their chronological age. They are encouraged through the literacy programme to improve. They follow the 'Corrective Reading', programme. De-coding skills are taught and in Year 9 comprehension skills are added. There is also the, 'on-line reading academy', where students use headphones for on-line learning. There are texts which are grouped in similar levels and housed in each academy and a class library. The students are encouraged to read widely both for research and for pleasure. As a result, students read aloud with expression in a variety of subjects, and by Key Stage 4 have a level of reading appropriate to their age.

A significant proportion of English lessons are spent teaching the skills needed for comprehension and the extraction of information from a variety of texts. Many confidence building exercises were observed where students built gradually, through prepared steps, to a full understanding of the subject matter. For example, students were observed to be highly competent in skim reading, identifying key points and synthesising into a coherent summary.

In most subjects, the students have a good knowledge of technical terms and read them easily. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson there was a good focus on vocabulary, where words such as 'variable', and 'cumulative', were learned and understood. In humanities key words, their definitions and their spelling are explicitly learned and tested. However, in science use of technical language is weak, and there is often no insistence on using exact terminology.

Written work is mostly neat and well presented with good handwriting. The quality of spelling is variable, but on occasions it is not taught with the required rigour. This is reflected in the variable quality of marking. At its best the marking has excellent prescriptive comments; at its worst no attention is paid to the quality of English when marking students' work. At times, in other subjects there is no correction of mistakes and no challenge to improve the quality of students' writing skills.

The leadership of English as a subject has identified strengths and weaknesses, but there is no formal role for subject leaders to initiate improvement. There is no time for peer observation and review, nor for the sharing of best practice through observation, and lesson observations are undertaken by a non-specialist teacher. The day-to-day exchange of ideas that would normally generate improvement are limited by the academy system, which splits English teaching over three buildings.

There is a good whole-school policy for English, with a stringent marking policy which encompasses the best elements, but the lack of monitoring of its implementation is a cause for concern.

Lessons in all subjects are taught in standard English, to which the students respond and reply in the same manner. Many teachers give feedback to help students improve their literacy skills.

The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics

The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is adequate.

Mathematics is a core subject throughout years 7 to 11, with all students entered for the CXC mathematics examination. In 2014, 43 percent of students achieved a level 2 pass, which is in line with the prediction from cognitive abilities tests, and a substantial improvement on the 35 percent that achieved this in the previous year. Gifted and talented students are identified in the Key Stage 2 mathematics examination and these then go on to take the CXC examination early, followed by GCSE statistics and then possibly AS Level mathematics. Ten out of twelve Year 11 students entered for statistics GCSE passed with grade C or above, as did all six entered in Year 10.

Attainment, using National Curriculum levels, is measured regularly by the department and all year groups show an improvement from 2013 to 2014, justifying predictions of CXC level 2 pass rates of 41 percent, 52 percent, 63 percent and 69 percent over the next four years. Students with SEND are identified and the best teachers use clear written strategies to generate tasks suitable for their learning needs.

In lessons observed, progress varied considerably, with most rapid progress occurring in well-planned lessons that made effective use of time and used a variety of learning strategies. In a good number of other lessons, however, there was no clear structure or expectation; the pace was slow and little progress was made.

Mathematics and numeracy work were observed across the broader curriculum and applied to lessons including in science, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education (PE).

In some lessons observed, the teacher planned well for the needs of all students. In these lessons, the learning tasks were varied to maintain interest and co-operative pair or group work was encouraged. The students enjoyed their work and made rapid progress. However, a significant number of lessons were observed where the students were not engaged, the pace was slow and little or no progress was made.

All teachers understand their subject well and are capable of guiding students through the demands of CXC mathematics. In a large number of lessons, however, they fail to plan how to use the time effectively and cater for the needs of the most able as well as those with special educational needs in mathematics. Students' targets are not always considered and there is little use of pair or group work, even though this is a stated departmental ambition. In some lessons, teaching assistants are effective but in others they are less so. In lessons where students were allowed to make presentations using the electronic whiteboard or worked in groups, better progress was made.

The classrooms are of a good size, well lit and in most lessons there were sufficient textbooks available. Interactive whiteboards were well used but the presentations and video clips displayed were not always well planned. The open plan design of the buildings does lead to considerable noise pollution from neighbouring classes and inhibits the use of group work because of the impact this has on those nearby.

Use of time is a weakness in a majority of lessons. Often, classes start on time but then students arrive late so that teachers' introductions are drawn out or repeated. Time is not always effectively managed by the teacher and expectation can be too low. The

structure and pace of such lessons mean that students are not sufficiently challenged and attention wanders.

Teachers understand the demands of the curriculum and are familiar with the requirements of the external mathematics examinations that students sit.

In lessons that are well planned and in which students are given tasks which are valued and understood by them, behaviour is good and they make rapid progress. However, in many lessons, time is wasted repeating ideas that are already understood and well-meaning students become bored because they have not been given tasks to extend their learning.

The department has a homework timetable and, on inspecting students' books, there was good evidence of homework being set and marked. Most of the marking, however, consisted of ticks and crosses, with no advice given to help the student improve. Interviews with students confirmed this observation.

Teachers are aware of students with SEND and EAL but do not always sufficiently plan appropriate adjustments to the lesson to accommodate their needs fully.

There is much good practice within the department and determination to share it in order to raise teaching standards, but teachers are line-managed by six different members of the leadership team. This inhibits circulation of good ideas within the team.

Most students are keen to do well in mathematics and show interest and enthusiasm for what is being taught; they concentrate on their work and remain on task. However, when students are not occupied or challenged by the task set, behaviour sometimes deteriorates and students become disinterested.

Good teaching encourages students to share their ideas by speaking to the rest of the class but this important skill is not well developed; students become inhibited and often speak so quietly the majority cannot hear them. Most students are aware of target grades, and are anxious to achieve or exceed them.

Students work well and independently in lessons when the task and outcomes are clear but in some lessons the requirement to exercise independence is limited. Similarly, good mathematical group work was observed but only on a few occasions.

Appendix A

Recommendations

The following are some suggested ways in which the school could try to overcome the weaknesses identified in the 'What needs to improve' section of this report.

1. Improve the quality of teaching, in particular, by providing more varied tasks in lessons that take into account the differing needs of learners; allocate sufficient thinking time in activities to allow students to develop critical faculties and more student participation in lessons with less emphasis on teacher talk.
2. Urgently confront the problem caused by teaching environments which suffer excessive and distracting noise for neighbouring classrooms and that consequently limit the range of teaching approaches and adversely affect the concentration of students.
3. Undertake a review of all marking and assessment to ensure that assessment is seen as integral to good teaching and that it makes a positive contribution to students' progress.
4. Immediately review the curriculum provision, quality of teaching and schemes of work in science, with the objective of improving students' practical skills and examination results.
5. Provide training and/or re-training, for all senior and middle management, in the appraisal of teaching and its impact on learning.
6. Work with teachers to review the content and quality of professional development.
7. Create a transparent tracking system, clearly understood by all teachers, that is robustly analysed, and that can be used to evaluate students' progress and achievement.
8. Focus on students with SEND by ensuring that their progress is properly tracked, that teachers receive appropriate training, and the impact on the progress of SEND students is rigorously and regularly monitored and evaluated.
9. Improve the deployment of teaching assistants to maximise their impact in supporting learning.
10. Restructure the management system so that subject heads have a direct responsibility for improving teaching and raising achievement in their areas, and are accountable directly to senior leaders. In parallel, re-site departments in the same building to allow greater professional dialogue and sharing of resources.
11. Introduce tougher procedures for dealing with staff who fail to improve, or who are resistant to school initiatives designed to improve the educational experience of students.