

BASELINE INSPECTION REPORT

Lighthouse School

29 to 30 January 2015

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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:	Special School
Age range of students:	5-17
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	109
School address:	Lighthouse School PO Box 1834 Grand Cayman KY1-1110 Cayman Islands
Telephone number:	345-947-5454
Email address:	lhs@lhs.edu.ky
Name of Principal:	Carla MacVicar

The Lighthouse School was founded in 1976 by the National Council of Social Services, now known as the National Council of Voluntary Organizations, to meet the educational requirements of children with special educational needs (SEN). It was located in Bosun Bay, West Bay in the Bosun Bay Presbyterian Church Hall with an initial enrolment of 20 students. In 1981, the school became the responsibility of the Cayman Islands Government and was established in George Town next to the George Town Hospital. Currently the Lighthouse School is the only all-age government school in the Cayman Islands. The school caters specifically for students from the age of 5 to 17 years, who have moderate to profound learning disabilities and/or multiple disabilities. Over the last five years, the school has seen a 20 to 30 percent increase annually in enrolment.

In 2002 the school moved to its present location in a purpose-built facility. The building is designed specifically to accommodate the special educational needs of the students. Amenities consist of specialty rooms including an indoor gym and home science, physical fitness: multisensory, motor and speech therapy rooms, and a well-equipped computer laboratory. All rooms are fitted with furniture designed for the students. Bathrooms are fully accessible and equipped with shower facilities.

There is also an outdoor playground, which includes a hard court area, a football field and a sand and grass area with specialised playground equipment. A sensory garden is under construction.

Over the years, the school has continued to develop its programmes to ensure that the students receive an education that prepares them for life. Every student has an individual education plan (IEP) that focuses on developing his or her unique abilities to fullest potential. The main programmes include Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), which gives students the opportunity to receive international accreditation for achievements in life skills, the 'motor adaptive training programme' (MATP), which caters specifically for the physical education needs of students with severe and profound challenges, the 'vocational programme', which includes a pre-vocational and vocational class that prepares students for independent living and the world of work, and the 'mainstream inclusion programme', which provides students with opportunities to be integrated in mainstream schools to develop their skills further. The school also provides support services including speech and motor therapy, services for the visual and hearing impaired, counselling and educational psychological assessments. Students also actively participate and compete in local and regional competitions which include Inter-primary Sports, National Children's Festival of the Arts, National Youth Assembly and Special Olympics.

The school is divided into a primary and a secondary department. Students are grouped in primary classes according to their age, development stage, and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), using the categories 'moderate learning difficulties' (MLD), 'severe learning difficulties' (SLD), 'profound and multiple learning difficulties' (PMLD), 'autism spectrum disorder' (ASD) and 'P levels' (performance attainment targets for students with SEND who cannot access the national curriculum). Students in secondary classes are grouped according to their age, development stage and SEND and follow either a functional 'academics/vocational' or a 'life skills' strand. The maximum numbers of students within the classes are eight for the intake Year 1 classes and twelve for the others. However, there are many important variables that may affect the number of students in a class, including physical needs in terms of space, personal and behavioural needs, and first-time students entering a primary school. Each class has a minimum of one teacher and one support assistant. Some classes have assistant teachers in addition, and those for students with PMLD have special support aides.

Information about the inspection team

Lead: Stephen Cole

Team: Jonathan Cornwall
Susan Nebesnuick
Graham Sims

This inspection of Lighthouse School took place from 29 to 30 January, 2015 and involved a team of four inspectors. The following aspects of the school's work were looked at.

- Standards achieved and progress made by students
- 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.

- Seventeen full lessons were observed, and inspectors attended morning devotions, break and lunch
- School documents, including teachers' planning, curriculum guidelines and school policies were looked at and students' work was scrutinised
- Discussions took place with the principal and the senior leadership team, teachers, and support assistants
- Meetings were held with students in the secondary school and at lunch inspectors talked with primary students
- Comments from parents and staff were taken into account from the pre-inspection questionnaires (4 parents responded to the questionnaire and 14 staff)

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 adequate. Achievement across the curriculum is adequate, as is the students' progress. This includes those who lie in the middle range of ability levels (MLD) and those at the mid- to higher-ability end of SLD, both in the primary and in the secondary phase. However, students who have more complex physical and/or communication needs, are non-verbal and/or have PMLD are making unsatisfactory progress.

As students move towards leaving school and entering adult life, progress is good. They follow vocational and pre-vocational programmes geared towards their level of achievement.

Achievement in personal development and social skills is consistently good across the school for students with MLD and in the mid- and upper range SLD. For students with more complex learning and/or physical disabilities or lacking speech or social communication abilities, achievement requires improvement. Students across both primary and secondary phases achieve well in developing social behaviour. They are polite to adults and treat each other with respect and empathy almost without exception. They are well motivated and positive, and they grow in confidence and self-esteem.

The quality of teaching and its impact on learning and social development is good. Some teaching is very good but balanced by some that is unsatisfactory. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons clearly. Learning experiences offer stimulating opportunities for learning that capitalise on students' experiences. However, here is a lack of equality of access to a wide range of options in the curriculum for some students with the most profound or complex disabilities. Communication between teacher and special support assistant (SSA) is often inconsistent and hence the effectiveness of SSAs in supporting learning is variable.

Students are actively involved in their own learning and are encouraged to make choices. There is good provision to enable students to learn about sustainability and develop an understanding of the role they and others play in society and in the world. Enrichment opportunities are varied and the school makes good use of the resources and facilities in the locality.

The leadership and management of the school has many strengths but is adequate because it has not effectively addressed the areas of weakness in the school, particularly the variable quality of teaching and ineffectiveness of some SSAs.

What the school does well

- The achievement in personal development and social skills is consistently good across the school for students with MLD and in the mid- and upper range SLD.
- The quality of teaching and its impact on learning and social development is good and sometimes very good.
- Student relationships with each other and staff are positive and support the

- growth of students' self-esteem and confidence.
- The rewards policy is effective in promoting students' success.
 - The senior leadership of the school has high visibility and sets a strong example.
 - The school makes good use of the resources and facilities in the locality, particularly for older students.
 - Collaboration and involvement of parents and carers.

What needs to improve

- The achievement of students with more complex learning and/or physical disabilities or lacking speech or social communication abilities.
- The variable quality of teaching including some which is unsatisfactory.
- Monitoring how effective teaching is in furthering the progress of student learning
- The lack of equality of access to a wide range of options in the curriculum for some students with the most profound or complex disabilities.
- The lack of challenge and inclusion for some students with PMLD and lack of support in developing 'alternative or additional communication' methods or systems.
- The inconsistent communication between teacher and SSA – whilst in some parings observed there was excellent communication, in others this was largely absent.
- The variable effectiveness of SSAs in supporting learning.
- The quality of induction training and professional development from the ministry and the school, particularly in dealing with the complex needs of many students.
- The school's system for tracking students' progress and its contribution to the evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching.

Commentary on inspection findings

How well students achieve and make progress

[At Lighthouse School, for the purposes of assessment and teaching, students are classified in four groups. These are Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD). Other classifications present in school records (such as ID = intellectual deficit or specific and unusual medical syndromes) are regarded as fitting into one or other of these categories.

In order to identify individual achievement and progress across the school and to link this with the various record keeping schemes and the central collection of achievement and progress data, the inspection team tracked a selected number of individual students through the lesson observations and around the school. Their learning activities, abilities and needs through lessons and through the day gave inspectors a line of enquiry enabling judgements to be made about achievement and progress.]

Achievement across the curriculum is adequate. Students make adequate progress overall.

Students who lie in the middle range of ability levels (MLD) and those at the mid- to higher-ability end of SLD, in the primary and the secondary phase, are achieving and making adequate progress. They are able to work within the curriculum, take an active part in lessons and communicate successfully with their teachers.

Students who have more complex physical and/or communication needs, are non-verbal and/or have PMLD are making unsatisfactory progress. Students' opportunities to communicate and develop their understanding is constrained by the teaching methods. Teachers and support assistants show insufficient understanding of 'alternative and additional communication' systems such as signing systems, simple communication boards, or adapted switches and other use of information and communication technology (ICT).

As students move towards leaving school and entering adult life, progress is good. They follow vocational and pre-vocational programmes geared towards their level of achievement. For example, some students pursue subjects for everyday and independent living such as sports and leisure or horticulture. Others will follow courses on 'coping with people' and 'work awareness'. Some students are able to gain ASDAN qualifications (nationally approved qualifications based around the development of personal, social and employability skills) before leaving school. The strength of these programmes lies in their inclusive nature, where all students are able to take part at their own ability level and students who go into the community are clearly proud of their achievements.

Achievement across the curriculum is adequate and there is evidence that expectations for students with learning disabilities and difficulties in MLD and the upper-ability range of SLD groups are being realised.

It is not consistent throughout because of the variety of different approaches used to measure achievement and, in some classes, there is a lack of understanding or commitment to recording small steps consistently or continuously on any one system. Also, the small number of students with PMLD or who are non-verbal communicators are not sufficiently empowered and supported in using personal communication systems (such as personal picture communication boards to complement the 'picture exchange communication system' (PECS) work, communication books, technological communication systems and less technological signing systems).

Where the embryonic PECS is being evaluated, there are signs that children with speech and communication difficulties are beginning to initiate communications, to express their needs and to participate in a more meaningful way in lessons. There is insufficient evidence to support increased achievement as this approach is not implemented consistently across all classes with children who would benefit from it.

Achievement in personal development and social skills is consistently good across the school for students with MLD and in the mid- and upper-range SLD. They show good achievement when compared with similar students elsewhere. For students with more complex learning and/or physical disabilities or lacking speech or social communication abilities, achievement could be better. This is in part due to lack of challenge and inclusion for some students with PMLD and lack of support in developing 'alternative or additional communication methods or systems.

Students across both primary and secondary phases achieve well in developing social skills and social behaviour. They are polite to adults and treat each other with respect and empathy almost without exception. Where children have social communication problems they are encouraged to recognise attempts to communicate from others and to respond appropriately as are children with PMLD, even when they are not empowered and supported in their communication attempts.

Students are well motivated and respond positively to the various reward systems that acknowledge positive behaviour, correct answers, improvement, being helpful and trying hard.

Students grow in confidence and self-esteem, as was represented by senior students who could articulate the ways in which the school had helped them and describe their aspirations for the future.

Both in the primary and in the secondary phases, students with PMLD, social or general speech and communication difficulties are not achieving enough because they are not working within the curriculum or being appropriately supported and extended in their learning. For example, in the primary phase, because of their deficient understanding of proper use of the 'sensory room' apparatus, there were students who were unable to access and use the equipment to good effect. In another example, a student with PMLD was left with little or no interaction for over half an hour.

Achievement is good in classrooms where, for example, 'performance indicators for value added targets' (PIVATS) or the 're-think' for students on the autism spectrum result in accurate, continuous and well-focused data. Where achievement is poor it is because data on students' immediate responses and achievements in the classroom are not recorded effectively. In some classes, teachers and learning support staff collaborate effectively to collect and record such small steps data. In other classes, it is

either sporadic or not consistent, resulting in teachers being less accurate in assessing and recording necessarily small steps in achievement.

Where students are non-verbal or have either physical or social communication difficulties, communication is often insufficient through shortage of expertise, devices or systems. In these circumstances, the data become inaccurate, not reflecting the students' real abilities.

The results of other relevant assessments that include speech therapy, occupational therapy and music therapy contribute effectively to mapping progress for all students across the whole range of abilities. For example, the PECS system, being piloted as part of speech therapy, is instrumental in assisting teachers to judge more accurately what each student understands, knows and can do based on ability to communicate.

Where students' communication skills, including verbal communication and thinking skills, are in the MLD or mid- and upper-SLD range, teachers are able to interact more successfully and thus make more accurate judgements about ability and achievement. Where there is insufficient support or lack of understanding about non-verbal and other alternative forms of communication amongst staff, inaccurate judgements are made.

The effectiveness of teaching and its impact on students' learning

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

Some teaching is very good but balanced by some that is unsatisfactory. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons clearly but with room for flexibility. They manage their support assistants with varied effectiveness. Their knowledge of the prior achievement and specific needs of students is good, and most deal well with behavioural issues. However, they do not use assessment effectively in ensuring good progress for all students and do not draw on the alternative methods and resources to accelerate the progress of those with severe SLD and PMLD.

In the lessons in which the teaching is very good or good, teachers have clear knowledge and good understanding of the ability levels and prior achievement of all students in the class. Account is taken of any specialist advice. Detailed and imaginative planning and organisation ensure that students are challenged by relevant activities that provide continuity and reinforce learning in contexts that engage the full range of students.

There is effective collaboration and teamwork between the teachers, assistant teachers and special support assistants in lesson planning and teaching. Teachers are consistent in their approach, and encourage the contribution made by SSAs, who show initiative, skill and knowledge of students' needs and potential.

In several of these lessons, multi-sensory teaching engaged students in most of the varied activities provided. In one the variety of activities kept students focused and all made progress in their understanding of numbers. Finely graded tasks and individual and small group tuition combine to take the students forward in their learning.

Most lessons offer stimulating learning that capitalises on students' experiences within and beyond the school. There is evidence from lesson observations that progress in small steps is taking place. However, there is a lack of equality of access to a wide range of options in the curriculum for some students with the most profound or complex disabilities. This inconsistency of approach across different classes and phases means that some children are disadvantaged in relation to their peers and some students are not making sufficient progress because of lack of appropriate challenge.

Students are actively involved in their own learning and are encouraged to make choices, such as the way they want to solve multiplication problems in mathematics, the free time activity they want to pursue or which tablet app to use to reinforce their learning. They are expected to take responsibility for completing homework and by means of skilful questioning they are encouraged to think things through for themselves.

There is good provision to enable students to learn about sustainability and develop an understanding of the role they and others play in society and in the world. Enrichment opportunities are varied and the school ensures there is a high take-up by students where appropriate. The school makes good use of the resources and facilities in the locality through activities such as visits to the National Gallery and the Mission House in Bodden Town, students attending Dolphin Therapy and Horse Therapy, together with regular shopping trips for senior students as part of their life skills programme. It arranges a wide variety of work experience placements to meet the interests and needs of the students in order to help them prepare for the future, and in some cases these lead to regular employment.

Where teaching is unsatisfactory and requires improvement, the learning activities do not always encourage the participation of all students, particularly those who have more complex physical and/or communication needs, are non-verbal and/or have PMLD or are visually impaired. Appropriate resources are not always readily available or prepared in advance. Students are too dependent on adult support, with the SSA doing things for them rather than encouraging and supporting them to do things for themselves. Students are not actively involved in their own learning and consequently their behaviour deteriorates. In the unsatisfactory lessons, not all students are encouraged to participate. If more able or disruptive students gain attention then others can be ignored. A child with PMLD was left passively lying alone away from the rest of the class for 30 minutes, when there were clear signs of wanting to join in. Another was ignored for almost as long.

In these lessons, the support assistants are not always effectively deployed. Communication between the teacher and the SSA is insufficient and respective roles and responsibilities are unclear. SSAs do not show enough initiative in the classroom and do not help students progress or become more independent.

The impact on learning is that a minority of students, including those with no speech or with physical or complex learning difficulties that interfere with their speech ability, underachieve in all phases and year groups. Poor choice of task results in a significant number of students not engaging well with the activities provided, and this is reflected in the inadequate completion of tasks (with support), being left unsupported or ignored for significant periods of time.

How well the school is led and managed

The quality of leadership and management is adequate.

The principal and senior team have a clear and detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, in some areas there is confusion of responsibilities between the school and the Ministry, or line management structures contribute to ineffectiveness.

All senior staff and teachers have a thorough knowledge of the specific difficulties faced by each student. The principal, vice-principal, and senior staff are highly visible, and actively engaged in supporting students, who frequently 'call in' to their offices. The management of students is strong. The personal interest of the senior leadership and the well-conceived rewards system both contribute much to students' social development.

Most teachers have the skills and experience necessary for their roles.

Ministry appoints teachers and SSAs, but within that constraint the school is flexible in re-deploying staff to their strengths. The majority of teachers felt that some SSAs are not sufficiently qualified, skilled and/or motivated to provide the support that students need. At best the co-operation and communication between teacher and SSA works positively to further students' progress. The senior leadership is alert to relationships that are less effective, but has not addressed the issue robustly.

Teachers and SSAs do not value the quality of induction training or professional development from the ministry or from the school, particularly in dealing with the complex needs of many students. In some areas, the monitoring of teaching and its impact on learning is not as rigorous or as effective as it needs to be. The school's system for tracking students' progress is not well established, and hence does not contribute to the evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching.

The senior leadership reports that the island's policies for placing students with SEN in appropriate environments results in some students being placed in inappropriate environments or not being adequately supported. It has concerns about the shortage of specific training or professional development.

Collaboration and involvement of parents and carers in the assessment of progress is good on the whole. At the heart of the curriculum and assessment process are IEPs containing both subject and skill-based annual goals and shorter-term learning objectives in most curriculum areas. New students and their parents contribute to the initial IEP assessment and after that in reviewing and setting new objectives and goals each year. The majority of parents come to the review and planning meetings and sign off the revised IEPs with teachers. Those that do not attend are given at least three invitations to the review meetings.

Each student has an individual portfolio that is a requirement of the school assessment policy. It is intended as a systematic record for teachers, parents and students to follow progress and achievement throughout their time at school. Students are given this 'record of achievement' to keep at the end of primary schooling and a new one is started in the secondary phase and kept at the end of schooling. The student's current IEP is inserted into this Portfolio along with evidence of achievement (the student's most recent

work), explanations and descriptions of achievements in subject and skill areas. It is a useful prompt to recall and to give a long-term view of previous learning and personal development activities, but the evidence (pictures, statements, students' work) is not always effectively used or annotated to show progress.

'Choosing Options and Accommodations for Children' (COACH) is a planning process specifically designed to assist teams in identifying the content of IEPs for students with significant cognitive disabilities. It is an approach to collaborative planning and a person-centred approach that emphasises social inclusion. Senior managers feel that a specific aspect of COACH provides them with a tool for facilitating collaboration with parents on mapping achievement at annual reviews and planning meetings.

Currently the PIVATS data spreadsheet does not give an overview of achievement against a common scale (P levels 1 to 8 and some students at National Curriculum Level 1). This is potentially an effective method of measuring achievement across the school and comparing with other similar schools, as the P levels are common to schools in the UK and USA as well. It is not used as such at the moment, since year-on-year data collection has only just started. External comparisons with other students with similar abilities and needs in a similar special school can only take place when all students are assessed with a common approach.

Progress is recognised more effectively in classrooms where, for example, PIVATS class recording sheets or the 're-think' for students on the autism spectrum result in accurate, continuous and well-focused data. The school is beginning to map individual students' progress in literacy and numeracy, as well as a range of subjects across the school, by using a common framework provided by PIVATS. Where progress in small steps is not recognised or where teachers are not using a common framework, the data becomes inaccurate and skews the overall PIVATS year-on-year results.

There is a wide range of systems intended to track each student's progress in various ways: in the long term through annual review, and longer term with the portfolios and with the PIVATS data spreadsheet. Since the PIVATS system has just been introduced, there are no clear trends showing much individual progress and improvement. There is a lack of clarity about how small steps progress in the classroom feeds into the school-wide PIVATS approach. The range of different assessment tools in use or the lack of understanding of a common assessment framework leads to inaccurate assessments of progress.

Appendix A

Recommendations

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

1. Improve the quality of induction and the professional training needed, as identified by school staff.
2. Give all teachers and support staff specialist training to support those students who have more complex physical and/or communication needs, are non-verbal and/or have PMLD or are visually impaired.
3. Give the students described above greater access to effective alternative means of communication; for example, communication boards and ICT.
4. Tailor the curriculum and its implementation more closely to the needs of these students.
5. Achieve a more robust overview of the quality of teaching and its impact on learning.
6. Improve expectations of the role of and relationship between SSA and teacher.
7. Introduce a more stringent disciplinary procedure for teachers and SSAs whose performance is ineffective.
8. Develop further the systems that track students' progress.