

BASELINE INSPECTION REPORT

Savannah Primary School

14 to 17 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:	Government primary school
Age range of students:	4-11
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	475
School address:	Savannah Primary School 1659 Shamrock Road PO Box 435 Grand Cayman KY1 1500 Cayman Islands
Telephone number:	345-937-1344
Email address:	carol.nyack@gov.ky
Name of principal:	Carol Nyack

Savannah Primary School is the second largest primary school on the island and is one of the three International Baccalaureate (IB) Schools. The principal and vice-principal both joined the school a year ago. The school has 475 students from the age of four to eleven. Students start in Reception at the age of four, and a number of students join Year 1 when they are five. There are 18 classes in Years 1 to 6, with an average size of around 23 students. Additional support is provided for 100 students who are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school's mission statement is to provide a dynamic multi-cultural learning environment dedicated to developing confident, tolerant and disciplined life-long learners who can attain their full potential and interact effectively in the global community. The ability profile of the school is slightly below the UK average overall. There is a fairly wide spread of abilities represented, and some variation between the average ability spread of year groups, some of which are in line with the UK average.

Information about the inspection team

Lead:	Linda Donowho
Team:	Joy Richardson Ann McDonnell Valerie Clark

This inspection of Savannah Primary School took place from 14 to 17 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, particularly in English and mathematics
- The effectiveness of teaching and its impact on learning
- How well the school is led and managed

Reception was not inspected on this visit.

The inspection team gathered evidence in the following ways.

- Forty-three 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
- Inspectors listened to students read
- 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 from 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

In the Cayman Islands, the key stages are defined as follows.

KEY STAGE 1 – Years 1-3

KEY STAGE 2 – Years 4-6

Executive summary of the report

The overall effectiveness of the school

The overall effectiveness of the school is unsatisfactory. Progress is slow particularly in mathematics, where there has been little improvement in students' achievement for several years. Achievement and teaching are also unsatisfactory. However, attainment in English is improving and standards in reading are broadly adequate.

In their short time in post, this new leadership team have carefully evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have a strong vision and have introduced a detailed and specific school improvement plan. They regularly analyse assessment data, with particular note taken of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) students, and review staff performance, recognising strengths and weaknesses. They provide support and guidance for staff and are determined to improve standards of achievement. They have recognised that there is a lack of subject knowledge and have provided a range of opportunities for training.

It is still early days for this new leadership team and the initial focus on improving behaviour has had significant impact on the school. There is a sense of purpose and commitment from students and the school welcomes parents to be involved in their children's education and care. Now with their improvement plan securely in place, they move on to improving students' achievement.

What the school does well

1. Clear direction by principal and vice-principal.
2. The development of a reading culture with the library at the heart of school.
3. Teaching students to behave well, show good manners and take responsibility.
4. Honest and accurate self-evaluation, so that weaknesses are recognised and action taken.
5. Comprehensive system developed for tracking the progress of students over time.

What needs to improve

1. The quality of teaching.
2. Use of time in lessons to speed the pace of learning.
3. Recognising gaps in students' learning and addressing these, to prevent the achievement gap widening further as students progress through the school.
4. Practice of basic skills in literacy and numeracy.
5. The level of expectation for all students, and particularly the most able.
6. The volume of work that students complete in lessons.
7. Use of data to find gaps in learning and to guide teaching.

Commentary on inspection findings

How well students achieve and make progress

Achievement is unsatisfactory overall because students do not achieve as well as they should and could for their age.

They do not make enough progress from their different starting points and expectations are too low. As a result, the gap between what they are achieving and what they should be achieving widens rather than closes as students move through the school. However, attainment in English is improving and standards in reading are broadly adequate.

At the end of Year 6, students take Key Stage 2 tests that are marked and moderated locally. Results would be low if compared with the UK average for maintained schools, but there has been improvement in English in recent years. From 2011 to 2014, the percentage reaching the level expected for their age (level 4) increased from 15 per cent to 70 per cent in English, but remained at just over 40 per cent in mathematics. In 2014, 25 per cent of students reached a higher level (level 5) in reading, but only 9 per cent did so in writing and 5 per cent in mathematics. When cognitive abilities tests are compared with outcomes in English and mathematics, students are broadly achieving in line with their ability in English, though better in reading than writing, but under-achieving in mathematics.

Observations in lessons and the scrutiny of students' work confirm that many students make steady progress in reading as a result of the school's determination to develop a reading culture within the school. Students who make slower progress receive extra help, particularly in Year 2, but often continue to fall further behind in the older years. This is also the case in writing, where many students struggle because they are asked to tackle complex writing tasks without the basic skills needed for writing independently. Achievement in mathematics is low because students are taught a variety of written methods for carrying out calculations, without the speedy recall of number facts needed to underpin their learning. Usually, all students are taught at the same pace. Lower attaining students are helped to complete tasks while often lacking underlying understanding, and able students are rarely challenged to go further.

Support for lower attaining students and those with special educational needs is patchy. Additional teaching in small groups is helpful, as is the support of volunteers in listening to students read, but many students 'fall through the net', particularly in the older years. The staff group as a whole lacks training in responding to students' individual needs and providing the small steps in learning required to build understanding.

The school has developed a clear and thorough way of tracking students' progress from term to term and over their time in school. The school's leaders are beginning to use this information to identify under-achievement and to discuss with teachers how to address it. In the classroom, teachers acquire a wealth of data from regular tests and assessments, but rarely use it to guide their teaching.

The effectiveness of teaching and its impact on students' learning

The quality of teaching across the school is overall unsatisfactory and uneven across age groups and classes.

This level of teaching is strongly reflected in the levels of achievement and the progress made by students. The school has clearly identified this weakness and is taking steps to improve the quality of teaching.

At its best, teaching captures the students' interest in their work and is characterised by clear objectives and effective questioning, whereby teachers freely challenge students, setting a well-judged framework for them to investigate and explore. The students respond with willingness and enthusiasm, and their progress is rapid. However, this approach to teaching is highly inconsistent throughout the school. This is partly due to the frequent changes in staffing and to teachers' lack of knowledge and skill.

In the unsuccessful lessons, planning is poor and little consideration is given to the wide range of abilities within the class. As a consequence, more able students are left unchallenged and students of lower ability flounder in their understanding and so fall further behind. Too much time is spent on lengthy introductions and explanations and students are expected to listen without asking or answering questions. Little time is given to practise the skills that are taught and students achieve very little in the lesson. Often behaviour deteriorates as students lose concentration and little progress is made.

Regular assessments in mathematics and English enable senior leaders to track the progress of students, particularly those with SEND. However, teachers do not as a matter of course use these results to plan their lessons and guide their teaching. The marking of students' work is unhelpful. Most work remains either unmarked or only cursorily marked with ticks and crosses. In only a very few cases are students offered advice to help them improve their work but, in these cases, there is a noticeable incremental improvement. An inconsistent approach to marking contributes little to the learning or achievement levels for students. Although individual educational plans are provided, the staff as a whole lack training in responding to students' individual needs and providing the small steps in learning required to build understanding.

How well the school is led and managed

Leadership and management are adequate, with further improvement needed, but good initiatives for future success.

Both the principal and the vice-principal have been in post for little over a year and have already established a strong vision for the school's future. The new senior management team has now been identified but their roles and responsibilities have not yet been clearly established, particularly those of monitoring students' progress. Therefore these responsibilities fall on the principal and the vice-principal.

Following their initial review of the previous school improvement plan, the principal together with the vice-principal in consultation with all staff put together a carefully considered new improvement plan which clearly identifies the specific needs of the school whilst also responding to directed ministry initiatives. They have sensitively

striven to bring together the staff with a sense of purpose and acknowledgement of all that needs to be done. To this end, the views of staff were sought and they have had regular input into the new improvement plan. This has taken time and the senior leadership is aware of the need for a unified staff, focused on raising standards and improving teaching. The frequent changing of staff with little control over appointments, which are made by the Ministry, has added to the challenges ahead, but improving behaviour has been an important focus and the behaviour in lessons and around the school is a testament to work that has been achieved.

Monitoring of students' progress and improving teaching are now a keen focus and a comprehensive programme of observations and staff training has been established. Key strengths in staff are recognised and good use is made of them to mentor and support others. Staff receive regular helpful feedback and guidance on their teaching, with clearly identified targets, and the progress or lack of progress of their students is discussed. They are offered training and support where necessary and the literacy coach gives weekly training or support for staff.

Resources in the school are good and of particular note is the attractive school library, which is well stocked and organised; it is a central point for many school activities.

The quality of teaching and learning in English

Standards of literacy across the school are adequate. Over the past few years, students' literacy skills have benefited from the strong focus on improving standards both in reading and in writing.

Students make good progress in their reading and attainment has improved for all age groups. Regular assessments identify any areas for concern. Reading is taught through a mixture of guided, shared and independent reading. However, at Key Stage 2, students are not systematically taught the skills they need to unlock the meaning of longer or more complex texts. The school uses phonics training as a major tool in the early stages of reading but many of the older students still experience difficulties in blending sounds and letter strings. Reading often lacks fluency and students do not always make use of contextual clues to understand texts. Discussion of what they are reading reveals that many are still experiencing difficulty in extracting the meaning. Most lack the higher order skills required to understand inference or to develop their critical faculties. Frequently, the texts offered to them in lessons are not of a sufficiently high standard to help the development of these skills.

Comprehension is not systematically planned and undertaken, resulting in students not developing the skills necessary to understand and respond to more demanding texts either in the literacy curriculum or other units of study. However, this is being addressed and, in recent years, reading results in Key Stage 2 have shown steady improvement.

The main tool for the teaching of writing throughout follows a ministry programme. The way this is used has resulted in students spending large amounts of time learning and copying down the technical vocabulary associated with the text type being studied and not actually writing. Scrutiny of students' workbooks shows that the amount of writing being undertaken is not adequate for them to develop writing skills or to be able to write extended pieces. Students' progress in writing is further affected by the limited amount

of writing required in other subjects. The school is aware of the need for more writing and the fifteen-minute 'We write' sessions are the first step in an attempt to overcome the deficiency. For reading, a computer programme is available to all students at school and to those with access to a computer or tablet at home, allowing them to practise reading skills outside the curriculum.

The library is a bright, attractive and well-stocked resource for reading and study, to which all students have frequent access. They can use their account on the cataloguing system and thereby reserve books or request that a particular title be acquired. They all sign a contract to care for the books they borrow, resulting in only a negligible number having to be replaced. Many students benefit both personally and intellectually from the opportunity to be trained and, subsequently, to work as library assistants. The library contains a wealth of fiction and non-fiction books, as well as sets of graded readers, for use in guided reading sessions, and classroom sets of general readers. Students benefit from a valuable programme for able students. It is run by the librarian in order to allow students to tackle problems in different ways and to use all of the library resources in so doing.

The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics

Throughout the school, the teaching of mathematics is unsatisfactory. As a consequence, students' progress is slow and achievement falls below age-related expectations. More able students are not challenged to develop their mathematical knowledge and less able students are not given the necessary skills to move forward in their learning.

The content of the curriculum and lesson planning often lacks the depth and breadth needed to develop students' understanding and knowledge. It does not consistently arrange for investigation and problem solving; nor for a practical approach to learning essential skills. There is a lack of rapid practice to reinforce skills and too much time is spent on terminology.

Students' recording and presentation of their work is variable in quality and quantity and teachers' marking is inconsistent and perfunctory; it does not offer points for improvement.

The majority of students are eager to learn; they are excited, engaged and keen to succeed. In the best lessons, when given the opportunity, students co-operate well and work productively with each other.

Younger students count accurately to 20 and recognise numbers; they enjoy using practical methods working with a variety of apparatus to add units to tens, and are able to talk confidently about what they are doing. However, teachers make use of very few practical tasks to assist students' learning in mathematics. By Year 3 students are competent in describing how they use tally marks to create bar charts and pictograms. However, where students have not fully understood a concept it is often due to poor class management and the low expectations of the teacher, together with poor subject knowledge.

By the time students reach Year 4, the range of ability has widened. A significant number of students have a weak grasp of number and are slow to recognise multiples of 10; others fully understand fractions and are able to order and compute problems involving them. Year 5 students know the basics of co-ordinates and are able to plot these on a graph. Progress continues to be slow and unsatisfactory as students reach Year 6.

In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations; teaching engages the students and involves them in their learning, enabling them to make good progress. Students are challenged to think and questions extend learning. Lessons have a good pace of working and are well planned to include tasks specifically suited for the more and less able students. Too often lessons seen are of poor quality. Tasks are inappropriate for the age and ability of the students and there are low expectations of students' ability to achieve and of behaviour, resulting in a lack of progress. Lessons are slow in pace and dominated by the teacher's talk, with the result that students are not involved in the lesson.

A significant factor in the lack of progress is the lack of monitoring of lesson planning and often teachers in different year groups use the same work sheets with no consideration for their relevance. The school has no identified mathematics co-ordinator and year groups plan in isolation with little knowledge of what happens next or went before.

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 teaching and ensure that staff have the core knowledge so that they are more effective in their teaching, particularly in mathematics.
2. Ensure that staff use the regular assessment data available in order that they evaluate and provide for all abilities in their classes.
3. Clearly identify the responsibilities of management within the school.