



Education Standards And Assessment Unit

Progress report of CAYMAN BRAC HIGH SCHOOL

December 2010



Progress Report

Introduction

Cayman Brac High School is a government school for students from Years 7 to 12. It is the only secondary school in Cayman Brac. It was last evaluated by the Education Standards and Assessment Unit (ESAU) in April 2010. The full report can be accessed on the Ministry of Education's website: www.education.gov.ky. This is the progress check which follows approximately six months after an evaluation.

The purpose of this visit

- To assess the effectiveness of the school's action plan in addressing the issues for improvement identified at the time of the last evaluation
- To provide an opportunity to discuss progress with the school's senior management and make further recommendations if necessary

The main issues for improvement from the evaluation in April 2010

- The rigour of monitoring and evaluation procedures, so that the school has a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses
- Systems for tracking students' progress in order to identify areas of under-achievement and implement appropriate strategies for addressing them
- Strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning, with a particular focus on raising standards of achievement in mathematics
- Links with primary schools that will promote better academic progression and continuity

Progress in addressing the issues for improvement:

The school has not made sufficient progress overall in addressing the issues for improvement.

1. First issue: The rigour of monitoring and evaluation procedures, so that the school has a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses

The school's response as indicated in their action plan:

- Develop instruments to poll students, staff and parents regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the school
- Establish an appropriate cycle for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance
- Complete analysis of data listing areas of strength and areas of weakness. Identify priority areas
- Establish a cohort of teachers, including one from each subject area, together with a student and parent representative to consider actions for improvement

ESAU's observations:

The school's senior management has developed questionnaires for parents, staff and students regarding the school's strengths and weaknesses, but the timing, or 'cycle' for the completion of these has not yet been determined. The school does not anticipate being able to carry out any analysis of the data from these before April 2011, which would be a full year after the evaluation. The cohort for considering actions that might need to be taken is not due to be convened before September 2011.

Such a survey has the potential to be an effective tool, but it can also be very subjective, and the school's senior managers should not rely on this alone to determine the school's strengths and weaknesses. The staff survey that was completed earlier in 2010 was also too subjective, as it was not based on a systematic review of evidence from a range of sources. In addition to the use of questionnaires, the school needs effective internal systems of monitoring and evaluating its provision and practice. The evaluation report noted that the present systems were not rigorous enough to provide an accurate picture. Monitoring must involve checking that actions are happening at the agreed time and in the agreed manner. Evaluation must involve making a judgement about the effectiveness of the actions carried out. Senior managers need to have their 'finger on the pulse' of the school. Currently there is not enough awareness of what is really happening in subject departments.

Very little progress has been made with this issue.

2. Second issue: Systems for tracking students' progress in order to identify areas of under-achievement and implement appropriate strategies for addressing them

The school's response as indicated in their action plan:

- Subject departments will review schemes of work and plans to align with the National Curriculum attainment levels at Key stage 3
- Subject departments will conduct in-house training on levelling
- Request training on the general principles of levelling from the Department of Education Services
- Establish on-going collaboration with high schools in Grand Cayman to ensure consistency in levelling across schools
- Investigate / develop a suitable electronic mark sheet...to record progress
- Identify or develop a user friendly format for reporting students' attainment
- Formalize the practice of rotating members of the senior management to various curriculum areas for line management and review

ESAU's observations:

Some improvement has been made in tracking students' progress, with subject departments noting whether objectives have been 'fully or partially met or not met' by each student. Currently, staff use an electronic mark sheet for this and a new report card was developed for use in October 2010. A common report card across all high schools would be helpful and the school has been advised to check with the Department of Education Services concerning the development of this.

The school has not yet started to implement the support material which was provided for schools by ESAU on using Assessment Focuses to determine attainment levels. Some in-house training on levelling was carried out, but staff are not proficient enough in this area and require much more external support. Collaboration with the high schools in Grand Cayman is a positive suggestion, as consistency in the use of Assessment Focuses to determine attainment levels is needed. This should be pursued as soon as possible.

The school has made adequate progress in addressing the tracking of students' progress, but there is still much to be done to fully address this issue.

3. Third issue: Strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning, with a particular focus on raising standards of achievement in mathematics

The school's response as indicated in their action plan:

- Use the monthly heads of department meetings to develop a teaching and learning policy...
- Utilize the monthly staff meetings to ensure that staff have a clear understanding of the teaching and learning policy
- Use the policy in the bi-annual evaluation of classroom practice
- Modify current lesson observation forms to reflect aspects of the new teaching and learning policy
- Proceed with plans for peer observations curtailed due to the school evaluation last year
- Increase lesson observations in the mathematics department to two per month and provide support for the head of department in developing policy and improvement plans
- Use demonstration lessons to help staff improve the standard of teaching and learning in mathematics

ESAU's observations:

The development of a teaching and learning policy was noted as a priority in the evaluation report. Since that time, the Ministry has confirmed a national teaching and learning policy which all schools were asked to use as a basis for developing their own. The school's plans for using the monthly heads of department meetings to develop this would mean that their policy would not be completed until June 2011. This is far too urgent an issue to be left until then. Most of the other proposed actions are dependent on the teaching and learning policy being in place as its implementation is key to the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.

Peer observations and the sharing of good practice can both contribute to the improvement of teaching. These were originally scheduled for April 2010 when the evaluation took place, and consequently they were postponed. They have been re-scheduled for April 2011 but there is no reason for the resumption of these to be put off until a full year later.

Demonstration lessons in mathematics and plans to increase lesson observations have not yet begun, but these are dependent on an agreed teaching and learning policy so that staff have a common understanding of what is expected.

Not enough progress has been made in addressing this issue.

4. Fourth issue: Links with primary schools that will promote better academic progression and continuity

The school's response as indicated in their action plan:

- Explore the possibility of the Year 6 teachers attending one departmental meeting per term in the core subjects
- Provide Year 6 teachers with schemes of work for Year 7 students as a reference
- Involve Year 6 teachers in the on-going work of assessing work based on curriculum levels

ESAU's observations:

These are positive suggestions but no progress has been made apart from communicating the ideas to the school improvement officer. Links between the high school and the primary schools must include opportunities for the primary schools to share what they are doing too, in order to open up dialogue on the subject of how best to ensure progression and continuity.

No actions have been taken yet to address this issue.

Progress in subject areas

The school has made progress with a few of the recommendations for English, mathematics and science from the evaluation report, but there is still much to be done.

Recommendations for improvement - English

- Raise the achievement of lower ability students by reviewing the planning, resources, strategies and courses available to them
- Improve assessment practice in the department
- Increase opportunities for students to develop their speaking and listening skills by planning paired and group work
- Improve the English department environment so that lessons are not disturbed by noise from other classrooms

ESAU's observations

The school has made the decision to offer Functional English through the AQA examination board in the summer of 2011 for those students experiencing difficulty with the CXC English course. Results of the TerraNova and Key Stage 3 tests were received several months ago but are not scheduled to be analysed by the English department until January 2011. These results should be analysed as soon as they are received, so that they can help to identify students who need extra support.

Attainment levels were assigned for the first reporting period of the 2010/11 school year. However, the school has not yet begun to use the support material for English provided by the Education Standards and Assessment Unit and the levels were therefore not based on the procedure of Assessing Students' Progress (ASP), using Assessment Focuses. In order to achieve consistency in levelling, all schools must use the same procedure. Staff require much more support in this. The English department intends to create an assessment policy by June 2011. It is essential that this document reflects the ASP process.

The action plan indicates that more group and paired work will be utilized to help students to develop their speaking and listening skills and that the school intends to introduce drama in September 2011. Currently there is no documentation of progress in these areas. Documentation is needed in order to determine whether or not strategies are having a positive effect.

The English classrooms have been fitted with floor to ceiling movable partitions which have helped to reduce the noise level and consequent distractions.

Recommendations for improvement - mathematics

- Construct a department development plan
- Establish regular, frequent and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of departmental policy, particularly the quality of teaching and learning...
- Implement fully the National Curriculum across Key Stage 3, including the use of attainment targets and levels...

ESAU's observations

The department has not produced a development plan as recommended. This is needed in order to hold staff accountable for improvements as it would establish responsibilities, time targets and success criteria. However, the mathematics department used the TerraNova and Key Stage results from the summer of 2010 to identify students who were under-achieving. A compulsory

after-school programme has been developed for these students but there is no documentary evidence of this and it is not clear what sort of intervention programme is being used.

The department also intends to track students' progress across Key Stages 3 and 4 in order to predict their performance in external examinations. The action plan does not indicate how this will be done. Senior managers may wish to consider using a tool such as the NFER CAT 3 test for prediction of external examination grades. This would provide insight to teachers as to where specific support is required.

There are plans to emphasize differentiated activities, provide specific instructions to support assistants, reduce teachers' exposition at the start of lessons and incorporate more student-centred activities into lessons. These can all make a positive contribution to the improvement of teaching and learning, but must fit in with the whole-school teaching and learning policy, another reason to develop this speedily. Other helpful suggestions noted in the school's action plan include the development of a departmental handbook and a policy on numeracy. However, no progress has been made on either of these since the evaluation in April 2010.

Recommendations for improvement - science

- Improve students' achievement and independent learning skills
- Improve teaching and students' knowledge about how well students know how they are performing
- Ensure that students wear eye protection whenever appropriate for their safety

ESAU's observations

The proposed steps in the action plan to address the first two recommendations are, in fact, just statements about what needs to be done: "All students should be aware of their current level and set targets for improvements" and "All students should know their strengths and weaknesses and what they need to improve." The science department needs to plan specific actions that would enable these things to happen.

The issue concerning the use of safety goggles is to be emphasized during lessons and rewards or sanctions implemented as appropriate. In all cases it is essential that evidence of actions taken is documented so that it is clear what is effective and what might need to be reviewed.

The effectiveness of the school's action plan in addressing the issues for improvement

The school's action plan contains some positive suggestions such as collaborating with the high schools in Grand Cayman and the development of various policies and handbooks. However, many of the proposed actions are not due to begin until January, April or even September 2011. The school's senior management must take responsibility for driving the actions necessary for improvement. At present, there is no sense of urgency in addressing these.

In many instances, the action plan is too vague in setting out the specific actions that need to be taken, and where actions **are** specific, implementation is very slow.

The action plan as presented is limited in its usefulness in taking the work of the school forward.

The way forward

The school now needs to urgently address the issues for improvement by:

- Reviewing the action plan in order to ensure that proposed actions are relevant and will bring about the needed improvements
- Prioritizing the actions to be taken – for example, the development of a teaching and learning policy
- Specifying who will be responsible for checking that actions are carried out on time and in the agreed manner
- Determining how the monitoring will be documented. Hold staff accountable
- Ensuring that there is documented evidence of what has been achieved
- Specifying who will be responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of actions taken and how this evaluation will be documented
- Developing a system for reviewing the findings. Formally write-off anything that has been achieved. Keep the action plan up-to-date. Write regular progress reports

The Education Standards and Assessment Unit will review progress again in approximately six months.