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Mr M J Cawson  
The Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Cawson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 26<sup>th</sup> February, for the time you gave and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please also extend my thanks to the students and teachers who also gave up time to talk to me about the school.

As a result of the inspection in January 2007 the school was asked to address the following:

- The quality of teaching and learning needs to be improved so that the proportion of good or better lessons is increased and inadequate teaching removed.
- Leadership and management at all levels need to share a common vision and become more accountable in order to ensure provision is good in all areas.
- Senior managers and individual departments need to use self evaluation more critically, not just to analyse performance but to improve it.
- The behaviour policy needs to be implemented with greater consistency.
- Students need to be better prepared for life in a multi-ethnic society.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress.

The school recognises that although there are clear indications of improvement in students' progress in some subjects there continue to be issues with others. Longstanding concerns with English remain and are preventing faster improvement across all key stages. Staffing issues and the long term absence of key personnel have also slowed the pace at which improvements have impacted on student performance. Currently, at Key Stage 3 standards are generally above the national average, although weakest in English. Given that students enter the school with standards which are above the national average this currently represents only satisfactory progress in mathematics and English, with better progress in science. Teacher assessment reflects over optimistic outcomes. Standards in most foundation

subjects are above national averages with best performance in areas which show a greater commitment to improving teaching and learning, such as in design and technology, the performing arts and PE. Weaker performance in English and mathematics at GCSE mean that GCSE results (5 A\* - C) including English and mathematics) are only in line with national averages and significantly lower than those achieved by similar Service Children's Education (SCE) schools. However, good attainment in none core subjects means that overall achievement is satisfactory. In the sixth form most students make at least satisfactory progress when compared to their results at GCSE. The school has a range of suitable interventions in place to accelerate students' learning and is also making more effective use of the extensive data available to better monitor students' progress and identify underachievement. Improvements linked to teaching and learning have still not impacted sufficiently in mathematics and especially in English, to ensure that students make consistently good progress. The school recognises that raising standards in English and improving the performance of more able students are areas requiring rapid and sustained improvement.

The school has rightly made improving the quality of lessons the main priority and there are clear signs that this is happening. There is a range of well documented evidence from both external and internal monitoring to identify that there is an improved structure and focus to many of the lessons and that the majority of teaching is now good, especially in the foundation subjects. Students have also noted these positive changes. However, they, and their parents, still expressed concerns about weaker teaching in a minority of classes and notably in English. Observation of lessons during the inspection identified good practice but also corroborated these concerns. The frequent monitoring and observation of lessons by senior management has raised expectations and has had a positive impact. Good and effective practice has been identified and praised in most curriculum areas. In some areas, a culture of peer observation and mutual support is enabling staff to share and learn from this good practice. However, there is less evidence that pockets of weaker teaching are being challenged with sufficient rigour to reinforce the urgency and need for more rapid change.

Service Children's Education (SCE) and senior management have both offered good support to both teachers and students to tackle underachievement, particularly in English. This has included using external specialist support to provide additional lessons for those pupils in examination classes. Many teachers have benefited from the focused training sessions provided in classroom management, lesson structure and teaching strategies with over half the staff attending. This has invigorated teaching in many classes as has the support offered by external advisory teaching and learning consultants from SCE. In good lessons there is a clear structure and careful thought as to what is to be learnt. Effective use is made of ongoing and diagnostic assessment and the pace is frequently brisk. Questioning is interactive and fully involves the students who are appreciative of the efforts being made on their behalf. Where teaching is ineffective, the lesson is frequently dominated by too much teacher talk and students are often the passive recipients of information. Instructions may be unclear and students are occupied rather than challenged by the tasks set. The lack of planning and structure often results in disjointed learning rather than the progressive development of knowledge, skills and understanding. Weaker teachers

have tended not to engage in the training offered or have not seen its value. As a result, they have preferred more entrenched approaches and have not embedded new practice sufficiently into everyday lessons. Marking remains inconsistent across the school. There is some evidence of effective practice but equally there are some lessons where work is not marked or has very few comments which can inform students what they need to do to improve. This was especially evident in those classes where teaching was weak. Students also identified inconsistencies in the setting of homework. Some teachers use this as an opportunity to reinforce learning or engage students in challenging research. On the other hand, in some classes, homework is not set regularly or used constructively to support learning. Where routine times are not adhered to this can lead to periods when students have overload whilst on other occasions they have little to do.

The school is a calmer place since the previous inspection and students are on the whole well behaved, polite and inquisitive. No disruptive behaviour was evident in observed lessons. Students acknowledged that there has been a reduction in disruptive behaviour but also identified that some remains, particularly where teaching is weak. A common behaviour policy is in place and is being adhered to in most classes. Students are mainly positive about the intention but question anomalies and perceived unfairness. The rewards policy is not being used as effectively as it could be to reward high achievement but is often being used to placate those students who are more challenging during lessons.

The school has completed an audit to identify where opportunities exist to raise students' awareness of other cultures, particularly those in contrast to their own. Some faculties, notably humanities, have devised units of work designed to inform and engage students' interest. This approach has also encouraged cross-departmental co-operation and sharing of ideas and good practice. However in some areas, opportunities are not fully exploited and there is still limited use made to engage students with the rich cultural heritage and traditions of the island on which they currently live.

There has been a noticeable culture change in the school and most teachers and middle managers talk positively about the more open and participatory style of management. Consultation with staff to produce the school action plan, in response to the key issues raised by the last inspection, produced an open dialogue which allowed teachers to air concerns as well as face realities. There is greater shared ownership and a clearer understanding of what needs to be done if the school is to move forward. The introduction of more rigour and accountability into quality assurance systems has also raised expectations. The capacity of middle leaders is recognised and several have responded positively in managing change effectively in their areas of responsibility. They have utilised the self review system and subsequent departmental improvement plans to good effect to help identify priorities and also the strategies to address these. However, this is not yet consistent across the school and a minority of middle leaders have not been sufficiently critical of their own subject performance to embrace the need for change. Despite this, there is a new mood of optimism around the school and a clearer determination to make things happen amongst the greater majority of staff.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely



Leszek Iwaskow  
Her Majesty's Inspector