



CAYMAN ACADEMY



Progress Report
April 22, 2010



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION

Cayman Academy is an Adventist educational institution for students from two to nineteen years of age. The school is managed by a Board of Directors which has responsibility for overseeing and supporting most aspects of the school, including the development of policies and plans, the management of the budget and the hiring of staff.

The school was last evaluated by the Education Standards and Assessment Unit (ESAU) in October 2009. The full report can be accessed on the Ministry of Education's website: www.brighterfutures.gov.ky.

This is the report on progress on the issues for improvement which follows approximately six months after an evaluation.

The purpose of this progress review:

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

The review team comprised:

Favourita Blanchard, Evaluator - ESAU
Mary Bowerman, Director - ESAU

The main issues for improvement from the evaluation in October 2009

The issues identified for improvement at the time of the last evaluation in October 2009 were:

- The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school
- The quality of teaching, especially in Grades 4 - 9
- The tracking of students' progress and the use of assessment data to inform teachers' planning
- Systems to ensure progression and continuity in the curriculum

Other recommendations for improvement from the evaluation in October 2009

The evaluation focused on the core subjects of English, science and mathematics. The main recommendations for improvement of these included the following:

- Establish mechanisms for the effective monitoring of standards in the teaching and learning of the subject
- Ensure that teachers use assessment data to track students' progress and help them to plan to meet the needs of all students

Progress in addressing the issues for improvement

1. The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school

The school's response:

- Various policies have been developed, for example a marking and feedback policy, an assessment policy, a literacy policy
- Staff members have been identified to monitor the implementation of all policies
- The principal and vice-principals are responsible for evaluating teaching and learning throughout the school
- The school has now developed job descriptions for all staff
- Lesson observation schedules have been established and are being used

ESAU's observations:

The school's response is encouraging. The development of job descriptions and various policies will help to ensure more consistency in the work of the school, but their implementation must be closely monitored.

Senior management now needs to ensure that there is a specific focus for all observations and reduce the number of times teachers are being observed so that they do not become overwhelmed. The marking and feedback policy and the assessment policy should be combined into one document on assessment.

2. The quality of teaching, especially in Grades 4 - 9

The school's response:

- The school has developed a plan to improve teaching and learning throughout the school
- There is now a full complement of staff for Grades 4 to 9
- Peer observations with the intention of sharing best practice have been on-going

ESAU's observations:

There is no plan to focus specifically on improving the quality of teaching and learning in Grades 4 to 9. It is essential that all teachers in these grades understand the curriculum well so that they have high expectations of the students and there is no unnecessary repetition. A teaching and learning policy to ensure that all staff understand the requirements of the school for teaching and learning is crucial to this issue, and this has not yet been drafted. The full staff complement in Grades 4 to 9 does not necessarily guarantee that the teaching and learning will improve.

It is not clear how some of the proposed actions will improve the quality of teaching – for example, “Implement a reading programme to produce lifelong learners.”

The school has introduced peer observations to ensure that good practices are shared but the purpose and use of these observations need to be clearly established.

3. The tracking of students' progress and the use of assessment data to inform teachers' planning

The school's response:

- The school has produced a marking and assessment policy and a record-keeping policy to help improve its practice
- The school is exploring the use of the TerraNova to identify 'at risk' students

ESAU's observations:

The decision to use the Cayman Islands National Curriculum must, to a large extent, dictate the way that the school records students' progress. Therefore all teachers will have to become familiar with the attainment targets and attainment levels and how to use these effectively. The school also needs to be aware that using National Curriculum attainment levels may change the format by which it reports to parents. The marking and assessment and record-keeping policies will need to provide much more specific guidance to teachers. It is imperative that all teachers use a common format for recording students' progress and that this information is passed on from one grade to the other as students move up through school.

The use of a standardized test will provide some guidance on students who are 'at risk', but the school needs to establish systems and structures to track their progress and use this information to inform teachers' planning.

4. Systems to ensure progression and continuity in the curriculum

The school's response:

- The school has made a decision to use the Cayman Islands' National Curriculum
- Teachers have been attending workshops with resource persons to familiarize them with the related material. The school has indicated that teachers will need considerable training in understanding and applying the attainment levels to students' work if they are to effectively implement the new curriculum.

ESAU's observations:

The decision to use the Cayman Islands National Curriculum will involve extensive training. Teachers will need to become thoroughly familiar with all its aspects and be able to communicate these clearly to students and parents.

The school will need to identify what text books to use to most effectively deliver the curriculum.

The National Curriculum, if properly implemented, should provide the progression and continuity that is lacking at present.

5. Language arts within the school

The school's response:

- Job descriptions have been developed for language arts coordinators and they have started to observe teaching and learning in their subject
- The school has created a separate literacy policy for the primary and secondary departments
- The second Monday in every month has been designated for seminars and workshops to help teachers who need support in the teaching of language arts

ESAU's observations:

The school has worked hard to produce the literacy policies. It would, however, be more feasible to combine the two documents into one policy for literacy across the curriculum so that all staff will have a better understanding of what is expected of them and that there will be greater consistency throughout.

6. Students' progress in mathematics

The school's response:

- The school has not yet addressed the issue of students' progress in mathematics
- There are plans to start training seminars for mathematics teachers and coordinator

ESAU's observations:

The school needs to make it a priority to plan for improving students' progress in mathematics and prioritize steps to be taken with realistic timelines for the start and finish of each.

7. Teaching and learning in science

The school's response:

- The school has made an inventory of science materials in hand
- Science teachers are in the process of preparing a list of lab resources to facilitate practical work, so that supplies can be ordered

ESAU's observations:

During the school evaluation, ESAU found that inadequate planning and a narrow range of teaching methods, especially for students in Grades 7 to 9, negatively impact their progress. It was also noted that the use of on-going assessment was an area for improvement. The school needs to plan for each of these aspects to ensure that teachers are equipped to do the job expected of them.

It is important that the science lab is ready for the beginning of the new school year so as to enable the full range of practical work required by the curriculum.

Progress in other areas identified by the school

The school's response:

- Students' report cards have been modified and monthly report cards have been introduced
- A community business club has agreed to assist the school with plans to re-open its library at the beginning of the new school year
- A Students' Council has been established in order to instill and enforce acceptable standards of behaviour throughout school
- Prefects have been identified and a document with their schedule and responsibilities has been completed and shared with all involved

ESAU's observations:

The provision of monthly report cards will need to be monitored closely as this may prove to be too time-consuming.

The re-opening of the school's library will be a good incentive to help students develop their interest in reading. This is a commendable initiative.

The establishment of a Students' Council can be an effective way to let students' voices be heard and to develop their leadership skills if it is efficiently led and monitored.

These actions are all commendable ways of improving the school's provision.

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

The school has begun to address some of the issues for improvement and has taken account of the recommendations from the evaluation report. However, although the plan identifies actions that the school will take, some of these are not the appropriate steps needed to bring about the desired improvements. The school has made good progress in its plans for monitoring and evaluation of its work, and the decision to use the National Curriculum will provide a start to ensuring better continuity and progression across the school. The quality of teaching and learning in Grades 4 to 9 and the development of systems to track and report on students' progress are still priority areas that need to be urgently addressed.

The way forward:

The school now needs to ...

- Critically examine its plans to determine if the proposed actions need to be modified or changed
- Clearly identify who will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of each action taken
- Focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning in Grades 4 to 9 and the tracking of students' progress throughout the school