



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Saint Albans School**

**Public School 036**

**187-01 Foch Boulevard  
Queens  
NY 11412**

**Principal: Lynn Staton**

**Dates of review: December 5 - 6, 2006**

**Reviewer: David Taylor**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Public School 36, St Albans School, is located in Saint Albans, Jamaica. The school population, which is constantly subject to change, serves around 490 students from kindergarten through grade 5. These are predominantly Black (94.5%), with 3.5% Hispanic students, 1.6% Asian and less than 1% White. The school is Title I eligible. Two percent of students are English language learners, and nearly 10% are special education students. Sixteen special education students are in classes in grade 1 through 5 in a collaborative venture with District 75. Attendance figures are around 93%, very close to the average for similar and City-wide schools.

The principal has held the position for just over a year. There is a stable and well-qualified staff.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school is making good progress and becoming skilled at setting goals and assessing the performance of students.
- The principal shows clarity, imagination and warmth in her leadership, and demonstrates an excellent understanding of students and fine coaching skills in dealing with staff.
- Relationships in the school are marked by mutual respect and clarity of expectations, with any difficult incidents handled with firmness and sensitivity.
- Innovations such as book, artist, and country of the month have been valuable in creating a strong sense of school identity and shared purpose.
- Students apply themselves with great diligence and are eager to succeed, mostly achieving a very sound level of performance and generally behaving respectfully and thoughtfully.
- The school works effectively to integrate students' personal development and academic progress.
- Staff focus on improving students' performance and use instructional methods that are varied and appropriate.
- Professional development is of good quality, enhancing teachers' understanding of curriculum and assessment matters.

### What the school needs to improve

- Build on the progress that has already been made in involving teachers in setting and reviewing goals, based on close analysis of data on individual students.
- Develop further teachers' strategies for ensuring students' grasp of teaching points and for checking students' understanding.
- Continue to work collaboratively to make sure that all students receive suitable challenge and stimulus.
- Build on the initiatives already in place to develop teacher leaders across the school.
- Celebrate and disseminate best practices in creating classrooms full of excitement, appropriate resources and examples of students' work.
- Continue to develop the use of computing technology to support and extend students' learning.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

The school has come a long way in a short time, during the first year of the principal's effective and imaginative leadership. Many plans and innovative measures are making a real difference to the climate of learning. Professional development has been a spur to progress, and the benefits are plainly visible in the good quality of thinking and planning displayed by many staff. The school is rooted in its community, providing stability and security in an ever-changing environment. The principal has an exemplary understanding of the students' circumstances and needs.

Staff offer their students a focused education clearly directed at raising levels of performance. Preparation for external testing is thorough and systematic, although on occasion methods do not offer sufficient challenge to all students to ensure good progress. Students respond to the curriculum and instruction with sound and often high levels of engagement. They are motivated to succeed and apply themselves to the work. Incidents of inattention or disruptive behavior are few and are dealt with swiftly and decisively.

A key element in the school's progress is its increasingly effective use of recording and assessment procedures that give a very firm basis for planning the curriculum to meet all students' needs. Effective use of support services is in place.

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is proficient with well-developed features.**

There is a firm emphasis on efficient collection and analysis of data in order to relate it to individual students and to guide academic intervention and after-school programs. The school's practice in this area has improved considerably over the past year, and is now at a proficient level, with some very good practice in evidence. The school uses a wide range of internal assessments to supplement data from City and State tests. Teachers use the common preparation periods to undertake collaborative grade-level planning. The detailed records they are now keeping for themselves are improving their capacity to track students' progress and take action based on enhanced knowledge.

The school is also developing a sound approach to collecting qualitative data. The 'Adopt a Child' program introduced by the principal means that each member of staff spends time with at least one specific student on a weekly or more frequent basis. This is used well to get to know the whole child and foster both personal and academic development. Students appreciate this interest in their individual development.

The school analyses data for different classes and groups, and uses benchmark data in order to compare its performance with other schools. In preparation for imminent tests,

most teachers use data to identify topics requiring reinforcement, but this is not consistent practice across the school. The use of comparative data to check on achievement across class and grades is increasing, but is not yet carried out extensively.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

The school has a clear statement of mission, centered on ‘Excellence for All’, which serves as a signal of its inclusive aims, based on raising aspirations and achievement in the neighborhood. It sees success as based on collaborative partnerships with parents, staff and students, the community and civic groups, and has done much to establish such effective links. The school sets out specific targets in its Comprehensive Education Plan to move students up at least one level in their performance in City and State tests. The principal believes in using the plan, which is thoughtful and clearly presented, as a living document, making adaptations where necessary.

The school is working both to eliminate level 1 performance and to increase the proportions of those achieving levels 3 or 4. The school carefully monitors students’ performance in public tests in order to set appropriate goals. Results are carefully analyzed to see how preparation can be improved.

There are many intervention strategies for the students in greatest need of improvement, including the use of adults with expertise such as paraprofessionals, social workers and the school nurse. The principal stresses, however, that the class teacher has the paramount responsibility for dealing on the front line with any problems, ensuring that there is a coherent approach to supporting those students most at risk.

The school regularly communicates with parents to ensure that they understand what the school is trying to do to support their children. Parents appreciate the level of contact they received about school activities and their children’s progress. The school is well aware that gaining active participation from large numbers of parents is an uphill struggle, and has, with some success, tried a number of ways of securing greater involvement, including the ‘Parent to Parent’ workshops on such subjects as helping parents to navigate the system, developing a successful child and knowing how to help your child.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement, around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

The school follows the mandated curriculum. In English language arts, it pays close attention to balanced literacy and to reading and writing workshops. In mathematics, it seeks to complement the Everyday Mathematics program by setting more verbal comprehension problems, in order to strengthen students’ performance in this area. The school’s current goal is the development of its social studies and science programs, seeking in particular to develop links with literacy. The principal sets a high tone for

instruction, with strong use of ideas and statements from educational thinkers, to stimulate debate and encourage good practice. The examples she uses focus clearly on instruction that is of a high standard and geared closely to meeting students' needs.

Teachers have a good overall grasp of the principles of the mandated curriculum and instructional methods. Mini-lessons and other features of the workshop model are common practice. These are generally conducted with clear planning and focus on learning outcomes, although there is too little explicit differentiation in what is expected of students working at different levels.

In a minority of classes seen, especially in mathematics, teachers did not fully ensure that everyone had understood what was said, and occasionally the language of instruction was not entirely clear or direct. Teachers do not always deal well with errors made by the students, and the focus on diagnostic assessment in the classroom is not always precise. Students are mostly engaged fully in their learning: an example of huge enjoyment and involvement was observed in one physical education lesson where, in spite of limited space and time, students were seen to benefit greatly from this activity. There is some good use of computer technology, for example in 4th grade work on the American States, but this is not yet widespread across the school,

Parents are aware of the importance the principal attaches to good attendance, with an expectation that any absenteeism will be dealt with decisively. The same resolute approach is evident in dealing with the occasional outbreak of disruptive behavior, largely confined to a small minority of students. There is a culture of mutual respect, and students trust that their teachers will help them if there is a difficulty.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient with several well-developed features.**

The principal is making it a priority to have in place staff who share her commitment to the students and to dedicated professionalism. A number of changes already made telegraph this intention clearly. The program of professional development offers appropriate training opportunities for all members of staff. The school has employed a range of workshops and it expects those who attend these to 'turnkey' the training to others. There have been some effective examples of this approach. Internal use of grade conferences, faculty conferences and the common preparation periods, together with sessions planned by the literacy and mathematics coaches, have helped to ensure that common professional goals are implemented across the board.

Observing classes is a growing part of the school's repertoire of tools for supporting professional development. Apart from weekly formal and informal observations made by the principal and other administrative staff, the Comprehensive Education Plan commits the school to further inter-visitation by teachers, as well as visits to other schools. This plan is not yet fully implemented, however. Teamwork among staff is often good, and grade level teams are proving effective in ensuring that common approaches are developed for the classes within the grade.

The principal is greatly respected for the approaches she has adopted since her arrival in the school. Staff comment on her 'hands-on' approach, as well as her ability to combine a

firm lead with a sensitive approach to all students, based on her understanding of their circumstances and needs.

The school has well-established procedures, which are implemented smoothly and without fuss. Students move to where they are supposed to be efficiently and in a very orderly manner. Great care is taken to encourage good behavior at all times around the school.

Effective use is made of other partners to support learning. In particular, the ChaRosa Foundation has provided support for a number of years, with an after-school program and a summer program for students in grades kindergarten through 5. Further valued support comes from Experience Corp, a volunteer agency offering one-to-one tutorial support to students in kindergarten through grade 2. The school also benefits from such groups as Ballet Tech to work with selected students in developing their skills.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

Under the current principal, there has been a marked improvement in this aspect of the school's work, with a developing emphasis on the importance of using reviews of progress as the means to implement desired changes. The school is focusing on how to diagnose learning difficulties more accurately and respond to what is discovered by modifications to planning and instruction. The administrative team meets regularly to discuss improvement strategies which are then shared more widely with the faculty. Teamwork is developing strongly both within the school and with external partners. The staff have studied the Comprehensive Education Plan collectively in order to adapt the curriculum, staffing and scheduling to support learning.

The principal has done exceptionally well to establish a clear sense of common purpose within the school, although further work remains to make sure that everyone is working towards the same goals. Leadership by others in the school is developing gradually, and continued emphasis on professional development provides a clear way to address the remaining challenges and make the school still more successful.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Saint Albans School (PS036)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		X	

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	