

**BELLAIRE SCHOOL
207-11 89TH Avenue
Queens
New York, 11427**

Principal: Mr. G Hadjoglou

Dates of review: 8 – 10 May 2006

**Reviewer: Martyn Groucutt
Cambridge Education**

CONTENT OF THE REPORT

Part 1: The School Context

Background information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

What is the school's overall performance

How well does it meet New York City's evaluation criteria

Other key observations

PART1: The School Context.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a well-established community school serving an area of Queens. Bellaire also provides specialist facilities for students from a wider area who have a range of physical and learning difficulties, with the building having been made barrier free in order to meet their physical requirements. The school reflects the multicultural nature of its community, with sixteen languages being spoken. Support for parents is provided through language classes organized during the school day to enable them to develop their fluency in English and to maximize their ability to support their children's education. One group of students for example, has arrived from Guyana; they speak English, but still need support to develop their formal grammar skills in an American context. In the most recent E-CLAS test, given to the 3rd grade, 80% of students achieved level 7 or 8, which equates to their performance being at or above grade level. This reflects the commitment to providing effective education from the principal and all his staff. Attendance is around 95% and there are high expectations for good attendance and punctuality.

PART 2: OVERVIEW.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The school is an inclusive community that welcomes students from a wide variety of cultures and with a range educational needs, providing an education that enables them to learn effectively.
- The principal and his senior team have created a school that is looking to develop and embrace positive changes.
- The teachers and other staff in the school have high expectations and positive attitudes towards teaching and learning which inspires the students to give their best.
- Parents are welcomed and support is provided for those who do not speak English as their home language.
- Students with quite severe levels of physical disability are provided with an effective education in a building that has been well adapted to provide barrier free access.

WHAT THE SCHOOL NEEDS TO IMPROVE

- The school needs to make more effective use of data, measuring not only individual achievement, but also progress over time from an initial baseline with comparisons against other measures such as gender, special education needs, ELL performance, ethnic origin, etc.
- Literacy and numeracy need to be strengthened and taught through *all* curriculum areas.
- A curriculum review should seek to strengthen the role of science and social studies in the school's overall curriculum.
- Opportunities to bring about greater levels of integration, where appropriate, for those students with physical or learning disabilities should be sought providing that this is aligned with the equitable use of resources.
- A more school-focused approach to professional development should be established in which the expertise available internally is used to address identified need.
- There needs to be a greater focus on planned differentiation in teaching, building on the expertise being developed currently through professional training, ensuring school-wide practice that meets the needs of individual students.
- Grade and discipline teams should have clear and specified roles that provide a focus for professional development, including opportunities for teachers to work together to calibrate student work and also to promote the process of peer observation, supported by the coaches as appropriate, as a tool for promoting best practice.
- Greater use should be made of computer technology, for example in supporting individual work or extension activities, supported by training to develop the expertise of the staff in the effective use of computers as an aid to successful teaching.
- The specialist facilities for science teaching should be enhanced through the development of a dedicated laboratory.
- The possibility of introducing subject specialist teaching into the fifth grade should be investigated in a collaborative way that involves seeking the views of teachers and parents in any formal review.
- The school should constantly be seeking ways in which it can extend its resources in order to maximize the integration of students with physical or learning difficulties into general school settings.

PART 3: MAIN FINDINGS

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school, with a particular expertise in the education of students with physical disability, for whom the school has been made barrier free.

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

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is overall undeveloped.

What the school does well is to track the progress made by individual students throughout the year. This process of seeking to assess current knowledge and understanding, starts in kindergarten where students for the gifted class are identified and provided with more challenging work. The school is therefore knowledgeable about progress made by individual students. They are aware of how individuals are performing at any given time and procedures exist for dealing with concerns about progress.

However, what is not so well developed is the ability to compare the progress and performance of the students against other students, and against similar students elsewhere. There is no centrally held data that shows overall progress of students from that first baseline assessment when they enter the school right through to when they leave. Information and data is not systematically passed on between grade teachers, and this means that each year the teachers have to go through the process of getting to know their students, finding out for themselves about previous learning and achievement. The school could seek to gather detailed information on the progress made by students in each grade and to look at the progress of different groups: boys as opposed to girls, students who are English language learners, or those in special education, for example.

Quality Statement 2: 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 data that the school has on individual progress during the course of a school year enables it to plan its curriculum for the year. However, it needs to refine and develop its work in differentiation and has identified this as an area for development. A group of key teachers have already attended a conference on this and will be taking the work forward. The administrative team need to ensure that all

teachers' planning reflects the whole range of ability and learning styles of their students, and that individual needs are identified and taken into account. With those students who benefit from the specialist facilities that provides for their physical and learning disabilities, planning should also consider how their access to mainstream opportunities could be maximized. When the curriculum has developed at a more individualized level it will be easier to set challenging targets and goals for individual students.

An area for development is the use of technology in classrooms. This includes individual access to computers as a tool for individual research, supporting the specific needs of individuals, and the provision of greater challenge and extension to a study topic. The specialist teaching in the use of computers is providing an ideal opportunity to extend opportunities across all classes in everyday teaching. Similarly, computer assisted technology, such as smart boards, can provide a great asset for teaching and learning, and the school should consider a program for introducing them into classrooms. This would have to be accompanied by training for those teachers who lack confidence in the use of technology in their teaching if it is to have equal benefit for all. Computers in school will provide a real service for students who do not have access to a computer at home, enabling them to gain the skills needed to make best use of this tool of contemporary life, learning and society.

Teachers plan together in grade teams, but there is room for further refinement in curriculum development. In terms of the use of data, it would be possible to develop a school-wide spreadsheet showing the progress of each individual over the different marking periods, taking into account other factors such as attendance, additional support received, free school lunch entitlement, home language and any identified special needs. This should not be seen as a stand-alone tool within a single grade, but form part of on-going assessment and continuous monitoring as students go through the school. Such information could provide much more refined information for grade, or discipline, team meetings. Parents are well informed on the progress made by their children. One strong feature is the English language lessons provided for parents who are English language learners; through this not only is their access to the society in which they live improved, but also their capacity to support their child's education. There is regular and supportive communication with parents at an informal level, in addition to the formal parent conferences and reporting that take place during the year.

There is a need to identify programs for professional development taking into account both the priorities of the school and the professional needs of staff. Should the Principal decide to go ahead with initial thoughts on planning for discipline based teaching in the fifth grade there would be further opportunities for teachers to develop their expertise through a school focused process in which subject specialists could take a lead role.

Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has four parallel student groups in each grade – a regular class, together with separate classes for the gifted, for collaborative team teaching and a bi-lingual class taught half in English and half in Spanish so that students can develop language skills in both. All groups follow the same curriculum, though this is studied at a greater depth in the gifted group. One weakness in the use of data at the moment means that the ability to monitor the progress of “mainstream” students in the latter two classes compared to those in the other two is limited and it is difficult to make comparable judgments about standards of individual achievement across the four classes.

With one of the assistant principals specializing in ELL and the other in special education the needs of both of these groups are considered carefully. The principal has created a caring and supportive environment in which the personal development of all students is a priority for teachers. Students enjoy their school life and they work hard. One notable feature is the instruction for students from Guyana who, while speaking English, do so in a form that is not standard English and they have limited skills in writing. Two teachers provide a phonics-based program for teaching them standardized English, while also supporting them through the cultural and social differences they encounter in American life.

The school is inclusive and welcoming, as seen in the care and teaching for students with a range of learning and physical disability, and for those from different cultures. Two small groups of students who have the most severe physical and learning difficulties have their own classes, though opportunities are sought to provide opportunities for integrated activities. Within the resources available, the school should always be looking to maximize the degree of integration that is possible without jeopardizing the requirements outlined in their IEPs.

Quality Statement 4: 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 overall proficient.

The instructional leadership of the school reflects a range of very relevant professional expertise. The principal has a mathematical background, while his assistants are qualified in the areas of ELL and special education. A third assistant principal is soon to be appointed. This will provide an opportunity for a detailed review of the management structure and systems to include professional accountability and development, with members of the team having clearly defined annual objectives linked to both school and personal development.

There are four coaches, two each for language arts and mathematics. They are an effective team, knowledgeable and dedicated to providing effective support to teachers. The team provides a solid base for professional development and for supporting teachers in raising standards of teaching and learning. The principal identifies areas of focus for school development and encourages subject coordinators and coaches to attend relevant training so that the school can develop. Good examples are recent conferences attended in Chicago for language arts and St. Louis for math. Courses attended by staff on differentiation and on technology will support the school in taking forward these two areas, which the principal has identified as being in need of further development.

Teaching throughout the school is proficient and, where individual development needs are identified, the coaches provide very good support, for example in modeling best practice. The instructional leadership team could place a greater emphasis on monitoring the delivery of the curriculum by individual teachers. At present there is inconsistency, particularly in the teaching of science and social studies, which are under developed in some classes. This makes the development of literacy and numeracy across all subjects difficult to plan for and implement, and is an area for development. This would be of benefit to all students, irrespective of their background or achievement and would help emphasize the importance of development of mathematical and linguistic skills. The development of a properly equipped laboratory that all the students could use would strengthen science teaching.

Quality Statement 5: 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.

There are a range of systems through which the staff is involved in assessing the needs and the development of their students. In particular, there are formal meetings of the Academic Support team and the Pupil Personnel team, each meeting on a bi-weekly pattern. Teachers who have concerns about any of their students can make a referral to one of the teams, where a range of interventions are discussed, such as the development of an individual phonics program to improve reading.

Because of the expertise that the school has in special education there is good access to other support services. This allows health support, educational psychology and social service advice to be immediately available, as there are professionals based in the school. The expertise of the para-professionals in supporting special education students is also taken into full account.

Progress of students in the four different academic routes is followed through the year and is reviewed before the start of each school year. There is fluidity in the groupings, though this is often curtailed for some students in the bi-lingual group because of limited English language skills, or in the collaboratively taught group by the content of IEPs for the special education members of the class.

Evaluation of students' work could be improved with further calibration of work by students of different abilities across each of the classes in a grade. This would develop confidence that standards in one class are directly comparable with those in another. Similarly, expertise could be shared with discipline groups, and this would have the effect of ensuring a greater comparability within the actual curriculum being delivered by individual teachers. In particular the delivery of science and social studies would be strengthened if subject based teams were given an enhanced role.

BELLAIRE SCHOOL

207-11 89TH Avenue

Queens

New York

NY 11427

Principal: Mr G Hadjoglou

Dates of review: 8 – 10 May 2006

**Reviewer: Martyn Groucutt
Cambridge Education**

PART 4: EVALUATION CRITERIA GRADE SUMMARY

PART 4: EVALUATION CRITERIA GRADE SUMMARY

Final Evaluation	0	✓	+
Overall Quality of the school		✓	
Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.	0	✓	+
<p>1.1 The school uses available data (e.g., diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, students work products, standards-based portfolios, attendance, descriptive review, security data, etc.) and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are:</p> <p>(1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English Language Arts, math, and other important academic subjects.</p> <p>Criteria for measuring student progress are "objective" when they are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> standards-based, consistent across students, capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice, <p>and when they allow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the performance of different students to be compared, and learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified. 	0		
<p>1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English Language Learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school.</p> <p>{This criterion and the next are partially aspirational as of now. City and State Report Cards and Division of Accountability and Assessment reports provide only some of the necessary data. The NYC DOE will soon provide schools with fuller access to better data.}</p>	0		
<p>1.3. 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, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.</p>	0		
Quality Statement 2: 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.	0	✓	+
<p>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 it develops plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.</p>	0		
<p>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 warranting attention.</p>		✓	
<p>2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.</p>		✓	
<p>2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.</p>		✓	
<p>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</p>		✓	

Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	0	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals.		✓	
3.2 Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the day and week needed to inform teachers about each student's performance and next learning steps, set goals and plans for improved student learning, and implement and continuously improve plans for reaching stated goals.		✓	
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.	0		
3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		✓	
3.5 Teachers are accountable for student outcomes. 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.		✓	
3.6 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.			+
3.7 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		✓	
3.8 Instructional programs actively engage students.		✓	
3.9 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		✓	

Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	0	✓	+
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.		✓	
4.2 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.		✓	
4.3 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including, when possible, by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress.		✓	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.	0		
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.		✓	
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed.			+

Quality Statement 5: 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.	o	✓	+
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 reaching stated goals.	√		
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.		√	
5.3 Information generated by interim 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.		√	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve students' academic outcomes.		√	