

MONTSERRAT SECONDARY SCHOOL

REVIEW REPORT

MAY 2011

Montserrat Secondary School

Review Report

Abbreviations

CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
DfID	Department for International Development
DoE	Director of Education
EDP	Education Development Plan
EO	Education Officer
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LEAP	Lower Education Attainment Project
MCC	Montserrat Community College
MoE	Ministry of Education
MSS	Montserrat Secondary School
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
PTA	Parent Teachers Association
PVP	Pre-Vocational Programme
RT	Review Team
VP	Vice Principal
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

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Executive Summary

In April 2011 the Ministry of Education (MoE) appointed a team of three persons to review the Montserrat Secondary School with special reference to effectiveness of systems, management, curriculum, student behaviour and staffing matters. The members of the Review Team were:-

Dr. Howard Fergus (former Chief Education Officer and Resident Tutor, University of the West Indies, Montserrat);

Mrs. Oeslyn Jemmotte (former Principal of the Montserrat Secondary School and Director of Education, Montserrat);

Mrs.Elaine White-Samuels (former Chief Education Officer/Permanent Secretary, Montserrat).

Over a period of four weeks, the team observed classes, studied documents and held discussions with some key stakeholders. As a result of our investigations and deliberations we make the following recommendations for action inter alia:-

- a) a single teacher be placed in charge of the Lower Education Attainment Project (LEAP) to sustain it in its original manner;
- b) all MSS teachers be sensitized and reoriented to proven methods for teaching students of the lower ability group;
- c) a staff retreat be held to explore and deal with the tensions, disagreements and other negative feelings that exist among staff and the leadership team at the school;
- d) the Principal and the PTA Executive seek to establish a better rapport in the interest of the school;
- e) the disciplinary committee be expanded into a governing board, suitably constituted, with an advisory function;

- f) a Vice Principal with experience in managing educational change be appointed on contract;
- g) the management team, to include heads of subject departments, be re-activated;
- h) an officer be immediately appointed to co-ordinate and develop curriculum at the school;
- i) curriculum be devised not only for traditional subjects but also for the Arts such as Music, Drama and for Sports;
- j) a standard format be established for devising schemes of work;
- k) an unambiguous policy statement on the PVP be issued;
- l) department heads be appointed and be limited to clusters such as Humanities, Mathematics and Science, English, PVP and Technical-Vocational subjects;
- m) means be found to increase the material resources invested in learning;
- n) a policy on management of behaviour be agreed on by all concerned – students, parents, school board, school disciplinary committee, PTA, staff and administrators, and implemented by the beginning of the next school year;
- o) a continuous teacher training programme aimed at developing a professional staff be established;
- p) ‘model’ teachers be identified and used as facilitators in the training programme;
- q) the use of computers in the teaching and learning process be encouraged and facilitated;
- r) the staff be orientated to learning styles which capitalize on the interest of boys (conscious that girls will also benefit);
- s) a multi-purpose auditorium and lunch space be included in any expansion programme for the school.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Review

1.1.1 A comprehensive review of the Montserrat Secondary School was undertaken in 2007 and efforts have been made to implement some of the recommendations. The present task is a follow-up to that review and the consequential efforts at implementation. The MoE engaged a team of three persons in April 2011 to evaluate the operation of the school with special reference to systems, management, curricula, student behaviour, the quality of teaching and assessment and staffing issues. Analyses of the data gleaned would inform recommendations for action. (The Terms of Reference appear in Appendix 1).

1.1.2. The review process entailed a four day visit to the school to dialogue with students and teachers, observe lessons and study relevant documents. Discussions were also held with Ministry and other governance personnel as well as with the executive of the Montserrat Secondary School Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Following the intensive interactive work of four days, time was spent compiling data from questionnaires administered to students and teachers. The Review Team (RT) then embarked on the task of studying the findings and writing the Report. The process lasted for a total of three weeks. The RT was guided by the MoE document 'Montserrat Schools Evaluation Schedule' (2010) but did not feel obliged on this occasion to follow it in detail. (Supporting documents are annexed to the Report).

1.2 The Context of the Review

1.2.1 The MSS produced excellent results and enjoyed national esteem in the era when it was a selective institution. Even with a depleted school

population consequent on the volcanic eruption, the contrast of a roll 64 in 1941 to 300 at present is remarkable. The introduction of a new wing, a Senior or Modern school in 1955 and junior secondary education in 1972 did not substantially alter the elitist nature of the school.

1.2.2 A number of factors have since affected the character of the school and the national perception of its success and image. These include:-

- (a) the introduction of universal secondary education in 1986;
- (b) the volcanic eruption which triggered an exodus of students;
- (c) the replacement of indigenous and locally based teachers by a less stable teaching force;
- (d) a significant immigrant school population including some whose native language is not English;
- (e) behavioural problems which have dogged the school for several years.

1.2.3 By way of intervention there have been three major activities:-

- (a) a major review in 2007;
- (b) the employment of a change manager 2008-2010, who introduced a number of innovations;
- (c) investigation towards a new Education Development Plan.

1.2.4 Given the continuing public perception that there are major deficiencies in the MSS output, the MoE seeks by this evaluation to update its knowledge on the state of affairs at the school. Such a review will make recommendations on the way forward, based on all the current data.

1.2.5 While the MoE is concerned with the quality of teaching and learning and the conditions under which these take place, it is also interested in obtaining value for investment in education. The reviewers took into account all of the critical players and stakeholders including the leadership and management inputs

of Ministry personnel. The team was aware of the multiple variables at work in the educational enterprise.

2 The Evidence

2.1 The RT studied the conclusions of the Change Manager's Report with the changes which that consultant made in the system and programmes. She focused on the following areas:- leadership and management of the school, the teaching and learning process, the curriculum, assessment, the LEAP programme, discipline and other issues. It is instructive that our Terms of Reference identified four of these as areas which demand attention, if we equate discipline to student behaviour.

2.2 The quality of teaching relates to the LEAP project, an innovation of the Change Manager to address the needs of those students who were entering the MSS deficient in the literacy and numeracy skills necessary to access the full curriculum. Success was claimed for the project citing evidence of an empirical nature. Special credit for the success was assigned to the teacher-in-charge, demonstrating how important the teacher is as a variable in learning and teaching.

2.3 It was clearly incumbent on the RT to seek to discover whether the work was sustained with similar results. Judging from the Change Manager's overall report, sustainability appears to be critical.

2.4 At the time of the review, the MoE was in the final stages of producing a ten-year Education Development Plan (EDP). This emanated from intensive and extensive research and investigative work. The RT has been involved in the development of the Plan under the leadership of a VSO Education Planner, Mr Ed Davis, serving in the role of consultant. Naturally some of the findings and proposals relate directly to the MSS. Its findings on matters such as

leadership and management, curriculum and learning and teaching are pertinent to this review.

2.5 **The Efficiency of Structural and Operational Changes**

2.5.1 The success of the LEAP innovation was due in a great part to its co-ordination by a suitable member of staff devoted to it. Removal of such a co-ordinator has thrown the project somewhat off tract. In this critical attempt to address the cognitive deficiencies of an important group of students, sustainability of LEAP is an issue as the school itself recognizes.

2.5.2 The leadership team at MSS consists of the Principal, the Vice Principal, two heads of school – one for the upper school and one for the lower school. The Change Manger was responsible for recommending the heads idea. Some teachers feel the leadership team is inadequate in both quality and number. The general feeling though was that greater effort should be made to ensure that the entire staff operates as a team. More effective communication between leaders and staff was called for.

2.5.3 The PTA Executive was critical of the lack of arrangements to protect teachers, given especially the layout of the school plant. They also faulted the leadership for passing up opportunities to utilize extra-school resources proffered to carry out some of the programmes of the school. They cited, for example, extra-curricular activities and covering for absent teachers. The leadership team's rejoinder was that the school had to follow certain guidelines and protocol even when aid is offered. For them a staff sponsor literally meant staff presence and involvement.

2.6 **Effectiveness of Leadership and Management**

2.6.1 The RT admits to some overlap with section 2.5 but regard this as reinforcing rather than redundant. Some teachers informed the RT that while they support the leadership team, with near fulltime teaching loads for heads of schools, the team could not give the adequate leadership necessary. During the academic years 2008-2010 the heads were given lighter loads; however they are back on full teaching loads to ensure that the time table requirements of the

school are met. Many agree though that the heads are functioning as best they could within the limitations, but there are strong dissenting voices.

2.6.2 The RT received mixed assessments of the effectiveness of the leadership of the school. Of the eight teachers who voluntarily filled out a questionnaire (billed unfortunately as optional - See Appendix 2) five disagreed that the school was well led, one agreed and two offered no comment. The occasional written negative comment was aimed at the principal. (One has to note of course that eight is a very small sample). In face to face discussion one teacher stated that there was a need to change the top management personnel in the school.

2.6.3 Students too were divided in their perception of the effectiveness of the school leadership. A questionnaire filled by some 148 yielded this result:- 86 of these agreed, (32 strongly), that the principal and senior staff are doing a good job, while 63 disagree, (33 strongly). This does not give any cause for complacency or even comfort although the majority were positive. (See Appendix 3).

2.6.4 This obviously did not apply to all teachers, but a couple of them felt that administrators at the Ministry needed to demonstrate diligence and caring over contracts and conditions of service, if they are to retain excellent teachers. Ministry officials were reported as treating these matters in a “hands off” and “abstract” manner. The MoE acknowledges a follow-up role which it can emphasize, but correctly observes that the Ministry is not responsible for determining contracts under present administrative arrangements.

2.6.5 Some teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the leadership support which the MoE gives to the school. A minority said that they were frustrated by what they described as the dictatorial attitude of Ministry officials and the methods used for introducing innovation. There was a sense also that the MoE introduced too many changes in rapid succession. The teachers felt overworked and asserted that some of the policies currently under discussion would result in greater burden. For its part, the MoE is to be commended for seeking to introduce certain policies and strategies for the benefit of the school. Examples

are admissions and anti-bullying policies and behaviour management guidelines; and a new pro-forma and regime for lesson observation was under active consideration.

2.6.6 Communications at both Ministry and school levels were regarded by teachers as a major problem. Teachers have been invited to meetings by the MoE to discuss certain issues only to find a change of agenda, it was alleged. In spite of weekly staff briefings at the school level, methods of communication with teachers needed modernizing it was felt, and some teachers complain about seeing notices long after the relevant dates. Others complain about a lack of follow-up for issues raised especially when students are referred to the office for discipline.

2.6.7 The PTA executive is also of the opinion that the MoE is not providing the necessary support to assist the school in delivering its programmes. Mention has already been made of their criticism of school management for rebuffing their efforts to assist the school. They would like to see a review of the management structure and a system established for accountability, presumably accountability to the PTA as agents and representatives of the clients of the school.

2.7 **Curriculum in the Lower School**

2.7.1 It was obvious from the examination of documents and from discussion with the various groups that the school is greatly deficient in the area of curriculum in Forms 1 to 3. Steps have been taken to remedy this situation by the Change Manager through the introduction of a programme for the teaching of Mathematics and Language Arts at the lower secondary school.

2.7.2 Systems for leveling and target setting have also been introduced for these two subjects and to enable the tracking of students' progress in these areas. A teacher has been selected to be assessment manager and tasked with collating the results of tracking. These efforts are laudable, but deficiency remains.

2.7.3 In the current situation, the school is unable to present new staff with curricula in several subjects. The RT views this as a serious handicap

especially in light of the relatively rapid staff turnover which the school currently experiences.

2.7.4 Encouraging efforts and initiatives are, however being made by groups of teachers to structure curricula by adopting and adapting programmes from elsewhere. This is true for Social Studies, Building and Construction, Science and Mathematics to an extent. A further positive note rests in the fact that in some cases the syllabi came from other Caribbean Territories. This is not so in Mathematics where a UK based programme is used. This may be one reason why there has been a call (not by a majority) to jettison the Mathematics curriculum. Mathematical concepts are universal but the school generally agrees that all school curricula should be rooted in Montserrat's culture. Then there is the need in some cases to have the lower school curricula articulate with CXC syllabuses and with the OECS curricula for the lower secondary school. The titular EO Curriculum is in recent times aware of and party to curriculum work taking place in Science, Mathematics and some of the Arts.

2.7.5 The RT reviewed schemes of work for most subjects offered at various levels of the school. Apparently these schemes have been used over the years and have taken on the status of "curriculum". Some schemes are very well presented and gave a detailed description of what was to be taught for the term or year, the objectives to be achieved, teaching methods to be used, assessment procedures and resource requirements. Others are merely syllabus outlines.

2.7.6 The PTA expressed concern regarding the subject options at the Form IV level. They are calling for more flexibility in the subject choices. But as the principal indicated, the options to a large extent are controlled by the choices of the majority of students and the availability of teachers. All students will therefore not have the opportunity to take all the subjects they desire.

2.7.7 It is the consensus among teachers that the school is not adequately meeting the needs of those students who are not academically inclined, the majority of whom are boys. These students it was said had nothing to aspire to, and therefore had no desire to achieve. It was suggested that secondary education had no meaning for them. In the teachers' view secondary education

needed to be reformed to provide these students (who are in the majority) with some type of certification. The issue of the underachievement of boys was highlighted in the research which underpins the EDP.

2.7.8 Curricula cannot be meaningfully considered apart from supporting materials including text books. A constant complain of teachers was the lack of resources for the delivery of the programmes offered at the MSS. Basics such as duplicating paper and a working copier were not readily available. One group of students, who were out of class, informed the RT that no wood was available for them to use in the Building and Construction class. The impression was also given that in order to meet the requirements of students writing CXC examinations, preference had to be given to the CXC programmes when allocating resource, to the detriment of the PVP. This explains the PTA's call for adequate material and human resourcing of the programme.

2.7.9 Resources deficiency was particularly glaring in the fields of Woods, Textiles and Electricity. There were however efforts at solving the problems by the Woods and Clothing and Textiles teachers with support from the principal; the latter commendably sourced fabrics from community organizations. The MSS Woods workshop has tools which are beyond repair but with the acquiescence of the principal, the Woods teacher secured the co-operation of the principal MCC in using the MCC workshop, which has been lying idle for some time. An arrangement may be possible whereby Level 1 of the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications course is taught at the MSS while higher levels are pursued at the MCC. Formal arrangements will need to be made with the management of the MCC, with the assistance of the MoE, for the use of the MCC workshops for the delivery of the Level 1 course. Given the necessary resources, valuable work can be done by the woodwork students as evidenced by past examination success, projects which are still on display and repairs which have carried out on the school buildings. The Ministry has expressed willingness to address the problem and is presently awaiting a prioritized list from the school of equipment needed for woodwork.

2.7.10 The PVP merits an added substantive comment because everyone saw it as problematic. A few teachers would like to see a system change in MSS which produces an elite school for those who pass a selective entrance examination. Others react negatively to a seemingly official requirement that twenty-three percent (23%) of the 2011 cohort at the MSS achieve five CSEC subject passes including English and Mathematics.

2.7.11 The 2007 Review Team adverted to the curricular shortage in areas such as Music, Drama and Sports and pointed out that this made for a bias towards the “writing” subjects. This present team agrees and notes that positive efforts have been made in the fields of physical education and drama with some initiative in music as well. This is an important direction to take.

2.8 **Pupil Behaviour Management**

2.8.1 Perceptions of the state of student behaviour at MSS differ according to who is asked. The majority of students believe that the incidence of negative behaviour and poor discipline is exaggerated by the public; and the latter never see anything to compliment the school on. It is a small minority that gives the school a bad name, they contend. That minority, both students and the leadership team agree, are students in the lower forms. The results of the students’ questionnaire, did not, however, bear this out. Of the 148 students surveyed only 59 agreed, (16 strongly), that behaviour is good at the school, while 89 disagreed, (34 strongly). It can be at least concluded that all is not nearly well in the behaviour department of the school.

2.8.2 The number of staff members who returned a questionnaire was small, so no definitive conclusion can be drawn. Yet it is instructive that of the eight who returned it all but one either strongly disagreed (four) or disagreed (three) that unacceptable behaviour by students is well managed. This is due partly to the fact, one suspects, that there is no consensus on the disciplinary measures which should be taken to deal with manifestations of bad behaviour. Some teachers felt there was inconsistency in dealing with rebellious, rude and disruptive students. Current sanctions, it is held, penalize students who want to learn as well as teachers.

2.8.3 The 2007 Review stated that behaviour was unsatisfactory overall. It is not clear that the situation has improved significantly, but it is difficult to be categorical. The principal believes it has.

2.8.4 Interestingly some teachers linked the behaviour problem to the lack of appropriate curriculum for the less academic. There was no evidence that they saw behaviour as having some correlation with pedagogical procedures.

2.8.5 The MSS staff has drafted a behaviour policy aimed at behaviour modification at the school. The presentation of another policy by the MoE soon after the teachers had completed theirs has caused some unease among some members of staff. The team is nevertheless encouraged by the initiatives especially by the staff, and envisages a constructive meeting of minds.

2.9 **Quality of Teaching and Learning**

2.9.1 The RT observed 13 lessons. Most of the lessons were based on the review of tests given at the end of the Term II or on revision work for upcoming external examinations. The teachers were very effective in pointing out to the students, mistakes they had made and ensured that they understood what the correct answers were, and how they were arrived at. The students were well engaged in the process, questioning the teachers' allocation of marks and seeking information aimed at enhancing their understanding of certain concepts.

2.9.2 From the observation, admittedly limited, the quality of teaching at the school is mixed. Some lessons were recitative and didactic in the age-old talk and chalk mode with little activity and focused on knowledge and procedures at low cognitive levels; and others were characterized by teachers doing all the work – explaining, presenting, solving Mathematics exercises, and pointing out why students' examples were wrong. Even so, teachers were energetic and students generally attentive which augur well for the school; but the students have to be intellectually engaged in order to attain genuine understanding. On the other hand it was refreshing to see occasional examples of excellence in pedagogy with the use of modern information and communication technology (ICT) and the engagement of students in an interactive learning enterprise.

2.9.3 An overwhelming number of students were not convinced that teachers were interested in their views. Of 133 respondents to the questionnaire, 100 negated the idea of teachers being interested in their views, while only 33 agreed. If there is a certain level of veracity here, it is unfortunate, since this could affect learning, and at their ages, these children are capable of abstract thinking, if we accept Piaget's views.

2.9.4 What may still exist is the situation which the 2007 Review alluded to; that is, the apparent lack of skills to deal with children with learning difficulties and those of lower ability (page 12). This has implications for behaviour and the goals and tone of the school. There are a couple of teachers, however, who are making genuine efforts to teach basic skills to these students. It is our understanding though that more teachers should have been demonstrating this capability, since there has been some exposure to relevant training.

2.10.5 Judging from the comments of the MSS Principal and students, teacher punctuality seems to have improved since 2007. What may not have improved is mutual respect between teachers and students. Justifiably or not, some students used the word "coarse" to describe some teachers. Some teachers on the other hand are frustrated over the problems which they encounter with students and dissatisfaction with the discipline regime. Teacher-student relationship naturally has implications for the teaching and learning experience.

2.10.6 There was some evidence of meticulous lesson preparation, complete with aims and behavioural objectives, but it was difficult to form a valid view as to whether or not teachers generally came prepared for lessons. This was one of the defects cited by the 2007 review.

2.10.7 Assessment purpose and methods have undergone some changes at the lower levels of the school. Assessment of learning with the introduction of learning outcomes expressing eight levels of increasing difficulty was introduced as part of the 'change process'. Students are now placed at the secondary level according to their levels of performance in English and Mathematics, set targets, and their progress tracked by the Assessment Manager. While we were unable

to evaluate the effectiveness of the system, it is apparently working fairly well. However, although teachers generally approve of the system, some are of the opinion that the levels are too low based on the demands of the CXC CSEC syllabuses and others are uncertain as to how it fits into the system at the upper secondary level, and its sustainability.

2.11 **Staffing Issues**

2.11.1 Teacher recruitment and retention which has been already alluded to was raised by the PTA executive. They suggested that some incentive system should be put in place to encourage good teachers to stay in the classroom and effective teachers from overseas to extend their contracts. Teachers contracted from the region concurred with this idea. The PTA also suggested that the cultural diversity created by the presence of these teachers be managed for the school's benefit. The Director of Education has also expressed concern about recruitment and retention and is formulating a policy to address it.

2.11.2 Some teachers raised the matter of special support for the Spanish speaking students. They feel that the students have a desire to learn but become frustrated since they cannot understand English, the language of instruction. A special programme, they felt, needed to be instituted to assist them in learning English.

2.12 **Miscellanea**

2.12.1 The school offers a number of extra-curricular activities, but they are not well supported by the student body. The students indicated that it was not possible to participate due to unavailability of transportation. The principal contradicted this, asserting that the school bus, when available, made a second run on some afternoons. Some students, she says, are just reluctant to participate. The PTA executive also expressed concern about extra-curricular activities indicating them as an area in which they can assist.

2.12.2 Teachers as well as children commented on the need for repair and refurbishment in the school. They cited windows for instance; these were obviously the result of vandalism. A cafeteria or at least a lunch room was

generally recognized as necessary, also an assembly hall and a functioning library. Some children saw a need for more seats on the compound. We noted that many children bought their lunch from vendors who sold from the boot of vehicles, and wondered whether there were health issues involved in this practice.

2.12.3 There are times when the campus is relatively peaceful but it is noisy and raucous at others, eliciting calls from authority figures. This, together with occasional clusters of children out of classes, affects the general tone of the school.

3 Review Team's Judgment on the Key Issues

3.1 In this section, we follow the general pattern of the 2007 reviewers and comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Based on these and the findings of our brief investigation, we advise on some issues which need to be addressed.

3.2 The 2007 Review mentioned as a strength twenty years of universal free secondary education. This is significant and we endorse it. That team also mentioned the commitment of those who saw the school through, amidst the vicissitudes and crises of volcanic era. To overlook this is to sell ourselves short. As further strengths we would like to add:-

- the undoubted competence and commitment of several staff members;
- a leadership team seeking to be relevant and apparently open to learning;
- an enthusiastic and mentally and emotionally engaged PTA;
- the goodwill of the public including a cadre of well informed individuals who lose no opportunity to offer critical support to the school. Many see the success of the school as pivotal to the success of the nation;
- a favourable teacher student ratio.

3.3 The weaknesses of the school (challenges, is perhaps a more useful term) include:-

- some ambivalence over the goals of the school with its mixed student abilities;
- a nostalgia on the part of some for a school which caters to the academic cream, based on a common entrance examination;
- a persistent image of the students as exhibiting poor behaviour.

Partly, the task ahead is to capitalize on the strengths and reduce or eliminate the weaknesses.

3.4 **Structural and Operational Change**

3.4.1 The Change Manager introduced a viable structural and operational change in appointing a teacher-in-charge of the lower ability students (LEAP). This, among other things, addressed the matter of the abrupt change from the one teacher per class style of the primary school to the multiple subject teachers of the secondary. It is our view that a suitably oriented trained teacher should take up the baton and sustain the innovation. Additionally, we feel that the school with the assistance of the MoE must work to reduce the number of low ability students coming through by taking action to improve teacher training and caring at all levels, especially at the primary level. A large army of under-achievers should not be accepted as a permanent state of affairs, but some provision for special intervention and remediation should be built into the MSS programme, as at all good secondary schools.

It is the belief of the RT that, if true educational reform is to occur, we must begin to change the way we think about the students and the way they think about themselves and their intelligence. Teachers have the responsibility to show them how to learn and guide them to the conclusion that through effective effort they can become 'smart'.

3.4.2 While there is no compelling consensus on the effectiveness of the leadership and management at the school, there is a great need for a stronger

leadership team. In this regard, there is merit in a wider management team along the lines which the Change Manager suggested (p.9). We would include the educational psychologist, the pupil focus teacher and the subject departmental heads (limiting these to clusters of subjects rather than single subjects).

3.4.3 The problem of communication between Ministry and school and Principal and staff, using where possible, more modern modes than what now obtains, need to be addressed. The dysfunctional electronic means of communication with staff need to be made workable. This is important not just for notices but can also contribute to staff safety. The relevant ministry personnel need to be as business like as possible in dealing with staff contracts.

3.4.4 There seems to be a need for a better mutual understanding between the leadership team and the PTA executive. A *modus vivendi* is needed to transform any tension into creative action. There needs to be a common understanding of respective roles.

3.5 Curriculum

3.5.1 It is very obvious to us that curriculum is a major issue in this review. It is so critical that the appointment of a curriculum co-coordinator (or an officer of similar designation) is vital as there is a need for comprehensive, coherent curricula in virtually all subjects taught in the lower secondary school. Curriculum development is too important to be left merely with teachers carrying full loads or to an Education Officer who is also Examination Registrar.

3.5.2 To facilitate the process, curriculum focus groups need to be revisited and subject panels established to include volunteers where possible. Incentives may be necessary, for intensive and extensive curriculum development is envisaged to include aims, behavioural objectives, content, methodology, teaching strategies, evaluation and resources.

3.5.3 While in several cases, schemes of work were well prepared, the school would do well in our view to establish a format for the presentation of schemes of work and have all teachers adhere thereto. The maintenance of daily plan books would serve a useful purpose also.

3.5.4 It seems necessary to re-establish a policy on PVP which has a shared understanding by the Ministry, the entire school, parents and the community. As part of this process, the EO Curriculum or Curriculum Consultant (if we go that route) should be mandated to devise appropriate certification for PVP programmes. This can be both local credentials and overseas certificates (such as the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications).

3.5.5 Learning material needs, we believe, to be considered an important variable in learning. The amount spent on materials in the education budget is minuscule and this is reflected at the school level. Some way has to be found to address this deficiency; it may well have to be through partners of the education system and the school.

3.5.6 We see the need for someone with the vision and the responsibility for monitoring the progress and wellbeing of the less able students throughout the school. The head of the PVP/Technical and Vocational group could assume this task.

3.6 **Student Behaviour**

3.6.1 Student behaviour is the unhappy face of the school and causes copious comments and these come from the teachers as well as the public. What is needed is a system of discipline, punishment and sanctions that works – a system to replace traditional corporal punishment, detention and suspension or one that modifies some of these. What is billed as ‘internal suspension’ whereby students are allowed ‘at school’ but not in their regular classroom has merit. A prospective policy on behaviour with input from students, teachers, the Ministry, the school’s disciplinary committee and the PTA is to be eagerly anticipated.

3.6.2 We endorse the view which is widely shared that bad behaviour negatively affects the learning enterprise. It is hoped though that teachers critically examine their own attitudes to the students as well; and it needs to be accepted that teachers need skills to promote good behaviour in students. The in-service teacher training programme must take account of this.

3.7 **Quality of Teaching and Assessment**

3.7.1 If the quality of teaching and assessment is to improve significantly, an ongoing regime of training, needs to be instituted beginning with induction and including periodic upgrading and retooling throughout the teacher's career. This is consonant with the idea of professionalism. Emphasis needs to be placed on a range of learning styles and this has implications for better engaging students of low ability, especially males.

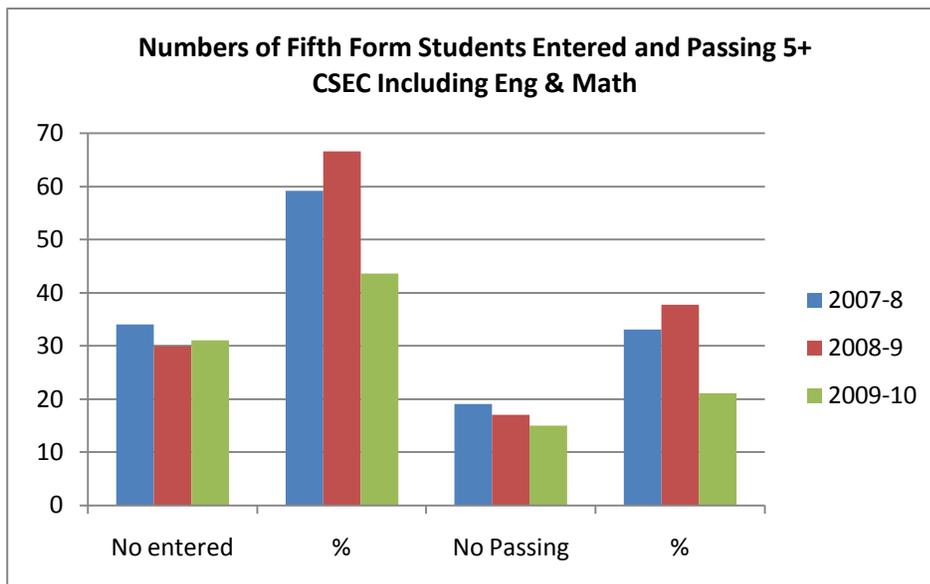
3.7.2 The use of modern technology in teaching needs to become the norm in the school; and teachers who are exemplars of excellence should be used as resource persons in in-service training. Assessment and evaluation are part and parcel of teaching strategy and should be included in the training programme.

3.7.3 Although our focus is on the lower school, MSS performance at CXC examinations has relevance and interest. Success at Form V depends on achievements at Forms 1 to 3. Table 4 and Graph 4 of the Ministry's official document Performance Data to Inform the Secondary Review (Davis) provide useful data on CSEC success in English and Mathematics. See below.

Table 4: Numbers Entered and Passing 5+CSEC Including English and Mathematics (Last 3 Years)

	2007-8	2008-9	2009-10
No entered	34	30	31
%	59	67	44
No Passing	19	17	15
%	33	38	21

Graph 4: Numbers Entered and Passing 5+CSEC Including English and Mathematics (Last 3 Years)



Only twenty-one percent (21%) of the 2009-2010 entrants were successful. CXC passes is not the only criterion for judging the success of the school, but it is important. These figures must improve progressively and success depends on the performance in the lower secondary school and the primary level. Data in the emerging EDP show that learning outcomes based on CSEC passes are low; and that both the numbers entered and the passes (in five CSEC including English and Mathematics) are low for the boys compared to the girls (p.16). This unwelcome phenomenon has to be addressed in the entire school.

3.7.4 The RT, however, is of the opinion that in assessing the performance of the school, favourable consideration should also be given to those students who obtain passes in five or more subjects with the inclusion of either English or Mathematics.

4. Recommendations for Action

4.1 Like the 2007 Review Team, we do not recommend a ‘retrogression’ to a selective secondary school. They expressed it succinctly and well: “We are quite clear that the 1986 change to universal secondary education is irreversible; going back to selection and separate schools is not an option, either philosophically or logistically (2.8).” We may however, have to make other changes to make the system successful. For instance, where students are joining the school from elsewhere without exposure to a proper course in primary education, special pre-secondary lessons may be necessary. This applies equally to persons whose first language is not English.

4.2 To build or not to build a new school on a new site was not of our particular concern. We may observe, however, that while a new plant may be welcomed on other grounds, it will not do much to address the gnawing problems that the school currently faces. Again we concur with our former colleagues. It must be admitted, though that the layout of the MSS does not lend itself to easy supervision. What needs to be built, for certain, is a culture of unity and partnership among the players if the school is to truly succeed. Beyond these comments, we confine our recommendations to the six issues contained in our Terms of Reference.

4.3 The Efficiency of Structural and Operation Changes

4.3.1 The Team regards LEAP as an interesting and useful innovation which needs to be revisited in its original form. It needs to be professionally managed, studied and evaluated for a further three years. The teacher chosen to carry it

forward may need a short regional attachment to an appropriate school with a similar challenge and a first rate teacher. We must preserve the single teacher idea which obtains in the primary school. These students, more than others, need to avoid the abrupt change.

4.3.2 The 2007 reviewers recommend that MSS discuss with the primary schools and collect data about the learning needs of year 1 student intakes. This, with LEAP in its pure form, should overtime chalk up success at the lower achievers' (for the time being) level.

4.3.3 We are suggesting that the management team takes on a new configuration. It should include professional heads of departments even at the expense of appearing to have too many bosses. This is why members of the management team have to be carefully chosen based on proven capability and in some cases suitable qualifications. Subject heads should generally be qualified academically and in pedagogy.

4.3.4 There is need to build a functioning partnership with the PTA while recognizing respective portfolios. The PTA cannot run the school but can enhance the resources available to management.

4.3.5 It is incumbent on both the MoE and the principal to take the necessary action to make the structural and operational changes more effective. They will, however, need the co-operation of the Ministry of Finance although the sums involved are small related as they are to allowances for added responsibilities.

4.4 **Effectiveness of Leadership and Management**

4.4.1 The quality of leadership together with the competence in teaching and learning are the real keys to the transformation of the school. The principal must find a way to ensure that the goals and priorities of the school are shared with the staff and that they own the changes which the leaders are introducing.

The principal operates in an already challenging situation including the management of changing processes. If the staff works to rule or co-operate only grudgingly, success could be jeopardized.

4.4.2 To strengthen the leadership of the school, the opportunity should be taken to appoint a Vice Principal (if only on a contract basis) who has experience of managing change. He/she should also be skilled in the supervision of instruction, in mentoring and in assertive discipline methodology. A counterpart carefully chosen should be attached to this person. Such a Vice Principal would complement the skills of the Principal.

4.4.3 The team did not form an opinion on whether the school should be governed by a statutory board as in the case of the MCC. What we do recommend is that the disciplinary committee be expanded into a governing board of an advisory nature. The PTA, the MCC and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry should be represented. (This recommendation is similar to the one which the 2007 review team made (p.33).

4.4.4 It would be useful for the Principal and staff to meet in social settings outside the school walls. This could reduce the incidence of 'talking at' and increase the habit of 'talking to'. These sessions could be somewhat analogous to the 'stress busters' which the Department of Administration mounted in the post-eruption days.

4.5 **Curriculum**

4.5.1 An Education Officer, Curriculum, needs to be engaged to drive curriculum reform in the school with special reference to the lower school. He/she must be guided by a philosophy of schooling in Montserrat's culture and a consciousness of knowledge most worthwhile for our youths. It is this officer who will form and coordinate working curriculum development groups.

4.5.2 Curriculum development should emphasize the Arts, ICT, Sports along with more traditional courses and a technical and vocational course such as level 1 of a regional programme. Curriculum cannot be separated from teaching strategies, so training will have to be considered relative to these fields of knowledge. The 2007 reviewers wanted citizenship and patriotism taught across the curriculum. We think these emphases are particularly necessary in Social Studies and Humanities generally, and would add self-esteem as another worthy goal.

4.5.3 The RT had some concerns that EO Curriculum has allegedly been omitted from the change process at the MSS especially in the areas of curriculum; and it is significant that the MoE had no documents to present to the team other than the Report. In light of this we suggest that a highly placed official in the Ministry should be tasked in such cases to monitor the activities of consultants to ensure a level of 'local' accountability.

4.5.4 Costs in the form of an EO's salary, honoraria for developers and for materials will be involved; and the main players will be the MOE, the principal and 'expert' teachers.

4.6 **Managing Student Behaviour**

4.6.1 If untoward student behaviour in all its manifestation - wandering, boisterous shouts, skipping class, fights, indiscipline, disrespect to teachers and vandalism - is to be brought within tolerable limits, a multi-pronged attack is needed. We expect the emerging staff-based document on behaviour will bring consistency to sanctions and disciplinary measures. The student council should have an input into the document. Whatever the document contains, teachers throughout the school will need to be trained in techniques of behaviour modification if the school is to experience success in this vital area. As teaching and curricular offerings improve, so should student behaviour.

4.6.2 We endorse the use of home rooms for Forms 1 and 2 to give a base and a place in which these younger students can take pride. This could also reduce vandalism.

4.6.3 There is some coverage for absent teachers, but this should become an imperative even if the school has to rely partly on appropriate volunteers. The students must not be left to themselves and contingency planning has to be made for free periods. Books with daily lesson plans will facilitate this process.

4.6.4 An alternative system for educating those students who have been convicted of crimes by the court needs to be found. Realistically they may have to be placed in a 'special class' given the financial situation of the country. Students who persist in obstructive behaviour and border on the incorrigible should be similarly dealt with.

4.7 **Quality of Teaching and Learning**

4.7.1 There should be an established training programme for the teachers and all opportunities for training advertised. All teachers should be taught techniques for assessing and evaluating learning.

4.7.2 Information and Communication Technology should be available in each classroom as a teaching tool.

4.7.3 Supervision and observation of teachers should continue with a view to identifying strengths and weaknesses. In-school assistance for those with weak areas can be more meaningfully planned.

4.7.4 The recommendation by the 2007 reviewers that the school set targets for new intakes and then assess them against these targets is sound. This system should be implemented for all students in the lower school. Students and parents can themselves better monitor progress.

4.7.5 The MoE may need to spend more on teacher training but must first explore the possibility of doing some of it on island. In any case there is an urgent need for in-service training programmes to equip teachers with a wide repertoire of instruction methodologies that are now required to develop the Montserrat learner of the twenty-first century. The methodologies should ensure that students are intellectually engaged and cognizing at the highest levels.

4.8 **Staffing Issues**

4.8.1 A major staffing issue that concerns management and teachers is recruitment and retention. We have already indicated that the DoE is addressing this. Our sneak preview indicates that he is on the right track.

4.9 **Miscellanea**

4.9.1 We recommend that the available slate of extra-curricular activities be published each term and that supposed constraints such as transportation be dealt with to the satisfaction of all concerned, as far as possible.

4.9.2 Any building or expansion programme for the school must include a multi-purpose auditorium and lunch space.

4.9.3 We have not cost the recommendations but have been acutely aware of costs throughout. The costs will be those associated with recruiting a VP while having a counterpart, engaging an EO Curriculum or equivalent, procurement of suitable programmes, modest remuneration for subject heads and travel and refreshment for teachers attending training courses. Additionally, more money needs to be spent on resource materials.

5 Concluding Note

5.1 The MoE must find more resources for education beyond salaries (according to the draft EDP we compare unfavourably with other Caribbean countries); and ministry officials must work with the school in an extended management mode to advance the school as a subset of the country's development. Curriculum which we have emphasized is derived from culture and some elements of culture change. This is why educators have to be sensitive to employment and development imperatives and must devise criteria by which to determine which subjects to add, drop or de-emphasize from time to time. In the new dispensation, curriculum activity is critical.

5.2 Curriculum is correctly closely linked with instruction. Close and continuous attention has to be given to quality, training and well-being of the staff. The teacher is easily the most important variable in the educational enterprise.

5.3 It is the teacher working in harmony with management at all levels that must seek to stamp out underachievement. Poor student achievement is unacceptable in the United States of America, and it must be deemed so in the micro state of Montserrat. Techniques for achieving high levels of achievement can be mastered if teachers and students have positive attitudes and high expectations. But teachers need incentives and where effective teachers are identified every reasonable effort should be made to keep them in the classroom by rewarding them appropriately. We applaud the initiative in instituting the teacher of the year award and the Ministry must develop other tangible ways of appreciating excellent service.

The Review Team wishes to record its thanks to the Principal, the entire leadership team and staff for the unstinting co-operation which they gave. The Principal was particularly helpful and enthusiastic about any change which will redound to the benefit of the school community.

Appendix 1

Terms of Reference: Members of the Montserrat Secondary Evaluation Team

1. Context

- 1.1. The school was reviewed four years ago (2007) and this is an opportune time, following on from the review of the primary sub-sector and the drafting of a new Education Development Plan, to do another evaluation of the operations of the school.
- 1.2. The Montserrat Secondary school benefited from a change process which was completed in September of 2010. Major changes were made: to the management structure; to strategies for helping low attainers; to methods of assessment; to teaching methods.
- 1.3. Some teachers who would have benefited from the training which was a part of the change process have since left the system.
- 1.4. The data suggests that males are still performing much lower than their female counterparts; there are still significant behavior-related issues at the school; there is a sense that performance is not as high as it could be.
- 1.5. A new principal was appointed midway through the process of change.
- 1.6. As a result of dwindling resources and the need to ensure value obtained for money spent is optimized, the school is challenged to meet strict performance targets. The most critical indicator is the proportion of the fifth year cohort which passes 5 subjects including English and mathematics at CSEC.

%of cohort passing 5 CXC-CSEC subjects (grades I-III), including English and Mathematics	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
	23%	26%	30%	35%	40%

2. Scope of Activities

2.1. Members of the Evaluation Team (ET) will be required to review the 2007 review report, the Change Manager's Report (2010), and available current data.

2.1.1. The ET will comment on:

- 2.1.1.1. The efficiency of structural and operational changes
- 2.1.1.2. The effectiveness of leadership and management
- 2.1.1.3. Developments in the curricular in the lower school
- 2.1.1.4. Pupil behavior management
- 2.1.1.5. The quality of teaching and assessment
- 2.1.1.6. Other staffing issues

2.1.2. The evaluation will involve four (4) days for collecting evidence on site and will be a collaborative effort under the leadership of the team leader.

2.2. The ET leader will seek consensus on all judgments but in the event of a failure to reach consensus will make final judgments based solely on the evidence available.

2.3. The report will be based solely on evidence collected at the school. It will include an executive summary, conclusions and recommendations written by the ET leader.

2.4. The report should list a set of actions based on priority on the recommendations and in line with the draft Education Development Plan.

3. Schedule of timings

3.1. The school evaluation is scheduled to begin on the 18th April 2011

3.2. Prior to the school evaluation the school leadership team will be required to complete a brief self evaluation form to assist the ET in targeting their work in the school

3.3. Prior to the evaluation, questionnaires will be sent by the school to parents and students and collected before or during the evaluation.

3.4. The draft evaluation report will be due by Friday 6th May , 2011

3.5. The final Evaluation report will be due in by May 13th , 2011

Appendix 2

Teachers' Questionnaire

	(please tick)	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I am proud to be a member of staff at this school	1	1		3
2	My contribution to the school is valued	1	1	2	1
3	I know what we are trying to achieve as a school	1	3		1
4	I am involved in what the school is trying to achieve		4	1	1
5	I contribute to the school's process of self-evaluation		3	1	
6	The school makes appropriate provision for my professional development		1	2	2
7	The school is well led		1	1	1
8	The school runs smoothly on a daily basis		2	2	2
9	Children are safe in this school		1	3	1
10	Any unacceptable behaviour by pupils is consistently well managed		1	2	3
11	The school successfully meets the differing needs of individual pupils			2	3

Appendix 3

MSS Students' Questionnaire		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I enjoy school	33	87	20	8
2	My school helps me to be healthy	14	51	59	24
3	I feel safe when I am at school	19	64	54	14
4	I learn a lot in lessons	43	89	25	3
5	Behaviour is good at my school	16	43	55	34
6	Adults care about me	38	69	36	10
7	Teachers are interested in my views	22	78	21	12
8	I know how well I am doing at school	41	87	21	2
9	Adults explain to me how to improve my work	53	66	20	6
10	My school helps me to prepare for the future	52	70	19	3
11	The principal and senior staff in my school do a good job	32	54	30	33

Appendix 4 References

Campbell, T. (2010), The Final Report: Change Process, Montserrat Secondary School

Davis, Ed (2011) Performance Data to Inform the Secondary School Review

DfID (2007) Review of the Montserrat Secondary School, Montserrat,

MoE, Government of Montserrat (2011) Draft Education Development Plan

MoE, Government of Montserrat (2010) Montserrat Schools Evaluation Schedule

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