

# Barbados Seventh-day Adventist Secondary School

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NORMA E. GREAVES

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The Barbados Seventh-day Adventist Secondary School is a co-educational, day high school located on Dalkeith Road, Saint Michael, near Bridgetown, Barbados.

Barbados Seventh-day Adventist Secondary School began operations on September 21, 1953, in a rented facility at “Flodden,” a five-and-a-half-acre property also near Bridgetown, where it remained for its first eight years.<sup>1</sup> The school’s enrollment grew quickly, and by the second term in January 1954, the enrollment was 190 students. The *Caribbean Union Gleanings* of February 1954 remarked that “many more are desirous of being admitted but we do not have the necessary space.”<sup>2</sup> Initially, the curriculum primarily prepared students in the upper grades to take external examinations for the GCE (General Certificate of Education) of the Oxford and Cambridge Examination Board. This preparation was later expanded to include local examinations from the Caribbean. The early 21st-century curriculum offers 21 subject courses at the CXC (Caribbean Examinations Council) CSEC level.

The successful establishment of this school was the result of the urging of numerous parents and the careful coordination of Melvin G. Nembhard, president of the Leeward Islands Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Caribbean Union Mission, headquartered in Barbados; Mrs. Lucy M. Kum, college instructor; Lionel R. Arthur, director of the Leeward Islands Mission Education department; and Maurice A. Joseph, principal of the Bridgetown Primary School. Participating in the opening ceremonies for the school were J. W. B Chaney, the acting chief justice of Barbados; and the leading political figure, Grantley Adams, according to the *Barbados Advocate*, the local newspaper.<sup>3</sup> Among the early students were non-Adventist and Adventist youth from neighboring islands.

Over the years, the school has remained the school of choice for Adventist youth but has allowed students of other faiths and from neighboring island states to attend. The school has produced a wide range of successful graduates. Many have continued their education at colleges and universities in Barbados, the Caribbean, Canada, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom. They are trained and worked professionally in a wide range of occupations; some are engaged in Adventist Church work and leadership and others in the fields of health, education, business, law, social work, public service, and community service. Some have won awards to attend area institutions of higher education. Since its early days, former students have worked in secular

schools and in government service.<sup>4</sup>

Eight principals have led the school since its founding. Each worked with its school board, instructors, staff, and parents to help guide the school into becoming one of the leading privately operated secondary schools in the island nation.

The school's first principal, Benjamin G. O. French (1953–1959), previously served as an inspector of schools in his homeland of Saint Lucia and brought effective pioneering leadership skills to the newly organized secondary school.<sup>5</sup> He was followed by Lionel L. Lawrence (1959–1963). He had decades of instructional experience in Trinidad and worked to maintain the foundational goals, as did John R. Hill (1963–1966). Hill was another veteran Trinidadian educator whose instructional specialty was Spanish. He had taught in Barbados previously and had an excellent rapport with students and parents. The fourth principal was the first Barbadian and female, Isabel Bayne (1966–1978). Student enrollment during the 1973/74 school year totaled 427 with a staff of 17 instructors.

<sup>6</sup> Ms. Bayne was among the founding teachers and specialized in the instruction of mathematics. After Ms. Bayne led the school for 12 years, she was followed by Lester Jones (1978–1983).<sup>7</sup> He had earlier served as the school's Bible teacher.

Dr. Norma Niles (1983–2003) had taught for over 20 years at the school before leading the school, and her specialty was English. She was the first principal who held a doctoral degree, which she received from Michigan State University. She was followed by Dr. Cecil Cummins (2003–2016). He was the first alumnus of the school to become principal, and he had earned a doctorate in educational administration from Andrews University. Ms. Annette Alleyne became the principal on January 1, 2017, and continues to lead the school and build on the foundation that the earlier principals laid for the benefit of preparing the students for the workplace as well as for further educational pursuits at the college and university levels.

Principals: Benjamin G. O. French (1953–1959); Lionel L. Lawrence (1959– 1963); John R. Hill (1963– 1966); Isabel Bayne (1966– 1978); Lester Jones (1978– 1983); Dr. Norma Niles (1983– 2003); Dr. Cecil Cummins (2003– 2016); Annette Alleyne (2017–).

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## NOTES

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2. "News Flash: Secondary School," *Caribbean Union Gleanings*, February 1954, 4.
3. B. G. O. French, "Barbados Secondary School," *Caribbean Union Gleanings*, September 1955, 8–10.
4. R. W. W. Cush, "Report of the Progress in the School Programme of the East Caribbean Conference," *Caribbean Union Gleanings*, August 1963, 4.
5. French, "Barbados Secondary School," 8–10.
6. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, second revised edition (1996), s.v. "Barbados SDA Secondary School."
7. Glenn O. Phillips, *Over A Century of Adventism in Barbados: Seventh-day Adventists in Barbados, 1884–1991* (Bridgetown, Barbados: Letchworth Press, 1991), 64–65.

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