

# **BASELINE INSPECTION REPORT**

## **Bodden Town Primary School**

**5 and 8 December 2014**

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## **Introduction**

The Honourable Tara Rivers, Minister for Education, has requested an inspection of all government schools during the 2014-15 academic year. The purpose of these inspections is to provide a baseline assessment of the quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning, the progress students make and the standards they achieve, the effectiveness of the leadership and management of each school, and the standards being achieved in English and mathematics.

The resulting inspection report provides a clear understanding of each school's particular strengths and weaknesses, and makes recommendations for improvement where necessary.

## Information about the school and the inspection team

### Information about the school

Type of school:	Government primary school
Age range of students:	4-11 (Reception not inspected)
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	252
School address:	6 Condor Road P.O. Box 50 Grand Cayman KY1-1600 Cayman Islands
Telephone number:	345-947-2288
Email address:	june.elliott@gov.ky
Name of Principal:	June Elliot

Bodden Town Primary School is situated on the outskirts of Bodden Town, which is some distance from George Town, the capital. The principal has been at the school for two and a half years and the vice-principal has just recently become non-classroom based. The school has 252 students from the age of four to eleven. Students start in Reception at the age of four, and a number of students join Year 1 when they are five. There are 12 classes in Years 1-6, with an average size of around 20 students. Additional support is provided for 64 students who are identified as having special educational and/or disabilities (SEND).

The school aims to promote increased student achievement in a safe, comfortable environment with a diverse curriculum to meet the needs of all students. It strives to create an atmosphere of good moral character, self-discipline, responsibility, leadership and respect for self as well as for others.

The ability profile of the school is below the UK average; most students have ability that is below average, although there is a fairly wide spread of abilities.

### Information about the inspection team

<b>Lead:</b>	Linda Donowho
<b>Team:</b>	Anne McDonnell Kathleen Silvester

This inspection of Bodden Town School took place on 5 and 8 December 2014 and involved a team of three inspectors. The following aspects of the school's work were looked at.

- Standards achieved and progress made by students, particularly in English and mathematics
- The effectiveness of teaching and its impact on learning
- How well the school is led and managed

The inspection team gathered evidence in the following ways.

- Twenty-four lessons, or parts of lessons, were observed, particularly in English and mathematics
- School documents, including teachers' planning, curriculum guidelines and school policies were looked at and students' work was scrutinized
- Inspectors listened to students read
- Discussions took place with teachers and with the principal
- Discussions were held with students, and their activities in lessons and outside the classroom were observed
- Comments from parents and staff from the pre-inspection questionnaires were taken into account

Inspectors use the following grading scale to describe aspects of the school's work.

<b>Grade</b>		<b>Description</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Very good</b>	Good in all respects and exemplary in some significant areas
<b>2</b>	<b>Good</b>	Good in most respects. Weaknesses are minor and not in significant areas
<b>3</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	No significant weaknesses, but no major strengths. Improvement needed
<b>4</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Some significant weaknesses that have a negative impact on learning and achievement. Cause for concern

In the Cayman Islands, the key stages are defined as follows.

**KEY STAGE 1 – Years 1-3**

**KEY STAGE 2 – Years 4-6**

## **Executive summary of the report**

### **The overall effectiveness of the school**

The overall effectiveness of the school is unsatisfactory. Students make progress but do so too slowly, and are capable of achieving more. Through regular assessments, areas for improvement have been identified but the school improvement plan does not clearly reflect these. The new management structure is not fully established and roles and responsibilities are still developing.

The school has a wealth of data from assessment and students' progress is tracked through the year; however, an evaluation of progress year on year has not been made. Teaching is variable in quality and the pace of lessons is often slow. Few adaptations are made for students of different abilities and able students are rarely challenged. Students' basic skills are weaker in mathematics than in English. The school provides a friendly and supportive environment for learning, but expectations of students are set too low.

### **What the school does well**

- The school is thorough in its collection of assessment data, which is shared with staff, and the management are developing better ways to track students' progress as they move from year to year.
- It identifies areas requiring improvement and draws on external support to address weaknesses.
- Students have positive attitudes to work and to each other.
- Classroom assistants are used effectively.
- Clear direction is given by management.

### **What needs to improve**

- Assessment is not used effectively to diagnose and remedy specific weaknesses in learning by individuals and groups.
- Teachers lack knowledge and expertise in teaching mathematics.
- Students make too little progress in lessons because the pace of teaching is often slow and there is little time for work to be completed.
- Teachers do not give enough guidance to students on ways to improve.
- Students do not write or read enough to practise and extend their skills, so that many fall further behind.
- Teaching does not take account of different abilities and there is insufficient challenge for the more able.

## Commentary on the inspection findings

### How well students achieve and make progress

Students' achievement is unsatisfactory.

Throughout the school, achievement is higher in English than in mathematics and students make better progress in this area, although they are not achieving as much as they should or could in either subject when compared with students of similar ability. Some year groups perform better than others and the principal feels that the current Year 6 is particularly strong because of the teaching in this year group and inspectors agree.

At the end of Year 6, students take Key Stage 2 tests in mathematics and English that are marked and moderated locally (apart from the grammar, punctuation and spelling sections). These are moderated locally, but the results are low if compared with the UK average for state sector primary schools. Key Stage 2 tests show low attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, at level 4 and level 5 in 2011, 2012 and 2013. There was significant improvement from 2011 to 2013 in reading, with 53 percent reaching level 4 and 13 percent reaching level 5. Progress in writing has been significantly lower, with 27 percent of students reaching level 4 and no students reaching level 5. In 2014 Key Stage 2 results showed a drop in mathematics, when compared to 2012/13 at level 4 and a small rise at level 5. English remained stronger but with a small improvement in reading and a significant improvement in writing, 59 percent level 4 or above and 19 percent level 5 or above. The percentage of students achieving the grades estimated by cognitive ability tests was low, and lower than the Cayman Island average. 2014 Progress in English (PiE) and Progress in Mathematics (PiM) assessments show a significant increase in both for Year 4 (now Year 5) but little change in other years.

Overall, the picture shows that the school is successful in its efforts to improve reading and writing but has a considerable amount of work to do with regard to mathematics.

Observations in lessons and the scrutiny of work confirm the results of assessments, showing attainment that is often one and sometimes two years below expectations for the age group. Teachers regularly assess students' progress and collate data. However, effective use is not always made of this when planning lessons. Consequently, tasks are not matched to students' ability and more able students are not challenged.

Support for students with special educational needs (SEN) is limited. The newly appointed SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) is a full-time teacher without specific training. She is given only a limited time to oversee the provision, and progress of these students rests with the class teachers and classroom assistants, who are used effectively to support students. Compared with other schools, there is little voluntary support available for reading.

## **The effectiveness of teaching and its impact on students' learning**

The quality of teaching across the school is unsatisfactory.

Teaching does not consistently engage and provide for students of all abilities, to ensure that they make progress and achieve in line with their age and ability.

In the most effective lessons, teaching is well planned and delivered at a crisp pace, with a high expectation of the students. In these lessons, teachers display strong subject knowledge and a clear understanding of students' needs. Consequently, students concentrate, are enthusiastic and make good progress.

In less successful lessons, the pace is slow and the teacher's lengthy introduction and use of technical terminology confuse students, so that they lose interest, their enthusiasm to learn, and time for work and discussion. Consequently, students' work is limited in its content and, in some cases, students do not move past writing the date and the learning objective. Copying of information or questions from a worksheet into an exercise book further serves to slow down the pace of lessons.

In the best lessons, teachers use the data produced from assessment to plan their lessons and so provide for the wide range of abilities in classes. When this consideration is not incorporated into planning, there is little challenge for the more able students and those requiring support struggle to understand and complete work, unless supported by teaching assistants.

Teachers' marking of students' work is inconsistent and commonly does not follow the school's marking policy. Some work remains unmarked whilst, for many other pieces, marking is cursory and offers students little or no guidance on ways to improve. The best marking offers students well-thought-out guidance and targets for improvement, which they recognise and appreciate.

Discipline in lessons is generally adequate but in the cases where low-level disruption remains uncorrected the standard of work is commensurately low. Teaching assistants are sometimes effectively used to support these disruptive students but this is not always the case and assistants are used merely to aid discipline.

## **How well the school is led and managed**

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

Although the principal has been in post for almost three years, the management structure of the school is relatively new and it is too early to judge its effectiveness. Previously, because of unforeseen circumstances, the principal has taken responsibility for most aspects of the management of the school. Now, several new management



appointments have been made but these are not fully established and responsibilities are not embedded in school practice. As a consequence, systems and procedures for review and monitoring are in their early stages of development. Clear direction is given in general terms to meet the aims of the school and suitable educational policies have been introduced, but there has not been a full review and evaluation of the success of these, including that of teaching and marking.

The school improvement plan closely follows national guidelines but has not been linked to a rigorous process that uses the information gained from performance data, and it does not specifically reflect the needs of the school and its students. Weaknesses have been identified but actions for improvement lack rigour and consistency. Staff are frustrated by the changes in national initiatives and expectations as their teaching practice is continually questioned. However, they are determined to improve the provision for their students and they work well as a team.

The monitoring of teaching is undertaken by the principal and vice-principal through lesson observations. These observations form part of a staff appraisal system but it does not identify areas for staff development sufficiently clearly because, although weaknesses are identified, action for improvement is not pursued consistently and effectively. Consequently, the quality of teaching varies widely.

The school is extremely diligent in collecting assessment data. It is less successful in making use of its data to bring about improvement.

### **The quality of teaching and learning in English**

The teaching of English across the school is unsatisfactory. In some year groups, teaching is strong; however, very few students achieve the expected literacy levels for their age and ability.

The school has had a strong focus on literacy and has seen some improvement. It is determined to encourage students to increase their vocabulary and their confidence in speaking aloud and discussing in order to improve both reading and writing. The curriculum now provides planned tasks for the younger students in order to establish a good foundation. For older students, practice is limited. Many of the activities planned do not serve the stated purpose in that the questions are often closed with a definitive answer and so do not provide students with practice in developing skills of debate and discussion. In many lessons, discussions are over-long and predominantly teacher led, causing students to gain little.

Younger students make good progress in their reading. Reading is taught through a mixture of shared, guided and some independent reading, where students are encouraged to discuss their reading with their peers. There is a systematic process of teaching phonics, which enables students from an early age to succeed in reading. However, this skill is not sustained and many older students struggle to decode words. The testing of reading shows that, in most year groups, students are below their expected levels. Teacher's model good reading for the students through story sessions but insufficient emphasis is placed on students practising reading skills themselves.

Much of the material available to students is not aimed at their age group, and so the more able readers are not challenged to read more demanding texts. There is little provision for students to learn to use books for research in topics across the curriculum. The library offers little opportunity for students to enjoy books freely and develop discernment in their reading choices.

Writing is improving, although improvement is limited by the strong focus on genre and the organisational aspects of writing. Students from an early age are burdened with learning the technical terminology associated with each genre and frequently do not move on from that. Time for creative writing and writing at length is limited for all students.

### **The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics**

Teaching and learning in mathematics are both unsatisfactory. Slow learning, with insufficient practice in new skills, and limited achievement, falls well short of normal age and ability related expectations, particularly for the younger ages.

From a low starting point in Year 1, slow progress is maintained and there is little breadth of study. By the time students reach Year 3, there is a lack of written work in mathematics. This results from the amount of time spent discussing work, with some calculations being carried out on white boards and rarely checked. This leaves teachers no evidence of attainment, learning or progress, and little time for students to practise skills is included in the lesson. Valuable time is wasted in writing out questions before working on them, especially for less able students, who then have little or no written practice and associated support. During interviews, students found it difficult to give any coherent explanation of their work and did not have instant recall of number facts or awareness of methods to use.

By the time students reach Year 6, they have covered an acceptable volume and breadth of study. They have worked with place value; whole and decimal numbers; multiplying and dividing by 10, 100, 1000; finding half-way numbers; odd/even numbers with sums, differences and products; multiples and lowest common multiple (LCM); division with remainders represented as fractions and decimals; metric measure; two-dimensional (2D) shapes and basic symmetry. They have also reflected upon their work in the form of 'Dear Diary'. However, during student interviews they were unable to explain how they arrived at the answers to some of their work. They enjoy mental arithmetic challenges and are capable of mental calculations, though they do not have instant recall of multiplication facts.

The over-use of 'number lines' across the school slows down calculation processes, as it is laboured and often unnecessary; it does not take into consideration all students' mathematical skills and knowledge. Too much time is spent on the process when students are already aware of the answer. The lack of instant recall of number bonds and multiplication tables slows down overall progress in problem solving and efficient strategies for problem solving are not regularly taught and practised.

In the best lessons, work is set to match students' abilities and learning is co-operative, with students helping one another to understand the concept behind the practical task set. In most lessons, the pace of working is slow, with low expectations in the teaching. There is a general lack of considered planning to meet the learning needs of the less able and to provide sufficient challenge for the more able. The setting of homework is inconsistent across the school. Some professional development has been provided to support the teaching of numeracy but teachers' subject knowledge is generally weak.

Marking is usually cursory, with few specific targets or guidance on ways to achieve them.

## **Appendix A**

### **Recommendations**

The following are suggested ways that the school could try to overcome the weaknesses identified in the 'What needs to improve' section of this report.

- 1. Further establish clear management roles and responsibilities.**
- 2. Provide training to improve teachers' mathematical knowledge.**
- 3. Ensure that marking offers guidance for students on ways to improve.**
- 4. Introduce consistent and informed planning across all age groups.**