

BASELINE INSPECTION REPORT

Red Bay Primary School

17 to 19 November 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:	5-11
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	416
School address:	271 Shamrock Road PO Box 380 Grand Cayman KY1-1502 Cayman Islands
Telephone number:	345-947-6333
Email address:	Vickie.frederick@gov.ky
Name of Principal:	Ms Vickie Frederick

The school has 416 students between the ages of five and eleven. The school does not have a Reception class, so students join in Year 1. The majority have had limited pre-school experience of following an educational programme. The school has 18 classes in Years 1-6, with three classes in each year group and an average class size of around 23 students. A total of 153 students are identified as having special educational needs. A few students whose first language is Spanish receive weekly support in learning English. The school adopts some of the approaches of the Primary Years Programme (PYP) of the International Baccalaureate (IB) but has yet to be accredited as an IB school. The school provides an extensive programme of activities before and after school. The principal has been at the school for eight years.

The ability profile of the school is below the UK average, with around two-thirds of students having below average ability and over half of the remainder having ability that is in line with the UK average.

Information about the inspection team

Lead:	Joy Richardson
Team:	Linda Donowho Mark Albini Ann McDonnell Kathleen Silvester

This inspection of Red Bay Primary School took place from 17 to 19 November 2014 and involved a team of five inspectors. The following aspects of the school's work were looked at.

- Standards achieved and progress made by students in Years 1 to 6, 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.

- Forty-eight 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 scrutinised
- 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 were taken into account from the pre-inspection questionnaires

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

Grade		Description
1	Very good	Good in all respects and exemplary in some significant areas
2	Good	Good in most respects. Weaknesses are minor and not in significant areas
3	Adequate	No significant weaknesses, but no major strengths. Improvement needed
4	Unsatisfactory	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 school's overall effectiveness is adequate. Students make a good start from a low base in Year 1. The pace of progress varies between year groups but accelerates in the older years so that many reach standards close to those expected for their age. However, students who find learning difficult often continue to fall further behind. Students do better in English than in mathematics, and in English their reading is better than their writing.

The school is well led and managed, with drive and vision. The principal harnesses the efforts of the whole staff team, and of volunteers, to overcome many barriers to students' learning. Students have a strong sense of belonging and the school's positive atmosphere helps them to thrive and to succeed. Assessments are regular and thorough, though not always used enough to inform teaching. The best teaching is highly effective in helping students to make rapid progress, but the quality of teaching is extremely variable and much stronger in some classes and year groups than in others.

The school identifies students with special educational needs and strives to make the best use of available resources to help these students make progress. However, provision in lessons does not always take full account of the range of students' abilities and prior learning.

The school is effective in evaluating its strengths and weaknesses and planning for improvement, keeping the best interests of students at heart.

What the school does well

- The principal gives strong direction in helping students to achieve their best, harnessing the efforts of the whole staff team.
- Rigorous teaching in the older years helps students to meet and sometimes to exceed expectations for their age.
- Students succeed in reading because they learn basic skills well and they are given frequent practice in reading.
- The school provides a rich environment for learning so that activities in and out of the classroom build confidence and pride in achievement.
- Teaching is monitored closely, and staff are encouraged to share and to seek improvement in their practice.

What needs to improve

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent, and weak teaching slows students' progress.
- Information from assessment is not used enough to guide teaching, to show students how to improve, and to close the gap when students are falling behind.

- Students do not write enough to develop their own ideas, and to express themselves fluently.
- There is limited support for the many students who have special educational needs, and teaching does not take sufficient account of different abilities.

Commentary on inspection findings

How well students achieve and make progress

Students' achievement is adequate overall and good in Years 5 and 6. Most students make good progress from starting points that are often low.

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). The results in previous years have been low if compared with the UK average for maintained primary schools, but there has been a marked improvement between 2011 and 2014. The percentage reaching the level expected for their age (level 4) increased from 32 to 86 percent in English, and from 25 to 73 percent in mathematics. In 2014, 71 percent achieved level 5 in reading, exceeding the expectation for their age, while 41 percent did so in mathematics. Results in reading were higher than the UK average, though standards in writing were lower.

Standardised tests in Progress in English (PiE) and in Progress in Mathematics (PiM), taken annually, show that a majority of students in almost all year groups are achieving below the norm for their age, more so in mathematics than in English. However, the results show an improving trend, and better attainment relative to age as students move up through the school. When cognitive abilities tests are compared with outcomes in English and mathematics, it is evident that students are achieving well for their ability, particularly in English.

Observations in lessons and scrutiny of students' work confirm the results of assessments for students currently in the school. Students' progress is good in Year 1 but then slows, accelerating again in the older years. Most students do well for their ability. However, resources are insufficient to meet the needs of the large number of students who have special educational needs, often of a behavioural nature. This necessitates prioritising those with the greatest need for additional support. Early intervention for those who fall behind in reading or writing is limited and the gap in some students' learning widens as they move through the school. The attainment of boys and girls is similar in mathematics, but boys do less well than girls in English and are heavily represented amongst those who make a slow start in literacy.

The effectiveness of teaching and its impact on students' learning

The quality of teaching is adequate but uneven.

It is mainly good or very good in Years 1, 5, and 6, but often weaker in other years. The quality of teaching is directly reflected in the pace of progress that students make in different years.

At the time of the inspection, a third of the teachers had been at the school for less than three months, and three had just started. The school works hard to set consistent standards for teaching, but the rate of turnover makes this hard to achieve.

Where teaching is very good, teachers are confident in their knowledge and understanding of the subject, the pace of working is brisk, and the level of challenge is high. Students respond well to high expectations and a sense of urgency about learning that generates enthusiasm and enjoyment. Students concentrate, show self-discipline and take pride in completing a good amount of high quality work.

In the best lessons, students listen carefully and are keen to contribute in discussion. They co-operate well in small groups, when given the opportunity, and value each other's opinions.

In around a quarter of lessons observed, teaching was unsatisfactory. Behaviour deteriorates because of a slow pace and low expectations. Students are required to listen for too long without active participation and then have little time to complete work on their own. Too much time is sometimes spent in learning complex terminology about language, rather than actively reading and writing. This is particularly problematic for students who have a limited vocabulary and low levels of basic skill.

Teaching is suitably planned and closely monitored to ensure appropriate coverage of the curriculum. However, planning often takes too little account of the spread of abilities, or of adaptations needed in the light of students' success or otherwise in previous learning. Although some teachers evaluate the lessons they have taught, this is not done consistently.

Students with special educational needs are withdrawn from classes on occasion for additional support. Individual education plans are in development but are not widely referred to in lessons. Less able students are often set the same work as the rest of the class without identifying the gaps in learning which hold them back. In the more effective lessons, worksheets at different levels are sometimes provided, and the teacher's questions are tailored to students of different abilities. However, able students are not often set further challenges when they finish their work, to extend their thinking.

Teachers are thorough in carrying out six-weekly assessments, and recording the levels that students are reaching. These are shared with students in a visual form so that they can see their progress. However, though students often know their target level, few clearly understand how to achieve it. Targets are not always expressed in ways that help students to improve, or followed up in marking. Teachers know how well their students are doing, though weak points shown up in assessments are not regularly followed up in teaching.

How well the school is led and managed

Leadership and management are good, cultivating an environment in which students are helped to achieve their best.

The principal inspires teamwork and generates a strong sense of family so that staff pull together in doing their best for students. Both students and staff feel that the school is a good place to be. Students are well known as individuals and their gifts are nurtured, so that they have the opportunity to do well in music and drama, dance and sporting activities as well as in academic subjects. This breeds confidence and self-belief that

helps them to succeed as learners. Events such as the annual reading day reinforce the feeling that learning is fun and that school is a good place to be.

The principal recognises the central importance of good teaching and regularly reviews the performance of staff. Lessons are observed, good practice shared and points for development are fed back to all staff. Co-ordinators for literacy and mathematics support other staff and contribute to the implementation of improvement plans. Staff meetings are used effectively for professional development. However, the rapid turnover of staff, and a lack of control over appointments contribute to a quality of teaching that is very varied and often falls short of the high standards to which the school aspires. Where strong teachers have worked consistently with students over several years, the results have been excellent.

Teachers go the extra mile; for example, in arranging sessions before school for identified students who would benefit from this. The school provides for a large number of students who have special educational needs, or whose behaviour impedes their learning. However, the school has scant resources for providing them with the scale of support required. Support assistants are present only in Year 1, and the school had a year without a special educational needs co-ordinator before the current appointment.

The school lacks structured resources to support teaching and learning; for example, in reading and mathematics. Teachers find their own resources from the internet but these are not always well matched to needs. The library is not currently staffed, and so is underused. The school's leadership considers that national initiatives and priorities sometimes cut across teachers' professional judgement about what works best for their students.

A wide range of measures is used to assess students' learning and progress, with a particular focus on the curriculum levels being achieved. The school's leadership recognises that these levels may have little meaning for parents. Accordingly, report cards have been adapted to give parents more detail about what students need to do to reach each level.

The quality of teaching and learning in English

Outcomes for students in English are adequate overall and good in reading.

Many students start school in Year 1 with a limited vocabulary and little experience of books. The school works hard to prevent this from limiting progress in speaking, reading and writing. Students are encouraged to enjoy words, to speak out and to contribute in a group, through singing and chanting and reading together, and through participation in performances. In some lessons, students are challenged to discuss and express their ideas, though opportunities are limited where questions require only a simple answer.

Students make good progress in reading. They learn to use letter sounds in building words, and many read widely and well by the time they leave the school. They have daily allocations of time for reading and do so with enjoyment, choosing books from class libraries. They support each other in group reading guided by the teacher, and many benefit from reading regularly to volunteers. However, the books available do not always provide enough structured support for those who are struggling, or breadth of

challenge for the more able. Skills of comprehension and reading for information are not developed systematically through the school. Vocabulary, including spelling, is sometimes learned at random, rather than being put to use in students' work. Students are not prompted enough to discuss unfamiliar words and explore their meaning.

Students do not write as well as they read, though the standard of writing is improving. Links between reading and writing are not made strongly enough. Tasks are often made unnecessarily complicated in the early stages by focusing on organisational features. This impedes the development of fluency. Older students benefit from regular writing activities, often choosing their own topics but, in some classes, students do not write enough to practise and embed their skills, or to develop their own ideas. Students strive to learn spellings and spell well overall. Sentence punctuation, complex sentences and paragraphing have been identified as areas requiring attention. Students learn effectively when specific weaknesses in their work are pinpointed and become a focus for teaching.

The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics

Outcomes for students are adequate in mathematics. They start from a low base in their understanding of number but make good progress, particularly in the older years.

Students broadly cover the work expected for their age, though some are capable of moving on faster. By Year 3, students are able to count on and back in 10s and 100s and use number bonds to 20. They show elementary appreciation of symmetry in shapes, work with bar charts, and manipulate addition by regrouping. By Years 5 and 6, students have a secure understanding of multiplication tables, though not always with quick recall. They understand prime numbers and factors, and fraction and decimal conversions.

Students are taught appropriate methods for carrying out calculations, but are not always sure what they can do in their head. Students often continue to use fingers for counting rather than committing number bonds to memory. They learn to use a number line, but this begins to slow down progress for more able students who are capable of learning quicker methods for calculating mentally.

Some teachers have good knowledge, understanding and skills in mathematics, and expertise in teaching the subject. Others are far less secure and effective. At best, students enjoy their work and are highly motivated to succeed. At worst, the pace is slow, and students become disengaged. Long explanations by the teacher give too little time for practising and reinforcing what has been learned.

Students have no textbooks to work from, but some teachers provide graded exercises for students of differing abilities. However, in many lessons, all students, regardless of ability, are expected to do the same work. This leaves the less able students floundering, while able students are not extended. 'Maths recovery' classes are provided after school on four days a week, giving some useful extra practice to students who are falling behind.

Students' progress is carefully assessed, though subsequent teaching is not always adapted to remedy the weaknesses found. Target setting and the marking of students'

work give little direction as to the next steps. Students often know the level at which they have been assessed, but are less clear what they should do to improve.

Appendix A

Recommendations

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

1. Ensure an adequate standard of teaching in all classes.
2. Use information from assessment, marking and evaluation of lessons to guide subsequent teaching.
3. Make sure that students understand their targets and what they need to do to reach them.
4. Take into account, when planning and teaching lessons, the different abilities of students and adapt tasks to give a suitable level of support or challenge.
5. Increase the pace of lessons so that students complete more work in the time available.
6. Develop a co-ordinated programme of interventions to help students who are falling behind to catch up.

English

1. Develop speaking skills by encouraging students to explain their ideas, and enrich their vocabulary through reading and listening to stories.
2. Provide structured reading materials to support the development of reading skills in the early stages.
3. Support students in learning to extract information and fully explore the meaning in what they read.
4. Increase the emphasis on students writing creatively and at length, in different subjects.

Mathematics

1. Develop students' speedy recall of number facts, and ability to calculate in their heads.
2. Reduce the length of teachers' introductions that require all students to work at the same pace.