



**External Evaluation Report**  
**First Baptist Christian School**  
**November 2007**  
**Lead Evaluator: Helena McVeigh**



**Education Standards and Assessment Unit**

*Building excellence together*



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# Executive summary of the report

## Background

First Baptist Christian School is a private school that caters for students from Kindergarten to Grade 8. The school is a member of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and offers a North-American based curriculum, with a strong Christian foundation. It has been open for 10 years and now has a roll of 78 students, of whom 59 per cent are Caymanian.

The school's mission is "to provide academic excellence in a Christ-centered environment, which meets the educational and spiritual needs of each individual; and to develop confident, disciplined, caring, responsible citizens, and life-long learners who exemplify grace, knowledge, integrity and godliness."

## How effective is the school overall?

First Baptist Christian School provides a satisfactory education for its students and has a number of significant strengths. There is a very strong and clear Christian ethos that permeates every aspect of school life. Relationships are very good and students feel safe, secure and valued. Their personal development is a strength. The curriculum includes a suitably wide range of subjects, with very good provision for music and physical education (PE). The students are being well prepared to develop the attributes of the 'Educated Caymanian' as described in the National Consensus document (2005).

The school is now experiencing a period of much-needed stability after an unsettled first ten years with a succession of principals and a falling roll that has never recovered since Hurricane Ivan wreaked severe damage on the school in 2004.

The school is well-staffed and benefits from good accommodation. The management team has recently been strengthened to include, alongside the non-teaching principal, two vice

principals and support from a part-time consultant. The impact of this good staffing resource and potentially strong senior management team is not yet as effective as it could be, partly because the teachers' responsibilities are new and roles are not entirely clear.

Students are achieving standards that are broadly in line with what is expected for their ages, though they exceed this in their speaking and listening skills, and in music and PE.

The management has put a number of useful strategies in place to bring about improvements, for example in teaching and learning, and there are signs that this is beginning to have a positive impact. There is still some way to go, and a need to raise expectations and challenge for the more able students and to improve some of the school's management systems.

The evaluation team judged that the school's capacity to bring about the improvements outlined in this report is good.

### What the school does well

- There is a strong, caring Christian ethos, with supportive relationships between staff and students.
- The leadership of the school has promoted a clear shared vision for the school and initiated some useful developments to improve teaching and learning.
- Students' personal development is very good.
- Students receive a very good start in Kindergarten.
- Students' speaking and listening skills are above average.
- The curriculum is suitably broad and there is very good provision for PE and music.
- Parents are very supportive and communication with them is good.

### What needs to improve

- The challenge for the most able students, as expectations of them are often too low
- The way that teachers assess students and use the information to drive instruction
- The clarity of senior management roles and some of the management systems, such as the collection, monitoring and use of data
- The way that teachers help students to learn and apply their literacy, numeracy and information technology skills across all subject.

*The school is expected to modify its existing improvement plan or to prepare a supplementary action plan to address the areas for improvement identified above. The amended plan or supplement should be sent to the Department of Education Services and Education Standards and Assessment Unit within 40 working days of receipt of the final report. The school is required to provide parents with an annual update on the progress that is being made in addressing the areas identified as needing to improve.*

## Introduction

The aim of the Cayman Islands' Education Standards and Assessment Unit (ESAU) is to contribute to the continuous improvement of education in the Cayman Islands, through rigorous independent external evaluations and by providing high quality policy advice and research.

Each school receives an external evaluation every four years. The evaluation identifies the school's strengths and the areas that need to be improved. In some cases, schools will be visited within four years in order to check on the progress that has been made in the areas identified as needing to improve. External evaluations are guided by the criteria in the *ESAU Handbook for the Evaluation of Schools*.

External evaluations provide schools, parents and the community, the Department of Education Services and the Ministry of Education, Training, Employment, Youth, Sports and Culture with an external and impartial evaluation of the quality of a school's work and its impact on students' learning and the standards they achieve. Through the publication of reports, external evaluations contribute to accountability, transparency and openness within the education system.

This was the first external evaluation for First Baptist Christian School. It took place from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> November 2007 and involved a team of five evaluators. The following aspects of the school's work were looked at:

- Standards achieved and progress made by students in language arts, mathematics and science
- The effectiveness of teaching and how well students learn
- The quality of students' personal development

- The quality of the curriculum and how students are assessed
- How well the school is led and managed
- The quality of the support and guidance offered to students, the level of care for their welfare, and support for their attendance and punctuality
- The effectiveness of links with parents and the community
- How well the school is preparing students to become 'Educated Caymanians'
- How well teachers help students to learn and use their literacy, numeracy and information technology skills across all of their school work.

The evaluation team gathered evidence in the following ways:

- Thirty nine lessons, or parts of lessons, were observed, mainly in language arts, mathematics and science, but including most subjects offered.
- School documents, including teachers' planning, curriculum statements and guidelines, were looked at and students' work was scrutinised.
- Evaluators observed Chapel, morning registration, breaks and lunch times and after-school activities.
- Evaluators spoke with students and took their views from the questionnaires into account and heard students read.
- Discussions took place with teachers, other members of staff, a representative from the Parents and Teachers Fellowship and with the acting Chair of the School Board.
- Comments from parents at the meeting before the evaluation and from the questionnaires were taken into account.

The evaluators used the following grading scale to describe aspects of the school's work:

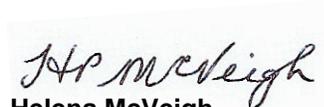
Grade		Description
1	<b>Very good</b>	Good in nearly all respects and exemplary in some significant areas
2	<b>Good</b>	Good in most respects. Weaknesses are minor and not in significant areas
3	<b>Adequate</b>	Satisfactory in most areas, no significant weaknesses, but no major strengths
4	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Some significant weaknesses (might be only one or two) that have negative impact on learning and standards

Evaluators also used the following criteria from the 'profile of the educated Caymanian' to evaluate how effective the school is in helping students to develop these attributes:

The 'profile of the educated Caymanian' states that an **Educated Caymanian** will:

- Be enthusiastic and motivated about learning, and will continue to extend his/her knowledge and skills after leaving school
- Be literate, numerate and adept at using information and communication technology
- Be a good communicator
- Be creative and appreciative of the arts
- Have a positive outlook and a high self-esteem
- Be well-rounded, good at finding solutions to problems, flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances and demands
- Have a strong work ethic and willingness to become an honest, reliable and responsible member of the work force
- Be respectful of God, him/herself, others, people from different backgrounds, the environment and property
- Be proud of and knowledgeable about the Caymanian culture, whilst respectful of other cultures and beliefs
- Be a good team player, civic-minded and willing to serve
- Have an awareness of global issues affecting aspects of life in the 21st century

The Education Standards and Assessment Unit hopes that this external evaluation will contribute in a positive way to helping First Baptist Christian School become even more effective.



**Helena McVeigh**  
Director  
Education Standards and Assessment Unit

## Information about the school and the evaluation team

### School contact information

Type of school:	Private
Age range of students:	5 – 14 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	78
School address:	920 Crewe Road Grand Cayman KY1-1003 Cayman Islands
Telephone number:	945 7906
Fax number:	945 5758
Email address:	fbcs@fbcs.edu.ky
Name of Principal:	Dr Linda Cross
Name of Chair of Board:	Pastor Thabiti Anyabwile

### Information about the school

First Baptist is a relatively new school, having been open for only 10 years. The school roll has fluctuated over the past few years. It was 150 in 2004, falling to 70 after Hurricane Ivan, when the school suffered a great deal of damage, and is now 78. Classes are small, particularly in grades 7 and 8, where there are only three and four students, respectively. Fifty nine per cent of students are Caymanian. There are significantly more boys than girls (48:30), with twice as many in some grades.

Twenty one students have special needs, with three who have individual education plans (IEPs). The school's programme for supporting students with learning difficulties is called the

Discovery Center, where students are taught language arts and mathematics in small groups or individually.

The school's mission is "to provide academic excellence in a Christ-centered environment, which meets the educational and spiritual needs of each individual; and to develop confident, disciplined, caring, responsible citizens, and life-long learners who exemplify grace, knowledge, integrity and godliness."

The school offers a North-American based curriculum, with a strong Christian foundation, and is a member of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI).

### The evaluation team

Lead:	Helena McVeigh	Education Standards and Assessment Unit
Team:	Favourita Blanchard Pachent Smythe Mary Summers Susan Winston	Education Standards and Assessment Unit Education Standards and Assessment Unit Overseas evaluator Overseas evaluator

## Commentary on evaluation findings

### How well do students achieve and make progress?

1. Overall, students achieve standards that are in line with what is expected for their age, although they exceed this in a few areas. Students generally make adequate progress, although the most able students could be doing even better.

Students are doing well in music and physical education, which are strengths of the school.
2. When students start school in Kindergarten, their skills and abilities are similar to the average for their age, with a typical range of a few above and below. Children make good progress in this class due to the high quality of the provision.
3. In the rest of the school, students' achievements (as judged by the evaluation team) are in line with expected standards, although their speaking and listening skills are good. Elementary students' reading standards are also above expectation.
4. From Grade 1, students sit the Stanford 10 Achievement Test in language arts and mathematics. Science is included from Grade 3. Results from the past three years show that students' achievements are at least in line with the Stanford international average and in some respects are above. The number of students in each grade is very small, so statistically it is difficult to draw conclusions from the test results.
5. When students' results are compared with other ACSI schools, however, they do not come out as well; they are in the lower end of average range and sometimes are well below average.

### What is the quality of students' personal development?

6. Students' personal development is very good and a strength of the school. The small numbers enable students to feel very well looked after and safe. The school provides good opportunities to foster students' personal development within its clear Christian ethos.

respectful of living creatures. Grade 6 students watched in awe as the science teacher added red dye to a beaker of water through which light was passing. Students took an active part in the Chapel service and demonstrated sincerity in their singing and prayers.
7. Character development is emphasized well through signs, reminders and messages posted at strategic points along the corridors. These messages, such as 'be kind', or 'be considerate', are modelled well by staff and have been internalized by students, who are friendly and respectful towards each other. Students know what is expected of them. They are very well behaved in class and they act responsibly when they are not supervised directly by adults, for example, during transitions across the campus and while working in small groups.
8. Students' spiritual development is very good. Children are thoughtful, sensitive to others and show a good sense of fairness and justice. They are encouraged to search for meaning by asking questions such as 'why?' and 'how?' They are curious and
9. The student population is diverse and multicultural. They are given some opportunities to learn about the Caymanian culture and heritage through trips, and in some subjects such as social studies and science, and they regularly and confidently sing the National Song in Chapel. Students are enabled to develop their artistic and creative talents through the strong music curriculum, for example and through art and drama. In general, though, there could be more planned activities and more displays and artefacts that promote students' understanding of Caymanian and other cultures.
10. Students respond well when given responsibility in class. The older students have some additional responsibilities if they are selected as members of the Student Council. They enjoy being able to contribute

to some of the decisions in school and to help their younger schoolmates. The separate location of the middle school classrooms helps to create a more mature environment for the students and they move

sensibly and independently between buildings. These students could, though be given more opportunities to take leadership roles and to play a more active part in the school and wider community.

### **How effective is the teaching and what impact does it have on students' learning?**

11. There are some significant strengths in the teaching, which have occurred as a result of the principal's vision and determination to improve students' achievement in the school. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory overall, at the present time but has the capacity to improve.
12. During the external evaluation, across the school, teaching was very good in 18 per cent of lessons, good in 31 per cent and adequate in 41 per cent. Teaching was unsatisfactory in 10 per cent of the lessons seen. Teaching was slightly stronger in the middle school, where all lessons were at least satisfactory and more than half were good. In the elementary, there was slightly more teaching that was very good, but there were significant weaknesses in 19 per cent of lessons.
13. The atmosphere for learning is very good throughout the school. Relationships are excellent because teachers know the students well and respect their ideas and opinions. They treat students fairly and consistently, which helps them to approach new learning with confidence. Teachers use praise well to build students' self-esteem and to persuade them to do their best. In a Grade 6 drama lesson, for example, the teacher's encouraging words and positive prompts led to students' enthusiastic participation in the role play exercise. They all achieved high levels in the presentation of their monologues.
14. Teachers implement the school's behaviour code well. They use positive words of encouragement rather than highlighting negative behaviour. Students respond well to this, concentrating well on their tasks and seldom wasting time.
15. Teachers plan many activities that enable students to work in teams, pairs and small groups. Students share knowledge, learn from each other and develop their ideas. For example, in a Grade 1 computer lesson, students helped each other and worked well together.
16. The teaching of music and physical education is very good. These teachers have secure knowledge of their subjects and transmit their enthusiasm very effectively to the students. They make the learning intentions very clear, involve students in a great deal of practical work and have high expectations of what they can achieve. Students rise to these challenges well, participating enthusiastically in lessons and in the after-school activities provided, such as soccer and badminton. Others develop good musical skills, showing high standards in playing the hand bells, for example, and singing. Working together in these ways helps them to develop good personal skills. Students display very positive attitudes to their education. They are very interested and well motivated to learn. They are not afraid to ask for help. They settle quickly to their tasks because most teachers provide clear explanations and instructions so they know exactly what is expected of them.
17. Teachers have received recent training in recognising and meeting students' different learning styles. Some teachers are responding well to this, organising different activities that involve students practically, or using pictures and diagrams to help them understand new concepts. In a Kindergarten mathematics lesson, for instance, the students learned about measurement by weighing out the ingredients for apple sauce. They conducted a survey of which apples they liked best, learning how to represent their results in a simple graph. On some occasions however, teachers do too much of the talking themselves and fail to engage students' interest through the use of pictures, diagrams, games or other practical activities. In these situations, students quickly become bored and their concentration wanes.

18. Training on lesson planning has been very useful in ensuring that teachers use the same format and indicate lesson objectives and activities. They usually make the learning objectives clear to students at the start of lessons. They seldom refer to them during the lessons, however, to remind students and focus them clearly on the purpose of the tasks.
19. Because of the small numbers of students in each class, teachers can monitor their progress quite easily in lessons. They move around the tables, checking how well students are completing their work, offering sensitive guidance and support. They have a secure knowledge of students' achievements, gained through marking their work and from regular tests and assessments. They are not using this information well enough however, to set work at appropriate levels for the students. Lesson plans generally indicate three levels of tasks to try to meet students' different needs and abilities. However, these are often pitched below students' capabilities, especially those who are more able. This affects the progress of these students, who are often capable of much more than is expected of them.
20. Students are not involved enough in assessing their own work, and in taking responsibility for their learning. Teachers mark assignments regularly but only in the older grades do they provide clear guidance on how students can improve their work. In Grades 5, 6 and 7 language arts classes, teachers use rubrics to show students how their work will be assessed and what they have to do to achieve success. Teachers' marking provides helpful comments and students respond to these well. This is seldom the case in lower grades and in other subjects.
21. Teachers show a good commitment towards improvement. They are keen to listen to new ideas and try out new methods. There is a significant amount of good practice throughout the school that needs to be shared more widely.

### **What is the quality of the curriculum?**

22. The school's curriculum has good breadth and balance. It includes a wide range of subjects in addition to the academics, with a good focus on creative areas such as music and art, as well as physical education. Spanish is taught from Kindergarten, which is a useful addition.
23. The Kindergarten curriculum is very good — it is well planned and provides a good balance of activities for the children, within an approach that integrates the learning areas very effectively. Tasks are chosen to meet students' learning needs. For example, in the morning 'book time', children were seen selecting books and reading independently or with the teacher; one child was reinforcing her knowledge of the alphabet by listening to tapes, whilst others were writing their names. The teacher took every opportunity to bring in literacy and numeracy, for example, by including counting and addition as part of the daily routines. The classroom has been made into a stimulating environment for children, with a good range of resources and focus on written language and mathematics. Children are given a very good start in the Kindergarten.
24. The curriculum for Grades 1 through 4 is appropriately broad and balanced. There are some differences in the way that teachers organise their timetables and some have adopted a creative approach to language arts and mathematics. For example, the 'mad math' session in Grade 3 that involves mental mathematics games and a quiz, makes the subject fun and helps children to make good progress. The leadership does not appear to be monitoring the different approaches or doing enough to ensure that best practice is shared amongst all teachers.
25. The middle school curriculum includes a good range of subjects, with appropriate amounts of time for them. Given the small size of the school, this is a significant achievement. Several subjects are taught by specialist teachers, for example, music, physical education and drama. The curriculum is enhanced by the inclusion of subjects such as drama, which is rotated with visual art and speech, and students

continue to experience good amounts of music and PE.

26. The weakest area of the curriculum is the provision for ensuring that literacy, numeracy and information technology are

promoted within all subject areas. These areas are not currently planned for well and opportunities are missed. For example, although students receive 'computer' lessons, they are not encouraged to apply the skills in different subject areas (See page 17 – literacy – page 18 – numeracy - and page 19 – ICT across the curriculum).

### **How effective are the arrangements for assessing students' work and progress?**

27. The school's arrangements for assessment and the way it is used to support learning are adequate overall.

28. The school carries out a range of different forms of assessment in order to monitor students' progress and determine what support is needed. A diagnostic assessment is carried out at the start of the school year, and for returning and new students. Assessment is used appropriately to identify the students who need additional support, for example, from the Discovery Center. Students also take Stanford Achievement Tests in language arts and mathematics from Grade 1 and science from Grade 3. From Kindergarten through Grade 5, students are assessed using DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), which are standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy development.

29. The school's assessment policy is a good document, which provides detailed guidelines on how assessment should be happening throughout the school. Its aims clearly support the use of assessment to facilitate students' learning by establishing learning targets for support. The objectives provide guidance on how it should be used, for example, to identify strengths and weaknesses and monitor progress. In practice, this policy is not being followed consistently throughout the school.

30. The school gathers a lot of data about students' performance, from tests and teachers' own assessments. Teachers track progress on an individual student and class basis, but the overall data from the different sources is not analysed to inform the school about how well students are performing from class to class and across the school or how the information can be used to raise students' performance.

31. Teachers know their students well and can tell what their strengths and weaknesses are based on discussions, students' assessment records and tests. Most teachers record test grades in books and write a brief summary of their student's performance, but they do not set specific targets for the student to work towards. They also do not all use this information well enough in lessons to cater to the different abilities and stages of their students' developments. This was evident in many lessons where all students were given the same level of work to complete, and neither the more nor the less able made the kind of progress of which they are capable.

32. Students are sometimes expected to track their own progress and evaluate their work and performance by using rubrics, for example, in Grade 5 language arts, or by using special tracking sheets, which is good practice. Others discuss their progress with teachers. This however, is done on a very small scale, and although the policy clearly states the need to inform students of their targets and objectives, and support self-evaluation, this is rarely carried out.

33. Although the school has a clear marking policy, teachers are not following it in practice and there is inconsistency across the school. Too often, work is not checked enough and inaccuracies go uncorrected. Teachers' comments are mainly acknowledgements of the student's completed work such as 'excellent' or 'very good,' but seldom offer ideas on how students can improve their work. Many students do not present their work well and it is disorganized, as there is seldom any guidance of the quality that is expected and teachers give very little attention to correcting poor handwriting or directing students on how to improve.

34. Assessment practice in Kindergarten is exemplary. It is a model of good practice for how to assess and record students' achievements and progress and to use this in planning the next steps for them. This

good practice could be shared more widely in the school. At the moment, no one has overall responsibility for monitoring assessment and this leads to inconsistency of practice.

### How effective is the provision for students with special educational needs?

35. The school's provision for students with special needs is adequate overall. The school has made a good start at identifying students who need additional help and has made some provision for their academic needs.

out the targets they are working towards. This is helpful, as teachers can use it to track students' progress.

36. There are 21 students on the special needs register, which represents a large proportion of the school's population. Students' needs include autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and learning difficulties in reading and mathematics.

39. The Discovery Center is satisfactory as a tutorial programme. There are good records of students' progress and students know how well they are doing. However, some students miss out on other subjects such as social studies and religious education, when they attend the Discovery sessions. Class teachers do try to help them to catch up, but this is not always as effective as it might be.

37. The school's main support for these students is through the Discovery Center. The Center's programme is part of the Discovery Network Services in the USA. It is monitored through monthly teleconferencing meetings with the Director and other Discovery teachers, which gives the programme much credibility.

40. The school does not have an effective system for coordinating and monitoring the overall provision for special needs, and some important areas are not well addressed. For example, no one is responsible for monitoring the IEPs or 'objective pages' to ensure that they are being used by class teachers. Currently class teachers rarely use this information to modify their teaching to ensure that these students are making good progress. There are also a few students who are still attending the Center even though they no longer need that support, and those with autism or ADHD are not receiving the support they need in regular lessons.

38. Currently students with special educational needs from Grades 5 and 6 go to the Discovery Center every day for their language arts and mathematics lessons. Students in other grades visit the Center once or twice a week. Three students have individual education plans (IEPs). The others have an 'objectives page' that sets

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

41. The school is well led and managed overall. It is experiencing a period of much-needed stability in its leadership. The principal, who has been in post for two years, has a clear vision for the school, with a good focus on improving teaching and learning within a strong Christian context. The vision is shared by staff and parents, and the Christian ethos permeates every aspect of school life in a very positive way.

curriculum are regularly discussed at Board meetings, but there is very little focus on how well students are achieving and on their results in standardised tests, for example. The school has a close relationship with the church, although there is a recognition on both sides that this could be improved further.

42. The Board is very supportive and is committed to the success of the school. Issues to do with the finances and the

43. The principal has recently strengthened the senior management team with the inclusion of two vice principals and a head of the elementary school. This has distributed the leadership appropriately and is a good

approach, though it is too early to evaluate its impact and the staff were not all entirely clear about the expectations for their new roles.

44. The school has a well written school improvement plan that includes success criteria, actions, responsible persons, timescales, progress notes and details of how the plan will be monitored and evaluated. The priorities are appropriate and there has been progress in many cases. The management is not yet, though, systematically analysing the range of data that is being collected, for example, about attendance or students' results in tests. This lack of a systematic approach to data management is hindering the schools' ability to monitor progress in the school development plan. The leadership, with backing from the Board, is currently looking into purchasing a computer-based information management system, which should help.
45. The principal has introduced some useful policies and initiatives, such as Teacher Appraisal Policy (TAP), which teachers feel is supportive and helpful. There are a number of other very sound policies, such as for teaching and learning and assessment. There is regular monitoring of lesson plans and of teaching, through, for example regular 'walk-throughs' by the principal and vice principal, with helpful oral and written feedback to teachers. This monitoring appears to have had a positive impact, as there was generally a consistent approach and a low proportion of unsatisfactory lessons during this evaluation. There is not yet, though, enough monitoring of how teachers are assessing students, or of how they are matching work to the different abilities of students.
46. The school is well-staffed and benefits from having generally good accommodation, with access to the beautiful chapel for assemblies, a purpose-built gymnasium for indoor PE and an excellent music suite. There are a few problems with the accommodation, though. Middle school students complained about the state of the 'dorms' (their home rooms), and the school field floods in the rainy season and is too hard to use in the dry season.
47. Classrooms are generally of a good size and some teachers have turned their rooms into stimulating learning environments with displays that acknowledge students' work and promote literacy and numeracy effectively. There is, though, a wide variety of practice in relation to the quality of classroom displays and some rooms are dull and uninviting. There are generally enough resources to support the curriculum, for example text books, but there is a lack of basic equipment for the teaching of physical science in the middle school.

## How effective are other aspects of the school's work?

### The support and guidance offered to students and level of care for their welfare

48. First Baptist Christian School provides a safe, healthy and secure environment for its students.
49. The school keeps very good records of its students. The records are regularly updated and are easily accessible to teachers and staff. The records are comprehensive and include progress data, attendance information, copies of letters sent to parents regarding absence and lateness and records of parent meetings and consultations.
50. The school's approach to managing behaviour is very effective. The discipline policy has recently been revised, as this was a priority in the school improvement plan. The school uses a system called 'love and logic' and 'recovery time' for students. The school has developed some useful documents and approaches regarding
- students' conduct and discipline, which describe the school's philosophy, definitions and objectives, and give examples of consequences and disciplinary actions possible. They also identify appropriate procedures to be followed and suggest a sequence of strategies to employ. The students show that they know what is expected of them and the consequences they face should they not meet expectations.
51. As a result of clearly written policies related to students' health and injury, responses to such situations are consistent and effective throughout the school. Similarly, issues of confidentiality and sharing of information are handled well. Students have access to a nurse and there are some health screenings, though little beyond those necessary for enrolment or for vision testing.

### Attendance and punctuality

52. The school has identified the need to improve students' attendance and punctuality; it is a priority in the school improvement plan. A number of useful procedures have been put in place to promote good attendance and punctuality. Class teachers closely monitor tardiness and parents are contacted when their children have been late on several occasions. The parents' handbook also addresses attendance and punctuality, explaining consequences for unexplained absences and continual tardiness. Most parents ensure that their children arrive at school on time, although several children
- were observed arriving late during the evaluation.
53. There is not enough regular systematic monitoring of students' attendance by the school in order to measure progress in this area. The data gathered during this evaluation showed that the rates of attendance were generally above 95 per cent, which is satisfactory. Attendance during the months of December and March in the previous school year were 92 and 93 per cent, respectively – lower than the other months, mainly due to students being taken on family holidays, which resulted in them losing valuable education time.

### Links with parents and the community

54. The school has established good links with the parents. There are several useful ways in which parents can find out what is going on at the school and how their children are progressing. A parents' orientation event is scheduled at the beginning of each school year to meet and inform new families. Open school nights are conducted every two
- months to coincide with reporting sessions and the distribution of report cards. Parents have good access to teachers and can arrange informal meetings with them upon request. Parents are expected to attend at least one of these meetings.

55. The school has introduced a useful agreement that is signed by the school and the parents, committing both to the established partnership requirements. Middle school students are also expected to sign the agreement, which is a good initiative.
56. The school keeps parents well informed about its work. A handbook for parents has been developed along with a comprehensive and very informative newsletter. Other, communication, like the "Eagle Eye" are also published regularly and well regarded by parents.
57. The report that goes home to parents includes useful information about how well students are doing, as well as space for 'next steps' and comments on general learning skills such as independent work, cooperation, and using information. Parents are also encouraged to write their comments, which is a useful addition.
58. The parent/teacher fellowship (PTF) is very supportive. It has spear-headed a number of fund-raising initiatives that have provided teachers with resources for special activities and experiences for their classes.
59. Parents are very happy with the school's performance and feel actively involved and included. They are pleased with the warm and nurturing environment their children enjoy. The only real suggestion for improvement made by parents was the addition of high school classes, which has also been the subject of much discussion by the Board.
60. The school has some links with the local community, especially with the church within which it is located. Students are encouraged to participate in community service and the school is collecting holiday boxes for needy families in Honduras; this has become a very successful community service project for the school.
61. The school takes advantage of some local amenities, such as the Lions pool for swimming instruction for its students. Students participate in local competitions, such as inter-school sports, the National Children's Festival of the Arts and the Spelling Bees. A few parents suggested that the school needed to aim for a higher profile in the community.
62. It is clear that links with parents and the community is an area that is given a high priority by the school. For example, there are three priorities relating to this in the school improvement plan. Children are to be involved in community service projects each year and to participate in an international service project. The school is also trying to increase parents' involvement in the school and to improve links with the church.

## What is the quality of teaching and learning in subjects?

### Language arts

63. Provision for language arts is adequate overall.
64. Students generally achieve standards that are in line with those expected for their age. They achieve good levels in speaking and listening. They speak fluently and confidently in front of the class and a wider audience. This starts at a very young age when they take an active part in worship in the chapel by, for example, presenting their poems about 'Kindness'. They participate enthusiastically in class discussions, listening carefully to one another's ideas and readily responding to questions. Teachers help students develop a good range of vocabulary by encouraging them to discuss their work in pairs and small groups. Students learn from one another and also have the chance to use new words in informal settings.
65. Students enjoy reading. Third and fourth grade students read aloud confidently and sometimes with good expression. They discussed their class reader, *George's Marvellous Medicine* with great enthusiasm, showing they understood the main ideas in the story. They predicted what might happen in the next chapter; one student suggesting that 'Grandma might explode!' Students in Grade 8 developed their critical thinking skills when they evaluated events in *The Outsiders*. Skilful questioning by the teacher helped the students to make connections between their own feelings and those of the characters in the book.
66. Achievement in writing is as expected for students' ages. Students develop a sound phonic knowledge in younger classes and begin to write short phrases and sentences. Kindergarten students are encouraged to 'have a go' at writing messages and labels. By Grade 2, they are beginning to use basic punctuation in their work. Students can spell simple words and make recognizable attempts at unfamiliar ones. They are beginning to understand about parts of speech, such as nouns and adjectives. Fifth grade book reports about 'My Side of the Mountain' showed reasonable spelling, punctuation and structure.
67. Students of all ages do not write enough. Pieces of work are often very short and in some cases are incomplete in students' work books. Handwriting and presentation are unsatisfactory. Students develop a joined-up style but do not take enough care with their work. Teachers mark work regularly but seldom provide any useful advice to show students how to improve. Only in some older grades are rubrics used to make students aware of exactly what they have to do to succeed and to encourage them to take more responsibility for their learning.
68. Students are keen and willing learners. They settle to work quickly showing good concentration and independence. Recent training has helped teachers to clarify exactly what they want students to achieve in lessons. This is beginning to have a positive effect on the pace and structure of the lessons and consequently on students' learning. Teachers now plan activities at three different levels to try to meet students' different needs and abilities. In many cases, though, the work is too easy and represents little challenge, particularly for more able students.
69. The teachers use regular tests and assessments to check how much progress students are making. The school has recently introduced the DIBELS assessment, which is a useful way of tracking achievements in reading from Kindergarten to Grade 5. It has identified students' starting points at the beginning of the year and has also determined end of year goals. This information is shortly to be shared with parents so they can also see how well their children are doing. The system is relatively new and classroom teachers have not yet received the full range of information provided by the tests to help them plan appropriate work for individual students.

70. Relationships between teachers and pupils are extremely good and result in a very supportive and caring atmosphere in classes. Students are ready to ask for help if they need it and they support each other sensitively. Students in Grade 4, for example, quietly prompted their classmates if they stumbled over a word while reading aloud.
71. Books are usually displayed prominently in classrooms and teachers encourage

students to look at and choose those that interest them. There are not enough posters on display to help students with their written work, for example to show them common spelling patterns, days of the week or suggestions of how to write for different audiences or in different styles. Students' work is not displayed prominently enough to encourage pride in the finished product or to value effort or excellence.

## Literacy across the curriculum

72. The way that the school helps students develop their literacy skills across all subjects is unsatisfactory, although there is some good practice.
73. Students' speaking and listening skills are developed well in many subjects. Teachers often write key vocabulary on the board and encourage students to use it during discussions and presentations. In a Grade 5 science lesson for example, students were using words such as 'phenotype', 'genotype' and 'chromosome' with ease. In Kindergarten, all lessons support the development of reading, writing, speaking and listening. In a science lesson for example, students sounded out the word 'skunk' when discussing the different features of fall. They learned about the characteristics of books such as the author and illustrator.
74. Another good example of integrating literacy into other subjects happened in a music

lesson for Kindergarten and Grade 1 students. The teacher helped students to break down words into syllables, which reinforced their learning in language arts, to fit in with the rhythm they were learning.

75. In most other classes, however, students do not practise their reading and writing skills enough. Instead of encouraging students to read from a text, teachers often read it aloud themselves. Too many worksheets are used in social studies, which limits students' opportunities to write freely for themselves to consolidate their understanding of new concepts. It also means they have fewer chances to develop a fluent and neat handwriting style and pride in the presentation of their work. Computers are seldom used to support students' learning in literacy, either through the use of software to allow them to practise certain skills or by encouraging them to publish their work for display.

## Mathematics

76. Provision for mathematics is adequate overall. Students make satisfactory progress, after a very good start in Kindergarten, and achieve standards that are generally in line with those expected for their age.
77. By the end of the elementary stage, students are able to add large numbers, such as 281 and 14, in their heads. They behave well in class, are enthusiastic about learning new concepts and are willing to participate in lessons. The teachers in the elementary school provide hands-on opportunities that help students move on to

the next steps in their learning. At this stage, activities are carefully chosen to help students create mental images to support their learning. For example, in one lesson, students used various items to measure a length of yarn and used this to find the circumference of their apples. This culminated in the teacher demonstrating how to use a ruler to measure yarn. Students compared lengths of yarn to objects in the classroom and consolidated the concept of 'longer and shorter than'.

78. By the time they reach the older classes, most students can expand numbers to illustrate place value, and convert fractions to decimals and vice versa. They respond well to questions and ask for clarification if explanations are unclear. They do not, however, get many opportunities to use higher-level thinking skills to solve problems. An exception was seen in a middle school lesson on multiplication of decimals where students worked comfortably with large numbers. The students calculated the amount of money they would receive at the end of the year if the bank gave three percent interest on their savings of 35 million dollars. They then explained how they arrived at their results, which showed their understanding of the process.
79. The teaching is satisfactory overall, and there are some instances where it is very good. Teachers plan consistently and sometimes seek to match work to the needs of individual students. Teachers know the subject well. They clearly state the learning objectives and in most instances provide well structured, thoughtfully chosen activities. Several teachers have introduced group work in their classes. Only a few, however, are providing opportunities for students to build their confidence through explaining their thinking or discussing their work with each other.
80. Some teachers evaluate and document their students' progress on a daily basis, but not all use this information to inform further planning. In Kindergarten, there is a very comprehensive system for monitoring, evaluating and planning for students.
81. Students' work is corrected, but not consistently. Opportunities are missed to reinforce certain concepts, and in some grades, students' mistakes are repeated without correction. Teachers offer comments about students' work, but these do not always give students a clear idea of what they must do to improve.
82. The school has a useful system for recording and tracking students' progress over the years. These records are available to class teachers and indicate areas of strengths and weaknesses for each student. The progress of students with special educational needs is supported by the help they receive from the Discovery programme, but students of higher ability are often not challenged enough. Overall, teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are sometimes too low, which limits students' progress. For example, in one class, students spent time repeating a concept they had already learnt.
83. Classrooms are well equipped with resources, which are used effectively by some teachers to promote learning. Many of the elementary classrooms have attractive displays, including useful charts and students' work, which motivate and stimulate the students.

### **Numeracy across the curriculum**

84. There is a limited use of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics. There are some attempts to promote the use of numeracy, with, for example, mathematics centers in most classrooms. A good example was also seen in an elementary class, where a height chart and balances were set up for students to measure and compare their heights and objects of different sizes and weights. In Kindergarten, mathematics is successfully integrated into most subjects and into the daily routines of students, for example, counting how many days have passed in November. In higher grades, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to develop and apply numeracy; for instance, there is not much evidence of graphical work in social studies or science.

### **Science (middle school)**

85. The school's provision for science in the middle school is adequate overall. Students make satisfactory progress and achieve standards that are broadly in line with what is expected in terms of their knowledge and understanding of science concepts. Students' skills related to scientific processes are less well developed, mainly due to lack of opportunities to carry out their own investigations.

Students get a good start to learning about science in Kindergarten, where the teacher's good questioning encouraged children to make predictions and draw conclusions. Students experience a reasonable amount of science in the elementary school and some of them achieve standards above expectations for their age. Grade 3 children were developing a keen sense of enquiry as they explored the contents of pond water to look for creatures. They worked safely and were very careful to avoid harming any living creatures that they found. The students took great delight in investigating their findings under the microscope. In a Grade 1 class, the children showed that they know what plants need to survive and in some cases had very good knowledge for their age about animals and plants.

86. In the middle school, students' knowledge of science is generally in line with what is expected for their age. They use correct scientific terminology, which is a reflection of the teacher's own good use of these terms and emphasis on their meaning. For example, Grade 6 students were asked to explain terms such as 'conclusion', 'hypothesis', 'distort' as they discussed the effect of passing light through a beaker of water. Grade 5 students were studying an advanced topic - genetics - but could use terms such as 'chromosomes', 'DNA' 'recessive and dominant genes' with some confidence. Their scientific skills of measurement and devising experiments to test hypotheses are less well-developed. The students are not given enough

opportunities to devise their own experiments or test their predictions, other than those discussed as a whole class or suggested by the teacher.

87. The teaching of science in the middle school is adequate overall, with some good features. The teacher writes clear objectives for the lesson and revisits these at the end, for example, by saying 'what did you learn?' He encourages students to think and to be precise in their scientific language. Students are responsive and generally enjoy their science lessons. There is good reference to the local Caymanian context in discussions about, for example, the weather.
88. The main weakness in the teaching is that students are not given enough responsibility for their own learning and they all have to work at the same pace. The teacher spends too much time talking to the class and dictates the pace at which students work, which is too slow for the more able. Students' written work is not well presented in many cases and not regularly checked by the teacher so that errors and gaps go uncorrected.
89. The management of science needs to be improved as there is little coordination between the work done in the middle and elementary schools, and no one has responsibility for this. There are also not enough resources to support the science curriculum in the middle school, particularly for the practical physical science area. The laboratory is of suitable size, but has only one sink, no gas supply and poor quality display.

### **Information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum**

90. The school's provision for students to develop and apply their ICT skills in different subjects of the curriculum is currently unsatisfactory. Students experience regular computer lessons, where they learn basic skills such as using the keyboard and mouse and learn to word-process and use other Microsoft packages such as PowerPoint and EXCEL. Older students tackle more complex tasks successfully, such as creating and editing their own web

pages, which they really enjoy. The work is generally around the standard for their age. What is lacking is the opportunity to apply, reinforce and extend their skills in other subjects. There was very little evidence of any ICT in use beyond the computer lessons, apart from a little word-processing in the middle school. Some teachers use computers in their classrooms for research purposes with their students, but there is little else.

## Physical education

91. There is very good provision for physical education and it is a strength of the school. Students participate with enthusiasm and often achieve standards that are above expectations for their age.
92. The teacher, who is a subject specialist, demonstrates very good knowledge of the subject. The curriculum is broad and balanced, offering suitable learning experiences and access for a wide range of abilities and interests. For example, students with disabilities and talented athletes are all catered for well and enabled to achieve. Team games, swimming, racquet sports, gymnastics and dance are examples of the range of learning opportunities, organized in a clear yearly plan.
93. The teacher's lesson plans are very good. They build effectively on students' prior learning and clearly state learning outcomes. Tasks and activities are engaging and meet the learning objectives; for example, a circuit was designed well to allow Grade 7 and 8 students to experience all the components of fitness. There is an appropriate focus on developing skills, fitness, creativity and understanding. The teacher is flexible in adapting to the small class sizes. Students' attitude to physical education is very good and in all lessons observed there was 100 per cent participation.
94. The teacher assesses students' progress well, through observation of performance and quizzes to test their knowledge. Appropriate improvement targets are then set for individuals as well as for classes. This helps the students to attain levels of performance that are often above expectations for their age group.
95. The facilities for physical education are generally very good. The indoor gymnasium is a valuable resource; it is used well and doubles up as a canteen at lunch times. The outdoor field is, though, prone to flooding in the wet season and is too hard in the dry season. The lack of changing facilities is overcome by the students wearing their kit to school. This enables good use of available lesson time, but restricts activities that might result in students needing showers, such as field games where they might get muddy. There is adequate equipment for physical education and it is used well so that all students can participate during lessons.

## Music

96. Provision for music is very good. Music has a high profile in the school with each class receiving regular weekly music lessons as well as opportunities to participate in extra-curricular clubs and activities. Students thoroughly enjoy making music, whether it involves singing or playing instruments. Students in Kindergarten learned about half and quarter notes in a very successful lesson where they marched in time to a drum beat. They were all actively involved and having fun. Through the teacher's skilful instruction, the students learned how to break down words into syllables to fit in with the rhythm.
97. Older students in Grade 5 were involved in playing the hand bells. They responded extremely well to the very well-planned lesson, making very good progress in their technique and in their ability to read musical notation.
98. Students, including the school choir, sang enthusiastically in Chapel, with good attention to dynamics and pitch. Soloists sang confidently and with great sensitivity. Boys were well represented in the choir, and participated with enthusiasm.
99. The provision of a music specialist has a very positive effect on students' progress in music. A confident and dynamic approach to lessons, coupled with very high expectations, contribute very successfully to students' involvement and confidence.