



**LITTLE CAYMAN EDUCATION SERVICE**

**INSPECTION REPORT**

**JUNE 2007**

**LEAD INSPECTOR: ROGER HOLMES**



**Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate**

*Working in partnership for high quality education for all students*



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## Foreword

The aim of the Schools' Inspectorate is to contribute to continuous school improvement in the Cayman Islands, through rigorous external evaluations of schools and by providing high quality policy advice and training.

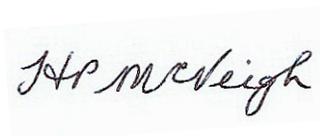
Each school receives an inspection every four to six years. The inspection identifies the school's strengths and the areas that need to be improved. Between inspections, schools are visited regularly by a link inspector to check on the progress that has been made in tackling the priority areas and to support the school in its own self-evaluation.

Inspectors are guided by the criteria in the Cayman Islands *Handbook for the Self-Evaluation and Inspection of Schools*.

Inspections provide schools, parents and the community, the Education Department 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 inspection reports, inspection contributes to accountability, transparency and openness within the education system.

Self-evaluation by schools is considered to be an important part of the Cayman Islands school evaluation model. Together with inspections, self-evaluation provides a balanced system of internal and external accountability for schools.

The Inspectorate hopes that this inspection will contribute in a positive way to helping Little Cayman Education Service become even more effective.



**Helena McVeigh**  
Chief Inspector of Schools

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION SERVICE AND THE INSPECTION TEAM**

### **THE EDUCATION SERVICE**

Type of education service: Government primary

Age range of students: 4 years 11 months – 12 years 3 months

Gender of students: Mixed (all boys at the moment)

Number on roll: 4

Service address: PO Box 26, Blossom Village, Little Cayman

Telephone number: 948 1052

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Name of teacher in charge: Mrs Veronica Juman-Khan

### **THE INSPECTION TEAM**

Lead Inspector: Roger Holmes Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate

Team Inspector: Pachent Smythe Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Information about the education service**

The Little Cayman Education Service (LCES) was opened in January 2000, to provide primary education for children between the ages of four and eleven on the island. There is no provision for secondary education on Little Cayman and so students leave the island for this stage of their education. LCES is housed in one room of a building shared with the island's clinic and the students have access to a small, sandy play-area next to the building.

LCES currently has four students, all Caymanian boys, whose ages range from four years eleven months to twelve years three months. They are at different stages in their education and are placed in Reception and Years 2, 5 and 6. All have English as their first language and none have statements of special educational needs.

The service is staffed by a teacher-in-charge and a full-time teacher's aide. LCES also receives regular support from members of the community, who help with the teaching of subjects such as art, cooking, physical education (PE) and, until May 2007, music.

### **Information about the inspection**

LCES was previously inspected in November 2003. This inspection was carried out on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> June 2007 by a team of two inspectors. The following aspects of the LCES's work were looked at:

- Standards achieved by students in language arts and mathematics
- The effectiveness of teaching and how well students learn
- The quality of students' personal development
- Students' attendance and punctuality
- The quality of the curriculum and how students are assessed
- How well LECS is led and managed
- The quality of the support and guidance offered to students, and the level of care for their welfare
- The effectiveness of links with parents and the community

The team also evaluated how well students are helped to use and develop their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across all of their subjects.

The inspection team gathered evidence in the following ways:

- Ten lessons were observed, mainly language arts and mathematics, but including science, social studies, religious education (RE), PE, and ICT.
- Other activities, such as devotions, lunch and break times, were observed.
- Documents, including teachers' planning, curriculum statements and guidelines, were looked at.
- Students' work was scrutinised.
- Inspectors spoke with students and took their views from the questionnaires into account.
- Inspectors heard students read during lessons.
- Discussions took place with teachers and other members of the community who work with the students.
- Comments from parents at the meeting before the inspection and from the questionnaires were taken into account.
- Information obtained through the regular link inspector visits was also taken into account.

Inspectors used the following grading scale to describe aspects of the LCES's work:

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

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

### How effective is the education service overall and how much progress has it made since the last inspection?

Little Cayman Education Service (LCES) provides well for its students and they receive a good education. The distinctive family atmosphere of LCES helps them to feel safe and secure. They grow in confidence and maturity and learn to enjoy working together. Students make good progress and achieve well as a result of the effective teaching and the close, individual attention that they receive.

The teacher-in-charge has established a clear direction and purpose for LCES, capitalising on the advantages of having so few students and minimising many of the disadvantages. LCES is well organised and runs smoothly each day, but the system for measuring students' progress is not yet well developed. The geographic isolation of LCES is made worse by the lack of formal links with other schools and the absence of a clear pathway into secondary education for the students.

LCES has maintained the good level of performance found at its last inspection in November 2003. It is well placed to act on the recommendations in this report, although some are beyond its control and will need support from the Education Department and the Ministry of Education.

### What the LCES does well

- Students make good progress and achieve well, particularly in language arts.
- The family atmosphere in LCES encourages students to do well.
- Students' personal development is good. They behave well and support each other very effectively.
- LCES is well led and managed.
- Teaching is good and students have very positive attitudes to their work.
- There are strong and productive links with parents and the wider community.

### What needs to improve

- The way that LCES monitors students' progress and identifies what they need for the next steps in their learning
- The facilities and equipment that the students can use for PE and for out-door play
- The way that LCES is integrated into the overall education system of the islands

*The LCES 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 Education Department and Schools' Inspectorate within 40 working days of receipt of the final report. LCES 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.*

## **How high are standards at the LCES?**

Students achieve well in LCES as a result of the effective teaching and close, personal attention that they receive. The teacher and teacher's aide are particularly alert to students' individual needs and tailor their programmes to meet these requirements. As a result, for example, a student who initially found it difficult to stick to a task and consequently did not achieve as well as he should, is now able to concentrate well and has more than made up the ground that he lost. He is now working at least at the level expected for his age.

Students achieve well in language arts. They express themselves clearly in speech and listen well. Most students read particularly well. Even the youngest reads fluently and confidently, enjoying tackling new words and finding their meaning. Students also write well and adjust their style for different audiences.

In mathematics, achievement is satisfactory, particularly when students are carrying out numerical calculations. Students are slowed down by not being able to remember facts about numbers quickly enough, for example having to recite a whole multiplication table to themselves rather than immediately knowing the product of two numbers.

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

Teaching in LCES is good because the teacher and aide work very effectively together and adapt their teaching to the individual needs of the students. They have established a very positive atmosphere in LCES, so that the students feel valued and supported in their learning. As a result, students are motivated, work well in school and make good progress.

Lessons are planned well in outline, although sometimes there could be more detailed preparation, particularly when practical resources are needed. The teacher and teacher's aide know the students very well and adapt material to their interests and learning needs. This works well on many levels, but would be even better if there was a more formal record of assessment that describes what each student has learnt and what they have found difficult. This form of assessment could, for example, identify the problems that some students have in remembering multiplication tables and it could trigger a search for different teaching strategies.

Students' work is marked regularly and accurately, but the comments that are added tend to be very general rather than giving specific advice on how it could be improved. There are also occasions where requests that students complete work have not been followed up.

The teacher and teacher's aide face a particular challenge in matching work to the different ages of the four students within the same classroom. One of the successful techniques that they use is to involve the students in teaching each other. This is usually, but not always, the older ones teaching the younger ones something that they have learnt. This approach deepens the understanding of the student acting as teacher, whilst also helping the one who is being taught. Students working at the computers frequently ask each other questions and give advice and support.

During lessons, the teacher and teacher's aide make very good use of the excellent relationships that they have with the students. They ask searching questions that students try hard to answer because they know that their replies will be treated with respect and corrected sensitively if they are wrong. Lessons are often lively and interesting, making use of things that appeal to the students, such as current events and hurricane preparations.

The teacher and teacher's aide make good use of computers to assist, enrich and enhance students' learning in different subjects. The younger students follow routines well and know when to log on to complete supplementary materials. Students get many opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills. They practise for Christmas programmes, other community events and festival competitions where they recite and sing. These opportunities help them develop well in language, speaking and listening skills. The teacher and teacher's aide often break lessons to do 'brain gym' activities, movement, singing and reciting. Students are used to these activities and look forward to them. The frequent breaks help everyone and the student who needs frequent changes of task is not singled out; this has been a very successful technique for helping him make progress.

The teacher and teacher's aide have a firm grasp of the subjects that they teach, particularly in language arts. Whilst being willing to tackle all the subjects of the curriculum, they wisely take advantage of generous support from members of the community who have expertise in particular areas. This allows the students to interact with other adults and to benefit from their knowledge and skills. Students' learning in art, cookery, RE, PE and music has been enhanced in this way.

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

Students' personal development is good. This was an area of strength in the last inspection that LCES has maintained well. The students have a clear understanding of their values and beliefs. This is seen in the very good attitudes they have towards their work and positive relationships with each other. They understand what constitutes fairness and justice, and use their knowledge well in discussions during devotions, their early morning reflection sessions and during lessons.

The outstanding relationships, respect and care that are shared among staff and students create a very positive ethos and family atmosphere at LCES. Students make use of the many opportunities they are given to reflect on their own actions and how they affect others. The teacher and teacher's aide lead them in discussions on character development as they explore topics such as forgiveness, loyalty and friendship. This is further enhanced through RE lessons, which are taught by the local pastor, and also during devotions. Students express concerns for others and share their thoughts and ideas through their daily news time. For example, students shared news about a fatal accident on Grand Cayman and expressed their concern. Students' spiritual development is good. It is encouraged and enhanced through the good quality of their devotions, prayers offered in their own words, reflections on their learning, in RE lessons and some art lessons.

Students' moral development is very good. They know right from wrong and apply themselves accordingly. They are respectful and practise equality and fairness. In a PE lesson, for example, they played fairly and were helpful to each other during the activities. They develop self-confidence and are not afraid to tackle new things. This was seen in a science lesson where they were very enthusiastic about finding out how to purify sea water.

Students are very well behaved and work well together. There is very good peer support and the older student looks after the younger ones well. For example, one afternoon a student engaged the others in a fun activity while they waited to be picked up; they organized the games themselves and played with no additional supervision.

The students take very good care of their surroundings. They follow their school rules very well. The behaviour chart seldom shows any indication of unacceptable behaviour. Students participate well in community activities. Many community members know LCES well and some play an active role in teaching the students.

Students' social development is good. It would be even better if they had more opportunities to interact with students from other schools. However, they make up for this loss to some extent, through field trips on the island and to Cayman Brac. Students take part in swimming and track and field events on Cayman Brac and Grand Cayman. For example, the oldest student recently won the shot put event in the inter-primary school sports.

The students are knowledgeable about the Caymanian culture and participate in many local activities and community events. The topics they explore in social studies lessons help them to learn about their islands and how the government is structured. They also learn about other countries. They participate in the National Children's Festival of the Arts, at which they won medals. They are also involved in Commonwealth Day celebrations, Heritage Day, Mardi Gras, Pirates' Week and many other island activities. Learning about other cultures is not such a strong area, although they have had opportunities to learn about other countries and sample their festivals, such as Diwali. Visits by community members from different backgrounds also add to their exposure and experience of different cultures.

### **What is the quality of the curriculum and how effective are the arrangements for assessing students?**

LCES provides its students with a broad and generally balanced curriculum, covering all of the subjects of the National Curriculum. The time allocated to each subject generally matches the recommendations provided by the Education Department and students' learning is often supported through work that involves more than one subject, for example using their ICT skills to present their research about growing plants in pots. Students are encouraged to write for a wide range of purposes in different subjects, for example describing their observations in science. They make less use of concepts that they have learnt in mathematics. Opportunities are sometimes missed to use graphs in social studies, for example, to show how populations and land use have changed over the years.

The curriculum benefits from the close links that LCES has with the community. The students' learning is made more relevant and purposeful through contacts, for example, with the Central Caribbean Marine Institute, where the work they were doing in science was closely linked to the ecosystem of the island. Members of the community also give their time generously to LCES, so that the students benefit from their particular skills. However, LCES does not have access to the professional support from visiting teachers in subjects such as PE, ICT and art, which is made available to most other Cayman Islands schools.

Formal assessment procedures are under-developed. Students' achievements in tests are recorded regularly, but these marks do not indicate what each student is able to do or, more importantly, point to areas where they need extra support. The teacher and teacher's aide know the students very well and so, in practice, they match work well to students' immediate needs. However, the absence of a written record of achievement means that the details of each student's progress cannot be seen. As a result, patterns of difficulties in the past, for example in remembering mathematical tables, cannot be used to plan ways of avoiding similar problems in the future. LCES is starting to analyse students' performance in TerraNova tests in order to help students make even faster progress, but this has only just begun.

### **How well is the education service led and managed?**

LCES has a clear sense of purpose and operates smoothly and effectively as a result of good leadership and management within the institution. It has earned the respect and trust of the parents and community, who recognise the commitment of the teacher and teacher's aide to the students' wellbeing. The overall approach in LCES has been adapted very effectively to the needs of the students, by adopting a family structure, with students helping each other as well as learning directly from the teacher and teacher's aide. This system is thoroughly understood by the teacher and teacher's aide and is also communicated effectively to others who come into LCES to work with the students.

The unusual management structure of LCES creates some problems. Although the teacher-in-charge carries out many of the management functions of a school leader, she is not designated as a principal and does not regularly attend events, such as the annual senior management conference, where she would have the opportunity to exchange ideas with other senior professionals. This professional isolation is not helped by the lack of links with other schools. Although LCES staff attend formal professional development events on Cayman Brac, they miss the regular, informal exchange of ideas that take place in a larger school. This is made worse by the absence of visits from subject specialists that happen in other schools.

The classroom is adequate for the needs of the service, but more could be done to make special areas within the room, for instance to encourage students to read or play on the floor. The play area outside is small, unpaved, has little shade and no equipment to encourage activities such as climbing or swinging. It does not support the PE curriculum well enough.

## **How effective are other aspects of the education service's work?**

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

LCES provides good support and guidance for the students. The learning environment is very safe and secure, and so students feel cared for and valued. The caring manner of the staff helps to make the students want to come to school.

The teacher and teacher's aide work well together to provide good pastoral care for all students. They have close links and good relationships with the health service, which provides ready access to medical support. In the recent past, the paramedic taught music to the students, who successfully began to play the keyboard and the guitar. Students are taught about eating healthy foods and being in good physical condition through PE and health education lessons.

The teacher records students' results from academic tests, but their individual personal records are not updated, although LCES has the information. One student who was on an individual education plan is no longer in need of special intervention and he works very well at the Year 3 level. There is limited written evidence of students' performance and records are not readily accessible.

Students' **attendance and punctuality** are very good. Students attend regularly and are only absent for good reasons, such as when receiving medical treatment. They generally come to school on time and are ready to start work. Members of staff usually know when students are going to be away and contacts parents directly if anyone is away unexpectedly.

### **Links with parents and the community**

LCES has established very good links with parents and the community. Everyone knows the service well, and almost all have, at some point, contributed something to help the students improve. LCES maintains very close contact with parents through notes, home visits and telephone calls and they are kept well informed about their children's performance. The teacher and teacher's aide see parents daily and have frequent discussions with them. Parents have an opportunity to talk with the teacher and teacher's aide whenever they visit LCES. Parents are very appreciative of the service and have voiced their hopes of extending the facility to accommodate secondary education, despite the limitations that this might place on the older students' education.

Parents are involved in various fundraising activities for LCES. They support trips to Cayman Brac, purchase special prizes and trophies for students and other resources the facility needs. One parent is the designated driver for field trips and local events. Parents also help out with seasonal events such as Christmas programmes and Valentine's Day celebrations. Staff are now concerned that students are going to lose out on some community support for music and RE when the people involved leave the island.

## **What is the quality of teaching and learning in the language arts, mathematics, and ICT across the curriculum?**

### **Language arts**

Students generally make good progress in language arts. They achieve at the level expected for their age, and in some cases better than expected.

The students have a well-developed vocabulary. They use technical vocabulary appropriately. For example, in a Year 2 comprehension lesson, a student explained the process of how a seed develops using the word 'germination'. Students made good connections to earlier science lessons, explaining the meaning of precipitation, condensation and evaporation.

Students' standard of achievement in writing is satisfactory with some good features. The students write for a variety of purposes, such as to give information, express their views or describe an event; in most cases the writing is connected to their social studies and science lessons. Students are given good opportunities to transfer their thoughts to paper and use their skills to spell new or unfamiliar words. For example, a student was asked to draw a picture and write a sentence about making chocolate candies. He completed the task on his own and corrected his spelling of the word 'chocolate' after he had looked it up himself.

Although students write well, there is little display of students' work. The walls are covered with commercial charts and posters and material made by the teacher or teacher's aide. The very good work that students do in their books is not celebrated sufficiently in the classroom, nor are there places to encourage them to write. The library area is a single shelf with a variety of books and there is no designated reading area where students can relax and read or write.

The teacher and teacher's aide use a variety of methods to develop concepts and enhance students' learning. As well as planning effectively, they capitalize on opportunities that arise to capture the students' interest. They engage students in very helpful and interesting discussions and use questioning well to get targeted responses and to develop good reasoning and thinking skills. Younger students have the opportunity to learn from the older ones, as they are taught together for some portion of the day before being separated for individual activities. This helps to develop good language skills. In one creative writing lesson about road safety, the teacher took all students outside to practise the proper way of crossing the road. In another lesson, the teacher and student examined a growing seed, in support of a poetry comprehension activity.

### **Literacy across the curriculum**

LCES helps students to develop their literacy skills well in other subject areas. Students are taught technical vocabulary in science and social studies and the teacher and teacher's aide encourage them to use the words in discussions and written work. Students also make many connections to prior knowledge and use what they have learnt in new situations.

## **Mathematics**

Students make steady progress in mathematics and achieve levels expected for their age. They are best at carrying out standard calculations and almost always get the correct answer. Sometimes the younger students have to count on to find an answer, for example when adding 5 to 14. All students tend to recite a multiplication table from the beginning (for example, '1 x 7 is 7') to find, for example 6 x 7, which slows down their calculations. This lack of secure number facts adds to the difficulties that the older students have in tackling mathematical word problems, particularly those that involve several steps for a solution.

Lessons are often lively and students are actively involved. As a result they enjoy the subject and try hard to succeed. The teacher and teacher's aide have clear objectives for the lessons and the work is matched well to the needs of the students. They use questions well to encourage the students to think about their work and they encourage them to talk about what they have learnt, which helps to deepen the students' understanding. However, students do not have many opportunities to investigate ideas or explore the patterns and properties of numbers.

Students work very well together, often helping each other to learn. This is a strong feature of LCES and is one of the main reasons that the younger students do so well.

### **Numeracy across the curriculum**

Students use their numeracy skills in subjects such as science and cooking, for example when measuring. They also make some use of graphs and diagrams within subjects such as social studies to convey information more effectively than words. More use could be made of these graphs and diagrams and of displays within the classroom to give mathematics a higher profile.

### **ICT across the curriculum**

Overall, good use is made of ICT to support different subjects.

Students have ready access to computers and use them frequently, as a natural part of their learning. They are all confident in logging on and launching the program that they want to use. Older students often help younger ones if they run into difficulties, and this increases their own self-confidence with ICT. Students enjoy working with computers. They research confidently, often word-process their topic work and produce brochures, banners and flyers.

The teacher and teacher's aide support the students well. However, LCES does not receive visits from specialist ICT teachers. This means that students do not meet the same range of experiences as they would in other primary schools, and the teacher and teacher's aide do not get the opportunity for professional development. Similarly, there are problems getting speedy support when equipment or programs do not work properly.

Further use could be made of ICT to establish links with other schools, using email and possibly web cams and video conferencing.