



# Wesleyan Christian Academy

## Evaluation Report

April 2009

Lead Evaluator: Mary Bowerman



*Building excellence together*



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	3
<b>Information about the school and the team</b>	4
<b>Executive summary of the report</b>	7
<b>Commentary on the evaluation findings</b>	9
How well do students achieve and make progress?	9
What is the quality of students' personal development?	9
What is the impact of Accelerated Christian Education on students' learning?	10
How effective is the curriculum?	12
How well is the school led and managed?	13
<b>How effective are other aspects of the school's work?</b>	14
Support, guidance and students' welfare	14
Links with parents and the community	15
Use of ICT	16
<b>How effective is students' learning in the following subjects?</b>	17
English	17
Mathematics	18
Science (high school)	19

## 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 evaluations and by providing high quality advice and research.

Each school receives an external evaluation every four years and, about six months after an evaluation, a progress check against their action plan. The evaluation identifies the school's strengths and the areas that need to be improved. While external evaluations are guided by the criteria in the ESAU *Handbook for the Evaluation of Educational Provision*, we are also aware of the uniqueness of the Accelerated Christian Education system of education, and judgements made have taken this into account.

External evaluations provide schools, parents and the community, the Department of Education Services and the Ministry of Education, Training and Employment 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.

The Education Standards and Assessment Unit hopes that this evaluation will contribute in a positive way as Wesleyan Christian Academy strives to meet the needs of all its students and help them to reach their full potential.

*M.E. Bauwman*

**Acting Director  
Education Standards and Assessment Unit**

## Information about the school and the evaluation

### School contact information

Type of school:	Private
Age range of students:	3.9 – 18 years
Gender of students:	mixed
Number on roll:	150
School address:	150 Northwest Point Road West Bay Grand Cayman KY1-1301 Cayman Islands
Telephone number:	345-949-1121
Fax number:	345-949-1762
Email address:	principal@mywca.org
Name of Principal:	Mrs. Celia Furbur

### Information about the school

Wesleyan Christian Academy is a private school situated in the district of West Bay. It is affiliated with the Wesleyan Holiness Church and follows the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) system. This education system utilizes an individualized curriculum for Kindergarten through Grade 12.

Students are not placed in individual classes as in traditional schools; they are grouped in rooms called 'learning centres'. They move from Kindergarten to the Reading Centre (where students coming from Kindergarten learn to read and where others struggling with reading can receive extra help), and then to Learning Centres A, B and C, Junior High and High School. Students work at individual study carrels called 'offices'. They work at their own pace, and move independently through the curriculum under the guidance of supervisors. Students work in individual booklets known as PACEs (Packets of Accelerated Christian Education). These take the place of conventional textbooks and teacher-directed learning. There are twelve units to each year of subject material. Most students are expected to complete approximately 70 PACEs per year.

The school's mission is "Developing Christian Leaders through Biblical, Individualized Education" and its vision is "... providing the highest quality educational program with the cornerstones of: Christian character development among students and staff, quality performance among students and staff and transition for students to be servant- leaders."

The school caters for students from three years and nine months to 18 years. There are currently 150 students on the roll. The school has received full accreditation for the 2008-09 school year from the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA). In January 2009 the school was recognized again by the president of ACE Ministries for maintaining 'Accelerated Christian Education Model Status'. This means, among other things, that the school has fully followed the ACE curriculum, its records and training requirements are up to date, it follows the ACE Procedures Manual and its PACE test average is 88 per cent or higher.

## The evaluation

Lead: Mary Bowerman                      Education Standards and Assessment Unit

Team: Pachent Smythe                      Education Standards and Assessment unit  
Favourita Blanchard                      Education Standards and assessment Unit  
Donna Amhari-Smith                      Local Occasional Evaluator

The evaluation of Wesleyan Christian Academy took place from 27<sup>th</sup> April to 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2009. The following aspects of the school's work were looked at:

- How well students achieve and make progress
- The quality of students' personal development
- The impact of the ACE programme on how well students learn
- The effectiveness of the curriculum
- How well the school is led and managed
- The quality of support, guidance and students' welfare
- The effectiveness of links with parents and the community
- The use of ICT
- The effectiveness of students' learning in English and mathematics
- How well the school is helping students to develop the characteristics of the 'Educated Caymanian'

The evaluation team gathered evidence in the following ways:

- The evaluation team spent three full days observing routines in learning centres from Kindergarten to High School
- School documents were looked at
- Samples of PACEs in most subjects were looked at
- Evaluators observed an assembly, morning devotions, breaks and lunch times
- Evaluators spoke with students and took their views from the questionnaires into account
- Comments from parents at the meeting before the evaluation and from the questionnaires were taken into account
- Discussions took place with the principal and staff, the administrator and the School Advisory Council

Evaluators use the following grading scale to describe aspects of a 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>	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 of achievement

Evaluators also use the following criteria from the 'Profile of the Educated Caymanian' to evaluate how well the school is 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

## Executive summary of the report

### How effective is the school overall?

The school provides a very structured learning environment where students receive clear and focused Biblical teaching which is incorporated into every lesson through the PACEs. The Christian ethos is apparent in all aspects of the life of the school. Students are encouraged and expected to work independently. Good behaviour is expected and is the norm in learning centres and on the playground. Students know the daily routines and follow them without having to be told.

The Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) system allows students to work at the level best suited to each individual. This includes students with learning difficulties and those who work more slowly. Students whose first language is not English are only accepted if their command of the English language allows them to read and understand the material in the PACEs. Thus, most students at the school complete the requisite number of PACEs, if not at the same time as their peers.

Supervisors keep detailed daily records of each student's progress. Students score their own work at specific stages as they move through each PACE, and know that if they do not reach the required score of 80 per cent, they must repeat the material before they can move on to the next level. Students for the most part, therefore, work diligently in their offices, where there are few distractions. If students need help with their work, they display a flag which signals their need of the supervisor, but the amount and quality of support that they receive from supervisors vary. At the end of each level, students in Kindergarten and Learning Centres A and B may be given a diagnostic test which indicates areas of weakness in each subject. PACEs which focus on the specific areas of weakness identified can be given to students so that they can make up any gaps in their learning and score well enough to move on.

The school has maintained its 'model status' as an ACE school. However, the education that the school provides is only **adequate**, as the way that the school implements the ACE curriculum restricts students' learning in some areas. Students have to set themselves a certain number of pages to be completed in each day. Once this goal has been met, however, there is very little for some of them to do and much time is wasted. Students' speaking and listening skills are not being fully developed: they are required to spend their time working in silence on their PACEs. There are few opportunities for discussion, when students could listen to the opinions of others and give their own points of view. Their writing skills are also underdeveloped. The PACEs essentially require students to fill in the blanks: they are not often asked to justify their answers or to write at length for different purposes.

### What the school does well

- The school provides a strong Christian ethos that is highly valued by parents
- Students' behaviour, both in and out of lessons is good
- Students develop good organizational skills and work well independently
- All records are detailed and kept up to date

## What needs to improve

- The monitoring of the work of the school
- The management of time, so that students are always constructively occupied in their learning
- Provision for the development of students' speaking, listening and writing skills
- Provision for learning in Kindergarten

*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 must be sent to the Education Standards and Assessment Unit **within 40 working days of receiving the draft 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.*



## Commentary on evaluation findings

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

Students' progress in the ACE system is measured by the results of standardized testing, the number and level of PACEs completed and the scores achieved on the PACE tests.

The majority of students make the school's honour roll regularly with scores of at least 88 per cent, but receive only 'average' results in the Stanford 10 standardized test. Results from this test for the last three years have shown some improvement in the last two years. The weaker performance in 2006 was linked to the fact that the school had not done any standardized testing for two years prior to this, and up to 2003, students had taken a different test - the California Achievement test (CAT 5).

Progress is good in terms of numbers of PACEs completed with scores above the required 80 per cent. However, much of this is rote learning, and students who were asked to explain their work, were not always able to do so although they were able to recall enough to achieve the required pass mark. There are not enough opportunities for students to develop their speaking and listening skills as most of the time is spent working individually. Writing skills, too, are under-developed as the PACEs seldom require students to write at length, express a point of view or justify their answers.

Overall, students make **adequate** progress and their standardized test results are 'average'.

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

Personal development includes how well students acquire spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, a healthy lifestyle and the attributes of an 'Educated Caymanian'.

Students entering the school know that they are required to comply with the values, principles and beliefs of the school. Students are also encouraged to attend a Bible-believing church. Daily devotions, chapel services, scripture memorization, and the Bible-centred curriculum provide opportunities for students to enhance their spiritual development. High school students in particular, are trained to adhere to the school's philosophy and Christ-centred programmes so that they set a good example for younger students.

Daily devotion times provide much-needed opportunities for students to share their thoughts and engage in discussion, for example about Jonah and the importance of obedience. Older students are able to engage with 'real life' issues that affect them. An example of this was seen where supervisors shared an email they had received about the use of 'Face Book' and 'My Space' and how a policeman pretending to be a student gained information about a teenager. Together, students and supervisors explored issues of moral behaviour and the importance of being careful and making the right choices.

Each PACE up to the eighth level includes a Bible verse, and the material in the PACE is presented through Christian characters who 'grow and develop' to match students' different stages of development as students move through the school. From the ninth to the twelfth level, biblical concepts are stressed, and students are required to complete various activities to help them to memorize each verse. All students must be able to quote the verse before they can

proceed to the final test on that PACE. Some, however, do not always understand what these verses or concepts mean and they learn them because it is required, rather than because they are encouraged and motivated by them.

Students have opportunities to interact with each other during physical education lessons and at break and lunch times. Although some of the older students stated that they would prefer to have more interaction with each other, they comply with the school rules and regulations because they sign a 'standard of conduct' form at the beginning of each school year. Relationships among themselves are good. Older students, in particular, are well groomed, and their language is appropriate. Students from as early as Kindergarten are organized and independent, and they take responsibility for their learning. They demonstrate that they know right from wrong and know what the Bible says about certain behaviour.

Students who have responsibilities carry them out in a mature and purposeful manner. For example, those scheduled to lead lines, or clean tables in the lunch room do not wait to be reminded. They do their duties promptly and get ready for the start of the next session. They show respect for the school environment and property, including the way they care for the bathrooms and playground, which are free of litter. There is no graffiti. They take special care of their peers who use wheelchairs so that they do not feel left out of activities.

Students' understanding and appreciation of their own and other cultures is limited. They know very little about the Caymanian culture, and it is not well celebrated throughout the school apart from the daily singing of the National Anthem and the pledge to the National Flag. Students study the history of the Cayman Islands in Junior High as part of their social studies. However, this is limited in content and in the experiences students can gain from it. Students' participation in artistic and cultural activities is limited to the National Children's Festival of the Arts and the contributions made by students who have the opportunity to attend the International Student Convention in the United States. Social Studies PACEs present facts about other nations and people, but students do not study any of them in depth.

Opportunities for students to understand and choose a healthy lifestyle are limited. They participate in the Drug Abuse Resistance Education programme, DARE, and some of the science PACEs cover topics which address good nutrition and health. Students read this information and complete pages in the PACEs, but they are not required to demonstrate their understanding of this in any concrete manner.

Students' personal development is **adequate**. There are some strengths, but also some areas that need to be improved, particularly the development of a better understanding of their own culture and that of others, and some of the attributes of the 'Educated Caymanian'.

### **What is the impact of Accelerated Christian Education on students' learning?**

The ACE system encourages and promotes independent learning. Students take responsibility for their own learning but much of this is rote learning in order to achieve the required percentage on each PACE. There are very few opportunities for students to demonstrate how much they have really understood and can apply in different contexts.

In their learning centres, students are seated in individual carrels or 'offices'. These are arranged around the perimeter of each room so that students have their backs to the centre of the room and distractions are minimized. They are confident and competent in the established

routines, working silently at completing a certain number of pages of each of the core subjects each day.

PACEs take the place of conventional textbooks and teacher-directed learning and each covers a fairly wide range of material. Students are required to interpret maps, graphs and diagrams as well as to recall or search for information from the written page and then write their answers in the spaces provided. They work independently through these, raising a small flag to signal their need of the supervisor, either for help with their work or for permission to score their work periodically. Most of the scoring is done by students themselves, using a master sheet at the scoring table located in the centre of the room. The final test on each PACE is administered and scored by supervisors.

Students are well behaved and compliant. They know and follow the daily routines without fuss. Each day, students record the number of pages in each PACE that they will do, knowing that they are required to complete an average of 22. Many students easily meet their goals and have a lot of time left over. Much time is wasted, as more often than not, students sit and do nothing constructive.

Students rarely write anything at length when completing the PACEs and do not extend their learning through the use of reference books, the internet or through discussion. Completion of a PACE does not require students to be able to use a variety of presentation tools to demonstrate their learning. They do not have to explain or justify their answers, as most questions just require them to fill in the blanks. There are few collaborative opportunities for problem solving or for students to develop their speaking and listening skills by listening to the opinions of others and expressing their own points of view.

Most students eventually complete the same PACEs. If they are having difficulty, they may work at a lower level in one subject or another, but the format is still the same. Most of the teaching comes through students' self-study, although supervisors are available to advise students who need extra help. The effectiveness of this support varies throughout the school, with some supervisors providing very clear and helpful one to one support. However, it is difficult for one or two supervisors to provide the depth of knowledge that is needed at junior high, and particularly at the high school, levels. Some of the learning centres have a large number of students. Learning Centres B and C have 27 and 35 respectively, and the high school, 37. With such a high student / staff ratio, students sometimes have to wait a long time before someone is able to offer assistance. These issues sometimes cause delays in students' progress as they do not always receive the level of support they may need.

All supervisors have a good knowledge of the ACE system, but not all of them follow it consistently. Some only give help if a student raises a flag; others move around the room and guide and support wherever they perceive there is a need. They all keep detailed records showing the number of PACEs students complete each day and what their scores are. This is important as students have to repeat any PACEs where they fail to get at least 80 per cent. The records are also used to ensure that high school students are meeting their projection for graduation.

Kindergarten is one of the few places where the ACE curriculum allows more flexibility. Students use PACEs but are actually taught by supervisors as opposed to working independently through the PACEs. The Kindergarten room, however, is particularly devoid of material for promoting investigative or imaginative play or for developing children's fine motor skills. Some resources are available but they are not being used.

Although the subject material in the PACEs is adequate, the way that students are supported in their learning restricts progress. Throughout the school, students' speaking, listening and writing skills are not well developed. The school does not implement the ACE curriculum as effectively as the system allows. Students' learning, therefore, is just **adequate**.

### **How effective is the curriculum?**

The ACE core curriculum includes English, mathematics, literature and creative writing, social studies, science, word building and Bible reading. It provides students with information on a range of topics which they access mainly through the PACEs. For older students, PACEs may be supplemented with videos or DVDs, as in science, or by the use of software such as Rosetta Stone, for learning a foreign language. Rosetta Stone is helpful in the teaching of vocabulary and reading comprehension, but students' speaking skills are not well developed.

The curriculum promotes students' personal and intellectual development, but there is no provision for practical subjects, such as home economics or design and technology, or creative subjects such as art and drama. Not all subjects are offered to all students. For example, not all students do speech, and Spanish and French are offered only during a student's four years of high school.

In English, the emphasis is on grammar and there are not enough opportunities for students to use their grammatical skills to write well-structured, extended pieces or to become competent readers or speakers. In mathematics, students get much practice in completing various calculations. However, opportunities to apply their knowledge to 'real life' problems are extremely limited. (See the English and mathematics sections of this report). In addition, in science, there are not enough opportunities for students to learn and develop skills such as hypothesizing, predicting, investigating and evaluating. Science through DVDs does not provide the necessary hands-on, practical experiences that promote a firm understanding of the concepts being taught.

There are occasional field trips to places such as Boatswain's Beach, the Dolphin Discovery or a sports centre. However, only students who have earned a special privilege are allowed to go. The school does not offer any after-school activities to enhance the curriculum. Parents are encouraged to enrol their children in programmes outside of school and the school undertakes to provide transportation for those students to these various activities. The physical education (PE) programme at the school is not well developed. There is no structure to what the students do in PE to ensure that specific skills are being taught.

High School students who attend the International Student Convention receive some leadership training. This year the school will send 15 students to participate. The competitions allow students to use their gifts and abilities to compete in academics, art, music and athletics, but the school does not adequately train them for most of these.

The curriculum is **adequate**, but there are some areas that need improvement.

## How well is the school led and managed?

The management structure of the school provides for a School Advisory Council to oversee the work of the school. This is chaired by the pastor of the church who is also the school's administrator. He and the principal monitor the work of the staff in each of the learning centres and the principal sometimes assists with supporting students if there is a need. The administrator provides regular reports to the Council on the performance of supervisors and assistants and these are used for performance management. The principal is answerable to the administrator and the Council.

The school runs smoothly on a day to day basis. Daily routines are followed consistently. Staff carry out supervision duties promptly and regularly. Break and lunch times for each learning centre are staggered to accommodate all the students in the cafeteria, and these times are carefully planned and supervised so that there is no time wasted. The principal communicates with staff through a weekly newsletter and regular staff meetings.

The school's vision and values are clearly communicated through the Student Handbook, and staff and students alike, are required to abide by the school's clear Christian philosophy. The ACE Procedures Manual provides guidelines for all aspects of the work of the school, including its strong focus on the development of Christian character.

School leaders rely heavily on supervisors to follow these procedures. However, the monitoring of what is actually happening is not rigorous enough to ensure that policies and the ACE system are being consistently and effectively implemented across the school. The amount and effectiveness of support offered to students vary considerably. For example, much of the material needed to make learning effective in Kindergarten is in storage, as supervisors prefer not to use it. Learning Centre procedures are inconsistent and relationship building between staff and students is not encouraged enough. Although staff are required to attend yearly Christian Educators' Conventions where they receive training in ACE procedures, there is no planned support for supervisors who are under-performing and this has a negative impact on students' learning.

The school receives accreditation from the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) and applies for renewal each year. In preparation for this, the school is required to carry out a self study based on specific questions from CITA. When this was completed, it clearly identified areas where the school needed to improve. Evaluation findings confirm most of these. The self study formed the basis for the school's improvement plan which was produced by the principal. The plan sets out areas for improvement but there is no timeline or allocation of responsibilities for different areas.

Most of the policies and procedures needed for the smooth functioning of the school are already documented in the ACE Procedures Manual. Although the principal sets a good example in maintaining the Christian ethos, the monitoring of the work of the school needs to be improved. Overall, the leadership and management of the school are **adequate**.

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

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

Each learning centre has at least one supervisor and an assistant. They know the procedures required by the ACE system and ensure that detailed records are kept of each student's daily progress. Students' records are housed in the school office. These are kept up to date and include extensive information on students' academic, medical and personal details.

Numerical data are stored electronically and updated annually. Results from standardized tests and from all diagnostic tests taken are also stored in the main office. Some scrutiny of students' individual results enables supervisors to provide 'gap' PACEs which allow students who have done poorly on specific areas to get extra practice.

Although there is a considerable amount of information on each student, the school uses this information only in a very limited way. Because the information is all recorded on individual student cards and there are no collective records, it is more challenging to carry out, for example, an analysis of trends in test results, attendance or detentions, which could help to provide an overview of areas that may need to be improved. Also, in the case of an emergency such as a fire, there are no collective attendance records for quick reference.

Students are encouraged and assisted in setting their own daily work goals. While these are appropriate for many students, there are some cases where expectations may be too low and supervisors are not always aware of school procedures with regard to students who complete their work ahead of time. For example, in the lower school, a number of students had completed their day's work as early as ten o'clock. As a result, much time is wasted when these students are not engaged in meaningful activities. Some supervisors either give some of the following year's work in advance - which students are required to repeat the next school year - or 'slow down' students to prevent this happening. In these cases, the school is not meeting the academic needs of all students.

The progress of high school students is carefully monitored by supervisors in order to ensure that they are on track for their graduation projection and are achieving the required scores on their PACE tests. These students do not have regular provision for career guidance and work experience, and parents expressed concern about this.

When students leave Kindergarten, they move into the Reading Centre where they are taught basic reading skills. Older students who experience difficulties with reading also can receive support in the Reading Centre. This is a useful short-term intervention that has produced some good results. If students do not make the necessary progress in the Reading Centre, the school may recommend that they get additional help elsewhere.

Progress reports are sent home each quarter; congratulatory certificates are sent home weekly. In some learning centres, sticker charts and colouring sheets designed to track the amount of work that students complete, are used to encourage hard work. Students who achieve 88 per cent or above on their tests are given honour roll recognition.

During lesson time, communication between staff and students is focused on the work being completed. There are opportunities for students and supervisors to engage in longer, more general discussions - for example during break or lunch periods, but they seldom make use of these opportunities to build relationships. Although the school is small and supervisors know students well, a large number of students said that there was no adult at school that they felt

comfortable talking with if they had a problem. They stated that they have questions, and would welcome the opportunity to be able to discuss more. However, some are fearful that they may be misunderstood.

The Kindergarten classroom, located on the second floor, is a potential safety hazard as students are required to go up and down a relatively steep and narrow staircase. It would be difficult for such young children to exit the building quickly from this location in the event of an emergency. Similarly, the bathrooms available for these students are standard-sized and children cannot reach the facilities comfortably. This is a clear hazard area because students have to climb up onto the counter in order to wash their hands.

The school has enlisted the help of the fire service to provide advice on what to do in case of a fire. It recommended that fire extinguishers be moved to lower positions and exit signs clearly illuminated, but these things have not yet been done. The school has not had a fire drill for some time. Arrangements for students with physical disabilities include the provision of rails and wheelchair ramps, but supervisors do not have a clear plan of how to deal with these students in an emergency.

The provision for the support, guidance and welfare of the students is **adequate**.

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

An orientation meeting is held for new parents, and all parents are asked to meet with their child's supervisor early in the school year. Parents and students are given a school handbook which outlines the rules and regulations, and they are required to sign a code of conduct before students are enrolled at the school. This ensures that parents and students have a good understanding of what the school expects of them.

The school provides regular information for parents regarding students' attendance, progress and conduct. Parents are notified at an early stage if there is any significant deterioration. Student reports show test scores in percentages, and progress in terms of the amount of work completed. Information about students' personal and social qualities is given as a letter grade. Details of the student's particular weaknesses are not provided. This makes it more difficult for parents to know the ways in which they can help their child to improve in school.

Parent consultations are held three times a year. These provide useful opportunities for parents to meet with supervisors and discuss their child's progress. Those who do not attend are contacted by supervisors and new appointments scheduled. Contact with parents is carefully logged and written communication to individual parents requires a signature to confirm receipt. This ensures that issues are efficiently followed-up.

A weekly newsletter is sent to all parents giving details of any important events taking place in the school. There are few opportunities for parental involvement, and they are not asked to give feedback on relevant matters. There are missed opportunities for students to benefit from their experiences and expertise, for example, help with after-school activities or talking to students about Cayman or various possible careers.

The school's Parent Teacher Association (PTA) has recently been formed. This has provided some good support for the school in terms of fund-raising for the annual trip to the International Student Convention.

The school liaises with various community establishments such as the Lions Club, Health Services Association and Children and Family Services to provide services such as health and vision screening for the students on an annual basis.

The Royal Cayman Islands Police Service provides Drug Abuse Resistance Education to some of the older students annually, and a few students are encouraged to become involved in community activities – for example, the Cancer Walk or visits to the Golden Age Senior Citizens' Home. However, opportunities for students to engage with the community and enhance their learning in particular areas are too few. Students are not sufficiently exposed to local events – for example, cultural programmes or local competitions. Community members are not often invited to come into the school and share their knowledge or expertise with students, and the school does not make its facilities available to community groups. This reduces the students' prospects of being involved in genuine, practical learning experiences or sporting events.

The school does not take responsibility for extra-curricular activities, but encourages parents to enrol their children in these elsewhere. Links with parents and the community are **adequate**.

### **Use of information and communication technology (ICT)**

Each learning centre has at least one computer - in most cases, more than one - alongside other Information Communication Technology (ICT) resources such as televisions, DVD players and a limited amount of educational software.

Students primarily use computers to take tests or practise basic reading or mathematical skills using the Read Master or Math Builder programs. In high school, students watch a small number of science experiments on DVDs, as prescribed in the relevant PACEs. They also make use of computers to learn a foreign language with The Rosetta Stone program. Typing skills are acquired through some high school PACEs and all students are required to complete these at some point during their high school years. While some students show good keyboard skills, others show a lack of proficiency.

There is a school network with controlled internet access to each classroom. Most senior students have access to ACE Connect – a one-year online technology training programme which offers instruction in various computer applications, including Microsoft Office (2003) Suite and Microsoft Windows. However, the number of students enrolled is relatively small and there are few opportunities for students to use the internet to research ideas or seek information.

The chapel is resourced with modern audio-visual equipment (projector, microphones, and computer) to which the school has some access. A few of the older students are able to use these resources. For example, during chapel time two high school students assisted a member of staff in operating the computer and projector to display the words of songs.

Supervisors make use of the computers to record and print information about students' progress and to produce congratulatory certificates. In Kindergarten, the supervisor made use of the computer to play the accompanying CD for the day's lesson.

The use of ICT for testing and recording students' scores and grades, as required by the ACE programme is **good**. The use of ICT for developing students' computer skills is **unsatisfactory**.



## How effective is students' learning in the following subjects?

### English

The Stanford Achievement Test results show that students have made some progress over the past three years. In spite of the progress, however, the achievement of students is only 'average'. Students work at a level that matches their individual needs. They can repeat PACEs in areas where they are weak. All students have to achieve at least 80 per cent on each PACE in order to move ahead.

Students in Kindergarten follow directions well. They have learnt to listen well to letter sounds and identify letter names. Many have good recall of factual information from stories read to them, some of which are lengthy. However, their speaking skills are not well developed. While the ACE curriculum does not allow for much interaction among students, there is more flexibility at the Kindergarten level to learn through imaginative play and to explore their world through music, art and role play, for example. Opportunities and resources for these are extremely limited, however, and students are encouraged in rote learning. There are many instances where younger children could, but do not, communicate and interact with each other or the teacher during story sessions or early morning activities. For example, in Kindergarten, students were engaged in individual play while the teacher watched. There was no interaction with the children. Young children in particular, need to interact with each other and with adults to develop proper speaking and social skills.

Students' reading is crucial to the completion of PACEs. Students who need extra help can receive this through the Reading Centre. They complete many word building exercises and learn new vocabulary, not only through the English PACEs, but in all subjects. There is a strong focus on grammar within the programme. PACEs cover a range of topics. The repetition of concepts helps students to consolidate their learning or fill in any gaps they may have and ensures progression and continuity. Younger students, and a few of the older ones, show some interest in books but they are not given enough opportunities to develop their reading skills or to use the vocabulary they have learnt. Classroom libraries are not well stocked and there is very little attractive, up to date children's literature. There is no central library.

Students in Learning Centres A to C have to read aloud to their teachers all extended passages. Most read fluently, but with very little expression. There is much emphasis on factual information and not enough on problem solving and critical thinking. Students are usually just required to find answers within the paragraphs they have read, and very little is expected of them in terms of reasoning, predicting outcomes, making inferences or justifying their answers.

Phonics is the main method that is used for teaching reading in Kindergarten and the Reading Centre. After this, students are expected to read and comprehend the material in their PACEs, with support from supervisors if it is really needed.

Many students have good handwriting. They write with clear letter formation and orientation. However, some do not form their letters correctly and there is not much guidance for those who need to improve their presentation. Some students become so concerned with completing the required number of pages of work that, in their haste, the quality of their presentation deteriorates.

Extended writing is one way of communicating ideas and feelings. It is one way that students can demonstrate what they have learnt. However, this practice is very limited throughout the school as very few opportunities are given for them to write at length. 'Creative writing' is

theoretical and narrow. Rarely do students redraft their writing to improve it. Some supervisors provide helpful guidance for students on how they could improve their work, but this is not usually sufficient. Older students, particularly those in the high school, learn the theory of writing for different purposes but opportunities to practise different forms of writing are very limited. Even the study of a novel is restricted, as there is no opportunity for discussion and for hearing others' points of view. Answers tend to be limited to filling in blanks or completing comprehension questions.

There are few opportunities for students to develop speaking skills throughout the school. Very rarely do they engage in group work, and therefore miss opportunities to extend their learning through discussion. Communication is one way of building social skills. However, students only have opportunities for this during break, lunch times, physical education lessons or after school while waiting to go home. Speech lessons are taught through PACEs, but this is only available to a few of the older students.

Students are well organized and follow procedures well. Those who fail a PACE or a Read Master test on the computer, repeat the work with no fuss. The use of technology to enhance and reinforce English is limited.

Overall, the provision for English is just **adequate**.

## **Mathematics**

Stanford 10 results show that students' achievement in mathematics has been improving over the past two years, but their results are still only 'average'. The results also show that students are not achieving as well as they should in the area of problem solving.

Mathematics, like all other subjects, is taught through PACEs. The work in the PACEs builds on the students' prior knowledge and ensures continuity and progression. However, very little problem solving is included in PACEs for younger students, and the lack of this contributes to the difficulty that older students have in reasoning and developing their critical thinking skills. Students are given few opportunities to apply their knowledge to 'real life' problems in mathematics, but there are some opportunities to use their skills in subjects such as science and social studies. Most students exhibit good attitudes and stay on task to complete their work. They set the number of pages they will complete for the day and lose very little time in settling to the task.

The explanations and instructions in the PACEs are not always clear. For example, one student in calculating the area of a square of 22 centimetres could not see that her answer written as 'square feet' was incorrect. She re-read the explanation but this did not help. When students experience difficulty in understanding certain concepts as they are presented in the PACEs, they may be allowed to practise work on that topic at a lower level but usually in the same format. Seldom is the material presented in a different way to cater for the different learning needs of the students.

In some learning centres the quality of individual help is good but this is not consistent throughout the school. For example the quality of questions varies greatly and the support offered does not always help students understand what they need to do to improve.

Occasionally, students were seen using tools such as pattern blocks or calculators to assist them with their work, but in most cases, students complete pages in their PACEs with no use of

manipulatives to help them understand more clearly or make connections. Although each learning centre is equipped with a number of computers, these are used mainly for students to practise number facts on 'Math Builder' programs rather than providing opportunities for practice of difficult concepts.

Supervisors keep well updated files with students' results on the Stanford 10 and the scores they achieve on each PACE. The school's analysis of its mathematics test scores has enabled it to see the need to focus more on mathematics with a view to increasing standardized test scores. This has formed a part of the school's improvement plan.

The overall provision for mathematics is **adequate**.

### **Science (high school)**

Science is presented in the form of PACEs in Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Physical Science and Earth Science. These also include 'lab' pages which only require students to watch a specific DVD and answer questions in their PACEs about what they have seen. Although a wide range of topics is covered and students are exposed to a wealth of information, there are not enough opportunities for students to learn and develop skills such as hypothesizing, predicting, investigating and evaluating. Neither do they carry out any practical investigations or experiments for themselves. Students' learning is almost entirely theoretical. Provision for science is therefore **unsatisfactory**.