



**CREEK AND SPOT BAY PRIMARY SCHOOL
INSPECTION REPORT
OCTOBER 2005**

LEAD INSPECTOR: HELENA MCVEIGH



Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate

Working in partnership for high quality education for all students

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.

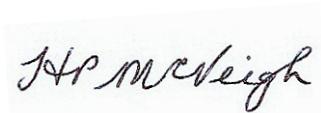
Each school receives an inspection every four to six years. The inspection identifies the school's strengths and the areas that need to be improved. Between inspections, schools are visited regularly by a link inspector to check on the progress that has been made in tackling the priority areas and to 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, 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 standards. Through the publication of inspection reports, inspection contributes to accountability, transparency and openness within the education system.

Self-evaluation by schools is an important part of the Cayman Islands' school improvement 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 Creek and Spot Bay Primary School to become more effective.



Helena McVeigh
Chief Inspector of Schools

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL AND THE INSPECTION TEAM

THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Government primary school
Age range of students:	Three years 9 months to 10 years 11 months
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	104
School address:	Creek Infants, PO Box 3CK, Cayman Brac Spot Bay Juniors, PO Box 142SB, Cayman Brac
Telephone number:	Creek 948 0226 Spot Bay 948 0225
Fax number:	Creek 948 0636 Spot Bay 948 0637
Email address:	Creek cps@candw.ky Spot Bay sbps@candw.ky
Name of Principal:	Creek Infants: Ms Tammy Da Costa Spot Bay Juniors: Mrs Janice Bradshaw

THE INSPECTION TEAM

Lead inspector:	Helena McVeigh	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
Team inspectors:	Mary Bowerman	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
	Pachent Smythe	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
	Roger Holmes	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
	Mary Summers	Overseas Inspector

INTRODUCTION

Information about the school

Creek and Spot Bay Primary School was formed in September 2003 from the amalgamation of two separate schools — Creek Primary and Spot Bay Primary. The school is located on the sites of the former schools, about one mile apart, with the juniors (Years 4 to 6) in the Spot Bay site and the infants (Reception to Year 3) in Creek. The school has retained two principals who are responsible for education on their sites.

The school's mission is "to create a progressive learning environment, utilizing dynamic teaching provided by a committed and qualified staff, in partnership with parents and the community to produce well-rounded individuals, who possess a strong sense of cultural identity, and will make a positive contribution to society".

There are 104 students at the school: 57 in the infants and 47 in the juniors. Eighty-seven per cent of the students are Caymanian. The total school roll has fallen slightly since the last time that the schools were inspected. In 2001 there were 48 children in Spot Bay Primary and in 2000 there were 67 in Creek primary.

There is a significant disparity between the numbers of boys and girls in most classes, with the greatest difference in the Reception class where there is one boy and eight girls. In Years 5 and 6, boys outnumber girls by two to one.

Shortly after Hurricane Ivan hit the Cayman Islands in September 2004, children from Grand Cayman joined the school and numbers nearly doubled. For a short while, an extra Year 3 class had to be created to accommodate the extra students in this year group. Most of the Grand Cayman students left after a few weeks but 13 infants and 11 juniors stayed for a term or more. All but five of these students have since returned to Grand Cayman and numbers have reverted to pre-Ivan figures.

The school has a high proportion of students with special educational needs (SEN), amounting to nearly one-third overall and one-half in the juniors. Children's special needs are wide-ranging and include learning difficulties, behavioural problems and physical disabilities that necessitate extra support.

There are three children in the juniors who are learning English as a second language (ESL).

Information about the inspection

The inspection was planned for Monday through Wednesday, 17th to 19th October 2005, involving a team of five inspectors, plus a trainee local occasional inspector. The inspection was interrupted after two days by the passage of Hurricane Wilma, which resulted in the closure of the school on the third day. Because of this, the inspection team visited some classes on Thursday when the school re-opened. The following aspects of the school'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 the school 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 teachers were helping students to use their literacy, numeracy and information technology skills across all of their school work.

The inspection team gathered evidence in the following ways:

- Thirty-one lessons or parts of lessons were observed, mainly in language arts and mathematics, but also in social studies, science, art, physical education and music.
- School documents, including teachers' planning, curriculum statements and guidelines, were looked at.
- Students' work was scrutinised.
- Inspectors spoke with students and analysed their responses to the questionnaires.
- Discussions with teachers and other members of staff took place and comments from their questionnaires were considered.
- Comments from parents at the meeting before the inspection and from the questionnaires were followed up.
- Information obtained through the regular link inspector visits was also taken into account.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

How effective is the school overall?

Creek and Spot Bay Primary School has a number of strengths and provides a satisfactory, and in some respects good, quality of education for its students. The amalgamation has been handled very effectively and has been a positive step forward. There is, though, still much room for improvement, including the need to establish greater consistency of practice between and within the two sites. A good start has been made and the school's recent development plan has identified many of the issues that have been outlined below. With the existing commitment from the principals, strengths of the teaching staff and parental support, the school is well set to bring about the necessary improvements.

What the school does well

- The staff have created a caring and purposeful environment for students, who feel secure and enjoy coming to school.
- Most students make good progress in language arts because of the good teaching.
- Communication with parents is excellent.
- The school receives very strong support from the parents and the community.
- The principals have worked together well to bring about the effective amalgamation of the two schools.

What needs to improve

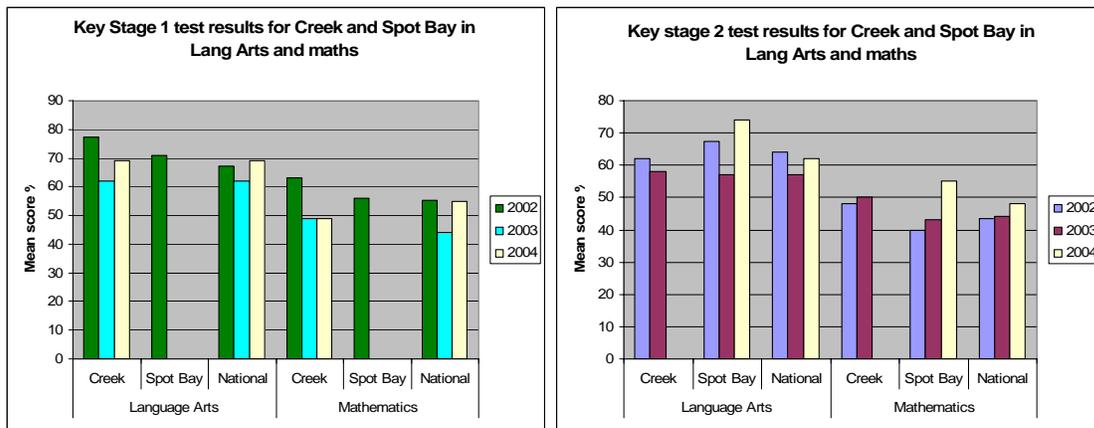
- The teaching of mathematics across both sites, though there is some good practice
- The challenge for the most academically able students
- The way that teachers assess and track students' progress, along with the use of performance data to influence how students are taught
- The way that policies are implemented and monitored
- The way that the support for students with special educational needs is managed and coordinated

The school is expected to prepare an action plan to address the areas for improvement identified above. In view of the fact that the school has recently written a development plan that includes most of the areas above, it simply needs to modify and add to this plan. The amended version should be sent to the Education Department and Schools' Inspectorate 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.

How high are standards at the school?

When children start school in the Reception class, many of them have lower than expected social and language skills for their age. Less than half of the present group have attended pre-school. The children are given a good start in the Reception class, where their social skills improve considerably. As they move up the year groups, students make steady progress in most areas and by the time they leave, their literacy skills have much improved. Overall, standards are broadly in line with the national average in language arts and mathematics. There are, though, wide differences between the achievements of students: some are operating well-above and others well-below grade level. There is a high proportion with special needs and these students have made progress but are still achieving below grade level by Year 6.

Given the small numbers of students in each year group, it is not possible to make a reliable judgement of how standards have changed over the years. Prior to 2005, students were entered for National Key Stage tests. Results were generally close to the Cayman Islands' average in language arts and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 (i.e. Year 3) and Key Stage 2, (Year 6). See below.



In May 2005, students sat the Terra Nova standardized tests for the first time. There were differences between the performance of students in different year groups, with Year 2 performing well above grade level (and the Cayman average) in reading, language and mathematics. In Year 3 and Year 6, results were close to the national average, but in Years 4 and 5 they were significantly below expected grade level (two years in some subjects). However, the present Years 5 and 6 have high proportions of students with special educational needs (SEN), which helps to explain the low Terra Nova results.

Students achieved less well in mathematics, particularly in computation, than they did in language arts. This finding was confirmed by the inspectors who found that standards were better in language arts than in mathematics generally. See also pages 17 to 20.

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

Teachers show good levels of commitment to the school and to the students. They know a great deal about individual children and care about them very much. Relationships with students and their parents are extremely good. Consequently, children feel safe and secure and ready to learn. Most show very mature and positive attitudes to their education. They know that it is important and are anxious to work hard and succeed. This is evident in lessons. Children in a Year 1 mathematics lesson for example, were encouraged to 'act as detectives' by their teacher, and explore a simple graph that they had made. They were so involved by the practical nature of the activity and by the teacher's skilful questioning, that they concentrated and learned the new skills really well. Children of different capabilities were carefully included in the discussion, so that they all were able to achieve success.

The provision of practical, interesting activities is a feature of many lessons. Teachers sometimes, though, spend too much time talking, and do not move on quickly enough to the practical activities. When this happens, children lose interest, become restless and sometimes misbehave and disrupt the lesson.

Generally, children know what is expected of them and how to achieve success. This is because teachers explain at the beginning of lessons what the students are going to learn. They give clear instructions about the work so that students are able to apply themselves and complete their tasks within the given time. In a good Year 2 reading lesson, the teacher organised three different activities that were all connected to the story on ships which she had read earlier. She carefully explained what they had to do and the children approached their work eagerly and with a good degree of success. A useful discussion at the end of the lesson encouraged them to share their experiences with the rest of the class.

Teachers are not providing enough opportunities for students to use their initiative and to be independent. Whilst teachers' clear instructions enable students to know exactly what they have to do, sometimes they give too much direction and do not present students with choices about which resources to use or how to present their work. Students do carry out research for their projects in social studies and science, and some good work was seen in Year 3 and 6, for example. More opportunities like these need to be provided so that students of all ages carry out independent projects, investigations and problem-solving. These activities will help them to become less dependent on their teachers and more effective learners.

Teachers often question students very effectively to find out what they have learned and understood. This is more common in language arts lessons than in mathematics. Helpful question-and-answer sessions at the beginning of lessons remind the students what they have learned previously. This puts the current lesson into context and provides a good basis on which students can build. Questions are used to assess students' understanding and move it on at the same time. One good example of this was in a Year 4 reading lesson. The children read a short passage and had to identify phrases from which they could infer information about the characters. Probing questions from the teacher such as 'How do you know?' and 'Could you explain why you said that?' really made the students think about the detail of the passage and 'read between the lines'. The teacher directed her questions carefully, making sure that all students

contributed, not just those who raised their hands. In a Year 5 reading lesson, the teacher's questioning successfully challenged children to think about a poem and to recall what they had learned previously about reflections.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Students make acceptable progress as they move through the school. There is however, great inconsistency between classes and between subjects. Students make better progress in language arts than in mathematics for example. The language arts curriculum is clear and provides very good guidance for teachers. Teachers are confident in teaching the various elements and most use the curriculum plans well to prepare their lessons. They are less confident with mathematics and this shows in lessons which are often not practical or interesting enough. Teachers rely on a narrow range of teaching strategies and often pitch the work too low.

The school has a high proportion of students with special educational needs, who generally make satisfactory progress, but they could be doing even better. Students make good progress when they are withdrawn to receive specialised teaching individually or in small groups. In these sessions students are taught specific strategies and skills to help them improve their skills and cope in lessons. However, this is not followed up in regular classes and teachers do not provide opportunities for students to use these skills. The students could make better progress in lessons if teachers used their very good knowledge of individual students more effectively when planning and preparing activities. There is some good practice: for example, sometimes teachers prepare different work for the students with SEN. Too often though, the work is not appropriate for these students and does not build on what they already know, understand and can do. Similarly, the brightest students are not extended enough by the work set. They find it easy and complete it quickly. They need to be set work at a higher level rather than simply being expected to do *more* work at the same level as the rest of the class.

The few ESL students are making good progress when the work is tailored to suit their needs. However, these students are not always receiving suitable help in class lessons. With more appropriate strategies, for example, better use of visual resources, group and paired work and a clearer focus on vocabulary in lessons, they could make more rapid progress.

A new behaviour management policy has been introduced recently but is not yet being implemented consistently. Children are taught by a number of different teachers and they are being given conflicting messages about what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. For example, in many lessons, students are expected to raise their hands before responding. In others, students are allowed to call out and chatter when the teacher is talking, which means that they do not always hear what the teacher and their classmates are saying.

Teachers' aides and teaching assistants provide a very valuable resource but their skills are not always deployed in the most effective way. In a few cases, when teachers give them clear guidance about what they want them to do with specific children and what they are expected to achieve, they are very effective. In many cases however, they have not been given enough direction to make a real difference.

The school has prepared a very clear and useful policy on teaching and learning which promotes high expectations. The principals now need to monitor and evaluate current

practice in classes against these high ideals to identify strengths and areas for school and individual development.

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

The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a strong emphasis on language arts and mathematics. Children are taught all of the other National Curriculum subjects for about the recommended lengths of time. The curriculum for children in the Reception class is matched well to their particular needs and includes a good range of activities that promote their physical, social, emotional and academic development.

Subjects such as music and physical education (PE) are taught by visiting specialists, who teach across the whole school. The demands on these specialist teachers' time from other schools means that PE lessons, for example, are bunched at the end of the week. More evenly spaced lessons would be better for the children's physical development, particularly the younger ones. The three teachers of the junior classes also carry out some specialist teaching, taking each other's classes for social studies, science, health and religious education. This arrangement works well, allowing the teachers to build up their expertise in the subjects and for students to meet different teachers, which prepares them well for high school.

The curriculum is strengthened by some links between subjects, but this is an area that could be improved further. Teachers sometimes help to develop children's literacy skills in subjects such as science and social studies by, for example, extending their vocabulary with the specialist words. Mathematical ideas, such as graphs are seldom used in other subjects. There is still very little use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the school, either as a subject in its own right or as a way of learning in other subjects. The school has sufficient good quality ICT equipment, but there have been some operational problems and the school has not received the specialist support that it expected. Students in Year 6 make appropriate use of ICT to edit pieces of writing, but they have not had enough exposure to ICT earlier in the school to enable them to enter text quickly or to use many of the functions of a word processing program such as cutting and pasting.

Students' work is assessed extensively, particularly in language arts and mathematics. These assessments often consist of tests at the end of sections in the published schemes and involve narrow questions that are closely linked to what has just been taught. Students are not tested on whether they can apply the new idea to a different context. This might be one reason why the students perform less well in examinations at the end of the year, where they have to apply their learning, than they do in the topic tests.

The school is beginning to use portfolios to collect students' work and to show how it improves over time. These portfolios are useful when the work is annotated to indicate why it has been included and dated so that progress can be measured. Some pieces of work are chosen by students and discussed with the teacher. This provides a valuable opportunity to discuss the strengths of the work and also what the next steps should be. This system is not fully implemented and at the moment the school makes too little use of the assessment data to see if children are making as much progress as they should, or to see if some things are being taught more successfully than others. Fewer assessments, using a wider range of measures, including teachers' own observations

and records, would provide better and more manageable information for the school to use.

Assessment procedures for students with SEN are generally satisfactory but require further refinement and improvement. Most of the students on the SEN register have been properly assessed and Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) are written for all. A useful multidisciplinary approach, which includes parents, teachers, principals and other specialists, is used in writing the IEPs. Targets are set for language arts, but not for mathematics, speech and language, or emotional and behavioural difficulties, although students do receive some support in those areas. The IEPs have limited information on students' needs and progress, and do not always provide helpful and specific strategies to support the learners. Although there is regular communication between class teachers and SEN support staff, the information that is shared is not always used to inform teachers' planning. The system for tracking and recording students' progress is not specific or detailed enough to recognise their achievements and identify how they can improve.

How well is the school led and managed?

The two principals have demonstrated good leadership in the way that they have worked together to ensure the smooth transition to one school. They took good advantage of the training that they were both involved in — the National Educational Leadership Programme (NELP) — to agree on plans and priorities for the new school. The amalgamation has been successful and parents are very positive about the way that it had been handled. They spoke of the two sets of staff as being a 'united team' and how they were much happier now that teachers did not have to teach double classes (two year groups in one class).

The principals have produced a shared vision for the school, with a clear focus on improving students' achievement. They have also more recently, with support from the School Development Advisor, prepared a school development plan. The plan is clear, concise and focused well on raising standards by improving teaching and learning, the curriculum, the use of assessment, leadership and management, and involvement of parents. These are well-chosen priorities. The plan is not perfect and the success criteria are not always easily measurable, but, overall, it is a helpful document and a good step forward for the school.

The school is managed well on a day-to-day basis and it provides an orderly and purposeful environment for students who feel cared for and valued. The principals play a big part in this by being very 'visible' around the school and accessible to students, staff and parents.

The way that the principals monitor what is going on in their sites has improved but could still be much better. Teachers are not always following the school's agreed policies, for example, the behaviour policy 'Don't Slip Up', and this leads to inconsistency of practice and confusion for the students. There have been some good initiatives on the infant site, such as teachers observing each other's lessons and regular classroom visits by the principal. The visits are followed up by a written record that is given to the teacher. This practice has helped to establish a climate in which teachers are willing to learn from each other. This good practice is less evident on the juniors' site. So far there have been few opportunities for the principals and teachers to visit one another's sites to monitor and observe lessons.

The school is attempting to enhance the role of subject coordinators by asking them to play a bigger part in monitoring and leading their areas; this is a positive move. Some coordinators have only recently been asked to take on the role and have not yet had the chance to make a significant impact on teaching and learning in their subjects. Subjects such as language arts and mathematics have a coordinator on each site. There have been meetings between the infant and junior teachers and some, albeit limited, monitoring across the school. Coordinators need further training about how to monitor their subjects if they are to improve their leadership and management role.

The school benefits from having well-qualified and experienced staff and relatively small class sizes. The arrangement for some specialist teaching by the Year 4, 5 and 6 teachers for science, social studies, health and religious education works well. The teachers' aides and assistants are a valuable resource, but are not always used in the most effective way: this needs closer monitoring by the principals.

The amount of support for students with special educational needs is good but there are weaknesses in how it is managed. Two trained special needs teachers work with individuals and small groups of students outside of the classroom as well as providing in-class support to the two sites for a total of seven mornings and five afternoon sessions per week. Students also receive additional help in lessons from the teachers' aides who are based at each site. In addition, the school is currently very fortunate to benefit from the voluntary services three mornings a week from an adult with experience in counselling. All this very valuable support is not as effective as it might be because no one has overall responsibility for coordinating and monitoring it. Class teachers are not using the IEPs to help them plan appropriate work for special needs children in class lessons. In some cases, teachers need more help in understanding how to modify their lessons to meet these students' needs. Presently, there is not enough specific support for students who have emotional and behavioural, physical, or speech and language difficulties. The specialist SEN teachers currently focus on students' literacy and numeracy skills and far less on these other areas.

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

Students' personal development

The school provides a positive and welcoming environment where students generally feel secure. There is a policy for behaviour and discipline and a satisfactory range of opportunities to foster students' personal development. However, these opportunities are not yet planned for systematically.

Students' spiritual development is good. Assemblies and class devotions encourage students to reflect about their own personal values and beliefs, and add to the Christian ethos of the school. Religious education (RE) lessons also reinforce the concepts and themes of assemblies and help students to see how to apply Biblical principles in their daily lives. Students are taught songs and choruses which incorporate scriptural themes. They enjoy the songs and know many of them by heart. Many of them are also comfortable praying aloud in class devotions.

Students are gaining a satisfactory understanding of moral principles. In September of this year the school introduced a new discipline programme called 'Don't Slip Up'. Students are aware of its five rules and of the associated rewards and consequences. The rules are displayed in each classroom. The principals and parents are very positive about this new programme, but it is too early to evaluate its impact on students' behaviour as it is not yet being used consistently across the school.

Students are given some responsibilities around the school, such as being lunchtime and class monitors, house leaders, and ringing the bell, which contribute well to their social development. Year 3 students help to clear up in the lunch room and watch out for younger children on the playground. There are plans to form a student council, and although this will involve mainly junior students, there will be some representation from Year 3. However, at present there are still not enough occasions where children take responsibility in class and work in groups. There are a few examples of students working together in small groups and in pairs in lessons, but in general, it is not yet a well developed feature in most classrooms. There are good opportunities though, for older children to play team games in after-school clubs and this teaches them the value of working together.

The social studies curriculum focuses to a large extent on the Cayman Islands and provides a good understanding of local culture and traditions. This is further enhanced by parents who are invited into the school from time to time to talk about 'old' Cayman and share their talents in local crafts or cookery. Students confidently sing the National Song at assemblies. There are some opportunities for students to learn about other cultures, for example, in religious education, social studies and through special events. However, these opportunities are not planned for systematically, or mapped where they occur in the curriculum and, so they are less well-developed than they could be.

Links with parents and the community

The school has established very good links with parents and the community and these contribute greatly to the positive atmosphere in the school and to the learning experiences that the children enjoy. Communication between school and home is excellent and parents are very supportive. Parents are seen as important to the life of the school. The school's recent development plan states that one of its priorities is to

'ensure that parents are informed and involved in the work of the school'. It already shows a good deal of success in meeting this aim.

Parents are kept very well informed about what is going on in the school. Monthly Parent Teachers Association (PTA) meetings are held at alternate sites, where the principals take turns to give an update on the work of the school. This helps to reinforce the cohesion between the two sites. Monthly calendars of events are sent home. The infant site uses 'reminder bracelets' and notes are often posted on the fence near the pick-up areas. Parents are called in by the school whenever a child receives four or more behaviour slips, or whenever one of the principals feels there is a need to discuss a particular situation. They are also contacted when children have been doing especially well. Parents report that communication is good, and the PTA is very active and supportive.

Parents are encouraged to get involved with the work of the school. The handbook for parents has been updated and there is an application form for parents to volunteer to help in different ways. Some parents help in the lunchroom at the infant site, accompany students on field trips, or help with sports or jobs such as photocopying. All the after-school clubs for juniors are run by parents.

Useful grade level meetings are held at the start of each term, when classroom teachers explain procedures and show parents how they can help and support their children. Parents are given a scheme of work and each class teacher explains it and gives opportunities for parents to ask questions or make comments. The school has produced a new report format and parents are happy with the information it gives. The regular reporting sessions each term provide good opportunities for parents to ask for further detail about the reports. Parents appreciate the fact that the principals and staff are always ready to listen to their concerns or answer their questions.

There are very effective links with the community. Students are involved in Rotary's Poison Prevention Day, the Pirates' Week art competition and Cayman National Bank's student saver's club, for example. At Christmas, students bring food items and make and deliver hampers for house-bound people in the community. The PTA has recently established a 'Befrienders' club, which involves members of the community in sharing their knowledge and expertise with the students. The community police officer visits the school regularly. He gives safety talks to students and also rides on the school bus from time to time to ensure that students are behaving appropriately and are using their seat belts. He teaches the Year 6 DARE programme, on drug use and abuse.

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

The school's arrangements for supporting and guiding students and looking after their welfare are good in some respects, although there is room for improvement. Staff care about the students and know them and their families well. They try to ensure that all children are looked after. For example, they organised the building of ramps to make the classrooms accessible to children in wheelchairs.

The school monitors attendance closely. **Students' attendance** is very good and parents say that their children enjoy going to school and are happy there. Truancy is rare, but where this has occurred, the school has taken appropriate steps, supported by the Education Department, to address it.

The school's pastoral links with the high school are satisfactory and help to ease the transition for students. Year 6 students are helped to prepare for high school by spending two days there in the summer term. The special needs teacher from the high school also starts to get to know the prospective new Year 7 students by observing them in their junior classrooms. There is some liaison between the Year 6 teacher and English and mathematics teachers at the high school. These subject links are still mainly informal and more regular discussions between primary and high school teachers would help to increase their awareness of what is expected of students in both schools.

The resources for learning, such as text books, are generally good, but there have been some major problems with information technology that have hampered progress in this area. Some of the classroom furniture, fixtures and fittings are old and do little to enhance the learning environment for students. Also, the use of desks at different heights makes it difficult for children to work well in small groups.

The school is fortunate in having libraries on both sites, but the rooms are uninviting and not well utilised. There is also no room that can accommodate all of the students, which means that there is nowhere inside where the whole school can assemble. Indoor lunchrooms at both sites are small. Parents have expressed concern about the lack of a covered walkway from the points at both sites where students are dropped off. If it is raining, there is no way to get students to the classrooms without them getting very wet.

WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATHEMATICS?

Language arts and literacy across the curriculum

Students make good progress in language arts. They start in the Reception class, confident enough to express themselves but with a fairly narrow range of vocabulary. They enjoy all the activities organised for them, gradually learning new words and starting to recognise the names and sounds of the alphabet. The children extend their language especially well when they work individually with the teacher, who encourages them to use new words and to express themselves at length. They develop their confidence further, learn to co-operate and respond positively to one another during role play activities which they particularly enjoy.

The children build on these early foundations well as they progress through the school. By the end of the infants, most are reading and writing at grade level. Whilst most students can read accurately, a few have gaps in their understanding of letters and sounds. They are unable to sound out new words in their books or use clues in the picture or story to help them. They rely too heavily on the teacher or other adults to help them. Students are developing competent writing skills. They can spell common words correctly and can make a good attempt at unfamiliar ones. Most can correctly punctuate their sentences with capitals and full stops. Some are beginning to notice and use quotation, exclamation and question marks. Whilst students master many of these skills in isolation, they have too few opportunities to consolidate their understanding by using them in extended pieces of writing.

Students in Years 4, 5 and 6 continue to progress well. By Year 6, nearly all can read fluently and with good understanding. They talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors and books, citing a wide range from Mark Twain to Judy Blume. Their written work is usually neat and they use an appropriate range of vocabulary to express themselves. Sentences are generally well constructed with correct punctuation.

Students, particularly the older ones, have some good opportunities to develop their research skills and to draft and edit their work, using a word processor. However, they have few chances to use the libraries on either site to research topics or simply to enjoy the different books. The libraries are a valuable resource for learning but are not currently being used to best effect. They provide an ideal setting in which to display reviews on books that students have read and enjoyed. Children seldom use a dictionary or thesaurus to improve their writing or to find out the meanings of new words.

The quality of teaching in language arts is generally good and helps students make effective progress. The well-organised curriculum plans make it clear to teachers what they should be teaching and in what order. The new curriculum has been introduced and implemented successfully on both sites.

Teachers know their students well and care about them. They create a warm and positive atmosphere in which children feel secure and ready to learn. In a few classes, students' work is displayed on the walls and this gives them a sense of pride and shows them that their efforts are valued.

Teachers introduce their lessons well, often telling the students right at the start what they are going to be learning and reminding them of what they learned previously. Their clear explanations and instructions mean that the students know exactly what is expected of them and how to succeed.

In some cases, teachers use their expertise and imagination to structure lessons so that students with special educational needs are well supported and learn effectively. This was apparent in a good Year 4 reading lesson. The teacher knew that the task would be too difficult for one of the students. She had therefore prepared activities to help him to move on from his existing levels of understanding. He cut and pasted individual letters to make words from his reading book, then made them into sentences, reading them to an adult helper when he was finished. This gave him great satisfaction and, at the same time, enabled him to practise his word building skills. In too many lessons however, these students are expected to do the same work as the rest of the class and their individual needs are not always met successfully.

The brightest children in each class are making reasonable progress but are capable of doing even better. They are seldom challenged by the work; they find it easy and complete it quickly. Occasionally this leads to them becoming bored and disrupting the work of others. Students are enthusiastic about their work and willingly accept the challenges offered. However, able students generally do the same work as the rest of the class in language arts lessons. Opportunities are missed to develop their learning more rapidly by providing work at higher levels.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

This is an area which is yet to be developed in both schools. There are a few instances where students use their literacy skills or give presentations about their work in other subjects. One such opportunity was seen in a social studies lesson for Year 6 students. They used the Internet to research information about the history of the Cayman Islands and presented this to the rest of the class. These opportunities give students confidence in speaking in front of an audience. They also show them how their reading and writing skills can be beneficial to other aspects of their work. Teachers need to consider providing these sorts of opportunities more often when planning their lessons in different subjects.

Mathematics and numeracy across the curriculum

Students generally make satisfactory progress in mathematics and by Year 6, they are achieving standards that are roughly in line with other schools in the Cayman Islands. However, students make better progress in some classes than others.

The main reason for this uneven progress is that the teaching varies too much. All teachers spend the recommended time teaching mathematics, but some are more confident in the subject than others. The confident teachers plan lessons that give the children the chance to explore what they are learning, to try out different ideas and to ask questions. As a result, students develop a good understanding of the work and use it in different contexts. In many other lessons, students spend most of their time working through tasks, such as practising calculations. They learn the techniques to carry out these calculations in the way that they are set out in the exercise book or worksheet, but they are often unable to use what they know in a new situation. For example, children can successfully tackle calculations such as ' $12 - 2 = ?$ ', ' $13 - 3 = ?$ ' and ' $14 - 4 = ?$ ', but they are thrown by the question "How can you make 17 into 10?". In contrast, younger infants learning about graphs are developing a firm grasp of the concepts that the length of a line can represent a number, that you can spot the biggest number at a glance and get the difference between two numbers by seeing how much longer one line is than another. This good understanding is a result of the way the children have been able to move real objects about to make their graphs and to ask questions after the teacher's careful and clear explanations. Similarly, students in Year 6 benefit from talking and writing about their mathematics. They are developing a firm grasp of the wide range of specialist words used in the subject, which helps them to analyse and solve problems more easily.

Children behave well in almost all lessons. They are attentive to the teacher and settle quickly to the work they are given. In those lessons where the teacher asks questions, most respond well, although some students are reluctant to reply and seem afraid of giving the wrong answer. Some teachers are successful in getting children to reply by asking questions which have more than one correct answer, such as how a calculation could be done, or by taking answers from several children rather than declaring each one right or wrong. These techniques let the teacher give credit to a number of different responses and encourage the students to develop confidence and understanding. When children are not answering, the teacher is not able to tell how well they understand or to spot any misconceptions they are developing.

The school covers all aspects of the mathematics curriculum and the work progresses appropriately from one year group to the next. Students' work is assessed very frequently, often as part of the published scheme that the school uses. The school has just developed a system for recording students' progress, which should prove useful. The subject coordinator is overseeing the development of this system and has already begun to monitor work in the subject across both sites. She has a good grasp of the way the subject should be developed and is well placed to help take it forward. The strengths that already exist in the way some teachers work in mathematics need to be shared across the whole school and the role of the coordinator will be important in making this happen.

Numeracy across the curriculum

There were some very good examples of mathematical concepts being used and reinforced in a Year 4 PE lesson where the teacher used the number of throws which hit the target to give the fraction of the class who were successful: “Only four out of seventeen of you! Why, that’s not even a quarter!” In the context of the excellent relationships this teacher had with the class, the comment spurred them on to greater efforts. Unfortunately, other teachers make little use of such incidental comments, which help to develop children’s understanding by presenting ideas in different contexts.

