

GEORGE TOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Post Inspection Summary Report



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PART I: INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT, SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE POST-INSPECTION VISIT

1. George Town Primary School was first inspected on November 20th – 24th 2000. This was a full inspection, which covered the aspects outlined in the *Handbook for the Self-Assessment and Inspection of Schools*; the subjects taught, including language arts; mathematics; science; religious education and special educational needs.
2. At the time of the first inspection, the following were judged to be key strengths of the school and key issues for action:

Key Strengths

- a dedicated and committed principal and staff;
- on-going in-service training;
- strong community involvement;
- a good range of extra-curricular activities;
- high quality programmes for pupils with special educational needs;
- a good health and safety record;
- a litter free and well-maintained environment;
- a strong Christian ethos;
- a strong emphasis on enhancing pupils' social and moral development;
- well-mannered and polite pupils who enjoy school and attend regularly.

Key Issues for Action

- introduce effective measures to address aspects of under-achievement in individual subjects and aspects of the curriculum such as literacy and numeracy;
- clarify and strengthen the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team, in relation to developing and monitoring the curriculum ;
- introduce effective measures to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning;
- ensure teaching styles provide more opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in lessons, and to carry out investigations and develop research and problem-solving skills;
- reduce the frequency of formal testing of pupils' achievement in the core subjects and introduce efficient and effective arrangements for assessing achievement in all subjects.

3. A team of five inspectors made a post-inspection visit to the school on 28th – 30th October 2003. Post-inspection visits are short, follow-up inspections for schools previously inspected. A post-inspection visit does not attempt to cover all aspects inspected in a full inspection. The purpose of a post-inspection visit is to assess and report on the progress made since the first inspection in relation to the key issues for the school and the other issues.
4. Over the two days of classroom observations at George Town Primary School, the team visited 47 lessons or parts of lessons in language arts, mathematics and science. In addition, interviews were held with the principal and staff and discussions were carried out with students. Before the inspection visit, meetings for parents were arranged to give them an opportunity to express their views on the improvements made by the school. The inspection team also reviewed a range of documentation from the school, including a progress report on the action plan and a sample of students' work.

CHANGES IN THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils

5. The school continues to admit pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 (4 years 7 months to 10 years 9 months). At the time of the post-inspection visit, 435 students were on roll compared to 438 at the time of the full inspection. Currently, 393 of the pupils are Caymanian.
6. The school reports that there are at present 168 pupils that it considers as having some level of special educational need (SEN). This number includes pupils who are involved in the Cognitive Acceleration Programme (CAP), pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) and pupils who are being seen by the counsellor. Fifty-seven pupils have been formally assessed by the educational psychologist.

Staff

7. There were 26.6 full-time equivalent teachers, including the principal at the time of the original inspection. At the time of the post-inspection, there were 28 teachers including the principal.

PART II: ACTION PLANNING AND PROGRESS IN RELATION TO THE KEY ISSUES

ACTION PLANNING

8. The initial inspection report was released in September 2001. The school submitted an action plan in November 2001.
9. The school responded positively to the inspection findings appropriately forming working-groups from different grade levels across the school to address the key issues. The subject issues for action were included within the response to Key Issue 1. The sections of the action plan were written to a common format. On the whole, the actions described within the plan suitably addressed the key issues. A positive feature of the school's approach has been that progress in implementing the plan has been regularly monitored by the working-groups and the senior management team.
10. The findings from the post-inspection visit confirm the school's view that, overall, progress in responding to the initial inspection report has been at least sound. This is particularly commendable given that there was considerable disruption to the school and a significant loss of instructional time during 2002/3 due to severe weather conditions and flooding.

PROGRESS IN RELATION TO THE KEY ISSUES

KEY ISSUE 1 : Introduce effective measures to address aspects of under-achievement in individual subjects and aspects of the curriculum such as literacy and numeracy.

11. There is not sufficient standardised assessment data available on pupil performance to indicate reliable trends in standards since the inspection in 2000. However, inspection evidence indicates that the school has carefully considered and introduced a number of measures that have potential to combat under-achievement. Some of these measures are still at the planning stage and others have not yet been fully developed and implemented. The school now needs to prioritise, complete, implement and monitor the existing plans.
12. Progress in tackling underachievement is strongest in mathematics followed by language arts. Standards of achievement in both subjects are generally in line with those expected for pupils of this age. There has been less progress in science, where too little attention is paid in lessons to developing pupils' investigative skills and there are gaps in some teachers' expertise in science.
13. Considerable efforts have been made to raise the standards of achievement of pupils of all levels of ability, and some effective additional provision has been made for the least and the most able pupils. The work in regular classes, however, is not always sufficiently matched to pupils' different but developing needs.

KEY ISSUE 2: Clarify and strengthen the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team, in relation to developing and monitoring the curriculum.

KEY ISSUE 3: Introduce effective measures to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning.

14. Progress has been sound generally and, in key areas, good progress has been made. There are high expectations of all staff and a common sense of purpose and a commitment to school improvement across the school. These are extremely positive features which have supported the school's good progress and development overall to date.
15. The school has a well-defined organisational structure and has established effective supporting systems and strategies. These ensure that staff and, as appropriate, parents, are consulted, informed and involved in the school's development. Committees and working-groups have been set up to give the steer in aspects of the school's work. In addition, teachers work together in grade-level teams to support the teaching and learning in the year groups. The senior management team appropriately oversees the operation of the committees and working-groups and there are effective processes in place to ensure that the work is co-ordinated.
16. Since the first inspection, the school has introduced or has plans to introduce, a number of potentially useful measures to support curriculum development and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. However, there is as yet, no clear strategy in place to ensure that this is being done in a systematic way. Therefore this remains an area for development.

KEY ISSUE 4: Ensure teaching styles provide more opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in lessons, and to carry out investigations and develop research and problem-solving skills.

17. Good progress has been made in ensuring that pupils are actively involved in lessons through a range of practical activities and through tasks which develop their problem-solving skills. Pupils are also provided with a range of opportunities to carry out and develop their research skills. However, the availability of internet and computer access across the school is limited and restricts opportunities for pupils to extend their research activities. There are occasional, good examples of pupils carrying out investigations in mathematics and science. In general, however, investigative work is not yet effectively used to support pupils' learning, and does not enhance pupils' attainment and the quality of their learning sufficiently, especially in science.

KEY ISSUE 5: Reduce the frequency of formal testing of pupils' achievement in the core subjects and introduce efficient and effective arrangements for assessing achievement in all subjects.

18. The school has undertaken extensive work in assessing, recording and reporting pupils' achievements, and has made a good start in addressing this key issue. The school has appropriately reduced the frequency of formal testing and introduced more manageable assessment arrangements. This has had a significant impact on the curriculum, making more effective use of lesson time for teaching rather than for revising. The school has recognised that it now needs

to consolidate the improvements that have resulted from the actions taken into a coherent school policy on assessment, recording and reporting.

PART III: SUBJECTS

LANGUAGE ARTS

19. Progress has been at least sound against all the issues for action. Considerable effort has been made to improve the quality of the teaching and standards of achievement. The recently introduced language arts programme, which provides a comprehensive coverage of key aspects of language arts, is making a very positive contribution to this work. However, teachers are not all equally familiar and confident with the new materials and it is not yet fully implemented in all classes.
20. The quality of teaching is sound or better in the majority of language arts lessons with no marked differences between the quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2. The recently introduced published language arts scheme is helping teachers to raise expectations by mapping progression in the work and influencing planning. There is some excellent teaching in language arts in all year groups that could usefully be exemplified and spread throughout the school.
21. Overall, learning is sound or better. Most pupils make steady progress in language arts. Pupils are generally eager to learn and their attitudes to learning are good.
22. In the lessons observed and the pupils' work seen, standards of reading and writing were generally sound. However, in all year groups, there are substantial numbers of pupils who read very well and with good understanding, and there are examples, especially in Year 6, of very high standards of writing both from boys and girls. There are also, a significant minority of pupils in all year groups whose reading and writing skills are below expectations for their age and are being provided with additional support. Pupils, in general, speak confidently and clearly.

MATHEMATICS

23. The school has responded positively to the inspection report, creating an effective team from different grade-levels across the school to address the issues. The school has made a good start in addressing most issues for action resulting from the first inspection.
24. The quality of teaching ranges from lessons with outstanding features to those with shortcomings in important areas. Overall, teaching in mathematics is sound. In the best lessons, planning is effective with clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils at the start of lessons; resources are well used; there is good pace and activities are well matched to the learning objective. In some of the weaker lessons, pupils are often given the same work whatever their prior attainment.

25. The quality of learning is sound overall. Pupils have very positive attitudes to mathematics and many say it is their favourite subject. By Year 6, most pupils use number bonds and tables well to calculate and solve problems. Pupils' abilities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum in open-ended and investigative ways are not well developed.
26. In the lessons observed and the pupils' work seen, standards in mathematics are in line with age expectations in most grade levels. By Year 6, achievement in national tests shows that one in four pupils reaches the higher levels and all but a very small minority achieve an acceptable basic level.

SCIENCE

27. The school has addressed a range of issues in science. However, the lack of a specific action plan for science has limited the school's ability to focus on those issues that are central to the development of pupils' learning in science. Progress has been limited in a number of key areas, particularly in relation to developing pupils' understanding of the scientific process.
28. The quality of teaching ranges from lessons with many good features, some of which are outstanding, to lessons that require substantial improvement. Overall, the teaching of science is too variable and insufficient progress has been made in improving quality. Too little attention is paid in lessons to developing pupils' investigative skills and some teachers' lack of science subject expertise stands in the way of raising achievement.
29. In the lessons observed and the pupils' work seen, standards are variable. There is too much disparity in the way individual pupils are achieving at present. Pupils' factual knowledge is in line with age related expectations particularly in relation to life process and living things. However, pupils' grasp of the scientific process is not secure as they get older. Too few pupils attain the highest level in the national tests at the end of Year 6;

PART IV: CONCLUSIONS

30. The school responded positively to the first inspection report and has used it as a steer for its work. The school has effectively used the inspection process and the resulting report to support its own improvement and development processes. The progress made in response to the key issues and to most of the subject issues for action identified by the first inspection has been at least sound. In many key areas, progress has been good. The school is to be commended on its hard work and efforts.
31. The school has given a great deal of attention to getting the school-improvement processes right, maintaining a positive ethos and establishing a culture where there is a strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils achieve as well as can be expected. As a result, it is well placed to use the findings from the post-inspection to further support its development.