



## External Evaluation Report

### PACE High School

April 2008

Lead Evaluator: Garry Bignell



*PACE High School*



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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## Introduction

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

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

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

This was the first external evaluation for PACE High School. It took place during the week beginning 21<sup>st</sup> April 2008 and involved a team of two evaluators. In addition, provision for special educational needs and for modern foreign languages was evaluated during February and March 2008. The following aspects of the school's work were looked at:

- Standards achieved and progress made by students
- The effectiveness of teaching and how well students learn
- The quality of students' personal development
- The quality of the curriculum
- How well the school is led and managed
- The quality of the support and guidance offered to students, the level of care for their welfare, and support for their attendance and punctuality
- The effectiveness of links with parents and the community
- How well the school is preparing students to become 'Educated Caymanians'

- How well teachers help students to learn and use their literacy, numeracy and information technology skills across all of their school work.

The evaluation team gathered evidence in the following ways:

- 30 lessons were observed, in all subjects offered.
- School documents, including teachers' planning, were looked at and students' work was scrutinised.
- Evaluators observed an assembly, morning tutorials, breaks and lunch times and after-school activities.
- Evaluators spoke with students and took their views from the questionnaires into account.
- A meeting of the Student Council was attended.
- Discussions took place with teachers, other members of PACE and shared staff.
- Comments from parents at the meeting before the evaluation and from the questionnaires were taken into account.

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

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

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

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

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

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



**Mary Bowerman**  
Acting Director  
Education Standards and Assessment Unit

## Executive summary of the report

### Background

PACE High School is one of four schools on the George Hicks Campus, which was divided up in September 2006. The decision to implement the 'schools within a school' model came after the school had outgrown its campus, exacerbated by the damage caused by Hurricane Ivan in September 2004. For two years after Ivan, students experienced part-time education and shifts in order to cater for the numbers on the campus.

PACE High School has 258 students on roll, with roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. There are 21 students who are learning English as a second language (ESL) and a further 22 who have special educational needs (SEN).

The school has a motto: "Excellence through Perseverance". The name PACE is an acronym for **P**erseverance, **A**spiration, **C**onsistency, **E**xcellence.

This was the first external evaluation for PACE High School. It took place during the week beginning 21<sup>st</sup> April 2008 and involved a team of two evaluators. In addition, provision for special educational needs and for modern foreign languages was evaluated during February and March 2008.

The findings of this evaluation must be viewed in the context of the relentless pace of change that PACE staff and students have experienced over the past few years.

### How effective is the school overall?

PACE High School provides an adequate standard of education for its students. The school has strengths in several aspects of its work, particularly its links with parents and the wider community. Students say they are happy at the school and would recommend it to others. The extent to which the school prepares students to become 'Educated Caymanians', as defined by the 2005 consensus document, is satisfactory.

In the short time since the reorganisation of the George Hicks High School, the school leader and staff at PACE have faced a period of rapid change. It is to their credit that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and that resources are managed effectively to support students' learning.

There are significant weaknesses in the core skills of literacy and numeracy when students enter the school and these persist as they progress through the year groups. Students generally make slow progress. A range of strategies is being put in place to improve achievement, but there is no available evidence of their impact.

The quality of teaching is adequate overall, but there are strengths within individual teachers' practice. Some of the very best teaching involved: good use of ICT by teacher and students; stimulating tasks which maintained

interest and moved learning forward at a good pace; efficient organisation of resources; skilled questioning that built on prior learning; and opportunities for developing student leadership. Teachers are very experienced and benefit from the school's good guidance on lesson planning and delivery. There are mutually respectful relationships between students and staff. The behaviour of students in class and around the school is usually satisfactory, although in a few lessons it can hinder their learning. Teachers' marking of work is too variable and often does not provide students with enough information about the standard of their work or how to improve it.

The curriculum is sound and is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities in which many students participate. Teachers are starting to become familiar with the Cayman Islands national curriculum and moving towards the use of attainment levels<sup>1</sup> to assess work. The provision for students with learning difficulties is adequate.

The school takes care to ensure that students are safe and well looked after. Attendance has improved.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Cayman Islands National Curriculum documents on [www.brighterfutures.gov.ky](http://www.brighterfutures.gov.ky)

Communication with parents and links with the community are good. The school draws well on members of the community to enrich and support students' experiences at school. Opportunities are sought to give students insights into the world of work and broaden their career horizons.

The school leader has quickly established a clear direction for the school, focused on raising standards of achievement in the core skills and improving teaching and learning. There is, though, insufficient monitoring of initiatives and

their impact on achievement. Performance data are not used well to track students' progress. Lesson observations take place, but there is no regular scrutiny of students' work or checking of teacher's records. The school runs very effectively from day-to-day and resources are managed well.

The school has the capacity to improve with continued support from the campus director and learning community leader.

### What the school does well

- Relationships with parents and involvement of the community to support learning
- The way in which the school supports students and cares for their well-being
- Provision of extra-curricular activities and enrichment of the curriculum
- Effective management of resources and the use of ICT as a tool for learning

### What needs to improve?

- The extent to which leadership and management monitor and evaluate the work of the school
- The quality of teaching, so that more lessons enable students to make faster progress
- The use of data to more effectively assess and track students' progress

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

## Information about the school and the evaluation team

### School contact information

Type of school:	Government
Age range of students:	10 - 15 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	258
School address:	73 Academy Way PO Box 1809 George Town Grand Cayman KY1- 1109 Cayman Islands
Telephone number:	(345) 516 0370
Fax number:	(345)949 9490 / (345) 516 0369
Name of Principal:	June Elliott
Email address:	jelliott@ghhs.edu.ky

### Information about the school

The school is one of four on the George Hicks Campus, which was divided up in September 2006. The schools are separated by chain link fences. Each serves around 250 students. The decision to implement the 'schools within a school' model came after the school had outgrown its campus, exacerbated by the damage caused by Hurricane Ivan in September 2004. For two years after Ivan, students experienced part-time education and shifts in order to cater for the numbers on the campus.

Since the split, there have been a number of new staff recruited to support the schools and students, for example, two educational psychologists and a special educational needs co-ordinator work across the campus. There is a cross-campus Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) that supports students who have learning and behavioural difficulties. Each of the four schools has a leader and deputy leader, plus, since September 2007, a senior teacher to help with overall management. In addition, several management functions, including maintenance and the budget, are handled centrally by the campus director.

At PACE High School, there are 258 students on roll (135 boys and 123 girls), with four tutor groups in each year. There are twenty-one students for whom English is a second language; one of these receives support from the English as a Second Language (ESL) peripatetic teacher.

There are 22 students on the special educational needs (SEN) register and four have Individual Education Plans (IEPs). A number of support staff provide in-class and withdrawal support for students with SEN. Some students also attend the cross-campus TLC for intensive support for literacy and numeracy.

There are 16 full-time teachers assigned to PACE High School, including the leader and deputy leader. Students are also taught by teachers who work in other George Hicks campus schools, who are known as 'shared staff', for art, design technology, physical education, life skills, drama and music.

### The evaluation team

Lead:	Garry Bignell	Overseas evaluator; also looked at Spanish
Team:	Edna Platts Steve Crowley	Local occasional evaluator Overseas evaluator (looking at special educational needs)

## Commentary on evaluation findings

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

1. Overall, students arrive at the school in Year 7 with standards of literacy and mathematics below those expected for their age. Levels of literacy as measured by language and reading tests are low, with about three-quarters of Year 9 students at basic or below basic levels in reading. A very high number (approximately a quarter of the cohort) score poorly or very poorly in mathematics tests in all year groups.
2. The standard of students' work in the vast majority of lessons, and in their books, is also below the level expected. Standards vary from year to year, with indications that the current Year 7 are achieving slightly better results than students in Years 8 and 9.
3. There are no significant differences in the progress made by boys and girls, although data suggest that girls appear to make less progress initially, but catch up and overtake boys by Year 9. The school does not compare performance by gender, ethnicity or by Caymanian or other nationality.

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

4. Overall students' personal development is adequate.
5. The school promotes an awareness and understanding of those less fortunate. For example, students have contributed to the local relief efforts for hurricane victims of neighbouring countries as well as the Cayman Islands Cancer Society. Weekly assemblies include prayer, choruses and Bible reading. Students are respectful during assemblies. There are also opportunities for supporting students' spiritual development through tutorials. Students are encouraged to reflect on their blessings and to give thanks in prayer. They also pray for their fellow students and others with specific needs. In lessons, however, teachers offer few opportunities for students to develop their own set of values through discussion and reflection.
6. Students feel that PACE is a good school and that their teachers expect them to do well. They know right from wrong. School-wide classroom management strategies have been put in place and behaviour rules are posted in all classrooms so that students know the standard expected. Several teachers also use praise appropriately. Most students respond positively in lessons where teachers have high expectations for behaviour. They show respect for adults and each other. In a few lessons, poor behaviour by some students interferes with the learning of others. A no-tolerance policy on bullying is in place, but there are isolated incidents of verbal bullying in particular, which teachers sometimes ignore. The life skills lessons for this term focus on conflict resolution and are designed to help students improve peer relationships. A lesson on making healthy choices proved helpful to students. Around the campus, students are well supervised and behaviour is acceptable.
7. Representatives from each tutor group belong to the student council. They meet weekly with a staff member and present suggestions and concerns from their classmates. In an observed meeting, students came up with creative ways to implement new initiatives. However, only a few council members had actually discussed issues with their tutor group before the meeting, which limited the involvement of other students in decision-making. Prefects mainly assist in the canteen at lunch. Their role could be expanded to extend their leadership skills.
8. Relationships between teachers and students are generally good. Some teachers also encourage co-operation among students by providing opportunities for them to work collaboratively. This worked particularly well in a social studies lesson where small groups had co-operative learning activities. Each student had the opportunity to reflect on their strengths before choosing how they would contribute to their project. There were too few opportunities for such co-operative learning



in other subjects, especially in the lower sets.

9. Other than in a social studies and religious education lesson, there were not many references in lessons to promote students' cultural awareness. However, students gain knowledge and appreciation of their own culture and other cultures through school activities, projects and classroom displays. Caribbean writers were featured on some classroom bulletin boards. A Commonwealth Day programme was presented by a group of students and some

students participate in local festivals such as Pirate's Week and Batabano.

10. To promote a healthy lifestyle, the school offers the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) programme that is run by the Royal Cayman Islands Police, to educate students about misuse of drugs. There has not yet been any evaluation of the effectiveness of this programme. A school nurse, a dental hygienist and a dentist provide preventive care.

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

11. Overall, the quality of teaching at PACE High School is adequate with some strengths in individual teachers' practice. Of the 30 lessons observed, nearly half were graded adequate and a further 13 were judged good or very good. Three were found to be unsatisfactory.

12. The best teaching was not confined to one or two subjects or year groups, as it was a feature of several teachers' lessons, both amongst PACE and shared staff. In these very good lessons, students enjoyed mutually respectful relationships with teachers, who demonstrated a clear understanding of the best ways students of this age learn. In each case, the lesson was very well organised and there were high expectations of work and behaviour. There were ample opportunities for collaborative learning and, in an excellent Year 7 English lesson, good development of student leadership by allocating group leaders to each table to ensure others remained focused and completed the task.

13. Other features of the best practice included the teachers' use of stimulating tasks which kept students' interest and moved learning on at a good pace; skilful questioning that built on prior learning and helped clarify students' thinking and a strong focus on students' personal development. More teaching of this quality is needed if students are to make up ground in their learning and achieve the standards expected for their age.

14. There is a teaching and learning policy and "lesson planning reminders" which help teachers to plan effective lessons. Staff are well qualified and very experienced – nine have more than 20 years experience and two have over 30 years service.

15. In the weakest lessons, students made little progress due to a poor match of activities to the ability level or prior knowledge of the students. Teachers of these lessons also demonstrated weak behaviour management skills and often spoke for long periods, causing students to lose concentration.

16. The quality of teachers' marking is too variable – even within the same subject. Some teachers are becoming familiar with the new national curriculum levels of attainment and using these to grade students' work.

17. In some subjects, such as social studies and drama, effective use is made of rubrics so that students know what they need to do to complete a good piece of work. Much of the work produced by students in top sets and in Year 9 was well marked with close attention to detail. However, the majority of marking consists of ticks, initials and dates with little or nothing to provide any feedback on the quality of the work or indicate areas for improvement. In mathematics, there is little expectation that students will do corrections in order to learn from their mistakes. This lack of a common approach to marking makes it difficult for students to know how they are doing and difficult for senior leaders to monitor students' progress.

## What is the quality of the curriculum?

18. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a good range of creative subjects, such as visual art, drama and music. Music is a strength of the campus and students benefit from opportunities to learn an instrument and participate in the band. Around 200 students from all year groups and sets across the campus attend band practice regularly. The teachers' approach is one of high expectations, established routines and firm but friendly relationships to which the students respond extremely well. These sessions are very beneficial for students' personal development as well as their achievement in music.
19. Most aspects of the curriculum and how it is organised and timetabled fall outside of the control of the school, as they are designed at a whole-campus level to accommodate the shared staff and common teaching areas. There are only two life skills teachers for the whole campus, which results in students receiving only one lesson per week. Students' personal development would be supported further by an increase in this worthwhile provision.
20. The school aims to meet the needs of its most able students who have been identified as gifted by providing some enrichment activities for them. A variety of extra-curricular activities – from which all students can benefit – are available to them and can help develop particular talents such as performing and creative arts, chess and various sporting opportunities.
21. The school attempts to cater for less able students in the lower sets or through sessions in the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) and this is generally effective. However, students in these sets are not given the opportunity to study Spanish; the time is used instead for extra reading lessons. Sixty five students are currently not benefiting from learning a modern language. This is a whole campus issue and consideration is being given to how Spanish can be provided to all students.
22. The campus and school leadership have already recognised that the school is not building enough on work that students have done in the primary schools. In most subject areas, teachers are not aware of what students have learnt in their primary school classes, though some try to find out what students know about a topic before they teach it, which is good practice.
23. The curriculum is enriched by a range of after-school and lunchtime activities, ranging from art and technology to science and PACE broadcasting. When asked, nearly all students said that they take part in extra-curricular learning opportunities and some students are torn between attending two or more sessions which are offered simultaneously. This impressive range of enrichment opportunities is a strength.

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

24. Provision for students with special educational needs is adequate overall.
25. The quality of the teaching observed ranged from unsatisfactory to good. In all cases, there was a strong correlation between teaching and students' progress.
26. Where teaching was most effective, teachers had good subject knowledge resulting in clear explanations of the learning objective and how it would build on what students had already learned. In a science lesson with Year 9, for example, the demonstration experiment was well prepared and presented in a logical manner that helped the students to think in terms of cause and effect. Skilful prompts were used to help students make links with prior learning which brought meaning to the lesson content. In response, the students thought at deeper levels and asked pertinent questions to gain better understanding. Key words were used effectively to extend the students' science vocabulary. In an English lesson with Year 7, students were encouraged to use their imagination by predicting the next part of a story they were

reading. The teacher provided helpful prompts to extend their thinking beyond their initial response.

27. Teaching was unsatisfactory where the students were unclear as to what they were expected to know, understand or do as a result of the lesson. Students were treated respectfully at all times, but the teaching methods used were not well suited to the needs or age of the students.
28. Overall, the students make sound progress in their personal development with the exception of a very small minority of students with severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school is not effectively meeting the needs of this small number of students.
29. During the SEN evaluation, conversations with students indicated that they view the school as supportive. A few felt that only some teachers were very caring and helpful, but they all agreed that there were staff they could go to if they needed help.
30. The school has worked hard to create this supportive ethos. Policies, procedures relating to, for example, positive approaches to school discipline have been drawn up and implemented. The atmosphere seems friendly and welcoming. Nevertheless, there were occasions when some teachers used harsh words to correct minor infringements of school rules. Others were assertive, but nurturing, in the way they managed such incidents; this approach was consistently more effective and enabled the students concerned to continue interacting with others without feeling stressed.
31. Procedures to promote good behaviour around the school have been developed, but students were unanimous in their view that the vast majority of incidents that lead to suspension occur outside of the classroom or immediately after entering the classroom.
32. Some staff felt that information about students is not always well communicated between the various professionals that are involved in intervention for students with SEN. For example, teachers reported that they were unaware of strategies or approaches being used with individual students attending the TLC. Others said that they did not know which students had individual education plans (IEPs).
33. Students spoke positively of their experiences with the school counsellors. Even those who had never had cause to visit one recognized that they were beneficial to the student population. Records of students' achievements and progress are documented and made available to parents.
34. The provision for students with SEN has been suitably led and managed throughout a period of considerable change. The school leader and her team are aware that there is still much to achieve if the needs of the students are to be fully met. Some staff and most students expressed the view that the school was a less stressful place to be than before because the decrease in the school population allows closer friendships to form.
35. Good working relationships have been established between the educational psychologist and the SEN teachers. The SEN co-ordinator based at the TLC works well with the school, but the sheer volume of work required co-ordinating the SEN provision for all four schools means that his skills are spread very thinly.
36. The school has based its sound strategies for improving SEN on the analysis of the results from the wide range of diagnostic tests it has administered. However, the school is not effectively monitoring the implementation of these strategies to ensure they are executed appropriately.
37. The leadership has not yet clearly identified where good practice occurs and made it a priority to disseminate it across the school.

## How well is the school led and managed?

38. The leadership and management of PACE High School are adequate.
39. The school leader has quickly established a clear direction for the school, focused on raising standards in the core skills and improving teaching and learning. This is entirely appropriate as the students enter the school with low attainment and most make slow progress. There is a useful action plan for the current year which has been discussed with staff. The priorities for improvement it contains are fully justified. However, monitoring of the plan is not taking place regularly enough to know the extent to which actions are happening or their impact on students' learning.
40. The senior leadership team consists of the school leader, deputy and a senior teacher. They work as a team to help ensure the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and provide support to staff in dealing with discipline issues. Neither the school leader nor her deputy has a teaching commitment, thus enabling them to maintain a high profile around the school.
41. The school has a substantial amount of data, particularly relating to students' academic performance in English and mathematics; the senior teacher is responsible for developing this area. The school is not yet using performance data as effectively as it could be to track students and identify those who are not making expected progress or to evaluate the impact of an intervention.
42. Appropriate procedures are being established for appraising teachers' performance, including arrangements for support and targets to help staff improve their practice.
43. Teachers are responsible for identifying under-performance of students which may lead to movement between sets. There is not yet any system for holding teachers accountable for ensuring that students achieve their potential.
44. The school leader monitors the quality of teaching through regular lesson observations. However, there is no regular scrutiny of students' work or checking of teacher's planning or assessment records. There are also no procedures for sharing good practice amongst the staff.
45. Resources are well organised and used effectively to support students' learning. These include computers in many teaching rooms, class "crate" libraries, interactive white boards and the interests and expertise of staff for extra-curricular activities. The outside spaces within the PACE compound are barely adequate for play and recreation.

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

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

46. The provision for support, guidance and students' welfare is adequate overall, with some good aspects.
47. The school's records are well protected. They are kept in a secure fireproof area and are readily accessible to staff. They include a range of academic and personal information as well as primary school reports. Subject teachers keep their own records of students' assessments and some use the information to adjust their lessons. School-wide data tracking to improve performance or raise standards of students is not practised and no one person has access to all records.
48. The school implements good policies to ensure the welfare and safety of its students. Tutors usually stay with their tutor group for three years. They get to know their students well and can provide sound advice and guidance. Tutors and parents can readily contact each other. The morning tutorials give the students a positive start to the day. Students can also get help from a counsellor, through self-referrals, or requests from teachers or parents. A small group of students receives grief counselling

because of recent tragedies. Other staff members that help to ensure student safety and well-being include a school nurse, a dental nurse and two daytime security guards.

49. The school has a number of strategies in place to improve students' behaviour. Some teachers do not follow all the strategies, perhaps because there are so many and they find the record keeping unmanageable.
50. The seven classroom expectations are posted in all rooms and when teachers remind students about them, behaviour improves. These rules are understood by students. The few students with serious infractions are suspended from school and attend a suspension unit off site. Most suspensions average three days and when the student returns to school they are carefully monitored. Older students are involved in a work education project, which involves visits to businesses including a hotel, fire station, bank, museum and retail outlets. These visits give students an opportunity to explore possible future career

choices. The house system encourages a school spirit and healthy competition. Students gain points for their house not only through sports events but also through community service, effort, and outstanding work.

51. Attendance at PACE has improved considerably in the second term and is now good. The school's procedures for monitoring attendance are effective. The executive officer is responsible for calling home when students have been absent for two days. Tutors check for absences in morning tutorials and expect a note from the parent when a student returns. However, teachers are not so vigilant about recording lateness, which can be a problem as several students are tardy in the morning. The expectation is for a student to submit a late slip to their tutor, but this does not always happen in practice. A few students arrive late for lessons as well, even though there is a five minute gap to enable them to get to their next class.

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

52. The school has established good links with parents.
53. There is a comprehensive school handbook for students and parents and a bulletin to parents is sent home every month. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to contact parents not only when problems arise, but also when students are doing well. Parents have each tutor's phone contact number. They are encouraged to inform their child's tutor regarding absence, or whenever they have concerns. Students also have a daily planner in which they record homework. Parents and teachers can communicate by writing comments in this planner. However the planners are not widely used.
54. Another way parents and teachers keep in contact is through the Home School Association (HSA). Meetings are held monthly and are well supported. The HSA has involved students, parents and teachers in a school beautification project to improve the learning environment. Recently many students and parents volunteered part of the weekend for cleaning the school grounds.

55. School reports are issued at the end of each term. They inform parents of effort, behaviour and achievement. Past marks are recorded on the report so parents can check for progress in those areas. The usefulness of teachers' comments varies. Some teachers of mathematics and social studies, in particular, include useful details on the students' strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. In others, there is little or no information on targets for improvement. Reporting sessions at the end of each term offer parents an opportunity to meet with teachers and discuss students' progress.
56. The school has developed very good links with the community. For example, this year there have been visitors in social studies classes and the police assisted in life skills lessons. These links help to build community relations and enrich students' learning. Good use is also made of outside facilities. South Sound Community Centre was recently used as a venue for the senior student conference "Change from Within", and Christmas and Easter functions are held in nearby churches. Students also

participate and do well in art, spelling bee and writing competitions which are sponsored by local institutions and service clubs. The media is invited to help celebrate school achievements and this gives students a sense of accomplishment and pride.

57. The school participates in community service and students have contributed to the

local relief efforts for hurricane victims in Honduras, Nicaragua and Jamaica. They also raise funds for the Cayman Islands Cancer Society, receive donations for the "crate" libraries and help provide school supplies for children in Haiti through the 'back-pack' project.

### **Provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum**

58. The provision for literacy across the curriculum is adequate. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is good. Provision for numeracy across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

59. The school has identified weak literacy skills as a problem. There is an action plan that sets out a whole school approach to raising literacy standards. Goals have been set for each year group. Staff have worked hard to provide many opportunities for students to improve their literacy skills in all subjects. In the vast majority of lessons observed, subject-specific vocabulary was introduced at the beginning of the lesson and in some classes; students' speaking and listening skills were strengthened through working and discussing in small groups. A few teachers skilfully question students so that they explain and justify their answers, but in a number of lessons, students are not expected to give more than brief responses. New books have recently been purchased to support the students' reading levels as determined by the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) test. These are kept in tutor rooms in 'crate' libraries. In tutorials, two days per week are set aside for DEAR (Drop Everything and Read). The tutor models good habits by also reading at this time. The weakest readers are also encouraged to do paired reading at lunch and break. Parents are given an opportunity to promote their child's literacy by recording pages read in books they take home. The impact of these strategies has not yet been evaluated to show whether or not literacy skills have improved significantly. A literacy committee on which subjects are represented is charged with reviewing the impact of the plan at the end of the year.

60. There is no written policy on the development of students' numeracy across the curriculum. There are few opportunities for students to develop their numeracy skills through subjects other than mathematics. Teachers used numeracy in a few lessons and activities. When measurement was used in a Year 7 home economics cooking class, students could see the value of fractions and the need for care in measurement. Producing graphs in a Year 9 social studies lesson also extended mathematical skills and students learned how to make data meaningful. Similarly, two extra-curricular clubs had elements of numeracy. In the homework session some students used 'My Maths', a computer program, to further their understanding in mathematics. The board games extra-curricular activity required students to understand the rules of tessellation. When mathematics is used in different subjects, students begin to see its wider relevance.

61. Classrooms are well equipped with computers and they are used in many subject areas. Students enjoy working with computers to produce PowerPoint presentations and word processed essays. They are skilful at using web searches to find information and use their findings to produce good quality displays and projects. Some subject-specific software is used by students to improve mathematics skills both in school and at home. Students use keyboards in music to learn and practise skills. Teachers in classrooms with interactive whiteboards use them to enhance students' learning, while others use computers and project images onto a screen.

62. The ICT teacher has put in place appropriate safety and security features. He also offers workshops to teachers for developing their skills. There is, though, no formal monitoring of ICT use by students. Although the co-ordinator can check the log

to see how often students use the computers, it does not show which programs they have been using. The school has plans to produce a policy for ICT across the curriculum.