



**RED BAY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**INSPECTION REPORT**

**NOVEMBER 2005**

**LEAD INSPECTOR: MARY BOWERMAN**



**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 Red 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: Four years 9 months to 12 years  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 475  
School address: P.O. Box 380 SAV, Grand Cayman  
Telephone number: 947-6333  
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Name of principal: Mrs. Angela McLaughlin

### THE INSPECTION TEAM

Lead inspector:	Mary Bowerman	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Information about the school**

Red Bay Primary School is a government school located in the district of George Town.

The school's mission is "to equip students with the skills that promote academic excellence, personal integrity, compassion and the Caymanian culture in a child-centred, nurturing environment, embracing Godly principles."

The number of students on the roll steadily increased from 415 at the time of the school's first inspection in 1998, to 481 by the end of 2003. After the advent of Hurricane Ivan, the roll went up and down last year, but now stands at 475. Ninety-five per cent of students are Caymanian.

There are three classes in each year group from Year 1 to Year 6, with slightly more boys than girls. The average class size is 26. There are 41 students whose first language is not English, and 63 students who have special educational needs and require extra support.

At the time of the inspection, the school had opened without its full complement of teachers. There was no special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), or information and communication technology (ICT) teacher. The post of librarian was being temporarily filled, and one class was being taught by a supply teacher. The week before the inspection, the school received a part-time music teacher for the juniors; the infants are taught music on Fridays by one of the Year 2 teachers whose class is then covered by a teachers' aide.

### **Information about the inspection**

The inspection took place from Monday through Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2005, involving a team of six inspectors, plus a trainee local occasional inspector. 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:

- Sixty-two lessons or parts of lessons were observed, mainly language arts and mathematics, but also science, social studies, religious education (RE), physical education (PE), art and pottery.
- School documents, including teachers' planning, school policies and students' academic records, were looked at.
- Students' work was scrutinized, and inspectors heard a selection of students read.
- 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 and inspectors also spoke with parents during the three days at the school.
- Information obtained through regular link inspector visits was also taken into account.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

### How effective is the school overall and how much progress has been made since the last inspection?

Red Bay Primary School provides a caring environment for its students and has established good links with its parents. There are, though, some significant weaknesses to overcome in order to improve the quality of education at the school and to raise the standards that students achieve.

Red Bay's first inspection report in 1998 pinpointed the need to raise standards and to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The post-inspection in 2001 noted that some progress had been made, but that there was still much to do. The school has not received the amount of external support that it clearly needed and many of the shortcomings identified in 2001 are still present.

Some work has recently begun on preparing a school improvement plan. This is a positive step forward, but it is in the very early stages. The school has a committed and hard working staff. They have established a climate in which students behave well and are eager to learn. The school has strengths in its senior management team, but even so they will need help to bring about the necessary improvements identified in this report.

### What the school does well

- Staff are committed to the school. They work hard and care deeply about the children in their classes.
- Discipline is good and students behave well in class and around the school.
- Some of the teaching of reading for children with special needs is outstanding.
- Parents are kept well informed about the work of the school and their children's progress.
- Parents make a valuable contribution to the life of the school through the Parent-Teacher Association.

### What needs to improve

- The direction and vision provided by the school's leaders
- The way that senior managers check how well the school is doing and take effective action to bring about improvement
- How the curriculum is organized and monitored to ensure that students receive a better balance of knowledge, skills and understanding in every subject
- The way that lessons are planned and organized to help all students learn successfully
- Arrangements for tracking and assessing students' progress and how this information is used to plan the next steps in their learning
- The support and guidance given to staff to help them fulfil their roles effectively

*The school is expected to address the areas for improvement identified above. These need to be prioritized and added to the school improvement plan which has been started. The plan should be sent to the Education Department and the Schools' Inspectorate within 40 working days of the 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?**

The results that students achieved in the 2005 TerraNova tests were broadly in line with other schools in the Cayman Islands. However, the inspection found — from observing lessons, talking with students and looking at their work, from teachers' plans and mark books — that, overall, the standards achieved by students at the school are too low.

The school collects a large amount of information about students' achievements from a wide variety of sources – tests written by teachers, tests from the published schemes and a variety of external tests. However, this information is not in a form that readily enables the school to draw conclusions about the standards students are achieving. Different external tests have been used over the last few years, for example, the California Achievement Test (CAT 5) and, apart from last year, the national key stage tests set by the Education Department. The number of different external tests makes it difficult for the school to compare results from one year to the next and to tell the extent to which standards are improving over time.

The standard of reading is better than for other aspects of language arts, and is generally in line with what would be expected for children's ages. Standards in other subjects are generally below what is expected. However, there is a variation between classes and between infants and juniors, with infants generally achieving better standards than the juniors. Standards of students' work are also generally higher in language arts than in mathematics, throughout the school. Infants who are withdrawn for extra support with reading, make very good progress.

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

The quality of teaching varied considerably, from a few lessons where it was excellent to several that had significant weaknesses. In the majority of classes, teaching needs to improve.

Teachers know their students well and want them to succeed. They consistently use the school's programme, 'Don't Slip Up', to reward good effort and work, and promote good discipline. They have a high level of commitment to the school and their students. As a result, students know that they are well cared for, safe and generally come to school wanting to learn.

Most teachers have a secure understanding of the subjects that they teach. However, not all are confident in teaching mathematics, with the result that they 'play safe' by giving students many low-level number exercises.

Teachers rarely share with students what they expect them to learn in a lesson. As a result students are often unclear about the focus of their learning. They are not able to assess how well they are doing because they do not know what is expected of them. Despite this, most try hard, wishing to please their teacher and they generally maintain their positive attitudes to learning.

Too often, the pace of lessons is slow. Teachers spend too much time talking to students and asking questions which go over issues already covered earlier in the lesson, rather than moving on to new learning. In an effort to make sure that all students understand an idea or grasp a skill, teachers often hold back the learning of others. Lessons often do not start on time, which also reduces the amount of learning that can take place.

Teachers rarely plan lessons that include a range of activities to cater for students' different capabilities. A few teachers have successfully organised their lessons to enable students to work at different levels, for example, through a 'stations' approach, which is highly effective in helping students to make progress. In a good Year 5 lesson, the teacher organised four stations, each one focusing on a different aspect of language arts or mathematics. The learning objectives were complemented by well-matched activities, which allowed the teacher to intervene where necessary, assess students' progress and move learning along through good use of questioning and discussion, either individually or in groups.

Resources are generally well used. However, there is limited use of information and communication technology (ICT), either by teachers or students. Computers have been out of use for some time and students have not, therefore, been able to develop their ICT skills, either in discrete lessons or in subjects across the curriculum. An outstanding exception to this was seen in a Year 6 social studies lesson on population trends in the Cayman Islands. The teacher used the Chamber of Commerce website to help students predict the results of the next census. Students confidently expanded their vocabulary using words such as 'demographics' correctly. An example of effective use of visual aids occurred in a Year 6 science lesson where the teacher used real chicken bones to illustrate the cartilage. She went on to develop the importance of safety, using a pin from a fractured leg bone as an illustration. This brought the learning to life and emphasised the safety points well. In both lessons, expectations of what the students could achieve were high and the lessons moved along at a brisk pace.

Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning. Students rarely choose which resources they should use and how best they might present their work, for example, using PowerPoint presentations or graphs. Older students do carry out some research; for example, in social studies they found out which countries people came from and plotted these on a map. However, all students need to undertake more research. They need to be less dependent on their teachers in order to become more effective learners.

The school has a number of students with special educational needs, and there is a generous allocation of support staff, three of whom are full-time at the school. Small groups are taught separately two to three times per week by a learning and behaviour disorder (LBD) specialist and a teacher of English as a second language. A reading resource teacher, based at the school, provides excellent support to students in Years 1 to 3 and these students make good progress in reading. These sessions provide students with the skills to help them during regular lessons, but classroom teachers do not always build on these skills. Too often students with special educational needs are expected to function at the same level as others in the class, and they do not make enough progress. Students make much better progress when they are allowed to work in groups where the activities match their needs and abilities. A good example of this was seen in a Year 2 class where the teacher and teacher's aide worked very closely together. Both knew what the expected learning outcomes were for all students. While the teacher worked with most of the class, the teacher's aide supported a small group of students with special educational needs. This ensured that all students made good progress.

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

The curriculum is broad and the recommended subjects for children of primary school age, apart from Information and Communication Technology (ICT), are provided. Year 6 children benefit from a drugs awareness programme which takes place every year in the second term. Other aspects of health education are covered through science lessons. The school and the community come together in an annual 'Reading Day' which focuses on a specific theme and provides children with a range of opportunities to engage in reading activities. Students develop their football and netball skills in after-school clubs. The recent appointment of a music teacher for the junior department means that children in all classes are now receiving regular music lessons. Valuable expertise is provided by a pottery teacher who works with different classes over the school year.

Although the curriculum is broad, it is not well balanced because teachers spend widely different amounts of time on each subject. The amounts of time do not match Education Department guidelines. The time devoted to language arts for example, ranges from eight to 13 hours, when the recommended time is ten hours per week.

Much time is also lost because lessons seldom begin on time. Many students arrive late in the morning, missing valuable parts of lessons and disrupting the start for others. Time spent on devotions often goes on for longer than stated on schedules and eats into other subjects. Morning break, which is allocated 20 minutes, usually lasts for 40 as children file between their classrooms and the canteen. Children are not allowed time to play in the mornings and consequently have no opportunities to run off physical energy. This can affect their concentration levels in the period between break and lunch.

There are some useful long term plans for the curriculum, which provide good guidance for teachers. However, the lack of appropriate monitoring by school leaders means that there is wide variation in the way that these plans are interpreted by teachers. School leaders do not check on gaps or overlaps in what is taught across the school. In some year groups, teachers plan together and this ensures that students of similar ages cover the same topics. In other year groups, teachers work in isolation and this often means that children receive different experiences. There are also examples in both mathematics and language arts of lessons where the same work is being covered in different year groups. In mathematics, for example, there were instances where the concept of 'multiples' was revisited, sometimes at lower levels.

Students' work is assessed regularly, mainly through tests devised by teachers, the frequency of which varies. Not enough use is made of the information gained from these tests to monitor students' progress, to set targets for improvement or to help teachers to plan the next steps for individuals or groups of students. Although teachers regularly mark students' work, they give little guidance to them as to how it can be improved.

## **How well is the school led and managed?**

Some aspects of the way that the school is led and managed are satisfactory, but there is much that needs improving.

The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Office and ancillary staff carry out their responsibilities well. The school and grounds are well maintained and attractive, and provide a safe environment for students. The one exception to this is the poor state of the playing field.

There are strengths within the senior management team and a commitment to improve. The senior management team comprises the principal, deputy principal, heads of infants and juniors, and coordinators for language arts, mathematics and special educational needs (SEN), although at the time of the inspection, the school had no SENCO. These members of staff do not have job descriptions or a clear understanding of their roles.

The school does not have a clear vision of how to bring about improvement and there is no overall strategic plan for the raising of standards in the school. Part of the school's mission is "to equip students with the skills that promote academic excellence..." This is a worthy aim, but it is not being fully realized in practice. The school's leadership is not focused sharply enough on raising standards. There is, for example, no school approach or policy on teaching and learning, although there is some monitoring of these by the principal and deputy. At present heads of department and subject coordinators have little involvement in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in their areas. The management team needs to develop a systematic approach to monitoring teaching and learning, linked to criteria in staff's individual job descriptions so that all are held accountable for raising standards.

The school has a great deal of test data, but this is not used to monitor students' progress as they move through the school. Much more analysis needs to be carried out to identify under-achieving groups or individuals who need extra support, and to measure students' progress year on year. Management of the curriculum, too, needs to be closely monitored and evaluated, so that all students receive a better balance of subjects and learning experiences.

The school has made little progress since its last inspection in addressing areas of weakness. Some of the present senior team have been in post since that time and must share responsibility for the lack of progress. However, they did not receive the amount of external support and guidance that they clearly needed after the previous inspections. Senior managers do not have a firm grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and therefore have not been able to set priorities for improvement. Heads of department and subject co-ordinators have not had the training that would enable them to carry out their roles effectively. The school's focus has been on improving students' behaviour. While this is commendable, and improvements can be seen in students' behaviour, the areas for improvement noted by previous inspections remain key issues.

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

### **Students' personal development**

Teachers care about the well-being, care and safety of the students. Good relationships between students and teachers are encouraged and fostered. Students respond well to teachers and are respectful.

Students attend weekly assemblies and daily devotions which support their moral and spiritual growth. They are attentive and listen quietly as teachers read or tell stories with moral and religious concepts. They participate energetically and happily in the singing of religious choruses, theme based songs and the National Song. A few students confidently take part in acts of worship by praying or leading the singing. Students are given few opportunities to talk about and explore their beliefs and views, even during religious education lessons. They are rarely encouraged to investigate how actions are influenced by personal principles, thoughts and feelings.

Students are generally well behaved in classes and around the school. Very few instances of inappropriate behaviour were seen. Prefects chosen by the teachers from the Year 5 and 6 classes have duties, but these are limited to assisting with discipline. Prefects monitor different areas of the school at lunch and break. Students take pride in their personal appearance and take good care of their personal belongings and school property.

The school has introduced its discipline policy, 'Don't Slip Up', as a strategy for improving behaviour. It is generally being used well by teachers. Part of the 'Don't Slip Up' policy includes students earning rewards from the school's merit store when they receive the required number of 'punches' on a 'punch card'. Most students respond well to this strategy.

In most classes, students sit in groups, but they are rarely expected to work collaboratively. Only a few good examples were seen when students worked together productively, sharing roles.

Students are learning about Caymanian culture in their social studies lessons. For example, in Year 6 the students study text is "People of the Cayman Islands". Flags of various countries are on display in the library. Although there is some reference to other cultures in subjects such as religious education, there is little evidence of any planned or systematic study of these.

### **Students' attendance and punctuality**

Most students attend school and classes regularly. However, a significant number of students do not arrive at school on time in the morning. Lateness is not being consistently recorded or monitored, and the rules and consequences for lateness set out in the Parents' Handbook are not being followed. This is having a negative impact on students' learning because those who are regularly late miss large parts of the first lesson and disturb the other students. The school's secretary records daily attendance using the Star Student System and the information is sent to the Education Department each day. Not all teachers return their attendance registers to the office on time, which adversely affects the timeliness of the information being recorded.

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

The school has established good links with parents. It sees this connection as being very important and the handbook for parents and students is readily available. The handbook, which was updated for the new school year, gives very helpful and detailed information regarding the way the school operates and what is expected both of students and parents.

Parents are also kept well informed about the work of the school. Monthly parent/teachers association (PTA) meetings are held. Useful reporting sessions are held each term when parents can discuss their child's progress. Parents also receive newsletters, phone calls and notes. Those who have access to the Internet can retrieve information from the school's website. Teachers have made their cell phone numbers available for parents who might want to contact them.

Parents make a valuable contribution to the school. Each class has at least two parents who work as class contacts. These contacts support class activities such as field trips, socials, or birthday parties. Every year, the Year 3 classes put on special parents' award ceremonies to which parents are invited and receive special recognition.

The PTA pays the bus driver, bus warden and teachers who work on the early school supervision shift. Parents attend special assemblies, sports days, fund raising and other school activities. Along with a service club, the PTA has donated funds to the school which are used to provide food and uniforms for students when the need arises. The PTA also makes donations to the school's reward store, which is a part of the school's discipline policy.

The school has maintained some useful links with the community. The school works closely with the Red Bay Holiness Church. After the hurricane the church helped them get back in working order and it continues to take part in special assemblies. It also hosts the school's graduation ceremonies. On occasion, the school lends their school bus to the church. The community policeman comes in to conduct the Drug Abuse and Resistance Education programme (DARE) with Year 6 students.

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

The guidance and support offered to students are satisfactory. They are the responsibility of individual class teachers, most of whom know the students well. The school now has a full time counsellor who is easily accessible to the students who either refer themselves or who are referred by teachers. The school also benefits from having a dental technician and nurse for the students.

The school keeps records of each student's progress. It now uses its own student record, which is user-friendly and includes a wide range of academic and personal information. Most class teachers keep the students' records up-to-date. Although the records are accessible to members of staff, they are not yet being used to track students' progress through the school.

The amount of support for students with special needs is satisfactory overall: there are six specialist support staff, three of whom are based at the school. However, very little time is allocated to supporting the juniors.

The procedures for the assessment and placement of students with special needs are good. The school has established a team that monitors the referrals from class teachers and decides how best to assess and place the students. Most of those on the special

needs register have been properly assessed. Individual educational plans (IEPs) have been written for some. However, these need to be consistent in design and in the information they convey so that progress is more easily monitored. Class teachers also need to use them to plan work at the right level for these students.

Support for students who are learning English as a second language (ESL) needs to be improved. Less than half of these students currently receive any support, and this is only for two afternoons a week. The specialist finds that there is not enough time to really help these students make progress, particularly those who understand and speak little English.

The school grounds and the classrooms are clean and attractive and offer a pleasant atmosphere for the students and the teachers. The school's groundsman and cleaner make sure that the students' restrooms are kept clean and sanitary and the school grounds are litter free. The playing field, which is used for physical education classes and football clubs, is in poor condition and needs urgent attention.

## **What is the quality of teaching and learning in language arts and mathematics?**

### **Language arts**

Students' progress in language arts varies considerably across the school and is heavily dependent upon the quality of teaching they receive. Reading is generally taught effectively and students reach appropriate levels for their age. In some classes students develop their writing skills quickly but in others they make extremely limited progress. Consequently standards in writing are below average. Many students lack fluency and confidence in speaking in front of an audience because they receive few opportunities to develop these skills in lessons.

The children make the best progress when they are involved in practical activities. These make learning fun and the children work hard because they are enjoying themselves. In a good Year 2 lesson for example, the teacher organised the children into four groups. Each group worked on different activities to do with the letter sound 'e' they had been learning the previous day. One group made words containing the letter 'e' with magnetic letters on metal trays; another used play dough to make words containing 'e'. Other groups shared books together, practising their reading skills and working with the teacher on comprehension activities. They made good progress, as well as learning how to interact with one another and share books and equipment.

Few teachers of older classes provide this level of practical activity. Many lessons are dull and do little to engage students' interest and concentration. In many cases, the teacher talks from the front while the children listen and the only activities provided are worksheets or exercises on a very specific skill or concept. The students do not have the chance to practise their new skills in interesting or relevant situations.

There are however, a few examples of excellent practice in older classes. In one Year 6 class, the atmosphere is centred on learning. Students know this and work hard because they want to succeed. In a language arts lesson in this class, the students worked in three groups. The teacher had thought carefully about what each group needed to learn to help them improve their reading and writing. She organised a different activity for each group. The brightest children were challenged to write a description of the clothing worn by the characters in a book they were reading. The middle group worked on reports which helped them focus on specific aspects of their books – characters, setting and plot. The teacher was then able to focus on the students whose skills were weaker and needed support. Skilful teaching, with the use of an overhead projector, enabled these students to see how dictionaries could help them with reading *and* writing.

This example is one of only a few seen where the teacher catered effectively for students at different levels. Too often the brightest students learn little during lessons because the activities are too easy for them. They are seldom challenged to tackle independent research or given any choice about how to present their work. There are few opportunities for students to write letters, poems, diaries and narrative stories to encourage them to express their own thoughts and ideas and show imagination and creativity.

Some students with special educational needs are withdrawn for additional support with reading. In these sessions they become more confident and make rapid progress because they are enjoying what they do. They benefit from sensitive and well-organised

teaching that uses a wide variety of strategies to gain their attention and curiosity. Rhymes and action songs help the students fix new concepts firmly in their minds. In contrast, class teachers seldom provide appropriately modified activities for these children, and so they make far less progress.

In some cases teachers have not thought clearly enough about what they want the students to learn. The activities provided are vague and often not adequately explained. As a result, the students have to guess what they are expected to do. Despite this, in the vast majority of cases, the children are well behaved and try their best.

There are few opportunities for students to improve their speaking and listening skills. Teachers seldom identify key vocabulary and give students the opportunity to use it in discussion or in their written work. Students have few chances to conduct research and present their findings to an audience to develop their confidence and fluency.

Timetables show that teachers are spending vastly different amounts of time on language arts over the week. However, there is no connection between the amounts of time spent and the standards that students reach. Much time is wasted going over work that children have already covered. Work on singular and plural nouns, for example was seen in Year 3 and again in Year 4. The fact that this has not been identified shows inadequate monitoring of the curriculum.

The school has very good resources, which are not being used effectively to support children's learning in language arts. Computers in classes and in the library and computer suite have been out of action and this is contributing to children's inadequate progress. Similarly, the school library is not fully in use. Although some instruction in library skills is given to each class, the students do not have enough opportunities to use the books and learn reference and research skills at first hand.

The coordinator is enthusiastic and keen to make an impact on the development of the subject in the school. Unfortunately she does not have a clear enough view of her role, nor does she have any non-contact time available to visit other classes, to make a real impact on teaching and learning.

### **Literacy across the curriculum**

The opportunities for students to use their reading and writing skills in other subjects vary tremendously from teacher to teacher. There are some good examples, as in a Year 6 science lesson in which students carried out their own research about the human body. They wrote illustrated reports, some of them word processed, and presented their findings orally to their classmates. In some classes, teachers emphasise new vocabulary and write it on the board as in a social studies lesson in Year 3. Children were able to refer to this in their discussions and used words such as 'globe' and 'hemisphere' in their written work.

In many classes, students have few opportunities to reinforce and develop their literacy skills. They often copy from the board instead of reinforcing concepts using their own words. Teachers are not routinely planning activities in other subjects to help consolidate literacy skills.

## **Mathematics**

The standards that students achieve are below what is expected for their ages. Students, particularly those of average and higher ability, do not make enough progress as they move through the school.

There are two main reasons for variation in students' progress. The first is because of the imbalance in the amount of time used for teaching mathematics. There has not been enough monitoring of this and so the amount of time varies within years as well as between years. The curriculum is not planned so that each year students build upon what they have previously learnt. There are instances where lessons just go over work that students have already learnt and this results in very slow progress. Teachers meet in year groups to discuss the curriculum, which could provide an excellent opportunity to share ideas, review successful teaching approaches and plan in detail for the future.

The second main reason for the uneven progress is the variation in the quality of the teaching. The most effective learning takes place when teachers use what they know about students' understanding and plan lessons that help students to move on. These lessons have clear learning outcomes that are shared with students. For example, in one lesson, the teacher asked the students how many ways they could find the missing numbers when  $? \times ? \times ? = 70$ . Students worked very effectively in twos and threes, recorded their work and confidently explained their different strategies for solving the problem to the whole class. Here students were manipulating fairly large numbers, which really challenged their thinking. In many other lessons, the pace is slow and students spend a large amount of time listening to the teacher, answering questions as a whole class, before working through calculations on a worksheet. Few opportunities are provided for them to transfer and extend their understanding to different situations, or try out new ideas to deepen their learning. A consequence is that progress is slow, particularly for higher ability students.

The school has good resources, including a teachers' manual full of useful ideas. By using this as a teaching resource, alongside their other resources, some teachers successfully provide students with learning objectives that are well matched to their different abilities.

Students behave well in classes. They are attentive, generally get on with their work quickly, and try hard. Where teachers ask individuals questions, they answer readily enough, but where the question is unclear, or they do not know an answer, many appear afraid to ask for clarification and appear anxious that they may answer incorrectly. This often reflects the ethos and teaching style of the teacher, rather than the attitude of the student.

## **Numeracy across the curriculum**

The use of numeracy across the curriculum is limited. Opportunities to enrich other subjects are often missed. An example of one such missed opportunity was in a physical education lesson. Students worked hard and were excited when they completed a good length in the long jump. The opportunity to include numeracy by measuring the jumps was unfortunately lost.