

ST IGNATIUS PREP SCHOOL

Post Inspection Summary Report



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PART I: INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT, SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE POST-INSPECTION VISIT

1. St Ignatius Prep School was first inspected on 3 - 7 November 1997. This was a full inspection, which covered the aspects outlined in the *Handbook for the Self-Assessment and Inspection of Schools*; and, the subjects taught, including language arts, mathematics, science and religious education, special educational needs and the education of children in the kindergarten.
2. During the first inspection, the following were judged to be key strengths of the school and key issues for action:

Key Strengths

- a positive ethos that provided a caring and secure learning environment;
- a strong and shared emphasis on the care and well-being of all pupils;
- well-developed links with parents;
- a hard-working and dedicated staff;
- a strong commitment to pupils' spiritual, moral, social development, which was well reflected in pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes;
- pupils' positive attitudes to learning.

Key Issues for Action

3. To improve and enhance the quality of education the school needed to:
 - review the current curriculum and schemes of work and up-date the work in some subjects;
 - broaden the range of teaching methods to include more opportunities for personal and imaginative writing, critical-thinking and first-hand investigations;
 - improve the range and quality of materials, books and equipment;
 - ensure the pace and level of work matches the needs of the full ability range, particularly able and slow learning pupils;
 - further develop the procedures for identifying and monitoring the progress of pupils with special educational needs;
 - review the arrangements for testing, assessing and recording pupils' progress;
 - develop a stronger unity of purpose among the staff by delegating greater responsibility to individuals and staff teams;
 - implement a staff development programme designed to tackle these issues.
4. A team of four inspectors made a post-inspection visit to the school on 30th September to 2nd 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 identified in the core subjects of language arts, mathematics and science. The resulting report is limited to these areas.

5. Over the two days of classroom observations at St Ignatius Prep School, the team visited 40 lessons or parts of lessons. Thirty-five of the classroom observations related to work in language arts, mathematics and science. In addition, interviews were held with the principal and staff and discussions were carried out with pupils. Before the inspection visit, a meeting for parents was arranged to give them an opportunity to express their views on the improvements made by the school. The team also reviewed a range of documentation from the school, including a progress report on the action plan and scrutinised a sample of pupils' work from the limited amount available.

CHANGES IN THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

6. St Ignatius Prep School is a private Catholic school. It is situated on the outskirts of George Town and shares the grounds and some of the premises with the St Ignatius High School.
7. Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced some very unsettled times. There have been three changes of principal and high levels of staff turnover. Major changes in the administration of the parish church, which owns the school and has overview of its strategic development, coincided with the appointment of the former principal in Autumn 2000. The school now operates under a newly established mission, vision and values statement that serves both the Prep and the High School.
8. From July-September 2003, a large building project has been taking place to improve the facilities for the both the Prep and the High School. At the time of the inspection, construction work was still underway and projected to be completed during the autumn term, 2003.

Pupils

9. The school continues to admit pupils from kindergarten to Year 6. At the time of the post-inspection visit, 341 pupils were on roll compared to 353 at the time of the full inspection. Currently, 189 of the pupils are Caymanian.
10. The school reports that there are currently 30 pupils that it considers as having some level of special educational need (SEN). Few have been formally assessed and none of the pupils are following individual educational plans (IEPs).

Staff

11. A new principal took up the post in September 2003. Three new teachers joined the school in September 2003. There were 19.11 full-time equivalent teachers, including the principal, at the time of the original inspection. At the time of the post-inspection, there were 23.3 teachers, including the principal and part-time peripatetic staff.

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

ACTION PLANNING

12. The initial inspection report was released in March 1998. The resulting action plan was not sufficiently focused on the key issues and there were significant limitations in its format. Following the appointment of a new principal in August 2000, the school sensibly revisited the original action plan and re-focused its efforts, which were monitored by the Inspectorate. As a result, appropriate action has been taken in many instances in response to most of the key issues, although the proposed developments were not always formally recorded. The school's arrangements for checking on the progress it is making against the key issues are sound.

PROGRESS IN RELATION TO THE KEY ISSUES

KEY ISSUE 1: Review the current curriculum and schemes of work and update the work in some subjects

13. The school has made sound progress overall in tackling this key issue.
14. Curriculum reviews in language arts and mathematics have resulted in the introduction of new commercially produced programmes of work for both of these subjects. The programmes are a significant improvement on the curriculum that was offered in these subjects at the time of the last inspection.
15. The school has also introduced improved programmes of work in art, music, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education. Each of these revised programmes now provides for a wider range of activities.
16. Plans to carry out a review of the science curriculum have not been implemented. Reviewing the curriculum in this subject remains a priority for the school. Post-inspection findings indicate that the textbook currently used for science, provides factual content but is less helpful in the guidance it provides on the use of teaching approaches and learning activities to promote pupils' understanding of scientific processes.
17. There is now greater consistency between classes in the time allocated for the teaching of each subject. Although the time allocated overall is heavily weighted towards the language arts, some improvements have been made in securing a better representation of creative subjects.

KEY ISSUE 2: Broaden the range of teaching methods to include more opportunities for personal and imaginative writing, critical thinking and first-hand investigations

18. Overall, the school has made sound progress in response to this key issue, although progress has been less marked in science.
19. In most of the lessons observed, there were opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their learning for at least part of the time. Most lessons achieve a suitable balance of whole-class teaching with a variety of other strategies that enables pupils to work individually or co-operatively in small groups or pairs, as best fits the task.
20. In language arts, teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to listen to stories; develop their reading skills; express and modify their ideas through discussion, and write extended pieces drawing on their personal experience or imagination.
21. In mathematics, good opportunities are regularly provided for pupils to undertake practical, first-hand investigations and solve problems. Pupils are now more suitably challenged to think critically and interpret information in order to make sensible predictions, estimations or deductions.
22. Many of the teachers lack confidence in teaching science. Consequently, in the lessons observed, although efforts were made to involve pupils in activities that required the use of observation and investigation skills only occasionally were they carried out to good effect because they rarely focused on promoting pupils' understanding of scientific processes.

KEY ISSUE 3: Improve the range and quality of materials, books and equipment

23. The school has made good and in some cases very good progress in relation to this key issue, except in science.
24. Teaching resources have improved considerably, particularly in language arts and mathematics. Resource materials and equipment in science, however, have not been developed significantly since the previous inspection.
25. A new ICT suite has been established and equipped with sufficient computers to allow pupils in each class to have individual access during these lessons. However, cramped conditions and the way in which the room has been organised hinder the efficient and effective use of this provision. The school has an extensive programme in place for improving facilities in ICT in the early months of 2004.
26. The school library is much improved. It now has a good range of fiction and non-fiction books that reflects the demands of the new language arts scheme and provides a variety of texts suitable to the interest and needs of the pupils. Class

libraries are not so well resourced or maintained. Many of the books are old and unattractive.

27. Other materials and equipment have been introduced that impact positively on the classroom environment for teachers and pupils, and contribute to more effective teaching and learning. For example, the school has replaced the old chalkboards in classrooms with new dustless boards or whiteboards and there has been a significant increase in the number and use of overhead projectors. A substantial amount of new furniture, including desks, chairs, carrels for pupils to work at individually, and tables for small group work have helped to make the classrooms more conducive to effective learning.

KEY ISSUE 4: Ensure the pace and level of work matches the needs of the full range of ability, particularly able and slow learning pupils

28. The school has made sound progress on a number of fronts in relation to this key issue, although scope remains for further development. The use of some suggested teaching strategies in the new language arts and mathematics programmes has resulted in lessons moving along at a brisker pace. The programmes have also, to some degree, helped teachers to set work that is more closely matched to the levels at which pupils are performing. However, the teachers' weekly and daily lesson plans rarely make sufficient reference to how the needs of pupils functioning at different levels are to be met.
29. Some teachers have placed pupils in small groups of similar ability for part of the time in particular subjects. During lessons, some teachers use this arrangement well to allow them to provide suitable assignments for pupils who are able to work independently whilst they give extra attention to pupils experiencing difficulties.
30. In some cases, teachers from equivalent year groups arrange to teach subjects in which they are specialists, to the classes within that year group. Where this was observed, the teaching more often matched the needs of the full range of abilities in the class.
31. At present, differentiated work and additional support is mostly directed at those with learning difficulties rather than the most able. However, some writing assignments that require pupils to read and/or write for different purposes do stretch the most able pupils. In addition, projects that require pupils to gather and interpret information or undertake longer-term investigations often provide suitable levels of challenge for pupils with the potential for achieving high standards.

KEY ISSUE 5: Further develop the procedures for identifying and monitoring the progress of pupils with special educational needs (SEN)

32. The school has made limited progress in tackling this key issue.

33. Pupils with SEN are not referred for additional support according to any agreed criteria. Helpful procedures and guidelines have been drawn up to help staff identify and refer pupils they suspect may have special educational needs but they have not been shared with all the staff.
34. The progress of pupils with SEN is limited because very little focused assessment is undertaken of pupils' individual learning difficulties, such as poor long or short-term memory problems, problems with processing information or emotional difficulties. Progress is further limited by the absence of individual education plans, or their equivalent, for any of the pupils and minimal joint planning or liaison between the class teachers and the specialist SEN teacher.
35. The information available to parents in relation to pupils with SEN contains little or no reference to the quality, range and scope of the provision. Written reports to parents make little reference to the progress made by pupils with SEN.

KEY ISSUE 6: Review the arrangements for testing, assessing and recording pupils' progress

36. Sound progress has been made overall but in the absence of a whole-school policy, there are inconsistencies in practice.
37. The school does not yet carry out any systematic baseline assessment to take account of pupils' learning before they come to the school. However, in one class, the youngest pupils are observed carefully to establish how well they have made the transition to school and to establish some starting points for learning.
38. The introduction of new initiatives in language arts and mathematics has, in some cases, helped teachers to set goals for pupils; determine the means by which to achieve them; and, to measure pupils' success in achieving the goals. They have raised teachers' awareness of the importance of focusing on what pupils should know, understand and be able to do by the end of a module of work, and helped them to set benchmarks in these subjects.
39. Although records of pupils' scores are well maintained, in most classes, teachers do not yet use the results of standardised assessment tests effectively when planning their lessons. Reading records are usually passed on to the next teacher but no whole-school requirements are in place for the transfer of other assessment information from class to class.
40. There is good practice to build on. Pupils' portfolios contain evidence of assessed pieces of work, which, if maintained over time and passed on to receiving teachers, could provide useful evidence of progress. In Years 3, 5 and 6, there are some examples of good quality marking of pupils' work that provide helpful comments for pupils that clearly state what they need to do to improve.

KEY ISSUE 7: Develop a stronger unity of purpose among the staff by delegating greater responsibility to individuals and staff teams

41. Overall, the school has made sound progress in responding to this key issue. Many of the actions taken have helped to move the school forward.
42. The process used for establishing the new vision statement, which now serves both the Prep and the High School, has helped to promote a greater sense of common purpose.
43. A three-year review, launched in the autumn term of 2000, to improve the curriculum in language arts, mathematics, science and religious education has helped to focus the efforts of the staff and the school's management team. At the time of the post inspection, science was the only curriculum area that remained untouched. The reviews were carried out through a sound process of investigation, consultation and decision-making that enabled contributions to be made by staff at all levels and by governors. Subject co-ordinators were designated to lead and manage the implementation of the recommendations arising from the review.
44. The school introduced a professional growth plan for staff and a system of staff appraisal. This has helped to bring further direction and focus to the work of the school and clarify what is expected from all staff. However, the absence of whole-school policies and guidelines and a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities in key areas, such as assessment and the provision made for pupils with special educational needs, contribute to inconsistencies in the day-to-day practice in these areas.

KEY ISSUE 8: Implement a staff development programme designed to tackle all key issues.

45. Good progress has been made in relation to this key issue. All staff are now suitably involved in discussions with the principal regarding their own professional development needs within the context of the school's development priorities.
46. The staff were provided with appropriate training to support the introduction of new curriculum programmes for language arts and mathematics. Further in-service training is needed in relation to the teaching of science and information and communication technology.
47. Some of the staff have attended relevant international conferences after which they were required to share the key learning points with colleagues at the school. The staff reported that the biennial conference for private schools in Cayman, and the annual 'retreat' day for all staff at St Ignatius Prep, helped to raise awareness about new developments and promoted the sharing ideas and teaching strategies.

48. There is no formal induction programme. New staff to the school report that colleagues are friendly and welcoming but all were agreed that in addition, a formal structured approach to the induction of new staff would have helped them to settle into the life of the school more productively.

PART III: SUBJECTS

LANGUAGE ARTS

49. Overall, good progress has been made against the issues for action identified during the first inspection.
50. The school is implementing the new language arts programme well and using it with growing confidence. The programme covers all facets of language arts but, at present, the themes on poetry and drama are underused.
51. In the limited number of lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching in language arts was generally sound or better. A good range of appropriate teaching strategies is used. Almost all lessons have clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils at the beginning of each lesson but they are not always re-visited sufficiently, especially at the end of the lesson, to check the pupils' understanding and progress. Where teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and passionate about literacy and literature, pupils' interest is captured and they are eager to learn. However, in some lessons the work set does not provide all pupils with suitable challenge, particularly the more able and those with special educational needs.
52. The quality of learning is good overall. In nearly all lessons, the majority of pupils make sound or better progress. Most pupils are co-operative, well behaved and have very positive attitudes to their learning. They listen, think critically and often produce reasoned responses to questions.
53. The standards that pupils achieve are broadly in line with those expected for their age. However, for a significant majority, pupils' reading and spelling skills, and their understanding of grammar, are above the expected levels.

MATHEMATICS

54. The school has made significant improvements in relation to most of the issues for action and work is continuing on others. The school now follows a consistent and well-balanced programme of mathematical study.
55. In the great majority of lessons, the teaching is sound or better. Teachers use a broad range of teaching styles and include practical activities relevant to the everyday use of mathematics. In general, lessons continue at a brisk pace except on the occasions where the teaching approach is heavily reliant on input from the teacher with little or no opportunity for pupils to be actively involved.
56. The quality of learning is at least sound. Pupils are developing a useful range of learning skills: they tackle problems methodically, listen carefully and are keen to learn. Behaviour is generally good.

57. Standards in number work are generally sound and, in some cases high in relation to the pupils' age. Insufficient evidence was available to judge standards in other aspects of the subject such as shape, space and measurement, or data handling.

SCIENCE

58. A more consistent time allocation for science within the curriculum has been achieved. However, the science curriculum has not been reviewed since the last inspection, although the school has plans for it to be reviewed in the near future. Overall, very limited progress has been made in relation to the issues for action identified in the last inspection.
59. The quality of teaching is variable. In a few lessons it was sound but in others there were shortcomings. Lessons are well planned and sequenced. In the most effective lessons pupils are encouraged to discuss their work in groups, to describe their findings and agree their conclusions. There is a safe classroom ethos where pupils feel comfortable and relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Where teaching is less effective, the purpose of the activity is not sufficiently clear, the work does not provide pupils with sufficient challenge and not enough emphasis is given to enabling pupils to understand scientific processes.
60. The quality of learning reflects the quality of teaching. Pupils make most progress in those lessons that involve their use of critical thinking skills to make predictions. Most pupils are attentive and keen to learn. In a few instances, pupils are more resistant to learning when the work becomes more difficult.
61. In the small sample of lessons seen, the pupils were insufficiently challenged and their knowledge and understanding was often superficial, hence many were achieving at levels below that expected for their age.

PART IV: CONCLUSIONS

62. The school has made sound or better progress in relation to almost all of the key issues arising from the 1998 inspection report. The quality of the curriculum offered has improved significantly in language arts and mathematics. However, the school has not yet taken the steps needed to improve the science curriculum.
63. Almost all of the progress made has been achieved in the last three years. The way in which major initiatives have been introduced, such as the review and development of the language arts and mathematics programmes and the approach to professional development for the staff, has enabled the staff to work together more effectively and to learn from their successes and from their mistakes. This places the school in a promising position to continue building on what has already been achieved and to tackle other areas such as the provision for pupils with special educational needs, and curriculum development in science, with increasing confidence.