



**TRIPLE C SCHOOL  
INSPECTION REPORT  
MAY 2006**

**LEAD INSPECTOR: CAROLINE DAWES**



**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.

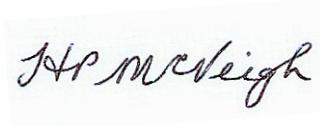
Each school receives an inspection every four to six years. The inspection identifies the school's strengths and the areas that need to be improved. Between inspections, schools are visited regularly by a link inspector to check on the progress that has been made in tackling the priority areas and to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

Self-evaluation by schools is considered to be an important part of the Cayman Islands school evaluation 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 Triple C become a more effective school.



**Helena McVeigh**  
Chief Inspector of Schools

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL AND THE INSPECTION TEAM

### THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Private
Age range of students:	1 year 9 months – 19 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	340
School address:	74 Fairbanks Road, George Town, Grand Cayman
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Email address:	marjorieebanks@triplecschool.org
Name of Principal:	Marjorie Ebanks
Chair of the Board:	Ian Philips

### THE INSPECTION TEAM

Lead inspector:	Caroline Dawes	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
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## INTRODUCTION

### Information about the school

Triple C School is a Christian school for children aged between 1 year 9 months and 19 years. It is administered by the Church of God in the Cayman Islands and follows an American education system. There are currently 340 students on roll, of whom 152 are in the early years and elementary school. This compares to 375 at the time of the last inspection.

Triple C School was established in 1941 as the first school to offer primary and secondary education in Grand Cayman. Triple C stands for 'Creative Christian Character', a name chosen by students in 1943. In 2004 the school received accreditation from the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) for Grades K to 12 for the maximum seven year period.

The school moved to its current location, comprising modern facilities in 12.3 acres, in 1997. There are 22 classrooms including five specialist rooms for information and communication technology (ICT), science, home economics, art and music. There are purpose-built rooms for Kindergarten, a large library and a multi-purpose hall, which is used for sports, drama and assemblies as well as for the cafeteria. The pre-school is housed in two separate buildings. There are two sports fields.

There are five divisions in the school:

<b>Division</b>	<b>Grades</b>	<b>Ages of students in September 2005</b>
Pre-school		1 year 9 months - 4 years 2 months
Early Years	Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten	3 years 9 months - 5 years 8 months
Elementary School	Grades 1 - 5	5 years 9 months - 12 years
Middle School	Grades 6 - 8	11 years 1 month - 14 years 4 months
High School	Grades 9 - 12	13 years 5 months - 19 years

The school's motto is 'To grow "... in wisdom, and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52)'. Its mission statement is 'Triple C School (Creative Christian Character) exists to help students develop their potential, in order to fulfil their God-given purpose by providing internationally competitive education in a Christ-centred environment'.

## Information about the inspection

The inspection took place from 8<sup>th</sup> May to 11<sup>th</sup> May 2006 and involved a team of nine inspectors.

The inspection focused on language arts, English and mathematics across the whole school, together with science in the middle and high school. The standard of education in the early years and the quality of care in the pre-school were also evaluated. Other subjects, such as business studies, drama, art and music were sampled. The team also evaluated how well teachers were helping students to use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across all of their school work.

The following aspects of the school's work were looked at:

- Standards achieved by students in the subjects inspected
- 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.

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

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

The inspection team gathered evidence in the following ways:

- 76 lessons or parts of lessons were observed, mainly in language arts, English, mathematics and science, but lessons in other subjects were sampled.
- School documents, including teachers' planning, curriculum statements and guidelines, were looked at.
- Students' work was scrutinised.
- Inspectors spoke with students and took their views from the questionnaires into account.
- 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 taken into account.
- Information from link inspector visits was also drawn upon.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

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

Triple C School was devastated by Hurricane Ivan in September 2004. The school lost many of its resources, assessment data and records. The school building was out of operation for a year and many staff and students left the island. Despite the trauma and devastation, the school continued to provide refuge, stability and an education in borrowed accommodation. By necessity, the school leaders focused less on developing teaching, learning and the curriculum, and more on matters such as building repairs, rescue or replacement of resources and supporting students.

Overall, the school provides a satisfactory education for its students. Parents are happy that their children attend Triple C, and students feel safe there. The school offers a broad range of subjects and there are examples of very good teaching across the school, but particularly in the elementary grades. Students' achievements in language arts and English in the elementary and high school are consistently good. Most students are confident, keen to learn, work well together and have good independent learning skills.

Some progress has been made since the last inspection in 2002, but much still needs to be done. There are shortcomings in aspects of the way that the school is led and managed. Instructional leadership is under-developed and improvements are needed in the systems and structures that would help ensure consistently good teaching and learning throughout the school. The school will need support in order to bring about the necessary improvements.

### What the school does well

- Teaching and learning in the elementary school are consistently good.
- Students achieve consistently well in language arts in the elementary school and in English in the high school.
- Students are confident, keen to learn, work well together and have good independent learning skills.
- Students have the opportunity to study a wide variety of subjects, especially in the high school.
- The school communicates well with parents.

### What needs to improve

- Aspects of the way the school is led and managed, in particular the instructional leadership and how policies and practice are monitored
- The quality of teaching in some early years and middle school classes
- The alignment between the intended learning outcomes, the taught curriculum and how it is assessed
- The use of assessment of students' work to guide teaching and learning
- How the school caters for students with special educational needs

*The areas for improvement listed above will form the basis of the school's action plan, which should be sent to the Education Department and Schools' Inspectorate within 40 working days of receipt of the final report. The school is required to provide parents with an annual update on the progress that is being made in addressing these areas for improvement.*

## **How high are standards at the school?**

Overall, students at Triple C are achieving standards in line with what would be expected for their age. Their results in the Stanford 10 standardised tests<sup>1</sup> have generally been on a par with, or slightly above, the average for schools that take the test.

Students at all grade levels, have very effective communication skills. They are articulate and engage readily in conversation with adults. This is the case even with the youngest students in the Pre-kindergarten class.

In the elementary school, students achieve well in most subjects. Standards of achievement in language arts and English are consistently good in both the elementary and the high school. The standards of students' achievements in other areas, especially in the middle school, are often lower.

Students study a wide range of topics, but the most able, in particular, could often achieve much more. Students do not develop enough high-level problem solving and analytical skills.

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

Teaching and learning are consistently good in the elementary school. Here teachers present their lessons imaginatively and are not bound by the textbooks. They think carefully about what they want students to learn and then consider the best ways to achieve this. Teachers use a range of different teaching approaches and resources to help the students take an active part in their learning and discover things for themselves. Grade 3 students refining their mathematical skills for example, were given the task of measuring each other to the nearest half inch. They worked enthusiastically, but also very carefully, to ensure accurate results.

There is much more variation in the quality of teaching in the early years classes and in the middle and high schools. This leads to significant differences in the rates of students' learning. Too much of the teaching in the middle school is unsatisfactory. Students in this part of the school do not make as much progress as they should, especially in mathematics. The picture is more positive in the high school where the teaching of English is particularly good and much of the students' work in this subject is of a high standard.

Throughout the school, students are keen to learn. They are interested in lessons, concentrate well and work hard. This is particularly the case when teachers provide a varied range of stimulating activities, the lessons are practical and involve students working in small groups. In such instances, students cooperate with each other and use a good range of different learning skills to present and refine their ideas. In a Grade 11/12 class for general English, for instance, the students worked in groups to analyse how different themes were included in Act 3 of Macbeth. Lively discussion and debate within the groups helped students to articulate their ideas, refine their arguments and opinions and arrive at well substantiated conclusions.

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<sup>1</sup> Stanford 10 tests are tests from the United States which assess a range of subjects. They compare a student's performance with that of other students sitting the tests.

Relationships between students and teachers are very good. Students feel confident to voice their ideas and opinions because they know their contributions will be respected and valued. In the best lessons, teachers encourage students to explain their ideas fully by asking searching questions. This is particularly successful in the elementary school and results in students developing fluency and confidence in spoken English, as well as deepening their understanding of the lesson. Grade 4 students were considering lightning during an introductory lesson on magnetism and electricity. They suggested that farmers had a good chance of being struck by lightning. 'Why would that be?' asked the teacher, provoking considerable thought and discussion. Students' learning was extended successfully and they all enjoyed the process.

Most teachers have a secure knowledge of their subjects, especially in the high school. Lessons in English, art and music often transmit teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects to the students. Presentation is lively and generates students' excitement and enjoyment. In band practice, for instance, the students responded with great enthusiasm to their teacher's vigorous encouragement, working extremely hard on two very difficult pieces of modern music.

Students' work is usually marked regularly. However, most teachers rarely add useful comments to help the students see where they have gone wrong or where they can improve.

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

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection; it is broader and includes a good range of courses. The timetable now ensures more balance between subjects. There are art and music programmes for all grades, taught by specialist teachers. Care has been taken to ensure that the curriculum caters for the varied needs of high school students. For example, higher level courses, such as physics and honours English are available for students who need them for college entrance. This is a significant accomplishment for a small school.

School leaders have not identified what students need to understand and be able to do by the end of each grade in every subject. There is also little consistency in teaching methods, materials and activities. This results in the content of lessons being left too much to the discretion of individual teachers. Although documents detailing the subject content of the curriculum have been written, in practice, the majority of teachers follow a textbook as their curriculum. The lack of monitoring by subject leaders and the senior leadership means that these issues are not identified.

In the elementary school, teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies and there are many examples of very good practice. Unfortunately, there are few organised opportunities for teachers to share this practice or plan together. The good teaching strategies and ways teachers assess students are not written down in a way that would help them become common practice in these grades.

In the middle and high school, the taught curriculum is too often limited to the content of textbooks. With the notable exception of English, little effective use is made of different teaching strategies such as group work, whole class discussion or ICT. There is a lack of consistency in the way that students' work is assessed. Expectations and methods vary too much between grades, subjects and teachers. Assessment

methods tend to focus on topic tests or chapter reviews instead of on-going formative assessment based on grade-specific expectations that would give students more immediate feedback and help them to improve. Achievement targets are not set for individual students in any subject.

The Stanford 10 test, which is aimed primarily at students in the United States, is administered to students in all grades at Triple C every year. The school's curriculum is not well aligned with the expectations of these tests and so it is difficult for the school to use the information from the results to inform what is taught and to help improve students' achievements.

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

Triple C School is well organised and runs smoothly on a day to day basis. It is led by a principal and vice-principal, with a board of directors that oversees the work of the school. Most of the members of the board are selected by the Church of God in the Cayman Islands. Leadership, both at board and school level, has focused mainly on spiritual aspects of the school in an evangelical Christian context, and financial matters. The school is now financially stable and there is a clear vision for the Christian life of the school.

The principal provides a clear direction for the school as a Christian community. She ensures that all teachers are born-again Christians and are good role models for Christian living. There is induction for all staff at the beginning of the year that focuses on the spiritual side of the school and orientation for teachers new to the island. There are very clear expectations about how teachers should behave both inside and outside school. There is a clear commitment to integrating the Bible into all curriculum documentation. All of these contribute to a common understanding of the role of the teacher in nurturing young Christians and a strong sense of mission within the staff. There is a clear Christian agenda for the school, but the academic agenda is not as strong.

Instructional leadership is the main weakness of the school. The school has had difficulty recruiting a long-term business manager, with the result that the principal has had to spend time dealing with business-related issues at the expense of academic matters. The school leadership does not provide clear enough guidance on the content of the curriculum, how it is taught or how students' progress will be assessed. There is also a lack of common expectations about what constitutes good teaching and learning at Triple C. The school relies heavily on recruiting good teachers who make their own decisions about what happens in their classrooms. The progress that students make therefore depends too much on the qualities of their individual teacher and not enough on a systematic school-wide approach to teaching and learning.

The role of subject leaders is under-developed. They have no responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and subjects are not coordinated across the whole school. This means that progression from one grade to the next is not clearly planned or monitored and good practice is not systematically identified and shared.

The board of directors is responsive to parents and consults with staff through a teacher representative. It needs now to play a greater role in developing the academic side of the school. A staffing review has been carried out and there is an appropriate proposed

staffing structure. However, the principal and vice-principal do not have job descriptions for their current roles and there are no procedures for appraising their performance.

The principal and vice-principal regularly observe lessons and provide feedback to teachers. Whilst this is useful, the weaknesses in teaching that they identify are not addressed effectively enough.

The school has an ambitious policy for professional development. Individuals are encouraged to pursue higher qualifications and teachers are expected to complete a course on the philosophy of Christian education. Opportunities are, though, missed for professional development through personal research and the formal sharing of practice and expertise within the school, and through membership of professional organisations such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the National Council of Teachers of English. The school also needs to keep more up-to-date with educational developments in the United States, in order to inform decisions about standards, curriculum, resources and assessment.

Systems, procedures and expectations of staff and students are laid out in detail in the staff and student handbooks, but there is not enough monitoring to ensure that policies translate into practice. For example, there is wide variation between the specified curriculum time allocations in the elementary school and time actually spent by individual teachers on different subject areas.

The principal knows Triple C very well and is aware of its strengths and areas needing some attention. The school has made a positive start to the process of self-evaluation and improvement planning. The school's improvement plan will be a useful tool in the continued improvement of the school.

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

### **Students' personal development**

Students' personal development is satisfactory. Relationships between teachers and students are generally good. Students are usually well behaved and relate well to each other in lessons and around the school.

The school actively promotes important values such as 'loyalty' each week in homeroom announcements and students across the school help to raise funds for worthy causes locally and overseas. Students of all ages respond positively when provided with opportunities to take responsibility. Some elementary school students are given distinct responsibilities in the classroom, such as paper monitor or line leader. Class representatives are encouraged to express their views on school issues through the student council. For some older students, the Key Club develops leadership skills as well as an opportunity to provide service to the community.

Various policies and displays around the school reflect the school's aim to promote its Christian ethos. In senior chapel, a visiting speaker clearly modelled the Christian life and active faith promoted by the school, and the students listened attentively and responded positively to him. Grade 4 students responded well to devotions in registration and contributed their own sensitive reflections. All Grade 8 students participated in saying grace before lunch. However, in homeroom classes students'

responses to prayer are mixed. Some students do not actively participate, such as by bowing their heads or stopping what they are doing, and appropriate responses are not always reinforced by the homeroom tutor. Students are given too few opportunities in Bible, or other lessons, for discussion, exploration of beliefs and spiritual reflection. An exception to this was seen in a Grade 9 world history lesson in which students were encouraged to articulate their views on similarities and differences between Christianity and Islam.

Students develop a broad appreciation of national culture, heritage and marine ecology through homeroom quizzes, social studies, Caymanian history and marine biology lessons. This is enhanced by local visiting speakers. Clubs and activities during breaks and after school also help to enhance students' cultural and social development. Students participate in the music, speech and literary categories of the National Children's Festival of the Arts and some enter the Commonwealth essay competitions. Students learn about other cultures in social studies and in Grade 9 world history.

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

Links with parents and the community are good. The school communicates well with parents through its website and yearbook. Parents also receive regular newsletters and academic reports from teachers and the school's leadership. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to make contact with the school.

The school promotes positive links with the community through good use of visiting speakers. For example, a retired sea-captain visited Grade 4 to talk about the Cayman Islands' seafaring history as part of their social studies course. There is a work experience and community service programme for some senior students and the school's band and choir participate in local cultural events. Some parents assist the Parents' and Teachers' Association in community activities such as the Spring Fair and selling meals at Thanksgiving.

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

The support and guidance offered to students is satisfactory.

The school regularly provides parents with reports on students' academic progress. Reports in the elementary school describe students' behaviour in helpfully straightforward terms. The reports for middle and high school students are less parent-friendly as they include codes that are not easy to follow and rarely include comments by the teacher.

The system for monitoring attendance, particularly in the afternoon, is over-reliant on effective communication between individual teachers and the school secretary. Whilst some teachers record attendance in lessons, others do not consistently follow this policy. The information that the computer system provides does not enable the school to track patterns of attendance easily over time for individual students and groups. This makes monitoring attendance difficult.

Support and guidance for careers education and arrangements for preparing senior students for the next stage of their education or employment are under-developed. The school invites people from various colleges to speak to students, but there is no coherent programme for higher education guidance and counselling. Many senior students are uncertain about the different types of high school diploma that exist and the requirements for each. After-school classes are provided for students sitting the

Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and students appreciate the value of these. However, many students do not fully understand the expected standards of their work and are unclear as to what is required of them beyond the SAT.

There is some appropriate monitoring of students' academic progress and behaviour. For example, the vice-principal monitors the quarterly academic reports and meets with students in the middle and high school to provide guidance on academic concerns and promotion to the next grade. The dean of discipline provides support on behaviour issues. However there is not enough linking of the two to look at how students' behaviour is impacting on their academic achievement and little effective documentation of strategies to help students improve.

Behaviour around the school is generally good. Students understand the systems that promote and reinforce positive behaviour and they are praised and rewarded in assemblies. Students usually wear their uniform according to the school's expectations, although there is some inconsistency in how standards are enforced by teachers.

### **Special educational needs**

During Hurricane Ivan, virtually all records of the students with special educational needs were lost. The lack of a designated coordinator for these students has meant that the school has been slow to implement new procedures and replace documentation. A special educational needs co-ordinator has been appointed to start in September 2006.

Overall, students with special educational needs are not supported adequately. They are generally able to take an active part in lessons because most teachers try to modify the work for them, but often this does not really meet the students' specific learning needs. A few support sessions are held for students in language arts and mathematics, but these vary widely in quality. Grade 12 students receive very useful advice in their language arts support lessons when they learn how to write letters, résumés and fill out application forms. They appreciate these lessons and work well, showing a good degree of interest. In other cases however, the support offered is poor: weak teaching, the lack of documentation about students' needs and poor communication between teachers mean that students' needs are not met. No one is monitoring the progress of students with special educational needs or the levels of support offered in lessons to identify and address any weaknesses.

Teachers notify parents when their children who have special educational needs are not making enough progress. Informal meetings are arranged and teachers offer advice about how parents might help their children at home. This is a helpful approach, but the teachers do not always have enough specialist knowledge to be able to offer really appropriate advice. Some parents have valid concerns about the levels of support offered to their children.

The links with outside agencies, such as the Lighthouse School, speech therapists and educational psychologists are inadequate. Consequently, teachers, whilst often concerned about their students, do not have access to the support and advice they need to help them meet their students' individual learning needs.

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

Observation during the week of inspection and data provided by the school show that attendance and punctuality in the school are good overall.

## **What is the quality of teaching and learning in the early years, language arts, English, mathematics, science and ICT across the curriculum?**

### **Early Years**

#### ***Pre-school***

Children in the pre-school are happy and settled and make good progress. They like coming to pre-school and have good relationships with staff and each other. Children are able to take part in a good range of activities, including painting, drawing, reading, doing puzzles, playing with water and rice, dressing up and making models. They develop good social skills, play cooperatively, take turns and share well.

The children's spoken language skills are good and they continue to make good progress because they have plenty of opportunities to sing, say rhymes and talk. Children show quite high levels of independence for their age. They tidy up after themselves and push their chairs under the table.

There is a large, well resourced outdoor play area that children use every day. When the pre-school uses the school hall for energetic activities, the children tend to just run about while staff watch from the side. This is a missed opportunity to plan activities that would systematically develop children's physical skills.

There is good communication between the pre-school and parents. The teacher plans activities around themes and this information is sent home to parents in regular newsletters. Parents use this information to reinforce learning, for example finding objects around the house that begin with a certain letter. Children also go on trips and outings that enhance their learning.

The pre-school building has two large rooms and the children are grouped by age. The two year-olds have plenty of space, but the three and four year-olds are quite cramped. If there were more staff, then the children could go in both rooms and the space could be used more effectively. With the current numbers and ages of children the ratio of children to adults in the pre-school is lower than the Education Council guidelines.

Although two thirds of pre-school children move into Pre-kindergarten there are no formal transition arrangements to help children cope with the change. Assessment records of the children's progress are not kept and so cannot be shared with their next teacher. This lack of planned transition is likely to hinder children's progress when they move into Pre-kindergarten.

#### ***Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten***

Students in the early years have good speaking and listening skills and positive attitudes to their work. They participate willingly in activities, cooperate well with each other and display high levels of independence. There are clearly established rules and routines which students understand and follow very well. The bright spacious rooms and immediate access to safe outdoor areas provide a very suitable learning environment for young students.

In Pre-kindergarten, teaching strategies and learning activities usually take into consideration the way young children learn. Students have the opportunity to work at

different 'centres', although there is sometimes an over-emphasis on worksheets. Teaching and learning approaches in Kindergarten are more suited to the developmental needs of much older children. Too much of the teaching in Kindergarten is through direct instruction by the teacher, or through paper and pencil exercises. Students often sit colouring in worksheets or filling in missing letters and words. This style of teaching does not meet the needs of most young students as they need well planned practical activities to help them learn. Students do not make as much progress as expected, particularly the more able.

In Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten, the teachers use their assessments of work to complete students' report cards. They do not, though, use them effectively to help plan the next steps in students' learning. In too many lessons, the more able students finish very quickly and have to spend time colouring in, while less able students do not manage to start the work at all. A notable exception was a physical education lesson on skipping, where there were three different activities for the students, relevant to their stages of development. This provided good learning opportunities and all students made progress during the lesson.

There is no systematic approach to teaching phonics in either class which hampers students' progress in reading and writing. Students can recognise words in their reading books such as 'neighbourhood' and 'state' but they do not have strong enough phonic knowledge to help them read unfamiliar words when they are completing their workbooks.

Students in both Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten have limited opportunities to develop their writing skills. Students do not have enough opportunities to develop fine motor control and hand-eye coordination through activities such as doing jigsaw puzzles, using play-dough and lacing pictures. These would help their development of writing. There is often a lack of clarity about the objective of a writing lesson, which sometimes results in an inappropriate emphasis on handwriting at the expense of creative writing.

Pre-kindergarten students make satisfactory progress in their mathematical development. They can count, identify single-digit numbers and sort and match objects. Students in Kindergarten can name two dimensional shapes such as triangle, circle and square, but they are not familiar with names of basic three dimensional shapes. Students can count confidently up to 30 and beyond, but the most able do not know basic addition facts.

### ***Role of the subject leader***

The subject leader for Early Years is committed and enthusiastic. She does not have a job description, nor does she have any allocated time to undertake any leadership duties. This needs to be rectified in order to have effective coordination and monitoring across the Pre-school, Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten classes.

## **Language arts and English**

### ***Elementary School***

Students learn effectively during their time in the elementary school due to the consistently good teaching of the subject. The class texts provide the structure for teachers to plan their lessons to cover all aspects of the subject successfully. Teachers are confident enough, however, to move away from the text and present the material in different, more creative ways. The use of overhead projectors along with crisp question and answer sessions, demonstrations and practical activities all add to students' enjoyment and interest.

Students are confident and fluent speakers and use a wide range of vocabulary. By the end of Grade 5, most are able to read and understand a range of texts. All classes have a weekly library period where they learn simple library skills and choose books to take home. Most students enjoy these times, but need to be encouraged to select books that are appropriate for their age and reading ability, instead of those that are too easy for them.

Students write for a range of different purposes and with good attention to spelling, punctuation, structure and vocabulary. Students in every class carry out individual research projects in social studies and science which help them to practise and apply what they have learned in language arts lessons. Handwriting and presentation are weaker elements of students' writing.

### ***Middle and High School***

Students are generally articulate and enjoy participating in class discussions. When students have the opportunity to work in small groups or in pairs, their speaking and listening skills develop well. In the middle school, for example, students sometimes present some of their research to the class or take part in role-plays, which helps them to develop confidence in speaking in front of other people.

Most students read fluently and accurately. However, although extra support is given to lower ability students, their specific literacy needs are not always being met. For example, in the middle school some students have weak phonic skills but there is no systematic plan for supporting them. Some students read on their own for enjoyment, but said that they would be more inclined to do so if the fiction section of the library were updated and re-stocked. This is a work in progress, as many of the books were destroyed by Hurricane Ivan. High school students study novels or plays in addition to the excerpts in their main textbook. Students in the middle school do not have as many opportunities to read complete pieces of literature and their range of reading is much more limited.

Students' writing skills are developing well in the middle school due to systematic teaching of various forms of writing. High school students also make good progress with writing. They undertake assignments that require them to write at length, and much of this work is word-processed. Students in these grades enter various competitions such as the National Children's Festival of the Arts, or the Commonwealth essay competition, and most of their work for these is of a very good standard.

The way that students present their work needs some improvement. Students need to be encouraged to form their letters properly in the elementary school so that by the time

they reach the middle and high school they are able to write in neat and legible cursive script. Not enough students take pride in presenting their work neatly. Many use paper torn from notebooks and there is therefore no organised record of the work done over the semester or over the year. This makes it more difficult to find evidence of progress. In fact, older students say that they often throw away papers after each semester as they are no longer needed.

Teachers have good subject knowledge, which is clearly seen in their effective, probing questions that encourage students to really think through their answers. In all classrooms there is a warm and supportive atmosphere. Students' work is displayed well and obviously celebrated. Lessons are well organised and structured. Planning is generally good and teachers have clear objectives for their lessons. Where teachers use a variety of creative teaching strategies, students are particularly responsive and motivated and this has a positive effect on the standards they achieve. This is especially apparent in the high school.

Students who are more able are not always appropriately challenged in the middle school. In the high school students are streamed according to ability and two courses are offered – general and honours English. Students may be moved from one stream to the other according to the level of their performance. This arrangement ensures that these students are working at the level most suited to their needs.

Students' work is generally marked or graded regularly, and teachers' mark books are conscientiously kept. The marking is most helpful where teachers include comments, rather than just a grade or percentage so that students can see what they need to do to improve. Teachers use these marks to arrive at a final grade for students' reports but do not use them regularly to guide their own planning or to set targets for improvement. The best practice occurs when teachers share the marking guidelines or rubrics with students, which gives them a better understanding of what they are expected to achieve, why they received a particular grade or mark and what they need to do to improve.

### ***Role of the subject leader***

The quality of teaching varies across the grades, and currently, there is no regular sharing of good practice or support for teachers where there are specific areas that need to be improved. The role of subject leader needs to be developed so that all teachers of English have a shared vision for the development of the subject. Curricular links between the elementary, middle and high school grades need to be strengthened, and monitoring systems put in place that would ensure the continuity and progression of the subject from one grade to the next. With all teachers working together to analyse performance data and set goals for improvement, standards of achievement could be even better.

### ***Literacy across the curriculum***

There is no written policy for the development of literacy across the curriculum. Students are, though, given opportunities to develop and apply their literacy skills in subjects such as social studies, science and history, where they carry out research projects. In some classes students' speaking and listening skills are strengthened through working and discussing in pairs or in small groups. Older students develop their writing skills through project work, for example in developing a newspaper and reporting in different ways on the happenings in the lives of Romeo and Juliet.

## **Mathematics**

Standards of achievement in the elementary and high school are in line with levels expected for students' ages. However, standards in the middle school are often below what is expected.

The quality of students' learning is satisfactory overall. Students in all grades are confident to ask questions in lessons, and this promotes understanding. In the majority of classrooms the atmosphere is relaxed and students have a sense of belonging. Some teachers display students' work attractively on the walls and this makes the students proud of their achievements. Students treat each other with respect in the majority of classes and work well in pairs or groups to share and refine their ideas. Students in all grades would benefit from doing more problem-solving and investigative work as these skills are currently under-developed.

### ***Elementary School***

Most students in the elementary school have very positive attitudes to their learning. In one lesson when some students had completed the assignment, they quickly went to their mathematics 'extra work' file to choose another activity. They are well motivated and this keeps them on task during lessons.

Students' learning is especially good when they are encouraged to work in groups on a varied range of activities. For example, in a lesson on measurement, students worked well in pairs to measure classroom objects and each other's heights. Students had to choose the appropriate tool for the task and measure heights carefully, checking with each other while they worked. They were all involved and the activities improved their understanding of careful measurement.

Teachers often plan from clear objectives and make good links to prior learning. Their good questioning engages students in mathematical thinking and enables them to develop their understanding. Practical activities and well-planned group work mean that all students make progress. Teachers make appropriate use of textbooks, but are rarely bound by them – they are used merely as a resource. Only on occasion, when teachers lack confidence in mathematics, do they rely too much on letting students' complete pages of their work books, without interacting with them.

Assessment is inconsistent across the grades. There is too much emphasis on tests. Some teachers carry out informal on-going assessments and use the information to guide their lesson planning. However, very little feedback is given to students about how they are doing. Students' work is not always marked regularly and there are too few written comments to help students improve.

### ***Middle and High School***

Students in the middle school are not progressing as well as they should, mainly because teachers use a limited range of teaching strategies. Teachers rely too heavily on the textbooks, following them step by step. When the textbook explanation is not clear to students, they do not understand the lesson and make little progress. Teachers fail to interact enough with students to guide their learning and question their understanding.

The textbook scheme used in the high school restricts the development of students' understanding of mathematics as a whole, as it consists of short unrelated topics with

lots of repetition. Students do not make links between different areas of the subject and do not have the chance to really get to grips with mathematical problems. For example, students studying Algebra II could not make links between the properties of quadratic equations and graphs of quadratic functions.

Teachers do not adapt their lessons well enough to meet the needs of individuals, especially those with special educational needs and the more able students. The most able students are often not challenged by the work set and do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Teachers' subject knowledge is adequate, but their teaching does not appear to take account of current thinking about how students learn mathematics. Their lessons are often poorly structured. In some lessons the objective is presented and then an unrelated assignment is given before the teacher returns to the topic. This confuses the students and they lose focus.

Assessment of students' achievements is poor. In most grades, assessment is used to keep records of marks rather than to guide teaching. Tests are administered and marked but students' day-to-day work is either marked without comments, or not marked at all. Too many students are not aware of how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.

### ***Role of the subject leader***

The development of mathematics is restricted by the amount of time the subject leader is able to spend on his leadership and management duties. There is also a lack of awareness of what these duties include, although there is recognition that improvement is needed. There is no clear guidance on how best to teach the subject to help improve students' achievements. No-one has a clear overview of the mathematics curriculum for students from Pre-kindergarten through to Grade 12, which makes ensuring progression from one grade to the next difficult.

### ***Numeracy across the curriculum***

There is no written policy on the development of students' numeracy across the curriculum. There is some, albeit limited, use of numeracy across the curriculum in the elementary and middle school, for example in science. However, many opportunities are missed for teachers to develop students' numeracy through subjects other than mathematics. Very few examples were seen of students applying numeracy skills, or of teachers planning for their development.

In the high school, students studying accountancy and business studies did apply their numeracy skills appropriately and were confident in working with large numbers. These opportunities enabled students to use numeracy in a practical way and to see the value of mathematics in different situations.

## **Science**

The standard of students' work, in both the middle and high school, is broadly in line with what would be expected for their age. However, there is not enough practical work to enable students to develop the investigative skills of designing experiments or measuring and handling data to a high enough level.

Teachers have a good command of their subject and respond quickly and accurately to students' queries. They want their students to do well and most have developed good relationships with them. In addition, most students have a good attitude to their studies, work co-operatively and behave well. This has helped to develop a good working atmosphere in the classroom.

Science lessons sampled in the elementary school indicate that students get a good start to their science education. Teachers plan several activities in each lesson to keep students actively involved in the learning process. Students have the opportunity to discuss their ideas with their classmates and teachers. They also have practical activities to do, such as analysing leaf litter and soil samples. Classrooms are exciting environments with students' work and posters well displayed on the walls and ceilings.

The quality of teaching in the middle and high school is satisfactory overall, but there is much room for improvement. Too many lessons lack variety and interesting things for students to do or see. They are characterised by uninspiring activities that go on too long, such as answering questions from a textbook or listening to lectures, so that many students become bored. There are too few opportunities for students to develop and express their own ideas. Lessons are rarely challenging enough for more able students. There is also insufficient support material for less able students and those with special educational needs. As a result, the most and least able students are not making as much progress as they should.

Teachers regularly set and mark a variety of tests, but the results are not used to set targets for the students' future performance. Students do not store these test papers well and their notebooks are rarely marked. As a consequence, they do not know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve. Teachers do not take enough account of what students have learned when planning their lessons each day.

The science department does not have enough specialist resources to meet the needs of a practical science course, although the situation is beginning to improve. The two science laboratories offer spacious and adaptable accommodation but their refurbishment is not yet complete. Teachers do not brighten up the laboratories enough with display work to provide a stimulating environment and do not exhibit students' work regularly to exemplify standards and celebrate students' achievements.

### ***Role of the subject leader***

The department's coordinator has numerous other roles and commitments which means it is very difficult for him to be effective in leading and managing the science department. The science team has no clear guidance on what standards their students should achieve in each grade, what an effective lesson looks like, or how to plan to ensure good progress is made by all students. Although there is some monitoring of science teaching by senior school managers, it has not had enough impact on the quality of teaching to ensure that the team develops a consistent and effective approach. There are too few

opportunities for science teachers to work together to develop and extend the range and effectiveness of their teaching strategies.

### **ICT across the curriculum**

Students are given satisfactory opportunities to develop their ICT skills in computer lessons in the elementary, middle and high schools. The computer courses cover basic skills and competencies, and students develop these well.

In the elementary school, with the help of their class teacher, students are introduced to the computer, use some subject-specific software, search for information and learn how to word-process their work.

The ICT coordinator provides specialist instruction in the later school phases. Middle school students concentrate on developing their word-processing skills. In the high school they develop these skills further and also extend their understanding of the use and design of web pages, use databases and spreadsheets and produce multi-media presentations.

A strong feature of the course is that students become very competent on the keyboard and know how to produce formal documents, such as business letters and résumés.

Teachers do not make enough use of ICT in other subjects to support teaching and learning. The ICT administrator maintains the hardware and systems well and facilitates their use by teachers through workshops and individual support. He has put in place appropriate safety and security features. However, there is no clear plan to embed ICT in all curriculum areas. Responsibility for co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum has not yet been defined or allocated. Consequently, there is no monitoring of the range and quality of students' experience of ICT across all subjects. There are too few opportunities for students to put into practice what they have learned in their computer lessons, or to appreciate the full value and relevance of ICT in improving their learning.

Students make most use of ICT for word-processing essays and projects and for finding information. They have the appropriate skills to be able to use computer packages in their lessons. Some subject-specific software has already been installed and there are enough computers for the process of embedding ICT in all subjects to begin.