



External Evaluation Report

Grace Christian Academy

May 2008

Lead Evaluator: Mary Bowerman



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	3
Executive summary of the report	5
Information about the school and the team	7
Commentary on the evaluation findings	
○ How well do students achieve and make progress?	8
○ What is the quality of students' personal development?	8
○ How effective is the teaching and what is its impact on students' learning?	9
○ What is the quality of the curriculum?	11
○ How well is the school led and managed?	12
How effective are other aspects of the school's work?	
○ Support, guidance and students' welfare	13
○ Links with parents and the community	14
What is the quality of teaching and learning in subjects?	
○ Language arts and literacy across the curriculum	15
○ Mathematics and numeracy across the curriculum	16
○ Science in the high school	17
○ ICT across the curriculum	18

Introduction

The mission of the Education Standards and Assessment Unit is to contribute to the continuous improvement of education in the Cayman Islands through rigorous independent evaluations and by providing high quality advice and research.

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

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

This was the first external evaluation for Grace Christian Academy. It took place during the week beginning 26th May 2008 and involved a team of five evaluators. The following aspects of the school's work were looked at:

- Standards achieved and progress made by students in language arts and mathematics (Grades 1 to 11) and science (high school only)
- The effectiveness of teaching and how well students learn
- The quality of students' personal development
- The quality of the curriculum
- How well the school is led and managed
- The quality of the support and guidance offered to students, the level of care for their welfare, and support for their attendance and punctuality
- The effectiveness of links with parents and the community
- How well the school is preparing students to become 'Educated Caymanians'
- How well teachers help students to learn and use their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across all of their school work.

The evaluation team gathered evidence in the following ways:

- Forty-three lessons, or parts of lessons, were observed, mainly in language arts, mathematics and science, but including most subjects offered
- School documents, including teachers' planning and curriculum statements, were looked at and students' work was scrutinised
- Evaluators observed a high school assembly, breaks, lunch times, and after-school activities
- Evaluators spoke with students and took their views from the questionnaires into account and heard students read
- Discussions took place with teachers, other members of staff, a representative from the Parents and Teachers Association and with the Chair of the Board of Directors
- Comments from parents at the meeting before the evaluation and from the questionnaires were taken into account.

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

Grade	Description
1	Very good 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	Adequate No significant weaknesses, but no major strengths
4	Unsatisfactory Some significant weaknesses (might be only one or two) that have negative impact on learning and standards

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

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

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

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



Mary Bowerman
Acting Director
Education Standards and Assessment Unit

Executive summary of the report

Background

Grace Christian Academy was founded in 1996, and is located in the district of West Bay. The vision of the founders was to establish a Christian school, based on the American system of education that would meet the educational and spiritual needs of their children and others from the local community. When the school began, it offered only elementary education.

In 2004, all the buildings were badly damaged by Hurricane Ivan – so much so that the school had to remain closed for a year. Since that time, the buildings have been extensively renovated, and the whole site restored. Most of the work was undertaken by a group of hardworking and determined parents who were part of the restoration committee. The school has gradually added classes since 2005, and now caters to students from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 11. The intention is to complete the high school classes next year with the addition of Grade 12.

There are 134 students on the roll, and classes are limited to 14 students. There are two Pre-Kindergarten classes and one class in each of the other grades. Currently Grades 4 and 5 are being taught together. Seventy-nine per cent of the students are Caymanian.

The school's mission is “to minister to students in a Christ-centered environment, which is committed to the pursuit and practice of excellence in academics, leadership and physical development, social and spiritual growth, in preparation to meet the challenges of the future.”

How effective is the school overall?

Overall, the school provides an adequate education for its students. The Board of Directors and the school's senior management have a clear vision for the school in terms of providing a family atmosphere with a firm Christian foundation. Small class sizes make it possible for teachers to know the needs of individual students, and they are able to offer support where it is needed. Relationships between staff and students are generally positive, and students are encouraged to express their ideas and seek answers to their questions. The care and support of students and their personal development are strengths of the school. Parents generally expressed satisfaction with the education that their children receive at Grace Christian Academy.

The evaluation team found that the quality of teaching varies tremendously across the school, and only 40 per cent of the teaching seen was good or very good. Standards in the elementary grades and in mathematics across the school are adequate. However, students do not achieve as well as they should in English across the school or in high school science. The school has only recently, within the last year, begun to develop an overall plan for its curriculum and currently there are few ways of checking to ensure that students are making the progress of which they are capable.

Leadership and management were found to be adequate. However, there is an urgent need for more effective systems for monitoring the work of the school so that priorities can be identified and an effective plan developed to address these. In the absence of whole-school policies, there are inconsistencies in the way staff deal with issues, including the way they assess students' work. At present, more emphasis is given to the grade or percentage that a student receives than to identifying and addressing students' specific strengths and weaknesses.

The evaluation team judged that the school will need help to bring about the improvements outlined in this report.

What the school does well

- The school takes the welfare of its students very seriously, and effectively supports them in a caring, Christian atmosphere
- The school provides well for students' personal development, and is preparing them effectively to become 'Educated Caymanians.'
- The school has developed strong and effective links with parents and the community
- Students are encouraged and supported to develop as confident and articulate speakers

What needs to improve

- Management systems – to ensure that the work of the school is monitored more effectively
- Strategic planning – to ensure that short and long term priorities are identified and effective plans are developed to address them
- The curriculum – to ensure progression and continuity in students' learning from one year to the next
- Procedures for assessing students' work and using the data gathered to raise standards of achievement

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

Information about the school and the evaluation team

School contact information

Type of school:	Private
Age range of students:	3 – 17 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	134
School address:	P.O. Box 31930 Grand Cayman KY1 - 1208 Cayman Islands
Telephone number:	(345) 945 -0899
Fax number:	(345) 945 - 0896
Email address:	gca@candw.ky
Name of Principal:	Leonora Mendoza-Hydes
Name of Chair of Board:	Stephen Faucette

The evaluation team

Lead:	Mary Bowerman	Education Standards and Assessment Unit
Team:	Pachent Smythe	Education Standards and Assessment Unit
	Favourita Blanchard	Education Standards and Assessment Unit
	Roger Holmes	Overseas Evaluator
	Donna Smith	Local Occasional Evaluator

Commentary on evaluation findings

How well do students achieve and make progress?

1. The standards achieved by students at Grace Christian Academy vary widely across the school, and in lessons seen, nearly a quarter were unsatisfactory.
2. In the 2006-7 Stanford Achievement Test, students achieved standards that were in line with what is expected for their grade levels. The evaluation team found that standards in the elementary grades and in mathematics across the school are adequate. However, students do not achieve as well as they should in English across the school and in high school science.
3. The school rightly identified the fact that standards of achievement needed to be improved and at the beginning of this school year, raised the pass mark to 65 per cent for students in Grades 3 to 11. This was done with the expectation that students would work harder. However, this has not yet shown that it is effective in raising standards overall.

What is the quality of students' personal development

4. Students' personal development is good.
5. Grace Christian Academy provides a very caring and friendly Christian ethos that is supportive of students' learning. The Christ-centred atmosphere is a strong feature of the school.
6. The school provides many effective opportunities for students' spiritual development. Students experience a positive start to their school day through relevant and thought-provoking devotions, assemblies and chapel times. Students' reflection on the meaning of Bible verses enhances their spiritual development. They spend time considering positive qualities such as friendliness and kindness, and the importance of giving and of making right choices.
7. Students have many opportunities in lessons such as social studies, drama, psychology, English / language arts and careers to reflect on what they are learning. This is a common feature throughout the school. They talk about values and beliefs and reflect on personal experiences, which makes their learning more meaningful and relevant.
8. Students empathize with each other and show care and concern for their classmates. They search for meaning by asking questions. Some teachers encourage this and stress positive thinking in their lessons, as well as the importance of valuing each other's opinions. Teachers' responsive and positive relationships enable students to ask questions and express their ideas confidently and without fear of making a mistake. For example, in a psychology lesson when students were learning about abnormal behaviour, one student commented that he didn't believe people should be labeled as having abnormal behaviour when each person is different and has different ideas and values. He cited instances when 'normal' people exhibited silly behaviour. The teacher used this opportunity to help the class reflect on the issue and they came away with a clearer understanding of the topic discussed.

9. Experiences that students gain during chapel times and in some lessons help them to develop a deeper understanding of right and wrong, what constitutes justice and how they should aspire to live Christ-like lives. Most students enjoy their lessons and get on well with each other and with the adults who work with them. Directives in the faculty handbook mandate that teachers insist on good manners, cooperation and obedience. Students generally behave well around the school but in some lessons, they talk and behave inappropriately. Some teachers lack effective behaviour management skills and where they allow this to go unchecked, students' learning is affected.
10. Students have good opportunities to develop their social skills through the many activities at the school and in the community. The recently formed student government is beginning to provide prefects and class captains with responsibilities and helping them to develop leadership skills. Field trips, after school activities both on site and in the community, along with Community Service activities add to their social development. House competitions, the Drug Awareness and Resistance Education (DARE) sessions, the school's Spirit Day activities and assemblies are some examples where students are learning to work effectively with each other.
11. Each classroom has individualized rules and consequences displayed. Students are expected to follow them as well as the general school rules and routines. This leads to inconsistencies, particularly in the high school, where they move from class to class. Students show respect for the school property by not littering. Their behaviour between classes, and at break and lunch times is generally good. Those who are given detentions have an opportunity to think through the consequences of their behaviour, reflect on how they should have responded and write an apology. Communication skills are well developed through effective questioning, lively discussions and sharing of ideas in lessons.
12. The school provides well for students to learn about their own as well as other cultures. They take part in a range of artistic, sporting and cultural activities such as the National Children's Festival of the Arts and the school's swimming competition. They study Spanish art and learn about various artists. The school also celebrates Commonwealth Day when students learn about their own and other cultures through projects and class work in subjects such as art, drama, social studies, English and language arts. Sometimes there are guest speakers. For example, in January, Mrs. Sybil McLaughlin came to speak about national heroes.
13. The school encourages students to develop a healthy lifestyle by being involved in activities such as cycling and swimming and by providing healthy meals for them. Students commented that they needed more opportunities for physical activities and that the school space did not allow for this. The provision of a pool for swimming lessons is a useful addition.

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

14. The quality of teaching is adequate overall. It is slightly stronger in the elementary school than in the high school.
15. Even though class sizes are small, there is still a range of ability within each class. Teachers generally make it a priority to offer help and encouragement to students who may be having difficulties with the work and there is an opportunity one afternoon a week for students to receive more individualized help during the 'tutorial' time. However, they do not always ensure that the most able are sufficiently challenged. Most teachers share with students the tasks that they will be completing during the lesson, but very few actually tell students what they should know, understand or be able to do by the end of the lesson. Expectations are often too low, for example where students are tested on spelling words in the order in which the list was given because 'otherwise they might not spell the words correctly'.
16. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good. They are accurate in the information they convey, and many ask probing questions that encourage students to think and ask questions of their own. Across the school students' speaking, listening and thinking skills are developing well. However, teachers frequently use worksheets which require little effort on the part of students and are often taken out of context. There are not enough opportunities for students to show that they have mastered the worksheet exercises by transferring these skills to their own extended pieces of writing.
17. Teachers' lesson planning varies in effectiveness. Activities for the lesson are usually clearly thought out, but these tend to become the focus of the lesson rather than what the teacher actually wants the students to know, understand or be able to do by the end of the lesson. When there is no clear learning objective, it is more difficult for teachers and students to check whether or not they have actually achieved what was intended. The planning does not take enough account of the fact that students are at different stages in their learning and that they may also have different learning styles. For example, there are few opportunities for students to be involved in practical, investigative work, especially in the high school. However, some effective investigative work was seen in Grade 3 mathematics and social studies lessons.
18. The range of teaching methods is limited, but some lively and effective lessons were seen, for example in careers, mathematics and psychology. Throughout the school students are keen to try new things, are articulate and ask questions freely. Where the range of teaching methods is limited, the pace is often slow and teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are low. The untidy way that many students present their written work, for example, is often accepted by teachers. Some students who are not being challenged do not see the relevance of the task they are being asked to complete and become restless and disruptive, and this is sometimes not dealt with by teachers.
19. The new curriculum is still in draft form and not all teachers are familiar with it. Few are actually using it yet. Some of them rely heavily on textbooks, which may or may not be pitched at the right level for the class. Currently there is no effective way of ascertaining that students are not repeating work unnecessarily or ensuring that there is continuity and progression in what they learn from year to year.

20. Other than the school's grading scale which sets out the general distribution of marks, there are no formal guidelines for marking and assessing students' work. The lack of formal monitoring procedures results in inconsistency in the way that teachers assess students' work and there is no constant benchmark for determining the progress each student is making. Generally teachers' marking does not include specific, helpful comments to show students what they need to do to improve that piece of work. Currently, teachers determine whether students are making enough progress by noting if the percentage on their monthly progress reports goes up or down, and as they assess in different ways, this method is not very practical. The pass mark has recently been raised, but students can retake tests and can also earn extra credit in other ways, so it is not clear how effective this is.

What is the quality of the curriculum?

21. The curriculum across the school is adequate in terms of breadth, but it does not yet ensure continuity and progression from one year to the next.
22. The curriculum for the elementary years is generally matched to the needs of the young students, although lack of space in the teaching rooms is a constraint and limits the amount of physical activity and practical work that the children experience. These younger students are taught all the subjects normally found at this stage, apart from information and communication technology (ICT), which they only experience through their work in other subjects. This arrangement does not ensure that they systematically develop their skills in using modern technology. Many students are confident and use computers well, but these are skills they have learnt at home. The range of subjects is enhanced by Spanish, as Grace Christian Academy has acknowledged that children are better able to learn another language at this age.
23. High school students are taught the range of subjects usually found at this stage and currently have a choice of three electives – economics, psychology and sociology. The length of time available for each subject is generally appropriate, but ICT and music are only taught for a term each in Grades 6 to 8 and Grades 9 to 11 only have two hours per week in science. These arrangements provide too little time to cover the material that needs to be taught in these subjects. Similarly, physical education only has one hour per week throughout the school.
24. Within the last year, the school began to develop an overall plan for a new curriculum, which will set out the scope and sequence of work to be covered for each subject at every grade. The school is drawing on curriculum documents that have been produced in the United States, and on the Cayman Islands' national curriculum which provides guidance on covering the subjects at the appropriate levels. Most progress has been made in producing the plans for mathematics and religious education, but significant work remains to be done in language arts, social studies and particularly in science. In the absence of this curriculum guidance, teachers have to decide for themselves what to teach, without having a clear view of what students have already covered or what they need to be prepared for in later years. This results in work being repeated unnecessarily and slows students' progress. Cross-curricular strands such as literacy and ICT are under-developed. In some cases, particularly when textbooks are over-used, students are being presented with too much detail and are not learning as well as they should.

25. The curriculum has a strong Christian focus, through the inclusion of religious education lessons for all students and by the frequent inclusion of Christian ideas within other subjects. All students have equal access to the curriculum and those with special educational needs are supported without distorting the range of subjects that they meet. The school offers a good range of enrichment activities, and students are required to take part in at least one of these each term.

How well is the school led and managed?

26. Overall, the leadership and management of Grace Christian Academy are adequate, but there are many aspects that need to be improved.

27. The school is run by a board of directors and a senior management team. They have a clear vision for the school in terms of providing a family atmosphere with a firm Christian foundation. This is evident in the quality of the support and care given to students and the effectiveness of students' personal development, both of which are strong. After Hurricane Ivan, much of the focus of the leadership was on restoring the physical facilities and adding a class each year, taking the school currently to Grade 11. This effort has been very successful. However, there is no effective strategic planning which sets out short and long term priorities for the school in terms of the teaching and learning and how these priorities will be addressed.

28. The senior management team consists of the principal, a deputy principal and two deans, one with responsibility for the elementary school and the other for the high school. All of these apart from the principal have full time teaching responsibilities. The principal is the only senior member of staff with a detailed job description and there is some uncertainty as to exactly what the roles of the others entail. Consequently there is some overlap of responsibilities and inconsistencies in the way issues are addressed. Staff meetings are held on a regular basis, but more than half the staff do not feel that communication within the school is good, and have concerns about the way the school is led and managed. Board members are mainly concerned with the appointment of staff, the handling of finances and maintenance issues. Currently the board does not play an active role in monitoring the school's performance, especially in ensuring that crucial policies are developed and consistently implemented.

29. The school functions smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Daily procedures are known and understood by staff, students and parents. The office is well organized, and personnel there are friendly, polite and helpful.

30. The school seeks to provide an education for its students that promotes high standards of achievement. However, only within the last year, was work started on the development of a curriculum which would provide more guidance to ensure progression and continuity across the school. While it is understood that this is a work in progress, teachers have had to decide for themselves what to teach, and because there has been no clear, written guidance, there is repetition of work already covered which, in some cases, has actually slowed students' progress.

31. There is some monitoring of the teaching and learning, but this is not frequent or rigorous enough, to ensure consistency or to identify good practices within the school so that they can be shared. In an attempt to improve standards of achievement, the pass mark was raised, with the expectation that students would understand the need to work harder. However, students can re-take tests as necessary in order to achieve a pass mark, or they can earn extra credit in other ways that can be applied to their final grade.
32. The faculty handbook provides some guidance to teachers, but there are very few written guidelines or policies on such things as teaching and learning, marking and assessment, or homework. Much is left to the discretion of individual teachers and this leads to inconsistencies across the school. For example, although there are some whole-school rules, teachers also have their own classroom rules, which vary from teacher to teacher. All staff are required to make a weekly entry in their grade book for each student, but they can also submit their own alternative assessment method for approval. There is some guidance for what should be included in teachers' lesson plans but they are only checked 'from time to time'. The lack of formal systems and structures for checking how well the school is doing is a major weakness in the management of the school and there is no written school improvement plan to document how the work of the school is evaluated. This affects the ability of others to be involved or to be held accountable for improvements.

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

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

Support, guidance and welfare

33. The school provides good care, guidance and support for its students, and they feel safe in the supportive family environment. Students' academic, personal and medical records are kept up to date. The office is well informed about each student and the staff know the students very well and are sensitive to their needs. The school is supportive of the needs of individual students and is quick to offer emotional, social and medical care when needed. This includes frequent home visits by some senior staff. The school maintains very good contact with parents and they are appreciative and quick to respond.
34. The accommodation and grounds are regularly checked so that students can work and play in a safe environment. The outdoor play areas and the grounds are particularly well maintained. Safety procedures, which are written in the staff handbook, are clear, known and understood by all staff. These are well organized and implemented diligently. For example, students have to sign out when they are riding or walking home. The provision of a staff monitor on the bus, the students' signing out book and medical records reflect the school's concerns for the safety of the children.
35. Students for whom English is a second language (ESL), as well as those with learning difficulties and behavioural problems are satisfactorily provided for in lessons. Class teachers generally support these students well. They develop 'Academic Individual Plans' (AIPs) which focus on the areas they need to improve. The deans review these AIPs on a regular basis and have discussions with individual class teachers on how each student is progressing. These students often perform as well as their peers.

36. The school's staff mentors provide additional support for students who have been identified as being at risk academically. Students can discuss concerns and issues with a member of staff on a one-to-one basis. Some staff use this time well to motivate and encourage them.
37. The school acknowledges students by giving them special awards for perfect attendance, behaviour, leadership skills and good schoolwork. These awards are presented at the monthly chapel services that are held on the last Friday of each month at the John Gray Memorial Church. Classes take turns in leading these services.
38. The school makes good use of support agencies to help students and their families. Specialists include educational psychologists, counselors and a pastor who is a regular visitor to the school.
39. Students' attendance is good and the school is monitoring those who are not very punctual.

Links with parents and the community

40. Grace Christian Academy has established good links with parents and the community.
41. The school keeps parents well informed. Information is communicated through focus groups, e-mails, newsletters and telephone calls. The school informs parents of their children's progress through monthly and end of term reports and reporting sessions. Daily notice board reminders of current and up-coming events are posted at the entrance to the school compound.
42. Parents have opportunities to be involved in the life of the school. They read to students, accompany them on field trips, conduct after school clubs, and participate in monthly assemblies or Heritage and Commonwealth Day celebrations. There is a vibrant Parent Teachers Association (PTA) that is responsible for fund-raising. For example, they assisted in the day trip of Grades three to eleven students to Cayman Brac.
43. The school has established strong links with various sectors of the community. It has contributed funds to many charities such as the 'Breakfast for Kids' programme sponsored by the Kiwanis Club, Hospice care initiatives, the West Bay Senior Home, the National Trust Iguana drive and the 'Heifer International' Project Funding initiative in which students donate money that is used to purchase animals to send to Africa. The Red Cross association works with the school to train teachers and students in First Aid. Teachers and students are awarded certificates after successful completion of the sessions. Recertification is also done by the Red Cross.
44. The school gives students the opportunity to be involved with the wider community through participation in sporting and cultural events. Students interact with members of the cycling and squash clubs and compete in the inter-primary swim meet and track and field events. They have completed recycling projects that were organized by the Department of Environment. Students also participate in the National Children's Festival of the Arts and Spelling Bee competitions organized by the Department of Education Services, and the Knowledge Bowl competition organized by Sagikor. The school continues to succeed at the science fair which is organized under the auspices of the Rotary Club. Support from the community is valued and the school continues to involve members of the community in their work.

What is the quality of teaching and learning in subjects?

Language Arts

45. Overall, the provision for English / language arts across the school is just adequate, as the teaching varies from good to unsatisfactory. Students' standards of achievement are lower than expected, with forty-four percent below the expected level for their ages.
46. Teachers generally have a good knowledge of the subject, and know their students well. However, their day to day planning does not always show a clear and appropriate learning objective for each lesson, and students are therefore not always aware of the purpose behind some of the activities they are given. Although classes are small, not all students are at the same stage in their learning, but in most lessons they are all required to do the same work. The use of worksheets and workbook activities, especially for the most able students is restrictive and hinders them from making the progress of which they are capable. Behaviour sometimes deteriorates when students are finding the work either too difficult or not challenging enough.
47. The teaching in some of the elementary grades was generally more stimulating than the teaching in the high school. Where teachers used a variety of different strategies, gave students explicit instructions as to what was expected and set time limits for completing the work, students were more attentive and eager to learn. These teachers asked probing questions and encouraged students to justify their answers and ask questions of their own.
48. The language curriculum is in the process of being developed, but is still in draft form. Not all teachers are aware that the school has a draft curriculum, and they have had to decide what they feel is most appropriate for each class. Consequently, lessons are sometimes repeated for different grades, without the tasks being prepared at a more advanced level for older students. There is no consistency in the progression of what is being taught from one year to the next and no way at present to ensure continuity between the elementary grades and the high school.
49. Teachers know the students well and generally ensure that students feel comfortable to voice their opinions and ask questions. Students' speaking and listening skills across the school are developing well. They challenge ideas that they may disagree with, while on the whole, maintaining close relationships with their peers and teachers. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for discussion and this helps students to strengthen their understanding of new ideas.
50. Most students across the school read confidently and fluently, with good expression, and teachers provide regular opportunities for students to read aloud during lessons. However, they do not have enough opportunities to select and read books independently, or choose from a wide range. The school does not have a library and the number and variety of reading books in classrooms vary between grades. Due to the limited space in classrooms, reading books are frequently stored in crates or boxes, and these are often inaccessible to students.
51. Worksheets and workbooks are used in most grades. While these are sometimes useful for reinforcing a particular skill, they can also restrict learning. This was seen in both elementary and high school lessons, where students were asked to identify correct usage, rather than use particular skills themselves – for example, the identification of literary techniques, recognition of tenses or the definitions of new vocabulary. Students work on projects during the second term. This allows them to make connections between different

subjects and do some extended writing, but on the whole, there is not enough of this to ensure that they understand and are able to correctly use these skills.

52. The quality of teachers' marking across the school is inconsistent and varies from unsatisfactory to very good. In the best examples, teachers use proofreading symbols that students are familiar with and include comments that help them know what they could do to improve their work. There are regular tests, and students strive to achieve the required pass mark of 65 per cent. Teachers and students discuss progress in terms of 'pass' or 'fail' with an emphasis on the percentage achieved, but there is no effective means of describing students' strengths and weaknesses in order to target specific areas for improvement for each individual.

Literacy across the curriculum

53. At present, there is no whole school plan to ensure that students' literacy skills are addressed in subjects across the curriculum. In the high school, in particular, where different types of reading and writing are required in different subjects, this is a weakness. However, students are given the opportunity to make some use of their literacy skills during the second term when they are given projects to work on.

Mathematics

54. Provision for mathematics across the school is adequate.
55. The standards that students achieve are generally in line with those expected for their grade level and students with special educational needs are making adequate progress. In the elementary school, more progress is made than in the high school. For example, in one high school class students spent much time repeating simple algebra skills, a concept they had already learnt. Students of higher ability could do even better if the work was more challenging and their needs were planned for.
56. Teaching is adequate overall but there is some that is very good. In the best lessons, teachers know their subject and students well and thoughtfully plan activities to promote understanding and give students opportunities to be actively involved in their learning. For example, in an elementary lesson on measurement, students worked collaboratively in groups to measure selected outdoor areas. The three groups used different measuring tools – a meter rule, measuring tape and a trundle wheel. Students discussed which tool was the most appropriate for their task and why. They converted measurements from yards to feet and inches and then devised a scale which they used to draw the areas measured. Skilful, probing questions by the teacher helped the students extend their thinking and make connections in their learning.
57. Except for a few occasions, students generally behave well in class and exhibit positive attitudes to learning. Students in the elementary school are eager to participate in mathematics lessons. This is mainly because teachers in this section of the school provide more hands-on opportunities for them that help to make learning meaningful and fun. In addition to this, their classrooms have some useful displays and resources for teaching mathematics.
58. The draft mathematics curriculum is still incomplete and this has resulted in teachers using mathematics textbooks to inform what they teach, making it difficult to ensure progression in content and skills that are taught from one grade to the next.

59. There are limited resources for the teaching of mathematics in the high school. As a result, high school students are given many practice exercises from their texts and not many opportunities for practical work. On one occasion when they did practical work, the lesson came alive and students stayed on task as they worked independently to illustrate the relationship between the hypotenuse and the legs of a right angle triangle. They were also asked to reflect on and evaluate their learning and to explain their understanding of the concept. The school provides extra support for those students who are struggling by offering after school tutorial sessions once a week.
60. Teachers evaluate and record students' progress on a daily/weekly basis, but do not always use this information to help them plan the next steps in students' learning. Performance is recorded in terms of percentages and communicated to parents through monthly and termly reports but these currently do not provide enough information about what the students can or cannot do.
61. No one has responsibility for coordinating the teaching and learning in mathematics across the school but the principal occasionally checks students' books and evaluates lessons. She sometimes contributes written feedback about their work, explaining where they have done well and what they need to do to improve. This is helpful to students and teachers, as teachers' comments are limited to feedback such as "well done," "excellent," "seen" or the teacher's signature.

Numeracy across the curriculum

62. There is no school policy to promote planning for numeracy across subjects and so there is limited use of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics.

Science (high school)

63. Students are not achieving as well as they should in science. While they have a grasp of some aspects of the subject, there are major elements that they have not met and do not know. For example, Grade 8 students understand food chains and the way various systems, such as digestion, work in the human body but they do not know about electrical circuits or understand the scientific concepts of force, work and energy. There is a similar picture at all grade levels. This is due in part to the fact that students in grades ten and up, study only one branch of science per year. For example, students in Grade 10 tend to know about biological and earth science topics because they focus on biology and are not introduced to chemistry until Grade 11 or physics until Grade 12. Students in the middle grades – 7, 8 and 9, do not receive a balanced overview either, and miss out on learning concepts from across the whole range of the subject. Currently, textbooks are being used to provide a route through the subject. These texts often deal with topics in considerable detail, which can be useful for reference purposes, but when used indiscriminately can swamp students with too much information and make the key points harder to identify and learn.

64. Lessons are often based on the textbook, with the teacher leading a discussion on the topic being covered, asking questions that require students to search the text for answers. She responds well to student's replies, valuing their contribution and encouraging them to use correct scientific vocabulary. Students are willing to try out unusual ideas and to ask questions because they know they will be taken seriously. These questions often reflect a thoughtful approach to the subject and help to extend students' understanding of the work. In a lesson on the formation of soils, for example, a student asked why the soil on Cayman is so shallow. This led to a fruitful discussion, involving all the students, in which they explored ideas of weathering and the development of humus. Students speak well and express themselves clearly and confidently.
65. While discussion and debate are strong features of science lessons, students have too few opportunities to take part in practical activities. This limits their understanding of investigations and runs the risk of them seeing science as simply a list of facts which have to be memorized rather than a dynamic process of hypothesis, observation and analysis. As part of their project work during the second term, many students carry out interesting investigations, mainly at home. Many of these are well researched and thoughtfully presented pieces of work. They would be even better if students were able to draw on a range of experiences of investigations in which they had been guided in formulating hypotheses which link to the science they know, identify variables carefully, apply controls and present data effectively.
66. High school science is taught in a room that is just large enough for the class sizes, but that is inadequately equipped for practical activities. This is one of the reasons that students have too little experience of investigative work. For example, there are very few chemicals available for students to use and virtually no equipment with which to investigate electrical circuits. In addition to these shortages of practical resources, little use is made of computer simulations or video clips that could make the science easier to understand and more memorable.
67. The shortage of resources for science and the lack of effective curriculum plans in the high school point to the subject not being managed effectively at this level. Science in the elementary school also lacks overall coordination and although there are examples of effective work, such as the way Grade 1 is learning about nutrition, this is not always built upon in later grades, or acknowledged when students begin high school. At the moment no one is monitoring the overall performance of students in science across the school, and no one is taking responsibility for raising performance.

Information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum

68. During 2006/7 the school installed a well equipped suite of 14 up-to-date networked computers, together with a projector and interactive white board. Formal computer lessons have been started this year for Grades 6 to 8, with each grade receiving a term's tuition, but all three grades covering the same aspect. Lessons are focused on word processing. Students learn to handle files, manipulate text and change the appearance of documents. The school has plans to extend this programme next year, eventually building up to a three year programme, covering more aspects of the subject, together with keyboarding skills. The intention is that students will learn skills in these lessons that they can then make use of in all areas of their learning. Students in the high school often use the computers for word processing their work, especially during the second term when students' work is more project-based. Students in the elementary school currently do not have opportunities for ICT lessons.

69. At the moment, ICT is under-used as a way of supporting teaching and learning. Opportunities to use ICT have not been identified in curriculum plans and some teachers are unaware of the opportunities that exist to use ICT within their teaching. Some of them also lack the confidence to explore the use of ICT, for example, using digital cameras, videos or internet clips in their lessons and there few are opportunities for staff to share ideas and expertise.