



WEST END PRIMARY SCHOOL
INSPECTION REPORT
NOVEMBER 2006
LEAD INSPECTOR: ROGER HOLMES



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.

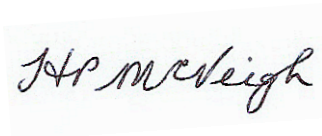
Each school receives an inspection every four to six years. The inspection identifies the school's strengths and the areas that need to be improved. Between inspections, schools are visited regularly by a link inspector to check on the progress that has been made in tackling the priority areas and to 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 West End Primary School 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:	Government
Age range of students:	3 years 9 months – 10 years 9 months
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	59
School address:	West End Road East Cayman Brac
Telephone number:	948 1425
Fax number:	948 1539
Email address:	weps@candw.ky
Name of Principal:	Mrs Gale Connolly

THE INSPECTION TEAM

Lead inspector:	Roger Holmes	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
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INTRODUCTION

Information about the school

West End Primary School provides education for children between 3 and 11 years of age, who live mainly at the western end of Cayman Brac. With only 59 students, it is the smallest government school in the Cayman Islands. There are almost equal numbers of boys and girls at the school, but with considerable variation between classes. In Year 1 there are seven girls and no boys. Fifteen students are on the school's register for special educational needs.

The school has six classes. From Reception to Year 4, the classes have single age groups. The oldest class is made up of twelve Year 5 and six Year 6 students. The school has visiting specialist (peripatetic) teachers for music, physical education (PE), science, special educational needs, literacy and student counselling. Art is taught by a specialist teacher who is based at the school.

The school's motto is "wealth in wisdom".

Information about the inspection

The inspection took place from 27th to 29th November 2006 and involved a team of three inspectors. The following aspects of the school's work were looked at:

- Standards achieved by students in language arts and mathematics
- The effectiveness of teaching and how well students learn
- The quality of students' personal development
- Students' attendance and punctuality
- The quality of the curriculum and how students are assessed
- How well the school is led and managed
- The quality of the support and guidance offered to students, and the level of care for their welfare
- The effectiveness of links with parents and the community.

The team also evaluated how well teachers help students to use and develop their literacy, numeracy and information technology skills across all of their school work.

The inspection team gathered evidence in the following ways:

- 37 lessons or parts of lessons were observed, mainly in language arts and mathematics, but including a sample of other subjects taught.
- Students' work was scrutinised and they were heard reading.
- Inspectors spoke with students and took into account the responses to their questionnaires.
- Discussions with teachers and other members of staff took place.
- School documents, including teachers' planning, policies and guidelines, were looked at.
- Comments from parents at the meeting before the inspection and from the questionnaires were taken into account.
- Information obtained through the regular link inspector visits was also taken into account.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

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

West End Primary is a caring school, which provides a satisfactory education for its students overall. It has strong links with the local community. Staff know the students well and take a keen interest in their welfare. Students get a good start to their education in the first four classes, where teaching is strong, lessons are lively and there are clear expectations of good behaviour. Teaching is less effective in the older classes, where lessons do not always meet the needs of the students, with the result that some do not behave well and less progress is made.

Overall, students' achievements are in line with what is expected for their age and results in tests are generally above the average for schools in the Cayman Islands. Considering the good start they get, some older students should be doing even better.

The school has identified a number of areas for development, including tackling the dip in performance at Year 4, and has a well-written improvement plan. The last inspection, in 2002, identified four key issues for action. Sound progress has been made on two of these issues: for example, students now have more access to information and communication technology (ICT), and the creative aspects of the curriculum have been strengthened. Little progress has been made in the other two areas: planning the curriculum more carefully and matching work more closely to students' individual needs.

What the school does well

- Students' attendance is excellent
- Students' social development is good
- Teaching is good in the first four classes
- Provision for students' welfare and guidance is good
- There are strong links with the community

What needs to improve

- The quality of teaching in the older classes
- The way the curriculum is planned, so that there is more focus on what students will learn
- The management of the behaviour of some students in the older classes
- The integration of the work of the peripatetic teachers with the other teaching in the school, and the way its effectiveness is monitored

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 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 the areas identified as needing to improve.

How high are standards at the school?

Students make good progress in the first four classes (Reception and Years 1, 2 and 3). They reach the expected standards for their age, develop self confidence and work well together. In language arts they read confidently and write accurately. They calculate correctly in mathematics and have a good grasp of place value.

Performance dips at the start of the juniors (Years 4, 5 and 6). Although it picks up a little in the oldest class, students do not progress as well as they do in the infants and the more able could achieve more. Students know how to write for different purposes. In mathematics their calculations are accurate, although rather slow, because they still use strategies such as counting their fingers rather than recalling simple number facts like seven plus five.

In the TerraNova tests, which are standardised tests taken by all government schools in the Cayman Islands, results are at the expected levels for students' ages, and better than the average for the country.

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but varies widely in the school. In the first four classes, teaching is consistently strong. Teachers plan carefully and make sure that the work is interesting and challenging for the students. Lessons are lively and the students enjoy learning. Teachers pay particular attention to the students' social and personal development, establishing clear expectations for behaviour. They work hard to move children away from the self-centredness, which is normal for infants, to an awareness of others. As a result students learn to take turns, listen when others are speaking and follow the classroom rules. For example, in Reception, the young children have already learnt that if they quarrel they must sit on the two special chairs and resolve their problems before rejoining the class.

This good start is not maintained in the older classes. Planning is more superficial, often limited to a list of activities that the students will do, rather than what they will learn. There is significantly less emphasis on helping students to develop acceptable social skills and behaviour. Rudeness and lack of respect are sometimes not corrected and so students do not always understand what constitutes acceptable behaviour. Overtly bad behaviour is not so prevalent in Years 5 and 6, but there is still disruption in some lessons and the climate for learning is not as productive as it could be.

The class teachers know their students well and often adjust the way they ask questions to individual students' abilities. Most teachers use assessment to reflect on how successful their lessons have been. In a series of mathematics lessons in the oldest class for example, the teacher made very effective use of his assessment that students had difficulty understanding their work on problem solving. As a result he re-designed the next day's lesson and addressed their difficulties successfully.

There is considerable scope for sharing the techniques of the successful teachers in the school with those who need to strengthen their practice. This will include: taking account of what students already know; concentrating on what students need to learn; making lessons lively and interesting; adjusting the work to match individual needs and ensuring that the students know what is expected of them.

What is the quality of students' personal development?

Overall, students' personal development is satisfactory.

The arrangements for students' spiritual development are satisfactory. There are assemblies for the whole school twice each week and on other days devotion is planned separately by each class. On some occasions, pastors and members of the community are invited to take part in the assemblies, which cover special themes such as thanksgiving and other character-building topics. Some teachers reinforce the message of the whole school assembly by discussing the topic with their students, which is helpful.

Students' moral development is satisfactory. The school emphasises the importance of respect for the national song, for example, by asking everyone to stand to attention until it is finished. Some classes have displays which encourage respect, responsibility and honesty, but this is not a common practice throughout the school. The system of student monitors helps to develop awareness of right and wrong as the students share responsibility for monitoring during break times by acting as 'field marshals.' Other responsibilities include monitors for PE and reading buddies. However, students are not always sure of their responsibilities and sometimes have to be reminded to do their work.

Teachers often use positive reinforcement and sensitive correction to help students focus on right and wrong actions and behaviours. Classes make their own rules and reminders are strategically placed in most classrooms, but these vary in content from class to class, reflecting teachers' different expectations. Desired behaviours are reinforced, especially in the infant classes. Students generally listen well and take turns when speaking and listening. This was evident during the 'GimiStory' lunch time presentation where students also displayed good communication skills by asking and answering questions and by their warm applause at the end.

Students' social development is good. The house system helps students to develop the idea of working as a team and encourages the spirit of competition through the use of a points system. Students can gain points for their house through effort, behaviour, class work and general deportment and the points are credited to the house in which each student is assigned. Punctuality is encouraged throughout the school and students are greeted on arrival to school by a teacher who presents them with stickers if they are early. An attendance chart is displayed on the wall of the assembly hall and students are acknowledged with an award for good attendance. Students compete for 'Student of the Week' awards. These are given if the student meets the criteria such as being at school every day, on time for school, finishing all class work and behaving well. These rewards are valued by students and contribute to their good attendance.

Students' cultural development is satisfactory. Students are exposed to their own culture and, to a lesser extent, that of others through, for example, steel pan music and an art display of Canadian symbols depicting the season of fall. Some know about their culture and heritage and can write about aspects of them. For example, during reading week some students wrote about 'Cat in The Hat' visiting different historical places in the Cayman Islands and other countries that the class had studied. The islands' rich culture, particularly that of Cayman Brac, and other cultures could be celebrated more throughout the school. Little evidence, such as photographs, pictures, artefacts, videos

or craft, was seen in classrooms or around the school. Students do, though, have the opportunity to participate in the National Children's Festival of the Arts during festival time and also take part in the national Spelling Bee competition.

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

The curriculum is broad and generally balanced. Teachers use the National Curriculum guides to produce their schemes of work, but these do not include the knowledge, skills and understanding that children will learn. In practice, teachers rely heavily on the textbooks to plan their lessons, especially in language arts and mathematics.

A significant part of the curriculum is provided by peripatetic teachers. These teachers are not expected to submit plans for their work to the school. The support teachers for special needs students do not plan well enough with the classroom teachers and sometimes work at cross-purposes. As a result, students are not always working at a level that is best suited to their abilities.

There is an imbalance in the amount of time set aside for subjects, especially language arts and mathematics in different classes and this is likely to have an impact on learning. ICT is used in some lessons to practise skills or write stories. There is no visiting ICT specialist and the school has not taken on the responsibility for teaching the subject.

A satisfactory range of after-school sports activities are provided by the community sports director and PE staff. The school's own extra-curricular activities are steel pan and art and craft clubs.

Overall, the school makes satisfactory use of assessment information. TerraNova, mid-term and end of term test results are carefully analysed and the assessment data is used in planning. Teachers submit a progress report to the principal. Students' work is marked regularly and some teachers make helpful comments that show how it could be improved. Class and peripatetic teachers do not always make enough use of assessment information to modify future lessons.

The school plans that next term teachers will meet at least once per term to evaluate their work, share ideas and promote good practice. This could also help to ensure that there are consistent approaches to teaching and applying literacy and mathematics across the curriculum.

How well is the school led and managed?

The leadership has been successful in establishing a shared view of the school's purpose as a caring community. This view is communicated through documents, such as the policy on uniform, discussions between staff and through the role model that the principal provides. The principal's care and concern for the welfare of students shows in all her dealings with them; for example, she readily shared her lunch with one child who was upset because his food had fallen on the floor. Her leadership in this important area is, though, interpreted by staff in different ways and some are too tolerant of inappropriate behaviour in a misguided effort to be kind to the students. Inconsistencies in the way staff deal with behaviour and in the quality of teaching have not been tackled effectively enough by the principal and result in some older students not doing as well as they should.

Teachers have recently taken on the roles of subject coordinators for language arts, mathematics and science. This is a new venture in the school and, although teachers are keen to use their expertise in these subjects, there is no clear understanding of what they should do or how they will know if they are being successful. Some subjects have schemes of work to guide the teaching, but these say little about how students' learning will progress and how it will be measured. The school has no overall plan for some subjects, such as art and ICT, or music and physical education, which are taught by peripatetic teachers.

Peripatetic teachers, including those who work with students having special educational needs, are timetabled carefully, so that their visits tie into the other work of the school. Some individual class teachers work well with the specialist and/or peripatetic staff to ensure that the work they do fits in with other lessons. For example, an art lesson for Year 2 supported their language and science work by emphasising the rough and smooth textures that the students produced with their modelling clay. In some other cases, the peripatetic teacher does not follow a plan set by the school, or submit information to the school, setting out what students will learn in their lessons. Consequently, there is no way for management to ensure that the work they do is integrated into the rest of the curriculum, or that the teaching methods used support the school's philosophy, or that their work is good enough to help students learn. There is a lack of clarity about the relationship between the peripatetic teachers and the school and about, in particular, who is responsible for ensuring the quality of their work. The lessons taught by peripatetic teachers are a significant part of the curriculum, totalling more than a day each week for most students and considerably more for those receiving support for their special educational needs.

The work of the class teachers is monitored more successfully. The principal visits most classes and reviews students' written work. As a result, she has made some useful comments to teachers to help them improve. The principal has also analysed test results carefully, which has led to some refocusing of special needs support.

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

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

The provision for support, guidance and students' welfare is good. The school has maintained this position since the last inspection in 2002. Teachers know the students and their families well, and show much concern for their well-being.

The school maintains very good academic, personal and assessment records of all students, including individual education plans (IEP). The records are carefully stored in the main office and are colour coded to provide easy access for all staff. The records are updated regularly and provide useful information for teachers. Those records that are of a confidential nature are handled with sensitivity and discretion.

The school effectively maintains up-to-date attendance records, and follows up absences with appropriate action when necessary. These strategies contribute to the very good levels of attendance and punctuality at the school.

Students' personal development is promoted through their work as monitors and in the buddy reading initiative. There is also a very strong and effective incentive and awards programme that is monitored by the principal. All students have the opportunity to be rewarded for their work and teachers encourage them to perform well. Older students look after their younger peers well and show them much respect.

The counsellor provides good service to the students, teachers and parents. Students in the Reception class receive good induction and are cared for by the staff.

There is no whole school behaviour policy to guide teachers on promoting good behaviour or how to deal with misdemeanours, although there is a list of inappropriate conduct of which all are aware. Teachers develop their own classroom rules and there are some differences in the way behaviour is handled. As a result of this inconsistency, students sometimes behave inappropriately and there are very few consequences for misbehaviour.

Links with parents and the community

Links with parents and the community are very good. The school keeps parents well informed about their children's progress through monthly newsletters. An information meeting for parents is held early in the school year. Each teacher discusses the programme that is planned for the year. Parents come to the school to collect their child's report at special reporting sessions, where it is discussed with them. Parent teacher association (PTA) meetings are well attended and parents are very supportive of the school. The PTA organises family fun nights and holds many fund-raising activities such as the talent night and walkathon, which involve the whole community. Several local businesses donate funds and goods as well. Funds are used to purchase equipment such as printers and playground equipment.

Visitors from the community such as pastors, firemen, customs, drug and police officers are invited to participate in assemblies and special presentations. The Year 6 class participates in the drug abuse and resistance education programme (DARE), which is run by the police department.

What is the quality of teaching and learning in language arts, mathematics and ICT across the curriculum?

Language Arts

Students make satisfactory progress in language arts across the school and are generally working at levels appropriate for their age.

Students develop confidence, speak boldly and learn to express themselves from as early as Reception. Some students achieve better than expected in speaking and listening. For example, Year 1 students selected vocabulary words, explained their meaning and used the word in a sentence. In the Reception class, students are beginning to recognise alphabet names and sounds, and are connecting initial sounds for words to the objects they represent. In the past, the programme followed by these children was too advanced and not well matched to their stage of development. The work is now much better suited to their needs. The students extend their learning and develop thinking skills through the activities and questions in which the teacher engages them.

Students in the infant classes show positive attitudes to learning, build on prior knowledge and make reasonable progress. They demonstrate competence and confidence in themselves and in their work. Some do self-checking activities or consult with their peers to ensure they are doing the right task. Students with special educational needs are making progress both in class and when they are withdrawn. More could be done, however, to help these students make better progress through closer collaboration of support staff and class teachers. For example, students withdrawn from lessons should be given work that seeks to enrich and extend their learning, instead of following a different topic and losing the new learning that their peers experienced in the classroom.

Students in Years 1, 2 and 3 make good progress and, by the end of the infant years, the majority of them can read accurately and fluently. The students are articulate and can identify themes and characters and show understanding of texts by selecting key points. They read for meaning and with understanding. The students are developing very good writing skills. Most spell correctly and show improvements in their use of grammar and punctuation. Overall, students achieve well in the infants.

In the junior years (Years 4, 5 and 6), some students continue to make progress, but not as quickly as they do in the infants. Most students speak confidently about their work and what they would like to do and a few ask questions for clarification or in contribution to discussions. They are sometimes not challenged enough. For example, in a lesson on 'story elements' students could tell what the setting, plot, main idea and mood of a story were. However, they were not given an opportunity to show understanding of these by selecting key points from the text. Students were not generally very eager to work nor did they show excitement and enthusiasm about what they are learning. The students are given few opportunities to reflect on their work and to help each other. When they are, this is usually at a low level and not challenging enough.

Students talk about stories they read but cannot name a range of children's books and their authors. Few remembered the Dr. Seuss stories, although these were featured during reading week and most talked about fairy tales and stories that they remember from younger classes. Although the students show mature skills in all areas, and there

are examples of good writers, they are not given enough opportunities to express themselves through a variety of writing experiences or to write for various audiences to encourage their creativity. The writing that they were asked to do was limited to one paragraph or a few sentences about a topic even though earlier writing in their books indicated that they were capable of producing work of a higher standard.

The teaching of language arts is satisfactory overall. In the infant section it is good. Teachers here have secure subject knowledge and are confident about what they do. They use a range of teaching strategies to engage students and keep them interested in their work. They involve their students actively in their learning and help them make good progress.

Some teachers provide an active lively start to their lessons. They share the purpose or objective of the lesson with the students. They build on students' prior knowledge through helpful reviews, through questioning, students' recall of knowledge and through brief discussions. In the infant classes, teachers used games, pictures, songs and objects along with targeted questioning to build on prior knowledge and help students to learn.

Some teachers give very clear explanations and instructions that help students to be aware of what is expected of them and how they should behave. In the good lessons, teachers planned well, taking into consideration the students' different abilities. They skilfully ensured that students with special needs or behaviour problems could make progress. An example of this was seen in a Year 2 reading lesson where the teacher used a variety of teaching strategies and activities to engage all students in the lesson. The students were involved in singing, working on a wall chart, and moving to different areas of the room for an activity. The teacher asked well targeted questions that supported students' responses and helped them make connections with their learning. The teacher led the group in spelling words orally, matching them to the chart and finally answering in a polite manner. Students corrected their own work and that of their peers.

In too many lessons, however, particularly throughout the junior years, the teacher delivered the same lesson to the whole class. This was too hard for many of the students who were unable to do the work and missed opportunities to develop the learning for those who needed more challenge. When this occurred, those who were bored constantly got themselves into trouble. They did very little work and became disruptive. Even though relationships appear to be good, the junior teachers need to manage misbehaviour more appropriately.

Marking is inconsistent and not always accurate. In some books, incorrect work is marked as correct. In the upper grades, the comments are usually congratulatory with words or stickers such as 'good', 'beautiful', and do not offer enough suggestions for how the work could be improved. Assessment has been used very effectively by the Year 2 and Reception teachers to match work to the children's level of development.

The library is now used as a classroom and therefore students, particularly the older ones, have limited access to a range of books and printed materials. The arrangements in the early morning reading programme are helpful, but again the books are limited in range and quality for the older students. Some classrooms have clearly defined areas for reading and students use them well.

Literacy across the curriculum

The school has correctly identified the areas of literacy and creative writing as needing improvement. The last inspection report cited this as an area for development, and the school now has a teacher to coordinate the area.

Students are rarely given opportunities to demonstrate their speaking and listening skills other than when they are asking or answering questions. Some students have done simple research on the Internet. In one religious education lesson, for example, some students role-played portions of the story of the Prodigal Son, showing forgiveness and relating it to their behaviour towards each other, and wrote about their feeling on forgiveness. Students in the Year 3 class have already begun to integrate subjects in their project on literacy across the curriculum. The reading week activities also demonstrated their confidence and boldness as they broadcasted the activities for the week. These activities show how students can use their reading and writing skills to enhance other aspects of their schoolwork.

Mathematics

The standards that students achieve are generally in line with those expected for their age. Students of higher ability could do even better if the work was more challenging. Number investigations and non-routine problems that require higher level thinking skills were not evident. Students with special educational needs do not receive enough support in mathematics.

Teaching is satisfactory overall, but varies too much across the school. It is good in infant classes. Teachers in the infants plan lessons according to what students understand, which helps them move to the next steps in learning. Activities are carefully chosen to match the learning objective and help students to grasp the concepts. For example, in a Year 3 lesson on addition, students used number blocks to reinforce understanding of place value and explain regrouping. The Reception class used large numbers made of play dough. Students traced the numbers with their hands and then traced around them on paper. Infant teachers also encouraged students to work in pairs or small groups on a variety of activities. An example of this was seen in Year 2 where students working in pairs helped each other determine the greater of two numbers. This enabled the teacher to check students' progress while they were working. In lessons that were directed to the whole class where there was no accommodation for different abilities, students with special educational needs had difficulty understanding and the more able students did not progress as quickly as they should. There are too few opportunities for juniors to extend their understanding, to manipulate numbers or try out new ideas and build their confidence.

Assessment is not used effectively in some classes to guide future planning. This frequently leads to a mismatch between what teachers plan for lessons and what students really need to learn. There are instances where students spend too long reviewing prior learning, resulting in slow progress. An example of this was seen in a junior class where students spent a lesson on material they already knew and no new learning took place. A few teachers record daily evaluation and reflections and use this information for future planning. This was most effective in some infant classes where the progress of each student was documented for follow-up in the next lesson, thus

addressing individual needs. There are not enough opportunities for students to assess their own learning to help them have a clear idea of what they must do to improve.

In the majority of classrooms the atmosphere is relaxed and students have a sense of belonging. A number of classrooms have attractive displays of students' work. The classrooms are well equipped with resources and these are used effectively to promote learning in the more successful lessons. In a Year 1 lesson, 'bunnies' were used to make patterns and determine 'how much more or less'. These students were able to assess their own work, knew how to make it even better and made good progress.

Numeracy across the curriculum

The use of numeracy, in subjects other than mathematics, is limited. The following examples were seen during the inspection. In a science class, students measured the time and some acted as timekeepers. In an infant class, a 'grocery store' had been set up for students to sort items according to shape, make patterns, and identify the amount of money needed to buy groceries. Teachers sometimes missed opportunities in other subjects to explore numeracy, for instance, failing to explain the number '50 million' that cropped up in a language arts lesson. Little use is made of graphs in social studies.

ICT across the curriculum

Provision for ICT is better than it was at the time of the last inspection. A computer room has been set up with 15 modern machines and there are computers in all classrooms. Teachers make use of ICT in their teaching, projecting images and text as part of their lessons and using digital photographs to record the students at work. As a result, students see ICT as a normal part of their lives and make use of it confidently, although their levels of competence are not high.

Most classes have lessons in the computer room and students learn to use the computers for word processing and to search for information on the Internet. They make use of these skills in many lessons, for example, typing stories they have written and making the presentation more interesting by adding a border or changing the font.

There is no coordinator for ICT or plan to help students develop their skills as they move through the school, and no system for assessing how well they are doing. Students do not meet some important aspects of ICT, such as programs for drawing or spreadsheets. Their work is mainly focussed on word processing and what students are able to do in Year 6 is little different from what they can do in Year 3.