



**ST. IGNATIUS CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

**INSPECTION REPORT**

**FEBRUARY 2007**

**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.

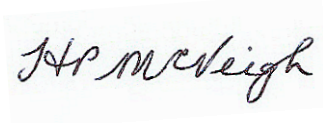
Each school receives an inspection every four to six years. The inspection identifies the school's strengths and the areas that need to be improved. Between inspections, schools are visited regularly by a link inspector to check on the progress that has been made in tackling the priority areas and to 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 St Ignatius become an even 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:	4 years – 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	636
School address:	599 Walkers Road George Town, Grand Cayman
Telephone number:	949 9250
Fax number:	945 6230
Email address:	<a href="mailto:general@st-ignatius.com">general@st-ignatius.com</a>
Name of Principals:	Jennifer Paul-O'Donnell (Kindergarten to Year 6) Peter Embleton (Year 7 to Year 13)
Chair of the Board:	Liam Day

### THE INSPECTION TEAM

Lead inspectors:	Roger Holmes	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
	Pachent Smythe	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
Team inspectors:	Clive Baker	Local Occasional Inspector
	Mary Bowerman	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
	Caroline Dawes	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
	Kate Marnoch	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
	Helena McVeigh	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
	Edna Platts	Local Occasional Inspector
	Sandra Tweddell	Overseas Inspector

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Information about the school**

St Ignatius is a private Catholic school, taking boys and girls of all abilities between the ages of four and eighteen. There are currently 636 students on roll, about 40 more than at the time of the previous inspections in 2002 and 2003. This number is close to the school's capacity and almost all year groups are full. Over 60 percent of students are Caymanian in Kindergarten to Year 6. In Years 7 to 13, almost 80 percent are Caymanian.

The school has a Learning Support Centre, sponsored by one of the parents. The Centre supports around 107 students, 79 of whom have Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

Until 2004, the school operated as separate prep and high schools. It still has two principals, but is now one school under the control of the governing body that is set up by the Parish Council.

### **Information about the inspection**

The inspection took place from 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> February 2007 and involved a team of nine inspectors, plus two trainee local occasional inspectors. The following aspects of the school's work were looked at:

- The quality of provision in language arts, mathematics, science, the early years and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum
- 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 their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across all of their school work.

The inspection team gathered evidence in the following ways

- 92 lessons, or parts of lessons, were observed, mainly in language arts, mathematics and science, but including most subjects offered. All teachers present during the inspection were seen at work.
- 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.
- Inspectors heard students read during lessons and discussed their work with them.

- Discussions with teachers and other members of staff took place.
- 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

Previous inspections took place in 2002 for what was then the high school and in 2003 for the prep school.

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

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Excellent/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	Satisfactory	Adequate in most areas, no significant weaknesses, but no major strengths
4	Unsatisfactory	Some significant weaknesses (might only be one or two) that have negative impact on learning and standards

**Some terms used in the report:**

Early years: Kindergarten and Year 1

Key Stage 1: Years 1 and 2

Key Stage 2: Years 3, 4, 5 and 6

Key Stage 3: Years 7, 8 and 9

Key Stage 4: Years 10 and 11

Sixth Form: Years 12 and 13

Checkpoint tests: Taken by Year 9 – predicts students' grades at IGCSE

IGCSE – International General Certificate of Education

AS – Advanced Subsidiary examination (generally taken at the end of Year 12)

A2 – Advanced Level, normally worth double an AS qualification (generally taken at the end of Year 13)

## **INSPECTION FINDINGS**

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

St Ignatius Catholic School is a good school, but there are areas that need to be improved. A strength of the school is students' personal development, which is fostered very well in the supportive, Catholic ethos. Students behave well and have good attitudes to their work. Teaching is good and students generally make good progress. The standard of work seen during lessons was often better than expected for students' ages. Results in external examinations are satisfactory, though the number of good passes (Grades A to C) has fallen over the last three years.

The school's management has successfully started the process of establishing St Ignatius as a single school and is focusing effectively on the importance of teaching and learning. While the general thrust of these developments is understood and supported by staff and parents, there are some weaknesses in communication by senior management that have hindered the school's progress.

The school has made satisfactory progress in the areas for development identified in previous inspections. Progress has been good in terms of the focus on teaching and learning, and in improving the provision for mathematics and science in Key Stages 1 and 2. It has the capability to maintain these developments and to move forward with greater confidence.

### **What the school does well**

- Students' personal development is very good.
- Students behave well and make good progress in their learning.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Students who are helped by the Learning Support Centre make good progress.
- The developments in teaching, learning and assessment are progressing well, particularly in Kindergarten to Year 6.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Links with the community are very strong.

## What needs to be improved

- The way that teachers match work to the different needs of students in some lessons
- The way that senior management communicates with staff and parents, and ensures their full support in the development of the school
- The effectiveness of the way that management at all levels tackles inconsistencies across the school.

*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?

Children start in Kindergarten with a wide range of abilities, for example, some can read words and others do not yet know letter sounds. Students generally make good progress as they move through Key Stages 1 and 2 (Years 1 to 2 and Years 3 to 6, respectively)<sup>1</sup>, and sound progress at Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9). By the end of Key Stages 2 and 3, most students are working at, or above, the levels that are expected for their age in English, mathematics and science.

The school uses the Cambridge International Examinations' Checkpoint test in Year 9 to measure students' attainment and provide a prediction of their performance at IGCSE. The test is marked externally, and results confirm the wide spread of ability within the school's comprehensive intake, with some very high and some very low scores.

Results in IGCSE examinations in 2006 were generally below the international average and the proportion of students achieving A\* to C grades in five or more subjects has fallen noticeably since 2004. During this period, the number of subject entries has risen significantly. Students' results have been consistently better in English than in mathematics. Overall, the standard of students' work seen during the inspection was better than the 2006 results would indicate, but the most able students could still achieve more.

Results at AS and A level fluctuate from year to year, reflecting the relatively small numbers of students involved. Most students achieve the results that their performance at IGCSE would predict, but when there is a difference, the grade tends to be below rather than above the prediction. Students in the present Years 12 and 13 are making sound progress and results are likely to be higher this year.

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<sup>1</sup> Note – the information on page 6 shows the relationship between Year groups and Key Stages.  
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## **How effective is the teaching and what impact does it have on students' learning?**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The majority of lessons seen during the inspection were good or very good and almost all the remainder were satisfactory. The fact that so few lessons were unsatisfactory reflects the attention that the school has paid to improving the quality of teaching. The school has an agreed approach to lessons, which start with a clear introduction in which the teacher sets out what the students will be expected to learn. After the main part of the lesson has been taught, teachers return to the aims of the lesson and summarize what has been achieved. This simple three part structure helps to ensure that students understand the purpose of what they are asked to do and encourages them to play an active role in their learning.

Most lessons go beyond this basic framework and students are presented with a range of interesting activities that motivates them to learn. Teachers are careful to match the work to students' existing levels of understanding, to pace the work briskly and to ensure that everyone keeps up. They question effectively to test students' understanding and to make them think more deeply about the work. They use students' answers to judge the pace of the lesson and to decide where extra support is needed. This sensitivity to the needs of students, at the planning stage and during the lesson itself, is the main distinction between those lessons that were good and those that were satisfactory.

Students have good attitudes to learning. They respond well to lively teaching, answer questions readily and are keen to be involved in activities. Most teachers capitalize on this situation well and establish good working relationships with their students. As a result, there is a pleasant atmosphere of shared endeavour in many lessons, with a healthy mix of hard work and good humour. A few teachers report that students are disruptive in some lessons. During the inspection, the only times that students showed any sign of misbehaviour was when lessons were dull, and in every case the same students behaved well and were good learners when the teaching was better. For example, students were fully engaged in an art lesson because the teacher made it interesting and relevant for them, just after the same group had been inattentive and talkative during a less successful mathematics lesson.

Teaching and learning are strong features of the school and parents reflect this in their responses to the questionnaire, which are overwhelmingly positive about the way their children are taught. These features have grown even better as a result of the emphasis placed on them in the school's plans for development, particularly when this has been backed up by coaching and support for individual teachers. There is still scope to extend this focused support and to share good practice, for example in the early years and within subject departments such as English, so that all students experience good teaching.

## **What is the quality of students' personal development?**

Overall, students' personal development is very good.

Students' spiritual and social development is excellent. The school's strong Catholic tradition and ethos provide a firm foundation on which students can build an understanding of their faith. All students attend Mass, where there is an atmosphere of respect and reflection. The songs are meaningful and lively, and the teaching is matched to the students' ages. Attendance at Mass provides an excellent opportunity for students to deepen their understanding of the relevance of Scripture to their daily

lives. Students from Key Stage 2 accompany younger students to the church, sit with them and help to explain what is going on. The regular school assemblies provide times for reflection. Religious education lessons also play an important part in students' spiritual development. In Key Stages 3 and 4, in particular, students are given clear explanations of the church's teachings and are encouraged to ask questions and think through some complex issues.

As a direct result of this teaching, students are growing in their understanding of personal responsibility and the importance of serving others. Younger students raise money toward the sponsorship of foster children in various countries. Students sponsor two blue iguanas and the turtle tracking project locally, and raise money for the care of an orangutan. At Christmas, the school works closely with the Social Services Department to find a family that each class can "adopt". The students take great care and pleasure in preparing a special hamper for that family. Younger students can join the Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) club, when they work with their teacher to think of ways that they can help others, or show care and concern. For example, these students have made birthday cards for an eight year old cancer victim to help him get into the Guinness Book of Records and planted flowers in the school grounds to provide a splash of colour. Older students are involved in Key Club activities. Sixth Form students take on responsibilities as Head Boy and Head Girl and prefects, having undergone a rigorous selection process and a course on conflict management. Sixth Form students are also required to do some service within the school for a term, and they help in a variety of ways, such as assisting teachers in class or with administration.

Students' moral and cultural development is good. The new life-skills programme is already having a positive impact on students' personal development, with classrooms displaying the 'Community Agreements' of 'attentive listening', 'no put-downs', 'the right to pass' and 'mutual respect.' All classes follow the same topic at the appropriate level, working on personal qualities such as integrity, responsibility or self-management through activities that involve problem-solving, reasoning and decision-making. The programme is already having a positive impact and should be even more effective when all teachers have been trained in its delivery.

Students behave very well in lessons and around the school during break and lunchtimes. Some instances of bullying have been reported, but the school has developed a new policy on this, which appears to be working well as fewer cases have been reported recently. The student council, which includes representatives from each class, is taken very seriously by students; issues that affect the school are discussed and ways forward suggested.

Students' appreciation of local culture is fostered well through participation in activities such as the National Children's Festival of the Arts, Pirates' Week celebrations and visits to the districts during Heritage Days. Key Stage 3 and 4 students have good opportunities to learn about local culture and traditions through their literature studies and various local speakers who are invited into the school from time to time. Students learn to appreciate some of the other cultures represented by the school population, when, for example, families share their different customs and celebrations. Teachers sometimes lead assemblies about their countries of origin. In Spanish lessons, students learn about other cultures; for example, a student from Mexico was invited to answer questions on her county and its culture, and the students then wrote a comparison of Mexico and the Cayman Islands.

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

Overall, the curriculum and assessment arrangements at St Ignatius are satisfactory. The curriculum is broad, offering a range of subjects, mainly of an academic nature. Students in Key Stages 1 and 2 are taught music, art, physical education, religious education, ICT and Spanish by specialist teachers. While this provides a broad experience for students it sometimes results in a rather fragmented school day for some of the younger children, with frequent changes of subject and teacher. Students in Key Stage 3 learn a second modern foreign language, although currently there are no students taking two languages at Key Stage 4.

There has been some progress in making the curriculum more relevant for Key Stage 4 students' needs by the introduction of a business studies entry level course, single science and learning support for students who are less academic. Compulsory ICT at Key Stage 4 is also very relevant and students in Year 11 undertake work experience. Students engage in practical and creative activities in art, music and physical education, however, they are not taught design and technology.

A good range of 14 subjects is offered in the sixth form, all at Advanced Level, together with accounting IGCSE and the opportunity to retake IGCSE examinations. The school has been creative in finding external sponsorship for its Advanced Level law course.

There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly for younger students, and plenty of opportunity for participation in sports, including diving and sailing. Some of these after-school clubs enable students to do more practical activities, for example in Brownies, and help develop students' moral and spiritual skills, for example in the RAK club.

Students receive careers guidance through some life skills lessons in Key Stage 4, but this is an area which needs further development. Students in the sixth form have access to individual support for their applications to universities and colleges abroad but do not receive enough guidance on how to make choices about their futures. There needs to be a more coherent approach to work-based learning and support for students' decisions about their next stage of education needs to start earlier. There is some flexibility within the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form which enables students to re-sit or take some examinations early.

There is a good strategic approach to curriculum development across the school. The curriculum councils have followed a clear remit from the senior management to produce action plans to develop curricula from Kindergarten to Year 13. More progress has been made in some subject areas than others. There is an excellent curriculum map for social studies, illustrating topics covered from Kindergarten to Year 13, that gives a very clear overview of the subject in the school.

A good start has been made to rationalizing and improving the assessment systems in the school to support students' learning, particularly in Key Stages 1 and 2. In these years students' attainment is assessed against learning objectives and a good system has been established to track students' progress. Excellent support is provided to teachers by the coordinator for teaching, learning and assessment. This support has improved teachers' use of assessment and of the new schemes for mathematics and language arts.

In Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form, there has been an appropriate focus on developing objective-led lessons with the hope that this will lead to more effective methods of assessment. Criterion-referenced assessment<sup>2</sup> is not yet well developed, although some departments are using rubrics effectively: students are made aware of standards that teachers expect, and can see what they need to do to improve their grade. More consistency between the assessment policies being developed at Key Stages 1 and 2 and at Key Stages 3 and 4 would help to address differences between the schools.

The school carries out some analysis of assessment data. In Key Stage 2 this is beginning to be used well to inform teaching, particularly in mathematics. There is some analysis of external examinations in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, leading to targets being set for students, but this needs to be further developed. Issues are followed up with departments by senior management, but responses vary, and tend to focus too much on strategies such as withdrawal from examination entry or providing revision classes, rather than on identifying weaknesses within the curriculum or teaching approaches.

Target setting is not yet well developed. Currently, students have 'targets' pasted into their books in some subjects, but these consist of the term's objectives and are the same for all students. Some students, for example those in Year 13, are given goals for improvement on their report cards but these are not followed up consistently.

There is currently little baseline assessment, so it is difficult for the school to measure students' progress. Implementation of consistent assessment practice (for example, using levels of attainment) in all years would help this. Students entering Kindergarten are given a diagnostic screening test. This is only used to identify students' immediate needs and is not used as a baseline from which to measure progress.

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

Leadership and management in the school are satisfactory overall, with some strengths and some areas for improvement. The two principals work closely together and there is a clear sense of shared values based on strong Catholic foundations. This is seen most clearly in the importance placed on students' personal development and in the positive relationships that have been established between staff and students and amongst students.

Senior management has recently focused on two major developments: the "one school" project of uniting the former prep and high schools into a single institution, and improving the quality of teaching and learning. There has been considerable success in each of these developments and both have had the strategic support of the board of governors. Their importance and relevance have been accepted by staff and parents and there are some tangible outcomes as a result of changes that have been made. For example, almost all lessons across the school follow the structure that has been agreed by staff as part of their work on teaching and learning. This has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching.

Although there is a general consensus about the importance of these two developments, this level of agreement does extend to the details of their implementation. This is

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<sup>2</sup> Criterion-referenced assessment assesses students against what they should know, understand and be able to do in particular subjects, rather than ranking them against their peers.

particularly noticeable in relation to the development of assessment systems. There has been considerable progress in this area in Kindergarten to Year 6, where the National Curriculum from England has been adopted for the core subjects of language arts, mathematics and science. Teachers of these year groups are using rubrics to describe what students have achieved and what they need to do to improve. These descriptors are much more meaningful than simple grades and help teachers to plan the next stages of learning. However, a significant number of parents have not been convinced of the advantages of this approach and do not understand the move away from percentages on students' reports. Similarly, some staff within the school, particularly in the older years, do not understand how to make effective use of assessment to set targets for students' performance at IGCSE. Senior management has not communicated its plans for change effectively enough. This has led to strong feelings of discontent amongst some parents that were expressed at the meeting before the inspection. There is also resentment amongst some staff. This does not seem to affect their relationships with students, but it does lower morale and slow down the pace of change.

Staff morale has also been adversely affected by the introduction of contracts that have to be renewed every year. This has been imposed on the board by the diocese, but the board has not made any statement, which would reassure teachers that contracts would normally be renewed. At present, the school does not have a clear policy for managing the performance of staff, for example, for dealing with inadequate teaching or with disciplinary issues. As a result, decisions relating to the renewal of contracts can seem to be arbitrary. This is not a healthy situation: it leads to some staff feeling under-valued and reduces their willingness to take part in professional debate.

The school's management structure does not yet reflect its current position as a single organisation. For example, there are two principals and responsibility for subjects and pastoral areas is generally duplicated, typically with someone having responsibility in Key Stages 1 and 2 and another person taking responsibility in Key Stages 3 and 4. Having a deputy principal who works across the school is, however, useful and there is good liaison between the subject leaders through the subject committees. The structure does not, though, take full advantage of the potential benefits of being able to plan across the full 14 years of education at St Ignatius. Whilst it is understandable that these divisions should remain during the transition to one school, there is no agreed plan for what the management structure should look like in the future.

In order to help improve the quality of teaching and learning, two new posts, called teaching, learning and assessment coordinators (TLAs), have been established, one for Years 7 to 13 and the other for Kindergarten to Year 6. Staff have benefited from presentations by the TLAs and have been actively involved in discussing the features of effective learning. The roles of the TLAs have, however, developed differently. In Kindergarten to Year 6 there is much more innovation, with the simultaneous introduction of strategies for literacy and numeracy, a strengthened science curriculum and revised assessment procedures. These developments have been largely due to the work of the TLA coordinator, whose regular and highly effective support has been skilfully matched to the needs of individual teachers.

The school operates smoothly, with effective systems for the routine daily administration. Development planning has been tackled effectively by the senior management team and the school improvement plan is a well focused document that provides a clear guide for future development. The establishment of the post of business manager has enabled school leaders to focus their efforts on running the school, without having to be concerned with financial issues to the same extent as before. The business manager



and the financial adviser to the board work closely together and are developing long term financial plans for the school.

The school has adequate accommodation overall for the number of students on roll. There are specialist rooms for art ICT and science and particularly good facilities for music. The library is, though, inadequate. The early years' block is a potentially good resource, but currently one of its rooms is under-used, which is hard to justify in a school where space is at such a premium. Parents commented on the poor quality of cleaning around the school and inspectors agree that this should be better.

Teaching staff are appropriately qualified and they have a good range of experience. Their teaching load gives ample non-contact time for preparation and marking. Teachers with additional responsibilities have adequate time for these extra duties. Some teachers feel that the allocation of resources to departments is not transparent enough. The school does not have an agreed system for allocating funds to departments and heads of department do not have explicit responsibility for controlling their budgets. Resources for teaching have recently been boosted with a considerable investment in ICT.

## **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 school cares for its students well, and provides them with satisfactory support and guidance.

Students' general records are readily accessible and available to staff, and include a range of academic and personal information. Learning support files are kept separately, and information is available on a 'need to know' basis. Although the files are accessible to staff, at present they do not provide a complete picture of each student's life at the school. For example, records of students' behaviour in Key Stages 1 and 2 are not consistently filed and are not always available. Records for students in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form do not all contain option or subject choices for external examinations, records of careers advice, or work experience evaluations from employers and the school.

Attendance and punctuality are very good. The school has an excellent system in place to track students and report to parents.

The school, through the tutors and those responsible for the well-being of students in each key stage, ensures that students who may be experiencing emotional difficulties are well cared for. Pastoral teams within the school meet on a regular basis to share concerns and to report on individual students' needs. Students can be referred either to the chaplain or for counselling sessions at the Wellness Centre, with which the school has close links. These systems work well.

When a survey of students revealed that they had concerns about bullying, the school took effective steps to address this problem. The situation was discussed by the student council and in special assemblies, and a new policy on bullying was produced, along with a help sheet for students. The behaviour policy for Key stages 3, 4 and the sixth form has been updated to give a better balance between rewards and sanctions. Students appreciate the bronze, silver or gold certificates they receive as a result of accumulating merits. In Key Stages 1 and 2, however, the behaviour policy is not

implemented consistently by teachers and instances of unacceptable behaviour are not always followed up.

The school provides good support for students with special educational needs. More detail of this aspect of the schools' work is provided in the next section of this report, on page 16.

There are a few students whose first language is not English. They are nearly all fluent in English, however, and do not require a great deal of support. The school has recognised their abilities and the progress that they have made and some of them are working on AS level Spanish in Year 9 and will be able to take the examination earlier than their peers. A hearing impaired student receives extra help four times a week from a teacher of speech, which is helping the student to make progress.

Year 11 students have an opportunity for a week of work experience. There is some useful preparation for this when guest speakers from various businesses in the community talk with students about career possibilities, and students are able to role play some situations in which they might find themselves. They find work experience valuable and gain an insight and understanding into the 'world of work'.

Support for students transferring from Year 6 to Year 7 has been well thought out and there are effective procedures in place to help ease the transition from primary to secondary school. During their final term in Year 6, ten students at a time join Year 7 'buddies' for a day.

St Ignatius was the pilot school for the Be Active programme in the Cayman Islands. This has encouraged students to adopt healthy lifestyles. Students in Key Stages 1 and 2 are not allowed to bring candy, chocolate or sodas to school. When going outside, they are also required to wear protective hats as part of their uniform, but there is still some resistance to this by students. Some classes now have water coolers so that students have access to water whenever they need it, and the school canteen provides healthy choices for lunch and at break time. Also in keeping with the promotion of healthier life styles, students in Years 12 and 13 are required to participate in physical education classes, and Year 6 students all take part in the Drug Awareness Resistance Education (DARE programme) run by the community police.

### **Provision for students with special educational needs**

The school has established a Learning Support Centre to deal with students with special needs. Staff in the centre work with students both in regular classes and by withdrawing small groups for specific support. They also run an after-school homework club. The school's policy for students with special educational needs was developed by the learning support staff together with the two principals, but it has not yet been approved by the board. Overall, the centre is effective in helping students to make better progress.

The Learning Support Centre is most successful when the support staff and class or subject teachers plan together. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, the teacher used effective methods to teach the lower ability group. As a result of close collaboration with the Centre and taking into account students' individual education plans, she used rubrics very effectively to show students what they needed to do to gain higher marks. She matched the work to their needs in order to ensure that everyone made good progress. The centre is more directly involved with English in Key Stage 2. Students

are put into ability groups for the two days that the class receives support from the centre. The class teacher works with two groups in class while the learning support teacher withdraws students who need extra help, and works with them on similar skills. When the students return to class they are able to join in with their peers. This arrangement works well and students are making good progress.

Not all teachers work as effectively with the centre, and some students are referred for ill-defined reasons, or for learning needs that would normally be met in a mainstream class. For example, one student has been sent to the centre because the class teacher considers he has “blurred handwriting”. The school needs to examine its systems for referral of students. Currently, many students who are on the special needs register should be taught by their teachers in their regular class with the help of learning support staff. The support given to students with other needs, for example those receiving speech and occupational therapy, and high achievers, needs to be re-examined so that the most effective use is made of the available support.

The procedures for monitoring students’ progress in the centre are not clear. Staff cannot readily report on how individual students are doing or whether they have made enough progress to return to regular classes. It is commendable that the school does not want anyone’s needs to be overlooked, but having an increasingly large list of students is not the most efficient way of doing this.

The centre staff are an effective team. They work closely together, plan frequently and keep up to date. Closer liaison between centre staff and other teachers is needed in order to continue to make an impact on students’ progress, because, although the centre is a part of the school, it appears to work in isolation and is perceived as a separate unit.

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

The school has established and maintained good links with parents and very good links with the community. Parents, in their replies to the questionnaire, were very pleased with almost all aspects of the school’s work, particularly the progress that their children make, the quality of teaching they receive and the way they grow in maturity.

The school keeps parents informed about its work and ways that they can be involved. Parents have regular contact with some staff when they drop off or pick up their children. This enables teachers and parents to share information and discuss briefly any immediate issues. The principal of Kindergarten to Year 6 greets parents and children as they arrive. The school sends home newsletters that keep parents informed about school events, although these sometimes reach parents too late. The school’s website is a useful medium through which some teachers share valuable information about home work, rubrics for marking students’ writing, topics to be covered and general news. The Year Book provides a lively summary of activities and events throughout the year.

Parents are invited to sit on the school improvement plan sub-committees that the school has established, and work with staff in writing action plans. They are able to discuss issues and voice their concerns, make an input and learn first hand about what the school is doing. The school has also made presentations to parents about its work. Some parents volunteer regularly to help younger students by reading to them and hearing them read. Children look forward to this activity and parents and students seem to enjoy it. Parents and school representatives have regular Home School Association meetings to discuss plans with the school.

The school keeps parents informed about their children’s progress through regular



written reports, case conferences and special meetings. There are also regular scheduled consultation meetings, and some parents make use of these. Some parents would like more information on progress that can be measured against international standards, and indications of how they can help their children to improve.

The school has developed very good links with the community. For example, teachers from the law school teach classes to some of the older students. This and the accountancy course are sponsored by local firms. Members of the community are invited to speak to students about the world of work, or are special speakers in assemblies, or talk about other cultures and customs. Others are also involved in fund raising ventures and in some extra-curricular activities, such as the Be Active programme. Parents agreed that the strong links that the school has forged with the community are an effective feature of the school.

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

### **Early Years**

Provision in the early years is satisfactory.

There are 104 children in the early years at St. Ignatius, divided between two Kindergarten classes and two Year 1 classes. They are taught in a building separate from the main school where there are four classrooms, a central shared area and a secure outdoor play area. The Kindergarten classes each have a teacher's aide who works alongside the class teacher to support children's learning.

When children enter Kindergarten, their social skills and spoken language are in line with expectations for their age. Children enjoy coming to school and have good relationships with each other and the staff. They are keen to join in activities, discuss their ideas and settle quickly to their work. They are encouraged to develop good questioning skills and teachers model the 'what, why, where and when' style of questioning. In all four classes children's behaviour is excellent. They listen attentively, co-operate in groups and work well on their own.

The teaching seen during the inspection was always at least satisfactory and in one kindergarten class, teaching it was of a very high standard and at times outstanding. This teacher shows a good understanding of how young children learn, and plans activities that provide them with a rich variety of practical learning experiences. Conversely, teaching is less effective when the teacher talks for too long while children are sitting and listening and not being active enough.

All children make satisfactory progress in Kindergarten and Year 1 and some children make very good progress. Standards achieved by the children are at least in line with what would be expected at their age and in some cases exceed expectations. For example, in one of the kindergarten classes, children are beginning to write independently. They can all write their names, some of them copying from their name cards but many not needing this support, and in Year 1, children are beginning to subtract numbers from twenty.

In one kindergarten class, children are encouraged to become independent and their social and emotional development is excellent. The teacher supports children in solving problems and encourages them to think carefully about things. For example when a child's drawing did not have his name on it, the teacher asked 'How will I know who made this picture?' The child quickly realized that he needed to write his name on his picture. Some opportunities are missed for children to develop independence, for example, by handing out and collecting back pencils, rather than letting them help themselves. The impact of this is that children are over-reliant on direction from adults and do not settle to a task when there is no one to tell them what to do.

The classrooms are quite small and have too much furniture, which limits the range of activities the children can access. The shared central area is underused. Small groups of children are sometimes taken into the central area by parents or support staff to read books. However, given the limited space in classrooms, much better use could be made of this central area for sand, water, paint and role play. The outdoor area is being developed and is used mainly at playtimes and lunchtimes. If it had more shade and resources, it could be used throughout the day.

The teachers are provided with a variety of curriculum and assessment documents but they are not used consistently. The Key Stage 1 coordinator holds regular staff meetings but does little to monitor teaching, planning or assessment. Although the Year 1 staff plan some work together, across the early years the teachers operate as four individuals rather than as a team. For example, they use different approaches to teaching phonics and early reading. The good practice within classes is not shared and some children do not make as much progress as they could.

## **Language arts / English**

Provision is good, although there are some aspects that need to be improved.

The inspection found that students are making good progress in lessons and that standards of achievement are higher than examination results indicate. The number of good passes at IGCSE (grades A to C) in English language has dropped over the last three years. At the same time, the number of passes in English literature has risen. There is currently a strong focus on language arts from Kindergarten to Year 6 and the introduction of England's National Literacy Strategy is starting to ensure that students in each year group build on their learning of the previous year. In Years 7 to 13, progress in lessons is generally good because of the effective teaching. Girls do better than boys, particularly in reading and writing. Students with special educational needs achieve well, particularly in Key Stages 3 and 4, as they are taught effectively, with well-targeted support. More able students could, though, be achieving even better.

Students' achievements in speaking and listening are better than expected of the many opportunities they are given to take part in discussions. In Year 2 circle time, students spoke to the whole class with confidence about their wishes. In a very lively debate about racial profiling, sixth formers put forward their opinions eloquently whilst listening to the views of others.

There is a strong focus on reading across the school, supported by book weeks and by silent reading, recently introduced in Years 7 to 9. It is too soon to see the impact of this on students' enjoyment of reading, but standards are better than expected for their ages.

Standards of writing are at the expected levels and work is generally well presented, although there is some inconsistency. Students are given good opportunities to write for different purposes. Teachers of students in Years 10 and 11 are appropriately focusing on analytical writing as their review of examination results showed this was an area of weakness.

There was a high proportion of good teaching across the school during the inspection, and some was excellent, particularly in the sixth form. Subject expertise is a major strength across the school. The introduction of England's National Literacy Strategy gives good support to teachers in the early years and in Key Stages 1 and 2. This is boosted by the guidance given to each year team in weekly planning meetings with their TLA coordinator. The impact of this support is evident in teachers' good questioning that deepens students' understanding and use of technical language. As a result, young children, for example, talk about 'repetition' as a feature of an amusing book and older ones discuss their reading and writing with precision.

The curriculum is satisfactory and covers the elements of language arts well. A major strength is the curriculum council that gives an excellent forum for debate. The school has not yet prepared guidance to teachers through schemes of work, although one for

Year 7 is well underway. However, teachers often carefully choose texts that motivate boys as well as girls, such as Noyes' *The Highwayman* that had every student agog waiting for the conclusion. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher used a range of successful activities to help boys understand the concept of tension in writing.

A thrust across the school has been the promotion of students' independence, which has been effective, although there is some inconsistency. From an early age, students assess themselves on a scale of 1 to 4. Teachers in Key Stages 3 and 4 use the initiative as a way of raising standards, particularly of coursework. A very recent move in Key Stage 3 is the introduction of examination criteria that students can understand and use to see how well they are doing and what they need to do next. Student profiles for Years 7 to 9, another recent introduction, give useful information about how well students are doing.

The quality of assessment varies across the school, but is much stronger in Key Stages 1 and 2. This is a major area for development as staff cannot easily track the progress of each student from Kindergarten to Year 11.

The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall, with some aspects of leadership being good. The two subject leaders have identified what needs to be done to make the teaching consistent across the school. They have set a clear direction for the development of language arts, but monitoring and evaluation are not yet well developed. For example, teachers are not consistent in challenging the most able students. In the best lessons, teachers set high expectations and use probing questions and activities that extend them. In other classes, teachers target the middle of the wide ability range, with the result that the more able students are not stretched.

Another area of inconsistency is in the quality of marking. Much of the marking, particularly in Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form, includes helpful comments that indicate what students need to do to improve. On the other hand, some marking, although done regularly, gives students little guidance.

### **Literacy across the curriculum**

The strong focus on literacy that begins in Kindergarten results in students becoming proficient in reading and writing. Cross-curricular links in the early years and Key Stages 1 and 2 are used to promote skills of research and a wide range of styles of presentation of information. In Key Stages 3 and 4, some subjects encourage students to focus on key vocabulary. Students sometimes draw on their study of texts in English lessons for background information. The limited size of the library does not support literacy sufficiently and there is no whole school approach to literacy across the curriculum.

## Mathematics

Standards of students' work are satisfactory. Students are achieving better results at Key Stages 1 and 2, where a new scheme of work has been introduced and teachers have the support of a newly appointed coordinator. The number of good passes at IGCSE (grades A\* to C) has fluctuated over the last three years, results at A level have risen. The school is now encouraging a 'one school' approach and an improvement plan is being implemented to raise standards of achievement at all stages. Overall, provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

In the majority of lessons, learning is good. In many lessons, students are provided with activities that carefully match the learning objectives and they readily grasp the concept being taught. For example, in a lesson on measurement in Key Stage 2, students first estimated, and then measured the length and width of a variety of objects. They then had to write the answers in metres using decimals. Finally they found the area of the object they had measured, using a formula. The students were very involved in the practical nature of the activity, learned the new skills really well and more able students challenged themselves by measuring more difficult objects.

In lessons where teachers did not match work to the different needs and abilities of students, the more able students were waiting for others to complete tasks before moving on. These students did not have an opportunity to advance as quickly as they could. In some very good lessons all students were suitably challenged. A Key Stage 2 lesson on reflection gave students the opportunity to draw a shape, and then reflect it over an axis. Some students drew complex shapes and used a horizontal or vertical mirror line. Others even drew their shape across a diagonal axis, which made the reflection difficult. By having choices, students were able to attempt more difficult problems, acquire new knowledge and have a sense of achievement.

ICT equipment is used effectively by those teachers who have them. In a Key Stage 3 lesson on linear graphs, for example, the lesson objectives were projected onto the board. A graph was then projected onto the whiteboard and several students took turns in coming to the board to plot points whilst others checked them for accuracy. Students confidently completed the assignment sheet that they were then given.

The progress of students with special educational needs is supported by the help they get from the Learning Support Centre. A teacher from the centre works in Key Stage 3 and 4 mathematics classes twice a week. Teachers from the centre not only assist weaker students, but observe the methods that the class is using to acquire the skills or knowledge. This approach gives them a better idea of how to help students access the work when they are withdrawn for individual assistance.

Teaching is good and teachers know their subject well. A very successful Key Stage 2 lesson began with a fast paced introduction: Students were asked to write a number from one to 100 on their white boards. The teacher then asked them to stand up if their number was in a particular category, such as a multiple of six and greater than 40. Each time the students were asked why their number fitted the category. The questions were well-chosen and having to explain their answer required students to think hard. All students were involved, and the fast pace of the activity kept interest high.

Most teachers clearly state lesson objectives and in a number of classes across the school, students have these pasted into their workbooks. Students then know what is expected of them. Some teachers ask students to record how well they have achieved the objective and then use these responses to plan subsequent lessons. In less

successful lessons, demonstrations or explanations went on too long and in some instances the teacher did most of the work. For example, in a Key Stage 3 lesson on handling data, there were a number of questions involving calculations. Several of these calculations were done by the teacher who recorded them on the board before many students had an opportunity to work them out. When students saw this happening, they lost interest in the lesson and made little progress.

The new Abacus Evolve curriculum is making a positive impact on raising expectations up to Year 6. There has been a good start on the Key Stage 3 scheme of work but it does not include enough information on teaching strategies, activities and assessment targets. The policy of allowing some students to take the IGCSE mathematics examination a year early is not always effective. Several of the students who take the examination in Year 10 fail to achieve good grades and have to repeat the course in Year 11. Others who do get high grades miss out on studying mathematics in Year 11 and are disadvantaged when they start the AS course in the sixth form.

The two subject leaders are working together to produce a whole-school mathematics policy. The Kindergarten to Year 6 leader works with teachers to improve teaching and learning in mathematics and is very effective in helping them access the new curriculum. To help students move from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, the leaders have arranged for teachers to observe each others' lessons. This is not only a positive way of sharing good practice, but also helps in the planning of a whole-school policy.

The quality of assessment varies across the school. Teachers use assessment in Kindergarten to Year 6 to set objectives for each student and to measure progress against benchmarks. Teaching is then modified for individual students. This sort of tracking system has not yet been adopted in the older years. For example, tests are administered at the end of units in Key Stage 3, but the results are not used to modify lessons.

### **Numeracy across the curriculum**

There is some limited use of numeracy across the curriculum. Examples were seen throughout the year groups. Calculators were used to find the average in a Key Stage 2 lesson. Students' workbooks in a Key Stage 3 class included a line graph and a formula. In a Kindergarten class children could count up to ten and work out problems such as four buttons, add two more. A sixth form business studies class used graphs to represent cost and revenue. Graphs were also used in a Key Stage 4 history class to illustrate supply and demand. Similarly, Key Stage 3 geography students used bar charts for rainfall, and a Key Stage 2 ICT class generated tables using formulae on a spreadsheet. By using numeracy in subjects other than mathematics classes, students can see its value in different situations.

### **Science**

Provision in science is satisfactory.

Students in Key Stages 1 and 2 enjoy science lessons and readily participate when given scope to do so. They make satisfactory progress from Kindergarten to Year 2 and good progress in Key Stage 2. By Year 6, they are working at the levels expected for their age. This is a significant improvement on the situation at the last inspection.

The curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 is developing effectively to incorporate England's National Curriculum schemes of work. In some lessons teachers used the scheme with



confidence and planned interesting activities, such as in a Year 5 lesson where students modelled the movement of the earth and responded to question about the time of day. However, there is still some inconsistency in the use of the new scheme and the time has been allocated for the subject.

There is a strong and growing emphasis on investigative work in Key Stages 1 and 2. In one Year 4 lesson, students designed and made helicopters of different types. They were able to explain clearly what they were measuring, changing, and keeping the same, in order to establish a fair test. The use of specialist teachers for science in Key Stage 2 is helping to raise standards.

Students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make satisfactory progress from a wide range of starting points. Whilst Checkpoint scores at Year 9 and examination grades at Year 11 have fallen in recent years, standards of students' work in lessons are in line with expectations. The school has recently introduced a method for assessing and tracking students that should enable more secure judgements of progress to be made. A new scheme of work has been introduced that provides better progression in learning from Key Stage 2 to 3 and places more emphasis on matching of the work to students' abilities.

In Years 10 and 11, most students follow highly academic courses leading to IGCSE. Satisfactory progress is maintained at this stage, as judged by lessons and students' work, although Checkpoint data from Year 9 indicates a less positive picture. Recent work to use Checkpoint alongside other school data will provide a valuable means of tracking students' progress and help to ensure that students choose appropriate examination courses. The school has recently taken the positive step of adding a single award GCSE science course to cater for students for whom the IGCSE is too demanding.

In the sixth form, students follow AS and A2 courses. The quality of work is variable, but is in line with the very wide range of abilities of students accepted on the courses. This is further reflected in the final A level examination grades in recent years. Sixth form classes are often very small, which makes it difficult for teachers to set up vibrant discussion and group work. This was overcome in some lessons, such as in A2 chemistry, where the two students researched complex molecular structures and prepared questions for each other. The standard of work in this case was very high.

Science staff liaise effectively in the recently formed curriculum council. This forum provides good opportunities for teachers to work together to develop a coherent approach from Kindergarten to Year 13. Teachers of science already share resources and have made plans for a project to ease the move from Key Stage 2 to 3.

Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers' subject expertise and enthusiasm for science contributes to the effectiveness of the teaching the students receive. The teaching of practical skills is well developed in general, for example in a Year 10 lesson, students planned and successfully carried out a detailed investigation on enzymes in potatoes. A variety of methods is employed to engage the students, particularly in Key Stage 3. There is, though, in general a need for a wider range of strategies to meet the needs of students' different abilities in science lessons.

The quality of planning is often good. In a Year 10 class, for example, a teacher had carefully planned work to enable her students to construct a candy model of a DNA molecule. The students worked well to both build and label the molecule. In a Year 5 class, students used mini-white boards to feed back their answers, enabling the teacher

to assess their progress. However, in some classes, teachers' planning did not take account of students' previous learning, nor of the ways that students learn most effectively. These lessons were characterized by too much talking by the teacher and too little involvement of the students. In one such lesson on the uses of electricity, students rapidly became disengaged and more difficult to manage.

The quality of relationships within classes is a strength across the school in science. A friendly working atmosphere is established in nearly all lessons, and this has a major impact on students' confidence and willingness to learn. Students are secure enough to ask questions and seek help. In return, the committed science team gives generously of their time both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Science clubs are used to expand students' experience of science, such as the 'Chemistry is Magic' club, or to offer individual help as in the revision classes. In some lessons students rely too heavily on teachers rather than taking responsibility for learning themselves. In some cases, a number of students do not complete the tasks set, particularly homework. The way that teachers mark books, particularly of older students, is partly responsible for this, as work is not routinely corrected, nor are students expected to respond to comments in books or remedy errors.

The subject leaders are relatively new in post and are developing their roles. Most major policies and procedures have been drafted. There is a need now for the leadership to ensure consistency in their implementation. The recently completed schemes of work represent a significant effort from the teachers. There is a strong sense of teamwork within the department, despite the pace of recent change and constraints in terms of resources, accommodation and timetabling.

### **ICT across the curriculum**

The use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory. ICT is used extensively by many teachers in different subject areas throughout the school, mainly as a display tool in lessons. Sometimes this supports students' learning very effectively. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher projected a shape onto the board and students had to predict where it would be after it was reflected in a mirror line. The teacher then displayed the answer and the whole class could see the result of the reflection. Too often, the projector is just used to display the learning objective and is not used to support actual learning.

Students' use of ICT across the curriculum is less developed and little use is made of subject-specific software or equipment. ICT was used effectively in some science lessons, for example, to show an animation of the cardiac cycle in Year 12 Biology. In other cases it was used simply to communicate text. Students word process their work in a number of subjects, but there is scope for exploration of the broader functions of ICT such as the use of spreadsheets in graph work and data analysis, and for the purchasing and use of data loggers for digital measurement. In several subjects, students use ICT for research and use the Internet confidently. In a Year 3 lesson, ICT was integrated successfully in a mathematics lesson to support students' understanding of three dimensional shapes.

Students are well motivated by ICT. They are focused, listen to instructions and quickly get to the correct place on the computer system. Students work very well together and help each other willingly and unprompted by the teacher.

The recent audit of departments' use of ICT and obstacles to its integration is a good basis on which to improve provision across the curriculum. The business studies



department has already included the use of ICT in their schemes of work. Similar practice in other departments would help ICT become a tool for teaching and learning across the school.

Teachers are keen to use ICT in their lessons. In Key Stage 1 and 2, the work of the specialist has helped teachers become more confident in their use of the computer suite. There is a need for professional development and subject-specific resources across the school so that teachers can make more use of ICT to enhance students' learning in their lessons.

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