

BASELINE INSPECTION REPORT

John Gray High School

13 to 16 January 2015

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Appendix A

Recommendations

Introduction

The Honourable Tara Rivers, Minister for Education, has requested an inspection of all government schools during the 2014-15 academic year. The purpose of these inspections is to provide a baseline assessment of the quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning, the progress students make and the standards they achieve, the effectiveness of the leadership and management of each school, and the standards being achieved in English and mathematics.

The resulting inspection report provides a clear understanding of each school's particular strengths and weaknesses, and makes recommendations for improvement where necessary.

Information about the school and the inspection team

Information about the school

Type of school: Government high school

Age range of students: 11–16

Gender of students: Mixed

Number on roll: 1065

School address: John Gray High School
515 Walkers Road
PO Box 1108 GT
George Town
Grand Cayman KY1-1102
Cayman Islands

Telephone number: 345-949 9444

Email address: johngray@ighs.edu.ky

Name of Principal: Lyneth Monteith

Prior to 2010, John Gray High School was the only government high school for students in Years 10, 11 and 12. In September 2009, it amalgamated with George Hicks Middle School for students in Years 7, 8 and 9. It is now the largest of the three secondary schools in the Cayman Islands, educating students in Years 7 to 11, the large majority of whom are aged from 11 to 16, although the school has some older and some younger students. At the time of the inspection, there were 1065 students in the school. The students are divided randomly into four academies (Dolphin, Marlin, Tarpon and Wahoo), which provide the main organisational structure for teaching and pastoral care. In Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11), and for a few subjects in Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9), students are taught together with those from other academies for some subjects. The ability profile of students at the school is below the UK average overall.

In Key Stage 3, students follow the Cayman Islands National Curriculum. In Key Stage 4, all students are taught English, mathematics, science, electronic document preparation and management (EDPM), physical education (PE) and life skills. In addition, they choose three further subjects from a wide range of options. Students are entered for the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) administered by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) in some subjects, and the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) awarded by various examination boards in the United Kingdom in other subjects. A small proportion of students also follow courses offered by

the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and by the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI). In order to measure their raw ability, students take standardised cognitive abilities tests at the end of Year 9 and standardised tests of attainment in English and mathematics (PiE and PiM respectively) in Years 7, 8 and 9.

Classrooms are housed across a large campus in many different buildings, many of which are temporarily replacing those rendered unusable because of hurricane damage. The school is due, at some stage in the future, to move into purpose-built facilities, the construction of which has been stalled for many months. The large majority of staff are on short-term contracts. Around 10 percent of the staff are Caymanians. Around half come from other Caribbean islands and the rest come from the United Kingdom, the USA, Australia and other English-speaking countries. The principal has been in post for four years.

Information about the inspection team

Lead: Graham Sims

Team: Olivia Boyer
Stephen Cole
Nicholas England
Stephen Gray
Carl Hansen
Karen Jamieson
Susan Nebesnuick
Penny Silvester

This inspection of John Gray High School took place from 13 to 16 January 2015 and involved a team of nine inspectors. The following aspects of the school's work were looked at.

- Standards achieved and progress made by students, particularly in English and mathematics
- The effectiveness of teaching and its impact on learning
- How well the school is led and managed

The inspection team gathered evidence in the following ways.

- A hundred and twenty-two lessons, or parts of lessons, were observed, with special emphasis on English and mathematics
- School documents, including teachers' planning, curriculum guidelines and school policies were looked at and students' work was scrutinised
- Discussions took place with teachers and with the principal
- Discussions were held with students, and their activities in lessons and outside the classroom were observed
- Comments from parents and staff were taken into account from the pre-inspection questionnaires

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

Grade		Description
1	Very good	Good in all respects and exemplary in some significant areas
2	Good	Good in most respects. Weaknesses are minor and not in significant areas
3	Adequate	No significant weaknesses, but no major strengths. Improvement needed
4	Unsatisfactory	Some significant weaknesses that have a negative impact on learning and achievement. Cause for concern

Executive summary of the report

The overall effectiveness of the school

The overall effectiveness of the school is unsatisfactory. Although there have been some improvements in standards of attainment and students' progress over the last four years, students' achievement is unsatisfactory. Many students enter the school with weak literacy and numeracy skills, and more than four in ten students do not make the expected progress in Years 7 to 9. This means they are not well prepared for the start of their examination courses in Years 10 and 11. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 11, standards vary widely from one subject to the next. Students achieve well in some subjects for which they sit CXC examinations, but in subjects for which they sit GCSE examinations, standards are low and have fallen over the last few years. The proportion of students achieving a level 2 pass (equivalent to a GCSE grade C or above, or a CXC pass at grade III or above) in both English and mathematics has risen, but standards are still a cause for concern in mathematics, as they are in science. The proportion of students achieving five level 2 passes, including English and mathematics, has improved from 16.2 percent in 2011 to 27.5 percent in 2014, but is still very low. Few students achieve the top two levels or grades in their CXC or GCSE examinations. Boys' achievement is lower than that of girls.

The quality of the teaching is unsatisfactory. While there is some good, and some very good teaching in the school, the teaching in many lessons requires improvement and, in one in five lessons during the inspection was a cause for concern. Although most teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and examination requirements, the planning of lessons is often poor. Students in the same class group can be fully engaged, eager to learn and make rapid progress in one lesson, yet show poor attitudes, be disruptive and make very little progress in another. Such variances are caused by the quality of teaching, which often does not take sufficient account of students' needs and provides tasks which fail to motivate the students. There is little requirement for students to develop as independent learners or to work collaboratively. Lessons often do not start on time, and the pace of learning is slow. The quality of marking is poor and students are given very little written feedback on how well they are doing and what they need to improve. There are few opportunities for practical work in science, and opportunities to develop students' speaking and listening skills are limited. The provision for meeting the needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is inadequate.

Although leaders have made some significant improvements to the general ethos of the school, considerably reducing the number of serious behavioural incidents, and have instigated some improvements to academic standards, the quality of leadership and management is unsatisfactory. Steps taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning have not been rigorous enough. Subject leaders have little involvement in overseeing the quality of teaching and leading improvements in their subject areas. The school's self-evaluation and subject action plans are not robust enough in identifying what needs to improve and how that improvement might be brought about. Action plans, school procedures and new initiatives are not implemented consistently across the school. Although there is a system for setting targets, this is not implemented effectively. Data about students' performance are not collected, analysed and used with sufficient rigour to give leaders an accurate picture of how well students are performing

and teachers sufficient information to use when planning their lessons. Although the school's division into four separate academies provides an efficient structure for pastoral care, it has an adverse impact on the organisation of teaching groups and mechanisms for improving the quality of teaching. The school has insufficient resources for dealing with students with severe behavioural difficulties, or for those who have SEND or EAL.

What the school does well

- In the majority of subjects for which students sit CXC examinations, the school exceeds targets which are set on the basis of standardised tests taken in Year 9.
- Students achieve well in CXC examinations in building technology, food and nutrition, Spanish and PE.
- Results in English at the end of Year 11 have improved over the last three years.
- The school develops students' reading skills well, and the quality of reading is good.
- Most teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and are familiar with the examination requirements for students.
- The school has some good and some very good teaching practice, which engages students' attention and enables them to make good progress.
- Leaders have reduced the number of serious behavioural incidents and improved the safety of students.
- The academy structure allows for efficient and effective pastoral care.

What needs to improve

- Students' progress and their levels of attainment, in particular:
 - students' writing and numeracy skills
 - standards in mathematics and science
 - results in GCSE examinations
 - the proportion of students achieving five level 2 passes, including English and mathematics
 - the proportion of students achieving the top grades in CXC and GCSE examinations
 - students' progress in Years 7 to 9
 - boys' achievement and progress across the school.
- The quality of teaching, in particular:
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 - teachers' expectations and the level of challenge, particularly for the most able students
 - the way in which teachers engage students' interest in lessons and motivate them to learn
 - the way in which teachers adapt their teaching to meet the different learning needs of all students
 - the way in which teachers manage students' behaviour in lessons

- the marking of students' work and the quality of written feedback given by teachers
- the support for students with special educational needs and the use of teaching assistants
- the development of students' speaking and listening skills in lessons
- opportunities for students to engage in practical work in science
- The leadership and management of the school, in particular:
 - the steps taken by leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning
 - the involvement of subject leaders in overseeing the quality of teaching and leading improvements in their subject areas
 - the range of professional development opportunities available for staff
 - the way in which the quality of education is monitored, analysed and evaluated
 - the way in which data are collected, analysed and used to track the progress of individuals and of groups of students
 - the consistent implementation of policies, procedures and plans for improvement
 - the resources available for dealing with students with severe behavioural difficulties
 - the resources available for meeting the needs of students with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

Commentary on inspection findings

How well students achieve and make progress

Students' achievement and progress are unsatisfactory.

Standards of attainment in different subjects vary widely, but are a cause for concern in a number of subjects, particularly in mathematics and sciences.

In almost all subjects in which students took GCSE examinations in 2014, results were well below UK averages. Results in many individual subjects have fallen. The proportion of students achieving a level 2 pass was lower in almost all subjects in 2014 compared with proportions reaching a similar level in 2011 and 2012.

For subjects in which students took CXC examinations, the proportions of students achieving a level 2 pass fell in six subjects from 2011 to 2014, but improved in eight subjects. In some subjects for which comparisons are available, the proportion achieving a level 2 pass compares favourably with the average for the whole of the Caribbean. In other subjects, results are below the Caribbean average for 2013.

The students' attainment in GCSE and CXC examinations is uneven across subjects. In 2014, for example, 79 percent of students achieved a level 2 pass in food and nutrition, whereas only 10 percent reached a similar standard in child development. Students achieve well in building technology, food and nutrition, Spanish and PE. They achieve appropriate standards in English, a range of humanities, and practical subjects. However, standards of attainment are low in mathematics and science. In mathematics, only 32 percent of students achieved a level 2 pass in 2014, and less than 27 percent of students achieved at least one level 2 pass in a science subject. The proportion of students achieving either a Grade 1 or a Grade A is low in all subjects.

The proportion of students fulfilling the minimum academic qualification for graduation has risen over the last three years. The proportion achieving five or more level 2 passes, including English and mathematics, improved from 19.9 percent in 2012 to 27.5 percent in 2014. This proportion, however, is well below UK norms. The proportion achieving any combination of five or more level 2 passes has remained fairly constant at just over 35 percent.

Students' progress in Key Stage 3 is a cause for concern. Although standards in English and mathematics when students enter the school in Year 7 have improved over the last few years, they are still low, particularly in mathematics. All students in Key Stage 3 are expected to make two sub-levels of progress each year. Even though the proportions making this progress have improved over the last few years, less than 50 percent of boys and only 60 percent of girls are currently making the required level of progress. This means that many students continue to fall further behind and are well below the expected level when they start their GCSE or CXC studies in Year 10.

Students' progress in Key Stage 4 is better than in Key Stage 3, but is a cause for concern in some subjects. The school measures progress through Key Stage 4 by comparing standardised baseline assessments taken towards the end of Year 9 to actual results at the end of Year 11. The school's analysis shows that students' progress has improved from 2011 to 2014. The value-added scores are much better in

subjects for which students take CXC examinations than in those for which they take GCSE examinations. For example, there are significant positive value-added scores in CXC building technology, principles of business, electrical and electronic technology, food and nutrition, office administration, Spanish, technical drawing and PE. However, in GCSE mathematics, child development, science and media studies, there are significant negative scores. While predictions based on the standardised assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate positive progress in many individual subjects, the same is not true for students' overall performance.

There is a marked difference in performance between boys and girls. In 2014, 34.5 percent of girls achieved five or more level 2 passes including English and mathematics, compared with 20 percent of boys. No data were available at the time of the inspection to allow a judgement to be made about the progress of other groups of students; for example, students with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language, or the most able students. The school does not analyse how well different groups of students are performing.

In the lessons observed, the inspectors saw a wide range of achievement. In the best lessons, when the students were challenged with demanding tasks, they responded well to reach high levels. The most able students show excellent mathematical skills and write fluently and with considerable imagination. The majority of students express themselves clearly and articulately. However, the levels of achievement seen in about half of lessons required improvement. A minority of students lack the basic skills of numeracy and literacy and, therefore, are unable satisfactorily to access the work covered in the lessons. In some lessons, achievement is limited by the inattention or poor behaviour of students.

While the school possesses a range of data to measure students' performance, the data are not analysed rigorously enough, and overall conclusions mask some serious shortcomings in students' achievement. For example, although information about students' attainment and progress should be recorded for every subject and for every student in the school's information management system, there is no systematic analysis to show whether particular classes or particular groups of students are performing better or less well than others. The true extent of students' achievement at the end of Year 11 is masked by concentrating on the proportion achieving five level 2 passes, while ignoring whether the more able students achieve their full potential.

The effectiveness of teaching and its impact on students' learning

The overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory.

During the inspection, the teaching in over half of the lessons observed needed improvement. The teaching in one in five lessons was a cause for concern. The teaching in some lessons is good and, at times, it is very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. However, the inconsistent quality of teaching throughout the school does not promote effective learning, and poor teaching contributes to poor behaviour. Judgements made by the school's senior leaders when undertaking formal observations of teaching portray a much more positive picture of the quality of teaching, although leaders acknowledge that the quality of teaching during these formal observations is not

always reflected in day-to-day teaching because teachers receive advance notice of observations.

The school is developing and implementing a range of strategies and interventions to improve the standards of teaching and learning to meet students' different learning needs, but these are not sufficiently embedded in classroom practice and there is inconsistency in the way these are implemented between subjects and key stages.

Most teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and make their expectations of the students clear. However, in many lessons teachers' expectations are not sufficiently challenging for many students, particularly for the most able. In too many lessons, teachers display a rigid approach in order to keep control, and there is a heavy reliance on copying notes and listening to the teacher, with little opportunity for students to explore topics further. The setting of standard tasks for the whole class fails to offer many students sufficient challenge and results in levels of boredom and frustration that hinder effective learning for students of all abilities.

Teachers make learning objectives clear to students, but these focus too often on the completion of mechanical tasks rather than learning activities that allow students to show initiative. Many opportunities for the development of learning skills are lost in the target-setting and review process. Targets are not consistently recorded by the students. This makes it difficult for them to take responsibility for improving their own learning and behaviour.

Although teachers understand the syllabus and examination requirements for the subjects they teach, they fail to adapt the nature, content and level of tasks sufficiently to cater for the different learning needs of all students. A common feature of many lessons is a heavy reliance on the copying of notes and completion of mechanical exercises that deprives students of opportunities to demonstrate the level of their knowledge, skills and understanding. There is a limited range of opportunities for students to be able to engage in independent or collaborative learning. In some lessons, discussion and the sharing of ideas is actively discouraged because teachers are preoccupied with their efforts to retain control of the lesson.

A significant concern is the amount of teaching time lost each day. Lessons often do not start on time because students arrive late, taking an unnecessarily long time to get from one class to the next, or because the teacher is not ready to start. The inefficient organisation and lack of preparation of some teachers squander valuable teaching time. Lack of pace and variety in many lessons results in students not being sufficiently challenged.

Behaviour presents a significant challenge in too many lessons, although the reasons for poor behaviour are often linked to the quality of teaching. Particular classes were observed responding positively and with enthusiasm in one lesson where the teaching was good, yet behaving badly in another lesson where the teaching was unsatisfactory. Although the school has provided training for teachers in ways to manage students' behaviour, teachers' inconsistent and often ineffective use of behaviour management techniques has a negative effect on learning for all students. Teachers often fail to address low-level disruption and boisterous behaviour. This disrupts the process of learning and limits progress for the entire class. The extremely challenging behaviour of a minority of students has an unsettling impact across the school.

Many teachers fail to take account of individual needs and abilities and do not adjust what they teach and how they teach it in order to meet the needs of all students. Whole-class teaching predominates and results in a lack of concentration and motivation in many students. Marking of work is perfunctory and there are few examples of constructive written comments to help students improve the quality of their work. Some teachers do not encourage students to take pride in the presentation of work. They do not follow up incomplete work; minimal homework is set and it often goes unmarked. Teachers' acceptance of low standards does not promote positive learning attitudes.

There are insufficient appropriately trained staff available to make consistent and meaningful provision to support the large number of students who have special educational needs or those who speak English as an additional language, and teachers fail to make appropriate adjustments for these students, particularly in mixed-ability teaching groups. Teaching assistants are rarely involved in the planning of lessons and are not deployed effectively in the classroom. The reliance on setting the same task for the whole class leaves these students confused and demotivated. In-class support is only available in mathematics and English and there are not enough specialist teachers to provide individual and small-group support and advise teachers on appropriate strategies and teaching resources.

Where the teaching is good, teachers convey their enthusiasm for their subject and encourage students to think for themselves, by asking open-ended questions that extend students' knowledge and understanding. Teachers have high expectations of the students, who respond positively and are able to explain and justify their answers, ask perceptive questions and communicate their ideas clearly and effectively. In Key Stage 4, many students are aware of how to achieve their examination targets, as can be seen in the way they concentrate and remain on task in lessons, complete work on time and take pride in it. Teachers manage behaviour effectively, providing pace, challenge and a variety of tasks to engage and motivate students to learn. They identify targets for individual students and provide feedback that enables students to improve their attainment. There is a positive rapport between teachers and students that contributes to a well-disciplined classroom where students can make progress. However, the effective teaching practice evident in some lessons, particularly in Key Stage 4, is not being used as an exemplar to improve the quality of teaching elsewhere.

How well the school is led and managed

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

The vision of the school is 'discipline, excellence and pride'. The school has made some movement towards these three aims, but there is still some way to go before this vision is achieved. The school has made some improvements to standards in the last two years from a very low base. Leaders have also successfully tackled some of the worst behaviour of students, reducing the number of serious incidents recorded each year, and leading to a safer school environment. However, aspirations for good behaviour and the quality of learning and progress of students are still not high enough to effect the improvements needed. The school has made plans to improve these areas, but these are not being implemented consistently across the school and, as a result, are having limited impact on improving the standards of teaching and learning and the behaviour of students. The school has introduced a range of new initiatives, such as examination

scrutiny and learning mentors, but these have not been embedded consistently throughout the school and have yet to have a significant impact in the classroom and on outcomes.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning have some weaknesses. The principal has recently produced the school's first self-evaluation report, but it does not rigorously evaluate the impact of the school's initiatives on increasing the progress and achievement of students. The quality of teaching is reviewed regularly, but these evaluations do not focus sufficiently on the quality of learning and students' progress. There is no internal or external moderation of lesson observations. The observations made by the school were over-generous compared with the findings of the inspectors and did not identify key aspects of teaching which needed to improve in order for students to make more progress. A significant number of teachers feel that the feedback they receive does not help them to improve their practice. The quality of marking and assessment is poor. The school does not scrutinise the quality of students' work and, as a result, leaders do not know that students are not getting clear feedback to help them improve their work.

The day-to-day running of the school has some significant weaknesses. Although leaders and staff report that there have been significant improvements in the behaviour of students, the management of students' behaviour is still unsatisfactory. In many lessons, the strategies for managing behaviour are inconsistent and ineffective, and disruptive behaviour impedes the learning and progress of a large number of students. The school has not identified that poor behaviour often arises when the quality of teaching is poor, and that the most effective way of improving the students' behaviour is to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders have also not identified that students who enter the school with low levels of attainment are not coping with the level of work presented in lessons. The consequence of this is that a large number of students become disengaged from their learning and, as a result, their behaviour deteriorates. In addition, a significant number of students have extreme behavioural difficulties, but there is insufficient alternative curricular provision available to enable them to have a quality learning experience.

The school structure, where the school is divided into four separate academies, has some strengths and weaknesses. The structure allows for efficient and effective pastoral care, but the fragmentation of subject areas has a detrimental effect on the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of the curriculum. For example, the teaching of science occurs in four locations around the campus and, in a number of cases, in rooms which are ill-equipped for practical teaching. Subject leaders are not able to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects because they do not have oversight of staff and how the curriculum is taught in the other academies. They are also not involved in the observations of teaching and learning. The fragmentation across the academies also impedes the school's ability to allocate students to the level of class that meets their needs.

Equality of opportunity is a cause for concern. The school does not analyse the data from different groups within the school and, therefore, cannot identify if the learning needs of specific groups are being met. Staff do not take sufficient account of the needs of the lowest-attaining students when planning their lessons. The school has insufficient resources to provide the necessary support for students with SEND and, as a result, the learning needs of around a quarter of the students in the academy are not being met. Teachers do not receive training in how to ensure students with SEND make progress in

lessons. The needs of EAL students are met more effectively, but many staff are unsure how to help these students in class.

Support to help teachers to improve their practice requires improvement. The professional development opportunities available for staff vary in quality and relevance. The quality of professional development varies between the four academies. There is little subject-specific training, and there is insufficient emphasis on improving the quality of learning and progress made by students.

The assessment of students' performance is unsatisfactory. The marking and assessment policy is not implemented effectively and, as a result, the quality of students' written work is poor. Little, and in too many cases, no written feedback is given by teachers to enable students to make progress. The tracking system generates targets for students and also for the termly updates on performance. However, students' targets are not being used effectively by staff to enable students to understand their progress. Many students' planners are incomplete and, in too many classes, students have to request data about their performance from teachers rather than being presented with the data. Few tutors spend time with individual students to review their progress across subjects.

The analysis and use of data require improvement. There is no centralised detailed analysis of data on students' performance within the school, which results in a lack of a strategic overview to indicate how well students as a whole or particular groups of students are performing. Targets are set by the government and are not wholly owned by the school. Data are not externally validated. Subject leaders are required to carry out an analysis of the data in their subjects and to present a report to the school's senior leaders. However, these reports lack rigour, and action plans focus on issues such as changing awarding bodies rather than improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. There is significant under-performance in mathematics and science, but departmental plans fail to address the key areas for improvement.

The quality of teaching and learning in English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is adequate.

Students' achievements in English have improved over the last three years. The proportion of students gaining a level 2 pass in English language, around a half, is commensurate with their level of ability as assessed in Year 9.

All students take the CXC English language examination, and around a third also take the CXC English literature examination. In English language, the proportion of students achieving a level 2 pass increased from 43.8 percent in 2012 to 51.4 percent in 2014, although this was similar to the proportion achieving a level 2 pass in 2011. During this time, there has also been a slight increase in the proportion of students achieving the top grade, which was just under 10 percent in 2014. Students' overall attainment was higher than the predictions based on standardised tests taken in Year 9. However, while girls made better-than-expected progress, boys under-performed. Of those taking English literature, almost three quarters achieved a level 2 pass, but this was some 12 percent lower than the predicted grades for these more able students.

Some additional opportunities are now provided for the more able students. Seventeen students in Year 10 are taking an advanced proficiency course in communication studies and it is planned for them to sit an advanced proficiency in English literature at the end of Year 11. Less able students in Year 11 are now being given the opportunity to achieve a certificate by taking a functional skills-based examination.

The quality of teaching varies considerably, from lessons where the teaching is very good to those where the teaching is a cause for concern. Overall, the quality of teaching is adequate.

Although many students are articulate and perform well when giving individual presentations and interacting with the teacher, opportunities to develop students' speaking and listening skills are not exploited sufficiently well in lessons. All too often, students' oral contributions are in the form of brief answers to teachers' questions, and teachers do not require students to give more extended answers or to engage in discussion. Students are rarely encouraged to build an argument taking into account the comments of other students over a sustained period of time. In the lessons which cause concern, and also in those requiring improvement, teachers have problems managing students' behaviour, and the resultant low-level disruption or poor behaviour is not conducive to developing students' speaking skills through engaging in class discussion. At times, the students appear keen to contribute but, even in the best lessons, teachers do not allow extended free exchange of ideas between students. Despite the lack of opportunity, students' usage of technical terms, such as 'cyclohexene' and 'onomatopoeia', is very good at times.

The school develops students' reading skills well, and the quality of their reading is good. Students, including in lower-ability groups, read texts aloud to an audience, confidently, clearly and with expression. They are encouraged to develop their reading skills through silent-reading sessions and to read outside school; many make good use of these opportunities. A club for avid readers, which allows them to borrow and read a variety of novels, extends students' reading skills.

The school provides good opportunities to develop the skills of weaker readers. When students enter the school, many have an extremely low reading age. The reading skills of over half are below the level expected for their age. However, interventions to improve their reading skills result in significant improvement. The weakest students are withdrawn from English lessons for intensive help. They are given reading books which are graded in difficulty to help build their confidence and reading stamina. A peer reading scheme, where better readers help the less able, is also having a positive impact. One morning a week volunteers come into the school to help with reading.

The teaching of writing, although it prepares students adequately for their examinations, does not help them to develop fluent writing styles. Writing tasks are focused on examination criteria, with a strong emphasis placed on structure and acquiring a knowledge of technical terms. Students' spelling and grammar have improved as a result, not only in English, but also in other subjects, and their handwriting is mostly clear and legible. However, there is little opportunity for students to produce creative writing or extended pieces of written work.

The teaching of writing fails to stimulate or engage the students and is inhibited by poor behaviour in many lessons. Students are bored by routine grammar exercises and the lack of stimulation and, too often, become disruptive. The students who wish to learn

wait patiently for the class disturbance to die down, but their learning is clearly interrupted and they often lose focus as a result. Even when teachers attempt to provide a more stimulating lesson, students are not sufficiently well prepared for the tasks they are given and this, too, results in unruly behaviour and a reversion to activities such as gap-filling vocabulary exercises.

The teaching does not cater sufficiently well for students with SEND or those with EAL. In the large majority of lessons, all students are taught the same thing and no account is taken of the differing needs of these students.

The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is unsatisfactory.

Although results have improved over the last four years, the proportion of students gaining a level 2 pass in mathematics, around a third, is still very low. Of those who do achieve a level 2 pass, very few attain top grades.

The top three sets in the school are entered for the CXC examination, with the top two sets being entered in Year 10, and set three in Year 11. The lower-ability sets, usually three, are entered for the GCSE examination. Value-added results, based on standardised tests taken in Year 9, show a small gain for students taking CXC exams, whereas the GCSE results show that the students achieve results which are considerably below expectations. The value-added analysis shows that boys and girls reach similar levels of attainment for their ability.

The school focuses on achieving level 2 passes. In 2014, 38 out of 46 students in Year 10 achieved a level 2 pass but, of those, only four students achieved grade 1, and so very few are in a strong position to study mathematics or science at level 3. In 2014, by the end of Year 11, 57 percent of those entered for the CXC exam achieved a level 2 pass, which represents 32 percent of the whole year group. The remainder of the year group were entered for GCSE; no student achieved a level 2 pass, and 30 out of 84 achieved a level 1 pass. Overall, however, there has been an improvement in mathematics results over the last 4 years, with the number of level 2 passes rising from 19.7 percent in 2011 to its current level of 32 percent.

The progress of students in lessons and the quality of teaching vary markedly. In a small proportion of lessons, students show a high standard of attainment and make rapid progress because lessons proceed at a good pace. In almost half of the lessons, however, poor lesson structure, low expectations, slow pace and students' lack of engagement result in little progress being made. Overall, the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory.

Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, but do not always utilise this knowledge effectively. They are capable of solving any mathematical problem posed by students; they do not have to rely on books or manuals. In many lessons, however, they fail to make the subject sufficiently valid or interesting to the students. Teachers understand the demands of the curriculum and are familiar with the requirements of the external mathematics examinations that students sit.

The planning of many lessons is inadequate. Often, the aims of the lesson are not made clear. Teachers' planning does not take into account the needs of different abilities within the class or students' targets, and so does not cater for the needs of the most able or those who find mathematics particularly difficult. Teachers are aware of students with SEND and EAL but do not plan appropriate adjustments to the lesson to accommodate their needs fully. Plans make little provision for paired or group work. Teaching assistants are not used effectively to promote students' progress. There is little use of homework to extend students' learning.

Teachers' expectations of how much progress students are capable of making are often not high enough. Consequently, students respond with slow progress and poor behaviour, including chatting, shouting out and scraping desks across the floor. On the few occasions when students are allowed to make presentations or work in groups, they make noticeably better progress.

Resources for the teaching of mathematics are adequate. The classrooms are of a good size, well lit and in almost every lesson there are sufficient textbooks available. Interactive whiteboards are used in most lessons, but the presentations and video clips displayed are not always well planned.

Use of time is a weakness in a majority of lessons. Often, classes do not start on time and then time during the lesson is not used effectively by the teacher. The slow pace of many lessons means that students are not sufficiently challenged. In too many lessons, time is wasted dealing with low-level disruptive behaviour and well-meaning students become bored because they have not been given any work.

The marking of students' work is ineffective. Very little work has been marked in the books of many students. The marking that is undertaken consists only of ticks and crosses, and no advice is given to help students improve. Students say that the marking of their work provides them with little guidance.

The quality of students' learning reflects, and is largely determined by, the quality of the teaching. When sufficiently challenged and occupied, students show interest and enthusiasm for what is being taught. They concentrate on their work, remain on task and make good progress. When not occupied or challenged, their behaviour deteriorates and their chatting, shouting out and wandering about the room all contribute to a low-level disturbance that generates an ethos which is not conducive to learning.

Not enough is done to help students develop good learning habits and become independent learners. At times, the students can work well and independently in lessons when the task and outcomes are clear, but such planned activities are limited. Often, students are unwilling to tackle tasks that they find challenging and will give up or wait for the teacher to help rather than strive for the satisfaction of solving problems themselves. Some students are aware of target grades, which are held in their student planners, but they are not helped to reflect on strategies to achieve or exceed them.

Appendix A

Recommendations

The following are some suggested ways that the school could try to overcome the weaknesses identified in the 'What needs to improve' section of this report.

1. Improve students' progress, and particularly their literacy and numeracy skills, in Years 7 to 9, so that they are better prepared for their examination courses in Years 10 and 11.
2. Improve the teaching and students' progress in mathematics throughout the school, and review the suitability of entering lower-ability students for the GCSE examination.
3. Improve the teaching and students' progress in science throughout the school, and provide better opportunities for students to engage in practical, investigative work.
4. Provide greater challenge for students to achieve the top two grades in their CXC and GCSE examinations.
5. Provide more encouragement for students to engage in collaborative learning and to develop independent learning skills.
6. Ensure that teachers pay closer attention to the development of students' speaking and listening skills throughout the school.
7. Provide more resources for the specialised teaching of students with special educational needs and ensure that day-to-day teaching meets the needs of these students.
8. Improve the quality of teaching throughout the school, paying particular attention to: teachers' expectations and the level of challenge, particularly for the more able students.
9. Ensure that leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly, and that there is sufficient support for improvement, with better professional development for staff.
10. Maintain the advantages of the academy structure, but remove the artificial barriers to monitoring the quality of teaching, the development of subject expertise across the school and the grouping of students across year groups, where appropriate, by ability.
11. Give subject leaders greater responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching, providing professional guidance for other subject staff and leading improvements in their subject areas.
12. Increase the rigour with which the quality of education is monitored, analysed and evaluated, and implement improvement plans which identify what needs improving and how that improvement is to be achieved.

13. Ensure that policies, procedures and plans for improvement are understood by staff and are implemented consistently throughout the school.
14. Provide adequate resources for dealing with students with extreme behavioural difficulties, and improve the behaviour management skills of staff to enable them to deal effectively with poor behaviour and low-level disruption.
15. Maintain a much more careful check on students' progress in each year group, and analyse the resulting information carefully to identify individuals and groups of students who are not making sufficient progress, and then help them to catch up.

[As the above issues apply to the teaching of all subjects, as well as to the teaching of English and mathematics, no separate issues for improvement have been identified for English and mathematics.]