



JOHN A CUMBER PRIMARY

INSPECTION REPORT

APRIL 2007

LEAD INSPECTOR: PACHENT SMYTHE



Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate

Working in partnership for high quality education for all students



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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.

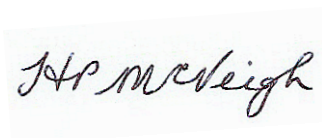
Each school receives an inspection every four to six years. The inspection identifies the school's strengths and the areas that need to be improved. Between inspections, schools are visited regularly by a link inspector to check on the progress that has been made in tackling the priority areas and to 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 John A Cumber Primary become a more effective school.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "H McVeigh". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Helena McVeigh
Chief Inspector of Schools

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL AND THE INSPECTION TEAM

THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Government
Age range of students:	4.7 years – 12 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	491
School address:	Town Hall Rd, West Bay KY1-1302
Telephone number:	949 3314
Fax number:	949 1096
Email address:	dewayne.bennett@gov.ky
Name of Principal:	Mrs Dewayne Bennett

THE INSPECTION TEAM

Lead inspector:	Pachent Smythe	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
Team inspectors:	Caroline Dawes	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
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	Mary Bowerman	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
	Mary Summers	Overseas inspector
	Roger Holmes	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate

INTRODUCTION

Information about the school

John A Cumber Primary School is the only government school in the district of West Bay, and one of the largest primary schools on the island. There are 491 students on the roll, 91 per cent of whom are Caymanian. There are four classes in each of Years 1 to 5 and three classes in Year 6.

Approximately 17 percent of the school's population has been identified as having special educational needs (SEN) and there is a variety of support services available for these students.

During the last few years the school has faced a number of challenges including the death of the former principal and damage caused by Hurricane Ivan. Staff and students have had to make adjustments as they worked to overcome these difficulties.

Information about the inspection

John A Cumber was previously inspected in 2000, with a post-inspection visit in 2003.

This inspection took place from 23rd - 27th April, 2007 and involved a team of six inspectors. The following aspects of the school's work were looked at:

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

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

The inspection team gathered evidence in the following ways:

- 61 lessons, or parts of lessons, were observed, mainly language arts and mathematics, but including all subjects offered.
- 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.
- Discussions with teachers and other members of staff, including peripatetic teachers, took place.

- Comments made by the parents who attended a meeting prior to the inspection and from the questionnaires were taken into account.
- Information obtained through the regular link inspector visits was also taken into account.

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

Grade	Judgement	Description
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 a negative impact on learning and standards

INSPECTION FINDINGS

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

John A Cumber Primary School has some strengths on which it can build, but there are significant weaknesses that prevent students from achieving as well as they should.

Students' personal development is satisfactory. They generally behave well in lessons and on the playground, and enjoy the range of extra-curricular activities the school provides. They achieve well in sporting events and in the arts, areas of which the school is proud. Standards in reading are starting to improve. The school has established strong links with the community.

The school has not made enough progress in tackling the issues identified by the previous inspection and post-inspection visit, and neither has it maintained the areas identified as strengths. Progress has been hindered by the illness and subsequent death of the former principal and the damage caused by Hurricane Ivan. The school has also not received enough external support during this time.

There is an urgent need for stronger direction from the leadership and for greater clarity in the roles and responsibilities of senior managers. The school has now produced some useful documents and policies, including an improvement plan, which identifies many of the weaknesses referred to in this report. However, these policies and plans are not always being implemented or monitored effectively. The inspection team judged that the school lacks the capacity to bring about these improvements without external support.

What the school does well

- Students have good attitudes towards their learning and generally behave well.
- There are strong links with the community.
- Standards in reading are beginning to improve due to the focus on literacy.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.

What needs to improve

- The quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning
- The way the school's leaders direct, implement and monitor strategies for raising standards of achievement
- The provision for the least and most able students and the way their progress is monitored
- The way the school assesses students and uses the results to improve their learning

The school is expected to modify its existing improvement plan to address the areas for improvement identified above. The amended report 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 come into Year 1 with a wide range of abilities, but fewer of them are above, and more are below the normal level for this early stage of education. This means that many students have to make more progress than usual if they are to reach the expected levels of attainment by the time they leave the school. After a generally good start in Year 1, the progress they make is uneven. It is better in some classes than others, but overall not good enough to bring them up to the level of performance expected by Year 6.

In language arts, students' reading is not far below the expected levels, but expressing ideas through writing and in speech is significantly lower. Standards of performance in mathematics are also below expectations. Students carry out calculations confidently and generally accurately, but they do less well in other aspects of the subject, such as geometry, and they are not confident in using mathematics to solve problems.

In the standardised TerraNova tests taken by all government schools, results for John A Cumber students were generally close to, and sometimes above, the Cayman Islands average in 2006. However, close to half of Year 6 students performed below the level expected for their age in most areas tested, for example, in reading and mathematics, and the boys did significantly worse than girls.

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

There is some good teaching at John A Cumber, but there is also too much that is unsatisfactory.

Teachers' subject knowledge is generally satisfactory, although there are some weaknesses in mathematics. Their understanding of how students learn does not always appear to be secure. Teachers' planning seldom takes into account the fact that students may be at very different levels in their learning. In many lessons students are all expected to do the same work at the same pace, but some of them require extra help and support whilst others need to be challenged more. Students who find the work too difficult sometimes become frustrated and those who find the work easy become bored. Neither group makes enough progress.

Students generally rely heavily on instructions from the teacher. There are too few opportunities for students to choose the resources they need, work collaboratively to solve problems or carry out research or investigations. They are rarely encouraged to explain their answers or apply what they have learnt to new situations. An exception to this was some of the mathematics work on measurement and money, in which students were given the opportunity to solve problems for themselves and to increase their understanding. The work in students' books suggests that this kind of activity does not happen often enough.

In many classes, relationships between teachers and students are warm and respectful and teachers have established clear routines. Students in these classes know what is expected of them and how the teacher wants things done. Even where this is the case, few students express opinions confidently or ask questions if they do not understand. Students generally behave well in lessons.

Teachers work hard to create an attractive learning environment, especially in the younger classes, and many classrooms have bright, motivational posters and good displays of students' work. Some of the classrooms are too small, which limits opportunities for students to work in groups or take part in role play activities.

In some lessons, teachers make clear to students exactly what they should understand or be able to do by the end of the lesson. This creates a clear focus and teachers and students are able to see whether the learning objectives have been achieved. At present, this is yet to become a common feature in the school.

Teachers' marking does not always make clear to students what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve further. There is a lack of effective systems to help teachers keep track of the progress that each student is making, and so planning work that would help individual students in the next steps of their learning seldom happens.

Some teachers are beginning to share their good practice across the school through peer observations, but this needs to be properly monitored in order to provide support where it is needed. There is no policy or clear guidance for teachers as to what the school's expectations for good teaching and learning are, and there are inconsistencies in practice. Many of the areas the school identified as strengths during lesson observations by senior staff, such as 'clearly stated objectives at the beginning of lessons and revisited during the lesson', 'good lesson preparation with work to match students' ability', and 'high student participation in own learning' were rarely seen during the week of inspection.

Overall, the teaching is not effective enough to ensure that all students are making the progress of which they are capable.

What is the quality of students' personal development?

Students develop confidence and a good sense of fairness as they move through the school. They are polite, generally behave well and learn how to deal with different social situations.

Students attend devotions regularly as a whole school and also in their own classrooms. Staff often project a strong sense of their own faith and ideas by the way they conduct their devotions. The students show a good understanding of Christian practices, but there is often little opportunity for students to pause and reflect on what the material being covered means within their own lives. Students pray together, generally showing genuine respect and sincerity, but need to be encouraged sometimes to use their own thoughts and words. This lack of time for reflection is a general feature of other parts of the curriculum, for example in science, where the emphasis on learning facts reduces the opportunity to take a broader view and marvel at the interdependence of living things. The predominant teaching style in the school does not encourage students to ask searching questions and overall, the school's approach to spiritual development could be strengthened.

Students' moral development is good. The school provides clear expectations for how students should behave and they develop a firm grasp of right and wrong. Students receive rewards for behaving well and sanctions for misbehaviour, and generally see these as fair, although teachers use them in different ways. Behaviour around the school and in classrooms is usually good and many teachers have positive relationships with their students.

Students work well together in class. They take on different roles in groups of their own age, sometimes leading and at other times supporting. Older students, particularly, are aware of the times when others need extra support, because they are upset or are finding the work difficult. On these occasions students are sympathetic and helpful. At lunch times they play well together, often boisterously, but their games are generally fair and well-organised. Within some classes, teachers give the students the opportunity to discuss their opinions and influence decisions, which helps them to begin to see how the broader society works. Some Year 5 students have been identified for training as prefects for the coming school year, and this should provide further opportunities for students to take on responsibilities.

The school provides a good range of opportunities for students to explore the cultural heritage of the Cayman Islands. They learn about the history and economy of the islands as part of the social studies curriculum. The school enriches this work by giving students first hand experiences through field trips, for example to the Botanic Park, and through hearing visiting speakers talk about their experiences of former times. Students also take part in local festivals, performing as dancers, singers and musicians and reciting verse. They develop a firm grasp of Caymanian culture and values. There is some involvement with other cultures through, for example, social studies lessons and the annual Commonwealth Day celebrations. Many students have connections with other countries, but not enough is done to compare the ways that people live in different parts of the world with Cayman.

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

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for the students. This year, teachers have begun to review the curriculum to ensure that students build progressively on their skills, knowledge and understanding in language arts, mathematics, social studies and science as they move through the school. Teams of teachers have worked together well to form useful guidelines to support weekly and daily lesson planning. Some teams have also planned for religious education and speaking and listening, showing good levels of commitment and enthusiasm. This curriculum review has established teamwork across the school and provides a firm basis on which to build. Evaluation of the new plans, scheduled for later this term provides an excellent opportunity to include more cross-curricular work, and to plan more carefully the use of literacy, numeracy and ICT in different subjects. More focus will be placed on improving the areas of music, library and physical education.

Although teachers are covering the same content in their specific year groups they do not experience the same degree of success because they interpret the curriculum plans in different ways. Closer monitoring is required to identify teachers who need further support and guidance.

The curriculum includes a good range of subjects and is appropriately balanced, except in mathematics. The amount of lesson time for mathematics varies widely between classes, which affects progress that students can make.

Students have opportunities to be creative through music and art. They work in various media in art, showing attractive results in their paintings, clay work and papier mâché models.

The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities and students enjoy the many different sports, musical and competitive events available. Some learn to play musical instruments while others participate in the school choir which recently gained two gold awards at the National Children's Festival of the Arts. Sport has a high priority, with girls and boys competing in football, basketball, cricket and netball at inter-school events. These opportunities help students to develop their social skills which will stand them in good stead in the future.

The school assesses students' reading skills each term, which has helped to identify those most in need of support. The school has taken swift action to meet these needs and help the students move on successfully. This is a good, but isolated, example of what the school has achieved through effective and consistent assessment.

Overall, assessment procedures are unsatisfactory. While many discussions and meetings have occurred in the past, there is still no policy to guide the way teachers assess, record and report on students' achievements. Students' progress is not checked and monitored carefully enough to provide a clear picture of how they are doing in each subject as they move through the school. This is a key feature which is hindering the school's drive to improve standards.

There is not enough use of ongoing assessment to guide teachers in their day to day planning for individual students. In a few cases, teachers identify clear lesson objectives and check students' understanding through careful questioning as well as relevant written exercises which enable teachers to gauge students' learning. In too many cases however, the most able students are not challenged by the work and the least able find it too difficult.

At the end of each term teachers administer tests in different subjects, but only in reading has the information been analysed and used effectively to guide curriculum development. The way that reading is taught has been adapted and improved and this is helping students to make better progress. The school now needs to extend this effective practice to other subjects.

How well is the school led and managed?

There are some strengths with the way that the school is led and managed but there is much that needs to be improved.

The school runs smoothly on a daily basis. The principal and the deputy can be seen around the site and they have good relationships with most staff and students. They know the students well and provide care and individual attention when necessary. They are committed to the school and care about its development.

The senior management team comprises the principal, the deputy principal, the head of juniors and the literacy co-ordinator. Most of these do not have up-to-date job descriptions, and there is some uncertainty about their roles and responsibilities. The lack of clarity about the roles of senior staff was also a concern at the time of the last inspection.

Some progress was made after the inspection in 2003 to encourage senior staff to work together with greater cohesion. The principal and deputy now work closely together, for example. Staff have worked well together to develop a school improvement plan, but there are no clear structures for monitoring and evaluating its implementation. The plan states that the main goal is to raise standards of achievement through a strong emphasis on improving literacy and numeracy and by monitoring the teaching and learning. These are commendable goals, and the emphasis that the school has placed on reading has resulted in some improvement. There is, though, little evidence that many of the other planned actions have been implemented.

The principal carries out regular performance assessments with each member of staff, but this is not followed up to ensure that individuals are receiving the support they need to meet their targets for improvement. The good teaching that does exist is not shared enough, although some useful in-house professional development has enabled teachers to observe others' lessons and the modelling of good practice by senior teachers.

The school has not made enough progress since its last inspection. Some important areas for improvement noted then, remain key issues. There is a need for strong leadership to direct and drive the changes that are needed to bring about improvement. The school will need to draw on external support to help it.

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 way that the school looks after students' welfare is satisfactory. One of the school's aims is to encourage a caring school environment where all students feel safe, secure and valued. There are effective procedures for first aid and medical care. However, there are some concerns about safety and supervision of students in the mornings and at pick-up times. For example, some students arrive as early as 7 a.m. when there are no adults around. At the end of the school day, teachers who are on duty do not always manage to get out immediately, with the result that students are unsupervised. Students were seen running in front of cars and wandering onto the road. The two

security guards are not able to cover both entrances neither do they monitor the flow of traffic effectively.

The school maintains adequate personal and academic records for all students. Although staff members are clear about what is to be recorded, there is inadequate monitoring to ensure that teachers update the records regularly and use the information to help them plan effectively. There is limited information on the progress made by students or any further action that might be recommended.

The school has identified a large number of students with special education needs. The quality of the support they receive when they are withdrawn from the class is satisfactory overall and sometimes good. However, even though individual education plans (IEPs) have been developed, there is little evidence that teachers use them during regular lessons or that they are properly monitored. In most classes, all students, including those with emotional and behavioural problems, are expected to complete the same work as others. As a result, they make very little progress.

The school's counsellor provides individual and group counselling, as well as timetabled lessons in guidance with students in Years 4 to 6. Students in the younger classes are seen individually. Topics, such as dangerous substances found in the home, are useful and relevant, but there needs to be more collaboration between class teachers and the counsellor to ensure that timetabled lessons will occur.

Attendance is satisfactory overall. The school seeks to improve attendance and punctuality through the use of awards and incentives. Students are awarded 'perfect attendance' certificates, for example if they are punctual and present at school every day. Despite its efforts there are a few students who habitually arrive late and there are some who arrive late to class after break and lunch. Some teachers remind students to return to class on time, and this practice needs to be consistent throughout the school.

Links with parents and the community

The school keeps parents informed about its work and has established good links with the community.

The school holds meetings for each year group in September, and parents have the opportunity to hear from each class teacher about what their child will be learning during the year. In addition there are also regular grade level meetings for parents. Newsletters are sent home each term, and when necessary, teachers also send home memos and notes. These meetings are usually well attended.

One of the most effective links the school has with parents is the reading initiative, "Welcome Home, DEAR", in which many of the parents have signed an agreement to read at least one book a week with their child and become a member of the library. The school's librarian has worked hard to develop these links and to keep the programme going. Parental support in keeping the reading logs up to date is not as strong as it might be, but the school has seen a positive change in the attitudes of many students to reading and there is an increase in the number of books that parents borrow. Parents are also involved in the Maths and Literacy Night activities at the school and other activities held during reading and maths week celebrations.

There is an active Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Parents are encouraged to get involved with the work of the school through initiatives such as "Three for Me", when they can sign up to give at least three hours' help wherever it is needed. As a result of this, some parents are involved in activities like lunch time supervision, photocopying, listening to children read and supervising field trips. The PTA is also active in raising funds for the school, and was particularly supportive after Hurricane Ivan. It also supports the 'Be Active' programme and provides gift boxes for needy families at Christmas time.

Parents receive three written reports during the year and these are followed with sessions where they can meet with their children's teachers. Parents are generally satisfied with these.

However, the reports give very little information about each child's strengths and weaknesses in different subjects, and do not always suggest targets for improvement.

The school makes use of the community's playing field and hard courts, and at times the school hall is used for community events. Local people are invited into the school to share their knowledge and expertise with students. During the week of inspection, for example, a member of the community spoke to Year 3 students about bats, as this year group had been reading about them in class. Linked to the social studies curriculum, some of Cayman's ex-sailors came to talk to Year 5 about their experiences when they worked on the National Bulk Carrier ships. Students have opportunities to hear story tellers at the 'GimmiStory' story telling events. They take part in road safety campaigns with the local police and the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) programme. They are also very involved in the National Children's Festival of the Arts and the inter-primary sports and league competitions.

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

Language arts

Students do not achieve as well as they should in language arts. Too many students are performing below the standards expected for their age in speaking and listening, reading and writing. The most able students do not reach high enough levels, especially in reading and writing.

Many students have a very limited vocabulary and have difficulty in speaking in grammatically correct sentences. A few teachers take great care to correct grammatical errors and model appropriate speech, but too often students' errors go unnoticed. These mistakes are then transferred to students' written work. The school has just introduced plans that carefully identify key vocabulary in different subjects and in some cases these words are listed in classroom displays. However, students do not have enough opportunities to use this vocabulary themselves in paired or group discussions, so that it can become firmly established in their minds.

As at the time of the last inspection, standards in writing are low, especially in Years 3 to 6. Students in Years 1 and 2 receive good opportunities to transfer their thoughts to paper, and quickly begin to use the skills they have been taught, to attempt to spell new words.

They write enthusiastically, for example, about their visits to the Turtle Farm and the Queen Elizabeth II Botanical Gardens. Teachers mark this work sensitively, enabling students to edit and improve, and feel proud of their efforts. These regular opportunities to write at length and express their thoughts freely, contribute to their good progress in these year groups.

In older year groups, students do not write enough at length, either for a variety of purposes or in different subjects. They learn literacy skills in isolation and seldom have the chance to use them together in a meaningful way. Spelling and punctuation are weak and sentences are often poorly constructed, with limited use of interesting vocabulary. The most able students are not challenged to produce work of a suitable length or depth to further extend their skills and confidence.

Students' reading skills, while remaining below those expected for their ages, are beginning to improve. This is due to some good initiatives introduced by the school over the past year. Students, especially boys, are reading more and showing increased levels of enjoyment.

Many use the library before school and at lunchtime, to exchange books or just browse around the shelves. A good proportion of parents has opted into the 'Welcome Home, DEAR' reading contract, providing beneficial support and encouragement to their children at home. A healthy sense of competition exists between classes, with a display showing the numbers of books read. The school is currently reviewing how it can best help those students, whose parents have not opted into the contract, to ensure they receive enough support.

There is a significant proportion of lower attaining students whose progress in reading is hindered by their very poor phonic and word recognition skills. The school has recognised this and has implemented some effective withdrawal sessions to help them. These sessions happen in some but not all year groups, and need to be extended to ensure that all students have the chance to fill these gaps in their learning. Links between literacy support, special educational needs staff and classroom teachers are not strong enough to ensure that all are working together to meet the needs of individual students.

There are a few examples of good teaching in language arts across the school. Guided reading lessons are often well taught and show the success of recent professional development. In a Year 4 reading lesson for example, the teacher showed good knowledge of students' different levels when she arranged the class into groups, ensuring that each had reading material relevant to their needs. Sensitive and supportive questioning teased out some of the weaker students' understanding of the story, enabling them to make great strides in their understanding of how to use picture and contextual clues. The pleasant relationships that existed between the teacher and students made for an informal yet purposeful learning ethos, in which students pleaded for a few more minutes to finish their assignments, even when the timer had sounded.

Too many lessons in language arts are barely satisfactory or are unsatisfactory. Weaknesses in teaching centre around inadequate lesson planning and an apparent lack of understanding of the learning needs and styles of the students. Teachers focus too much on giving information rather than considering exactly what they want the students to learn.

Learning outcomes are seldom shared with students at the start of lessons to harness their enthusiasm and to encourage them to take some responsibility for their own learning. Consequently, they rely too heavily on their teachers, rather than becoming independent learners. Students rarely use computers in language arts lessons to help them practise new skills or to write individual responses.

In many cases, students all do the same work and teachers take little responsibility for helping weaker students in areas which they have not understood in the past. Similarly, more able students are not challenged enough by the work; they complete it quickly and waste time waiting for classmates to catch up. They are capable of working at much higher levels.

Marking of students' work is unsatisfactory in Years 3 to 6. In some cases, students' written work is not marked at all and where it is, teachers seldom provide useful comments to help students understand what they have to do to improve.

The school's assessment systems are not organised well enough to provide a clear picture of students' development in language arts as they move through the year groups. A good start has been made to introduce regular checks of students' reading levels.

This is beginning to provide useful information to help senior management evaluate the effectiveness of the new strategies for reading. This system needs to be extended to ensure that teachers maintain these records throughout the term, rather than rely on formal end of term tests. Further work is required to establish clear and consistently updated records to track students' progress in other aspects of language arts.

Although development on the issues identified at the last inspection has been slow, more concerted efforts have been made over the last year to improve reading standards. Senior staff now need to build on this effective practice to secure improvement in other aspects of language arts.

Literacy across the curriculum

Students receive few opportunities to develop their literacy skills in subjects other than language arts. In isolated instances where this occurs, students benefit greatly, understanding the relevance of their learning and practising their language arts skills in meaningful situations. In a religious education lesson in Year 2 for instance, the teacher drew students' attention to specific words in the story of Abraham. In their language arts lesson they had been learning how to change verbs from the present to the past tense. They were able to practise this again in a different context as they recounted the story in the correct sequence. They also discussed the meanings of words such as 'consequences', 'experience' and 'consume' and identified synonyms for 'disappointment' and 'surprised'.

There are too many worksheets that require one-word answers in science and social studies, especially in Years 3 to 6. Students do not have enough chances to write their own reports and accounts. In many cases, work is copied from a central source and students have limited opportunities to write further.

Mathematics

The standard achieved by students in mathematics – what they know, understand and can do - is below expectations for their ages. In Years 1 to 3, students can write their numbers, present their work using correct notation and carry out simple calculations. However, students cannot apply what they have learned to solve problems. This continues into Years 4 to 6, where standards in written calculations often exceed expected levels, but students are not able to apply these calculation strategies readily to solve problems. Students have a limited understanding of other areas of mathematics such as fractions and percentages and very little knowledge of geometry or statistics.

In Years 1 to 3, students study a wide range of mathematics. Some teachers provide occasional opportunities for problem solving, for example activities linked to a trip to the supermarket, but these do not happen often enough in all classes. The curriculum becomes much narrower in Years 4 to 6, and focuses too much on written calculations at the expense of other areas. Students rarely engage in problems which require them to apply their knowledge or explain their thinking. A notable exception to this was a Year 6 lesson in which students were finding the length of a missing side given the perimeter of various polygons. The teacher planned the lesson well with clear progression and good questions that explored students' thinking.

The quality of mathematics teaching is variable, with some elements of good practice in some lessons, but overall there is too much that is unsatisfactory. In some classes, students benefited from well-organised, practical, hands-on activities. For example, in a good Year 1 lesson, students chose items from the teacher's 'shop' and counted out the correct money from their piles of 1 cent coins. They were able to practise their counting, learn about money and begin to solve problems. In most lessons, teachers do not focus enough on what they want students to learn and understand but instead concentrate on completion of activities. Too often these activities consist of students following instructions and the teacher emphasising processes. In these lessons, students go through the motions but do not understand what they are doing. They make little progress in their learning and cannot apply their mathematics in unfamiliar situations.

Teachers rarely plan lessons that anticipate students' common errors and misunderstandings, and these are often not picked up during lessons. In Years 5 and 6, students are sometimes taught in ability sets and at other times they work in class groups. Teachers do not differentiate between these groupings when they plan lessons, which results in some students repeating work and a lack of connection between lessons. Teachers' subject knowledge on the whole is not strong and they do not plan targeted questions using mathematical language for individual students. Instead, questions tend to be addressed to the whole class, inviting choral responses. There is usually no expectation that students explain or justify their answers. Students' reasoning skills are weak and they have very limited mathematical vocabulary. Higher ability students are not stretched enough and lower ability students' weaknesses are often not being addressed adequately.

The leadership of mathematics in the school is under-developed. The role of the mathematics coordinator is limited to managing resources and organising the maths week. The coordinator also has responsibility for science and is a full-time class teacher, so does not have enough time to lead improvements in the teaching mathematics.

ICT across the curriculum

Currently ICT is not used effectively to support students' learning in different curriculum areas.

Students of all ages are confident and competent users of the schools' computers. They can log on and find the appropriate software, for example Encarta Kids, without assistance. Students are motivated and well-behaved in the computer suite.

Most students receive a lesson from an ICT specialist each week. The ICT teacher's plans are not included in the school's planning documentation, so teachers do not know what is to be covered and do not know the skill levels of their students. One exception was a Year 5 science project on the solar system. As part of their science project, students produced leaflets using Microsoft Publisher during their ICT graphics unit. This type of collaborative planning between the class teacher and the ICT teacher is rare.

Most teachers do not plan effectively for the use of ICT to enhance their students' learning. When students do use ICT as part of their lessons, for example to use Microsoft Encarta Kids for research, the tasks are often ill-defined and lacking in structure. Too often the computer is used as a time-filler or as a reward or incentive for good behaviour. The use of ICT is rarely identified in curriculum plans, which the school has recognised.

Some students use the Destination Math and Destination Reading software programmes. However, these occasions are not well-planned by the teachers and lack focus, so the students do not know what they are supposed to be learning about. Teachers feel they have to use these pieces of software but do not have enough guidance on how to incorporate them effectively into their planning to support students' learning. Students' progress on these programs is not monitored.

Classrooms are well equipped with computers, even when there is limited space. Some teachers are beginning to use laptops and LCD projectors for presentations, but this was not common and often hampered by poor technical skills and connectivity problems.