



**Cayman Academy**

**Evaluation Report**

**October 2009**

**Lead Evaluator: Favourita Blanchard**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   | <b>Page</b> |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Introduction</b>   | 3           |
| <b>Information about the school and the evaluation team</b>                 | 4           |
| <b>Executive summary of the report</b>                                      | 7           |
| <b>Commentary on the evaluation findings</b>                                | 9           |
| How well do students achieve and make progress?                             | 9           |
| What is the quality of students' personal development?                      | 9           |
| How effective is the teaching and what is its impact on students' learning? | 10          |
| What is the quality of the curriculum and how well is it organized?         | 12          |
| How well is the school led and managed?                                     | 12          |
| <b>How effective are other aspects of the school's work?</b>                | 13          |
| Support, guidance and students' welfare                                     | 13          |
| Links with parents and the community  | 15          |
| <b>What is the quality of teaching and learning in subjects?</b>            | 15          |
| Language arts / English and literacy across the curriculum                  | 17          |
| Mathematics and numeracy across the curriculum                              | 18          |
| Science (high school)   | 19          |
| ICT across the curriculum   | 20          |
| <b>Appendix</b> Recommendations for the school                              | 21          |

## Introduction

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

Each school receives an external evaluation every four years and, six months after an evaluation, a progress check against their action plan. The evaluation identifies the school's strengths and the areas that need to be improved. External evaluations are guided by the criteria in the ESAU *Handbook for the Evaluation of Educational Provision*.

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

The Education Standards and Assessment Unit hopes that this evaluation will contribute in a positive way as Cayman Academy strives to raise standards of achievement.



**Acting Director  
Education Standards and Assessment Unit**

## Information about the school and the evaluation team

### School contact information

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Type of school:         | Private  |
| Age range of students:  | 2 – 19 years   |
| Gender of students:     | Mixed  |
| Number on roll:         | 244  |
| School address:         | 209 Walkers Road, George Town,<br>Grand Cayman, KY1-1106<br>Cayman Islands |
| Telephone number:       | 949-7190   |
| Fax number:             | 949-5909   |
| Email address:          | principal@caymanacademy.org  |
| Name of Principal:      | Mrs. Nelda Rose Dracket  |
| Name of Chair of Board: | Mr. Eric D. Clarke   |

### Information about the school

Cayman Academy is an Adventist educational institution for students from two to nineteen years of age. Since the time of the last evaluation by the Education Standards and Assessment Unit (ESAU) in 2006, the school has steadily added classes to its high school, and now takes students up to Grade 12. Students sat Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC formerly known as CXC) examinations for the first time this year. The school is managed by a Board of Directors of the Cayman Islands Conference of Seventh Day Adventists. The Board has responsibility for overseeing and supporting most aspects of the school, including the development of policies and plans, the management of the budget and the hiring of staff.

The Board is accountable to and supported by the Education Department of the West Indies Union of Seventh Day Adventists, which undertakes regular evaluations of the school. An evaluation by this body in March 2005 resulted in a report that recommended that the school be accredited for a further five years.

The school's mission statement is:

- To provide the environment necessary for the delivery of the highest standard of social, spiritual, physical and mental training to all students
- To provide teachers with the necessary resources required to achieve the highest quality Christian education
- To ensure that all teachers, students, parents and guardians receive maximum satisfaction from their contribution
- To provide the Cayman Islands economy with the best quality human resources needed for the continued development of the society.

The mission statement is accompanied by the following statement of the school's vision:

- To provide the necessary physical, economical and academic structures to sustain the continued development of Cayman Academy so as to provide the best quality human resources to satisfy the various needs of the Cayman Islands and the wider Caribbean.

There are three divisions in the school, namely:

- Early years: Pre-Kindergarten (Pre K) and Kindergarten
- Primary: Grades 1 to 6
- High School: Grades 7 to 12

New students are allocated to classes according to how well they perform in the school's entrance tests, rather than according to their age. As a result, most grades include a few students who are several years older than their peers.

The number of students on roll now stands at 244, only one more than in 2006, despite the fact that three high school classes have been added. There are roughly equal numbers of girls and boys, although there are a few classes where the ratio of girls to boys is higher.

## The evaluation

Lead: Favourita Blanchard                      Education Standards and Assessment Unit

Team: Mary Bowerman                      Education Standards and Assessment Unit  
Natasha Chopra                      Local Occasional Evaluator  
Kevin Roberts                      Local Occasional Evaluator

This evaluation for Cayman Academy took place from 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2009 and involved a team of four evaluators. The following aspects of the school's work were looked at:

- Standards achieved and progress made by students in language arts / English and mathematics in both primary and high school, and science in the high school
- The effectiveness of teaching and how well students learn
- The quality of students' personal development
- The quality and organization of the curriculum
- How well the school is led and managed
- The quality of the support and guidance offered to students
- The effectiveness of links with parents and the community
- How well the school is helping students to develop the attributes of the 'Educated Caymanian'
- How well teachers help students to learn and use their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across all of their school work

The evaluation team gathered evidence in the following ways:

- Forty-four lessons were observed in most of the subjects offered
- School documents, including teachers' planning, curriculum statements and guidelines, were looked at and students' work was scrutinized

- Evaluators observed assemblies, breaks and lunch times
- Evaluators spoke with students and took their views from the questionnaires into account
- Evaluators listened to students read
- Discussions took place with teachers, a representative from the Home - School Association and with the Chairman of the School Board
- Comments from parents at the meeting before the evaluation and from the questionnaires were taken into account

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

| Grade |                       | Description   |
|-------|-----------------------|---|
| 1     | <b>Very good</b>      | Good in nearly all respects and exemplary in some significant areas   |
| 2     | <b>Good</b>           | Good in most respects. Weaknesses are minor and not in significant areas  |
| 3     | <b>Adequate</b>       | No significant weaknesses, but no major strengths   |
| 4     | <b>Unsatisfactory</b> | Some significant weaknesses (might be only one or two) that have negative impact on learning and standards of achievement |

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

The Educated Caymanian will:

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

## Executive summary of the report

### How effective is the school overall?

Cayman Academy provides a warm and caring environment in which teachers have established positive relationships with students. Teachers and support staff are good role models and they promote a strong Christian ethos through daily devotions. Students' behaviour is good and they are respectful to each other and to adults.

A new acting principal was recruited in September 2009 and several new teachers also joined the staff. She has a clear vision for the school which has been communicated to staff, and an understanding of the urgency of improving the work of the school. The school has now started to address the issues for improvement identified in the 2006 report. Subject coordinators have been appointed, the Board is more closely involved in the work of the school, communication amongst staff has improved and some policies have been prepared and agreed by staff.

However, the wide variation in the quality of teaching and a lack of effective monitoring of the work of the school are still undermining students' learning and achievements. The school provides an adequate start for students in Pre K and Kindergarten although it has not maintained the high standard seen at this level when the school was evaluated in 2006. The quality of teaching across the rest of the school varies tremendously. In Grades 1 to 3 it is adequate, in Grades 4 to 9 it is generally unsatisfactory and in Grades 10 to 12, much of it is good. This variation in the quality of teaching affects students' standards of achievement, particularly in Grades 4 to 9, where there is a sharp decline in what students understand and are able to do. The curriculum is not monitored well enough to ensure that there is progression and continuity in what is taught from one year to the next.

High school students sat the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC – formerly known as CXC) examinations for the first time this summer. They were able to achieve adequate results in most subjects, despite the shaky foundation provided in Years 4 to 9, because of some very good teaching in these top classes.

The school has been slow to address the issues for improvement identified at the time of its evaluation in 2006. Positive steps have now been taken in the right direction, but it will be some time before the effectiveness of these initiatives can be seen. At present the education provided by Cayman Academy is still unsatisfactory. The school will need external support to develop the necessary systems and structures to raise standards of achievement.

### What the school does well

- Provides an effective pastoral system which ensures a positive Christian ethos
- Teachers are caring and the positive relationships between teachers and students promote respect and good behaviour
- There is some very good teaching in Grades 10 to 12

### What needs to improve

- The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school
- The quality of teaching, especially in Grades 4 to 9
- The tracking of students' progress and the use of assessment data to inform teachers' planning
- Systems to ensure progression and continuity in the curriculum

*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 must be sent to the Education Standards and Assessment Unit **within 40 working days of receiving the draft 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.*

## **Commentary on evaluation findings**

### **How well do students achieve and make progress?**

Students in Pre K and Kindergarten make adequate progress. As they move through Grades 1 to 3, the standards they achieve remain fairly constant because in most of these classes the teaching is adequate. However, students at the top end of primary – Grades 4 to 6 – and at the lower end of high school – Grades 7 to 9 – are not making the progress they should; standards of achievement are generally unsatisfactory. There is no clear plan to ensure progression and continuity across the curriculum, and teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low. Unexpected staff shortages have resulted in the use of substitute teachers for mathematics in Grades 7 to 9, and this has made it even more difficult for students to achieve the standards they should.

By the time students reach Grades 10 to 12, it is very difficult to make up the gaps in their learning. Staff shortages at this level also, have resulted in the use of substitute teachers whose strengths do not necessarily lie in the subjects they are asked to cover. Along with the weak provision in Grades 4 to 9, this negatively affects the standards that students can achieve. There are, however, some enthusiastic teachers who are able to motivate students to focus on their work and who provide them with stimulating and effective teaching, so that, in most subjects, apart from mathematics, students achieved satisfactory standards in CSEC examinations which they sat for the first time this year. The overall results were commendable. This is due mainly to some good teaching in Grades 10 to 12.

Overall, standards of achievement in Grades 1 to 3 and 10 to 12 are adequate. Standards of achievement in Grades 4 to 9 are unsatisfactory.

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

The school provides a warm and caring environment in which teachers have established positive relationships with students and treat them with respect. Teachers and support staff are good role models. They know the students well and their relationships with them support the strong Christian ethos of the school very effectively. Parents see this as a strength of the school and value the spiritual and moral teaching that their children receive.

Assemblies and class devotions are held every day and provide opportunities for students to learn the stories of the Bible and understand how to apply them to their daily lives. The children enjoy singing hymns and sing tunefully and with great enthusiasm. Students regularly volunteer to help lead the singing or prayers, both in their class devotions and in whole-school assemblies. Students and teachers pray before each lesson which helps to create a calm and purposeful ethos for learning. These opportunities enhance students' spiritual development.

Students are gaining a good understanding of moral principles through daily Bible lessons. For example, in a class discussion on forgiveness, many students were open and honest and asked questions of their teachers and peers. Students were able to make connections with the verses from the Bible through identifying what the story said about forgiveness and applying it to their lives. Students behave well and they work collaboratively, when given the opportunity. The school has a discipline policy and

teachers are quick to handle classroom situations when they occur. Students consider the sanctions the school has in place to be fair.

Provision for students' social development is not as well planned as their spiritual and moral development. Although students work collaboratively in some lessons, there are not enough opportunities to ensure that all students learn how to work together effectively. There is a newly established student council and students are excited about having their voices heard in matters that concern them within the school. Student representatives from Grades 1 to Grade 12 meet weekly with teacher mentors to discuss any issues raised. In a recent meeting, high school students shared concerns about the lack of opportunities for them to participate in a variety of sporting activities, and inter-school competitions such as debates. Currently prefects are assigned to sit with younger children during assemblies to try to encourage good behaviour and they also have responsibility to assist with a class. The student council and the role of prefects provide students with effective ways of developing leadership skills.

Students are sometimes taken on field trips to local places of interest connected to what they are studying in social studies lessons, and this enhances their understanding of local culture. The National Song is sung regularly and confidently by students. Occasionally people from the local community are invited in to school to share stories about the past. There are fewer opportunities to learn about other cultures and there is currently no planning in place for students' broader cultural development.

Students in Grades 7 to 10 have life skills lessons. These provide opportunities to learn skills which will help them make healthy choices about food, drugs, behaviour and relationships but at present, life skills lessons are not offered to other classes. The school organizes events such as a 'Health Week' when the school promotes a healthy lifestyle and students are able to learn about making healthy choices. The canteen provides healthy options for snacks and lunches. These are not enough to ensure that students understand and choose a healthy lifestyle.

Overall, students' personal development is adequate.

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

The school has maintained the caring ethos and good relationships between staff and students that were seen as strengths at the time of the last evaluation. Students' attitudes are positive and they are generally well behaved in lessons. They are articulate and are comfortable asking and answering questions.

In Pre K and Kindergarten, the teaching is adequate and students make adequate progress. They have the opportunity to learn through singing nursery rhymes and counting songs and they participate with enthusiasm. In Pre K, most students can count up to five and some can read and write these numbers, for example. In Kindergarten, this work is built on, and their understanding of letter sounds and names is reinforced. However, much of the time is spent sitting at tables listening to the teacher, and students become restless and inattentive. There are too few opportunities for them to explore and discover at their own pace through less formal activities such as sand and water play. There is not enough appropriate reading material in either of these classes to promote a love of books. In Kindergarten the children spend much of the afternoon sleeping, and this cuts down even more on the opportunity to learn through play.

Across the rest of the school, the quality of teaching varies tremendously. It is stronger in Grades 1 to 3 and 10 to 12 than in the middle grades, 4 to 9, where too much of the teaching is unsatisfactory. Although teachers plan their lessons, there is no consistency in format and little evidence that the planning is in any way coordinated or monitored to ensure that there is progression and continuity in what is being taught. Consequently there are topics and skills being taught in different grades but at the same level of difficulty.

In almost every lesson seen, teachers shared the objectives for that lesson with students. In many instances, however, these consisted of a list of the activities to be done, rather than the knowledge, skills or understanding that students should be expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. Although teachers have a general understanding of how well students are doing, they have no system of checking students' progress against specific objectives by the end of the lesson. There is little recording of the strengths and weaknesses of individual students, and teachers have limited evidence on which to base their planning or by which they can report accurately to parents.

Teachers' subject knowledge is generally adequate, and in some cases, good. Their knowledge of the curriculum to be taught is not as secure: although teachers in the primary school know what topics their own class should be covering, they are not always aware of the appropriate skill levels, and their expectations of what students can achieve are often too low. They do not have a firm understanding of what students in the class below or above theirs should know, understand and be able to do. Teachers in Grades 10 to 12 who teach the same subject across grade levels are familiar with the examination syllabus for each level and therefore build appropriately on students' prior knowledge.

Students make better progress in Grades 1 to 3 and 10 to 12 than in Grades 4 to 9, where the majority are not making the progress of which they are capable. This is linked to the fact that teachers' expectations, especially in these middle grades, are often too low. Students are not challenged to justify their answers or given enough opportunities to work collaboratively to solve problems or discuss issues.

The computer lab is not yet fully functional, but the computers can be used without being networked. Teachers are not taking advantage of this and students in the primary grades, especially, do not use computers – or any other technology - much in lessons. In Grades 10 to 12, students use the lab for discrete computer lessons, but they also use laptops in other lessons, and are able to critique each other's skills in using different aspects of PowerPoint, for example, as they make presentations.

Students in Grades 10 to 12 have more opportunities to work collaboratively and they use these times effectively. In some English and science lessons, for example, they discuss issues, investigate hypotheses and justify their answers, both orally and in writing. Expectations are high and students generally work with enthusiasm. The recent CSEC external examination results are commendable and reflect the quality of some of the teaching at this level.

A much greater proportion of the teaching needs to be good or very good if students' learning is to improve and they are to achieve the standards of which they are capable. Currently the teaching in Grades 4 to 9 is unsatisfactory overall. In Grades 1 to 3 it is adequate and in Grades 10 to 12 it is generally good.

## **What is the quality of the curriculum and how well is it organized?**

In Grades 1 to 9, teachers use the older version of the Cayman Islands National Curriculum to guide them in the topics they teach in most subjects apart from Bible, where the curriculum from the West Indies Union of Seventh Day Adventists is used. However, in the primary school, language arts and mathematics are very much guided by the textbooks in use – *Integrated Language Arts* and *Integrated Mathematics*. The curriculum in Grades 10 to 12 is dictated by the CSEC examination syllabus for each subject. Teachers are not yet familiar with the newer version of the National Curriculum with its attainment targets and attainment levels and so there is little guidance to ensure progression and continuity across all grades, either in topics or skills. In the high school, physical education and music lessons are not building progressively on skills, and the taught curriculum is unsatisfactory. Parents also, expressed concern about the limited opportunities students have for learning and participating in different sports.

The range of subjects offered is satisfactory, as is the range of options for the external examinations. Timetables are now more balanced in terms of time allocation, but there are too many instances where lessons do not start on time, and students lose out on teaching time. The actual taught curriculum, however, is somewhat restrictive where teachers follow textbooks too closely. Examples of this were seen in the limited range of writing for different purposes in Grades 4 to 9.

Provision for the cross-curricular skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT (Information and Communication Technology) is not well planned. Opportunities for extending literacy skills across other subjects is adequate, but this is only incidental. Students have opportunities for speaking and listening and their vocabulary skills are developing well. Numeracy and ICT, on the other hand, are not developed in other subject areas.

Grade 11 students were involved in work experience, and this provided a useful opportunity to be a part of the world of work. There is some career guidance offered, but this has not yet been fully developed.

The way the curriculum is organized does not ensure progression and continuity, and therefore is unsatisfactory.

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

The new acting principal assumed her post in September 2009. She has recognized the urgency of improving the work of the school. Her vision is widely shared and all staff members are expected to work towards raising the standards of achievement of students. The principal has brought energy, enthusiasm and high expectations of staff and students to her new role.

The Senior Management Team work well together and are seeking ways to improve provision, as is evident from the appointment of subject coordinators for both primary and high school. Subject coordinators do not yet have clear job descriptions, although some of them are beginning to give some thought as to what improvements need to be made in their subject.

The Board of Directors has become more involved in the work of the school and members of the Board have made themselves available to the principal and staff during regular visits to the school. At present the school does not have its full complement of

teachers in the high school, but the principal and the Board are working at filling the vacancies with teachers who will bring appropriate skills and experience to the job. Meanwhile, provision for these students is inconsistent and in some instances, unsatisfactory.

The principal has improved communication within the school. Teachers assemble for a briefing and time of prayer before the start of each day. This sets the tone for the day and a similar procedure occurs at the beginning of most lessons, emphasizing the importance of the spiritual aspect of the school's life.

There are still no effective systems in place for the collection and analysis of data. Consequently the principal does not have sufficient information to help her to set priorities or identify actions for improvement. For example, although teachers record grades for students, there are no policies to ensure that these are used in a systematic way to help them to plan to meet the needs of different students or to set targets for improvement. A lack of policies in some other areas is also affecting the efficient working of the school. For example, there is no guidance from management on the ratio of students to adults in Pre K and Kindergarten. At present this ratio in Kindergarten is too high and at times the teacher's aide is called away to assist in other classes in the school. This leaves the teacher alone with 27 students. The recommended staffing levels are:

One adult to every 10 children aged three to four years

One adult to every 12 children aged four to five years

Some students arrive late for school and do not have the opportunity to make up the work they miss. This is compounded by the fact that the number of days spent in school is considerably less than those spent in government schools. There is no policy on attendance and punctuality.

The leadership and management of the school are still unsatisfactory even though a positive start has been made by the new principal.

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

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

Teachers know the students well and show concern for their general well-being, but this concern is not focused enough on their progress as learners. The school has not identified any students as having special needs although there are students in most classes who are in need of extra support. For some, this is because there is a learning difficulty and for others, because English is not their first language. These students do not receive the level of support that is needed. There are also students who are placed in classes according to their ability, regardless of age. In some cases this means there are students within a class who are as much as five years apart in age. This situation was also identified in the last evaluation report as it is very difficult to meet the personal, social and emotional needs of such students.

Students' personal files are well-organized and accessible. Teachers record students' scores and grades in tests which each teacher sets individually, but the information is not analysed or used by teachers to help them to plan for students with differing needs. There are no student profiles which give an overview of achievements during their time at the school.

The school has a policy on discipline and teachers work hard to encourage good behaviour. The guidelines in the students' and teachers' handbooks are clear and promote positive attitudes and behaviour. They contain useful 'tips' for teachers and parents on how to deal with discipline. They also give students helpful advice.

Resources within the school are limited. There is no library and so there are no books available for students to access for research and enjoyment. The computer lab has twenty-two computers. It is mostly used by the high school ICT classes and is not being fully utilized by all students across the school. All classrooms in the primary department have new tables and chairs which provide teachers the opportunity to arrange their rooms in different ways for different activities. The classrooms for younger students are a good size. However, classrooms for students in Grades 4 to 11 are too small. Students are cramped into tiny spaces and it is difficult for teachers and students to move around the room freely. There is limited space for teachers to display and celebrate students' work.

Teachers have a duty roster for canteen and playground supervision. They are usually present for duty but some stay in the same place rather than walk around the school yard to ensure that all areas are monitored. However, it was found during the evaluation that on some occasions students were left unsupervised. Sometimes, this was due to staffing issues in the high school, for example when a substitute teacher did not turn up. In the morning, many students gather in the chapel before school. This group of students ranging from primary age to high school were also sometimes left unattended. The school has a security guard who arrives early in the morning. He patrols the car park to ensure that students do not step out into this area and that there is a safe flow of traffic during the day.

The school provides breakfast for students who arrive early. There is a good selection of food choices from fruit plates to pancakes. The school also provides students with healthy meals and snacks. Students have PE lessons once a week but have limited opportunities for physical exercise at other times in the day. At break time there is only enough time to buy and eat a snack and at lunch time, most high school students return to their classrooms after lunch as the younger students play on the field. There is not enough room for all students and resources for outdoor activities are limited. Students expressed concern that there were not enough sporting activities to engage in after school and would like to have more options.

Overall the provision for students' support and welfare is just adequate.

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

The school uses a variety of ways to communicate with parents, for example, through the school's weekly newsletter, *The Little Informer*, the school's website, monthly HSA (Home-School Association) meetings and family nights. Academic reports are sent to parents three times a year and provide information about how students are progressing. However, these reports do not always provide meaningful suggestions as to what students need to do to improve. In addition to academic reports, discipline reports, and special reports are sent home to parents if students have behaviour problems.

The HSA supports the school well. It has been instrumental in the installation of the school zone warning light and a pedestrian crossing at the entrance to the school. The new president has ideas which he hopes to take forward. Parents who attended the pre-evaluation meeting with ESAU were very supportive, but there are limited opportunities for them to become involved in the work of the school.

There are some productive links with external agencies to enrich the curriculum and provide necessary guidance to students. For example, the Cayman Islands Fire Service came to demonstrate their services and give students opportunities to learn about fire-fighting equipment and see a fire engine. The Women's Resource Centre and the Department of Environmental Health have also visited the school and addressed students on abuse, gender issues and community care respectively. The school has already made plans with the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service to address students on security and policing. Students participate in the National Children's Festival of the Arts, the annual Lions Spelling Bee, the Sagicor Knowledge Bowl competition and Junior Achievement.

Although the school has productive links with the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, there are limited links with the wider community. There are not enough opportunities for students to contribute to voluntary or charity work or community projects and activities. Parents generally feel that the school needs to develop further links with the wider community beyond the Adventist church.

Links with parents and the community are adequate.

## **What is the quality of teaching and learning in subjects?**

### **Language arts (English)**

Students in all grades listen well and speak confidently in front of the class. They are keen to participate in discussion and debates, responding well to others' comments. Students are articulate and enjoy asking and answering questions. When they have the opportunity to work in small groups or in pairs, their speaking and listening skills are developing well. In the high school, for example, students sometimes present some of their work to the class and they are given opportunities to critique each other's presentations. This helps them to develop confidence in speaking in front of other people.

Students in all grades make adequate progress in reading. By the time students reach Grade 3 they talk confidently about books they have enjoyed and they read with fluency and some expression. The less confident readers struggle to decipher unfamiliar words as they have few strategies for making sense of the text. They rely heavily on teacher

support. Students are unfamiliar with the terms 'fiction' and 'non-fiction' and are familiar with few authors. By Grade 6 they are more aware of different kinds of texts and can talk about the format of an information text. There are books in the classrooms that they are allowed to take home but these are limited in number and genre. Students are fairly confident readers and continue to read with some expression. Students who find reading a challenge are hesitant with unfamiliar texts and make little progress as there is not enough planned support for them. There are few opportunities for students to read for enjoyment as class books are limited and the school currently does not have a library. High school students study novels and plays for their CSEC examinations, and their comprehension is generally good, as evidenced by their articulate discussions of character and plot. Here they make adequate progress but there are still a number who lack expression in oral reading.

Writing standards are below the expected level in most classes. Students express ideas in simple ways. By the time students reach Grade 3 most are confident in using capital letters and full stops. They are just beginning to write longer sentences using words like 'and' to join shorter sentences. Students are also beginning to organize their writing into paragraphs and the spelling of common words is fairly accurate. Students often write from personal experiences but there are too few opportunities for them to write for different purposes. By Grade 6 students are given more opportunities to develop their skills in writing. For example, students are able to write a set of instructions, make simple plans and draft their work. Although students are taught skills in editing, there is little evidence to show that students actually improve their work through re-drafting. In writing generally, students do not use a varied and interesting vocabulary.

Once they reach Grade 9 they have made little progress. Their writing is limited to personal experiences and is usually descriptive or informative. They use complex sentences with phrases demarcated by commas, and some students use similes and metaphors and show a more varied use of vocabulary. At Grade 12 their writing skills are developing better due to the more effective teaching of different forms of writing. There are more opportunities for students to write at length and some students have the chance to utilize their skills in ICT to make PowerPoint presentations. In all classes the presentation of students' written work needs improvement.

The quality of teaching across the grades varies considerably. In some classes where teaching is good students are motivated because teachers use their expertise and subject knowledge to make lessons more interesting and lively. As a consequence students make satisfactory progress and are enthusiastic about their work. In a high school lesson on characterization, for example, the teacher chose subject material appropriate to the age group. This motivated students and held their interest as they discussed the characters. As the lesson developed the students actively participated in their learning by acting out the behaviours of characters as another student read the description. However, this good standard of teaching is seen mostly in the high school and in particular in Grades 10 to 12.

In Grades 10 to 12 teachers have good subject knowledge, which is seen in effective use of questioning that encourages students to think through their answers. These lessons are well organized and structured. Planning is generally good and teachers have clear objectives for their lessons. In classes where students are not suitably challenged they become restless and bored. Often the pace of these lessons is too slow and teachers' expectations of what students can do are far too low. In all classes students develop positive attitudes and respect each others' ideas. This creates a warm and supportive atmosphere.

Students' work is marked regularly. Teachers write positive comments and place incentive stickers on work to show younger students how well they have done. Most marking, however, does not show students how to improve their work. Often corrections are done by the teacher and there is little evidence that students pay attention to these as often the same mistakes are repeated. Teachers do not use the information from marking well enough to guide their own planning or to set targets for improvement.

The subject coordinators for the primary and high school have only recently been appointed. They do not yet have a written job description with clear guidelines on how to fulfil their roles. There are no systems in place for the consistent monitoring of the standards of teaching and learning in this subject and there is currently no regular sharing of good practice or support for teachers. Curricular links are not well developed to ensure there is continuity and progression of the subject from one grade to the next, especially between the primary and high school.

Students generally achieve standards that are in line with expectations for their age in Grades 1 to 3 and, 10 to 12. However, in Grades 4 to 9 standards of achievement are too low.

### **Literacy across the curriculum**

There is currently no written policy for the development of literacy across the curriculum. However, students do have opportunities to develop their skills in literacy in other subject areas, such as science, mathematics, social studies and Bible. In some classes, especially in Grades 10 to 12, students speaking and listening skills are extended through the skilful use of probing questions from the teachers and students also develop their skills in research and writing. They are encouraged to highlight key words, make notes and report back to the class. Some students use and understand technical vocabulary in other subject areas such as science and mathematics and are given the opportunity to work collaboratively. Students read different material and express ideas and ask questions. For example, in a science class students studied the labels of food products to ascertain what food additives could be found in them. They were clearly interested and motivated by this and healthy, stimulating discussions ensued. Younger students have key vocabulary displayed in the class and are encouraged to sound out words to help them in their writing. Students do not have a library so access to a range of reading material is limited.

The overall provision for literacy across the curriculum is adequate. It is an area for development.

## **Mathematics**

In half the lessons seen, the standards of achievement in mathematics were unsatisfactory. In Grades 4 to 9 especially, students' standards of achievement are too low. Most students are performing below what is expected for their age and higher ability students are not being challenged. This is partly because mathematics in Grades 7 to 9 is being taught by substitute teachers. Standards of achievement in Grades 1 to 3 and 10 to 12 are adequate and students are making some progress. CSEC examination results confirm that learning in mathematics is not strong. Only three of the nine students entered gained a higher level pass – grades i, ii or iii.

Across the school teachers do not effectively use information gained from marking work and questioning students, to identify what students need to learn next. This leads to lessons covering similar work more than once. For example, lessons on converting improper fractions to mixed numbers and vice versa were seen in several grades from primary to high school sometimes at a lower level than in the previous grade. Students are repeating concepts they already know and this does not help them make progress. Teachers are not aware of what is taught in classes above and below the grades they teach, and there is no effective system of tracking students' progress so that teachers can identify specific strengths and weaknesses.

Teaching varies from grade to grade. There are some instances where teaching is good but most of it is just adequate or is unsatisfactory. A few teachers use good questioning techniques to help students make connections in their learning. In most classes students work in groups but not many teachers have planned appropriate, differentiated activities for the groups. In a lesson in the primary school, the teacher used well thought out differentiated activities to help students move on in their learning. The teacher clearly knew the children well and planned activities that met their different needs. This helped to extend the students' thinking and also helped the teacher evaluate students' understanding of the concept taught. The teacher also provided plenty of interesting activities to deepen students' understanding. The teacher and teacher's aide worked well together, monitoring the three groups and questioning students to find out how they arrived at their answers. This good use of differentiated work was not seen throughout the school. Some teachers hold back the learning of students by requiring the whole class to do the same tasks even though the students are at different stages in their learning.

Resources such as manipulatives in the primary school are generally effectively used to support learning. Information and communication technology is rarely used to support students' progress as in most classes it is only used by the teacher to display information. A lack of appropriate resources in the high school prevents teachers from making the learning more interesting and meaningful.

Students have positive attitudes to learning but they are not able to apply a variety of learning strategies and skills in their work. They have few opportunities to choose what approach they would use to solve a problem, for example. Teachers do not use lesson objectives to help them to track students' progress. They mark students' work regularly and encourage them with stickers, ticks, short comments for example; "good work", but these comments do not indicate to students what they need to do to improve.

Two subject coordinators have recently been appointed with responsibility for primary and high school mathematics, respectively. They do not yet have job descriptions or

have a clear picture of what teaching and learning in mathematics is like at the different levels.

The overall provision for mathematics is unsatisfactory. Most of the teaching should be good or very good for students' standards of achievement to improve.

### **Numeracy across the curriculum**

There is very little use of numeracy, in subjects other than mathematics.

### **Science (high school)**

The quality of teaching and learning varies across the high school. In Grades 10 to 12 teachers use activities and teaching methods which capture students' interest, including the effective use of probing questions, collaboration through group work, observations, some investigations and some effective use of ICT. These students understand fundamental scientific terms and use them accurately in explanations and discussions. Students in Grade 10 compared variations of leaves using scientific terms and were able to explain why some leaves were greener than others, and highlight the functions of different parts of the leaf. In Grades 7 to 9, however, there are missed opportunities. For example, Grade 7 students were asked to identify habitats and match different animals and plants to these. Most students found this activity too easy. There was no opportunity for students' to extend their thinking by critically evaluating interaction within habitats.

The science lab is not fully equipped with the necessary resources to enable the full range of investigations required by the curriculum. Other gaps in provision, such as inadequate planning and a narrow range of teaching methods, especially for students in Grades 7 to 9, negatively impact their progress.

Students generally have positive attitudes towards their learning. They express themselves well orally and are enthusiastic in responding to questions. They work well in groups when given the opportunity, and share positive relationships with each other but, they do not always arrive on time or settle quickly enough after the start of lessons and much time is lost.

The subject coordinator has an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject, and knows what needs to be done to improve the teaching and learning. One of the areas identified is the use of on-going assessment, as teachers seldom record what aspects individual students need to improve, and their planning does not reflect the needs of different students. In addition to the responsibilities as science coordinator, she also is responsible for coordinating English, and is the school's registrar, which leaves no time for monitoring the teaching and learning in science.

In Grades 10 to 12, teaching and learning are good but standards of achievement are only adequate as in Grades 7 to 9, teaching, learning and standards are unsatisfactory.

## **Information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum**

The school is equipped with four liquid crystal display projectors (LCD) which are in use and a lab of twenty-two computers. However, slow progress in completing network infrastructure for the lab and the lack of computers in classrooms, are significantly affecting provision for the teaching of ICT skills in subject areas. Although the school recently purchased four Mimio boards, these have not yet been installed.

Students have very few opportunities to develop ICT skills. Use of technology, especially in the primary school, is frequently centred on displaying information such as lesson objectives via the LCD projector. In a few lessons in the high school, teachers made good use of ICT. For example, in an English lesson on statistical report writing, students effectively used PowerPoint presentations for summarising statistical data and critiqued their use of colour, font size, animation and other techniques.

The provision for the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

## **Appendix Recommendations for the school**

The following are some suggested ways that the school could try to overcome the weaknesses identified in the 'What needs to improve' section on page 8 of this report.

### **1. In order to improve the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school, senior managers should:**

- Determine priorities for improvement and set realistic targets
- Delegate the responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the actions for improvement
- Ensure that subject coordinators have clear job descriptions and time to carry out their responsibilities
- Develop a schedule for lesson observations and clear criteria for evaluating classroom practices
- Delegate responsibilities for evaluating teaching and learning and ensure that those responsible have the necessary skills
- Ensure consistent implementation of all policies

### **2. In order to improve the quality of teaching and learning, senior managers should:**

- Ensure that teachers understand the level of work that is appropriate for the class they are teaching
- Provide individual feedback to staff and specific support where needed
- Provide support and guidance to teachers to help them to meet the needs of students of different abilities within each class
- Develop a teaching and learning policy that sets out Cayman Academy's expectations of the elements of a good lesson
- Build in time for the sharing of good practice

### **3. In order to improve the way teachers track students' progress, senior managers should:**

- Develop a policy on marking and assessment and ensure that it is consistently implemented
- Consider using criterion-based assessment rather than percentages or grades
- Consider the use of a standardized test to provide information on progress

### **4. In order to ensure progression and continuity in the curriculum, senior managers should:**

- Decide on the curriculum that will be used in Grades 1 to 9 and ensure that all teachers are familiar with it and use it consistently
- Encourage teachers to plan with the grade below and above the one they are teaching
- Use textbooks as resources rather than relying on them to guide teaching

## **Subjects:**

### **Language arts / English**

#### **5. In order to improve language arts within the school, senior managers should:**

- Develop the roles of the coordinators with clear guidelines on how to fulfil these
- Ensure that coordinators have time to fulfil their responsibilities
- Put in place mechanisms for the effective monitoring of standards in the teaching and learning of the subject
- Develop a policy for the teaching of language arts and literacy across the curriculum
- Establish good links between the primary and high school so that they can plan together as a school to ensure continuity and progression in the skills taught
- Develop teaching methods that encourage students to take a more active role in their learning and become more independent
- Ensure that teachers provide opportunities for group work where students can work collaboratively to solve problems and enter into lively discussions
- Ensure that teachers plan work that is suitable for students of different abilities – challenge and extend the more able and offer extra support for the less able students
- Ensure that teachers teach the skills needed for reading and comprehension
- Ensure that teachers provide students with a range of reading material that excites and encourages them to read
- Ensure that teachers provide more frequent opportunities for students to develop extended pieces of writing
- Ensure that teachers improve the quality of marking so that it shows students how to improve their work

### **Mathematics**

#### **6. In order to improve students' progress in mathematics, senior managers should:**

- Provide opportunities for subject coordinators to gain the professional development needed in order for them to effectively monitor teaching and learning in mathematics
- Promote planning across the school to ensure continuity and progression
- Ensure that teachers use assessment data consistently to track students' progress and to assist in planning to meet the needs of all students
- Ensure that there is an effective marking policy which is consistently used by teachers and regularly monitored
- Encourage the use of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics

## **Science (high school)**

### **7. In order to improve teaching and learning in science, senior managers should:**

- Ensure that teachers track students' progress and use this information in their planning
- Ensure that teachers plan work that meets the needs of students of different abilities
- Acquire the necessary resources for the lab in order to facilitate practical work.
- Encourage teachers to incorporate regular practical work in all year groups
- Ensure that teachers across the school plan together following an agreed science curriculum
- Ensure that schemes of work or term plans reflect progression from one year to the next
- Allocate time for the department head to carry out lesson observations
- Ensure time for sharing good practice across the department
- Ensure that teachers provide regular opportunities for practical and investigative work