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17<sup>th</sup> February 2022

Mr Jonathan Clark  
John Gray High School  
73 Academy Way  
George Town  
Cayman Islands

Dear Principal Clark,

### **OES thematic visit to John Gray High School**

Following my visit to your school on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022, I write on behalf of the Office of Education Standards to confirm the findings. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, for the time you made available to discuss how the school's leadership teams are managing and leading the school during the Covid-19 pandemic in two key areas of provision:

- Performance Standard 5: Keeping our students safe and always supported
- Performance standard 6: Leading and managing our school and developing links with the community we serve.

Following the publication of Ministry of Education guidelines and the constraints of COVID-19 the OES devised this 1 day thematic visit to reduce the pressure on the school.

OES visits to schools during this spring term are not inspections. We are not giving graded judgements. We did not undertake the usual range of inspection activities and were not always able to gather all sources of evidence, such as visits to lessons. The content of this letter gives an overview of our discussions about what happened in your school regarding leadership and wellbeing since September 2021.

During the visit, we spoke to you and your leadership teams. We did not speak to students.

## **Context**

As we learn to manage community transmission and continue to support the school family, the OES will undertake a 'thematic visit' program and will visit:

- A sample of 31 schools.
- Both government and private sector schools.

The information from this visit will feed into OES's national reporting so that the insights can be shared with the government and the education sector.

We did not find any significant concerns. As such a thematic visit report will be published on our website in due course.

## **From this visit the inspector noted that:**

- The senior leadership team (SLT) and all other staff were committed to facilitating and maintaining students' academic development in a safe and secure learning environment during the pandemic. All staff referred to their school community as a family.
- Moreover, a new school mantra of '*Comeback, better, stronger and smarter*' was evidence of the senior leadership's determination to focus on the positive lessons learned from the pandemic.
- Subject Leaders and SLT reported that students continue to make progress despite minimal periodic learning loss due to enforced Covid-19 absence. Individual subjects had deployed remedial activities to keep students on track.
- The previous summer catch-up camp was largely successful and responsible for the solid start most students had made in September with new baseline assessments taken at the start of term. Teachers and leaders had continued to monitor progress whilst students are learning remotely. 72% of parental respondents stated their child is making acceptable progress throughout the pandemic.
- The school had increased the cleaning regimen with twice daily cleaning and deep cleaning during the term breaks. The school buses were sanitized twice each day ahead of any student use.
- A number of campus adaptations had been implemented, for instance canteen arrangements were changed to a boxed 'Grab and Go' style, assisting with social distancing and to avoid the gathering of large groups. Water fountains were turned off in favour of bottle refill stations and fresh air intakes are in the process of being installed for the old modular classrooms.
- Covid-19 has had an impact on the supply of some materials and delayed the opening of the new school site although some areas had been securely opened. For instance, the new inclusion base for the most 'at risk' students (Oasis group and Learning Support Class) was used to ensure the impact of the pandemic had a minimal effect on their continued education and support. This phased approach was planned to continue with the Performing Arts move starting in February 2022 with the school hosting NCFE events.
- Specific Covid-19 entry and exit routines had been created with a new parent drop off area, and senior staff greeted and checked all students as they stepped off the buses.

Students had adopted good habits of mask wearing and staff ensured hands were sanitized.

- The overall entry on to the campus was managed to ensure congestion was kept to a minimum. However, it was reported that sustained remote learning had started to impact aspects of student socialisation. Therefore, the school had started to move towards a 'half and half' system with some students attending in-person activities, for example assembly in person and others via Teams.
- Arrangements for LFT tests and sanitiser worked well between the school and DES. However, the repackaging of LFT kits for such a large school was a significant task depleting already limited resources.
- Leaders reported that they were aware that the new Year 7 students were getting a different introduction and experience of high school education due to the Covid-19 arrangements. Leaders had ensured that tutors stay with their cohort and move up with them as they transitioned through the school.
- Each year approximately fifty students in Year 9 & 10 in the Goal Accelerated Program (GAP) will take early entry examinations but this year this has been reduced from four to three subjects to ease existing Covid-19 related stresses.
- The school had three councillors, SENCO and a dedicated student services office with support continuing for those having to isolate online. In addition, the school operated a 'Nurture' group for those most vulnerable students offering mindfulness training including breathing techniques. The 'Boysz2men' program included a 'Fishing extravaganza' and 'social etiquette' training at the Ritz Carlton Hotel that supported the wellbeing for older students.
- In a most recent survey a minority of students reported that they required more mental health and wellbeing support and only 32% of respondents agreed '*Support which I have received for my emotional needs has been useful during the pandemic.*' Furthermore, only 28% of respondents agreed with the statement, '*Adults in my school check in with me regarding my emotions and needs during the pandemic.*'
- Leaders collected a vast amount of data on a daily basis demonstrating solid monitoring systems across all areas of the school. However, the pandemic had delayed the analysis phase which would provide a 360 view of the schools performance during these difficult times.
- The representatives of the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) stated there was regular two-way communication via 'In-touch' and WhatsApp' which required the set-up of an additional 'WhatsApp' group to meet parental demand.
- The PTA also stated that they felt Public Health should do more to assist with the mental health of their students. The PTA had played a role in informing other parents about the services of the school councillors and passing on government flyers and Covid-19 information via their WhatsApp groups.
- The PTA were keen to express their gratitude for the school staff especially teachers, running a teacher appreciation breakfast and valentines fund raiser.
- The school had moved parents evenings online although, this terms staff isolation absence problems had negatively impacted these arrangements. However, the school had taken the decision to permanently move parents evening, to an online activity, to meet the needs of parents.

- Staff and leaders commented that the allocation of specialist staff was struggling to support the increased number of mental health related issues over the latest COVID period. Three school councillors are available to students if they come forward. The school does have access to the services of an Educational Psychologist 3 days a week. Leaders commented on her great work and support for those in most need which often goes over and above her remit. However, the most significant issue raised by students in the survey was their perceived lack of support for their mental health. Leaders stated, such resourcing was not always able to meet the demand for students that had been exacerbated by Covid-19 mental health issues.
- The school deployed a significant teacher cover system and on occasion as many as 22 teachers had been absent at one time. On average, school data suggested all staff, including SLT, were covering three additional lessons every week.
- The detail of the school record keeping ensured that most of the time the cover teacher was able to teach the lesson, although this was not always a subject specialist.
- Government donated laptops had been very well received by the whole school community and leaders report, it had changed the face of education and provided new and exciting opportunities for learning, particularly helping with the remote learning during the pandemic. However, the school reported ongoing problems with maintenance budgets and turn-a-round times resulting in access issues for periods of time.
- During the visit, lots of students were observed using their laptops both in class and during the breaks. The school currently provided Microsoft Certified accreditation with students achieving MS Associates, MS Specialist and Expert industry standard qualifications. In addition, the increased use and interaction with technology had accelerated the digital literacy of school staff and students.
- Subject Leaders reported using additional online applications to support the students learning during the pandemic. For instance, mathematics used 'White Rose resources' and 'Timetable Rockstars', English used 'Read Theory' and 'Read Works' and, Science utilised 'Collins Connect'. Additional mentoring intervention in mathematics is taking place through 'Aim Higher' and "100% maths' which continued online if a student is out for COVID related reasons
- The school and DES had additionally supported the laptop rollout with a variety (11) of applications currently in use by the school. The most utilised applications were Office 365, 'Class-marker', 'Live-worksheets', 'Near-pod' and 'Quizzizz'. However, licence purchases and decisions to rescind or cancel an application licence like 'Minecraft' were taken centrally and not at the school level, sometimes negatively impacting student learning.

### **'COVID Keepers'**

- **Virtual instruments** – Allowing students to practice and compose music at home. This will continue and complement future practical work.
- **Word not PDF** – Work in a word format has a greater potential for interaction and can be better used at home.
- **Youtube accessibility** – A number of excellent resources are on Youtube but do not meet the school/DES access policy. As such specific videos will be exported to Teams for student use at home.
- **General Teams use** – Students are now well versed in Teams and therefore future use will provide continued access whether in or out of school.

- **Attitudinal apps** – Now students all have laptops. The school can test the temperature and feelings of the students with more immediacy.
- **Online meetings for staff and parents** – Cuts down on the movement across the school and the difficulties for parents to get into school after work.
- **Online exams and tests** – Expand the use to ensure being absent from school does not disadvantage or advantage any exam taker. To move some online exams to a self-mark system giving an immediacy of feedback.
- **Online Prep (revision) and mentoring sessions** – Most subjects reported a higher attendance when delivered online
- **Virtual field trips** – these will not fully replace the real experience but have been an excellent way of extending and enriching students experience during COVID and will be kept – E.g. Science students watching live medical procedures from Health City, humanities students watching the Grouper Moon event with Caribbean Marine Institute
- **Online Year 9 Option process** - Use of Microsoft Forms and Teams to move the information evening and process for selecting Key Stage 4 subjects online. Impact has been higher and quicker response rate and less adjustments

Thank you again for contributing to this important national work. The views and experiences you have shared will help inform future policy.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Education Services, the Chief Officer for the Ministry of Education and the Chair of the Education Council. This letter will be published on the Office of Education Standards website.

Yours sincerely,



Nicholas Sherriff  
**Chief Inspector** |Office of Education Standards  
 Portfolio of the Civil Service

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Successful Schools  
 and Achieving Students **2**

Cayman Islands Government