



*Office of Education Standards  
133 Elgin Avenue  
Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands*

*Tel: (345) 244-2391  
E-mail: [adminOES@gov.ky](mailto:adminOES@gov.ky)*

21 February 2022

Director D. McLaughlin  
559 Walkers Road  
Grand Cayman

Dear Ms. McLaughlin,

### **OES Thematic Visit to Cayman Prep and High School**

Following our visit to your school on 16 February 2022, we write on behalf of the Chief Inspector of the Office of Education Standards to confirm the findings. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the time you made available to discuss how school's leadership team is 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 one 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 and a section of your staff.

### **Context**

As we learn to manage community transmission and continue to support the school family, the OES will undertake thematic visits to 31 government and private 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 available to parents and carers.

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

The school's leadership team and staff demonstrated exemplary commitment to promoting students' wellbeing and progress during the pandemic.

- The Board of Governors had provided strategic oversight and guidance and held senior leaders to account for standards of educational provision through regular meetings and reporting. The board chair advised that a planned restructuring of the school board was underway to strengthen its oversight role in leading educational provision. To this end, two committees had been recently established: Education and Finance and General Purposes.
- The maintenance and business managers indicated that regular thorough checks were conducted and acted upon to ensure a safe environment was maintained across both phases of the school. There were satisfactory inspection reports available from the Department of Environmental Health.
- Across the phases, there was a clear emphasis upon good hygiene practices. High contact areas were cleaned regularly throughout the day. The cleaning regimen included two shifts of cleaning staff.
- The leadership teams had committed considerable resource to the procurement and improvement of the school environment in response to the pandemic. For example, the school had closed off all water fountains and replaced them with water dispensers, upgraded the air conditioning filtration system, procured additional masks for staff and students and installed Covid-specific signage around the school.
- The secondary phase site had adopted a 'one-way' flow system around the school that had mitigated students walking past one another along narrow corridors. Similarly, at the primary phase, there were three designated areas for pick up and drop off for different year groups to promote social distancing.
- Leadership at the secondary phase had moved the time at which students should be in their form rooms, in the morning, forward 15 minutes and extended the school day to avoid interactions with neighbouring schools at the end of the day. The positive Covid implications of these actions were complemented by a strengthening of the cohesion within the form.
- Lateral flow tests (LFTs) were provided by the ministry of education. The school nurses at both sites coordinated the school's Covid-19 response strategy. It was noted that the collection, collation and distribution of LFTs was a laborious task and although leaders and staff helped in the process it still required a considerable resource.
- School leaders tracked attendance systematically. Nonetheless, they expressed challenges recording attendance given the variance in Covid-19 isolation scenarios. The leadership team at the primary phase had developed a 10 day Covid-19 tracker for each class and the school nurse issued daily reports. Attendance at the secondary phase also included collection of Covid-specific absenteeism and this was being reported accordingly.
- At the primary phase, the head of pastoral care and the counsellor reported that there was negligible increase in the number of students who presented with anxieties related to the pandemic. It was noted that students who were already flagged for support were often the ones who required additional psychosocial support. Staff indicated that a few of the younger children had exhibited separation anxiety and some had experienced difficulties adjusting to class routines after being absent due to Covid-19. This had sometimes resulted in low level disruption.
- The secondary phase had appointed heads of year groups (7, 10 and 12), to offer an additional layer of support for students during the pandemic.
- Regular staff meetings and communications ensured all relevant staff were aware of individual student requirements and concerns regarding wellbeing and mental health.

- The Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS) survey that was administered at the primary phase in the previous school term showed most students demonstrated positive attitudes to learning and felt safe in their learning environment.
- The special education needs coordinator at the primary phase outlined a holistic inclusive approach to supporting students with additional learning needs. Learning support plans were in place for students and there was a coordinated approach to students' development involving staff, parents and external providers. Nonetheless, it was noted that interventions were adversely impacted as a result of Covid-19 related staff absences.
- The senior support teams within the secondary phase had further focused their interactions with students with special educational needs and ensured all stakeholders were aware of the needs for any additional actions required around each student.
- Strategies to promote students' emotional wellbeing included mediation and brain breaks. A teacher shared that her class had a prayer/worry box and students were encouraged to write or draw their fears and place them in the box.
- The school nurse and the counsellor at the primary phase had designed a "Wellness" board to share age appropriate wellness tips and coping strategies. "Mindfulness Monday" was also used to promote students' wellbeing and the 'Character Education' model was centralising the school's focus on acquisition of resilience and perseverance for challenging times.
- At the secondary phase, students' bodies, including the Wellness Warriors, met to share and discuss wellbeing issues throughout the pandemic.
- Staff's emotional health was supported through activities such as a staff fayre. Other social events were organised throughout the term and celebrations of staff birthdays served to lift spirits and boost morale. There was scope to utilise various avenues to glean additional feedback on staff's emotional health during the pandemic.
- Seesaw and Microsoft teams were the main platforms used for online learning at the primary stage. Additionally, online resources such as Purple Mash, Mathletics, and the recently added OAK Academy provided students with a wide range of learning opportunities. Staff indicated that online resources had provided students with immediate feedback on their work and had reduced the amount of marking for teachers.
- Leadership at the secondary phase had supported the implementation of technology and online resources to support students' learning throughout the pandemic, including a comprehensive catalogue of relevant websites and online resources including Dr Frost and Action for Happiness.
- Expectations for remote learning for students, staff and parents were clearly outlined in the school's remote learning policy. To promote students' safety on line, the information technology department had installed firewalls and disabled some features in Microsoft Teams.
- Communication between staff and students was facilitated via Seesaw and Microsoft Teams. Nonetheless, staff also expressed that they missed the quality of face to face interactions in events such as in person whole school assemblies.
- At the primary phase, modifications to the learning environment due to Covid-19 precautions had restricted some curriculum options. For example, visits to the library were curtailed and the librarian indicated that classroom book boxes and grab and go bags had replaced library visits. Reading resources also included links to 'read alouds' to promote children's reading.

There were planned subscriptions to other online resources to promote students' phonic knowledge and reading fluency throughout the pandemic.

- The sixth form centre was too small to accommodate the year groups such as to maintain social distancing, and the leadership team had agreed that years 12 and 13 students may be allowed to leave the campus at lunch time to help alleviate this issue.
- Staff at the primary phase indicated that Covid-19 restrictions had impacted enrichment activities such as field trips. As a consequence, teachers innovated motivating and engaging learning experiences for students using videos and virtual visits. Field trips were gradually being reintroduced and Year 1 students had an upcoming field trip to Vigoro Nursery. The use of LFTs had safely facilitated the phased return of parent volunteers and after school care activities.
- Off-site visits were thoroughly risk assessed including full recognition of Covid-19.
- Several stakeholders across the school expressed a concern that the cancellation of inter-school sports fixtures may be leading to a de-motivation for some students with respect to undertaking physical activity.
- The primary school had recently lost two subject leaders. Staffing was also impacted by staff illness or isolation due to Covid-19. Staff were redeployed to support areas as needed. There were plans to recruit additional learning assistants and sports staff for the new school year.
- Similarly, leadership at the secondary phase was finding recruitment and retention particularly difficult at the moment with staff making decisions to either return to their home countries or not travel during the Covid-19 situation. The school was reviewing how best to address this.
- The Continuous Professional Development coordinator at the secondary phase had devised a system of matching CPD with school and staff requirements throughout the pandemic. The coordinator's knowledge of the staff and understanding of the needs of the school enabled a comprehensive schedule of personalised programs to be produced that could usefully be expanded in response to the constraints of Covid-19.
- A useful demonstration of utilising talented staff to support CPD was evident at the primary phase where staff with high levels of expertise in digital competencies had successfully supported their peers in progressing their own digital skills.
- At the primary phase, staff indicated that despite disruption to learning for some students who had contracted Covid-19 or who were required to isolate or quarantine, most students continued to progress in their learning throughout the pandemic. Joint planning among subject leads promoted cross curricular linkages to strengthen and consolidate students' learning in key areas of the curriculum. Subject leads were now focused on consistent implementation across year groups.
- At the secondary phase, senior leaders had a thorough and robust set of systems monitoring progress across all subjects. Progress was assessed on internal data and highlighted areas of learning loss and ensured gaps were addressed. The assessment team on the secondary phase site had considered 'what if' scenarios with respect to Covid-19 and external examinations, and had produced detailed action reports.
- Interviews with staff indicated that a consultative, collegial ethos was engendered in the school. Despite frequent changes as a result of managing challenges associated with Covid-19, most staff felt involved in planned activities. A staff member expressed that schools should

be given greater autonomy to devise in-school Covid-19 protocols based on their unique contexts.

- Leadership demonstrated a shared understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and this had formed the basis for the self-evaluation of performance standards 5 and 6; this level of detail now needed to extend to all performance standards.
- The primary school's improvement plan outlined broad developmental goals aligned to the OES inspection framework. The plan will benefit from a more robust delineation including success criteria and timescales.
- The school and the Board of Governors had begun the process of embarking on an ambitious strategic 10-year plan. Notably, the primary leadership team had already structured meaningful avenues to incorporate student voice in strategic planning processes.
- Effective communication with parents was maintained through newsletters that were issued fortnightly and regular emails. Newsletters often included wellness tips and guidance for parents. 'Class mums' had continued to promote parental involvement in the work of the school during the pandemic.
- Almost all parents who completed the survey agreed that there was a clear strategy to promote learning during the pandemic and this had been communicated to them. Similarly, almost all indicated that their child had appropriate technological resources to support remote learning.
- All stakeholders consulted during the visit expressed a strengthening in the depth and meaningfulness of communication between school and parents during the pandemic with staff happy to extend additional efforts to alleviate issues before they became greater problems in the future.

### **'COVID Keepers'**

The staff shared examples of strategies and innovations that they had implemented either as a direct or indirect consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and which they planned to retain post COVID-19. These included:

- **Concentration on general hygiene** around the school including removal of water fountains. The school reported a significant improvement in general health and awareness of the needs of all aspects of healthy living around the school, including the use of sanitizers, hand washing and social distancing.
- **Use of designated areas for drop off and pick up for different year groups.** The primary site used three designated areas for arrival and departure. At the start of the school day, staff, including the principal and deputy, were observed at the different access points welcoming students on arrival and greeting most by name. This served to promote a caring ethos. At dismissal, staggered pickups for year groups had reduced traffic congestion. Parents' access to the premises was also restricted.
- **Use of online resources to promote learning.** Staff expressed how the use of online resources had a positive impact on students' learning and levels of engagement. There were positive reviews about the recently implemented OAK Academy online resource at Key Stage 2 and numerous sites across the secondary phase.

- **Microsoft documents.** Parental consent for lateral flow testing was organised with the use of Microsoft forms. The business manager indicated that this tool was efficient and effective. Consequently, the school was considering utilising it for other activities.
- **Increased Peer Training.** Throughout the pandemic, staff with high levels of expertise in digital competencies had supported their peers in progressing their own digital skills. There was also increased collaboration among teachers in the sharing of effective teaching and learning strategies in online environments. New staff were effectively mentored by their peers.
- **Emotional wellbeing strategies.** Strategies such as meditation and brain breaks were used to promote students' mental wellbeing. Individual classes had devised additional strategies such as a prayer/worry box. Another class used a teddy bear wearing a mask to normalise mask wearing for younger students. The secondary phase adopted student bodies including "Wellness warriors" and use of the "Action for happiness website."
- **Virtual parent consultations** were found to be extremely popular with staff and parents, enabling all to access meetings from a broad range of locations.
- **The extending of the school day** at the secondary phase site to avoid departure coinciding with local schools ensured social distancing outside the school was more manageable.

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 Chair of the Board of Governors, 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,

*A. Edwards-Boothe*     *D J Baldwin*

Althea Edwards-Boothe and David Baldwin

Senior Inspectors | Office of Education Standards  
Portfolio of the Civil Service

133 Elgin Avenue | Government Administration Building | Grand Cayman KY1-9000 | Cayman Islands  
Direct: (345) 244-2391 | Main: (345) 949-7900  
E-mail: [AdminOES@gov.ky](mailto:AdminOES@gov.ky) | Website: <http://www.oes.gov.ky>



Office of  
Education  
Standards



Successful Schools  
and Achieving Students **2**

Cayman Islands Government