



Cayman Islands Government

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February 11, 2022

Dr. Richard Wildman  
Principal  
Clifton Hunter High School  
311 Frank Sound Road  
Grand Cayman

Dear Dr. Wildman,

### **OES Thematic Visit to Clifton Hunter High School**

Following my visit to your school on February 9, 2022, I write on behalf of the Chief Inspector of the Office of Education Standards to report the findings. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the time you made available to discuss how the school has prepared for and reacted to the recent pandemic related issues in regard to 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 the Ministry of Education guidelines and the constraints of COVID-19 the OES had devised one day thematic visits to reduce the pressure on schools.

Over the next few months, the Office of Education Standards will conduct thematic visits in 31 government and private schools. Information from the thematic visits will inform the OES national reporting so that the key insights regarding health and safety, support and guidance as well as leadership can be shared with the government and the education sector.

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 lesson observations. The content of this letter gives an overview of our discussions about what happened in your school regarding wellbeing and leadership since September 2021.

During the visit, I conducted interviews with you, members of your leadership team and other staff. I also reviewed samples of students' work, reviewed key documentation and conducted learning walks. I did not interview students and parents. However, prior to the visit, parents, staff

and students completed online surveys which polled their views on aspects of the school's provision.

Following the thematic visit to Clifton Hunter High School, I did not find any significant concerns. The summary of the thematic visit will be published on the OES website available to parents and other stakeholders.

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

- The principal, senior leaders and staff had demonstrated strong commitment to promoting students' wellbeing and progress during the pandemic. They had expertly coordinated arrangements to track, monitor and report on students' health, well-being and progress.
- Throughout the pandemic, the principal, senior leaders and staff had maintained a clear focus upon promoting a caring and supportive environment for students and staff.
- There was also a strong emphasis upon the promotion of healthy lifestyles. The department of education services had contracted additional cleaning staff. Consequently, increased cleaning regimes ensured high touch surfaces were regularly sanitised throughout the day and that deep cleaning of classrooms and common areas was carried out daily.
- The facilities manager conducted regular checks and coordinated arrangements with the contracted cleaning company. Early issues with availability of supplies had been resolved.
- Health routines were beginning to be established but were not yet fully embedded. During the visit, staff had to issue reminders to a minority of students to wear masks properly or maintain social distance in lunch lines.
- Senior leaders had taken on the additional responsibilities of coordinating the logistics associated with bi-weekly lateral flow testing and reporting to allow staff to focus on teaching and learning activities. The principal and school nurse were responsible for triage and managed the logistics around procurement and distribution of lateral flow testing kits.
- Senior leaders had also developed and implemented innovative policies and procedures to manage the complexities associated with supporting students' wellbeing and continuity of learning during the pandemic. For example, they had developed a COVID-19 screening tool aligned to the World Health Organization (WHO) guidance to monitor and track students' wellbeing during the pandemic. Students experiencing allergy, cold, flu or Covid-19 symptoms were screened and this determined if they would be sent home, sent to the nurse or treated and allowed to return to class.
- Senior leaders also systematically collected and evaluated information about students' behaviour and attitudes to learning. For example, staff administered student frame of mind surveys to assess students' attitudes to learning and plan appropriate support.
- The principal and senior staff systematically and effectively monitored student attendance. Consequently, senior staff had engaged in detailed analysis of attendance patterns to provide targeted support.
- The principal reported that student attendance fluctuated in the Autumn term, with the highest number of absences recorded in January. This spike in absences was attributed to community transfer of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. Overall attendance for the current school year, including authorised absences had averaged 93 per cent.
- Staff reported that the pandemic had exacerbated emotional issues for a significant minority of students, and this was partly linked to increased incidence of vaping and marijuana use.

Consequently, the pastoral team had to deploy a range of psychosocial support services to help students cope with these and other issues.

- The pastoral team, supported by external support agencies, provided good levels of care, guidance and support for students through mentoring, counselling support, contact with parents, parent meetings, case conferences and progress reports. However, staffing issues had adversely impacted counselling support and small group interventions.
- The pastoral team also reported that students with additional learning needs who required accommodation to access the curriculum had experienced challenges in the online learning environment.
- They further stated that students on the at risk register who were out of school for prolonged periods due to COVID-19, often exhibited behavioural issues on transitioning back to face to face class routines. Consequently, there was an increase in the number of students needing further intervention and support.
- Staff felt well supported by the senior leadership team but expressed that they were feeling exhausted.
- Throughout the pandemic, senior leaders had prioritised continuity of learning. Consequently, senior leaders and staff had developed plans to remediate learning loss and to employ appropriate interventions.
- There were effective strategies in place for continuous professional development of staff during the pandemic. For example, peer facilitated training had been used successfully to progress upskilling of staff in areas such as digital competencies. There was scope to further embed this in teachers' practice.
- Heads of department had ensured that staff developed teaching plans that balanced continued curriculum progress with re-teaching mechanisms to bridge concept gaps.
- Staff also described how they had developed synchronous and asynchronous learning activities to support students during face to face and remote learning. Additionally, paper based learning packs were prepared for students with internet or hardware challenges.
- Staff highlighted the challenges they faced in developing the wide range of strategies required to meet the varied needs of students in face to face and online learning environments. Teachers also reported challenges reaching a minority of students who did not engage in online learning.
- Staff were appreciative that senior leaders had promoted flexible arrangements to alleviate the workload of teachers and students.
- High numbers of COVID-19 related staff absences, as many as 17 in one instance, were recorded during the recent wave of community transfer. Consequently, the senior leaders had devised innovative strategies to provide teaching cover. For example, master classes were organised in the performance halls. Here several classes were facilitated at the same time so they could be supervised by a reduced staff complement.
- Staff dedication and commitment was evidenced by the teachers who had continued to teach remotely, despite being ill with COVID-19.
- Staff expressed disappointment with the length of time it took the Department of Education Services to provide supply teachers. Reportedly, two supply teachers were only recently deployed to provide teaching cover.

- Staff were highly appreciative of the support provided by senior leaders. They reported that the principal and deputies despite their administrative responsibilities had provided regular cover for a number of classes. Staff also commended the quality of support provided by Assistant Teachers throughout the pandemic.
- Despite the challenges, senior leaders reported that a majority of students had continued to progress in their learning during the pandemic. Although there was variability across year groups, senior leaders indicated that in school-based assessments and the external examinations used by the school, most students achieved in line with curriculum standards.
- It was noted that at Key Stage 4, students' performance had dipped during the Autumn term. This was attributed primarily to staff and student COVID-19 related absences.
- A distributed model of leadership was well-embedded in the school and this had promoted partnership and collaboration among teams at all levels during the pandemic.
- Effective monitoring ensured that leaders had an accurate picture of school performance.
- Additionally, school self-evaluation and school improvement planning processes were robust and underpinned by reflection on practice, data analysis and target setting.
- Effective lines of communication were maintained between the school and parents through online meetings, phone calls, parent newsletter, What App messages and emails.
- Senior leaders also stated that a majority of parents were able to access Teams and the Everest platforms to check students' progress.
- Senior leaders and staff reported improvement in the relationships between home and school during the pandemic, although there were challenges engaging a minority of parents.
- Parents made highly positive comments about the work of the school in the parent survey. A majority of respondents agreed that there was a clear strategy to promote learning and this had been communicated to them.
- The principal reported that almost all students had laptops, with the exception of new transfer students. Some staff expressed concerns regarding the capacity of the school's information technology department to manage and respond quickly to software and hardware issues as they arise given the size of the school.
- Throughout the pandemic, senior leaders and staff had networked with their peers in other schools, both private and public to share ideas and promote worthwhile learning opportunities for students.

### **'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:

- **Whole-school virtual assemblies.** Staff highlighted the positive benefits associated with whole school virtual assemblies. For example, the ability to reach all students at the same time with particular foci. Similarly, all students are able to participate in celebratory events, such as award presentations, at once. Virtual assemblies also removed the need to pack away chairs or physical education equipment to house students in a single space.
- **Virtual devotionals for staff.** Dubbed "Quiet reflection" the principal shared brief devotional messages with staff daily. Staff made highly positive comments on how this simple activity promoted spiritual awareness and created a positive tone to start the day.

- **Digital lesson plans and curriculum planning documents:** Heads of department reported that staff had begun digitising lesson plans. As a consequence, during the pandemic staff cover was not fraught with the usual issues of locating teachers' plans and resources. This had allowed for greater efficiency and effectiveness in lesson planning and delivery.
- **Use of digital technologies to promote effective teaching and learning.** A majority of staff extolled the benefits of incorporating digital technologies such as notebook in Microsoft Teams and classMaker to adapt learning experiences and make learning more relevant for students. Staff reported that the use of digital technologies had made assessment both meaningful and transparent for students. In many instances, students received instant feedback on the completion of assessments. Senior leaders indicated that all end of year assessments in December were conducted online.
- **Virtual Parent Meetings:** Senior leaders and staff reported higher participation rates from parents in meetings facilitated on line to discuss their children's progress and wellbeing. Staff also found virtual meetings helpful in explaining COVID-19 requirements and communicating changes to parents.
- **Developing a community of practice:** Increased networking with colleagues in both private and public schools had provided school leaders with a support system to share experiences and strategies.

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

Althea Edwards-Boothe

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

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