



*Office of Education Standards
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24th March, 2022

Ms. Emma Kendall
Ms. Bryony Platt
210 Eastern Avenue
George Town
Grand Cayman

Dear Ms. Kendall and Ms. Platt,

OES thematic visit to Footsteps School

Following my visit to your school on 23rd March 2022, I write on behalf of the Chief Inspector 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 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 had 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, I spoke to you, your leadership teams and staff. I did not speak to students.

Context

As we move towards learning to manage community transmission, 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' national reporting so that the insights can be shared with the government and the education sector. I did not find any significant concerns. As such a thematic visit report would be published on our website available to parents and other stakeholders.

From this visit the inspector noted that:

- The school had created an inclusive and safe learning environment allowing students to continue their education during the pandemic. The school team referred to each other as family and exhibited a strong collegial spirit.
- Almost all parents, staff and students surveyed, reported that the school was a safe place to learn during the pandemic.
- The school had implemented a staggered drop off and pick system for parents to minimise the chance of cross contamination. Only the parents of the youngest children were allowed on site to collect their children from class.
- A holding system for older students was employed by staff where students were only released once a parent arrived at the main door. Staff used a walkie-talkie system to communicate across the school that ensured a smooth, managed exit of students from the school.
- All students had their masks checked upon entry and staff made sure all children's hands were sanitised prior to entering the school.
- The school had deployed a number of hand sanitizer dispensers and had additional individual bottles available throughout the school. Masks were worn in classes by all students with spares carried by the school. The school's class size policy of 16 helped to support social distancing in lessons.
- The school's ethos ensured students had regular activity outside of the classroom that afforded mask breaks and ensured a sense of normality for children.
- The school administrator monitored, repackaged and distributed the LFTs and also monitored the Covid-19 incidence and student absence. The school stated that they encourage all students via their parents to test at least twice per week.
- As an inclusive school, 19% of the student population is SEN registered with more SEN students waiting to get into the school. The school had a robust behaviour policy and was able to identify what the school referred to as 'Bubbling Behaviours' well before they became a problem.
- School leadership had ensured that the offsite trips on Tuesday and Thursday for Nature Day and PE continued throughout the pandemic, which was seen as greatly supporting student wellbeing. The school had a number of extra-curricular activities, for instance, on the day of the visit students took part in the hockey afterschool club.
- School leaders had continually monitored the wellbeing of students throughout the pandemic via their internal student surveys and the PHSE programmes.
- Senior leaders reported that staff wellbeing was a priority for this academic year and had provided wellness training. Moreover, senior leaders were keen to stress that additional time required for Covid-19 related incidents was returned to staff where possible. Staff further reported how well supported they felt, and stated senior leaders had monitored teachers' wellbeing, even stepping in to take lessons and alleviate pressure.
- The school marking policy had a guide to support teaching staff and improve the efficiency of marking.
- As a strategy, senior leaders had tried to create a sense of normality to help support wellbeing, particularly for those students with special educational needs.
- School leadership had contingency planning for remote learning however, to date, this had only a minimal requirement. The subject coordinators did have evidence of a system

of work being sent home and marking returned for those few students in ‘travel return quarantine.’

- Subject coordinators reported very minimal learning loss evident in the GL Progress test scores and internal assessment results. However, teachers did suggest that students who came from other countries or halfway through the year had been identified as requiring the most support.
- Leadership acknowledged the importance of assembly to students in recognising behaviour and acts of kindness. Therefore, assembly was moved outside to ensure its continuation whilst meeting the health and safety guidelines for Covid-19.
- Despite the pandemic senior leaders had analysed school performance and produced a current self-evaluation and school improvement plan.
- The school reported a close relationship with parents and valued the continued, now socially distanced, conversations at the school gate that ensured staff were aware of any new situations. In addition, subject coordinators had evidence of regular email communications and messages via the classroom application ‘Seesaw’.
- The school had experienced minimal impact from Covid-19 accounting for a minor increase in absence of 3% since September 2021 thus the school reported an average of 94% attendance. The school had in place a robust system of two-way communication to ensure the school and parents were informed of any Covid-19 incidence or absence.
- Parent meetings had been moved online however, meetings regarding SEN IEPs were deemed necessary to be in person. Going forward the school planned to give parents the choice.
- The staggered approach to drop off and pick up had lessened the pressure on the limited parking facilities at and around the school.
- School outside space was rather limited in size but did have several shaded areas, the garden, the play area and a seating area. The school leadership shared that they were currently investigating a move to a more suitable site in the near future.
- The school uses a number of online resources including Seesaw, Edshed, White Rose and Google Docs to reinforce student engagement and support learning.
- The school leadership reported the school had continued to be a popular choice for new staff and they had not experienced any recruitment issues due to the pandemic.

‘COVID Keepers’

The school shared a wide range of practices that had been put in place either as a direct or indirect consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The practices that the school would look to continue in a post-COVID “normal” situation include:

- **Online Zoom meetings** – Supportive of external meetings with SEN professionals and the recruitment of new staff. In addition, the options it gives to better communicate with parents.
- **Staggered pick-up and drop off** – Easing of congestion, easier to monitor and more of a chance to chat with mums and dads.
- **General hygiene** – Keep the handwashing practice and the use of hand sanitizers with the promotion of general good health.
- **Focus on Health and Wellbeing** – To continue with the regular check-ins on staff morale, surveys for parents and students, encouraging exercise and mindfulness/yoga.

- **Online Training and CPD** – Continue with the NPQH system for leaders.
- **Nature learning days** – To continue the outdoor days that had such an impact upon student and staff wellbeing/learning.
- **Online learning platforms** – To continue to use and explore online application like Seesaw and Edshed to support engagement and communication within student learning.

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 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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and Achieving Students **2**
Cayman Islands Government