



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

Tel: (345) 244-2391
E-mail: adminOES@gov.ky

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Dr S Tibbetts
Grand Harbour Shoppes
Units 5 & 6
Red Bay

Dear Dr Tibbetts

OES thematic visit to Hope Academy

Following my visit to your school on 19 January 2022, I write on behalf of the Chief Inspector 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 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 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 would be published on our website available to parents and carers.

From this visit the inspector noted that:

- Senior leaders, and all staff were fully committed to the wellbeing of all stakeholders. There were numerous strategies in place to support wellbeing, including a Mental Health Counsellor/Therapist available, free of charge.
- The school have lost two of their four middle leaders recently and this has placed increasing strain on key staff. The school did not have designated heads of departments. Subjects were monitored through experienced staff and other senior leaders.
- The school felt it had enhanced its communication channels with households throughout the pandemic, with communication becoming more meaningful and regular.
- The school did not have a governing body, although the senior leadership team supported one another and regularly discuss responses to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- During the visit, all staff and students were following the Ministry of Education guidelines regarding the wearing of masks.
- Comprehensive wall displays regarding wellbeing and appropriate hygiene highlighted students' clear understanding of the pandemic and its effects.
- The school responded proactively to the Covid-19 situation last October by transferring all high school provision online for a two week period. This was to enable greater space in the school and decreased interaction between students, helping in delaying incidences of Covid-19 in the school.
- Leadership utilised the 'Gradelink' platform to monitor attendance, behaviour and academic grades. 'Gradelink' was not able to divide absences between Covid and non-Covid related cases. However, leaders monitored absences due to Covid-19 and they could report on cases manually.
- The school was able to calculate attendance since September 2021 and showed a fall of 20% due to Covid related absence.
- The school continued to deliver a number of electives and arts-based courses, including art and Spanish, although there were limitations to extra-curricular activities due to Covid restrictions.
- Staff reported a general increase in Covid-related anxiety amongst those students with anxiety-related conditions, and this had led to a very small increase in low-level behavioural incidences. These are expertly monitored and managed by the staff.
- The school was able to continue to deliver appropriate provision for all students through a range of technologies when students or staff were isolated at home. In one case a teacher was delivering from home via Zoom (due to quarantine), to a group of students in the classroom (who were being supervised by a teaching assistant), while two further students were able to access the lesson from their own homes remotely, also via Zoom.
- During the visit, knowledgeable staff were able to discuss progress throughout the pandemic within each of the core subjects, and senior leaders had a similar understanding of same.
- Leaders reported progress had continued to improve during the pandemic across both the middle and high school phases in maths, English and science although, there has been a slight dip in the primary school phase.
- Students were observed eating their lunches in their classrooms, this was monitored by staff and protocols adhered to.
- Throughout the pandemic, leaders had facilitated professional development sessions, including Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI), Child Safeguarding, Child Protection, First Aid (online) and also upskilling staff in online provision, particularly Google Classroom. Staff had also engendered an ethos of mutual support, sharing knowledge openly.
- Staff reported that students' problem solving skills had increased though the use of remote learning and staff further report some students' personal confidence had increased while working remotely and this had successfully transferred into the classroom upon returning to school.
- The Principal ensured all staff were aware of the latest regulations and protocols once they were officially released, via WhatsApp and email.

'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:

- **Use of digital channels to facilitate communicate with parents.** The use of Zoom or Microsoft Teams to accommodate parents' meetings have increased engagement levels, particularly with those parents that do not like going into school or those that cannot get away from work at a given time.
- **Provide access to a Mental Health Counsellor/Therapist free of charge.** The access to a Mental Health Counsellor/Therapist free of charge has acted as a significant support for both students and staff.
- **The use of online myOn reading and Freckle platforms through Renaissance.** The myOn and Freckle platforms have enhanced student experiences in reading and maths online. Platforms can be personalised to reflect level of need and ability.
- **The use of Google Classroom** to support tracking and general accommodation for students.

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,



David Baldwin
Senior Inspector | 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 | Website: <http://www.oes.gov.ky>



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