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24th March 2022

Sister Angela McLaughlin
Principal
Truth for Youth School
Walkers Road
Grand Cayman

Dear Sister Angela,

OES Thematic Visit to Truth for Youth 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 and representatives of the Church Council and a section of your staff.

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. I did not find any significant concerns. As such a thematic visit report will be published on The OES website available to parents and other stakeholders.

From this visit the inspector noted that:

- Senior leaders, the Church Council and staff exhibited clear commitment towards the ongoing provision of education for all students in a safe learning environment.
- The Church Council was supportive of the work of the school and had hired substitute teachers during the pandemic to ensure adequate staff cover was in place to deliver the curriculum. Additionally, the Council had already started staff recruitment for the new school year.
- The Church Council expressed commendation to the government for reinstating the financial grant to private schools. The grant had supported the school's purchase of tablets for all students to support blended learning. Reportedly, the tablets were on order and slated for delivery soon.
- The principal also spoke positively of the Ministry of Education's provision of lateral flow kits (LFTs) for staff and students. A support staff had dedicated responsibility for organising the distribution of LFTs to parents.
- Throughout the pandemic, students' attendance was tracked regularly; however, attendance reporting required refinement to accurately reflect those students who were in quarantine but still engaged in learning remotely. Average attendance for the first school term was 83 per cent.
- The Church Council had made significant investment to secure the school premises to promote safeguarding. For example, a buzzer and camera system was installed at the main entrance to the school and gridded gates were installed at the side of the building leading to classrooms. This had restricted visitors and parents' access to the premises.
- A support staff employed by the church provided maintenance and security support at the school. He also ensured that all students sanitised hands on entering the premises.
- Additional combination tables and benches were installed throughout the outdoor play area and this supported social distancing.
- The Church Council had purchased masks for students and staff and had also purchased a sanitising system to ensure regular cleaning of high contact areas.
- A number of procedures had also been introduced to further promote the health and wellbeing of students. For example, class bubbles and staggered break and lunch times supported social distancing. Students ate break and lunch in their classrooms before engaging in outdoor play at timed intervals. Although class bubbles supported improved supervision and social distancing, this impacted teachers' non-contact time.
- As a health precaution, water fountains had been turned off. Most students brought reusable water bottles from home. Bottled water was also sold at a discounted rate in the school canteen.
- Health routines such as mask wearing and hand sanitising were well embedded in the school.
- Almost all parents who responded to the OES online survey agreed that the school provided a safe environment for their child during the pandemic.
- Staff reported that they regularly checked in with their students to monitor their emotional wellbeing during the pandemic. The principal also reported that being a Christian school, staff, students and parents had tapped into their faith to support them during challenging times.
- No formal surveys were conducted to gauge the impact of the pandemic on students' and staff's emotional wellbeing.

- Staff provided in-class support for students with additional learning needs. Students who required additional support in their learning also attended afterschool programmes that were provided at a cost to parents. There was the need for a coherent and well-coordinated approach to improve provision for students with additional and special educational needs. The Principal advised that there were plans to hire staff to coordinate SEN provision in the new school year.
- Subject leaders reported a degree of learning loss across the core subjects for a minority of students. Teachers provided in-class support to close knowledge gaps for those students. However, staff reported that the majority of students had continued to progress in their learning during the pandemic.
- Work scrutiny indicated that staff had continued to mark students' work regularly throughout the pandemic, but limited developmental feedback was provided. Also, there appeared to be an over reliance on work sheets.
- The Principal constituted the senior leadership team as there was no Deputy Principal post. Subject leaders were in place and a part-time teacher was supporting curriculum implementation. Nonetheless, the strategic roles of middle leadership required further development to support the work of the school in key areas.
- Throughout the pandemic, teaching and learning was monitored through peer observations and walkthroughs.
- School leaders had developed a response to inspection plan. However, adjustments are required in the formal planning for school self-evaluation and improvement planning. There was the need for the school's self-evaluation to be more closely aligned to the OES Successful Schools and Achieving Students 2 Framework. There was also scope to ensure that the school improvement plan and priorities were derived using suitable and accurate evidence from self-evaluation processes.
- The school had maintained strong links with the community during the pandemic. This was evidenced by the donation of 20 Chrome laptops to the school by Flow and Mourant. Additionally, past students had donated money to purchase tablets and thermometers.
- Throughout the pandemic, the school had maintained regular communication with parents through emails, phone calls and WhatsApp. However, some parents expressed the desire for more regular online parents' meetings.
- Most parents who responded to the Inspectorate's online survey indicated that the school had regular communication with them regarding their child's progress. The new curriculum resources generated parents' newsletters which kept parents abreast of their child's learning.
- Most parents agreed that their child had appropriate information technology resources to participate in remote learning. However, staff expressed that insufficiency of school laptops restricted opportunities for students to log on to online resources during in-school lessons.
- The Church Council had invested in a new curriculum for the school. The introduction of the New York State Curriculum had also provided staff and students with a suite of digital learning resources to augment students' learning. These included Freckles, Embark on Learning and Generation Genius.
- Following the introduction of the New York State Curriculum and the attendant digital learning resources, staff reported that they had participated in professional development with an overseas support team as well as training facilitated by the school staff member in charge of

curriculum implementation. Most staff reported that they were becoming more confident in the use of online resources but still required support in areas. Lessons on the use of online resources were facilitated for students during Information Technology classes.

- Throughout the pandemic, staff had used Zoom and Google Classroom to facilitate online lessons for students who were learning remotely. Students in Kindergarten had also received video lessons via WhatsApp.

‘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:

- **Continued Emphasis on Good Hygiene Practices.** The range of health protocols that were implemented due to the Covid-19 pandemic had promoted increased focus upon healthy lifestyles. Staff noted that the improvement in general health awareness including the use of sanitizers and frequent hand washing will continue to be beneficial to students.
- **Blended learning.** Staff spoke positively of students’ developing responsibility for learning which was attributed to their increasing use of the various online resources.
- **Security measures to restrict general access to the premises.** While the school valued the involvement and contribution of parents to the work of the school and will welcome parents in a structured way to the campus, the school will continue to limit general access to parts of the school post-covid-19. This had reduced traffic congestion and had promoted improved supervision of 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 Chief Officer for the Ministry of Education, the Chair of the Church Council and the Chair of the Education Council. This letter will be published on the Office of Education Standards website.

Yours sincerely,

A. Edwards-Boothe

Althea Edwards-Boothe
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Successful Schools
and Achieving Students **2**

Cayman Islands Government