



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

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

**Cayman Islands Government**

14 January 2022

Ms Allison Greaves  
East End Primary School  
17 Sea View Road  
East End

Dear Ms. Greaves

### **OES thematic visit to East End Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 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 and your deputy, Ms. Jackson, 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, your deputy and your leadership teams, your senior school improvement officer as well as a group of teaching staff and teaching assistants. 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 other staff across the school, exhibit an exemplary attitude towards the ongoing provision of education for all students. The school has remained open throughout the pandemic despite significant numbers of staff and student absence.
- School attendance rates were significantly affected by Covid-19 during the first term 2021/22, with rates dropping to 30% at one stage, although attendance levels have since returned to 94% by the end of term.
- Senior leaders, teachers and survey returns suggest the laptop scheme has been beneficial. Senior leaders stating it has given the students a greater ownership of their own learning, and given all children access to reading resources such as Oxford Owl. All students have now received laptops and generally remember to bring them into school. There are a few cases of hardware malfunctions and the school have sought to address these.
- School leaders are aware of a degree of learning loss across the core subjects and have identified knowledge gaps through testing. The learning loss is different across the three subjects and heads of department have programmes designed for closing the gaps in each area. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) and counsellor are also aware of the specific requirements of those students with special and additional needs.
- Heads of departments are ensuring that all areas of the curriculum are covered during Covid-19 and this is discussed at senior leader and staff meeting level. Heads of Departments are aware of knowledge gaps and staff address these through cross-curricular planning.
- All stakeholders strictly adhere to Covid-19 safety protocols and these are closely monitored by all staff, for example, on the occasions when students forget to wear their masks staff quickly ask them to put them on. Students take snack, lunch and playtimes in their 'bubbles' and follow requirements of sanitizing, mask wearing and distancing as required.
- Water fountains have been turned off. This has had hygiene and behaviour management benefits. Students no longer share water spouts, thus reducing risk of transmitting germs and they no longer congregate around the water fountain that had been a source of friction and antagonism.
- Entrance and exit from the school are well monitored and all stakeholders follow clear routines to ensure all stakeholders observe social distancing and mask wearing. The security guard and duty staff work together to maintain these routines, dividing duties between the front and back of the school. The bus company follow Covid-19 protocols with respect to seating, sanitising, mask wearing and social distancing.
- The school has several key health and safety documents that collectively present as a Covid contingency plan. The school has worked closely with the Department of Education

Service's (DES) facility management department and requests made through the 'Espace' platform have been swiftly met.

- Wellbeing is a priority for all stakeholders and staff talk openly about a caring, empathetic and supporting ethos that pervades throughout the school. Staff recognise the concept of 'mental wellbeing days' and the advantages in ensuring all staff are able to perform maximally across the school.
- The Senior School Improvement Officer works closely with the school and has supported senior leaders in all aspects of procedure and wellbeing. Senior leaders are appreciative of this support in forms of templated documents and emotional reassurance.
- Teachers are appreciative of the Senior Leaders Team's (SLT) actions in supporting their wellbeing as they are encouraged to ensure they are mindful of one another through social committees, digital platforms and inputs from the local church.
- Leaders, and particularly the SENCo and counsellor ensure additional support is available for SEND students during Covid-19. The SENCo will devote extra time to working with SEND students online when they are confined to home due to Covid-19.
- The SENCo has the role of the attendance officer and he ensures communication is made with home on the morning of the first day of absence if no communication has been received from the parent/guardian.
- Communication with the school is difficult if key personnel, including the principal and executive officer are absent for any reason. Leaders are investigating numerous methods to ensure there is a readily accessible point of contact in the school in the event of absences resulting in the school office not being staffed.
- All staff are aware of their expected additional responsibilities in the event of staff absenteeism, as witnessed by the deputy stepping up to act as principal during the visit and senior leaders deputising for the principal and deputy principal in the event of them both being absent from the school. These practices could usefully be documented as a part of the school's management structure.
- The school has ensured staff continue to receive appropriate professional development throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, upskilling staff, particularly with respect to online delivery. Professional Development is delivered by the Ministry of Education, First Aid agencies and senior staff, both in-person and virtually.
- SLT are aware of the need to complete key documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan. Key issues have been identified and are being addressed 'on the ground' although written evidence is yet to be formalised and centralised.
- Teachers have set up class WhatsApp groups that have been successful in ensuring all parents are aware of ongoing events and information. Teachers reported that the benefits of such groups were both academic and social.
- Leaders recognise that there are periods when, due to the high levels of staff absence, covering all classes is challenging. Senior leaders have managed to fulfil all commitments thus far.
- The school has recently opened a new outdoor play and learning area for the reception class. The build was completed during the pandemic and involved numerous grants and external agencies including Technical Vocational and Education Training (TVET) and the local community. The area further supports the school's efforts to promote delivery and social distancing in the outdoor environment.

## **‘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:

- **Counsellor to send out ‘wellbeing tips’ to staff via email.** The counsellor has sent out a series of ‘wellbeing tips’ and strategies for supporting one’s own mental health. These are relatively small and easily manageable points such as ‘mindful hand washing’.
- **‘Bubble’ system to manage behaviour and logistics around school.** The school has noticed that by ‘bubbling’ or separating the students within the school there has been a marked decrease in poor behaviour as opportunities for conflict have been reduced.
- **Removal of water fountain and replacing with water dispensers in class.** This has had several benefits. There has been a reduction in poor behaviour around the water fountain when students congregated and jostled for access to the fountain. Students have ready access to water in the classroom thus promoting hydration and the transition around the school is smoother as the students are not stopping to drink between classes.
- **Split lunchtime/playtimes to manage behaviour and logistics around school.** The school has found that split lunchtimes and playtimes with students remaining in their bubbles and not interacting with larger groups of students has reduced incidents of poor behaviour and increased speed and smoothness of transition around the school.
- **Lunch and snack in classrooms** has resulted in a calmer atmosphere about the school. The practice has removed the ‘flash points’ associated with transition to lunch areas.
- **Digital communication with parents/guardians** such as parent/guardian consultations has led to a greater level of commitment to meetings. Parents and guardians are able to access meetings without coming into school or having to leave work or home.
- **Staff meetings to include face to face and virtual delivery.** The practice of holding staff meetings as simultaneous face to face and virtual events has proved beneficial as staff who are not in the school at the time can access meetings without making specific journeys.
- **Increased hygiene focus in school.** The school has found that Covid-19 protocols and discussions have raised awareness amongst all stakeholders as to the necessity and advantages of general hygiene and healthy living. Hygienic practices such as regular hand washing and sanitising and healthy practices such as regular hydration are becoming embedded across the school.

- **Hosting of special events on zoom so parents can access (Prefect induction etc.).** The school has embraced the opportunity to share school events with parents via digital platforms and parents and guardians have been able to join events from work and home.
- **Mental health days (language and concept embedded across school).** The school has prioritised and focused on the concept of wellbeing and 'it's alright not to be alright'. The language of mental health is embedded amongst all stakeholders and supports the wellbeing of all.

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](mailto:AdminOES@gov.ky) | Website: <http://www.oes.gov.ky>



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