



24 February 2022

Ms. Clare Thorpe  
491 Crewe Road  
George Town

Dear Ms Thorpe,

### **OES thematic visit to Island Montessori**

Following my visit to your school on 23 February 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, your leadership teams, a member of the advisory board and members of staff. 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. I 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:**

- School leaders reported all staff had undertaken daily lateral flow tests before coming to school each day.
- Nearly all staff and students in the primary phase did not wear masks. The school reported this was due to medical exemptions.
- Hand sanitizing and hand washing protocols were followed by all stakeholders and was an embedded practice.
- Children arrived at staggered times between 07:30 and 08:00 hours ensuring car parking areas did not become congested. Adults were not permitted to enter the school buildings and children were met at the school entrance and taken into class by a member of staff.
- Each class entered the school via a separate entrance which led directly into their class area. The school employed a bubble system for all indoor activities.
- Leaders recorded attendance on a bespoke Excel spreadsheet. Students were recorded as either present, absent, late or remote learning. Leaders had access to the data to report on absence due to Covid-related issues. Attendance in both term 1 and term 2 was above 94%.
- Leaders had enabled staff and students to access lessons from home when absent. Staff had delivered lessons to the classes when at home, positive with Covid-19, but asymptomatic.
- Staff had downloaded lessons and resources onto Teams or See-Saw platforms enabling students to access work remotely.
- Continuous Professional Development had been delivered, on the whole, on an individual basis, with staff highlighting the areas they wished to pursue as well as under the guidance and direction of senior leaders. Whole staff CPD including safeguarding, first aid and specialised PSHE/mental health support (Zippy and Apple programme) had been delivered during the pandemic.
- Communication between parents and school was generally through email, WhatsApp, newsletters and direct phone calls. Stakeholders reported a loss of face-to-face engagement at the start and end of the day due to Covid protocols, but highlighted that communication overall was more thorough and comprehensive, with parents gaining a greater understanding of the process of learning.
- Throughout the pandemic, senior leaders had felt confident that all levels of management had been involved in key decision making and that staff were able to step up and deputise for senior leaders should the need arise. This was supported by the staff survey.
- Owners had invested heavily in resources for the school due to Covid-19. The school had appointed three extra members of staff, mindful of the need to provide adequate, appropriate cover for absent personnel.
- In response to the pandemic, the owners had established additional outdoor teaching space including a whiteboard and a fan. This space is timetabled regularly by the primary phase to maximise the opportunity for Covid-safe outdoor learning.
- Staff reported they felt supported by senior leaders throughout the pandemic with respect to their mental health and wellbeing. Senior leaders provided 'joy', in the form of special food and drink items, as well as organising staff socials and events to boost morale.
- The Advisory Board had provided wellbeing support for senior leaders throughout the pandemic. The Advisory Board had held senior leaders to account with respect to progress during Covid-19.
- The school did not have specific heads of maths, English or science, however, senior leaders in the primary phase were able to articulate progress within each subject and provide evidence through a school-based tracker system.
- Primary phase senior leaders were able to demonstrate minimal, if any, loss of progress in maths, English and science across all year groups during the pandemic. This was supported by evidence in students' books.
- Senior leaders reported that the primary phase had managed to maintain curriculum coverage through appropriate content adaptation when staff were absent with Covid-related issues and were not able to deliver remotely. This was further supported by additional digital resource.
- Owners and senior leaders had been able to recruit new staff throughout the pandemic, and were looking to expand their primary provision on a new site next year.

- Senior leaders and staff across the primary phase highlighted that they had been involved in the writing and reviewing of the school self-evaluation form and school improvement and development plan, although the Advisory Board had not contributed.
- Senior leaders had established weekly staff meetings within which individual student wellbeing was a standing item. The special needs coordinator also produced a tracking sheet for all special needs students and their ongoing requirements during the pandemic.
- Health and safety across the primary phase was closely monitored and significant changes and additions had been made in response to the pandemic. The owners had installed Puradigm Proactive Air and Surface Purification Systems as well as water coolers, outdoor work spaces, temperature recorders, lateral flow tests, hand sanitisers and disposable towels. Logistical systems including separate drop-off points and adults not being able to enter the building had also been adopted.
- Teachers expressed confidence in their ability to deliver remote sessions and upload digital content during the pandemic. Teachers explained there had been a steep learning curve in gaining digital competency, which had been an additional work burden during the pandemic.

### ‘COVID Keepers’

- **Regular hygiene and hand washing protocols** across the school to complement the general ethos of cleanliness and healthy living
- **The option for parents to opt to have their parent/school consultations held remotely**, so parents could access consultations from home or work.
- **The use of online applications** to complement teaching in the classroom.
- **A continued emphasis on learning outside** in the new open spaces.
- **Separate ‘drop-off’ zones for each class.**
- **Parents not entering the school** with their child at the start of the school day.

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

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