



11 March 2022

Acting Principal Ebanks-King
Prospect Primary
Prospect
Grand Cayman

Dear Mrs. Ebanks-King

OES Thematic Visit to Prospect Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 March 2022, I write on behalf 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 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 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 your leadership teams 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 and staff demonstrated commitment to promoting students' wellbeing and continuity of learning throughout the pandemic.
- Throughout the school, almost all students consistently observed health protocols such as mask wearing and hand sanitizing.
- The maintenance manager reported that last term the Department of Education Services had erected tents outdoors. This supported social distancing as well as year group bubble arrangements. Additionally, to

further promote students' health and wellbeing, water fountains had been turned off and replaced with water bottle dispensers. Air filters had been installed to improve air quality and high contact surfaces were sanitised regularly throughout the day.

- The school nurse was on call and conducted regular visits three afternoons each week. However, the dental nurse had been redeployed due to the demands of the Covid-19 pandemic upon the health sector.
- Senior leaders expressed that the distribution of Lateral Flow Kits (LFTs) required much effort but this was executed with the support of other staff who willingly pitched in. Staff reported issues with few parents who did not always email their child's LFT result as required.
- Students' attendance was tracked regularly; however, senior leaders reported challenges tracking attendance particularly for students who were learning remotely. Reportedly, the Department of Education Services was in the process of finalising attendance codes that would support schools in tracking and reporting students' attendance more effectively.
- Staff indicated that during the pandemic they had to be sensitive in addressing students' and parents' Covid-19 related anxieties as well as families with medical vulnerabilities.
- Some staff reported challenges with attendance for a minority of students. Following unsuccessful attempts to engage parents, reports were made to truancy officers at the Department of Education Services.
- There had been recent changes to senior and middle leadership positions at Prospect Primary. In less than a year, the school had experienced three changes to headship. The Deputy Principal was the current Acting Principal. Furthermore, during the first term of the current academic year when Covid-19 community transmission was at its peak, key positions of deputy principal and counsellor were vacant. Both positions were filled recently. This had presented challenges for the senior leaders and staff.
- Notwithstanding, senior leaders indicated that they had been managing the changes with the support of the senior school improvement officer and other personnel from the Department of Education Services including the Director. Given the inexperience of the current leadership team, the senior school improvement officer recognised the importance of providing professional training relevant to their positions.
- Distributed leadership at the school was evolving but was not yet optimised. A number of middle leaders were also recently promoted. Consequently, there was agreement that training will promote improved understanding of leadership roles and responsibilities and lead to greater confidence by the team in executing their core functions. In the context of recent frequent changes to leadership at the school, the senior school improvement officer further indicated that succession planning and capacity building were identified as areas to be actioned expeditiously.
- The pastoral team comprising the newly appointed school counsellor, the Special Education Needs coordinator and the education psychologist had worked beneficially to support students with additional learning needs. The team had adopted a holistic approach to monitoring students' wellbeing. Strategies to promote students' emotional wellbeing included whole class as well as individual interventions. The team actively supported students in understanding and using coping and self-regulation strategies throughout the pandemic. Referral mechanisms were in place to support students who required psychosocial support.
- The pastoral team's plan for implementing additional initiatives was progressing well. For example, as part of a multi-tiered system, the educational psychologist had started stress test surveys for staff and students which were slated for completion at the end of the month.
- The pastoral team had also conducted sessions with staff on wellness and how to recognise signs of burn out. Partnerships with external providers such as the Employee Assistance Programme were also used to support staff wellbeing.
- Senior leaders indicated that all staff were trained in child protection and lessons on cyber safety had been facilitated for students.

- The librarian had created a calming area to cater for students with emotional needs. The space was outfitted with soft furnishings and music. Year 6 students, in particular, who had displayed increased anxiety during the pandemic utilised the space to promote their emotional wellness. Here, at key points during the day, they could engage in yoga, breathing exercise or listen to soothing music.
- Senior leaders were beginning to apply self-evaluation in purposeful ways and to implement strategies to improve teaching and learning practices. Nonetheless, there was scope to strengthen school improvement planning processes so as to ensure success criteria are reported in measurable and precise language linked to impact on students' outcomes. The process of self-evaluation would also benefit from incorporation of student voice and parental views on the quality of provision and the outcomes for the students. In the online survey, only a minority of parents agreed that the school had involved them in self-evaluation and improvement planning activities.
- Of note, less than one third of the staff, including only five teachers, had completed the Office of Education Standards online survey ahead of the thematic visit. The low response rate suggested that staff engagement was an area for review. Nonetheless, almost all of the respondents agreed that they were aware of the Ministry of Education guidelines regarding continuity of education during the pandemic and that there were appropriate arrangements in place to support students' learning, safety, health and overall wellbeing.
- Despite the challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, the school had recently completed the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme review and was awaiting the final report. Senior leaders indicated that they were exploring ways to further develop and embed interdisciplinary learning so as to promote students' ability to make relevant and meaningful links across their learning.
- Throughout the pandemic, senior leaders had undertaken a range of appropriate monitoring activities including walkthroughs and work scrutiny. This was supporting improved evaluation of teaching and learning. Teachers spoke positively of how recent professional development and model lessons were supporting them to reflect on their own practice and to improve their pedagogical knowledge.
- Work scrutiny during the thematic visit indicated that marking was sufficiently regular but there was variability in the quality of marking.
- Senior leaders were beginning to ensure all staff had structured opportunities to receive targeted professional development by developing a training calendar. Staff had recently completed training in moderation, data analysis and differentiation. This was supporting teachers to make more accurate assessment of students' standards as well as how to map and promote students' skill development progressively.
- Unlike most of their counterparts in other public schools, staff at Prospect Primary were not unduly impacted by Covid-19 related illnesses. In fact, throughout the pandemic, staff attendance was consistently above 90%. Reportedly, only few teachers and teaching assistants had contracted the Covid-19 virus. This was borne out in the survey responses as majority of the respondents indicated that the school had sufficient staff to deliver the curriculum effectively during the pandemic.
- Conversely, the student population did not fare as well. Several classes were impacted by Covid-19 leading to prolonged absence for a number of students. Some teachers reported that a minority had experienced challenges transitioning to face to face learning and others had continued to experience residual impact of the virus such as tiredness and falling asleep during lessons.
- Given the curriculum structure and timetabling arrangements, some teachers expressed challenges supporting students with knowledge gaps who had been absent due to Covid-19. Some teachers had incorporated lesson recall activities at the start of each class as part of their catchup strategies. Reportedly, learning loss was more evident at Year 4. Consequently, early morning classes had been organised for these students.
- Other initiatives such as the Mathematics club and the YMCA afterschool programme were being used to support students in their learning.

- The Acting Deputy Principal had identified students' areas of weakness in mathematics and in collaboration with teachers had started to devise targeted interventions to support students' learning during the pandemic. He had also started work on a school mathematics website to support teaching and learning. The Primary Years Programme IB Coordinator also reported students' challenges working scientifically in online learning environments. This was being addressed with additional homework packs and week-end activities. Additionally, curriculum guides had been shared with parents. The Literacy coordinator reported that while a majority of students had continued to make progress in grammar, punctuation and spelling, reading was flagged as an area of concern.
- Throughout the pandemic, the school had maintained regular communication with parents through newsletters, emails, phone calls, Class Dojo, Everest and WhatsApp. Additionally, the school leaders had developed a comprehensive distance learning guide for parents and students which was shared with all parents.
- In the responses to the Inspectorate's online survey, a majority of the parents indicated that the school had regular communication with them regarding their child's well-being.
- Similarly, almost all parents indicated that their child had appropriate information technology resources to participate in remote learning. Senior leaders indicated that all students, except Reception, had received government issued laptops. Reportedly devices for Reception classes had been sourced and distribution was slated to commence shortly.
- Staff also reported that a few students in Year 6 had not been taking their devices to classes and attempts to engage the parents regarding this so far had proven futile. Throughout the pandemic, paper based learning packs had been distributed to students who had connectivity issues.
- The main online platforms used by the school were Seesaw and Microsoft Teams. IXL was used to promote literacy and numeracy. A new literacy online resource myOn was being introduced.
- In general, staff reported improvement in older students' research skills as a consequence of their ownership of laptops and access to online learning platforms.
- Staff spoke positively about the support provided by the Information Technology teacher in facilitating online learning. For example, instructional videos were developed and shared with staff and students. Other teachers had conducted training for colleagues on Microsoft Teams.
- Staff had organised virtual field trips to the zoo and Health City Hospital to mitigate curriculum restrictions caused by the pandemic. Resource persons had also participated in online lessons to enrich students' curricular experience.

'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:

- **Online Parent Conferences.** As a result of the flexibility and convenience afforded by online meetings, staff reported that more parents attended online parent conferences. The pastoral team also spoke positively about the convenience of online case conferences to discuss and agree students' learning support plan targets with parents.
- **Year Group Bubbles:** There were designated play areas for groups of students. The school's spacious outdoor space along with gazebos and tents supported distancing requirements. The use of year group bubbles had ensured adequate supervision of students at all times. Bubble arrangements had also restricted parental access to the premises.
- **Blended learning.** Throughout the pandemic, students who were isolating or quarantining at home were able to join classes remotely.

- **Wellness checks among staff and students.** Wellness check-ins at the start of school as well as other mental health initiatives supported students' emotional wellbeing. The use of stress tests by the pastoral team to measure and act on students' and staff's stress levels was useful in promoting emotional wellbeing.

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 Director of Education Services 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

Senior Inspector | Office of Education Standards
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