



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

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

28 January 2022

Brianna Bergstrom
Montessori School of Cayman
519 South Church Street
George Town

Dear Ms. Bergstrom

OES thematic visit to Montessori School of Cayman

Following my visit to your school on 26 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 the school 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 has happened in your school regarding leadership and wellbeing since September 2021.

During the visit, we spoke to you and your 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. We did not find any significant concerns. As such a thematic visit report will be published on our website available to parents and carers.

From this visit the inspector noted that:

- The school leader, and all staff are fully committed to the safety and wellbeing of all stakeholders. The school is relatively small which enables all staff to know every child well and recognise when appropriate, additional wellbeing strategies need to be employed.
- The school lost one of its senior staff last week to a promoted position. The school administration executive is also currently on maternity leave. These absences, together with staff absences due to Covid-19 and quarantine has placed considerable stresses on the staff this year. For example, staff have foregone their half-day admin when they would have uploaded additional evidence onto the Transparent Classroom platform (information management system), and the two teaching assistant have increased their hours at the school.
- The school's owner/leader is also the principal and lead teacher of the Casa class. She fulfils these roles with extreme competence, but she is aware of the need to build a senior leadership team around her to delegate management tasks. Parent surveys and conversations with parents highlight the considerable appreciation felt of the school leader's efforts and praise her organisational skills and her ability to deliver a high level of provision throughout the pandemic.
- The school leader reports the collection, collation and distribution of LFTs has become smoother over the past few months and the school has an additional stock of tests to distribute should the need arise. Staff recognise that all jobs pertaining to Covid-19, however small, take time away from other tasks.
- The Ministry of Education shares official updates regarding Covid-19 with schools and these communications are immediately shared by the school leader with both staff and parents via email and the Transparent Classroom platform.
- The school is deep cleaned every weekend and after any reported outbreaks of Covid-19 in the school. All resources and educational items are cleaned in Milton solution once a week, all surfaces are cleaned at least twice a day and all 'hot spots' such as door handles and toilets are cleaned in the morning and in the afternoon, and additionally as and when required throughout the day.
- Students are brought to school by parents or guardians in the morning. To help ensure there are no large gatherings of parents or guardians, students are dropped off at either the front or rear of the school, depending on their class. Parents adhere to Covid-19 protocols and students readily sanitise their hands while their temperatures are taken and recorded on Transparent Classroom via designated iPads.
- Students' departure times at the end of the day occur within a 15 minute period and are naturally staggered amongst parents and guardians.
- The school leader monitors the wellbeing of all stakeholders through a very 'hands-on' approach, regularly speaking with each individual and checking on their mental health. The school leader has also registered the school with the Employee Assistance Programme for further professional support. The teaching staff are appreciative of these measures.
- The school leader is aware of the stresses she is under from her roles in the school, and these have been exacerbated by the pandemic, and ensures she has a strong network

around her supporting her own wellbeing, including colleagues, friends and senior leaders at other schools in the area.

- The school delivered online provision for the whole school during the first lockdown last year, but has struggled to deliver any form of hybrid provision when children are quarantining. This is due in part to the young age of the students, and parental support available for the student at home, and also the staff's relative expertise in remote learning.
- The school has no governing body at present. It was hoped to adopt a governing body this year but the extra work pressures due to the pandemic have meant this has been delayed.
- The school leader and staff have investigated a new staffing structure within the school with additional middle managers built in. Unfortunately, again, pressures due to the pandemic have delayed this part of the school's improvement plan.
- Staff are able to demonstrate progress made, during the pandemic, by the students through milestones achieved and evidenced on Transparent Classroom. More accurate progress would be shown if greater amounts of available evidence had been uploaded onto the platform. Staff have been unable to upload some evidence due to loss of admin time where there are now in the classroom and/or attending to other Covid-19 related tasks.
- The school leader has offered all staff professional development through the Centre Guided Montessori Studies body. Some staff have chosen to follow courses of their own choice, whilst other staff have chosen not to pursue professional development at the moment and are appreciative of the time to address other matters.
- Staff monitor student attendance through the Transparent Classroom platform. At present the school is able to record and monitor student attendance as either present, absent or sick. There is no measure to record absence due to Covid-19. Attendance for compulsory-aged students since September 2021 stands at 81%. This is heavily biased due to two students needing to quarantine at home through November and January.
- Communication with staff and parents is through WhatsApp, email and Transparent Classroom. The school leader and staff report these as very effective methods of communication. Although these methods of communication were embedded before the onset of Covid-19, they have served to solidify relationships between home and school during the pandemic.

'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:

- **Sanitise more regularly throughout the school day.** The increased awareness and use of hand sanitisers around the school has increased students' and staff commitment to hygiene and the prevention of spreading germs and diseases.
- **Snack times to be uniform and each student have their personal carton/container.** Students have individualised snack portions that are eaten at the same time. This has enabled staff to monitor eating habits and reduce the risks of spreading germs and diseases.

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 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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