



*Office of Education Standards
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2nd February 2022

Vice Principal Peter Embleton
Vice Principal James Hickey
St Ignatius Catholic School
599 Walkers Road
George Town
Cayman Islands

Dear Vice Principals Embleton and Hickey,

OES thematic visit to St Ignatius Catholic School

Following my visit to your school on 26th January 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 teams are 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, your leadership teams and 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 have found significant concerns regarding staff wellbeing, the continued Principal vacancy and the governance arrangements. As such a 'Notice of Concern' was raised with the Ministry of Education. A thematic visit report will be published on our website in due course.

From this visit the inspector noted that:

- The school still does not have a Principal however both Secondary and Primary Vice-Principals have stepped into the space. Although, in the current climate this is an unsustainable position for them both.
- It was clear during the visit how committed school leaders, teachers and support staff were to keeping the school safely open and continuing students' learning.
- The school lacks the key personnel in the role of Principal, human resources manager, IT manager, data manager, nurse and a dedicated SENCO for Primary. In addition the school has planned for 3 staff on maternity leave and 5 teacher contracts which will end this academic year.
- Parish Administration reported the difficulties of attracting new staff and senior leaders suggested the recruitment of supply teachers is an ongoing concern.
- All staff currently at the school have been sharing the workload of colleagues unavailable due to Covid-19, as well as the work of two staff currently on maternity leave and the full time role of a Principal.
- As such teachers and leaders cover lessons and extra duties for absent colleagues, administrative staff are spending upwards of 15-20 hours per week re-packaging LFT kits or organising pick up by parents.
- Senior leadership team do not have the direction or guidance from a Principal.
- The school has an Advisory Committee but it does not have the remit to hold the Parish Administration or school Principal to account. The Parish Administrator has school oversight although, does not have a background in education or educational leadership. As such is unable to academically support the school without a Principal.
- The school is a safe and secure learning environment. A number of new handwashing stations (7) have been acquired and all students demonstrate independent hand washing as they enter and exit the school. However, access to hot water was sacrificed for the portability of the new stations.
- The school has a staggered drop off and collection system helping to create social distance and avoid peak congestion. Staff are on hand with high visibility vests and 'walkie talkies' to assist where necessary.
- The school has increased the cleaning regime with an additional cleaner. Sanitizers are outside all classrooms and communal areas, and all stations are subject to an hourly clean and refill to ensure there is no lack of provision.

- LFT logistics from the Ministry of Education have become much smoother over the past few months. Weekly repackaging, and distribution tasks are considerable for a school of 690 students and this is shared between the school administration staff and senior leaders.
- The school has well-rehearsed routines for dealing with Covid-19 related incidents. During the visit, an entire class was tested on site and returned back to class in under 15 minutes. However, incidents for younger students requiring parental or qualified nurse to administer tests take longer requiring more time out of class.
- The school deep cleans with fogging after every positive test in a classroom and approximately every 8-9 weeks. Provision is made for teachers to clean their classroom surfaces with paper towels and NCL cleaning solution.
- The school has committed to a new air purifying system serving all classrooms at a cost of \$53000. Canteen use for lunches has been staggered from 1140 -1320 with socially distanced seating arrangements.
- Heads of Departments and subject leads continue to monitor the performance of students addressing gaps in knowledge and learning loss ensuring students are making progress. The school has ensured mock examinations for older students continue and used a form of 'proctoring' to allow isolating students to take their exams.
- The school uses a number of online platforms such as Century, Seesaw and E-Praise to communicate progress and feedback for both parents and students. In addition emails, newsletters and policy documents like the parent 'Web-based Learning Guide' ensure parents are kept informed.
- Parents who responded to the survey suggested that they were very supportive of the school during the pandemic. For instance, almost all parents surveyed reported they understand the schools Covid-19 safety requirements and that the school provides a safe environment during the pandemic. 89% of those surveyed said their child is making acceptable progress during the pandemic.
- School leaders have been able to evaluate their performance and write a new school Improvement Plan with a number of interesting proposals. This appears to have not been currently signed off by the Parish Administration. Key stage 3 has been identified by the school as requiring additional support to ensure targets are met. Primary and Secondary phases continue to use the GL assessments and their predictive data. The Primary Data Review and Pupil Progress period was postponed due to Covid-19 circumstances but has been re-scheduled.
- Heads of Department report systems are in place for sharing of information across departments. Key stage 2 have completed the trial of the Century 'Nugget' AI system which not only assesses student ability in a particular subject but also offers online teaching and materials based upon the student performance. KS 3 and 4 are currently considering the platform.
- The school offers a range of support options for students through the PHSE programme (Nursery to Year 11 plus 6th form), a dedicated Secondary SENCO with the Deputy of Primary taking on the SENCO as an additional role for Primary and a contract with the Wellness Centre. Although the Wellness Centre is available for staff, teachers failed to bring it up in the meeting and the pastoral team suggested that only a few staff had used the service. The 6th form lead and Assistant Vice-Principals track the face to face and online attendance with the PHSE lead meeting up online for those isolating. The PHSE lead offers additional 'Wellbeing and Mindfulness' drop in sessions for students. The Secondary SENCO reported a significant increase in students requiring support for anxiety related issues.

- However support for staff wellbeing is limited with only 27% of staff surveyed reporting - *I have received help and support for my own mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic*. During the visit staff reported feeling burnt out, exhausted, and requiring counselling support.

‘COVID Keepers’

- **Drop off and collection routines** – helpful in maintaining safeguarding and reducing congestion at peak times. ‘Walkie Talkie’ system is effective.
- **Handwashing and sanitizing stations** – good hygiene practices reinforced and very helpful when outbreaks of other non-COVID related transmissible diseases are in evidence. Also, helps to reinforce health related matters to students (and staff/parents) so these continue to be embedded.
- **Turning off Water Fountains** for drinking directly. This will be permanent but topping up of water bottles through the non-touch system should remain.
- **Air Filtration system**, improved on usual AC. The addition of an air purifying system.
- **Century online platform** – data and feedback suggest that there is excellent engagement in terms of children, not only in terms of engagement, but also in terms of success/ attainment/ gap analysis for data. Assists with absences in ‘normal’ time, homework, and in certain circumstances, classroom provision. Successful at KS2 and as a result, good conversations with KS3/4 colleagues and introduction in that area of the school.
- **Digitization of surveys** through ‘Forms’ are a quick and easy way of obtaining information/ feedback from parents and staff, especially with management of permissions etc.
- **Seesaw online Platform** - proven to be successful in many areas of Primary school engagement with children and parents. EYFS Learning Journey type provision. Video / audio/ feedback /marking and to be able to check quickly on parental, staff and children engagement.
- **Learning Packs** where necessary, especially to younger pupils where screen time should be minimized.
- **Online parental consultations** – parents and teachers will continue to use online meeting technology as an improved method of communication.

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 Chair of the Advisory Board, the Parish Administrator, 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,


Nicholas Sherriff

Chief Inspector | Office of Education Standards

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