MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORTS AGRICULTURE & LANDS | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SERVICES
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

PRESS RELEASE

The Department of Education Services Ensures School Readiness for the Return of Students Amidst the Pandemic

Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands, 17 August 2020. Further to the development and publication of a general guidance document for the Re-opening of Schools and Early Childhood Education Centres by the Ministry of Education (MEYSAL) on 24 June, the Department of Education Services (DES) conducted onsite visits to government schools last week to ensure compliance with current Public Health protocols and that guidance measures were being adhered to.

The team was led by the Minister for Education, Honourable Juliana O'Connor-Connolly and included education officials from both MEYSAL and DES; all of whom toured government school facilities in Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac. During the tours, classrooms, corridors and common areas were inspected for overall cleanliness, social distancing markers, signage, and adequate handwashing and sanitisation facilities. The team also inspected specific areas that have been identified as supplementary classroom and storage space to maintain appropriate social distancing.

At the close of the visits, Minister O'Connor-Connolly expressed her overall satisfaction with the schools' plans and preparations, both completed and in progress, which were presented by school leaders during the tours.

"I am pleased with the efforts that our schools have expended so far to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff during the upcoming academic year. I recognise that we have not yet achieved a complete state of readiness, still I am confident that DES will continue to work closely with our schools to ensure that all the necessary measures are put in place before students return," stated Minister O'Connor-Connolly.

Minister O'Connor-Connolly also disclosed that all staff in government schools and the DES would be subject to COVID-19 testing prior to school reopening, as an added precautionary measure implemented by DES which holds the operations of government schools within its remit.

"In addition to MEYSAL's general guidance for the reopening of all schools, DES developed and provided a supplemental document to all government schools who are expected to prepare school-specific re-opening guidance and to communicate their specific guidance to parents and guardians since this past week. Preparations and communication of those preparations are on-going. I encourage parents to remain in contact with school leaders, especially if they have questions in relation to this guidance and any other school related concerns. DES will continue to strive towards supporting our schools who have been working tirelessly and assiduously during these challenging times. We aim to provide the necessary resources as we adapt to all the rolling and updated measures as per the current advice and protocols set by health officials," added Acting Director of Education Services, Ms. Tammy Banks-DaCosta.

Such measures include the requirement of all students and school staff to wear masks while inside school buildings as required in the Government's *Prevention, Control and Suppression of Covid-19 (Partial Lifting of Restrictions) (No.3) Regulations, 2020*.

"The wearing of masks for everyone indoors is necessary unless they are sitting silently. There is a higher chance of airborne transmission of the COVID-19 virus while students are talking, especially in enclosed spaces such as classrooms," advised Chief Medical Officer Dr. John Lee.

For government schools, students and their parents and guardians can expect compliance with current Public Health Level 2 Suppression protocols such as the recently updated measure requiring students to maintain a distance of 3 feet apart in a classroom setting and consume their lunches at their classroom desks. Regular movement on school premises requires a social distance of 6 feet. In the school specific guidance, parents should also expect measures that address topics including, but not limited to:

- Daily operations;
- Hygiene practices and provisions;
- Wellness;
- Transportation (Including school bus measures);
- After school activities.

Contact information for government schools leaders as well as the General Guidance Document for the Re-opening of Schools and Early Childhood Care and Education Centres are available and accessible at www.exploregov.ky/coronavirus-education

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Photo Captions

Photo A: MEYSAL Acting Chief Officer Lyneth Monteith uses one of several recently installed hand sanitisation stations at the Prospect Primary School

Photo B: The team headed by Minister Juliana O'Connor-Connolly (front) demonstrate sitting 3 ft apart in a classroom at the Red Bay Primary School

Photo C: Lighthouse School Acting Principal Janice Headley shows Minister O'Connor-Connolly some of the measures the school has implemented for the new academic year.

Photo D: Lighthouse School displays some of its personal protective equipment that will be available to its staff during the new academic year

Photo E: DES Acting Facilities Manager Glen Arek Gardner (l) shows DES Acting Director Tammy Banks-DaCosta (background), Minister Juliana O'Connor-Connolly (centre) and Prospect Primary School Principal Matthew Read (r) some of the proposed plans for the school's reopening.

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