

**Statement to the Legislative Assembly  
6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of 2013/2014 Session**

**by the**

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**Minister of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs**

**School Discipline and Student Behaviour**

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MINISTRY OF  
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT  
& GENDER AFFAIRS  
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

I wish to update this honourable House on my Ministry's work to strengthen the way in which school behaviour and student discipline is managed in government schools.

This Government takes the matter of school safety very seriously. Since taking up office last year I have made a commitment on behalf of the Ministry responsible for Education and Government to be proactive in addressing the challenges faced by government schools so that teaching and learning is improved. So much so, that the mantra which I have already communicated to my staff at the Ministry, DES, schools administration, teachers and other educators to be used when working to address issues faced in the school system is 'No Excuses - Just Solutions'.

Since taking office, my team and I have held extensive discussions with individual school PTAs, representatives of the National Teacher Forum and the National Parent Forum, both launched in the latter part of 2013 under my leadership. We have also had visits to schools to listen to the concerns raised about school discipline and student behaviour, in particular the negative impact that a small number of students have on their schools. It is clear that we and our community all want schools that are safe, welcoming, supportive and inclusive learning environments. Further to this we must recognise our responsibilities to all our students including those who have difficulties and ensure that they have access to the right support.

The Ministry of Education already coordinates and has oversight of a number proactive 'safe school' measures. However, these measures are also the subject of review to determine their effectiveness and to identify gaps that may exist. Behaviour and Education Support Teams (BEST) are in place across government schools and meet on a monthly basis. BEST teams undertake assessments for early indicators of being at-risk of negative outcomes and manage a wraparound student-centred approach that relies on inter agency partnerships and collaboration in order to be effective. Crime prevention days were introduced last September to secondary school students and following their success were offered again this term to Year 8 students. There is a successful Extended After School programme that provides purposeful activities for students at the end of the school day. There are established supportive partnerships between my Ministry, the RCIPS and security firms to ensure that any incidents of violence in schools are dealt with appropriately.

During November 2013, Safe Management and Risk Reduction Training was developed and piloted with three schools and an adult training centre. Components of this training package have now been offered to relevant school staff to train colleagues within their schools, thus building capacity within the system to manage student behaviour more effectively.

The need to strengthen the provisions to address special education needs is vitally important. In November 2013, I asked the Senior Policy Advisor for Inclusion to draft an action plan to identify priority areas in relation to special educational needs. I also asked for a specific review of processes to support the identification, assessment, monitoring and provision for students with behavioural needs. From early in my tenure as Minister with responsibility for Education, I recognized the importance of and the need to strengthen the governance of behaviour management systems, both in schools and in the services that support schools; and the Ministry, DES and the schools, in collaboration with other stakeholders, have been charged with the responsibility to develop and implement a workable plan of action to address this fundamental issue and to increase accountability in the system. Further work is planned and underway in this regard.

The Government recognises that prompt actions need to be taken to address the concerns that have been raised about school behaviour and student discipline.

Significant work is well underway to define key expectations and strengthen the way in which school discipline and student behaviour is managed going forward. Stake holders, including parents and students, will be consulted and asked to provide feedback about the existing school code of conduct and home-school agreement.

Working groups in the high schools have started to review their school policies with the aim of having fairly apportioned rewards and sanctions according to behaviours

demonstrated. Further to this, a suite of national policy expectations and supporting guidance documents to support school based protocols are due to be finalised and published. These include, but are not limited to, an anti-bullying policy, dealing with complaints and guidance on recording and reporting school safety incidents.

A campaign is planned to communicate key expectations about school discipline and student behaviour to the community during the lead up to the start of the new school year. Key policy guidance is to be launched nationally at the start of term in August 2014 so that there are consistent standards across the country in relation to school discipline and student behaviour. The Ministry will be reaching out to all stakeholders to play their part to make this a reality at all schools, for all students.

However, it must be stated that some of the challenges faced by our school communities from those students who are struggling with severe, complex and significant behavioural and/or mental health issues go beyond the scope of my Ministry alone. These young people pose a risk to both their school environments and their community, and they require intensive and specific interventions to address their needs. Unfortunately, there is a gap in suitable secure therapeutic accommodation for these young people. We really must act with some urgency to address this matter. I will continue to lobby this Government, of which I am a part, to move quickly to develop a proper mental health facility suitable to address the mental health and wellness needs

of a growing population of students. Schools alone are not equipped to deal with such cases.

In summary, my Ministry takes its responsibility to provide national expectations about school discipline and student behaviour very seriously, and acknowledges the important role government schools have in supporting students, whilst they are being taught to accept responsibility for their own behaviour. I have specified before this Honourable house the work that my Ministry has already undertaken and the work that is underway to strengthen expectations about school behaviour and student discipline and fortify the governance of behaviour management systems. This reflects the Government's continued commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of all students and staff.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.