

**Statement to the Legislative Assembly  
2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of 2014/2015**

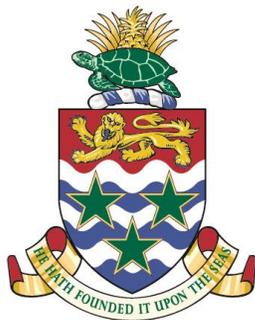
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**By the Honourable Tara Rivers, JP, MLA**

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

*Review of the Education System  
and Baseline School Inspections*

**17 September 2014**



MINISTRY OF  
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT  
& GENDER AFFAIRS  
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

## *Introduction*

The vision for our students is that they will be confident, motivated learners, and responsible, productive citizens, who are capable of succeeding in a globally competitive world. To achieve this, the Ministry of Education and other education stakeholders must ensure that the education system provides suitable and relevant learning environments that best enable our students to succeed.

Over the past 7 years, there have been significant changes within the government education system, with accompanying increases in overall student performance being achieved during that same period. However, it is recognised that further improvements are needed to tackle areas of underperformance and to achieve the best possible educational outcomes for all children.

As Minister for Education, I am committed to the very highest standards of education for *all* our students in *all* our schools. I have never lost sight of the fact that we must put **children first** in all that we do in education. With that said, it is essential that our education team continue to self-reflect, invite external scrutiny, and be willing to face up to the hard questions and issues.

Since taking up my role, I have engaged in consultation with a number of stakeholders including officers in the Ministry and Department of Education Services, principals, teachers, students, parents, the business community and the general public. As part of the consultation process, a number of strengths and areas for improvement have been identified. Much has been done over the past year to identify these strengths, certain gaps and areas of weakness in the education system, and steps have been taken and resources dedicated to address some of those issues identified; however, a more detailed analysis of each school and a more detailed analysis of the governance, management and structure of the education system as a whole is needed at this stage to assist with policy and planning purposes going forward. Again, the goal is to create an education system that puts the interests and welfare of the **children first**.

## *Inspections*

One of the areas of feedback has been the need to have independent evaluations of the education system so that progress can be measured. Schools, the Department of Education Services (DES) and the Ministry need to be able to build on strengths, identify gaps, plan for and make improvements that will benefit our children.

Over the past 5 years, only a limited range of inspections were undertaken using outsourced resources to complement a small core team. However, in order to help determine the effectiveness of our quest to strive for excellence in education, the reintroduction of the inspection process as an *independent* process is critical. To this end, I have requested that inspections of all government schools take place as a matter of priority to establish a baseline dataset on:

- student progress and achievement;
- effectiveness of teaching and its impact on learning;
- leadership and management; and
- the quality of provision and student outcomes in the foundation subjects of English and mathematics.

The pre-inspection process has already started and all government school inspections are due to be completed by June, 2015.

In addition to this being an independent process, it is also necessary that this be a transparent process with the results of the inspections being shared with all stakeholders. I reiterate that the goal is to put children first and I am confident that parents and the community in general, will want to know the results of these inspections and most importantly work with the DES and schools in implementing the recommendations made.

With that said, the final inspection reports will be delivered to the Ministry for onward transmission to Cabinet and the Education Council. These reports will also be published on the

Ministry's website. An Executive Summary report, providing a summary of the outcomes of the baseline inspections of all schools, will be laid on the table of the LA.

The work on rebuilding the Education Quality Assurance Unit will begin in the 14/15 financial year, with the recruitment of a Chief Inspector of Schools. It is anticipated that a new inspection schedule for public and private schools will be ready for implementation following the completion of the baseline inspections.

### *Education Review*

At this stage of the education reform process, and in addition to the planned school inspections this school year, the Ministry of Education is also engaging the services of an external and objective body to conduct an independent review of the government education system. The review will be considered by the Ministry, in conjunction with the findings from the planned baseline inspection of the public schools.

The objective is to provide a review to determine what changes could be made to drive further system-wide improvements, which should result in improved educational outcomes for our students. Further, the review is expected to identify options that could be pursued to establish a governance model which leverages a strengthened relationship, participation and commitment of parents, the private sector and civic society in public education.

The Ministry has already begun to conduct research to consider a governance model based on the establishment of school boards or similar structures to manage the operational aspects of individual or groups of schools. The system review is expected to consider this and other potential governance models for their suitability to the Cayman Islands Government Education System, and make recommendations on the steps needed to transition to the proposed model.

Although the terms of reference are still being finalised, it is anticipated that the review will focus on two key areas:

- a) Educational provision and student outcomes, which include:

- Evaluation of the standard of the existing government education system, in terms of student performance, including comparisons with agreed international benchmarks where possible, and stakeholder satisfaction;
- Evaluation of the current Ministry policies, plans and initiatives, and the extent to which they address or have the potential to address key system needs;
- Undertaking a gap-analysis to identify areas for improvement or change to meet the various needs.

b) Governance, which include:

- Identification of various models for an enhanced private sector partnership in the governance of the government education system, which could be adapted to suit the needs of the public educational system in the Cayman Islands, and which have the best potential to improve student outcomes;
- Identification of the pros and cons of each model and implications for implementation including changes to the current governance model, structures, systems and processes to facilitate a transition to each of the recommended models.
- Report key findings and make recommendations as to priority areas and strategic actions to be undertaken by the Ministry to improve the performance of the government education system.

The Education Review is planned to commence in October, 2014 and anticipated to be completed by the end of the year.

It is important to emphasise that any model to be established will ensure that there is accommodation for **all** students, and that **all** students are supported. Again, I will stress the fact that the goal of the ongoing education reform efforts is to put **children first** and I look forward to the support of you, my colleagues, the Civil Service and community at large in ensuring that this is achieved.