

**Statement to the Legislative Assembly
5th Meeting 2011/2012**

**By the Honourable Rolston Anglin, JP
Minister of Education, Training and Employment**

Child and Student Safety

11 April 2012



**MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION, TRAINING,
& EMPLOYMENT
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT**

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Education, Training and Employment is aware of the article carried on Cayman News Service on Tuesday April 3rd, 2012, entitled "Ex-Sex Offender Could Be Working At School" and, subsequently, by CITN that evening. The Ministry became aware of the matter referenced in the CNS article on Monday April 2nd, 2012 and immediately commenced an investigation. The Ministry has not received any official complaint from a parent or school in relation to this matter, and no incident reports were received by the Ministry.

Madam Speaker, the health, safety and protection of our children is of the utmost importance. We have therefore acted with urgency to investigate and report on this matter.

My Ministry's investigation has determined that, for a period of 9 days, in June-July 2011, there was indeed an individual employed by a subcontractor working on a construction site on one of our school campuses who was a convicted sex offender. In accordance with the usual practice, there was a construction zone isolating the construction site from the rest of the school campus. The subcontractor has confirmed that the individual spent three and a half days on the construction site at a time when school was in session, and a further six days when school was not in session.

Madam Speaker, I am able to report that the Department of Education Services does have a number of relevant protocols in place, in relation to other contracted services. The tender process currently in use for our main contracted services, including busing, janitorial companies, and kitchen equipment servicing, currently requires companies to submit police records for all of their relevant staff in order for them to be considered eligible for contract award. This also applies to any proposed change of employees during the term of a contract. In other words the contracting company must receive the Departments' approval before they change any employee. In addition, all employees of companies providing security services to our schools must be licensed by the RCIPS and so are subject to their scrutiny.

The Ministry will mandate police checks for all other contracted services, prior to commencement of services and retroactively include construction workers currently employed on ongoing projects on school sites.

In relation to construction projects, the normal requirement is for separate construction zones to be established, therefore isolating the construction site from the main school campus. In addition, construction workers are not permitted to enter a school site without the express approval of the project manager and the school leader.

In the interest of strengthening these measures, the Ministry will, with immediate effect:

- include the above-mentioned practices, and any others deemed necessary for the safety and protection of students, as part of a new school and student safety requirement for contract awards for future construction projects
- require police checks for all persons volunteering in our system, whether on school sites or not
- write to all construction contractors engaged in current projects, to require a new school and student safety requirement with immediate effect and to reinforce the need for full compliance
- write to government schools in order to support them in ensuring the full implementation of these school and student safety requirements
- write all private schools, Early Years Centres and Tertiary institutions, to provide information and request compliance with these school and student safety requirements expected by the Ministry.

The Ministry will also immediately begin the process of developing Regulations under the Education Law to extend and strengthen existing child and student protection measures for persons with direct access to children, and to make it illegal for persons with certain offences, including sex offences, to be on school sites or school buses. This will then mandate all schools, Early Years Centres and tertiary institutions to put in place policies and procedures to give effect to these standards. In other words we will have a uniform national standard for the protection of our children.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry takes the safety of our children very seriously. Outside of contracted services, I am able to report that all prospective employees are police checked as part of the Ministry's pre-employment process.

In addition to the specific actions I have committed to undertaking through this statement, I also wish to inform you that my Ministry has well-advanced plans for a major new initiative, “The Safer Schools Strategy”. This will have a much wider impact on our children’s safety and well-being. It aims to develop safe, supportive schools, free from risk and harm.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I wish to reiterate my Ministry’s commitment to ensuring the security and safety of children in every learning institution across our islands, both public and private.

Thank you.