



STATEMENT
To Parliament
By The Honourable Fayval Williams
Minister of Education, Youth and Information
November 17, 2020

Madame Speaker,

I take this opportunity to update the House on two subject areas:

- the first week of the pilot face-to-face in-school teaching project
- Registration for the eVouchers under the OYOD Initiative.

1. EVALUATION OF PILOT OF FACE TO FACE RESUMPTION OF SCHOOL

During the two week pilot, the process is being monitored. The goal of the monitoring and evaluation process is to determine whether the education system can safely return to physical/ face to face instruction fully, partially, or none at all during this COVID-19 pandemic. It is critical that the best practices, challenges, and lessons learned across institutions are identified and shared.

To achieve this, Madam Speaker, the following objectives have been guiding the pilot monitoring and evaluation activities.

Objectives:

- a. To determine the extent to which schools/ school leaders manage the processes required for safely operating the physical environment during the COVID-19- Pandemic;
- b. To identify the factors that promote COVID-19 safe school operations (best practices);
- c. To identify the challenges that prohibit schools from operating in a COVID-19 safe environment.

REPORT: SCHOOL RESUMPTION OBSERVATION SCHEDULE AND CHECKLIST

Purpose of this Report

The monitoring report provides feedback as to whether the initiative is on track to success and highlights the particular areas of weaknesses for immediate intervention to prevent failure of the initiative undertaken.

Independent data collectors have been contracted and have been visiting the schools to observe the activities and to provide data/information on the six (6) criteria including:

- **The school's management of entry to compound**

- **Management of the protocols in the classroom**
- **Management of students' movements during class time**
- **School management of break and lunch sessions**
- **School's management of medical emergencies**
- **School management of movement and interaction in clubs and other extra-curricular activities**

Madam Speaker, officers from the Ministry of Education Youth and Information also visited the schools to conduct observation of the activities taking place and to provide guidance where necessary.

The data collectors and observers who have visited the schools have since provided preliminary feedback from their observations. The schools are operating a rotation modality and those who were not at school were engaged online.

The high schools opted to have their grade 11 returned to the face-to-face setting while the primary level has students across the grades. Attendance at the high schools during the first week was approximately 52 % of the grade 11 cohort while attendance was low at the primary schools. One such school that has a student population of 128, was reported to have eight (8) students last Thursday and 28 on the Wednesday; - attendance may have been affected by the rain as it rained throughout the day.

Additionally, over the aforementioned period, 1,115 students were noted to be in attendance, with 52% (581) of that number representing boys and 48% (534) representing girls.

Madame Speaker, here is a synopsis of particular aspects under observation:

The schools' management of entry to compound

The overall management of the entry process was deemed to have been satisfactorily managed by the school in keeping with protocols for preventing transmission of COVID- 19. The entry points were reported as adequately staffed and efficiently operated.

Students were observed in queues that were adequately spaced at the entry points wearing their masks to cover both nose and mouth. In those schools with low turn-out, there was no need for queuing up of students as the few who turned up came in at different times. In one school, screening activities were moved onto the compound because of the rain. However it was done in a sheltered open location before students were permitted to move to the classroom space.

It was noted as a matter of concern in two schools that the infrared thermometer was being pointed towards the forehead of children. Other schools were observed to have efficient use of the thermometer.

The time elapsed between arrival and entry was commended in 14 of the schools by the observers who shared their satisfaction in rating. This means students were screened and admitted within two minutes of arrival at the entry point. Parents were not observed accessing the compound even though it was noted as being allowed only on a need to basis.

Temperatures were recorded accordingly for the records.

With regards to mask wearing, five (5) of 14 schools had students turning up without mask. An appropriate response was given as students were issued masks and screening and entry process was subsequently observed. Some students wore a combination of masks and face shields. Teachers also wore masks and face shields.

Only one (1) of 14 schools reported a conflict arising at the point of entry. The observer shared that this was effectively and politely managed by the principal. Overall, the management of entry to the compounds proceeded efficiently

Management of the Protocols in the Classroom

The overall management of the protocols in the classroom space was found to be satisfactorily done by the observers in the schools they visited. Students sat approximately 3 to 6 feet apart and facing one general direction in most cases. The administrations of the school

added print rich signs to the school plants to remind students to wear masks, sanitize and wash hands regularly.

Teachers posted updated class rule charts in their class that highlighted updated rules that were in adherence to the COVID-19 prevention protocols.

Similarly, mask wearing and social distancing were observed in classes monitored for over 20 minute's period in the 13 schools. Teachers were also observed wearing their masks within 6 feet of the students. Students were observed wearing their masks to cover both nose and mouth except for one high school in which students in a class were observed pulling their masks below their noses. Transition from class to class and subject to subject were managed efficiently by teachers.

Wash Stations and Sanitation Facilities

The observers reported that wash stations are visible and sanitizers are mounted at strategic locations in all schools, including on walls, at the entrance of or in classrooms. In some schools, wall sanitizers are in each classroom. Wash stations are also strategically placed and some are at the rear or side of the buildings. Handwashing stations are also erected on corridors. However, it was observed that one school needed to have hand sanitation closer to the classrooms.

Signage

Signs of social distancing images as well as reminders to wear a mask are strategically paced. There are clear markers along corridors (upstairs and downstairs) indicating where students should stand in relation to each other.

Management of Students' Movement During Class Time

The overall management of students' movements during class time was found to be satisfactory to the observers. Students were observed forming queues and monitored for 5 minutes' mask breaks on one hour intervals at a designated spot in most schools. This was done on schedule of every hour for each class group.

Sanitization was done upon entry and re-entry in the classroom spaces and more specifically on return trips from the rest room.

School Management of Breaks and Lunch Sessions

The school's management of breaks (including mask breaks) and lunch sessions were rated as being satisfactory in most schools. The methods used varied from staggered break and lunch sessions at the concessionaire shop or canteen to students being served in their classroom space. In one case, the school had to implement a contingency plan to the original plan due to inclement weather where students were served in their classroom space. The management of this was also commended by the observers. At one high school, there are three (3) tuck shops and one (1) canteen and

this gave students ample options and helped with preventing overcrowding. The lunch areas were adequately supervised at the school.

Transition from break and lunch to class was also rated as satisfactory. At one high school all students all the classes in their homeroom for the day. Therefore, transition to other classes or labs was not observed. However, their transition to their break/lunch period was satisfactory. Students exited class in an orderly manner while others remained.

It was reported that at dismissal some parents were outside the school premises awaiting their children.

School Management of Isolation Room and Medical Emergencies

Madame Speaker, on the other hand, the overall management of medical emergencies was rated less than satisfactory by a larger number of observers. Clear outline of protocols was noticed in seven schools; six schools had no documented protocols outlined for dealing with medical emergencies, while at one school, the protocols outlined to staff as observed by data collectors were less than satisfactory.

It was observed that at one school, the key staff members, including the Guidance Counsellor, were not sufficiently aware of the location of the isolation room.

In giving the principals of the schools the update of this report on Monday morning, we clearly brought this to the attention of the principals. Clearly, the MOEYI has more work to do in ensuring all our principals and teachers and support staff have to clear protocols for treating with emergencies at a school.

The observers noted that isolation rooms to manage suspected COVID-19 related emergencies are suitably placed for ease of entry and convenience. However, no management protocols were outlined for the isolation room in six (6) schools and observers in one school highlighted that the protocols outlined in that particular school was dissatisfying. MOEYI has already taken steps to engage The Ministry of Health and Wellness (MoHW) on this score.

Medical emergencies that were reported are as follows:

At one school, two students were admitted to the isolation room after displaying symptoms of runny nose and a boy was admitted due to diarrhoea. His parent were alerted.

For us to move forward with confidence, we must have our parents on board. Parents have a responsibility to not send students to school if they are having symptoms of runny nose, cough, fever etc. Parents we really need you to be vigilant. If students get to school in that condition, of course, our schools have to be ready to deal with these. This was the weakest of the many variables that were observed. It is the most important and so MOEYI has to impress on principals the importance of this particular protocol. We have to impress on parents

and guardians their responsibility as well in this process if we are to have confidence in the continued phased re-opening of schools.

School Management of Movement and Interaction in clubs and other extra-curricular activities

There was a general “**not observed**” for this aspect with observers sharing that based on feedback, this was not planned for most schools. The one school that this was observed in was rated as dissatisfying.

General Comments:

Madame Speaker, in general, the comments are favourable. There are areas to be addressed however and the Ministry's teams are working with the schools

It is expected Madame Speaker that a more comprehensive update will be provided after November 20 which is the end of the pilot.

The Way Forward

Madame Speaker

I met with the eCovid taskforce yesterday to update them on the results so far of the pilot and to solicit recommendations or feedback from them regarding the way forward.

In addition, the MOEYI team met with the Principals of the 17 schools where the feedback was shared and the specific weakness relating to the management of the Isolation area was addressed through a representative of the Ministry of Health and Wellness. Each school will be visited this week to provide further guidance.

As seen from the reports on the pilots, the areas under observation are performing satisfactorily in general.

We continue to seek the support of all stakeholders as we seek the best solutions in our children's interest.

2. Own Your Own Device

Now Madame Speaker, I want to update the House on where we are with the plans for the use of eVouchers for the OYOD program.

As I indicated last week,

1. Each Member of Parliament will receive **250** numbered application forms in sequence. The packages are here today for distribution, Madame Speaker.
2. Application forms should only be distributed to parents of students who are **not** on PATH.
3. All areas on the forms must be completed.
4. Forms must not be copied nor reprinted.
5. Forms copied or reprinted will be rejected as these will not bear the security feature.

6. The information on the application form must be uploaded on the **oyod.educate.gov.jm** website before **December 4, 2020** for verification and allocation of points.
7. The website will go live this afternoon.
8. Application forms where upload is not possible can be returned to the Ministry and the upload will be done there.

These can be addressed to:

**Attention – Own your Own Device Programme
2 – 4 National Heroes Circle, Building 1
Kingston 4**

9. Each form will be processed electronically for verification and allocation of points; therefore, **ALL** forms must be uploaded.

The application forms are being distributed on the outside by the Ministry's team. I am inviting each member to ensure you receive your package.

Thank you Madame, Speaker