



OFFICE OF THE
PREMIER
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

**COVID-19 George Town Primary
Remarks by Premier Hon. G. Wayne Panton
Tuesday, 14 September, 2021**

Good Morning people of the Cayman Islands,

I am here to speak to you about recent developments overnight and to outline the Government's position and course of actions to be taken today and over the next few days.

Late last night, Cabinet and Caucus received an urgent briefing from Public Health and Ministry of Education officials after confirming that one Year 6 student at George Town Primary School had tested positive for COVID-19. We were especially alarmed when we learned that the child had no travel history or direct contact with a traveller. Tracking and tracing was begun yesterday and so far other members of the child's household have not tested positive.

Therefore, out of an abundance of caution, we decided to immediately close the school and activate its planned response measures as guided by the Ministry of Education. GTPS will remain closed until it receives clearance to reopen from Public Health.

Public Health has swiftly made arrangements for on-site testing starting this morning with Year 6 to facilitate a quick, orderly and safe process for testing **all** George Town Primary School teachers, staff and students. Students' parents and guardians will be contacted this morning and informed of the time to arrive at GT Primary to receive their COVID-19 tests. Students, their parents or guardians should only go the school at their appointed time. This approach has been taken to ensure accessibility to **this** school community and because it allows Public Health staff to have a wider reach in the shortest amount of time.

We are asking for assistance in the following ways:

- Students and their parents or guardians should remain at home until they are contacted by the school administration and advised of a time their year group will be tested;

- Students and accompanying parents and guardians are asked to wear masks and take all precautions, exercising hand hygiene and physical distancing;
- School facilities and buses will be thoroughly sanitised prior to reopening; and
- Families will be supported by the school counsellor and other staff.

We understand that some households have students that go to both George Town Primary and John Gray High School. To be clear, we are only testing George Town Primary students and their parents or guardians today. We will let you know when arrangements are made for students in any other schools.

Our teams from across the public sector have worked into the early hours of the morning to ensure that the best plans were put in place making the well-being of **our** children **our** priority.

We have had no shortage of reminders over the past week that the global pandemic is far from over, even here in the Cayman Islands. No doubt complacency has slowly crept in among us, and as we changed our behaviors, including our compliance with the regulations, there should be no surprise that we have seen the tide quickly shift.

Positive COVID-19 cases emerging from within the community is a worrying trend.

It is in moments like these that we should all be truly thankful that the Cayman Islands enjoys such a high rate of vaccination, but we must not again let complacency creep in.

The science is clear and unequivocal; vaccines help to prevent people from dying and getting seriously ill. Please be reminded of today's Vaccination Clinic for Tuesday, 14 September, at Camana Bay 10am-2pm and 4pm-7:30pm. Get vaccinated to protect yourself and those you love.

We know that public health safety measures and responsible behaviors add a wall of protection around our most vulnerable - including those who cannot protect themselves. There is no doubt, the wall of protection is needed and needed now.

As previously mentioned during our September 8th press briefing, the Government is reviewing a number of measures in regards to the October 14th further reopening of the borders and the implementation of increased public health measures.

This morning the Cabinet will meet to finalise additional public health measures in light of the development of two separate incidents of

community transmission, including mask mandates, increased surveillance testing, consideration of quarantine periods and revisiting the rules around who can visit Cayman.

Based on the information that we have at this time, we are not considering a lockdown.

We will hold a press briefing at 5pm this afternoon to further update our community about this developing situation. I know there is a tremendous amount of anxiety and heightened concern, especially because to us there is nothing more important than our children. We are committed to being open, transparent and honest with you, so you will remain informed when the additional test results come back. I salute our dedicated public health officials who are working tirelessly to reassure and keep our staff, parents and students safe.

I urge the community to continue to remain vigilant, rely on trusted news sources for official information and to comply with public health guidance and regulations. If you feel uncertain or display possible symptoms, please contact the Flu Hotline at 947-3077 or

1-800-534-8600. You can also send an email to flu@hsa.ky

In closing, I extend my very best wishes for a speedy recovery to that dear student, and to all others who have recently tested positive.

ENDS