



All schools have needs and plans for school improvement. The Convent of Mercy Academy, Alpha; 128 years old, has in place the tradition of excellence and systems of learning to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing world; however, as we return to the physical classroom for the first full year since 2020, we must begin the process of making our Campus safe and enriching for learning in the 21st Century. Our Sponsors, the Sisters of Mercy, Alumnae, PTA and Friends have risen up to help us make provisions for the vulnerable and to imagine with us an Alpha for today.

SAFETY

In 2020, just before the onset of the Pandemic, our school was Inspected by the National Education Inspectorate who found **the overall effectiveness of Convent of Mercy Academy to be exceptionally high.**

Naturally however, there were recommendations for improvement. One surrounded the need to improve the aging infrastructure and the other to manage the vehicular traffic which posed a threat to student safety.

“Provisions for safety and security are good: The safety and security policies and procedures effectively address most security needs. Also, good perimeter fencing, and gates secure the school’s premises. Security officers monitor the entrance and exit points and they are suitably positioned on the compound to provide additional monitoring. Additionally, there is an electronic locking system utilized at the main office. Safety signs are displayed, and there are annual fire and earthquake drills to ensure that students remain aware of the protocols and procedures. Also, fire extinguishers are fully serviced and suitably placed. However, there are safety concerns for a few areas as some steps are without rails, and some gas cylinders are not enclosed. ***Also, there is limited protection for students and staff from vehicular traffic on the property before and after school.***

The report therefore ended with the following.

“We recommend that the following actions be taken to make further improvement-

- a) The Board of Management and Principal should mobilize funding from the Ministry and other organizations for the sustainable maintenance of the school’s infrastructure;”

Our Sponsors, the Sisters of Mercy took the concerns seriously and have funded and implemented annual maintenance and upgrading. They also commissioned the design for a new entry way that would provide safe entry and exit through our gate rather than having heavy traffic flows throughout the Campus when we are forced to use the access point at the northern Alpha Institute gate. Those drawings are now at the stage of approval with the relevant planning agencies and (half) of the expected funds has been sourced. We urgently need to source the remaining funds to complete this important project. *The safety of our students is paramount* and the additional benefit of providing an aesthetically pleasing entrance to our historically significant Campus.



The cost of this project is still being quantified however the Academy has been given an initial target of \$10,000,000 JMD (9,600 USD) towards this project. Construction is expected to begin in the second quarter of 2023.



Figure 1 Aerial View of entry way and parking area



CONVENT OF MERCY ACADEMY 'ALPHA'



Figure 2 Day and Night Presence.





Figure 3 We must honour our Sponsors and Donors to inspire the coming generations of Mercy.

THE 21ST CENTURY CLASSROOM: A CRUSADE TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

Since 2017, Convent of Mercy Academy 'Alpha' has been on a *Crusade* to transform our learning environment into 21st century classrooms. This includes shifts in curriculum and teaching methodology. Critical to our delivery is the access to digital technology and the internet. The COVID era amplified this need as students and teachers returned to the classroom, exposed to the wonders of the flipped classroom, online resources, and blended learning.

With our stakeholders' efforts have been made to provide wide access to the internet, the upgrading of The Mercy Memorial Library and Resource Centre built by Sr Bernadette Little RSM, and the installation of LED monitors in classrooms to allow for projection of rich content during classes. We have completed 12 classrooms and one resource room.

We will begin our Sixth Form installations with the latest donation and hope that with our partners can install a 55-inch LED screen in another 6 classrooms this year. **Each classroom requires some electrical retrofitting, a monitor and laptop a cost we project to be between \$1400-\$1500 USD depending on availability.**

We have other spaces e.g., two Halls and at four Labs that would require larger screens, up to 75-inches. The cost and availability of these screens vary. Please visit this site to see some options available locally. <https://www.pricesmart.com/site/jm/en/search?sq=TVs>