



**EDUCATION QUALITY
ASSURANCE UNIT**
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

Inspection Report

June 2013

**Discovery Kids Childhood Care
and Education Centre**

Preface

The inspection of the educational aspects of Early Childhood Care and Education Centres and Reception classes is now the remit of the Education Quality Assurance Unit (EQUA). These inspections will be carried out on a two year cycle, with a progress check approximately six months after the inspection.

The main aspects that will be reported on are:

- Leadership and management, including how effectively leaders and managers:
 - ensure the welfare, health and safety of the children
 - lead the direction for development and learning
 - manage the centre and staff and link with parents and external agencies

- The effectiveness of provision, including teaching, and its impact on children's learning and development, including the development of the following four key focus areas of the Cayman Islands Early Years Curriculum Framework:
 - Well-being
 - Respect
 - Communication
 - Exploration

The criteria for inspection have been circulated to all centres and primary schools, and these include some indicators of good practice. Centres have also been asked to complete a self-evaluation form which will be taken into account as part of the evidence gathering for the inspection.

Inspectors use the following grading scale to describe aspects of the work of the centre / reception class:

Grade		Description
1	Very good	Good in nearly all aspects and exemplary in some significant areas
2	Good	Good in most respects. Weaknesses are minor and not in significant areas
3	Adequate	No significant weaknesses, but no major strengths. Improvement needed
4	Unsatisfactory	Some significant weaknesses (might be only one or two) that have a negative impact on children's learning and progress. Cause for concern

Reports will be published on the Ministry's website www.education.gov.ky.

They will provide the centres, parents, the community and the Ministry of Education with an external and impartial inspection of the work of the centres.

The Education Quality Assurance Unit expects that this inspection report will prove helpful and will contribute in a positive way to improvement.

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Education Quality Assurance Unit

Background

The foundation a child receives in the early years of life is an indicator of future development and success. The provision of services at Early Childhood Care and Education Centres (ECCEC) has a large impact on the future of the child academically, socially and cognitively. It is important that quality interactions with adults and peers, as well as opportunities for exploration, problem solving and reflection occur consistently.

Early Childhood Care and Education is provided by both private and government sectors. In 2012, the Ministry of Education, Financial Services and Employment added seven new Reception classes in primary schools in Grand Cayman, which cater for children aged between four and five years old. However, the great majority of provision for young children is in private centres. Around forty private centres are currently in operation, providing an important service to families. Around 1,700 babies and children up to the age of five are being cared for and educated.

Building “a world-class early childhood care and education system” (Strategic Goal 2, Cayman Islands Strategic Plan for Education 2012-2017) will help ensure that children have the best opportunities to develop as life-long learners who are able to contribute positively to their community. Along with other stakeholders the Ministry of Education’s Early Childhood Care and Education Unit is working to “provide access to high quality early childhood care and education to all children, regardless of income, background, special or additional education need” (Cayman Islands Strategic Plan for Education 2012-2017).

In an effort to improve the quality of provision, private early childhood care and education centres benefit from professional advice, support and training by the Ministry’s team and the Education Quality Assurance Unit identified areas for improvement.

The report for this inspection will be used as a basis for discussion and will be published on the Ministry’s website. The centre is expected to take careful note of the recommendations at the end of the report and to prepare an action plan to address these. There will be subsequent visits by Ministry personnel from the Early Childhood Care and Education Unit (ECCEU) to provide support.

General Information about the centre

Address	93 Hospital Road Sigma Building PO Box 12180, KY1-1010 Grand Cayman
Telephone numbers	946-5437 or 939-8355
Email address	Dkids.ky@gmail.com
Name of owner	Ms Rochelle Dilbert
Manager / lead teacher	Ms Rochelle Dilbert / Irene Villegas
Age range	Birth – 4 years old
Number on roll	84

- Discovery Kids is situated on the ground floor of the former Insurance Company of the West Indies (ICWI) building at the corner of Hospital Road and Smith Road. It is close to the George Town hospital. It was first opened as an after-school care facility but has been registered as a pre-school since early 2011.
- The school caters to 84 children. Some attend part-time only. Sixteen children on roll are Caymanian.

Inspection Judgements

Leadership and management

Inspectors consider the extent to which the impact of leadership of learning improves outcomes for children and the efficiency of day-to-day management.

Ensuring the welfare, health and safety of the children

- A very warm and friendly atmosphere has been established in the school. The co-principal and leader have a welcoming manner and staff work together well. Staff are friendly and very supportive towards the children. Relationships in general are good.
- Some members of staff have successfully completed training in food and safety and have also had recent upgrades for first aid training.
- The school prepares healthy meals for the children and encourages healthy eating habits. The area where children eat is, however, unsatisfactory as it is in the main entrance to the school where the office is located. The area is small and congested during meal times. Adults walk through the small space, which prevents staff from having valuable conversations with children when they are eating their food. In addition, the children sit at tables that are too small.
- The playground space is unsatisfactory as it is too small and includes a limited range of equipment. Children are able to swing, ride and play in a sandy area around the tree outside, but it is very small. The inside space is also very limited and classrooms provide few opportunities for children to engage in art, music, technology, science and reading.
- The school has developed an evacuation plan but has not conducted a fire drill in the past nine months. It has identified two possible areas as “safe havens” in case of an emergency: the George Town Hospital Main Entrance/Lobby and the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Both require the children to travel through busy car parks which are also hazardous. The school states that it intends to conduct fire drills every six months.
- The school has two toilets, one for boys and one for girls, but these are also used by the staff, which is not good practice. In addition, children all use the same towel to dry their hands, which is unhygienic.
- Provision in the baby room is adequate. The room is clean and soft music provides a calm atmosphere. Sleeping areas are well-kept and adequate stimulation is in place. However, there is no natural light, and the glare from the artificial light is distracting and unsuitable for babies. Staff interact with the babies well. They talk, sing and play with them and serve meals in a calm and trusting manner.
- The area where the babies play is inappropriate as it is also used as a thoroughfare for other children. In addition, staff change and feed the babies in this area and do not sanitize the area after each child is fed or after children passing through have touched furniture in the space.
- All staff members originate from overseas and the principal indicated that police checks were all in place, but these were not accessible to inspectors as employees’ files are not kept at the centre.
- There are a number of other potential safety hazards for children. For example, some electrical sockets are not covered and some children wear necklaces with beads, which could cause choking if swallowed. The school needs to put in place measures to address such issues that are hazardous to children’s health and safety.

Leading the direction for development and learning

- The school completed its self-evaluation form but with minimal information in each area. The school has not established a system for monitoring its work and staff are not held to account. The owner/principal is not sufficiently aware of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the centre. Staff's plans are not checked.
- Shortly after the 2011 inspection, the school developed an effective way of recording what the children know, understand and can do. They also started using the CIEYCF template for lesson plans focusing on the four key focus areas of learning. Both forms of planning have now been discontinued. There is no formal system for recording children's achievements or for target setting. An assessment checklist is completed in September and at the end of the school year, but it is not used to set targets for children.
- The school has identified two children for early intervention. Personnel from the Early Intervention Programme provide speech therapy for them twice per week, but the school has not received any feedback from the Early Intervention team about how to support the children when their personnel are not there.

Management of the centre and staff

- Children are well supervised and cared for and the school adheres to the expected adult-child ratio. The day-to-day running of the school is shared between the owner and the leader and is managed smoothly.
- Some procedures are in place and are followed, such as administering medication and parents' pick up and sign in and out processes. The school has also developed some policies and these are shared with staff and parents.
- The principal visits classes every day to support staff, but is not providing them with written feedback to help them improve.

Links with parents and external agencies

- The pre-school has established good links with the parents and community. Parents are invited to the centre to share in special events and to talk to children about their jobs, for example, as community workers. Parents assist in other ways when they can.
- The school sends quarterly progress reports to parents, who can discuss these with the respective staff's child if they need clarification.
- Parents say they are pleased with the care their children receive at the school and children appear happy to be left there in the morning.

The leadership and management of the centre are unsatisfactory. Although staff are welcoming and communication with parents is good, there is too much that needs improving, including several concerns about health and safety. In addition, staff's documents are not readily available and there is no effective monitoring of staff's work. There is no tracking of children's progress or setting of targets. There is no evidence of performance management procedures and no one has a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to improve.

Effectiveness of provision, including teaching and its impact on children's learning and development

Well-being

Inspectors consider the extent to which each setting provides a safe environment that actively promotes a well-balanced and healthy lifestyle that enriches social and emotional development, and encourages resilience and self-confidence.

- There is a good monitoring procedure for the babies, which involves staff recording information on children's nap and potty times. This information is helpful as it is shared with parents at the end of the day.
- Children are not always given appropriate activities to suit their abilities and to help them develop their fine motor skills, for example, with tracing over pictures and writing.
- The layout of some classrooms limits the space available to the children for activities such as circle time or activities in centres. In some instances the children were squashed into very small spaces, which caused them to be uncomfortable and to lose concentration.
- The provision for four year-olds is adequate. Adults show consideration towards children and are alert to their needs. However, children who present challenging behaviour are not always receiving the help they need to improve their behaviour and learning.

Respect

Inspectors consider the extent to which each setting provides an environment that lends itself to both guided and spontaneous interactions that enable children to develop an appreciation of themselves and the world around them.

- Staff support children who need guidance. However, in a few lessons too much time is wasted as other children have to sit and wait for attention from staff.
- In classes where activities are not well planned and children have to wait for long periods without direction, inspectors observed children hitting and punching each other instead of choosing an activity or book with which to be engaged. In well planned lessons with proper class management, such as in the class for four year-olds, children were engaged in activities, sharing and helping each other and participated well in all the activities.

Communication

Inspectors consider the extent to which each setting provides a safe and supportive environment which will foster and enrich children's ability to listen and respond to others and to clearly express their own ideas, thoughts and feelings.

- Several members of staff do not have English as their first language. They care for the children, but do not always model the best spoken English for the children.
- Not all children are given opportunities to develop their language skills. In one room children used play dough to create different things and spoke freely in sentences about what they were making. The staff member's effective use of questions helped them to make choices. This practice was not seen in other classes, where opportunities for children to communicate were limited.

Exploration

Inspectors consider the extent to which teachers' planning and delivery of learning activities and the way in which they organise and manage their environments lead to effective learning for all children. In particular how does the curriculum and teaching enable children to develop in the key focus areas?

- Rooms are stocked with materials and objects for children to explore. In some rooms, the objects are out of children's reach, which prevents them from choosing activities for themselves in order to develop as independent learners. Activities are mainly directed by staff, which hinders children from making choices and being as involved as they could be. Staff are not using the ECCEU lesson planning template.
- Children at the beginning stages of writing are not given enough opportunities to develop fine motor skills. In a numeracy activity, children's progress was restricted because all children were given the same number of counters and not helped to develop an understanding of one-to-one correspondence.
- Children are given opportunities to engage in outdoor play each day. They sensibly use swings and are learning about taking turns. They develop their creativity as they use different objects while playing in the sand.

The effectiveness of provision, including teaching and its impact on children's learning and development, is unsatisfactory. Staff's planning is not aligned to the CIEYCF and does not ensure that the four key focus areas of learning are well planned for. Staff are not providing children with as many opportunities as possible to develop their language and number skills. Resources are not well-used and children do not have easy access to materials to develop their independence or to help them make choices.

Recommendations (These are the priority areas for development)

In order to improve further, the owner and principal need to:

1. Improve the aspects relating to health and safety as a matter of urgency:
 - Conduct regular fire drills and ensure a safe assembly point
 - Improve the space where children eat their meals
 - Ensure that all electrical sockets are covered
 - Improve the space in classrooms and the playground.
2. Develop a system for leading, monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, so that procedures are clear and documented.
3. Establish systems for recording children's progress and achievements, identifying their next steps and setting targets (This was also stated in last report).
4. Encourage staff to use the CIEYCF in their planning so that the four key focus areas of learning are planned for in children's daily activities.
5. Provide sufficient resources for children so that they can connect and stack objects themselves. Store toys, books and other objects for children on lower shelves for easy access by children.

Action Plan

The centre is expected to develop an action plan to address the areas for improvement identified above. The action plan must be sent to the Education Quality Assurance Unit within 40 working days of receiving the inspection report. The centre is required to provide parents with an update on the progress being made in addressing the areas identified as needing to improve.

The action plan is due on December 10th 2013.