



**EDUCATION QUALITY
ASSURANCE UNIT**
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

Inspection Report

June 2013

Casa Montessori

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	Judgement	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.

Favourita Blanchard

Senior Evaluator
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	491 Crewe Road
Telephone numbers	345-924-5846
Email address	caymancasamontessori@gmail.com
Name of owner	Mr Roger Parchment Mrs Sarah Parchment
Manager / lead teacher	Mrs Sarah Parchment - Principal
Age range	1.5 to 4+
Number on roll	33

- This centre follows the Montessori curriculum and three staff members have been trained in the Montessori philosophy.
- The centre opened in January 2011 and this is its first Inspection.

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

- The centre has made good strides in ensuring children's health and welfare. Most rooms have smoke detectors and fire extinguishers and some electrical sockets are covered.
- The owner is currently working with the Fire Department to develop an evacuation plan, which will be displayed throughout the centre. However, the centre has yet to conduct a fire drill despite being open for two years.
- The grounds are large and secured with a fence and padlocked gates. Children are encouraged to wear hats when playing outside and have adequate adult supervision. Toddlers play in their own separate area from older children and their area is well-resourced with appropriate sand toys and swings. The large grassy playground for the older children has two sandy areas and is well-equipped with slides, swings, climbers, ride-on toys, a balance beam and dolls' houses. Sun shades over the sandy areas provide adequate cover during playtime. There are some small holes located throughout the grassy areas that need to be filled in.
- Restrooms are clean. In the Casa section, there are two unisex bathrooms with one partition separating the two child-sized toilets. However, the second toilet does not have any privacy partition as the two child-sized basins are located in the same area. The lack of bathroom facilities in the toddler section is a concern as the one adult-sized toilet is shared by staff and children.
- Two snacks provided by the centre comprise healthy options, such as fruit and crackers. Parents are encouraged to prepare healthy lunches for children, and are provided with pamphlets containing suggestions. Children are encouraged to drink water from their water bottles during the day.
- The Environmental Health Department conducts regular checks of the water. The cistern, which is not used for the water supply, has a manhole located between the two learning areas, but there are no safety latches on its cover; this is a potential hazard.
- Older children are not always supervised adequately as sometimes they work on their own in the satellite rooms without adult supervision. The additional staff planned for the new school year will increase supervision of children at all times in the two satellite rooms. Supervision is good in the toddler section.
- The school has appropriate arrangements for contacting parents in the event of an emergency (via cell-phones or email) and these details are updated on a regularly basis. Incidents are reported to parents verbally upon pick-up. Parents also sign medical release and photo release as part of the registration form.

Leading the direction for development and learning

- The principal has started to monitor the work of staff through daily or weekly drop-in visits to classrooms. Formal observations are conducted monthly and an annual performance evaluation is done in May. The principal makes notes of the observations, but does not use a formal lesson observation form, which would help to ensure consistency.

- Staff meet regularly and work together to plan activities, led by staff trained in the Montessori philosophy. Lessons are planned around a monthly theme for the older children who willingly talk about their current topic. Staff complete observations of children each day and record findings using checklists.
- There are no written rules displayed, however expectations are conveyed to children verbally. There is a positive ethos of respect and sharing and this is evident in how well children interact with each other. Children are reminded of the expectations such as talking quietly, walking indoors, and are encouraged to verbalise their needs.

Management of the centre and staff

- There are appropriate personnel files for each member of staff that contain their job description, police clearance, and contract. Four staff members are trained in first aid and will receive updated training in August 2013.
- The Parent Handbook which is currently being updated for the new school year contains the centre's policies and procedures. Staff are encouraged to focus on positives and children usually comply with a gentle reminder.
- Staff are required to take an attendance register each morning in the circle time after children have returned from the playground. However, no attendance register was available during the inspection, which is a concern, as in the event of a fire staff need to be clear about who is present.

Links with parents and external agencies

- Communication with parents is good. The centre uses email, telephone or the website to relay information. There is a meeting with parents at the beginning of the year to discuss the expectations, policies and procedures. The first day of school is an orientation half day whereby children get to meet their new staff and get acquainted with the routines and the centre. There are two progress reports completed each year (December and June), with checklists completed on each child and discussed with parents.
- Four children receive support from the Early Intervention Programme (EIP). Brief reports are given to parents from the EIP and staff discuss with the therapists so that they are aware of their expectations. No records are provided for staff to help them plan for the individual needs of the children in the programme.
- Staff identify areas for improvement or concern through observation and completion of an age appropriate checklist to ensure that the child is meeting the expectations. For example, a child diagnosed with special needs is supported by a therapist from the Wellness Centre each day. At the time of inspection the centre was in the process of creating an individualized education plan for this child.

The leadership and management of the centre are adequate. The individual needs of the children are catered for by a caring and nurturing staff and arrangements for performance management have begun. Staff work well together. There are some concerns about health and safety. An immediate concern is that no fire drill has been conducted and no evacuation plans are displayed. Also, attendance registers are not readily accessible, which could be a problem in the event of a fire. The shared bathroom in the toddler section is not appropriate.

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 positive ethos throughout the centre and this is evident in the way that children and staff interact with each other. Teachers focus on the positives, but will speak quietly to individual children to redirect them if they are off task. Children are secure within their areas as doors to the outside have safety handles.
- Children get the opportunity to choose their snack and are aware of the routines of cleaning up after themselves, washing their dish, drying it and placing it in the dish drain.
- Children are being taught to be independent and to develop their fine motor skills through play. For example, they were observed lacing, tracing shapes, tying bows, and pouring materials from one container to another. Appropriate child-sized tables and chairs and low shelving provide the children with easy access to the variety of Montessori materials.
- Each child in the toddlers' section has their own cubby with their supplies such as pampers, wipes, etc. The plastic changing table folds out from the wall in the bathroom and is sanitized after each use.
- A soft ring of a bell signalled the end of the activity and children responded immediately by cleaning up and gathered together in the language room for story time.

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.

- There are no formal morning devotions, although children are taught the Golden Rule and sing grace before eating their lunch. Children also sing songs in their morning circle time and talk about the day of the week, month, weather and share ideas about the current theme.
- Children get a chance to choose the centre that they would like to work in and sometimes choose to work with a partner. For example, during the inspection a child asked if a friend could work with him to complete a puzzle of the United States.
- Teachers set good listening expectations before proceeding to read a story. Children actively participate in the story by filling in words or making a sound for the animals.
- Adults have high expectations with regards to how children treat and interact with each other and with adults. Children are encouraged to speak kindly to each other and they have a clear understanding of the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and this is reflected in the calm ethos of the centre. Staff and children speak to each other in soft tones. Children are encouraged to share their ideas, raise hands and listen to others.
- Children are encouraged to take responsibility for caring for their school environment by keeping their areas clean, and they take pride in assisting with the various chores.

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.

- Adults model clear and appropriate English and encourage children to take turns talking and to speak clearly with increasing descriptive language. Children are given many opportunities to speak with each other and with teachers.
- Older children engage in a range of appropriate mathematics activities in the maths room. For example, one child was working on adding numbers in the thousands and interchanging them using a grid, while another child was working on subtracting numbers up to ten.
- Children are given good language development experiences during circle time and throughout the learning centres. Children are encouraged to share information on their theme of study and to expand their vocabulary. At the time of the inspection the Casa section was learning about the Solar System, children used words such as "asteroid", "big dipper", "planets" and the "sun being the biggest star." They also identified the month, date and year and discussed the weather conditions.
- Children have opportunities to 'write' freely and they trace sandpaper letters, whilst stating the letter sounds in the language room.

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?

- In the Casa section, children have independent and guided opportunities for mark-making and numeracy development. Children explore the areas confidently and are eager to share their discoveries with adults.
- Children have good opportunities to play outdoors for the first part of the morning in their designated play areas. Children were seen role-playing in the dolls' house; others were playing cooperatively on wheeled toys and on the swings and slides.
- Children are provided with opportunities to mix colours, bead, lace, pour and scoop water, beans and rice, open and shut locks, and use tweezers and chop sticks to grasp objects. Some activities are guided by the teachers who work with individuals, but for the most part, children work independently.
- Children in the toddler section were also observed playing well. They cut vegetables and fruits in one centre, mopped the floor and put two dolls 'to bed'. Toddlers actively participated in one story by making the sounds for the various animals mentioned.
- Children are learning to care for plants. For example, they look after their classroom plant by pruning the leaves and cleaning them with water. The teacher also demonstrated how the soil could be checked to see if it had enough moisture and the children have proven that it is possible to kill a plant with too much water.

The effectiveness of provision, including teaching and its impact on children's learning and development, is good and very good in many respects. Children are exposed to a range of learning activities through play. The positive ethos of the centre ensures that each child's needs are identified and planned for. Children are actively engaged in their learning and are provided with many opportunities to share their ideas, experiment and work independently and cooperatively. The next step is to match the plans to the CIEYCF to ensure that children have access to all the four key focus areas of learning.

Recommendations (These are the priority areas for development)

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

1. Address the concerns about health and safety as a matter of priority:
 - Complete fire evacuation plans and arrange and conduct regular fire drills.
 - Improve the bathroom arrangements
 - Ensure that children are supervised at all times
 - Ensure that attendance registers are completed each day and are accessible
2. Ensure that the planned curriculum provides all four key focus areas of the new CIEYCF and encourage staff to attend the ECCEU training.
3. Develop a more formal record of classroom observations.

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.