

FOLLOW THROUGH INSPECTION REPORT

OFFICE OF EDUCATION STANDARDS
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

MARCH 2021



Precious Gems Preschool

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INTRODUCTION

FOLLOW-THROUGH INSPECTIONS OF SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND EARLY YEARS CENTRES IN THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

In academic year 2020-21, the Office of Education Standards conducted inspections of schools and early years centres across the Cayman Islands. Where the overall performance of a school or setting was evaluated as weak, then a further inspection was arranged six months following the publication of the initial report.

Views of stakeholders

During the follow-through visit, Inspectors focused upon the recommendations that had been made at the time of the previous inspection. They evaluated whether the preschool had made sufficient progress in addressing the areas requiring improvement. Inspectors used a four-point scale to comment on progress, with evaluations ranging between excellent, good, satisfactory or weak.

As part of the Follow-Through Inspection, parents and staff were invited to comment upon the work of the preschool by completing an on-line survey. The results from the survey are included within this report.

Follow-Through Inspection

The Follow-Through Inspection of Precious Gems Preschool took place from **3rd to 5th March 2021**. The preschool was previously inspected in November 2019. The Inspectorate gathered evidence through lesson observations and discussions with staff and parents. School documents and children's progress and attainment information were also reviewed.

During the Follow-Through Inspection of Precious Gems Preschool, Inspectors evaluated the progress that had been made by the preschool leaders in addressing the six recommendations from the previous full inspection.

The school had made satisfactory progress in addressing all six recommendations. The Inspectorate judged that there had been satisfactory progress overall.



INTRODUCTION

Consistency in quantitative terminology

Inspectors use quantitative terms in reports, as follows:

All	The whole – as used when referring to quantity, extent, or duration	100%
Almost all	90% and more	90% to 99%
Most	Three quarters or more but less than 90%	75% to 89%
Majority	Half or more but less than three quarters	50% to 74%
Significant minority	A quarter or more but less than half	25% to 49%
Minority	15% or more but less than half	15% to 24%
Few	Up to 15%	0% to 14%



SCHOOL INFORMATION

General information

	School name	Precious Gems Preschool
	Address	369 Walkers Road, Grand Cayman
	Telephone number	345-233-4367
	Website	None
	Name of the principal	Mrs. Victoria Nelson
	Date of this inspection	March 3 to 5, 2021
	Date of the last inspection	November 25 to 26, 2019

Students

	Number of students on roll	57
	Age range of the students	Five months to four and a half years
	Grades or year groups	As above
	Number of Caymanian students	32
	Number of Students with special educational needs	2
	Largest nationality group of students	Caymanian



SCHOOL INFORMATION

Staff

	Number of teachers	5
	Number of teaching assistants	7
	Teacher-student ratio	1 to 5
	Teacher turnover	25%

Curriculum

	Main curriculum	Cayman Islands Early Years Curriculum
	External tests and assessments	None
	Accreditation	None

School inspection overall performance history

Cycle 1 Inspection	November 2019	 Weak
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RECOMMENDATION 1

Review and improve the programmes for well-being and communication to facilitate children’s progress particularly in the Kindergarten classes.

The preschool had made **satisfactory** progress in addressing this recommendation.

School leaders were proactive in implementing strategies to improve the programmes for well-being and communication to facilitate children’s progress. As a consequence, the lead teacher had conducted refresher sessions with teachers on the use of teaching strategies to promote children’s language development. Staff had also participated in a Hanen Communication course. Teachers benefitted from continuous professional development. For example, the preschool leadership had facilitated internal training in curriculum planning to ensure that children’s activities reflected greater balance in the four key areas of the Cayman Islands Early Years Curriculum. Furthermore, staff had visited another early childhood centre to observe examples of effective practice. Inspectors observed that there was an appropriate balance between child-initiated and teacher-led activities over the course of the inspection. Teachers planned activities to promote rich integrated opportunities for children to develop their oral language and literacy skills. These included regular use of shared stories, discussions, dramatic play, and outdoor play experiences which enhanced children’s developing communication skills. Examples of good practice were evident in the Infants’ room where caregivers’ provided rich sensory stimulation for the children who often responded with giggles, coos and intent stares as they shifted their gazes to follow caregivers’ voices. In Kindergarten 2, as a result of the teacher’s skillful use of questions, use of imaginative play and hands on activities, children were developing a rich and broad

vocabulary. For example, children made up nonsense songs about “The Grouchy Ladybug” and came up with a wide range of synonyms to replace ‘grouchy’. Children suggested words such as mad, angry, miserable, and upset. A majority of children in the Kindergarten classes were able to segment and blend letter sounds to pronounce CVC words. Across the setting, children’s emergent language and literacy skills were promoted through mark making opportunities, songs, rhymes and shared stories. Children were encouraged to use their imagination to make up different endings to stories. All children had regular opportunities to listen to and to interactively explore stories. Staff also structured opportunities for dramatic play which successfully promoted children’s language development. For example, in a Kindergarten class, staff and children dressed up in hats, wigs and dress-up clothes and role played a church scene. All participated enthusiastically in this activity.

Children’s well-being was also successfully promoted across the setting. Teachers’ increased use of routines and schedules ensured more orderly classroom environments. Additionally, most teachers clearly communicated and reinforced behavioural expectations. Most teachers made good use of behavioural charts in the classrooms and incorporated emotions cards in activities to promote children’s awareness of different emotions. As a consequence, most children were beginning to understand the rules and boundaries of acceptable behaviour. There was, however, the



RECOMMENDATION 1

need for greater consistency in the use of behaviour strategies in the Toddler class where children sometimes became unsettled during whole group and circle time activities. Nevertheless, most teachers engaged children in reflective conversations on how their behaviours affected others. As a consequence, most children were well adjusted and involved in their learning episodes. The few noticeable instances of poor behaviour were promptly addressed by most teachers which resulted in minimal disruption to the teaching and learning experience. In the Infants' room, infants demonstrated secure attachment to their caregivers. Most demonstrated confidence in exploring their learning environment. The calm, nurturing attitudes of staff effectively supported children's feelings of security and well-being.



RECOMMENDATION 2

Review assessment practices across the centre to ensure that assessment information is comprehensive and is used effectively to inform the children's next steps in learning.

The preschool had made **satisfactory** progress in addressing this recommendation.

Following the last inspection, the preschool leaders and staff had placed appropriate focus upon improving assessment practices. Consequently, they had developed a comprehensive assessment policy which provided guidance to staff on how to recognise and document children's progress. Leaders had also introduced a range of assessment approaches across the preschool. A variety of assessment methods including photographs, videos, anecdotal records, observation checklists, progress reports and learning portfolios were used to gather information on each child's learning and development. In the Kindergarten classes, children's learning portfolios included a sufficient breadth of information on the skills, knowledge and understanding they were developing in the four focus areas of the Cayman Islands Early Years Curriculum. Samples of children's work were organised in learning portfolios according to the four early learning goals. The improvement in assessment practices was beginning to have a positive impact upon standards of teaching and learning across the preschool.

Over the course of the inspection, staff provided a variety of rich and meaningful enquiry based experiences that enhanced children's learning outcomes. However, additional training was required to further increase staff confidence in the use of assessment information to plan next steps in learning for all children. School leaders had also developed on-entry assessment

checklists as well as monthly progress checklists. There was the need to further review these to ensure adequate alignment and consistency across the setting. Additionally, there was scope to improve the quality of anecdotal records to ensure what staff recorded provided a rich picture of individual children's learning and development aligned to the key early learning goals. In the absence of parent conferences, staff informed parents about their children's progress and achievement through WhatsApp messages and discussions at pickup and arrival. Last school year, reports were not developed for all classes. Staff had identified where children required additional support in their learning and had referred a few children to external agencies. Staff were awaiting reports to complete learning support plans for these children.

Staff knew their children well. For example, in the Kindergarten classes, teachers often made modification to activities to meet the varied learning needs of children. For example, extension was built into some activities for the more able children and one to one support was provided for a few children to support them in progressing in their learning. However, there was scope to develop learning conversations with older children to better support them to make connections between what they were doing and what they were learning. Additionally, although a reflection session was timetabled for the older children, this was not evident in practice. There was scope for staff to use small group sessions



RECOMMENDATION 2

to provide focused opportunities for children to reflect on and talk about their learning. Staff engaged in monthly planning meetings where they devised activities to support the development of children's skills and knowledge in key areas of the curriculum. However, the quality of planning was inconsistent. Staff should also focus on the planning of next steps in children's learning taking account of their individual progress. Nonetheless, staff were responsive to children's interests and used these to plan learning across the curriculum. Staff also made good use of resources in the preschool to promote children's learning. For example, in keeping with a themed activity, children in the Kindergarten classes used apples, peanut butter and raisins to make edible lady bugs. In the Toddlers' class, teachers used a cardboard box to make a hot air balloon which served to engage children in their learning. Overall, Inspectors observed that children were viewed as competent learners and most teachers structured regular opportunities for children to play active roles in their own learning and development.



RECOMMENDATION 3

Enhance the quality of teaching and learning by providing professional development for staff in the area of positive behaviour management.

The preschool had made **satisfactory** progress in addressing this recommendation.

Positive behaviour management was observed throughout the preschool. Leaders had developed a Positive Guidance Policy and the impact of this policy was beginning to be evidenced across the preschool. For example, staff were observed using positive phrasing in most instances when redirecting children, positioning themselves face to face with children and supporting children to reflect on their behaviour and emotions. A behaviour chart with a range of emoticons including happy, angry and sad was used to support children to understand their feelings. Staff also supported children to use the emotions chart to explain how their peers felt following positive and negative behaviours. Classroom rules were displayed both in pictures and in print. The rules were reinforced and referenced by staff throughout the day as they guided children in reflecting on their behaviour and interaction with others. Musical and visual cues were used to signal transitions, such as clean up time and moving to outdoor play. As a consequence, almost all children transitioned well between activities.

Almost all children were developing self-regulation skills with support from the staff who attended promptly to children who displayed frustration. Strategies such as the “Slow Down” to help children calm themselves were in place, but were not always used when needed. All staff supported the children to express their emotions, sometimes using pictures, and comforted them when needed. In most instances, children were supported sensitively and

effectively to settle disputes, share and take turns. More effective and developmentally appropriate strategies, however, were required in the Toddler class to help those children to share, take turns and cope with frustration. Affirmation, praise and positive encouragement were regular features across the setting. As a consequence of the supportive environment, most children were developing personal and social skills appropriate to their age and stage of development. Furthermore, a majority were beginning to respond appropriately to different situations, agreeing on boundaries and persisting at tasks. Across the preschool, staff encouraged children’s social interactions and self-care skills. However, healthy eating was not consistently promoted across the setting as a significant minority of children had chips or cookies for snacks. Consequently, there was the need for staff to emphasise healthy lifestyles and to enlist the support of parents in this area. Most children were developing a sense of responsibility. For example, children in the Kindergarten classes were designated as servers each day and helped to serve breakfast and lunch to their peers.



RECOMMENDATION 4

Amend the structure of the typical day to maximise children’s practical hands-on learning time.

The preschool had made **satisfactory** progress in addressing this recommendation.

Following the last inspection, the preschool leaders and staff had revised the daily schedule to allocate adequate time for child-initiated play both indoors and outdoors. Additionally, the structure of the daily routines allowed children to predict activities and thus they felt empowered and involved in their learning. The schedule for each group comprised a suitable range of hands-on, child-initiated learning for a majority of the day. However, in a minority of observed instances, the schedule was not always followed. Time allocated for napping had been reduced since the last inspection, allowing for more time to be spent in active learning. Learning centres were well organised, and developmentally appropriate resources were readily accessible to all children. Learning centres were equipped with toys and materials to cater to all key focus areas from the Cayman Islands Early Years Curriculum. All children had regular opportunities to independently access and manipulate a range of learning resources. Repurposed materials were also utilised throughout the centre. For example, plastic water bottles were reused to make sensory toys in the Infants class, and an ice-cream container was repurposed as a sorter. In the Kindergarten class, staff were creative in making resources to promote children’s learning. For example, staff used edible ingredients to make play dough. Various types of dried pasta were used to represent the stages in the life cycle of a butterfly. In the Kindergarten classes, activities such as letter hunts promoted children’s literacy development. Children hunted for letter tiles hidden in sensory bins filled with shredded paper and then matched the letters to pictures. Staff often extended children’s learning to the

newly developed outdoor area. For example, activities completed outdoors sometimes built on themes and learning outcomes that children explored in indoor centre activities. For example, children in the Toddler class used magnifying glasses to look for ants in the sand box and children in Kindergarten Two went on a bug hunt outdoors and later discussed their findings. Resources outdoors included blocks, mark making boards, sand area with shovels and buckets, swings, slide, trapezium and an area for wheeled and riding toys. Staff had also made use of limited space to create a grow garden. One lunch time during the inspection, children had the opportunity to enjoy tomatoes that they had planted. Most children used resources and toys in developmentally appropriate ways in active learning, and were supported and guided by staff effectively in their development. Songs and cues were used to support transition routines, and most children readily complied with teachers’ instructions to pack away toys and other resources. Throughout the day, staff interacted with children in a mix of whole group, small group and individual activities. Teacher-led activities were reduced since the last inspection, and most activities were planned and managed effectively to promote learning for almost all children. Visual charts were used effectively to communicate the daily schedule, and rules. Consequently, children were aware of the structure of the day and this provided them with some amount of predictability. Teachers also used visual prompts to allow children to suggest choice of songs during devotion and circle time. However, teachers in the Toddler class required additional support in the use of developmentally appropriate strategies to help those children to share, take turns and cope with frustration.



RECOMMENDATION 5

Address the health and safety issues identified in the previous report.

The preschool had made **satisfactory** progress in addressing this recommendation.

Inspectors observed marked improvement in the quality of the documentation and recordkeeping practices in the areas of health and safety. Additionally, all regulatory requirements were met. For example, the school had current inspection certificates from the Departments of Environmental Health, Fire and Public Health. Staff files were also up to date and almost all staff had completed training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), first aid and child protection. However, one staff who was recently employed was still awaiting the relevant police clearance. In addition, other policies that were geared at ensuring the health and safety of children and staff were evident. These included a safe environment policy; a missing child policy and health and well-being policy. Personal hygiene practices were also prioritised evidenced by regular hand washing and sanitisation. There was also some emphasis on healthy lifestyles as children had regular opportunities for movement both indoor and out. Water consumption was a regular part of children's daily experience. The preschool also provided cooked breakfast and lunches daily; however, there was the need for consistent inclusion of vegetables and fruits to appropriately cater to children's nutritional needs.

Since the last inspection, the preschool leaders had undertaken a reorganisation of the physical space to incorporate a wider variety of activities for children both indoors and out. The preschool's leaders had invested significant time and resources in developing the outdoor learning environment. The play area was retrofitted with a suitable range of play equipment and resources to promote children's integrated skill development. Additionally, the reorganised space ensured better flow of activities and supported children's safe movement during exploratory play. In addition, class schedules were appropriately sequenced to ensure that available indoor spaces could be utilised by other groups whenever another group had outdoor play. Children's physical well-being was promoted through regular outdoor play opportunities.

The Infants' room was also reorganised. Consequently, there was adequate space between cots and clear floor space was available for infants' free play. Other improved safety measures included a system for the safe arrival and departure of children at the preschool. Parents were required to document their children's arrival and departure times and to indicate the person responsible for drop off and pick up. Steps were also taken to promote children's safety while off the compound as there were well documented risk assessment procedures for field trips.



RECOMMENDATION 6

Improve leadership through the introduction of more rigorous and accurate self-evaluation arrangements and comprehensive record keeping systems.

The preschool had made **satisfactory** progress in addressing this recommendation.

Following the full inspection conducted in November 2019, the preschool leaders and staff had engaged in a process of self-review in order to improve the quality of the preschool's provision. The preschool leaders had developed a comprehensive self-evaluation that was appropriately aligned to the Successful Students and Achieving Students 2 Framework. This had served to inform the preschool's priorities for improvement. For example, leaders had placed appropriate focus upon professional development. As a consequence, staff had participated in Hanen Communication and Behaviour Management training to improve their practice. There was also an improved focus on standards. Consequently, the preschool leaders had developed a comprehensive assessment policy which provided guidance to staff on the recording and use of assessment information. Record keeping had also improved. School documents were now filed in labelled folders that were well organised and easily accessible.

Review of the preschool's daily schedule had created a better balance between teacher-initiated and child-initiated activities. Preschool leaders had developed formal lesson observation tools to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching across the preschool. A schedule for lesson observations ensured that staff were appropriately supported in their work. The nurturing ethos and good relationships among staff impacted positively on children's learning. However, in the Toddlers' class where

routines were not yet well established, staff were not always effective in managing children's off task behaviour. Previously, the design and layout of the indoor and outdoor learning environments had restricted child initiated activities. Since the last inspection, school leaders' focus on the outdoor environment had improved the quality of children's learning experiences. The refurbished and reorganised outdoor learning environment now provided a broad range of opportunities for children's language play, construction play and imaginative play. Additionally, most teachers ably supported children to utilise the outdoor learning environment to stimulate, extend and consolidate their learning. Indoor and outdoor play areas were well resourced with a variety of developmentally appropriate resources. This ensured that children had choice and autonomy in their learning. For example, mark making opportunities indoors and out promoted children's early literacy skills. A newly built sand box as well as opportunities for water play provided children with a range of open-ended play opportunities. Almost all children enjoyed their learning and were beginning to demonstrate resilience, curiosity and initiative. Children were learning to manipulate different objects and resources. Staff regularly reinforced children's early numeracy skills throughout the day. Children also had regular hands-on experiences to develop an understanding of shape, size, number and weight through engagement in various centre activities.



SURVEY RESULTS

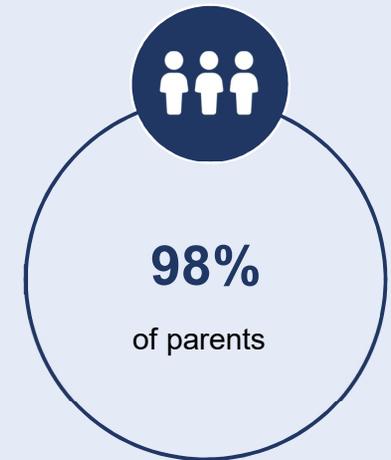
Before the inspection, the views of parents and staff were surveyed. The numbers of participants that completed the survey were:

Parents	48	Staff	13
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Parents

Survey: “I am satisfied with the quality of education provided at this preschool.”

Almost all parents were satisfied with the quality of the preschool’s educational provision. A majority of parents felt that their children were making good progress in their early communication skills. Similarly, a majority felt that their children were making good progress in their mathematical and early scientific understanding. Most agreed that the preschool supported children’s personal and social development. Almost all stated that children were being helped to take turns and almost all expressed that children were developing good environmental understanding. All parents indicated that teaching quality was good and almost all stated that their children enjoyed lessons and were inspired to learn. Also, all agreed that the children were safe and cared for at the preschool. Most parents felt that preschool supported their children to choose healthy lifestyles. Most felt that children were treated fairly and most expressed that poor behaviour was addressed appropriately. A majority felt that children with special education needs received good support. Almost all shared that the preschool was well led and that information for improvement plans was shared. Almost all agreed that communication was effective and that the preschool responded appropriately to parental concerns. Most stated that parents meetings were helpful and that parental involvement was adequate. A majority believed that adequate links were maintained with the community. All felt that staffing levels were adequate and that staff were suitably qualified. Additionally, almost all agreed that the preschool had sufficient resources of good quality to promote children’s learning.



Strongly Agree and Agree

1%

Increase since the last inspection



SURVEY RESULTS

Staff

Survey: “This preschool provides a good quality of education.”

All staff agreed that the preschool provided a good quality education. In addition, most staff stated that most children behaved well and that poor behaviour was dealt with effectively. Most agreed that the preschool promoted a positive learning environment and provided good opportunities for children’s exploration, choice and independent learning. Most felt that assessment practices were good. Similarly, a majority believed that children’s were developing age-appropriate environmental understanding. All agreed that the preschool offered a safe and caring environment; where children are treated fairly. Most staff agreed that the preschool promoted healthy lifestyle choices. A majority of staff believed that children with special educational needs received good support. Most staff agreed that the preschool was well led. Almost all shared that they were involved in the self-evaluation and improvement planning processes of the preschool. Most also stated that they were supported in their continuing professional development. Most believed that parents were actively involved in the work of the preschool and that parents meetings were well attended. A majority agreed that the preschool maintained good links with the community. Most indicated that there were sufficient resources of good quality to support their work with children. All agreed that the preschool had adequate, appropriately qualified and suitably skilled teachers and staff.



Strongly Agree and Agree

0%

Change since the last inspection



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

There will be no further Follow-Through Inspection of Precious Gems Preschool as the preschool will join the regular cycle of inspection.

WHEN WILL THIS SCHOOL BE INSPECTED AGAIN?

As the Precious Gems Preschool was judged to be providing a **satisfactory** quality of education, the preschool will now join the regular cycle of inspection which commenced in January 2021.



WHO ARE WE AND WHAT DO WE DO?

The Office of Education Standards is part of the Portfolio of Civil Service within the Cayman Islands Government. Our function is to inspect early childhood care and education centres, public and private schools and report upon standards in all educational institutions in the Cayman Islands.

How to contact us

You can contact us using the following e-mail address.

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Where to read our reports

Our reports are published regularly and are currently available on the Cayman Islands Government website. Please use the following link to read our latest publications.

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