



EDUCATION QUALITY
ASSURANCE UNIT
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

Inspection Report

June 2013

Precious Gems Pre-School

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.

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	369 Walkers Road, George Town Grand Cayman
Telephone numbers	929-9319 / 323-5400
Email address	<u>preciousgems@yahoo.com</u>
Name of owner	Asha Singh
Manager / lead teacher	Mrs Kim Miller
Age range	0 – 4 years
Number on roll	42 boys and girls 0-12 months - 5 1 year olds - 0 2 year olds - 8 3 year olds - 17 4 year olds – 12

- The Precious Gems Pre-School has undergone many changes since the inspection in 2011. The new manager, Mrs Miller, took up her position at the school in January 2013. There are currently 42 children on roll, 26 of whom are Caymanians. Two children have special educational needs and there are no children with English as an additional language.
- There are eight members of staff including the cook and the manager.
- The school was inspected in 2011 and a number of recommendations were made for improvement. At that time, the main focus was on the provision for the classes of four year olds.

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 provision for children's welfare and safety at Precious Gems Pre-School is good. The Manager is very committed to the work and development of Precious Gems. She has established a caring and welcoming atmosphere at the school which permeates throughout all the groups.
- The children enjoy a healthy breakfast in the mornings, snack (morning and afternoon) which is fruit and water, and a hot lunch, daily. The principal and staff encourage parents and care givers to serve children healthy foods. No sodas are allowed on the compound.
- The principal has established clear procedures for the health and safety of the children and this results in a safe and healthy environment. The school is close to the street, but is securely fenced in. Staff ensure that the bathroom, used by both boys and girls, is kept clean and equipped with soap and paper towel.
- The school conducts regular fire drills and there are enough fire exits. The most recent evacuation in June, 2013, was unannounced. The current fire alarm system is damaged, but is being repaired, and the Fire Department has given helpful talks and demonstrations to the school.
- All staff have a police clearance certificate and a common job description. The manager is developing a job description for assistant teachers.
- Parents sign their children in and out of the school each day. If an issue or emergency arises, parents can be easily contacted.
- The provision for outdoor play is barely adequate. The narrow play area and lack of variety of playground equipment undermine the development of children's gross motor skills. There is no opportunity for children to engage in sand and water play activities and staff do not talk with children enough whilst they are playing, resulting in missed opportunities to enhance children's language development. Children have many opportunities to ride their buggies and cars.

Leading the direction for development and learning

- There are some effective systems in place for monitoring the work of the school. The principal conducts staff meetings regularly, and keeps staff well informed about activities, requirements and training opportunities. She monitors teaching and checks staff's planning well. She encourages staff to plan lessons together and meets with them regularly to discuss further improvements in teaching.
- The school uses the CIEYCF to plan lessons. Staff meet each week and plan a two-week unit of lessons. This enables them to share ideas and enhance their lessons.
- Children with learning or speech difficulties are identified early and effective provision for them is planned. Early Intervention personnel work with children individually and they make good progress.
- Staff send home progress reports to parents which helps parents to better understand what the children are learning.
- The principal encourages effectively staff to take up any relevant training that is offered. Most of the staff have attended the Early Years training.

Management of the centre and staff

- The school completed the self-evaluation form appropriately, indicating how well it considered it was doing, backed up by evidence to support the judgements. The inspection confirmed some of the school's own evaluation.
- The supervision of children during the school day is good. Staff are on duty from 7 in the morning and each class except the Kindergarten has an assistant. Staff usually accompany children to and from their classroom to ensure proper safety and hygiene practices are observed.
- The principal regularly monitors class activities and fills in whenever a staff member is absent. She oversees discipline in the school but there is not yet a school behaviour policy in place. Although there are no written policies for behaviour management or discipline, some staff members use rewards for good behaviour. If children are sent to the office, the principal considers this to be the last resort.
- Every class has access to toilet facilities and staff encourage children to follow good hygienic practices when using the bathroom.
- The school has established some clear policies and procedures, as outlined in the Parent and Staff Handbooks. Staff's performance appraisals are held twice per year. All staff have job descriptions and all staff have police clearance certificates. Copies of these are safely stored in staff files. Staff know their roles and responsibilities, and carry them out efficiently, which contributes to the smooth running of the school.
- In case of an emergency, parents can be easily contacted by telephone or text message. All staff have a directory of parents' information which is updated regularly to ensure that numbers are current and in operation.

Links with parents and external agencies

- The school has established very good links with parents. Parents are allowed to come in and check on their child's progress whenever they want to. They are willing to support the school, including making monetary contributions and are looking forward to helping with an upcoming book drive. Parents gave very good support to the recent sports day. They provided refreshments and helped to officiate.
- Parents are given a useful information handbook outlining: the main school procedures, such as what to do in case of an emergency or in the event of illness, and how to nurture and care for children, as well as goals children should aim for and how parents can help them.
- Members of the community, such as nurses and police, visit the school regularly to give presentations. The dietician (with the help of parents), selected the healthy menu which gives children choices in what they eat.
- Good links have also been established with Cayman Academy. This year, Precious Gems will have their first graduation of the Kindergarten class there.

Precious Gems continues to provide well for the children. Leadership and management are good. The manager has established a warm, caring and positive atmosphere throughout the school. She has high expectations of what the school can achieve and is open to ideas to improve further. There are effective systems to monitor the school's work, and procedures have been established to ensure the health, safety and welfare of children. Communication between staff is good and links with parents continue to be a strength of the school.

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 atmosphere at the school. Staff are warm and caring and are helpful to the children. They hold and comfort those who are upset, and calm them down quickly. They are quick to resolve behaviour issues, and help children feel good about themselves. Their good encouragement and positive manner help children to try harder and do well. Children are generally happy and move enthusiastically to participate in activities. They generally get on well with each other and demonstrate growing independence as they do things by themselves, such as going to the bathroom or selecting resources for activities in the classroom.
- The cleanliness of the school is maintained well. Bathrooms are clean and only one is used by both boys and girls. While children move independently to the bathrooms, staff monitor their movements. Some staff allow children to use hand sanitizers before they eat their meals. However, they still encourage hand washing.
- Some staff do not always follow the hygiene rules. For example, they do not always wash their hands or allow children to wash theirs before meals or snacks.
- Many staff deal with inappropriate behaviours promptly and effectively. This was seen during the inspection when a staff member's skilful intervention dealt with a minor misdemeanour effectively.
- Children who have special educational needs receive support from the Early Intervention team, but otherwise work alongside other children in the classroom. They are not always well integrated with their peers and are sometimes kept apart. The school needs to find ways to manage pupils' challenging behaviours without ostracising the child.

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.

- Children generally show respect to adults and each other. They usually say please and thank you at the appropriate times. Some staff provide a good experience for children by their lively and enthusiastic manner, use of praise, and warm sense of humour. Staff encourage children's good manners and they speak kindly to the children. Staff deal well with the isolated incidents of children who do not show respect.
- Children have learned to say grace before a meal throughout the school. They sing lively songs in English and Spanish during devotion and some can say prayers. They know right from wrong and are not afraid to correct each other. Children are aware of their own culture and can answer questions associated with it. Symbols and pictures of the Cayman Islands are posted in some rooms and at strategic points around the school.
- Staff use praise effectively to manage children's behaviour and encourage and motivate them in their work. Good behaviour is rewarded through 'Star Student' recognition.
- Classroom rules focus on doing the right thing and staff remind children of these rules before starting a lesson. The pacey and lively lessons keep children alert and focused. Brain gym activities help children to regain concentration on their lesson.

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.

- The warm atmosphere and caring manner of staff ensure that children want to participate in lessons, and they do well. Children communicate well with staff and their peers: they ask and answer questions, count and say their letter names. They demonstrate good recall as they answer questions during the review lesson.
- The class of two-year-olds was very enthusiastic in the way they answered the staff member's questions on a range of topics from numbers to culture. The children were confident and articulate, and most spoke fluently.
- Children are developing fine motor skills well. They write their names, colour pictures, trace over letters carefully and can match numbers to quantity. They enjoy taking part in art activities.
- While staff and children share such good relationships in the classroom, staff need to extend this to the outdoor playground. Although staff supervise the children well, they do not interact enough with children playing outside.

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?

- There are adequate age-appropriate books and puzzles in the classrooms. These resources are placed on low shelves which give children easy access. Children are able to choose them when needed during lessons or in the mornings when they arrive at school. They usually play well together and share resources fairly.
- Children have limited opportunities to explore and be creative. There are not enough objects for them to play with, such as toy animals, construction blocks, dressing-up clothes for dramatic play. They do not have enough opportunities to engage in music, art, writing or mathematics.
- Phonics (the sounds letters make) is taught well. Children learn the names and sounds of letters. There is some children's work on display in classes, but not much. There are too few opportunities for children to write or develop their fine motor skills and coordination through drawing and mark-making.
- Children get a good opportunity to see the world around them when they go on field trips. They can ask the 'who' and 'why' questions about things.

The effectiveness of provision, including teaching and its impact on children's learning and development, is adequate. Staff plan lessons well, but do not review the learning that has taken place adequately. Staff's good questioning enables children to think hard about their answers. Children are enthusiastic about their learning. They are respectful and have positive attitudes. Children have good opportunities to read the few books regularly and choose their own activities, but the narrow range of resources does not stimulate children's imagination or the growth of their vocabulary well enough.

Recommendations (These are the priority areas for development)

In order to improve further, the school needs to:

1. Provide a wider range of resources and opportunities for children to explore and express their thoughts, ideas and feelings in creative activities in and out of their classrooms.
2. Establish a school-wide behaviour plan that is consistently followed by all staff in order to improve behaviour.
3. Devise a system to document classroom visits in order to monitor teaching, learning and assessment effectively.
4. Improve the outdoor play facilities to provide more stimulating activities and a wider range of experiences for 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 Precious Gems Pre-school 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.