



**EDUCATION QUALITY
ASSURANCE UNIT**
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

Inspection Report

May 2013

Sister Janice Early Learning 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 (CIEYCF):
 - 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	41, Watler Lane, Crewe Road
Telephone numbers	949-2524
Email address	<u>sisterjanicepreschool@yahoo.com</u>
Name of owner	Mr. Eldon Rankine
Manager / lead teacher	Ms Carol Mae Watson
Age range	6 months – 4 years
Number on roll	85 boys and girls Birth - 1 year olds - 6 2 year olds- 20 3 year olds - 29 4 year olds - 30

- Sister Janice's Early Learning Centre has been operating for over 20 years. There are currently 85 children at the centre, ranging from six months to four years of age. Two children have special educational needs and 20 are learning English as an additional language. The majority of children (72) are Caymanian.
- The centre was inspected in 2011 and a number of recommendations were made for improvement, including actions that needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The centre was visited twice since the inspection to identify what progress had been made and to indicate what support the centre would need to secure the necessary improvements.
- There are 12 members of staff, most of who are full-time.

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 principal is very committed to the centre and is keen for it to improve. She has helped to establish a warm and caring ethos.
- Daily attendance registers are completed appropriately and the nurse keeps a good record of children's medication. In other respects, information is not recorded systematically. For example, records are not kept of fire drills or of visits by agencies such as Department of Environmental Health or the Fire Service.
- Some recommendations from the recent environmental health visit have already been implemented, such as locks on the cabinet doors, and an extra hand wash basin in the kitchen. No report from environmental health was available.
- The centre is very clean and most classroom spaces have at least one window to allow for natural lighting. The size of classrooms is still an area of concern, resulting in overcrowding and very little space for children to move around. Storage of materials and resources on shelves above the staff is unsafe and a potential hazard, particularly in the event of an earthquake or tremor.
- The outdoor play area is adequate. It is fenced off and there are separate play areas for the younger and older staff. Play equipment is appropriate with swings, slides, and moon climbers. There is a sandy area under a tree, but no water table or sandbox for outdoor play is visible.

Leading the direction for development and learning

- Most staff are attempting to plan activities based on the new CIEYCF, but this is not consistent across the classes. The planning does not always translate to good learning opportunities in the classrooms. The principal checks some, but not all, lesson plans each week and visits classrooms, but there are no records of this being monitored.
- The owner reported that staff have attended all of the training offered by the ECCEU. The principal also acknowledges support from the ECCEU officer, who completed three training sessions in school with the staff. Despite this training, it is evident that most staff are unsure how to organise activities to reflect the principles behind the early childhood curriculum. Few staff have any prior training or qualifications in early childhood education.
- The owner reported that children are well prepared for school and that they make good progress. However, there are currently no systems for recording children's progress and achievements.

Management of the centre and staff

- The school completed the self-evaluation form requested for the inspection and involved all staff in a discussion about it. However, the self-evaluation was not based on a systematic review of evidence and there were no examples provided to support the over-generous judgements against all areas. The principal accepts that she needs more guidance on how to complete this form.
- There is no performance management in place and staff do not have job descriptions. Staff files are kept off-site and the majority of the staff have had police clearance certificates.

Links with parents and external agencies

- Parents feel very positive about the centre and remarked on its cleanliness. The monthly parent teacher association meetings provide useful opportunities for information about upcoming events or for parents to share concerns. Parents have opportunities to speak with staff at drop-off or pick-up times or call if there are concerns. The annual graduation and the Christmas concert are two events that are well attended by parents.
- Progress reports are sent home once per year. A sample report card was shared with the team and the principal is awaiting feedback on this from the ECCEU Officer. This report card does not reflect the areas of the Early Years Curriculum and is not appropriate for children of all ages in the centre.
- The early identification of children with special needs is good and links with the Early Intervention Programme have resulted in two children receiving twice weekly support from the Speech and Language Therapists. There was no record however of how the children were identified or an individual education plan for either one.

The leadership and management of the centre are unsatisfactory. The principal has established a warm and caring ethos and has shown a willingness to improve, but there are a number of significant weaknesses that are impacting negatively on children's learning and progress. There are far too many children in several of the classrooms leading to over-crowding. The over-laden shelves over children's heads are potentially hazardous. There is no record of any fire evacuation drills. The assessment of children's progress is inadequate. The monitoring of staff's plans and practice in the classroom is ineffective so that children are not thriving and progressing as well as they should be.

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.

- The school is clean and orderly. Parents spoken to say that their children are happy and this was evident to the inspectors.
- Adults are warm and caring towards the children and generally aware of their emotional needs. Some classrooms have displays of faces showing different emotions.
- Children are not given enough opportunities to develop resilience as too much is planned for them and they rarely have to choose activities for themselves.
- There are a few aspects of the building that potentially undermine pupils' health and safety. Most classrooms are too small for the number of children. The principal has split one class into two and this is a good way to get round this issue, but there were other classes that were too large. The lack of space restricts the kinds of activities and this contribute to restlessness and 'off-task' behaviour in some rooms.

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.

- This is the strongest area for learning in the school. Children show respect for their staff and often for each other. A good example of sharing occurred in the infant classroom when a small child politely handed a toy to a baby. Some staff encourage children to take turns and share. In other classrooms, particularly those that are overcrowded, children do not always cooperate effectively and this sometimes results in pushing or falling over each other. Staff often spend too long trying to teach the whole class and some fail to get the attention of all children.
- Staff help children to develop respect through participation in songs of praise and prayers in the morning. Children in one classroom closed their eyes and respectively joined in a song 'Thank you Lord'.
- The school provides opportunities for children to learn about their own and other cultures. They have a World Culture day and flags at the front of the school represent different countries. The principal explained that they teach children about Christianity, but not about the different denominations or other faiths, and they do not collect information about each child's faith.

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.

- Staff include useful displays in their classrooms of the alphabet and some key words linked to the current topic or theme, such as 'fruit'. Staff and other adults talk kindly to children and try to engage them in conversation. Several staff make good use of singing and children enjoy this. In the best lesson, the staff member asked children to explain their favourite fruits to the whole class and encouraged full answers. In general, though, children do not talk very much and so are not developing their speaking skills as well as they could. They are expected to listen and many find this hard to do. In some cases, the adults' own command of Standard English is not good. This was pointed out in the last inspection report in 2011 and the principal explained that some staff have attended training to improve their English. More training is clearly needed.
- There are not enough opportunities for children to develop writing skills appropriate to their different ages, such as mark making with a range of different materials, for example, paints, chalk and crayons or writing in the sand. The older children do not appear to have enough opportunities to practise their 'writing'.
- Staff read to the children but do not provide children with ready access to books, appropriate to their age, that they can choose for themselves and 'read' on a comfortable chair or cushion.

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?

- Staff are planning for all four key focus areas of the new CIEYCF, including exploration. In practice few opportunities are provided for children to explore. The small size of most rooms makes it difficult for staff to provide a range of resources for children that would help them to develop their creativity and curiosity.
- There is not much evidence of mathematical or technological development. All rooms do not have clear displays of, for example, number lines, mathematical puzzles and games. Children took great delight in playing with wooden building blocks in one classroom, but the need to share them with around seven other children limited their learning and progress.

The effectiveness of provision, including teaching and its impact on children's learning and development, is unsatisfactory. Although children are respectful and staff are caring, the practice in classrooms is not helping children develop the skills they need, such as resilience and independence. The range of activities is very limited and not reflecting the new early years curriculum. The poor English language of a few members of staff and the general lack of opportunities for children to talk is inhibiting children's language development.

Recommendations (These are the priority areas for development)

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

1. **Address the issue of overcrowding in several classrooms as a matter of urgency. This was a key issue in the 2011 inspection.**
2. Address the other potential health and safety issue identified in this report: the over-laden shelves.
3. Ensure that staff provide a wider range of activities and resources in each classroom to enable children to make more progress across all areas of learning, but particularly in relation to the development of exploration and communication. Children need to be given more opportunities to choose activities for themselves from a well-planned and organised selection linked to the four key focus areas of learning.
4. Establish a more systematic approach to the assessment and recording of children's progress and recording of information, such as the monitoring of teaching and learning, incidents and events such as fire drills.
5. Provide training to improve the English language skills of some of the adults who work with children. This was an issue identified in the 2011 inspection report.

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 findings. 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 6th 2013.