



EDUCATION QUALITY  
ASSURANCE UNIT  
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

# Inspection Report

May 2013

**Montessori School of Cayman**

## 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	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](http://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

<b>Address</b>	<b>519 South Church Street P.O. Box 30333 KY1-1202</b>
<b>Telephone numbers</b>	<b>949-0202</b>
<b>Email address</b>	<b><a href="mailto:montessorischoolofcayman@yahoo.com">montessorischoolofcayman@yahoo.com</a></b>
<b>Name of owner</b>	<b>Peggy Anderson</b>
<b>Manager / lead teacher</b>	<b>Lucy Brewer</b>
<b>Age range</b>	<b>2 – 4 year olds</b>
<b>Number on roll</b>	<b>Birth – 1 year olds – 0 1 year olds – 0 2 year olds – 8 3 year olds – 13 4 year olds – 14  Total = 35</b>

- Montessori School of Cayman is a privately owned centre. It has been in operation for 25 years. The school is located on the ground floor of a two-storey building. The owner's residence is on the floor above.
- There are three full-time staff, including the lead teacher, and one part-time member of staff.
- There are no children with special educational needs currently enrolled at the school.
- The school was inspected in February 2011. At that time the leadership and management as well as health, safety and welfare were judged to be good. Teaching and its impact on learning as well as children's personal, social and emotional development were judged to be very good.

### 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 positive ethos has been created in the school. Staff are warm and caring towards the children.
- The school is maintained well and is clean and orderly. The children are well-supervised inside and outside and the exterior doors are not accessible from the outside.
- The outdoor play equipment is generally in a good condition, although the plastic climbing frame and kitchenette appear to be in need of a clean.
- Lunch is not provided by the school and parents are responsible for providing a packed lunch each day. The food can be heated by microwave, if needed. The school could do more to encourage parents to provide healthy food options as this is not always the case.
- The leaders undertake appropriate checks on staff. Police clearance certificates are kept in individual staff files and are renewed each year.

### Leading the direction for development and learning

- The school owner is on-site and provides cover when staff are absent, which helps to provide consistency for the children. Each staff member has responsibility for overseeing the activities and targets for a group of approximately ten children.
- Staff's planning is based on the Montessori curriculum, drawing appropriately on the draft CIEYCF. Staff monitor and evaluate children's progress and achievements regularly and keep records of mastery using individual learning plans. Targets are set for each child, based on his/her individual progress through the plan.
- Communication between staff is good. A staff meeting is held every month, but in addition to these meetings, staff communicate regularly throughout and at the end of the day, as needed.
- Some staff attended the curriculum training provided by ECCEU, but not all staff are currently involved in any professional development.

### Management of the centre and staff

- The school is managed well and appropriate safety checks are undertaken. For example, fire extinguishers and smoke detectors are checked each year by a private company and were recently reviewed. However, the school does not carry out fire drills regularly enough and the Fire Service Department should be invited to review the drills.
- Policies and procedures are in place for emergencies and parents are immediately contacted if there is an injury to a child.
- All staff have job descriptions which are kept in individual staff files. Staff have had first-aid training and will complete a refresher course in September, 2013.

### Links with parents and external agencies

- A handbook is provided for parents that outlines useful information, including the policies and procedures for the school. Parents are given their children's individual learning plan when their child completes their schooling. Parents are able to speak briefly with staff during daily pick-up and drop-off times and may arrange staff conferences at other agreed times.
- The school has invited the National Trust and a community policy officer to give presentations to the children. The school is also involved in the 'Adopt A Blue Iguana' programme.
- A representative from the Water Authority checks the water regularly, but the school has not had a recent visit from the Environmental Health Department.
- Currently parents have access to a secure school web-site where the staff upload pictures of class activities.

**The leadership and management of the centre are good. The school has been established as a caring and well organised centre. There are a few areas that need to be improved before leadership and management can be judged as very good.**

## **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 engages in the good practice of scheduling regular water breaks throughout the day to ensure that children are kept hydrated.
- Children are provided with leadership or 'helper' roles that give them opportunities to take on responsibility. Children are keen to contribute and assist with organising activities.
- Staff are caring and compassionate, and are alert to children's needs.
- Children take care of their learning materials and have established routines and procedures for using and returning them to their storage areas.

### **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 know the routines and settle quickly without much prompting from adults. They behave well.
- Staff use a positive tone with children and encourage and praise them regularly. This helps to build their self-confidence and inspires them to work harder.
- Children play and work well together sensibly. They encourage each other and offer reminders of social graces, such as not speaking with a mouth full of food.

### **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 sing songs and read to the children. Most children listen attentively and participate when taught in a group and during independent and small group activities led by the staff.
- New vocabulary, for example, 'meteorologist' is introduced to the children, when the learning opportunity arises and staff help children develop simple definitions for such words.
- Children communicate well with each other and with staff. However, adults could talk more to children during outdoor play, as this will help increase their vocabulary and language fluency even further.

### **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?*

- The school provides children with access to a good range of resources, such as books, small objects that help children learn numeracy skills, and materials for art and craft. Staff work with small groups of children on their individual learning plans, while the other children work independently on activities of their choosing.
- Staff organise a good range of activities that enable children to develop their fine and gross motor skills as well as opportunities for mathematics, literacy, and cultural development.
- The outdoor play area has a good range of resources including climbing frames, balls, sand buckets and shovels. Children are also given the opportunity to make choices as they play outdoors.
- During whole group sessions children are immersed in learning opportunities that are developmentally appropriate and span a range of subject areas. For example, during the inspection, children were learning about ants as part of the 'bugs' theme. This very good activity provided them with opportunities to: count, move, identify days of the week, lead, turn-take, and to matching. The children reviewed the letter 'b' and each was asked to think of words beginning with b, coming up with words such as butterfly, bumblebee, Byron, bike, bean, boy, bicycle, ball and bucket.
- Staff need to give children opportunities to self-correct. In two different staff-led activities the staff member removed or rearranged manipulatives to correct the child rather than asking for them to identify their error and make their own corrections.

**Although there are a few areas to improve further, overall the effectiveness of provision, including teaching, and its impact on children's learning and development, is very good.**



## **Recommendations** (These are the priority areas for development)

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

1. Arrange regular fire drills and include the Fire Service Department to assist with fire drill safety procedures.
2. Ensure that children are given opportunities to self-correct, by staff allowing children to identify their mistakes reflect, and make their own corrections.
3. Ensure that all of the outdoor equipment is cleaned regularly.

## **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 6<sup>th</sup> 2013.**