



Office of Education
Standards
Cayman Islands Government

INSPECTION REPORT

NOVEMBER 2024



ISLAND MONTESSORI

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This report provides a comprehensive account of the setting’s quality of provision. A **summary report** offering an overview of the inspection judgements and main inspection findings is available at www.oes.gov.ky/education-institutions.

Cayman Islands Early Childhood Inspection Framework

In January 2024, the Office of Education Standards commenced inspections of early childhood settings using the First Steps to Success: Nurturing Environments and Thriving Children framework (Cayman Islands Government, 2023). Before the introduction of this tailored framework for the early childhood sector, inspections of educational institutions, including early childhood settings, were conducted using the Successful Schools and Achieving Students 2 framework.

Developmental Domains

When used in relation to human development, the word “domain” refers to specific aspects of growth and progress. The universal domains of development in early childhood, and also reflected throughout this inspection report and the inspection framework, are:

- ***Cognitive*** – Refers to the developmental aspect of children’s mental and intellectual abilities. It encompasses the processes of thinking, learning, problem-solving, reasoning and understanding the world around them.
- ***Social Emotional*** – Refers to the development aspect of children’s ability to understand, manage and express their emotions, as well as their capacity to interact and form relationships with others. This domain encompasses a wide range of skills and behaviours that contribute to children’s social and emotional well-being, including self-awareness, self-regulation, sensory processing, empathy and building connections with peers and adults.
- ***Communication and Language*** – Refers to the developmental aspects of children’s ability to communicate effectively and develop language skills. It encompasses a range of skills and milestones related to language acquisition, comprehension, expression, writing and interaction.
- ***Physical*** – Refers to the developmental aspect of children’s gross and fine motor skills and overall physical well-being. It includes the development of both large muscle groups (gross motor skills) and small muscle movements (fine motor skills) as well as eye-hand co-ordination.





















Early Childhood Setting

The term ‘early childhood setting’ is used throughout this inspection report and the inspection framework, First Steps to Success: Nurturing Environments and Thriving Children. Early childhood setting is defined as:

An entity of establishment which provides services for the care and education of children under compulsory school age as registered by the Education Council and/or approved by the Ministry of Education.

Early childhood settings include privately owned and operated Early Childhood Care and Education Centres, Nursery and Reception programmes and classes in government schools and early childhood provision in private primary or all-through schools.

Early Childhood Setting Information

General Information		
	Setting name	Island Montessori
	Address	491 Crew Road, George Town
	Telephone number	1 (345) 945 5814
	Website	www.islandmontessori.org
	Name of principal/manager	Jennifer Cowdroy (Director & Co-Owner)
	Name of owner	Jennifer Cowdroy
	Date of this inspection	November 19 – 20, 2024
	Date of last inspection	October 25 -27, 2022
Children		
	Number of children on roll	105
	Age range of the children	16 months to 48 months
	Groups	Toddler; Casa
	Number of Caymanian children	30
	Number of children with additional learning support needs	10
	Largest nationality group of children	British
Curriculum		
	Main curriculum	Montessori; Cayman Islands Early Childhood Curriculum Framework
	External tests and assessments	NA
	Accreditation	Montessori International
Staff		
	Number of licensed teachers	2
	Number of other staff	18
	Teacher-child ratio	1:4; 1:7

Context

Island Montessori is owned by Casa Partners Ltd., a group comprising individuals from diverse professional and personal backgrounds. The school opened its doors in May 2017 with an initial enrolment of 40 children. By the 2023/24 academic year, enrolment had grown to 100 students.

From September 2020 to June 2023, the school offered Year 1–6 (Key Stages 1 & 2) programmes. However, in September 2023, it transitioned to focus exclusively on early childhood education, operating as an Early Years Centre.

Located on a spacious 1.5-acre property on Crewe Road, Island Montessori features expansive outdoor learning areas designed to complement its educational philosophy. The school follows the Montessori Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum mapped to the Cayman Islands Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, with classes structured into two age groups:

Toddlers: Ages 16 to 36 months

Casa: Ages 36 to 48 months

The leadership team firmly believes that Montessori principles, which emphasise fostering independence and confidence, provide an excellent foundation for children as they transition into the mandatory school-age curriculum. The preschool's mission is to create a nurturing environment, committed to the development of the 'whole child'. The school is led by co-programme managers Roisin Mortimer-Murphy and Rhachel Whyte, alongside Jennifer Cowdroy, who serves as both Director and co-owner. Together with the Head Teachers, this leadership team is responsible for the overall management and operation of the school and reports directly to the Directors of Casa Partners Ltd. To support governance, two external advisors had been appointed to provide additional oversight and expertise.

Overall Judgement History

Cycle 1 Inspection	January 2020	Good
Cycle 2 Inspection	February 2022	Good
Cycle 3 Inspection	January 2024	Excellent

Next Steps

The Centre has achieved its second consecutive good or better rating and as a result, will be inspected within 4 years.

Current Performance Summary

Performance Standard 1 Helping our children to achieve in key areas of their learning and development				
Quality Indicator		Previous Inspection Judgement	Current Inspection Judgement	Judgement Change
Cognitive development	1.1 Attainment	N/A	Excellent	N/A
	1.2 Progress	N/A	Excellent	N/A
Social Emotional development	1.1 Attainment	N/A	Excellent	N/A
	1.2 Progress	N/A	Excellent	N/A
Communication and Language development	1.1 Attainment	N/A	Excellent	N/A
	1.2 Progress	N/A	Excellent	N/A
Physical development	1.1 Attainment	N/A	Excellent	N/A
	1.2 Progress	N/A	Excellent	N/A

Performance Standard 2 Promoting our children’s emotional well-being and civic and environmental understanding			
Quality Indicator	Previous Inspection Judgement	Current Inspection Judgement	Judgement Change
2.1 Social emotional learning	N/A	Excellent	N/A
2.2 Understanding of and appreciation for culture, religion and the environment	N/A	Excellent	N/A

Performance Standard 3 Ensuring effective teaching to support our children’s learning and development			
Quality Indicator	Previous Inspection Judgement	Current Inspection Judgement	Judgement Change
3.1 Teaching	Excellent	Excellent	→
3.2 Learning	Excellent	Excellent	→
3.3 Observation, assessment and planning	Good	Excellent	↑

Performance Standard 4 Offering a curriculum that meets the care and educational needs of all our children

Quality Indicator	Previous Inspection Judgement	Current Inspection Judgement	Judgement Change
4.1 Curriculum quality	Excellent	Excellent	→

Performance Standard 5 Keeping our children safe and well supported

Quality Indicator	Previous Inspection Judgement	Current Inspection Judgement	Judgement Change
5.1 Health and safety	Excellent	Excellent	→
5.2 Support and guidance	Excellent	Excellent	→

Performance Standard 6 Leading and managing in partnership with parents and the community

Quality Indicator	Previous Inspection Judgement	Current Inspection Judgement	Judgement Change
6.1 Leadership	Good	Excellent	↑
6.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good	Good	→
6.3 Links with parents and the community	Excellent	Excellent	→
6.4 Staffing and the learning environment	Good	Excellent	↑

What the Setting Does Well

- Children's achievement and progress in all four domains were judged as excellent.
- Children of all ages were developing their curiosity, imagination and problem-solving skills through high-quality learning experiences.
- The setting provided a comprehensive curriculum that effectively supported children's learning and development. Both the planned and delivered curriculum reflected the staff's strong understanding and confidence in implementing an emergent, inquiry-based approach. This led to exceptional learning outcomes for the children.
- A culture of reflection and self-review supported senior leaders and staff to plan effectively for improvements.
- The well-resourced visually appealing outdoor environments were thoughtfully designed to promote rich, multisensory learning experiences for children.

Recommendations

1. Further refine the Advisory Body to establish a clear and cohesive framework that effectively aligns with and supports the preschool's strategic goals and vision.
2. Strengthen collaborative links with other early childhood settings to build a robust community of practice to facilitate the sharing of best practices.

Inspection Findings

Performance Standard 1 Helping our children to achieve in key areas of their learning and development		
Quality Indicator		Inspection Judgement
Cognitive development	1.1 Attainment	Excellent
	1.2 Progress	Excellent

Cognitive development

Attainment in the Cognitive domain was excellent. Toddlers demonstrated early scientific skills by observing frogs and caring for plants, noting roots as they grew. They solved problems creatively, such as blocking ramps to stop toy cars and engaged in colour-matching activities. In Casa classes, children melted ice using droppers, spray bottles and by breaking it into pieces. Early mathematical skills were evident as children fitted 3D shapes, solved puzzles and used rods. With adult guidance, they followed recipes, counting eggs and scoops of ingredients. They counted by rote and demonstrated an understanding of numeral values. Technological skills were demonstrated as they mastered the use of tools such as magnifying glasses, tweezers and tongs, as well as everyday materials such as foam hair curlers to make shapes and letters. Literacy development was evident through proper book handling and retelling of familiar stories as children engaged with storybooks independently. Children made healthy choices about eating, rest, movement and hydration.

Progress in the Cognitive domain was judged as excellent. According to the data the setting recorded, almost all children made expected progress towards age appropriate milestones or maintained already high standards in their development. Learning observations during the inspection supported the data findings as well. Children built on prior knowledge throughout the setting. For example, when experimenting with an exploratory activity involving ice, children discussed the likeness of baking soda being released from the ice as “a volcano erupting”. Children make designs in “sand pizza” of shapes and snakes, noting the beginning sounds of the words. Children progressed well in their early mathematical understanding as Toddlers identified the number of ingredients when baking cloud cookies and when children in the Casa class expressed understanding of increasingly higher numbers and worked with more complex puzzles and equipment across their classroom. Growing independence skills were noted as all children entered the setting and put their belongings away, independently chose their own work and replaced equipment when completed. All children were able to independently feed themselves and clean up after themselves, including washing their plates and utensils.

Areas for development

Quality Indicator		Inspection Judgement
Social Emotional development	1.1 Attainment	Excellent
	1.2 Progress	Excellent

Social Emotional development

Attainment in the Social Emotional domain was judged as excellent. Children showed respect for themselves, others and their surroundings. Confidence and courage were evident as children took risks and tried new activities, while politeness and respect were consistently displayed towards peers and adults. They cared for their environment by cleaning up after meals and returning work equipment to its place. Children showed acceptance of differences, demonstrating respectful curiosity of those around them. They participated in cultural and religious activities, recently learning about Diwali and beginning to explore Christmas traditions. Emotionally, children managed their feelings well, with most demonstrating notable maturity. Social skills were well developed. Children in Casa classes formed strong friendships and showed respect for all peers. Children reflected on their learning and social interactions, engaging with adults and self-monitoring their behaviour during activities. Rich sensory experiences were embraced, as children explored cloud dough, coloured spaghetti, varied movements and diverse smells and sounds. Children independently sought quiet time, using noise-cancelling headphones and engaging with calming areas or peace baskets for self-regulation.

Progress in the Social Emotional domain was excellent. Data presented by the early childhood setting detailed excellent progress in this domain and, during the inspection, observations supported the information provided in the collected data. Toddlers demonstrated growth in their social development, transitioning from solitary play to cooperative play. This progress was evident when toddlers engaged in shared activities such as playing with toy dinosaurs or collaboratively constructing a train track. Older children in a Casa class exhibited strong collaborative abilities, working together to complete complex floor puzzles. They further demonstrated their creativity and understanding of real-life through elaborate role-play scenarios, often drawing inspiration from real-life experiences. Children made progress in showing respect for the environment. A Casa class explored the concept of protecting sea turtles, linking their learning to insights gained from a visit by the Turtle Centre staff. This inspired discussions on how they could actively contribute to environmental conservation. There was notable progress in the area of sensory development as all children advanced from merely tolerating diverse sensory experiences to articulating these experiences with a rich vocabulary. They shared how they felt during sensory activities, enhancing both their expressive language and emotional awareness.

Areas for development

Structure more regular opportunities for children to be more involved in age-appropriate sustainable initiatives.

Quality Indicator		Inspection Judgement
Communication and Language development	1.1 Attainment	Excellent
	1.2 Progress	Excellent

Communication and Language development

Attainment in Communication and Language was excellent. Observations and assessment data revealed that across almost all sub-domains, almost all children consistently demonstrated knowledge, skills, and understanding above age-related expectations. Children exhibited strong language development, displaying enthusiasm for conversation and discussion both with adults and peers. All children were actively learning to identify and sound out letter sounds. Additionally, they were developing emergent writing skills through opportunities for early mark-making, with most children steadily improving their fine motor skills. For instance, they demonstrated the ability to use tongs to transfer ping pong balls between containers and to fit puzzle pieces together. Children in Casa effectively used their phonic knowledge to sound out letter sounds and identify words beginning with specific consonant sounds. Regular opportunities to engage in listening activities, such as stories, nursery rhymes, and music, supported their auditory development. As a result, all children were able to listen attentively and respond appropriately. Most could successfully follow instructions involving three steps, and almost all - including the youngest children - displayed clear behaviours indicative of active listening.

Progress in Communication and Language was excellent. All children made excellent progress in early literacy skills and emergent writing. A diverse range of multicultural and theme-related books was readily available for children to explore throughout the day. As a result, almost all children demonstrated good book-handling skills. Children also made significant progress in self-expression by engaging in activities that promoted creativity through music, movement, and dance. Children made good progress in developing their ability to express their thoughts and feelings about their learning experiences. For example, during a reading activity with a parent, toddlers were able to point out animals in the story and mimic the sounds of various animals.

Areas for development

Improve opportunities for the children to explore rhythm, rhyme and sounds.

Quality Indicator		Inspection Judgement
Physical development	1.1 Attainment	Excellent
	1.2 Progress	Excellent

Physical development

Children’s attainment in physical development was excellent. Internal assessments showed that almost all children were achieving or exceeding early years learning goals. Carefully designed materials, planned activities, and well-prepared environments provided ample opportunities for developing fine and gross motor skills. Children engaged in regular activities to support their fine motor skill development. Activities included pouring liquids, spooning, threading, using rolling pins, squeezing, mark making, writing, manipulating playdough, and using utensils to cut. Transfer of learning from home to preschool was evident when children used tools like mini brooms, cleaning cloths, and scoops for cleaning tasks. More challenging fine motor skills, such as placing fine sticks into peg holes and screwing and unscrewing bottle caps, demonstrated a broad range of experiences. The large, open, and organic playground with designated areas for gross motor skill development allowed almost all children to develop their large muscles through climbing, sliding, running, balancing, swinging, digging, pulling, pushing, and riding on equipment that offered sufficient challenge and risk-taking opportunities. Additionally, integrating movement such as dance into daily routines and emphasising sensory experiences fostered a holistic approach to physical development.

Progress in physical development was excellent. Assessment results showed that all children made expected or above progress in this domain. Teachers used a variety of assessment tools like the Montessori compass, wall progress trackers, and bespoke checklists which provided a multifaceted approach to monitoring development. This comprehensive set of tools ensured that teachers had a complete picture of each child's growth, enabling more targeted and effective teaching strategies. The seamless progression of skills was evident where children worked with larger objects and simple materials, such as playdough and large blocks, and advanced to more intricate tasks like threading beads, using tweezers, and completing puzzles with smaller pieces. In addition, children moved from jumping in place during dance classes, to jumping higher and over further distances when playing outdoors.

Areas for development

Performance Standard 2 Promoting our children's emotional well-being and civic and environmental understanding	
Quality Indicator	Inspection Judgement
2.1 Social emotional learning	Excellent
2.2 Understanding of and appreciation for culture, religion and the environment	Excellent

Social emotional learning

Social emotional learning was judged as excellent. Throughout the early childhood setting, children demonstrated positive behaviour. They effectively managed their own feelings and behaviour, identifying emotions as they navigated their day. Children consistently exhibited a deep understanding of their emotions and those of others. They effectively utilised emotion dolls and engaged with the calming area or peace basket to self-regulate when required. All children demonstrated high levels of self-esteem and were confident when interacting with adults, including visitors to the setting such as parent readers. Children showed an awareness of the impact of their behaviours on peers. One child, upon accidentally shovelling sand onto another, immediately brushed it off the peer, apologising without adult prompting. This response illustrated a well-developed sense of empathy and responsibility and was evident across the setting. Even the youngest children in the setting demonstrated the ability to share, take turns and interact positively with their peers. Transitioning seamlessly from parallel play to more collaborative interactions, they engaged in cooperative activities, such as constructing with connecting blocks together or sharing resources in role-play scenarios such as bathing dolls. These interactions were underpinned by a supportive environment where children felt safe, respected and valued, enabling them to build strong, positive relationships with one another. The children's sense of identity and belonging was very effectively supported and celebrated through the attractive photographic displays of children and their families. Their self-regulation was well supported through activities, reflective practices and ongoing support from staff.

Understanding of and appreciation for culture, religion and the environment

Children's understanding of and appreciation for culture, religion and the environment was judged as excellent. Children demonstrated a secure understanding and appreciation of culture, religion, and the environment. Almost all children confidently engaged in activities that reflected an age-appropriate understanding of Caymanian heritage and other cultures. For example, children created authentic art representing the Cayman flag, tasted local foods like rice and beans and breadfruit, and participated in traditional activities such as quadrille dancing and thatch plaiting. They also explored global religions by creating Rangoli art for Diwali, painting the Star of David for Hanukkah, and stamping crescent moons for Ramadan. Older children also showed a commendable age-related understanding of environmental conservation. After a presentation by Turtle Farm staff, they explained the dangers of plastic waste to marine life, particularly turtles. Children demonstrated sustainable practices by using recycled materials for art. All children learnt to care for their surroundings through Montessori principles. The respect for the environment extended from their classroom to their playground and beyond. It was evident in how they avoided damaging the grass by not pouring sand on it and how they respectfully treated animals like frogs, lizards and snakes in the outdoor environment. Furthermore, children actively participated in environmental projects, such as seeding cotton trees from the largest cotton tree on the island found on the compound. Families were kept informed through newsletters about environmental initiatives, encouraging discussions about sustainability at home. This holistic approach instilled a deep respect for culture and the environment, supporting children's development as responsible global citizens

Areas for development

Develop innovative strategies to further promote and sustain environmental practices throughout the setting.

Performance Standard 3 Ensuring effective teaching to support our children’s learning and development	
Quality Indicator	Inspection Judgement
3.1 Teaching	Excellent
3.2 Learning	Excellent
3.3 Observation, assessment and planning	Excellent

Teaching

Teaching was excellent. During the inspection, staff effectively supported children’s play and learning. They were highly responsive to children’s requests, intervening in a timely and appropriate manner tailored to each child. The learning environment was well-organised to promote free-flow play, allowing children to choose where and how to engage in activities. This supported their autonomy and independence in leading their play. A thoughtful balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities was observed. For example, toddlers under three years were offered engaging opportunities to support sensory play. Older children had access to resources that reflected their current interests, fostering curiosity and imaginative play. Play opportunities were designed to nurture children’s curiosity, inquiry, and creativity. For example, children engaged in an activity involving a block of ice that contained seeds. They were able to connect the seeds to their lessons on plant growth and the life cycle of plants while also observing the melting process of the ice. Staff effectively used questioning techniques to extend and support children’s learning and provided strong support for language, literacy, and numeracy development through purposeful and engaging interactions. Both indoor and outdoor environments provided a wide range of engaging resources and materials that children could freely access to extend their play. Staff’s interactions with the children were nurturing, caring, and kind. They spoke with children at their level in a quiet and sensitive manner. These positive and supportive interactions fostered close bonds between staff and children, helping children feel included, safe, and consistently cared for.

Learning

Learning was judged as excellent. Almost all children exhibited a positive attitude to learning, evidenced by high levels of curiosity, motivation, concentration, and enjoyment. For instance, during outdoor play with colored ice blocks, toddlers excitedly rubbed their hands on the ice to explore how the colours blended when mixed together. They further explored how the ice felt under their feet and what would happen if it was in sand or if they broke it apart. In the Casa classes, children demonstrated strong concentration and persistence especially when working on complex puzzles and building projects. They showed excellent collaboration and problem-solving skills. For example, when children couldn't fit puzzle pieces together, they consulted each other and only asked the teacher for help after they had exhausted options. Almost all children showed agency and initiative in their learning, consistently demonstrating their skills and knowledge across various contexts. During outdoor play, children used sticks to set up a pretend campfire, mimicking real-life camping experiences. Children made meaningful connections between new knowledge and prior learning. This was evident when they saw seeds in a melting ice block and linked it to the plant life cycle. Almost all children took responsibility for their own learning. For instance, during a discussion about plant cuttings, one student independently decided to plant a cutting in the garden box. Children also had the freedom to choose activities they wanted to explore further and independently moved on to more challenging tasks after reflecting on their success.

Observation, assessment and planning

Assessment was judged as excellent. Early childhood educators systematically used a comprehensive range of assessment practices to adapt teaching and the learning environment to meet the needs of every child, ensuring all children make expected progress or better. Baseline assessments were thorough and collaborative where parents completed surveys to provide additional data for planning and tracking. The school used a comprehensive range of tools like Montessori Compass, bespoke checklists, daily trackers, and anecdotal notes to provide an accurate and coherent profile for each child. Data was reviewed both individually and as a group to analyse progress and trends. Observation records and learning documentation were of high quality, organised, and meaningful, featuring evaluative statements that accurately reflected children's development. 'Me Books' with anecdotal records, together with three reporting sessions, gave parents regular feedback about key aspects of their children's learning. Through regular conversations with children, staff skilfully facilitated discussions that encouraged children to share their achievements. For example, children clearly articulated how they made banana bread and what they expected it to look like after baking. Lesson activities were well sequenced and work was progressively organised with increasing challenge for children after self-assessing their mastery in particular skills. For example, children worked on tower building and after mastering how to order the size to ensure balance, they moved on to a more complex task with new levels of difficulty.

Areas for development

Include qualitative information for parents in termly reports, with brief notes on children's strengths, outlining clear next steps for their development.

Performance Standard 4 Offering a curriculum that meets the care and educational needs of all our children	
Quality Indicator	Inspection Judgement
4.1 Curriculum quality	Excellent

Curriculum quality

The curriculum was judged as excellent. It followed a flexible Montessori philosophy mapped to the Cayman Islands Early Years Framework (CIEYF) domains. It was inclusive, comprehensive, and balanced, while also remaining flexible to accommodate the diverse interests and abilities of all children. The curriculum was enriched by contributions from visitors, parent helpers, and external providers who expanded the learning and experiences for all children. The setting embraced play-based learning as a foundational approach to promote children's critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This was clearly demonstrated through the free-choice learning opportunities embedded in the wide range of learning experiences across the setting. For example, children chose their learning activity from shelves which were strategically organised to develop and deepen learning in various skills. By integrating play, exploration, and community engagement into its design, the curriculum effectively nurtured children's academic, social, and emotional growth, ensuring progress across all domains. Carefully sequenced lessons and collaboratively developed schemes of work ensured seamless progression and extended learning opportunities. Materials and themes were reviewed annually and adapted to meet evolving needs, incorporating input from staff and parents to maximise impact. For example, lessons on Diwali and Ramadan were incorporated to reflect the cultural backgrounds of some children. There were meaningful opportunities for children to learn about Caymanian heritage and culture, as well as other cultures and religions. Visitors taught Quadrille dances and thatch plaiting. A consistent focus on respect extended to environmental conservation, encouraging children to value their surroundings, from the classroom to the playground, to the home and the Islands and beyond.

Areas for development

Performance Standard 5 Keeping our children safe and well supported	
Quality Indicator	Inspection Judgement
5.1 Health and safety	Excellent
5.2 Support and guidance	Excellent

Health and safety

Health and safety were judged as excellent. Early childhood staff consistently implemented policies and procedures compliant with all requirements, ensuring the safety and well-being of every child. Staff maintained active supervision across the premises and adhered to rigorous protocols. All adults had completed the required safeguarding training, enabling them to promptly identify signs of abuse or neglect and to effectively apply safeguarding policies. Strong partnerships with external agencies such as the Department of Children and Family Services and the Early Childhood Care and Education Unit helped to ensure staff were well equipped to keep children safe. Staff regularly conducted hazard checks, maintained resources and carried out fire and earthquake drills. Detailed record-keeping evidenced compliance, reinforcing the setting's commitment to providing a safe, secure environment for children. Staff conducted thorough risk assessments for activities and situations. This diligent process ensured potential risks were mitigated or minimised, safeguarding children. Staff nurtured children's understanding of personal safety through age-appropriate strategies, including the personal safety programme from the Red Cross "My Body My Own". They equipped children with the language and self-advocacy skills to express when they felt uncomfortable or needed help. Also, children were developing capacities to make healthy nutritional choices. Staff promoted healthy habits like balanced nutrition, exercise, sun safety, hydration and rest. Staff knew the children exceptionally well and were adept at recognising and catering to their emotional needs.

Support and guidance

Support and guidance were judged as excellent. The Additional Learning Support Needs Policy was thorough and followed by all staff. Robust systems facilitated seamless collaboration among parents, staff and external service providers. Detailed records of visits and recommendations from specialists ensured consistent follow-through, alignment of goals and measurable progress for the children receiving services. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) worked collaboratively with staff and parents to create and monitor specific and practical Learning Support Plans tailored to the children's needs. Children with additional learning support needs made excellent progress alongside their peers. Transitions were managed with exceptional care. New children were introduced appropriately, with detailed communication with parents during the adjustment period. Children transitioning from Toddler classes to Casa classes were gradually familiarised with the new environment and expectations, such as learning safety rules while playing on the Casa playground under the guidance of Toddler staff. Staff shared information about the children who were transitioning between classes, fostering effective communication and collaboration among all staff and parents. A comprehensive progress monitoring system was in place, providing staff with continuous access to each child's developmental information and profile throughout their time at the setting. For children moving to the next phase of education, social stories were utilised as needed and staff from receiving schools were invited to observe children in their familiar setting. This ensured a smooth transition and effective preparation to meet each child's unique needs. Staff-child interactions were exemplary, with staff adeptly addressing children's social and emotional needs, promoting self-regulation and fostering a nurturing and supportive environment.

Areas for development

Performance Standard 6 Leading and managing in partnership with parents and the community	
Quality Indicator	Inspection Judgement
6.1 Leadership	Excellent
6.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
6.3 Links with parents and the community	Excellent
6.4 Staffing and the learning environment	Excellent

Leadership

Leadership was judged as excellent. The director and other senior leaders demonstrated a strong, shared vision with clear aims and objectives, which positively influenced practice. Staff, families, and children collaboratively contributed to promoting this vision, fostering a sense of ownership and belonging. As a result, families built strong, trusting relationships with the preschool, feeling valued and respected. A well-embedded distributed leadership model ensured active involvement across the setting. For instance, senior leaders worked alongside staff and parents in classrooms, maintaining strong connections within the community. This collaboration helped create a positive team culture. Class leaders also dedicated substantial time each day to planning, assessments, and reviews during work hours, effectively balancing professional responsibilities with personal commitments. The inspection team identified significant strengths in several aspects of the setting's provision, noting how these supported positive outcomes for children. Staff communicated effectively and respectfully, ensuring that children's needs were met and fostering an environment where they felt valued.

Performance management and professional development were well-targeted and focused, reinforcing a culture of continuous improvement. Robust quality assurance practices were evident throughout the setting, further supporting excellent outcomes for children. An advisory body was in place, though there was an opportunity to expand the structure to increase its monitoring and oversight responsibilities.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were judged as good. There were robust systems and procedures in place for assessing the preschool's performance. As a result, leaders had a clear and accurate understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for development. Development plans were focused on the right priorities, informed by a thorough and accurate self-evaluation. However, there was a need to define the key performance indicators (KPIs) against which success would be measured. Staff actively participated in the self-evaluation process, using best practice documents to assess and refine systems and processes. This reflective approach empowered staff to implement informed changes, leading to improved outcomes for children. Leaders incorporated two checkpoints throughout the year to review the self-evaluation and school improvement plan, ensuring that key action points remained on track or were adjusted to meet evolving needs. Good progress had been made in addressing all recommendations from the previous inspection report.

Links with parents and the community

Links with parents and the community were excellent. The setting maintained excellent links with parents and the broader community through highly effective, two-way communication channels. Each class had a dedicated WhatsApp group for quick updates, along with an assigned Parent Representative who played a key role in sending reminders, gathering feedback, and relaying this feedback to teachers. Leaders had increased reporting sessions to three times per year, with parent-teacher meetings following each reporting session. Detailed reports carefully tracked each child's progress throughout the year. Parents were also kept regularly informed about their child's learning and development through newsletters, open house events, and a private Facebook group. The secure Facebook group served as a space to share weekly photos, highlighting activities and special moments involving children and their peers. Monthly newsletters, tailored to each class, outlined upcoming events, recent classroom highlights, children's memorable comments, birthday celebrations, and key announcements. Additionally, an annual parent survey allowed parents to provide anonymous feedback on various aspects of the preschool, including their child's learning experience. Leaders actively facilitated parent engagement activities, such as coffee mornings and class Storytime sessions, where parents participated as "parent readers." These opportunities allowed parents to contribute meaningfully to the setting. Ties with the local community were strengthened through regular visits from community helpers including police officers, firefighters, and doctors. Cayman Heritage visitors provided enriching experiences, such as demonstrations of basket weaving and traditional dancing. Overall, the preschool prioritised strong connections with both parents and the community, ensuring a collaborative and supportive learning environment for all children.

Staffing and the learning environment

Staffing and the learning environment were excellent. The preschool's staff possessed a strong mix of skills and experience. Staff deployment was thoughtfully managed throughout the day to ensure all children were appropriately supported and included in a range of activities. Successful recruitment and effective staff transitions supported children's excellent learning outcomes. Children were cared for in a safe, secure, and well-organised environment. Each room was thoughtfully designed, with resources that were age-appropriate and aligned with the children's developmental needs. The play spaces reflected the children's current interests, curiosity, and investigative nature. Cosy areas with soft furnishings were available, promoting the children's well-being. These spaces supported relaxation, self-regulation, and a sense of safety. All children enjoyed well-resourced outdoor play areas featuring an extensive range of natural and open-ended materials and an exceptional range of developmentally appropriate play equipment. Additionally, children regularly participated in nature activities in a woodland setting, where they learned about nature, assessed risks, and developed their understanding of safety. These experiences helped children build self-confidence, independence, and self-esteem. During the inspection, parents shared overwhelmingly positive feedback about the preschool's expansive and well-equipped outdoor learning environment, highlighting how it inspired children's imagination and sense of adventure. Both indoor and outdoor learning environments effectively supported children's curiosity, creativity, and personal interests. For example, children had fun trying to find a snake which hid from them in the root of a tree. This extended into imaginative play with a child exclaiming she was going to make 'snake soup'.

Areas for development

Strengthen links with other early years settings to share best practice and to build a community of practice.

Summary of Parent and Staff Survey Results

Before the inspection, the views of parents and staff were obtained through surveys. The number of participants that completed the surveys were as follows:

Parents		Staff	
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Parents

Almost all respondents agreed that their child made good progress in overall learning and development and that teachers catered to their child’s care and developmental needs. Almost all parents agreed that their child enjoyed attending the early childhood setting and that they learned through play and was safe and cared for. Almost all parents felt that the setting supported their child to learn about healthy lifestyles and also supported them well during transitions. According to almost all respondents, children enjoyed positive relationships with adults and the setting had appropriately qualified and skilled staff and good quality resources and facilities. Most parents agreed that the setting supported their child to have an understanding and appreciation of culture, religion and respect for the environment. A majority of parents agreed that children with additional learning support needs were supported, although a significant minority felt they did not have enough information to answer this question. Most parents agreed that leaders positively impacted children’s achievement and that there was regular and reliable two-way communication. Most parents also reported that they received regular reports that helped them to understand their child’s progress. However, there were a few comments which were critical of communication regarding daily activities of children, particularly the toddlers. A majority of parents agreed that the setting sought their views and opinions during the self-evaluation process. Almost all parents felt that, overall, the early childhood setting provided a good quality of education. They also praised the warm and welcoming atmosphere fostered by the nurturing teachers.

Staff

19 members of staff responded to the OES online survey. Almost all agreed that the setting provided a good quality education and that most children exhibited good behaviour. They affirmed that children made good progress in their learning and development, achieving age-appropriate benchmarks. Most staff agreed that the setting promoted cultural, religious, and environmental understanding. Staff unanimously agreed that the learning environment was positive and balanced. Almost all staff felt that children were independent learners and that effective assessment systems, including evidence-based observational approaches, were in place. All staff agreed that the setting was safe, caring, supported healthy lifestyles, and had robust child abuse reporting procedures. Additionally, they agreed that there were sufficient high-quality resources to support teaching. All staff agreed that positive relationships between adults and children were evident, and support for special educational needs was strong. There was slightly lower consensus regarding the involvement of the advisory body in planning, as well as staff well-being and professional development, although most staff still viewed these areas positively. Most staff agreed that communication between parents and staff was good and that parents were effectively involved in the work of the preschool. Overall, almost all staff feel that the setting enjoyed good links with the wider community and had appropriately qualified and skilled staff and teachers.

What Happens Next?

The early childhood setting should prepare an action plan within four weeks of the publication of this inspection report.

This should consider and address:

- the recommendations identified within this report;
- areas identified by the early childhood setting as requiring improvement;
- other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the early childhood setting.

Further Information

Inspections of Early Childhood Settings in the Cayman Islands

As determined by the Education Act (2016), all educational institutions are inspected regularly by the Office of Education Standards. The purpose of inspection is primarily to support ongoing improvement in each educational institution and also to provide rigorous, impartial and comprehensive information to parents, government officers and to Ministers regarding the quality of education both in government and private educational establishments.

Inspections are undertaken at least once every four years and will usually involve a team of inspectors visiting each school and early childhood setting for between two and five days. Inspectors use an agreed framework to reach their judgements. In the Cayman Islands, the publication 'First Steps to Success: Nurturing Environments and Thriving Children' (Cayman Islands Government, October 2023) is the tool which is used both by early childhood settings to review their own work and by inspectors when they visit.

Inspection frameworks are a central feature of different educational institution evaluation systems worldwide. They provide a structure within which inspectors make judgements on the basis of evidence of observed practice. They serve a number of purposes:

- Indicators create a **consistent vocabulary and reference point** for a conversation with early childhood settings regarding the major determinants of educational success.
- Exemplars provide early childhood settings with clarity regarding the **expected standard** for a good judgement level.
- The indicators can be used by educational institutions for **self-evaluation purposes** and can be linked to improvement through effective development planning.
- The use of a common set of indicators encourages **consistency in judgements** across different inspection teams. Inspectors must base their judgements on the evidence of the practice they actually observe, rather than with reference to set norms or by employing relative ratings or referring to personal or individual preferences.
- The publication of inspection quality indicators enables settings to see inspection as a **transparent** process.

Judgements

The inspection framework is organised around judgements using a four-point scale. The four levels are defined as follows:

Excellent	Exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.
Good	The expected level for every educational institution, including early childhood settings, in the Cayman Islands.
Satisfactory	Partially effective in achieving positive outcomes for children but requires improvement. All key aspects of performance and practice in every educational institution, including early childhood settings, should, however, exceed this level.
Weak	Well below expectations and requires significant improvement. Any educational institution that receives a weak judgement will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of those aspects of their performance or practice.

Consistency in Quantitative Terminology

Inspectors use quantitative terms in reports, as follows:

Term	Definition	Numerical Value
All	The whole - as used in 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 a half	25% to 49%
Minority	15% or more but less than a quarter	15% to 24%
Few	Up to 15%	0% to 14%

The Office of Education Standards

Who Are We and What Do We Do?

The Office of Education Standards is part of the Portfolio of the 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: adminOES@gov.ky

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: www.oes.gov.ky

Information About the Inspection Team

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Team Inspector	Carol Bennett	Office of Education Standards
Team Inspector	Marsha Seerattan	Office of Education Standards



Office of
Education
Standards



First Steps to Success:
Nurturing Environments and
Thriving Children

CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT



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