



EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION INSPECTION REPORT

MONTESSORI DEL SOL

OFFICE OF EDUCATION STANDARDS
OCTOBER 2019

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Inspections of schools, colleges and early years centres in the Cayman Islands

As determined by Education Law (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 school and also to provide rigorous, impartial and comprehensive information to parents, to government officers and to appointed 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 for between two and five days. Inspectors use an agreed framework to reach their judgements. In the Cayman Islands, the publication 'Successful Schools and Achieving Students' is the tool which is used both by schools to review their own work and by inspectors when they visit.

Inspection frameworks are a central feature of different school 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 schools regarding the major determinants of educational success.
- The highest-level exemplar provides schools with a description of **educational excellence** to which schools can aspire.
- The lower-level exemplar provides schools with a clear understanding of levels of provision that are considered **unsatisfactory** and must be improved.
- The indicators can be used by schools for **self-evaluation purposes** and can be linked to school 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 schools to see inspection as a **transparent** process.

Evaluations

The inspection framework is organised around judgements using a four-point scale.

The four levels on the scale are defined as follows:

- **Excellent** - exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.
- **Good** - the expected level for every school in the Cayman Islands, both public and private.
- **Satisfactory** - the minimum level of quality required for the Cayman Islands. All key aspects of performance and practice in every school should meet or exceed this level.
- **Weak** - quality not yet at the level acceptable for schools in the Cayman Islands. Schools will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

Consistency in quantitative terminology

Inspectors use quantitative terms in reports, as follows.

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

Information about the centre

Name of ECCE centre	Montessori del Sol
Address	11 Hinds Way, George Town, Grand Cayman
Telephone	354-949-3222
E-mail address	Montessori@candw.ky
ECCE centre website	http://www.montessoridelsol.com/
Name of manager	Amy Lipton & Nadine Brandson
Name of owner	Amy and Greg Lipton
Centre's hours of operation	7:30am - 3:30pm
Number of children on roll	53
Number of teaching staff	7
Number of support staff	1
Date of last inspection	June 2013

Age range of children

Age Range	Number of boys	Number of girls	Total
18- 24 months	9	8	17
24- 48 months	13	16	29
48 months +	3	4	7
Total	25	28	53

The context of the centre

Montessori del Sol is located on Hinds Way, George Town, Grand Cayman. The school has been at its current location for over 20 years but has been under the management of the current owners since 2008.

Montessori del Sol caters to children from 18 months to six years. There are 53 children on roll but currently only 52 are attending. There are three classes including Toddlers, Casa Garden and Casa Sun Room. The classes are arranged following the Montessori philosophy of mixed age groupings. There are currently six children of statutory school age enrolled in the two Casa classes. The school promotes inclusion and there are three children with special needs on roll. The school follows the Montessori and the Cayman Islands Early Years Curricula. The school leaders plan to implement the new Cayman Islands curriculum for the Kindergarten age children.

The school's opening hours are 7:30am to 3:30 pm. An aftercare programme runs from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Montessori del Sol prides itself on offering a programme that cultivates children's kindness, independence and creativity. The school leaders are committed to providing an enriched learning environment that supports children to be respectful of themselves, others and their surroundings. The goal at Montessori del Sol is to assist children in developing the skills, knowledge and attitudes to become caring and productive members of their community.

Key strengths

Inspectors identified the following key strengths in the school:

- The programmes to support children's well-being and respect were excellent, as a consequence of staff diligence and skill. In addition, children's progress and their engagement in these areas of their learning were highly positive features of the provision.
- Across the year groups, children demonstrated confidence and enjoyment in their learning and staff effectively promoted children's independence and responsibility for their learning.
- Arrangements to ensure the health and safety of children were comprehensive and effective.
- School directors placed a strong focus on staff professional development and, as a consequence, both teachers and support assistants worked effectively as a team providing a consistent approach to practice and curriculum delivery.
- Links with the community and parents were effective in enriching the curriculum and broadening children's experiences.
- The spacious, well-resourced outdoor play areas provided rich and multi-sensory experiences for the children.

Recommendations

Inspectors identified the following areas to support the continued improvement of the school:

- Implement plans for the school to receive accreditation, thereby strengthening further the current arrangements for self-evaluation and school improvement.
- Review provision and children's progress in aspects of communication and mathematics particularly with regard to the Kindergarten-age children and adapting the curriculum to better meet the needs of those of statutory school age.
- Further develop assessments arrangements to ensure a close link to the new Cayman Islands Foundation Stage curriculum and track the progress of children overtime to monitor their achievement against expected standards.

Summary

Overall Evaluation - Good

The overall performance of Montessori del Sol was good. The school performed well in all major aspects of its work and the majority of the judgements were rated as excellent. The school directors were proactive and forward thinking and demonstrated a strong focus on raising standards across the school.

Across all quality indicators, a majority of judgements were excellent and these included:

- Aspects of children's achievement in exploration, respect, communication and well-being;
- Children's learning;
- Health and safety;
- Links with parents and the community, and;
- Staff and the learning environment.

All other judgements were rated as good. These included:

- Teaching;
- Assessment;
- Curriculum;
- Support and guidance;
- Leadership, and;
- Self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Montessori del Sol was judged to be a good school overall, with a number of excellent features. The school is in a strong position to build on its existing strengths and, in developing aspects of self-evaluation, teaching and assessment, is well placed to continue to improve even further.

Staff effectively engendered key Montessori principles such as choice and autonomy in children's learning. The school was a happy, safe community characterised by an ethos of mutual respect and collective responsibility. The learning environment was well planned and stimulating and provided rich multi-sensory experiences for the children who displayed high levels of enjoyment and engagement in their learning. Children of all ages demonstrated positive learning dispositions and usually concentrated well on their tasks. Interactions between the staff and children were nurturing, respectful and affirmative. Staff morale was high. Parents described the leadership team as efficient, responsive and committed and the learning environment as stimulating and designed to fuel children's curiosity and enjoyment.

Achievement

EXPLORATION	Evaluation
Movement: Children develop their fine and gross motor skills through independent and guided opportunities.	Excellent
Sensory: Children will use their senses in active exploration to understand their world.	Excellent
Scientific: Children inquire, research, generate and modify their own working theories about their world through independent and guided opportunities.	Good
Mathematical: Children manipulate materials and explore concepts relating to number, shape, space, measurement, time and classification through independent and guided opportunities.	Good
Technological: Children experiment with tools, materials and equipment through independent and guided opportunities.	Excellent

Children's movement skills were excellent because there was a rich and diverse programme in place which supported their acquisition of skills. In the outdoor area, for both Casa and Toddler classes, children had access to a well-resourced and spacious play facility. Resources were organised effectively to allow children's access and independent use of equipment. This supported their acquisition of fine and gross motor skills. Through the distribution of class tasks, such as watering plants and cleaning areas of the classroom environment, the children were able to demonstrate awareness of the rules for safety and the needs of others. Most children were very confident in their use of different Montessori resources, many of which required competent fine motor skills. In the outdoor area teachers provided an excellent range of activities, encouraging gross motor development in response to stimuli that promoted children's natural curiosity.

The excellent programme promoted children's use of their senses. Language skills and extensive vocabulary were enriched by the quality and range of available activities. Many of the tasks were planned carefully by staff but others were incidental as staff made effective use of arising learning opportunities. For example, in the outdoor area, the unexpected arrival of a chicken through a garden fence stimulated discussion and interest amongst the Toddler group. In the same class teachers had placed colourful flowers and pumpkins in the shared area and children had access to magnifiers to allow close examination and scrutiny. Throughout the day

staff made effective use of sounds, music and song to promote a calm and relaxed learning environment and, at all ages, this helped encourage good listening skill development.

Children's scientific knowledge and skills were good. Children had daily opportunities to explore the natural world. The garden area offered a beautiful and engaging environment, which was carefully organised to offer opportunities for investigation and exploration of the natural environment. For example, in the outdoor area children had access to water, mud, plants and large trees. They were encouraged to observe and describe their experiences. They all helped water the garden plants and could confidently explain what all plants needed to thrive. Furthermore, children showed respect and care for natural resources. A member of staff from the National Trust and the 'Heritage Heroes' programme facilitated children's appreciation of the wildlife of Cayman. The children had observed insects and could describe the life cycle of a butterfly. To extend the skills and knowledge of the children even further, there was scope for staff to include within the programme further activities that required children to organise, interpret and represent information they elicit from scientific investigations. Staff questioned the children effectively and this helped promote children's critical thinking skills.

Children's mathematical knowledge and skills were good. Staff made effective and regular use of Montessori resources and tasks to promote children's knowledge of number. In the Casa class, for example, the children presented information relating to place value and this consolidated their understanding of the concept of relative value. Older students were able to complete simple addition and subtraction tasks. Although most children were confident writing numbers correctly and demonstrated age-appropriate skills in calculation, their mental agility and recall of number facts required improvement. Staff did not consistently promote the children's skills in prediction, generalisation and independent mathematical investigation. At the toddler stage, staff effectively developed children's awareness of mathematical language within different activities. For example, using percussion in a music session, the staff enforced concepts of positional language within song. In the Casa class, children had explored the concept of measure by comparing heights and had also presented information about favourite fruits using bar charts. For the older children, mathematics tasks required further development and adaptation to meet their specific learning needs.

Children at all stages demonstrated excellent technological skills and knowledge. The children enjoyed access to a wide range of equipment such as scissors, cogwheels, magnifiers and music technology, which supported their acquisition of technological skills. In the Toddler class, for example, the youngest children used magnetic cogs to explore movement and colour. At all stages children independently accessed CD-players and headphones to listen to music and stories. In the outdoor area, the availability of magnifiers facilitated children's independent exploration of the natural world. In their use of different tools, such as those available, for example, in the 'Cayman mud kitchen', children's exploration and understanding of different materials were effectively promoted. High levels of engagement and enjoyment characterised the programme prepared by the staff to promote the children's technological understanding.

RESPECT	Evaluation
Self: Children develop a positive sense of who they are and an understanding of their rights and responsibilities.	Excellent
Others: Children understand how their role and the roles of others impact the community.	Excellent
Environment: Children will act responsibly in preservation of their natural world.	Excellent
Culture: Children gain an awareness of and appreciation for their own culture and cultures around the world.	Excellent
Religion: Children have an awareness of and respect for their own and other religions.	Good

The children’s sense of self was excellent because almost all children demonstrated a strong understanding of their own rights and responsibilities. The older children cared for themselves, their belongings and school resources and intentionally modeled positive behaviors that the younger children could emulate. Children in the Toddlers class accessed their water and snacks independently and were learning to use the toilets independently. Almost all children demonstrated age-appropriate understanding of the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour and showed care and empathy for others.

The children’s understanding of their role and the roles of others in the community was excellent. Planned visits by personnel from the fire department and the ambulance services effectively promoted children’s understanding of community helpers and how their roles impacted the community. Almost all children demonstrated the capacity to take turns and successfully negotiated such with their peers.

The children’s understanding of the environment was excellent. The children actively cared for their environment and the school’s active promotion of environmental awareness provided children with planned opportunities to reduce, recycle and reuse. The children had also planted grow boxes with vegetables and flowers which supported their understanding of how the environment provided for them. Children watered the plants and added crushed eggshells to the soil to provide nutrients for them. Furthermore, the school’s partnership with the Cayman National Trust provided rich opportunities for the children to learn about their natural environment including Caymanian flora and fauna and the Cayman blue iguana. During the inspection, a child excitedly pointed out a Cayman white wing dove hovering in a tree in the outdoor play area. The children also listened to shared stories that illustrated local and foreign environments.

The children’s cultural experiences were good. Children were developing an awareness of and appreciation for their own culture as well as cultures around the world. The inclusion of parents’ visits, ‘me box’ presentations, birthday celebrations and photo sharing supported children’s understanding of the traditions and customs of others. The children also demonstrated respect for the Cayman National Song. During circle time in the Casa Garden class, the teachers and children sang along to a recorded version of the national song and all stood with their hands at their sides and faced the Caymanian flag. The school’s annual ‘Cultural Day’ celebrated at the end of the study on continents promoted children’s awareness of regions and cultures across the globe.

The children’s awareness of religion was good. All children repeated Grace at lunch times. During a ‘me box’ presentation in the Casa Garden class, a child was able to identify religious symbols in the teacher’s photograph and the teacher explained in developmentally appropriate ways about her son’s baptism ceremony. The school leaders were proactive in securing parental involvement in promoting children’s awareness of festivals and celebrations associated with different religions and cultures. Following positive responses from parents, the school directors planned activities such as religious celebrations throughout the school year that celebrated the different cultures represented in the classes. These themed activities will celebrate individual children’s culture and religious festivals, including for example, ‘Honouring Advent with Avery’, ‘Celebrating Chinese New Year with Freya’, ‘Honouring Waitangi Day with Freddie’ and ‘Celebrating Greek Orthodox Easter with Sienna’. These activities will further promote children’s respect and tolerance for others.

COMMUNICATION	Evaluation
Verbal and Symbolic: Children interpret information received and effectively express themselves in a variety of ways.	Good
Listening: Children develop the inclination and ability to listen attentively and respond appropriately.	Excellent
Creative Expressions: Children experience and develop an appreciation for various forms of art from a variety of cultures.	Excellent
Literacy: Children demonstrate an understanding that symbols are used to represent ideas.	Good

Children’s verbal and symbolic communication was good. Most children demonstrated good oral language skills and were confident communicators. Most teachers ably supported children to verbalise their intentions and their emotions. In addition, children’s early literacy skills were supported by a range of mark making opportunities indoors and outdoors and ready access to a wide range of developmentally appropriate books across the centre. Furthermore, teachers

effectively supported children's multi-sensory experiences using sandpaper letters. Children were able to see the letter, listen to the sound of the letter and trace the letter with their finger. This tactile experience supported children's muscle memory of letters as a prelude to writing. Teachers also capitalised effectively on incidental opportunities to support children to expand their vocabulary and explore the meanings of new words. In addition, teachers' use of skillful questioning and interactive engagements with the children effectively promoted their development of a broad and rich vocabulary. There was scope, however, to further support the older children in guided letter practice and inventive spelling.

Children's listening skills were excellent because there were good routines in place to support listening in a variety of contexts. Teachers' use of positive behaviour strategies and initiatives such as the 'peace corner' and 'mindfulness' programme inculcated attitudes of respect for the views of others and courtesy in speech and actions. As a consequence, almost all children were developing the inclination and ability to listen attentively and respond appropriately. All teachers structured opportunities for children to participate in a variety of listening experiences such as stories, nursery rhymes, music and nature walks.

Children's creative expression was excellent. There were planned and spontaneous opportunities for children to express themselves through a variety of art media. For example, across the centre there were displays of children's water colours, during outdoor play several children dressed in aprons and chef's hats and participated enthusiastically in role play scenarios in the 'Cayman kitchen'. Others pumped water and poured it onto the sand to create moats and rivers. In addition, teachers actively promoted children's self-expression through music and dance. All participated in a variety of movements and some used props such as colourful streamers and ribbons to add interest and variety to their actions. The toddlers used egg shakers to create music.

Children's appreciation of literacy was good as all children participated in shared stories with their peers or in group settings such as circle time and lunch time. The planned learning environment supported children's easy access to range of developmentally appropriate books including texts that celebrated Caymanian culture. Throughout the day, most children interacted with books in the comfortable reading areas in the classrooms. Most demonstrated good book handling skills including the toddlers who held books right side up and turned pages with the correct orientation. Most children were developing phonological awareness through a variety of literacy experiences and there was a wide range of resources to promote phonics including books, sandpaper letters, letter tiles and sight word flash cards. There was a need, however, to better promote the phonemic awareness of some of the older children whose achievement was below the expected level compared to their age and stage of development.

WELL-BEING	Evaluation
Health: Children make safe and healthy decisions as they discover and learn about their bodies.	Excellent
Emotional: Children identify and express their own feelings.	Excellent
Social: Children will develop the skill to interact with others in a variety of contexts.	Excellent
Reflection: Children will reflect on their experiences.	Excellent

The arrangements to support children’s understanding of health were excellent. A highly positive and distinctive feature of the programme was the effective promotion of children’s independence and responsibility for learning. At all stages, children were encouraged to organise their resources, tidy away and consider the needs of others. Most did so in a way that exceeded the expectations for their age and stage. Well-established routines supported the children’s health and hygiene. Children’s typical programme each day included an appropriate balance of indoor and outdoor play as well as a suitable balance of rest and energetic play. In differing contexts, including snack and play, children made healthy choices and communicated their personal needs confidently as a result of the positive and supportive relationships with adults.

Children’s emotional development was supported through an excellent programme which gave due care and attention to each child’s feelings and emotional needs. Staff promoted the children’s emotional development through the careful delivery of various group and independent tasks that were prepared each day. In the Casa classes, the children were encouraged to talk about their families and were able to express their preferences and hobbies through the use of ‘me box’ presentations to their peers. Birthdays were celebrated in a way that facilitated growing self-esteem and recognition of each child’s unique personality and contribution. Almost all children were able to take turns and share resources. Staff reasoned with children in different contexts and were highly effective in helping children accept guidance and affirmation. Praise was a prominent feature of the programme and, even during transitions, children’s behaviour was excellent and positively affirmed. Children with additional needs were provided with excellent support because on-going assessment and careful observation helped identify triggers and specific behaviours which required further adult focus and intervention. Staff were observed to be consistent, kind, sensitive and vigilant in their promotion of the children’s emotional needs and development.

Children’s social skills were excellent. A significant proportion of the planned activities encouraged children to work independently of others. Nevertheless, within the programme, staff included daily opportunities for children to work in pairs, small groups and with their whole class. As children selected tasks the classroom groupings were often fluid and children were confident working with their peers and different adults. Children demonstrated a strong sense of empathy and a mature understanding of the needs of others. Consequently, they often shared equipment

with their friends and accepted reasoning and guidance from staff. Staff had established good routines across the Toddler and Casa classes and in a variety of contexts children benefited from clearly communicated expectations regarding behaviour.

Staff placed appropriate emphasis within the programme upon helping children to reflect on their experiences and, as a consequence, the children's ability to consider their own and the needs of their peers was excellent. For example, in the rare incidents of disagreement between children, staff intervened in a timely manner and directed resolution with sensitivity to the needs of all. When the children were taking turns, sharing resources or lining up, the staff were vigilant and proactive. There were consistently high expectations at all stages of the school. Children's resilience to face unexpected challenges was praised, though a few of the older children required further support and direction in order to complete tasks to the required level and thereby support their preparation for transition to the next stage of their education.

Teaching, learning and assessment

Ensuring effective teaching to support children's learning	Evaluation
Teaching	Good
Learning	Excellent
Assessment	Good

The quality of teaching was good. Inspectors observed around 30 lessons which reflected the breadth of the curriculum delivery including, for example, snack and rest times, outdoor and indoor learning, group and individual children's work programme. Staff demonstrated a confident understanding of the Montessori philosophy and methods as well as the purpose of different resources assigned to specific tasks. Importantly, they shared a good knowledge and understanding of the way that young children learn and tasks prepared each day were frequently suitable to the age and stage of the children. Teachers planned carefully to address the learning needs of individual children. In particular the younger children in the Toddlers and Casa classes benefited from an individualised programme which supported the children's acquisition of skills and knowledge across all four areas of the Cayman Islands Early Years Curriculum. Staff effectively managed the classroom environment, behaviour, routines and transitions. There was a strong sense of teamwork amongst staff and this was evident in the successful deployment of teaching assistants to roles which maximised the children's learning. Teachers questioning was effective in promoting children's thinking skills and independence. In continuing to improve the quality of teaching, there was scope for staff to extend their professional skills even further to widen their strategies to support the learning of the older children of statutory school age.

Learning was excellent and an important strength of the provision at Montessori del Sol. Staff were highly skilled and successful in promoting the children's responsibility for their own learning and, as a consequence, children were confident, articulate and independent learners. Inspectors noted high levels of engagement in all stages of the school. In the morning time, at the beginning of the school day when children accessed the outdoor area, children were noted to be excited about the activities available to them. They were curious and motivated; communicating their enjoyment and appreciation to staff and their peers. As a result of the choice of tasks and self-initiated learning available to them, all children were motivated to learn. This helped promote children's resilience and independence as young learners. School leaders and staff were appropriately focused upon extending opportunities for children to lead their own learning and gain an age-appropriate understanding of their next steps in core areas of the curriculum.

Arrangements for assessment were good. Staff used a breadth of assessment tools to check children's achievement and comment upon their completion of the assigned Montessori tasks. The assessments were linked to the Cayman Islands Early Years Curriculum. Throughout the

day, staff observed the children at play and took notes regarding their skills and understanding during various activities. This information was used to adjust the programme available to different children in the light of ongoing assessment information. An on-line assessment tool had been recently introduced and this was helpful in collating the arising observations made by staff and identifying those areas where children required further support or consolidation of knowledge or skills. Assessment practices required further development to support managers in their evaluation of the progress made by children over time. Similarly, in order to check children's achievement against international standards, the assessment strategy required enhancement to offer insights for teachers and leaders into children's acquisition of core skills relative to others of similar ages in similar educational contexts.

Curriculum

Offering a curriculum that meets the educational needs of all children	Evaluation
Curriculum	Good

Staff had invested significant time and energy in ensuring that the curriculum provision aligned with the requirements of Cayman Islands Early Years Curriculum framework. School directors participated in an annual review of the curriculum which was organised around planned monthly themes. Staff also participated in weekly planning meetings to discuss curriculum provision and children's progress in order to modify planned activities moving forward. The school was strong in its provision of Montessori practice. As a consequence, the toddlers were rapidly developing skills in independence, interpersonal relationships and oral communication. Children in the Casa programme demonstrated appreciable development in movement, grace and courtesy, language development and mathematical understanding. However, there was the need to provide more intentional instruction for the Kindergarten children and to ensure increased documentation and progress records of their reading, writing and numeracy skills.

Cross-curricular and extracurricular programmes were continually developed with support from parents and the community. Notably, the school had participated in a field trip to the National Gallery to enrich the children's experience and school directors signaled their intention to include regular field trips as part of the programme to broaden children's learning experiences.

Safety and support

Keeping our children safe and always supported	Evaluation
Health and safety	Excellent
Support and guidance	Good

Health and safety was judged as excellent because school leaders had established effective policies and procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and staff. The building and premises were safe and well maintained. All regulatory requirements relating to fire safety and environmental health were met. In addition, appropriate risk assessments were conducted for field trips. Comprehensive records were kept of fire drills and maintenance checks and record keeping was regular and precise. Healthy living was systematically built in and promoted in all aspects of school life. School directors offered helpful suggestions to parents on healthy lunch options for children. Children washed hands independently, took frequent water breaks and wore hats outdoors. Planned outdoor activities promoted children's gross motor development, and the children's participation in yoga and the 'mindfulness' programme supported their holistic development. Furthermore, the school directors were effective in creating a culture of safeguarding in the school. Child protection arrangements were clearly defined and all staff were trained in child protection arrangements. Staff were vigilant in their supervision of the children both indoors and outdoors.

Support and guidance was judged as good. Relationships between staff and children were nurturing, respectful and affirmative. As a consequence, the children thrived in a culture of respect and harmony. Initiatives such as the 'mindfulness' programme and the 'peace corner' effectively supported children's personal and social development. The school promoted an inclusive ethos, and children with special educational needs were skillfully supported to achieve their learning goals. The school had established good partnerships with a range of external providers such as Cayman ABA, Achieve Cayman and the Department of Education Services' Early Intervention Programme to provide in-school support for children with special educational needs. The school directors provided parents with regular reports about their children's progress each term. However, there was scope to refine systems by which staff and school leaders tracked children's progress, by providing rich and varied information about the skills, knowledge and understanding children were developing in the early learning goals and communicating this clearly to parents.

Leadership and management

Leading and managing the centre and developing links with the community	Evaluation
Leadership	Good
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Good
Links with parents and the community	Excellent
Staff and the learning environment	Excellent

Leadership was judged good because the school directors provided a clear sense of direction and demonstrated a strong commitment to reflective practice. Inspectors noted that there was a commendable ethos of professionalism, collaboration and collective responsibility among staff. Staff morale was high and all staff expressed highly positive comments about the quality of leadership and the educational provision offered by the school. The school was a happy, supportive and inclusive community. Continuous professional development for staff was an established feature of the school's practice. School directors conducted regular staff meetings to support professional reflection processes and improve children's learning experiences. Performance management systems were in place, and the directors had recognised the need to refine lesson observation tools to better monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the centre. In addition, the school directors were committed to building a middle leadership tier and had devolved areas of special responsibility to staff. Although there was no governance body in place, the school was actively seeking accreditation from the International Montessori Council to support ongoing external evaluation of its practice.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning was judged as good. The school directors demonstrated strong commitment to the process of self-evaluation to enhance their practice. Inspectors noted that self-evaluation and school improvement planning processes were comprehensive and systematic. As a consequence, the directors had a good understanding of the centre's strengths and the areas for improvement. Development plans were in place which appropriately targeted areas for improvement. All the recommendations from the previous inspection report had been satisfactorily addressed.

Links with parents and the community was judged as excellent. School directors proactively consulted with and involved parents in their children's learning and the work of the school. There were established mechanisms for communicating with parents. These included telephone calls, newsletters, termly parents' conferences and informal drop-ins. Other activities to foster parental engagement included 'Parents Craft Nights', 'Bring Mom to School Day' and 'Bring Dad to School Day' as well as a selection of social events throughout the school year. All parents received a handbook which included information about the school and the curriculum. In addition, the directors used on-line surveys to poll parents' views on the timing of special events such as 'Culture Day' and 'Parents' Night.' Parents were highly supportive of the work of the

school and all families completed the on-line survey ahead of the inspection. Most parents made highly positive comments about the quality of their children's learning experiences.

The school had also forged effective links with a number of organisations in the local community to promote and enhance the children's learning experiences. For example, each week Kirk's Market donated left-over flowers to the school for the children to use in floral arrangements. In addition, the school had developed an effective partnership with the National Trust to promote children's environmental and cultural awareness. For the second year running, the school was a part of the National Trust 'Heritage Heroes' programme. As the first early years centre to join the programme, school leaders had worked with staff at the National Trust to design age-appropriate experiences for the children. During the school year, staff from the National Trust conducted regular visits to discuss blue iguana conservation, recycling, and traditional Caymanian games. School leaders also shared best practices with other schools and facilitated professional development opportunities for colleagues in other centres to improve their practice.

Staffing and the learning environment were judged as excellent. All teachers were well qualified and were effectively deployed to support children's positive learning experiences. Staff retention was high. The premises provided a safe and stimulating learning environment. The classrooms were well planned, spacious and inviting. A wide range of Montessori materials were organised in easy reach of the children which promoted autonomy and choice in their learning. The spacious, well laid out outdoor play areas provided a rich multi-sensory environment that effectively promoted children's creativity, exploration, investigation and independence. In addition, the wide range of developmentally appropriate play equipment and resources successfully promoted children's integrated skill development. All children displayed high levels of enjoyment and engagement during outdoor play. Staff used laptops and I-Pads to document children's learning, attitudes and interests, and children used CD players to listen to music and stories. However, there was scope to expand information technology opportunities and further promote children's independent exploration and research of learning concepts.

Survey results

Forty-five parents and eight staff completed the on-line survey. The results from the survey are detailed in Appendices One and Two to this report.

Forty-five respondents representing all the families of children attending the school completed the on-line survey in advance of the inspection. The majority of the respondents had children attending the school for two years or longer. Almost all parents agreed that their children were making good progress in all aspects of early literacy. The majority stated that their children were making good progress in their mathematical understanding and early scientific understanding. All parents expressed that their children was safe and cared for at the school and that the school helped their children choose a healthy lifestyle. Almost all agreed that the school was well led, and that the school enjoyed good links with the wider community. All agreed that the school has appropriately qualified and suitably skilled staff and good quality resources to support their children's learning. Almost all felt that communication was effective and that they received timely reports on their children's progress. Many parents made highly positive comments about the work of the school. For example, one parent wrote, 'Montessori Del Sol is a well-run and organised school. It has amazing teachers, a safe and clean environment and all help nurture my children to be kind and caring individuals and encourage their desire to learn'.

All staff comprising seven teachers and one support staff completed the survey. Most had worked at the school for three years or more. All stated that the children's behaviour was good and that the school promoted a positive learning environment and provided good opportunities for children's exploration, choice and independent learning. All agreed that the school provided good support to children with special educational needs. All judged the school to be well led and agreed that the school provided a good quality of education. All agreed that they were involved in the process of self-evaluation and improvement planning. All staff judged that the school offered a safe and caring environment for all members of the school community. All staff believed that parents were actively involved in the work of the school. In addition, staff made positive comments about the caring and inclusive ethos of the school. One staff member wrote that 'the centre is consistently providing the best quality education to our children and leaders are committed to the professional development of staff'.

What happens next?

As the school is judged to be providing a good quality of education, there will be no further inspections of Montessori del Sol until the next cycle, which commences in September 2020.

Office of Education Standards | Parent Survey 2019

How many years has your child been at this Early Years Centre?

Response	Percentage	Count
Less than one year	33.33%	15
More than one year but less than three years	53.33%	24
More than three years	13.33%	6
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

What is your nationality?

28.89% 71.11%

Caymanian

Non-Caymanian

My child is making good progress in all aspects of early communication/literacy (including listening, speaking, early reading and writing).

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	84.44%	38
Agree	8.89%	4
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	6.67%	3
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

My child is making good progress in mathematical understanding.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	51.11%	23
Agree	22.22%	10
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	26.67%	12
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

My child is making good progress in their early scientific understanding.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	51.11%	23
Agree	17.78%	8
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	31.11%	14
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

The Early Years Centre is effective in developing my child's personal and social skills.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	84.44%	38
Agree	11.11%	5
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	4.44%	2
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

My child is being helped to take turns and share fairly as part of the education programme.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	88.89%	40
Agree	8.89%	4
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	2.22%	1
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

My child is developing good understanding of the environment and how they can help to protect it.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	77.78%	35
Agree	8.89%	4
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	13.33%	6
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

The quality of teaching in the Early Years Centre is good.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	91.11%	41
Agree	6.67%	3
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	2.22%	1
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

My child enjoys coming to the Early Years Centre.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	93.33%	42
Agree	6.67%	3
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

My child is inspired to learn.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	84.44%	38
Agree	11.11%	5
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	4.44%	2
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

My child is given a wide range of age-appropriate play opportunities each day.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	91.11%	41
Agree	8.89%	4
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

There are regular visits and visitors to the Early Years Centre which enhance the learning of the child.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	57.78%	26
Agree	17.78%	8
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	24.44%	11
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

My child is safe and cared for at the Early Years Centre.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	95.56%	43
Agree	4.44%	2
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

The Early Years Centre helps my child choose a healthy lifestyle.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	88.89%	40
Agree	6.67%	3
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	4.44%	2
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

My child is treated fairly at the Early Years Centre.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	86.67%	39
Agree	13.33%	6
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

The Early Years Centre deals effectively with incidents of poor behaviour.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	68.89%	31
Agree	15.56%	7
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	15.56%	7
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

The Early Years Centre provides good support to children with special educational needs.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	35.56%	16
Agree	8.89%	4
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	55.56%	25
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

The Early Years Centre is well led.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	88.89%	40
Agree	8.89%	4
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	2.22%	1
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

I receive good information about the improvement plans developed for the Early Years Centre.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	55.56%	25
Agree	28.89%	13
Disagree	2.22%	1
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	13.33%	6
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

Communication between the Early Years Centre and parents is effective and timely.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	84.44%	38
Agree	15.56%	7
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

The Early Years Centre responds appropriately to parental concerns.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	77.78%	35
Agree	17.78%	8
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	4.44%	2
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

I receive regular, comprehensive and accurate information about my child's achievements and progress.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	71.11%	32
Agree	24.44%	11
Disagree	2.22%	1
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	2.22%	1
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

Parent meetings are helpful and they are held regularly.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	68.89%	31
Agree	22.22%	10
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	8.89%	4
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

Parents are effectively involved in the work of the Early Years Centre.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	68.89%	31
Agree	22.22%	10
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	8.89%	4
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

The Early Years Centre enjoys good links with the wider community.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	53.33%	24
Agree	33.33%	15
Disagree	2.22%	1
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	11.11%	5
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

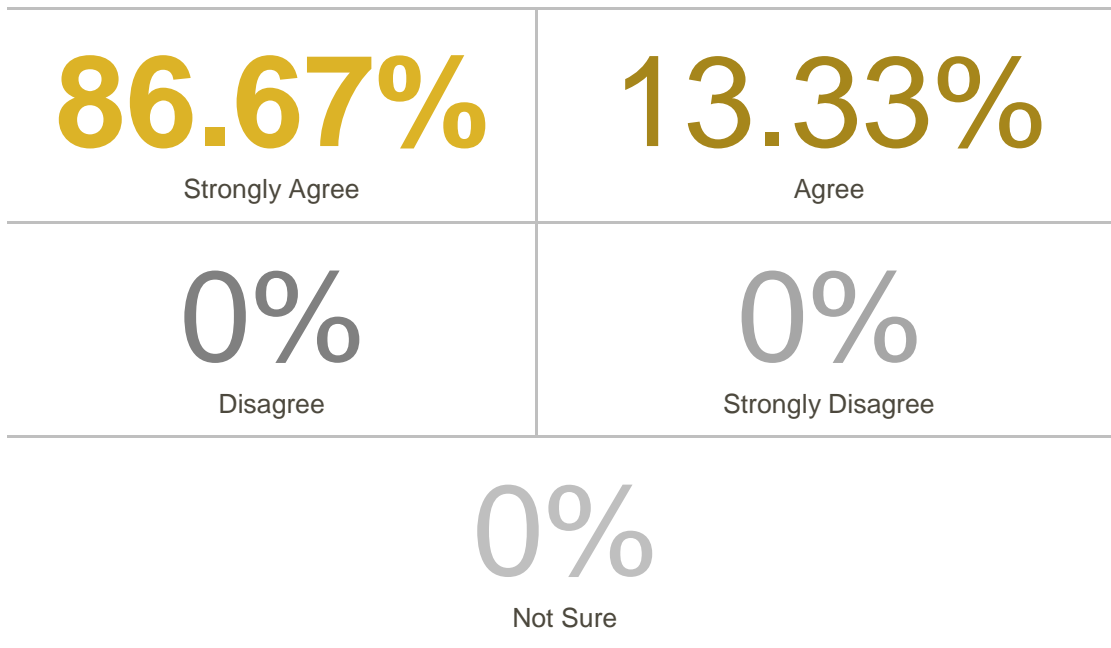
The Early Years Centre has appropriately qualified and suitably skilled staff.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	88.89%	40
Agree	11.11%	5
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

The Early Years Centre has good quality resources to support my child’s learning.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	88.89%	40
Agree	8.89%	4
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	2.22%	1
	Answered	45
	Skipped	0

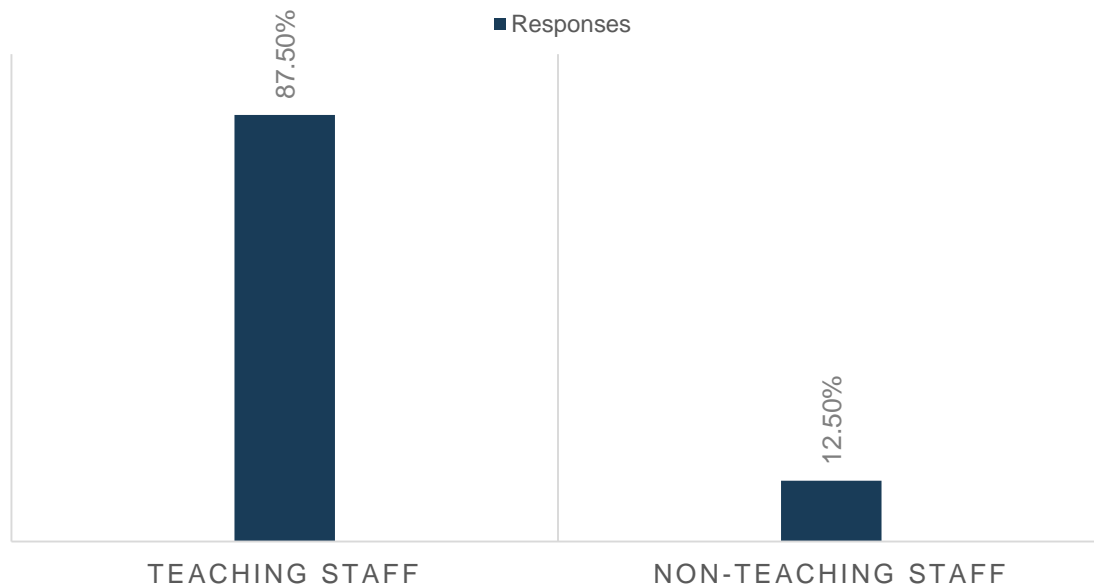
Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of education provided at the Centre.



Response	Count
Answered	45
Skipped	0

Office of Education Standards | Staff Survey 2019

What is your role in the Centre?



How long have you worked at this Centre?

Response	Percentage	Count
One year or less	0.00%	0
More than one year but less than three years	12.50%	1
Three years or more	87.50%	7
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

What is your nationality?

12.50%

Caymanian

87.50%

Non-Caymanian

The behaviour of most children in the Centre is good.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	100.00%	8
Agree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

Children are taught conflict resolution skills using books, drama, storytelling and other developmentally appropriate methods.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	100.00%	8
Agree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

There are good assessment systems in the Centre.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	75.00%	6
Agree	25.00%	2
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

The Centre supports a positive learning environment and provides good opportunities for children’s exploration, choice and independent learning.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	100.00%	8
Agree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

There is a safe and caring environment for all members of this early years community.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	100.00%	8
Agree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

The Centre helps children to choose a healthy life style.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	100.00%	8
Agree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

Where food is provided by the Centre, it is of sufficient variety, quantity and quality to meet the children’s nutritional needs.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	100.00%	8
Agree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

Children are treated fairly at this Centre.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	100.00%	8
Agree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

The Centre deals effectively with incidents of poor behaviour.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	87.50%	7
Agree	12.50%	1
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

The Centre provides good support to students with special educational needs.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	87.50%	7
Agree	12.50%	1
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

I am aware of the procedures for reporting suspected cases of child abuse under the Children Law (2012).

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	100.00%	8
Agree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

The Early Years Centre is well led.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	100.00%	8
Agree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

I am involved in the process of self-evaluation and improvement planning in the Centre.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	100.00%	8
Agree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

The Centre effectively supports my continuing professional development.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	100.00%	8
Agree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

Parent teacher meetings are well attended and helpful.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	87.50%	7
Agree	12.50%	1
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

Parents are effectively involved in the work of the Centre.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	75.00%	6
Agree	25.00%	2
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

The Centre enjoys good links with the wider community.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	75.00%	6
Agree	25.00%	2
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

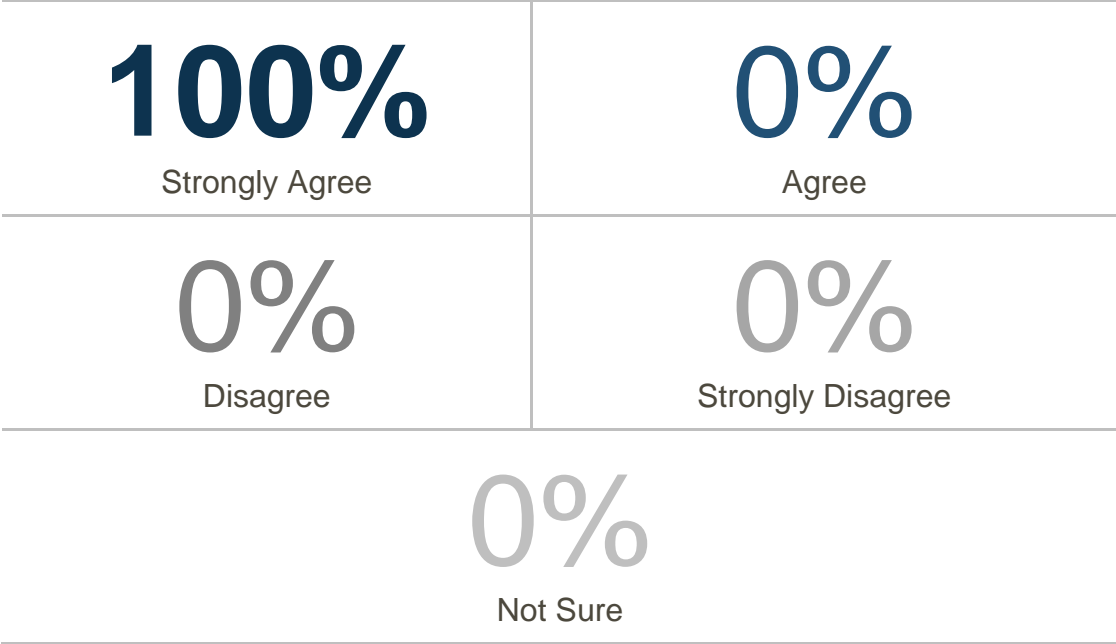
The Centre has adequate, appropriately qualified and suitably skilled teachers and staff.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	100.00%	8
Agree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

There are sufficient resources of good quality to support my work with the children.

Response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	100.00%	8
Agree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
I am unsure or unable to answer the question	0.00%	0
	Answered	8
	Skipped	0

Overall, this Early Years Centre provides a good quality of education.



Response	Count
Answered	8
Skipped	0

Who are we and what do we do?

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

How to contact us

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

adminOES@gov.ky

Where to read our reports?

Our reports are published regularly and are currently available on the Portfolio of Civil Service website. Please use the following link to read our latest publications.

www.oes.gov.ky

