

INSPECTION REPORT

OFFICE OF EDUCATION STANDARDS
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

MAY 2021



MONTESSORI BY THE SEA

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INTRODUCTION

INSPECTIONS OF SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND EARLY YEARS CENTRES 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 school and also to provide rigorous, impartial and comprehensive information to parents, government officers and 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 2**' (Cayman Islands Government, October 2020) is the tool which is used by schools to review their own work and by inspectors when they form judgements.

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.



INTRODUCTION

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	 Excellent
Good - the expected level for every school in the Cayman Islands, both public and private.	 Good
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.	 Satisfactory
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.	 Weak

Consistency in quantitative terminology








Inspectors use quantitative terms in reports, as follows:

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%
Significant minority	A quarter or more but less than a half	25% to 49%
Minority	15% or more but less than half	15% to 24%
Few	Up to 15%	0% to 14%









SCHOOL INFORMATION

General information

	School name	Montessori By The Sea
	Address	277 Prospect Point Road, P.O. Box 11747, Grand Cayman
	Telephone number	1-345-947-0684
	Website	www.mbts.ky
	Name of the principal	Ms. Deborah Thompson and Mrs. Kourtni Jackson
	Date of this inspection	May 11-13, 2021
	Date of the last inspection	March 2021





Students

	Number of students on roll	140
	Age range of the students	21 months - 12 years
	Grades or year groups	Toddler - Upper Elementary (Nursery - Grade 6)
	Number of Caymanian students	63
	Number of students with special educational needs	9
	Largest nationality group of students	Caymanian






SCHOOL INFORMATION



Staff

	Number of teachers	21
	Number of teaching assistants	1
	Teacher-student ratio	1.5 (Toddler); 1.10 (Casa); 1.5 (Elementary)
	Teacher turnover	14% (3 teachers)

Curriculum



















	Main curriculum	Montessori, referenced with EYFS, Cayman Islands National Curriculum and the English National Curriculum.
	External tests and assessments	Renaissance UK Star Math and Star reading (Grades 2-6); GL Assessments UK Key Stage PTE, PTM, PTS (Grades 5-6)
	Accreditation	n/a

School inspection overall performance history

Cycle 1 Inspection	March 2019	 Good
Cycle 2 Inspection	May 2021	 Excellent

SUMMARY







Performance Standard 1. Helping our students to achieve in **key areas of their learning**

Promoting our students' personal and social development.	Toddler	Change in judgement since last inspection	Casa	Change in judgement since last inspection	Elementary	Change in judgement since last inspection
1.1 Students' attainment in English	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲
1.1 Students' progress in English	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲
1.1 Students' attainment in mathematics	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲
1.2 Students' progress in mathematics	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲
1.2 Students' attainment in science	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲
1.2 Students' progress in science	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲



SUMMARY

Performance Standard 2. Promoting our students' personal and social development

Promoting our students' personal and social development.	Toddler	Change in judgement since last inspection	Casa	Change in judgement since last inspection	Elementary	Change in judgement since last inspection
2.1 Positive behaviour for good learning	 Excellent	▶	 Excellent	▶	 Excellent	▲
2.2 Students' civic and environmental understanding	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▶



Performance Standard 3. Ensuring effective teaching to support our students' learning

Quality Indicator	Toddler	Change in judgement since last inspection	Casa	Change in judgement since last inspection	Elementary	Change in judgement since last inspection
3.1 Teaching	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲
3.2 Learning	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲
3.3 Assessment	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲









SUMMARY

Performance Standard 4. Offering a **curriculum** that meets the educational needs of all of our students

Quality Indicator	Toddler	Change in judgement since last inspection	Casa	Change in judgement since last inspection	Elementary	Change in judgement since last inspection
4 Curriculum	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲













Performance Standard 5. Keeping our students **safe** and always **supported**

Quality Indicator	Toddler	Change in judgement since last inspection	Casa	Change in judgement since last inspection	Elementary	Change in judgement since last inspection
5.1 Health and safety	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲
5.2 Support and guidance	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲



SUMMARY

Performance Standard 6. Leading and managing our school and developing our links with the **community** we serve

Quality Indicator	Toddler	Change in judgement since last inspection	Casa	Change in judgement since last inspection	Elementary	Change in judgement since last inspection
6.1 Leadership	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲
6.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲
6.3 Links with parents and the community	 Excellent	▶	 Excellent	▶	 Excellent	▶
6.4 Staffing and the learning environment	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲	 Excellent	▲



KEY STRENGTHS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What the school does well

- Students' understanding of how to learn and their enjoyment in learning.
- The two Principals' drive for continual development and the quality of improvement since the last inspection.
- The curriculum and the opportunities given to students to follow and expand their interests, knowledge and understanding.
- The independence and confidence developed in students through the skillful teaching, knowledge of each individual and the care given to both academic learning and their well-being.
- The way in which the staff work as a team including the skillful co-teaching, the oversight of the curriculum and assessment model and the day-to-day administration of the school.

Recommendations

- Embed the programme to develop the students' cursive writing to improve legibility and presentation and do the students' excellent content justice.

What has improved since the last inspection?

- Attainment in all cross- curricular themes, involving English, mathematics, and science.
- Teaching in all areas, especially Casa.
- Assessment and curriculum mapping is now systematic and robust with good oversight.
- Support for individual students, including those with special educational needs.
- Processes for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are well-organised and effective.



OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Excellent

Montessori By The Sea was an excellent school that had made significant progress since the last inspection. Every recommendation had been addressed in full, through systematic and careful planning that ensured the changes were right for the school. It was highly effective in all areas and therefore judged as excellent overall. Leadership was extremely strong, and the two principals knew their school well and were expert in assessing what they did well and what they needed to improve. They also worked skilfully with staff to get the very best from them.

A significant feature was the students' attitudes to learning and their independence, composure, and self-confidence when working. As a parent said, "they all leave school knowing how to learn".

The curriculum was very well organised with the Montessori philosophy and themes enhanced by reference to the English National Curriculum and the Cayman Early Years Curriculum. The school had purchased a new, useful piece of flexible and secure software that allowed the full curriculum to be mapped and then tracked for each student individually. In addition, it linked to assessment information and teachers' lesson plans. This had contributed to the improvement in assessment which was excellent. Information and data was used very effectively on a daily basis to track where students were in their learning and used to decide what they needed to learn next.

The curriculum was organised under cross curricular themes rather than traditional subjects such as English, mathematics and science and these topics interested and engaged students who particularly relished the links with real world situations and the opportunities it gave them for independent research.

Teaching was excellent and the co-teaching model with each class having two or three teachers worked well. It ensured students always focused on learning, had respect for one another and developed excellent routines which contributed to individual students' well-being. Where teaching had been only satisfactory during the last inspection it had improved and was excellent. Teachers used their subject knowledge to guide and inform students and then to set them on exploring the task for themselves. They gave students well timed individual feedback on how to improve their work which was extremely effective and moved their understanding on. Support for those with a variety of special needs was significant and was included as part of the core provision of the school. The support given was very effective and students with special educational needs made excellent progress both academically and emotionally.










Students both from Caymanian and other backgrounds were knowledgeable and interested in the Cayman heritage, local customs and traditions. The environment both local and global were of great concern to them and many of the pieces of work they had produced gave testimony to their well-informed concerns about plastic and worldwide ecological issues.

Parents were excellent partners in their children's education, and they received useful and plentiful information about the school and their child's progress. The greatest concern for many parents was where their child would go after leaving Montessori By The Sea.



ACHIEVEMENT

Students' attainment in relation to international standards

Students' attainment in relation to international standards	Toddler	Casa	Elementary
1.1 Attainment in English	 Excellent	 Excellent	 Excellent
1.1 Attainment in mathematics	 Excellent	 Excellent	 Excellent
1.1 Attainment in science	 Excellent	 Excellent	 Excellent

English

Attainment in English and the language arts was excellent in all phases. Overall, lesson observations, students' work, internal and external assessments such as Renaissance and Star Assessment tests showed that students were achieving above international standards. Whilst English skills were often taught discreetly most of the students' English work was found within projects and themes. Achievement within the Early Years area of Communication was excellent. In Toddler, students knew that words and writing carried meaning, and they recognised that books contained stories and ideas. Their fine motor skills were developing well, and many could form a pencil grip. In Casa they knew many phonic sounds and could build words from combinations of sounds. In Lower and Upper Elementary students' knowledge across the subject demonstrated a broad range of skills in English, from reading to grammar. They recognised and used a comprehensive range of writing styles including narrative, analytical, and persuasive writing. They took excellent notes and organised their own study plans. During novel study students were perceptive readers and knew about inference, vocabulary, structure, and recognised writing techniques such as personification, repetition, and metaphor. The oldest students knew how to develop, research and structure research papers that included their references. Throughout their elementary years students could analyse language and explain the parts of speech, such as, the Latin roots to words and prefixes and suffixes. Spelling was very good and this knowledge strengthened students' vocabularies so that they attained well for their age. The students' lack of fluency and clarity of handwriting occasionally obscured the quality of the content of their English work, however, the teaching of a cursive style lower down in the school was improving this.



ACHIEVEMENT

Students' attainment in relation to international standards



Mathematics

Attainment in mathematics was excellent. Throughout the school, students' work, in class assessments and external benchmarking tests showed excellent mathematical attainment. Students were able to articulate in explaining their thinking and reasoning as they solved problems using appropriate language. Mathematics within the Early Years area of exploration was excellent. Hands-on, activity-based explorations enabled learners to develop a secure understanding of basic mathematical principles. Young children in Toddler and Casa use models accurately to show value. In the Casa phase, materials such as beads and bespoke maths boards, enabled children to solve multiplication calculations with 2-digit numbers. They were resilient and persevered by testing different ways to solve mathematical problems using tactile resources that helped them work through problems methodically. Lower Elementary students were skilled in interpreting tables and graphs. Many had a secure understanding of the times tables. In Upper Elementary, students used their mathematical learning effectively. They confidently applied and explained their reasoning when solving complex problems. Practical applications of concepts in geometry and algebra were a strong feature of the school curriculum. The oldest students used real world circular items including a table-top and a petri dish and measured their circumference and diameter. By comparing their results and applying their knowledge, they deduced the formula for Pi. Attainment on external benchmarks tests for most students, is above international standards.












Science

Students' attainment in science was excellent. Most students achieved above international standards. Since the last inspection, the school ensured that the Montessori science curricular goals matched national and international standards by mapping them to the Cayman Islands Early Years Curriculum and the English National Curriculum. Science is interwoven with subjects and almost all students used scientific vocabulary correctly and applied their scientific method learning skills to test predictions and across other subjects. Achievement in science within the Early Years area of exploration was excellent. Toddlers checked the weather and verbally reported to the class, Casa students sorted magnetic and non-magnetic objects. Lower Elementary students explored the five senses and used descriptive words to describe different foods after conducting a tasting experiment. In-depth learning was evident in the Upper Elementary students' high-quality project work where they had carried out research on the skeletal system and identified the muscles used by an athlete in a particular sport. The oldest students participated in the Montessori Model United Nations (MMUN), researched real life topics and prepared well-researched speeches to be presented. The quality of this work was excellent. Topics included Protection of Global Climate for Future Generations, Access to Clean Water, and Sustainable Development of Risk Reduction (national disasters).



ACHIEVEMENT

Students' progress in key subjects

Students' progress in key subjects	Toddler	Casa	Elementary
1.2 Progress in English	 Excellent	 Excellent	 Excellent
1.2 Progress in mathematics	 Excellent	 Excellent	 Excellent
1.2 Progress in science	 Excellent	 Excellent	 Excellent

English

Progress in English was excellent. There was clear progression from Toddler to the oldest students in Upper Elementary. Toddlers were given a strong start in developing and understanding of the power of words through songs and stories. They concentrated for age-appropriate lengths of time, listened well, and developed their fine motor and comprehension skills. This was built on securely as they moved through Casa into Elementary. The effectively sequenced curriculum developed the formal structures of English well, from recognising phonic blends to understanding how words are made of different parts and on to the accurate use of English grammar. Progress was strong and built on effectively over time. Students were given a series of interesting often real-world projects and themes in which to use the formal structures of language. This ranged from writing reports to imaginative stories and myths. Students developed a strong understanding of the fixed conventions of English and the rules of English sequentially over their time in the school. The practice they had to use this knowledge to convey ideas and information in their thematic work ensured their excellent progress. Internal ongoing assessment and informal and formal formative and summative testing over the students' time in the school assured this progress. Teachers used the information they gained from these assessments to tailor what students need to learn next. The individualised tasks given to students and the individual support they were given ensured that excellent progress of both more able students and those with special needs was made.



ACHIEVEMENT

Students' progress in key subjects



Mathematics

Progress in Mathematics was excellent. Most students' work in class, in internal assessments and external benchmarking tests showed excellent progress over time. Progress through the Early Years area of mathematical exploration was excellent. Montessori materials and methods helped children move from the concrete to the abstract. Learning through problem solving built the students' confidence, and resilience. Their critical thinking skills and their ability to predict developed well. The 3-year cycle of student groupings taught by two to three teachers, contributed to students' excellent progress. From Toddler through to Upper Elementary, peer-to-peer learning enabled older and younger students to work collaboratively, model, and take risks in learning. Students used bespoke materials, to successfully solve increasingly challenging problems. In the Casa Phase, a 5-year-old successfully solved several multiplication problems that would be found in Year 3 curriculum. Applying previous knowledge, Lower Elementary students successfully deduced the area of a rectangle. Upper Elementary students explored Geometry theorems. Using age-appropriate language, students were articulate in explaining their thinking and reasoning. On-going assessment during lessons and explorations showed that most students' progress was better than expected. Activity-based learning, and explorations enabled learners to securely develop an increasingly deeper mathematical understanding.









Science

Progress in science was excellent because most students made better than expected progress. Students' own learning notes in their books demonstrated significant gains in their knowledge, skills, and understanding. Progress in the scientific aspect of the Early Years area of exploration was excellent. Toddlers could identify different aspects of weather and were fascinated by investigating the natural world. The new management information system tracked the students' excellent progress and mastery of skills over the three-year cycle in Casa and Elementary. Best work portfolios contained samples of work reflected upon and selected by the student. These illustrated the wide range of scientific topics that students developed an understanding of. Teachers observed, monitored the progress over time and facilitated opportunities for greater depth in learning and deeper understanding of a concept. Extra-curricular activities and fieldtrips provided enrichment opportunities in science that consolidated their progress. Upper Elementary students learned about the protection and sustainability of coral reefs at the Central Caribbean Marine Institute (CCMI) in Little Cayman and compared the flora, fauna, and topography of Cayman Brac with Grand Cayman. A student was placed second in the Life Cycles Category at the 2021 Rotary Science Fair. After watching a documentary on sharks, students interacted with a representative from the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation (GHOF) and asked questions.



STUDENTS' PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Students' personal and social development	Toddler	Casa	Elementary
2.1 Positive behaviour for good learning	 Excellent	 Excellent	 Excellent
2.2 Students' civic and environmental understanding	 Excellent	 Excellent	 Excellent

Behaviour

Positive behaviour for good learning was excellent. The independent, self-confident, and thoughtful students were a strength of the school. Students wanted to learn and knew how to do so. Teachers and students exhibited genuine care for one another, and this resulted in excellent attitudes to work. The Early Years' curriculum area of learning, respect, was excellent. Toddler and Casa students concentrated for appropriate lengths of time and recognised the needs of others, responding with empathy. Students from the youngest to the oldest took responsibility and ownership of their learning and were highly engaged in their work whether on their own, with a work partner or in a small group. All students displayed a positive attitude to learning and supported one another in grasping new ideas and solving problems. Almost all students reported on the survey that they felt safe, valued, and supported in the school. All students followed classroom expectations with enthusiasm, and they prospered in the consistent routines and procedures. Toddlers were able to articulate the classroom expectations during circle time. Throughout the day, Casa students applied their three Bs - Be Kind, Be Calm and Be Focused. Relationships were excellent between pupils and staff and pupils. Students resolved minor disagreements by themselves through mature and thoughtful discussion. No hurtful or selfish behaviour was observed during the inspection. Students were eager to get to school. Punctuality remained good despite the challenges with the change to the traffic pattern at the start of the school year. Attendance was tracked daily and was excellent at 98 percent.



STUDENTS' PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT










Civic and environmental understanding



Civic and environmental understanding was excellent. All students showed an appreciation of local Caymanian traditions and were proud of these. Current events were integrated into the cross-curricular themes. All Elementary students sang the National Song and the National Anthem each morning. Students learned a traditional folk dance and used steel pans during music lessons. Upper Elementary students calculated the percentages of votes cast in the recent National Election during a mathematics lesson, whilst Lower Elementary students discussed the Discovery Day Public Holiday and the stories behind it. Casa students used playdough to build models of the districts in the Cayman Islands. Displays in all classrooms included the Caymanian Flag, Coat of Arms, and various artifacts. Caring for their environment was also incorporated in all classrooms with playground clean-ups at the end of recess. There were well established links with the community as evidenced in the students' participation in many outreach activities. Fieldtrips to Pedro St. James and the Parrot Sanctuary provided enrichment opportunities for the younger students. Older students demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of environmental sustainability and conservation in their extended writing. Participation in the Kids CARE (Community Awareness and Respect for the Environment) involved beach clean-ups and the turtle nest excavations project.



TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Teaching, learning and assessment	Toddler	Casa	Elementary
3.1 Teaching	 Excellent	 Excellent	 Excellent
3.2 Learning	 Excellent	 Excellent	 Excellent
3.3 Assessment	 Excellent	 Excellent	 Excellent

Teaching

Teaching was excellent in all phases of the school. Following the Montessori child-centred philosophy, teachers created inspiring classroom environments that helped each student to feel responsible for the success of their learning. Teachers knew their students well and had excellent knowledge of age-appropriate expectations and teaching strategies. They worked closely with them individually and in groups, throughout the 3 years they were responsible for their learning. In this way teachers observed students' development over time: tracked their strengths and weakness and provided lessons that met individual needs. Strong subject and pedagogical knowledge ensured teachers planned work that allowed for exploration and persistence while developing students' skills and knowledge. Classroom teachers and most specialist teachers consistently planned innovative lessons that used resources creatively, effectively enhancing learning while creating positive and enjoyable situations. They developed students' curiosity and critical thinking through exploration and guided study. Teachers asked perceptive and challenging questions to check that students understood what they were learning and to deepen that understanding. This ongoing discussion between learners and teachers assisted and extended learning and added to the students' understanding of how to learn. Timely, effective feedback included personalised next steps to improve. In the Elementary phases, teachers encouraged students to question and challenge each other's thinking and to independently find information. Throughout the school, teachers encouraged students to carry out their own investigations, evaluate their findings and explain their understanding. Consistency of routines and expectations of behaviour and the importance of students being responsible learners were consistent strengths of teaching



TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT



Learning

Learning was excellent. Students collaborated well, rose to challenges, and showed strong investigative skills. They were self-motivated, passionate learners who participated confidently and actively. With teacher guidance, toddlers worked independently and with their peers engaged in discovery and explorative experiences which developed very strong learning skills. Montessori inspired activities and the Cayman Islands Early Years Framework allowed these young students to become increasingly engrossed in their learning and make connections with other areas of learning and with the world. In Casa and Elementary, students planned their day's work schedule and participated in teacher set learning tasks alongside independent or collaborative projects. They took responsibility for the completion of this plan and chose how and when they were going to fulfil their tasks which developed their time management and independent learning skills. Individual and small group teacher conferences ensured understanding, reviewed short and long-term goals and assessed student progress. Upper Elementary, teachers and students signed personalised meeting charts after periodic reviews of work. This ensured progression and student understanding of expectations, with next steps clearly identified. Teachers carefully designed activities that developed students' critical thinking, problem solving and enquiry skills, enabling them to interpret information and apply it to new situations. Cross-curricular links were embedded, and students often linked their understanding to everyday life. This was an on-going cycle that enabled students to be innovative, enterprising, independent learners.






Assessment

Assessment was excellent throughout the school. Formal and informal assessment was consistently used throughout the school to check that each student was learning and making good progress. Formal testing included external benchmark exams, quizzes and tests. Internal assessment systems were strong and went beyond reviewing conceptual understanding. On-going assessment during lessons focused on problem-solving, modelling, reasoning and communication. Teachers observed groups, pairs and individual students. They questioned, assessed and supported students as they actively engaged in their learning. The co-teaching model enhanced these practices as it gave each teacher time to give immediate constructive verbal feedback. The new computer programme allowed teachers to record ongoing observational and formal assessments so that they designed lessons that took account of where students needed to go next. This ensured that work matched students' needs and abilities. These ongoing records accurately assessed students against standards and learning benchmarks, and provided up-to-date snapshots of students' strengths, weaknesses and progress. Informal assessment was a regular feature in lessons. Individual and group targets were set for students. Students were actively involved in assessment. They used rubrics, reflected on their work and discussed classwork with teachers and peers. Students reflected on the prior day's learning, assessing their attainment and progress. If they felt that they need further clarification or support, they chose their support partner, teacher or peer. Excellent assessment practices underpinned strong student learning.



CURRICULUM

Offering a curriculum that meets the educational needs of all students	Toddler	Casa	Elementary
4 Curriculum	 Excellent	 Excellent	 Excellent









Curriculum

The curriculum was excellent. The school's broad, balanced, dynamic Montessori curriculum made reference to the English National Curriculum and Cayman Islands Early Years Curriculum. Ongoing reviews and continual development of this curriculum ensured that it met the needs of all students and was benchmarked to international standards. The curriculum was particularly effective as it was informed by Montessori principles and the practice of starting students with real concrete experiences. This was extremely successful in motivating and promoting students' engagement. The curriculum was not structured under conventional subject headings, but knowledge was divided into a series of cross curricular topics and themes such as cultural geography, matter and astronomy and language arts. These enabled the strong links in developing students' knowledge across topics related to the real world. The computerised curriculum and assessment system alongside the spiralling three-year programme of study ensured that topics were revisited at a deeper level over time. Individual student's portfolios were used successfully to track students' progress. Students were well prepared for the next stage of their education as this curriculum mapping promoted continuity and progression of knowledge and skills. Consequently, students moving to other schools had good knowledge of what they had achieved and where they needed to concentrate further in their work. There was consistency in provision and in the approaches across all grades which gave excellent opportunities to ensure standards and outcomes. Extra-curricular activities included field studies, environmental awareness, community projects and international visits. The enriched curriculum incorporated music, art, drama, French, physical education, information technology and gave students a well-rounded experience.



SAFETY AND SUPPORT

Keeping our students safe and always supported	Toddler	Casa	Elementary
5.1 Health and safety	 Excellent	 Excellent	 Excellent
5.2 Support and guidance	 Excellent	 Excellent	 Excellent



Health and safety

Health and Safety were excellent. The school had established effective procedures and policies that ensured the health and safety for children and staff. There was compliance for the required safeguarding and child protection policies; every member of staff had had *Darkness to Light* and *Second Steps Training*. The younger students' classrooms had child safety knob covers and chimes on doors. Buildings, equipment and grounds were hygienic, safe and well maintained. Exit signs, fire alarms and extinguishers were regularly checked. Fire, earthquake and tsunami drills were regular. Evacuation maps and procedures posters were displayed in all rooms and record keeping was precise. Regulatory requirements that relate to fire safety and environmental health were met. Risk assessments were conducted for field trips. Healthy living was systematically built in and promoted in all aspects of school life. Parents were offered suggestions on healthy lunch options. Students washed their hands regularly, had healthy snacks and meals, drank water frequently and wore hats outdoors. Planned outdoor activities promoted development of students' gross motor skills and encouraged vigorous physical activity. Staff were vigilant in supervising students indoors and outdoors. Several staff supervised cars and greeted parents at the beginning and the end of the day when they were collecting or delivering their children which ensured their safety.



SAFETY AND SUPPORT







Support and guidance

Support and guidance were excellent. The school had promoted positive and supportive relationships throughout and there was a culture of mutual respect, and a strong emphasis on wellbeing. All teachers and staff had constructive and supportive interactions with students. The school valued each and every student. Teachers stayed with their students for the 3-year phase cycle and they knew their students well and recognised their strengths and weaknesses. Students' progress was accurately tracked and used when work was planned, and goals set. Through the learning support coordinator's scheduled classroom observation weeks, students who would benefit from support were identified. The school's internal 'Red Flag Report System' enabled teachers to quickly pinpoint student academic, wellbeing or social concerns in an evidence-based report. Those who were part of a student's life were involved in planning interventions cooperatively. Working closely with parents, teachers and students, the school ensured that students' needs were addressed. Ongoing monitoring and assessment enabled all students to feel successful and be active members of the school community. A small number of parents in the survey felt that racism and bullying were not dealt with firmly enough but no evidence of this was observed during the inspection or raised by the students. Students' transitions from phases within the school were carefully planned. Supported by their teachers, students visited their future phase and became familiar with routines and expectations. Students were well-prepared as they moved within the school and as they moved on to continue their education elsewhere.



LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading and managing our school and developing our links with the community we serve	School Wide
6.1 Leadership	 Excellent
6.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning	 Excellent
6.3 Links with parents and the community	 Excellent
6.4 Staffing and the learning environment	 Excellent



Leadership

Leadership was excellent. The Principals set very high standards for themselves, staff and students alike, as they wished the school to be the very best it could be. Their vision was clear and focused on providing students with a progressive Montessori education enriched by the Cayman Early Years Curriculum and the English National Curriculum. The leadership of those outside the classroom, such as the curriculum coordinator, the learning support coordinator and the administrator was strong and had contributed to the excellent improvement since the last inspection. Staff were fully committed to the philosophy which guided their day-to-day work and developed consistency of experience for the students. In addition, it produced the excellent ethos apparent across all aspects of school life. Staff were encouraged and supported to take up professional development opportunities, individually and as a group, which they valued. Students were also excellent leaders. From their very first days in school, they were encouraged to be responsible and thoughtful members of the school community. Toddlers took a lead in class by being the 'Helper of the day', leading the singing, and choosing resources. As they grew older, they took on many leadership roles within their classroom and around the school, as well as understanding what they need to do to lead their own learning.



LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT



Self-evaluation and improvement planning

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were excellent. Leaders knew the school well and aspired to continually evolve and become even better. This goal was supported by excellent, concise, and systematic planning documentation. The self-evaluation document was extremely focused, well-argued, and accurate and was a model of how to self-evaluate. The development plans were well judged and realistic. Information about the performance of the school and how to improve was methodical and based on data collected from a range of sources, formal and informal, including the views of teachers and parents. For example, staff have an end of year reflection day to consider what went well and what could be improved. All recommendations from the last inspection, including minor ones within the text, had been fully addressed. These improvements had led to the very positive changes to the inspection judgements on this inspection. Within the time since the last inspection developing a legible and fluent handwriting style had not yet been fully embedded and therefore that skill was not fully evident in some of the older students' work.



Links with parents and the community

Links with parents and the community were excellent. Parents were fully committed to work with the school and providing support for their child's learning. They appreciated having the same teacher for several years in the three-year cycle; as one parent commented: teachers "have seen our children evolve, learn, have seen their development, and know them inside and out". Communication with parents was very good and a very wide range of information was shared. Toddler parents, for example, got daily updates about their child's wellbeing. Reports were thorough, thoughtful and comprehensive. They were entirely personal to the individual child and contained information from regular formal and informal monitoring of their children progress through the year. A couple of parents in the survey felt Covid closures had damaged these links which had still not fully recovered, but inspection evidence showed a wide range of information was going to parents. The school has strong links with the community through the projects students are encouraged to join. These were often environmental or cultural. Links with other schools were used to support transition and also to offer and take part in shared professional developmental opportunities.



LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT



Staffing and the learning environment

Staffing and the learning environment was excellent. Staff were well qualified and had good subject knowledge. Some qualified classroom teachers who were not formally Montessori-trained were completing their additional qualifications. The collaborative teaching gave staff a supportive environment in which to develop their skills and to perfect their pedagogy. The three years that students stayed in each of the two elementary phases also gave teachers outstanding opportunities to refine their understanding of individual students and how to develop their learning skill, knowledge and understanding. Support staff were skilled in their roles and dedicated to the good running of the school and the well-being of the students. Retention of staff was good with many choosing to send their own children to the school. The building was well maintained, and class areas were well organised places to study with appropriate furniture for the age of the students. Many resources respected the Montessori principles and were tactile and real, especially those for the younger students. As students got older and were dealing with more abstract ideas there were some limited technological resources for them to use to research. The beautifully maintained outside area had been increased considerably since the last inspection which gave more room for play and physical education lessons. There were appropriate shade and rest areas. The Upper Elementary student had the beach directly behind their classroom as an inspirational backdrop.



SURVEY RESULTS

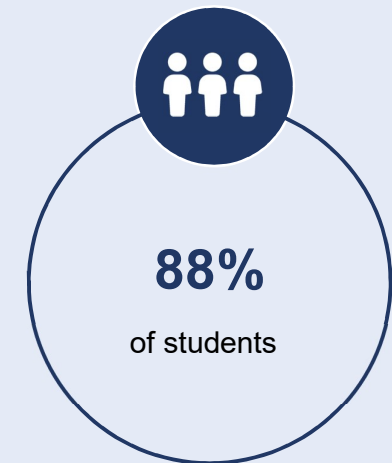
Before the inspection, the views of parents, staff and students were surveyed. The numbers of participants that completed the survey were:

Students	34	Parents	71	Staff	18
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Survey: “I am satisfied with the quality of education provided at this school.”

Thirty four students in Upper Elementary phase took part in the survey which was almost the same as the previous inspection where thirty two students responded. Almost all students agreed or agreed strongly with almost all the questions in the survey. Nearly all the students’ comments were very positive. The only negative comment mentioned the small sports field and therefore the sports equipment available. Students loved the school and said that it felt like a family. The words caring and fair were frequently used to describe the school environment. All but two students marked that they felt safe and cared and one commented. “Montessori By The Sea has helped me through rough times”.

Students thought that they were being prepared for their future and were acquiring skills to be successful. “I think the school really cares about the students’ learning and making sure we understand everything. It doesn’t base the level of difficulty instead it gives everyone a challenge.” Two students lamented that this would be their last year at Montessori By The Sea. As a whole the comments painted a picture of a school that is meeting all students’ needs, offers sufficient challenge and creates a very positive. Overall, the responses to this survey were more positive than the last inspection although the proportion of students who thought were satisfied with the quality of education fell slightly from 97%.



Strongly Agree and Agree

14%

decrease since the last inspection



SURVEY RESULTS

Parents

Survey: “I am satisfied with the quality of education provided at this school.”

Seventy-one parents responded to the survey and thirty-one made comments. This was lower than the hundred and one who responded at the last inspection. Almost all the responses to all the questions were answered positively. One parent said “Montessori by the Sea is a very unique special school where the child who attends gains a true love and interest in learning, They are given so much scope to explore their interests.” All parents felt their child was treated fairly, was safe and cared for, enjoyed school and was inspired to learn. Both in the survey and the meeting with parents stated the skills they developed for learning were universal and would serve them well in the future. Several parents with older children who had left for the next stage in the schooling commented that they had adapted extremely well because of these skills.

However, a minority were concerned about provision for special educational needs, and that bullying was not always dealt with well. The inspection found that support for students with education needs was good and that extra support was provided without cost to the parent.



88%

of parents

Strongly Agree and Agree

2%

increase since the last inspection



SURVEY RESULTS

Staff

Survey: “This school provides a good quality of education.”

Seventeen members of staff responded to the survey and two commented. This is a drop from the previous inspection where twenty seven responded. Almost every response to every question was completely positive. Out of 25 questions, one gave a feedback on whether teachers had enough resources. However, the inspection team judged resources to be excellent. Staff value the three years they work with their students as it enables them to know them well both academically and personally. One member of staff’s view was that ‘Leadership is compassionate, humane and puts faith in children and adults. The school cares very much about children and families, and offers so much time, attention and respect to parents.’ Responses from the previous survey were also overwhelmingly positive.



87%

of staff

Strongly Agree and Agree

10%

Increase since the last inspection



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The school has been asked to prepare an action plan within four weeks of the publication of this inspection report.

This should address:

- The recommendations identified within this report;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school.

WHEN WILL THIS SCHOOL BE INSPECTED AGAIN?

As the school is judged to be providing an **excellent** quality of education, there will be no further inspections until the next cycle which commences in January 2023



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

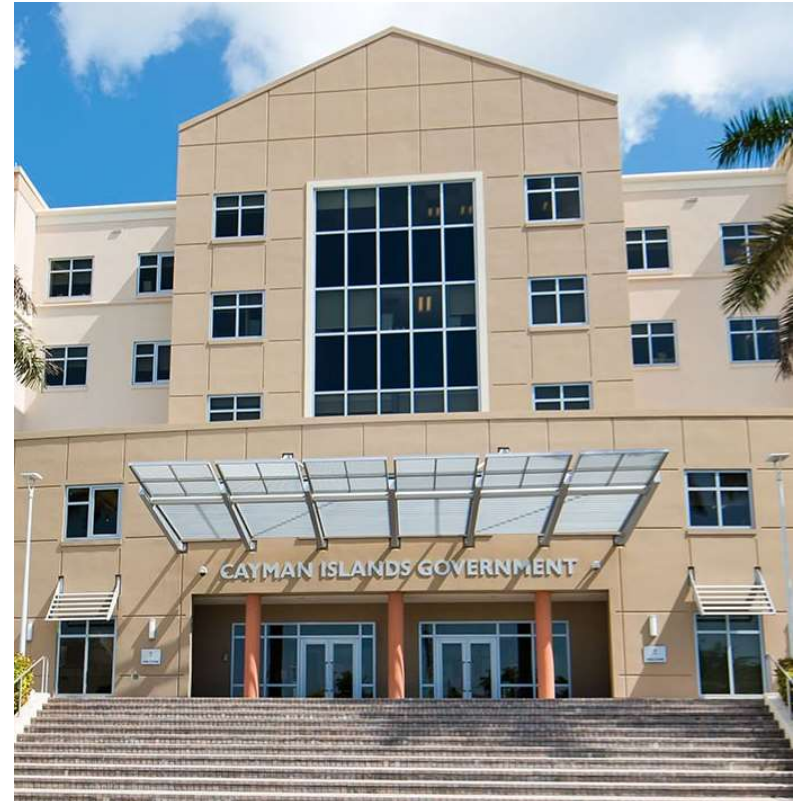
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Where to read our reports

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.

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