



FIRST STEPS TO SUCCESS

NURTURING ENVIRONMENTS AND THRIVING CHILDREN

**EARLY CHILDHOOD INSPECTION FRAMEWORK
OCTOBER 2023**



**Office of Education
Standards**

Cayman Islands Government

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MESSAGES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Message from the Minister for Education Hon. Juliana O'Connor-Connolly, JP, MP

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education, District Administration and Lands

Providing quality early childhood education is crucial for securing a prosperous future for our children.

The Ministry of Education is committed to improving early childhood programmes to ensure every child receives a solid education.

We wholeheartedly commend the Office of Education Standards' (OES) efforts in creating an inspection framework that encourages good practices among early childhood professionals. This framework outlines the inspection process, assists institutions in self-evaluation, and helps parents raise confident and resourceful learners.

We value the OES's unwavering support and eagerly anticipate ongoing collaboration to enhance the quality of education for our children.

Together, we can make a resounding and long-lasting impact on our children's lives.

My team and I at the Ministry of Education are dedicated and determined to this vital cause.



Introduction from Althea Edwards-Boothe

Acting Director of the Office of Education Standards



There is a significant body of research which underscores the pivotal role of quality early childhood care and education in shaping children's educational accomplishments, overall well-being and life prospects. Recent advancements in neuroscience have highlighted that a staggering 90% of brain development occurs within the first five years of a child's life. Many of the fundamental skills and traits essential for success in both school and the workforce—such as self-discipline, concentration, resilience and collaboration—are cultivated and nurtured during the early childhood years. Through play, children develop self-confidence, pro-social skills and empathy for their peers and others. Therefore, play in early childhood is integral to the development and future success of our children. A child's early years hold the key to their future achievements. In response to this growing understanding, many countries are shifting their focus towards early childhood policies as a strategy to enhance overall educational performance and address disparities (OECD, 2019). It is against this background that the Office of Education Standards embarked on a commendable endeavour—to develop a bespoke early childhood inspection framework tailored to the unique needs of the Cayman Islands.

The genesis of the early childhood inspection framework for the Cayman Islands was a truly organic process, drawing upon both local and international expertise. The adage, "It takes a village to raise a child," found its embodiment in the collective talents and efforts of the Core Working Group, dedicated school and centre leaders and staff, the Cayman Islands Associate Inspectors, our colleagues in the Ministry of Education and the Office of Education Standards (OES) team, who collaborated diligently to craft this distinctive early childhood inspection framework. I extend our gratitude to the former Director, Nicholas Sherriff, for his unwavering commitment to this endeavour and for providing the necessary tools and resources. I also recognise the pivotal roles played by OES Senior Inspector, Carol Bennett, and the early years consultant, Sharron Fogarty, in this process.

The Cayman Islands early childhood inspection framework, aptly named "First Steps to Success: Nurturing Environments and Thriving Children", delineates seven performance standards and numerous quality indicators that mirror the values, skills, dispositions, knowledge and practices essential for fostering high-quality early childhood care and education. Furthermore, the document is enriched with many exemplars of sector-leading standards to promote high-quality experiences and outcomes for children. The framework is also designed to assist owners, leaders and staff of early childhood facilities in assessing their practices and provisions to ensure quality and facilitate continuous improvement. Like the Successful Schools and Achieving Students 2 (SSAAS2) framework, the early childhood inspection framework places particular emphasis on leadership and self-evaluation. Strong pedagogical leadership stands at the core of high-quality early years provision, while ongoing evaluation enables staff to maintain responsive and child-focused provision. Research overwhelmingly supports the view that monitoring and evaluation contribute to enhancing the quality of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) services. Without monitoring, it becomes challenging to ensure that services align with their goals and objectives.

The early childhood inspection framework maintains a forward-looking perspective while taking into consideration the local context. We have conscientiously integrated the cultural relevance of the Cayman Islands throughout the document, alongside examples of international benchmarks and practices. The inspection framework is also tailored to enhance the capacity of early childhood staff to review, evaluate and improve their own practices. The Office of Education Standards takes great pride in this exceptional work, firmly believing that this early childhood inspection framework will have a positive impact on assessing and enhancing educational outcomes for our youngest children.

Statement from Cayman Islands Early Childhood Association



The Cayman Islands Early Childhood Association (CIECA) would like to thank the Office of Education Standards for the opportunity to be part of creating the inspection framework for the early childhood sector. As long-standing advocates for the care and early experience of young children in early years programmes, the CIECA has been registered as a non-profit organisation since 1997. Through training, advocacy and partnering with other organisations in the community, the CIECA aims to improve the quality of provision within the sector. To this day, the CIECA operates by a volunteer Executive Committee, elected each year by members. In 2022, the CIECA celebrated our 25th anniversary and the organisation looks forward to building upon and continuing its important work for young children, their families and their teachers.

Over the past many decades, research findings in education, psychology, medicine and more recently neuroscience, biology and economics, have provided new insights and compelling evidence for the critical importance of high-quality care and early experiences in the first four years of life. In response, many countries around the world, including the Cayman Islands, have been placing early childhood care and education (ECCE) increasingly at the forefront of political agendas as influential global organisations have stepped up their efforts to turn the world's attention toward these new understandings. The research findings are clear that investment in early childhood creates a better present while also providing an invaluable opportunity to create a happier, healthier, wealthier and safer future.

Early childhood is a unique stage of life characterised by rapid brain growth and development influenced by the child's environment. These developmental processes and influences establish either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for lifelong learning, coping, behaviour, cognition, resilience and physical and mental health. Crucial to building a strong foundation in a child's development are responsive interactions with caregivers and stable, nurturing care. Cognitive stimulation through

play and exploration in an engaging environment, along with adequate sleep, nutrition and healthcare are also vital. As increasingly more young children are being cared for in large group settings, adults have a collective responsibility to ensure ECCE provision prioritises these influences so that we can foster children's well-being, positive dispositions, effective lifelong approaches to learning and the conceptual understandings that will promote their success in school and beyond into adult life.

The CIECA would like to take this opportunity to thank the Office of Education Standards for their efforts and commitment to enhancing the quality of ECCE provision in the Cayman Islands. The CIECA is particularly thankful for the new inspection framework that is specific to the complexities and uniqueness of ECCE and we look forward to lending our support. We would also like to thank the team at the Early Childhood Care and Education Unit (Ministry of Education), past and present, for their long-time contribution and support of the CIECA and for inviting us to collaborate in the important work they do for young children.

Now, more than ever before, we know that "the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world" and so we would like to acknowledge early childhood practitioners for their dedication to the incredibly demanding and important job they do each day, tasked with the enormous responsibility of caring for so many of this country's youngest citizens. We ask you to please keep giving your all to the young children in your care and to be excited about the progress and rapidly increasing commitment to the field of ECCE both globally and in the Cayman Islands. Young children are most likely to thrive when they and their caregivers feel supported, valued, appreciated and have a sense of well-being. We ask all stakeholders to join us as the CIECA continues to advocate for greater recognition and support of early childhood practitioners commensurate with their influential role in creating a better present and future for young children and in doing so, for us all.

Acknowledgement of Contributors

The Office of Education Standards acknowledges the dedicated individuals who contributed their expertise, knowledge and time to create a framework of inspection for early childhood settings bespoke to the uniqueness of the Cayman Islands' early childhood sector.

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The Office of Education Standards also recognises colleagues at the Ministry of Education and Department of Education Services and members of the Cayman Islands Early Childhood Association for their valuable insights into the inspection framework.

Pilot Participants

Cayman Associate Inspectors

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The Achievement Centre



INFORMATION



Development of First Steps to Success

Early Childhood Care and Education is a dynamic sector that serves the most vulnerable segment of any community, therefore, the need to design and develop a national evaluation framework was necessary to raise quality and improve the outcomes for children from birth to compulsory school age (five years old).

The key challenges identified in the sector included:

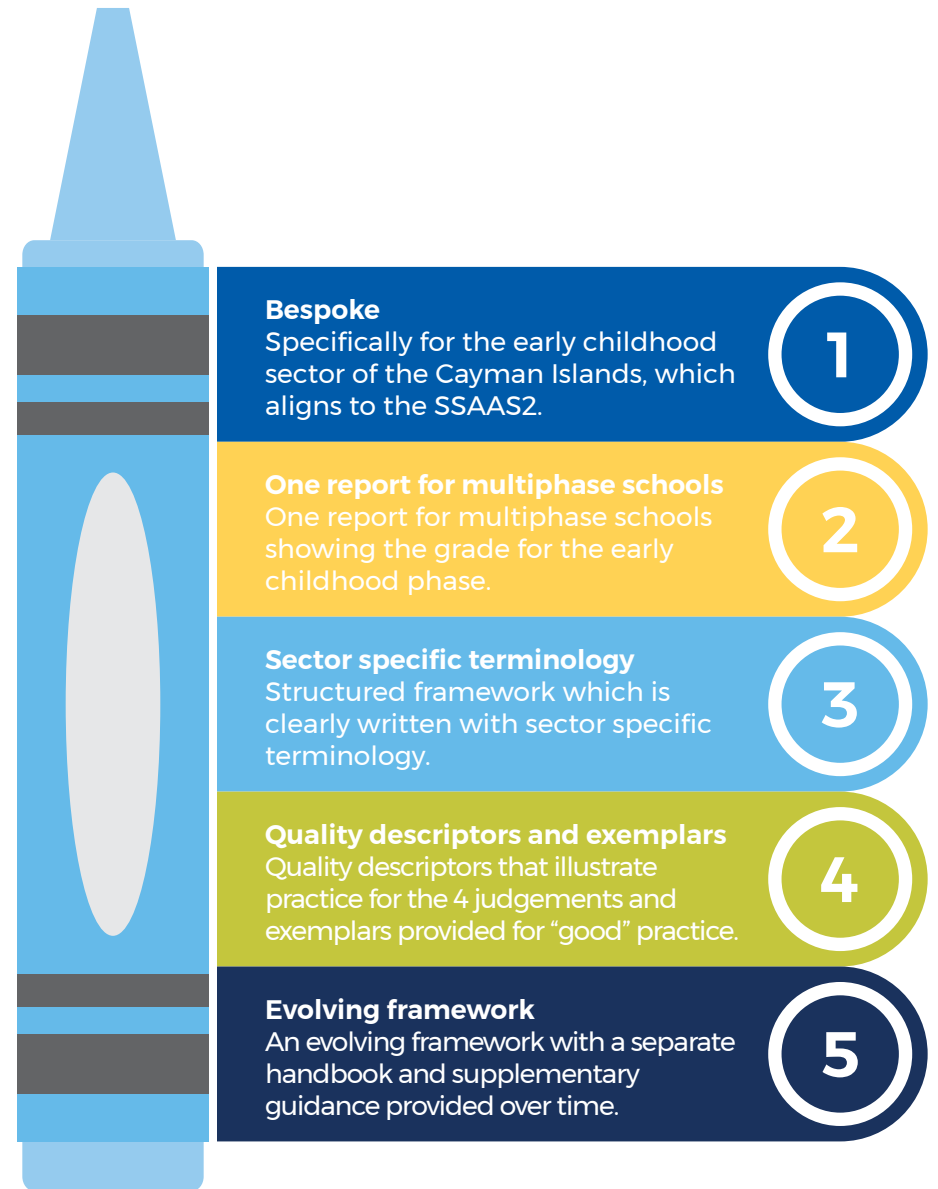
- The absence of evaluation standards aligned with high-quality practices for early childhood care and education;
- Inspection standards lacked comprehensive guidance and descriptors to support good practice and self-evaluation related specifically to early childhood care and education;
- Variations of what constituted good quality practices existed across the sector.

In the initial stages, research was conducted to inform the development of the framework. Articles and publications from international organisations, as well as international frameworks, were reviewed. Local laws, policies, guidelines and context were also reviewed.

Education stakeholders including the Ministry of Education, Department of Education Services, owners and leaders of educational institutions and representatives from the Cayman Islands Early Childhood Association gave consultative feedback.

A core working group was engaged. This group comprised expert stakeholders who were consulted and made contributions throughout the development of the framework. Finally, the Office of Education Standards, Cayman Islands Associate Inspectors and the International Consultant piloted the draft framework in a sample of early childhood centres and schools across the sector to ensure the tool was fit for purpose and contextually relevant. Pilot participants provided meaningful feedback.

The diagram depicts the outcomes of the consultations with all stakeholders.



The Inspection of Educational Institutions in the Cayman Islands

The Education Act (2016) requires the regular inspection of government and private educational institutions in the Cayman Islands. The Act places responsibility for inspection upon the Office of Education Standards within the Cayman Islands Government.

First Steps to Success: Nurturing Environments and Thriving Children applies to all institutions, entities or establishments catering for the care and education of children younger than compulsory school age.

In this section of the framework, we explain important aspects of the inspection process including the code of conduct for inspectors and the purpose of inspections.

As well as providing a framework for consistent reporting and evaluation, First Steps to Success is intended to ensure that inspections are of the highest quality and that the judgements inspectors make about early childhood settings are fair, rigorous and consistent.

All inspections should conform to the standards stipulated in the following quality promise:

Our Quality Promise

Inspectors will establish effective working relationships with the staff of each early childhood setting, based on professionalism, sensitivity and an understanding of their identified priorities and the circumstances in which they work.

In every inspection, sufficient valid and reliable evidence will secure the judgements made about the standards achieved, as well as the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and other aspects of educational provision.

Inspectors will readily explore issues through professional dialogue with early childhood staff based on the self-evaluation. Each early childhood

setting's strengths and the key areas for development will be clearly identified and reported.

Inspections will be planned well and managed effectively. Through its communications with early childhood settings, the Office of Education Standards will make every effort to ensure a clear and shared understanding of what is involved at each stage of the inspection process.

Feedback to early childhood staff and where applicable, advisory bodies, given orally and in writing, will be clear and unambiguous. Inspectors will aim to leave the staff of each early childhood setting feeling that they have gained from the experience of inspection. Those involved in leading early childhood settings should recognise the thoroughness of the evidence base as well as understand and respect the judgements that emerge. The entire early childhood setting community should believe that the inspection has provided a valuable contribution to its strategy for improvement.



Code of Conduct for Inspectors

Inspectors must not only arrive at fair and accurate judgements about early childhood settings but they must also conduct inspections professionally. Any assessment of professional competence can cause anxiety, and inspection is no exception to this. Inspectors will treat all the people they encounter during the inspection process with interest, courtesy and respect.

Our right of entry into any premises where early childhood care and education services is being undertaken is a privilege.

Inspectors will uphold the highest professional standards in their work and ensure that staff and children are treated fairly and that early childhood settings benefit from the experience of inspection. The process will be transparent and carried out openly with the results clearly communicated to all relevant parties. The standards expected for inspectors are set out in the Office of Education Standards' 'Code of Conduct for Inspectors'.

School inspectors are required to:

- Evaluate objectively and impartially, ensuring that judgements are accurate and based on sufficient and reliable evidence;
- Carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy and sensitivity;
- Act with the best interests and well-being of children and early childhood staff in mind;
- Maintain purposeful and productive relationships and dialogue with all involved in the inspection;
- Communicate judgements clearly and frankly;
- Respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work;
- Present an accurate, honest, fair and reliable report of what the early childhood setting achieves and does.

Effective inspections are those which early childhood settings regard as fair, rigorous and helpful and take account of the early childhood setting's self-evaluation. If early childhood settings respect and value the quality of inspections, they will be more likely to accept and make use of the findings to help them improve.

Complaints

The Office of Education Standards will investigate any complaints raised by early childhood settings in relation to the inspectors' code of conduct, the inspection judgements and the quality and content of the inspection report.

Complaints about the code of conduct and judgements must be received within one week of the end of the period of inspection in early childhood settings. Complaints about the quality and content of the report must be received within one week of the early childhood setting receiving the draft report.

All complaints must be made in writing and addressed to the Director of the Office of Education Standards using the e-mail contact provided with the inspection notification letter. The Office of Education Standards aims to make an initial response to each complaint within one week of receipt. It may be necessary to undertake a quality review of an inspection following a complaint and such could involve a re-visit to an early childhood setting to gather information and interview colleagues. Exceptionally, a complaint may be passed to senior civil servants regarding the Office of Education Standards, particularly when the focus of the complaint is a senior staff member of the Office of Education Standards.

Different Inspections for Different Purposes

The Office of Education Standards currently undertakes a number of different types of inspections.

<p>Regular Inspections of Schools</p>	<p>These cover the quality and effectiveness of the school's provision for, and practice in, the areas included within the inspection framework(s). Timing: Currently, once every two years but at least once every four years as required by Education Act (2016). Duration: Dependent upon the size of the school but, on average, four days.</p>
<p>Regular Inspections of Early Childhood Care and Education Centres</p>	<p>These cover the quality and effectiveness of the centre's provision for, and practice in, the areas included within the early childhood inspection framework. Timing: Currently, once every two years but at least once every four years as required by Education Act (2016). Duration: Usually two to three days, depending upon the age range of children catered for and the number on roll.</p>
<p>Follow-Through Inspections</p>	<p>These inspections assess the educational institution's progress in addressing the recommendations from a previous inspection. Timing: Approximately six months after an inspection and continued from then until all identified areas for improvement have been satisfactorily addressed. Duration: Generally two or three days, depending upon the nature of the recommendations made in the previous report.</p>
<p>Focused or Thematic Inspections</p>	<p>These types of inspections may be required in response to Ministerial directives to inform policy and practice across the Cayman Islands. They may focus on a particular aspect of education provision or outcomes and may be carried out across a number of educational institutions. For example, in May and June 2020, the Minister of Education commissioned a review of home learning in the Cayman Islands' schools. Other areas of focus can be specific to curriculum subjects or the implementation of certain policies or initiatives. Timing: As required. Duration: One to three days, depending on the area of focus and the number of educational institutions involved.</p>
<p>Monitoring Visits</p>	<p>In the Office of Education Standards' Annual Report 2019, 'Every School a Good School', the introduction of annual monitoring visits was proposed as a strategy to help drive improvement in those schools whose overall performance had been judged to be 'satisfactory' in the last inspection. The Office of Education Standards believes this strategy would facilitate ongoing improvement in the relevant schools. We aim to introduce such visits following agreement from relevant government teams.</p>
<p>Risk-Based Inspections</p>	<p>A risk-based approach to inspection is a method of evaluating and assessing educational institutions by prioritising resources and attention on those educational institutions that are deemed to have a higher level of risk in terms of educational quality, compliance with regulations and overall performance. A risk-based inspection model aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of education by focusing on educational institutions that need the most support and intervention. It balances accountability with support, leading to better outcomes for children and the education system as a whole.</p>

Self-evaluation and Inspection

The Education Act (2016) and its accompanying regulations set out the statutory basis for the work of the Office of Education Standards (OES) and the expectations for educational institutions in the Cayman Islands.

The remit of the Office of Education Standards is to promote the raising of standards of achievement in schools and early childhood care and education centres (ECCEs) in the Cayman Islands through rigorous and independent inspections and by the provision of sound professional advice to the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education Services.

First Steps to Success: Nurturing Environments and Thriving Children has been developed to:

- Define the criteria educational institutions offering early childhood care and education should use in the process of evaluating their work;
- Provide clear information for parents, leaders, staff and the wider public about performance and inspections in the Cayman Islands;
- Clarify how inspections work, so that everyone involved understands what we do, our inspection systems and processes and what we aim to achieve;
- Provide a consistent reference point for inspectors and other professionals working in educational institutions to support them in their task of evaluating a range of provisions and outcomes.

Self-evaluation and Improvement

This framework is primarily a tool for self-evaluation. Regular inspections are at the heart of our early childhood improvement strategy in the Cayman Islands, and we know that rigorous, collaborative evaluation will support early childhood reform and improve educational outcomes for our children. Working closely with stakeholders, the Office of Education Standards developed this framework to help define agreed expectations for different elements of early childhood performance. The findings from the processes of self-evaluation and inspection will inform improvement plans at both the early childhood setting and national level.

Accurate self-evaluation is a pre-condition for early childhood setting improvement. Without it, leaders do not have a realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses of the early childhood setting. This means that action for improvement is unlikely to tackle the most important issues and lead to improved outcomes for children. In line with international good practice in inspections, the Office of Education Standards places firm emphasis on the need for educational institutions to be familiar and confident with the processes of self-evaluation and improvement planning. This early childhood inspection framework is an important tool for early childhood settings to use as part of their self-evaluation procedures. The Office of Education Standards requires all early childhood settings to submit self-evaluation information before the visit to the early childhood setting. Self-evaluation information should be aligned to the quality indicators in First Steps to Success: Nurturing Environments and Thriving Children and, where appropriate, to the inspection framework for compulsory educational institutions, though the format for the submission remains at the discretion of the leaders of each early childhood setting. Inspectors will use the self-evaluation information provided by each early childhood setting as a starting point for their work. The quality of the information will directly influence the inspection activities. When the information is efficiently and succinctly presented, inspections will concentrate more on the validation of the accuracy of the early childhood setting's own self-evaluation. Inspectors will then be able to focus on other aspects of the work of the early childhood setting. As a part of the inspection process, inspectors will work together with leaders to help determine each early childhood setting's priorities for further improvement. Self-evaluation can be based on an agreed cycle of activities. Typically, this may start at the end of the academic year with a review of the previous year's performance. Most early childhood settings will use assessment information, observations and work scrutiny to inform their self-evaluation. They will also seek child, staff and parent opinions, as well as the views of the advisory body, to ensure the views of stakeholders influence decision-making.



How to Use the Framework

This framework is bespoke for the early childhood sector in the Cayman Islands and complements the inspection tool used in compulsory education. It is clearly written with sector-specific terminology and quality descriptors which illustrate practice for the four judgements.

There are three key outcomes: achievement, personal development and learning, which are the central measures of how effectively the early childhood setting meets the needs of all children. These are reflected in Performance Standards 1 and 2 and Quality Indicator 3.2. Additionally, four performance standards focus on inputs, including quality teaching, an engaging, play-based curriculum, support and guidance and leadership. Evidence and judgements regarding each of the six performance standards help determine the evaluation of the overall performance of the early childhood setting in the seventh performance standard.

Evaluations

The 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 educational institution, including early childhood centres, in the Cayman Islands.
- **Satisfactory** – partially effective in achieving positive outcomes for children but requires improvement. The minimum level of quality required for the Cayman Islands. All key aspects of performance and practice in every educational institution, including early childhood centres, should, however, exceed this level.
- **Weak** – well below expectations and requires significant improvement. Quality is not yet at the level acceptable for educational institutions, including early childhood centres, in the Cayman Islands. Any educational institution that receives a weak judgement will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of those aspects of their performance or practice.

During self-evaluation, early childhood leaders and staff are advised to begin their assessment from a baseline of good judgement. This judgement level is supported by exemplars of good practices. These exemplars serve the purpose of providing clarity regarding the expected standards for this judgement level but are by no means exhaustive.

In cases where the criteria outlined for good judgement fail to accurately align with the observed outcomes of the children or the practices of the early childhood setting, a re-evaluation is warranted. In such instances, consideration should be given to either moving the judgement level to satisfactory or elevating it to the level of excellent, depending on the best alignment. It is essential to understand that the statements in the framework are written cumulatively. This means that the positive aspects identified within the satisfactory judgement level should also be apparent when evaluating good practices. Similarly, if a judgement of excellent is to be assigned, all the positive statements corresponding to the good and satisfactory judgement levels must also be evident.

This framework can be used in tandem with the inspection framework for compulsory educational institutions, where there are multiple educational phases. Separate judgements for Performance Standards 1 to 5 will be assigned, with the early childhood phase using First Steps to Success: Nurturing Environments and Thriving Children and the compulsory phase(s) using the inspection framework for compulsory educational institutions. In these multiphase educational institutions, it is imperative to ensure a cohesive evaluation by assigning one comprehensive judgement for Performance Standard 6 by using the Quality Indicators and descriptors contained in the inspection framework for compulsory educational institutions. However, it is crucial to take into account the direct impact of leadership on the early childhood setting within the educational institution when making this judgement.

Additionally, one judgement will be provided for Performance Standard 7, 'How good is our school overall?' for multiphase educational institutions. To arrive at this judgement, the descriptors contained in the framework for compulsory educational institutions will be used. The judgements and evidence collected from the early childhood phase and by using First Steps to Success: Nurturing Environments and Thriving Children for Performance Standards 1 to 5 will be included and accounted for when determining the judgement for the educational institution's overall effectiveness.

Consistency in Quantitative Terminology

Quantitative terms are used consistently throughout the framework with the following definitions:

Term	Definition	Numerical
All	The whole – as used in referring to quantity, extent or duration	100%
Almost all	90% and more	90% to 99%
Most	Three-quarters or more but less than 90%	75% to 89%
Majority	Half or more but less than three-quarters	50% to 74%
Significant minority	A quarter or more but less than a half	25% to 49%
Minority	15% or more but less than a quarter	15% to 24%
Few	Up to 15%	0% to 14%

An Overview of First Steps to Success



Foundational Skills for Life and Learning

Executive functioning skills are fundamental to the full development of children as they are considered skills for life and for learning. The framework correlates with different executive functions in Quality Indicators 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 and 3.2.



Domains of Nurturing Care

Domains of nurturing care must be in place for children to thrive and grow to their full potential. The domains of nurturing care include access to good nutrition, warm and sensitive responsive relationships between children and adults around them, access to the highest levels of security and safety, access to high-quality early learning programmes and access to good health services and practices. Performance Standards 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the framework evaluate to what extent early childhood staff provide nurturing care to children.



Glossary of Terms

Early Childhood Care and Education Centre* - Education provided to children under the compulsory school age in early childhood care and education centres and in reception classes (or equivalent) in educational institutions, and includes the care, stimulation and socialisation necessary to support development and learning.

Early Childhood Educator - Staff working directly with children in early childhood settings who are responsible for their care and nurture and supporting their growth and development.

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

Early Childhood Staff - All staff members within early childhood settings, including early childhood educators and leaders.

Educational Institution* -

- (a) a school; or
- (b) an institution that provides part-time or full-time -
 - (i) early childhood care and education;
 - (ii) compulsory education;
 - (iii) post-compulsory education and training;
 - (iv) technical and vocational education and training;
 - (v) education to prepare for the award of any degree, qualification or certification; or
 - (vi) education provision for persons with special education needs and disabilities.

School* - An institution for providing compulsory education and includes -

- (a) a unit for that purpose but established in an institution that caters to other categories of education; and
- (b) a Government school, an assisted school and an independent school.

*Education Act, 2016



PERFORMANCE STANDARD

Helping our children to achieve in key areas of their learning and development

1



Introduction	This standard evaluates children’s attainment and progress in relation to age-related learning and development outcomes across the four domains of child development: Cognitive, Social Emotional, Communication and Language and Physical, taking into consideration children’s age and stage and starting points. It is important to remember that young children’s development is holistic and cannot be viewed in isolation and children cannot progress in one area without progressing in another. However, it is not expected that development will be even across all areas and the balance will likely shift from one time to another. It is also important to remember that every child is unique and will develop at an individual pace. Therefore, it is helpful to take into account any variations between groups, such as boys and girls, children with additional learning support needs and additional language learners. The curriculum in use at any early childhood setting and areas of learning within that curriculum can be reviewed in correlation to the universal four domains of development.	
Quality Indicators	1.1 Children’s attainment across the four domains of development (Cognitive, Social Emotional, Communication and Language and Physical) currently and in trends over time	1.2 Children’s progress over time in relation to their starting points across the four domains of development
Key Aspects	Attainment against age-related expectations (benchmarks) currently and trends over time Attainment of knowledge, skills and understanding through observation of play and learning	Children’s progress over time

Glossary of Terms

- **Attainment** - The level children reach, usually measured by developmental benchmarks.
- **Progress** - The gains in learning and development made between two points in time.
- **Developmental benchmarks** - A set of goals or markers that children are expected to achieve as they grow (also referred to as “developmental milestones”).
- **Domain** - When used in relation to human development, the word “domain” refers to specific aspects of growth and progress. The domains of development in early years are Cognitive, Social Emotional, Communication and Language and Physical. Each domain can be further broken down into subdomains that highlight more specific aspects of development within that domain.
- **Subdomain** - Refers to a specific area or category within a broader developmental domain.
- **Cognitive Domain** - Refers to the developmental aspect of children’s mental and intellectual abilities. It encompasses the processes of thinking, learning, problem-solving, reasoning and understanding the world around them.
- **Social Emotional Domain** - Refers to the developmental aspect of children’s ability to understand, manage and express their emotions, as well as their capacity to interact and form relationships with others. This domain encompasses a wide range of skills and behaviours that contribute to children’s social and emotional well-being, including self-awareness, self-regulation, sensory processing, empathy and building connections with peers and adults.
- **Communication and Language Domain** - Refers to the developmental aspects of children’s ability to communicate effectively and develop language skills. It encompasses a range of skills and milestones related to language acquisition, comprehension, expression, writing and interaction.
- **Physical Domain** - Refers to the developmental aspect of children’s gross and fine motor skills and overall physical well-being. It includes the development of both large muscle groups (gross motor skills) and small muscle movements (fine motor skills) as well as eye-hand co-ordination.

Quality Indicator 1.1 Children’s attainment across the four domains of development (Cognitive, Social Emotional, Communication and Language and Physical) currently and trends over time

Children with identified needs will not be considered for age-related expectations. Attainment and progress relative to the child’s targets on the Learning Support Plan will be considered.

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
1.1.1 Attainment against age-related expectations (benchmarks) currently and trends over time			
Data and developmental records show that across almost all sub-domains, almost all children consistently attain expected levels of learning outcomes relative to the appropriate age, stage and capabilities.	Data and developmental records show that across all domains, almost all children attain expected levels of learning outcomes relative to the appropriate age, stage and capabilities.	Assessment data shows that most children attain expected levels of learning outcomes relative to the appropriate age, stage and capabilities. Domains may show an uneven profile.	Assessment data shows that less than three quarters of children attain expected levels of learning outcomes relative to the appropriate age, stage and capabilities.
1.1.2 Attainment of knowledge, skills and understanding through observation of play and learning			
In observations, across almost all sub-domains, almost all children consistently demonstrate expected levels of age-related knowledge, skills and understanding that are in line with development norms and outcomes.	In observations, across all domains, almost all children regularly demonstrate expected levels of age-related knowledge, skills and understanding that are in line with development norms and outcomes.	In observations, most children demonstrate expected levels of age-related knowledge, skills and understanding that are in line with development norms and outcomes. Domains may show an uneven profile.	In observations, less than three quarters of children demonstrate expected levels of age-related knowledge, skills and understanding that are in line with development norms and outcomes.

Quality Indicator 1.2 Children’s progress over time in relation to their starting points across the four domains of development

Children with identified needs will not be considered for age-related expectations. Attainment and progress relative to the child’s targets on the Learning Support Plan will be considered.

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
1.2.1 Children's progress over time			
<p>Assessment data, evidence in learning and development records and observations show all children consistently demonstrate the expected progress or maintain already high standards in line with development norms and outcomes.</p>	<p>Assessment data, documented learning records and observations show across all domains almost all children demonstrate the expected progress or maintain already high standards that are in line with development norms and outcomes.</p>	<p>Assessment data, documented learning records and observations show most children demonstrate the expected progress that is in line with development norms and outcomes. Domains may show an uneven profile.</p>	<p>Assessment data, documented learning records and observations show less than three quarters of children demonstrate the expected progress that is in line with development norms and outcomes.</p>

Supplementary Information

Where additional learning support is provided, the teacher and/or Special Education Needs Coordinator should formulate a Learning Support Plan (The Cayman Islands’ Code of Practice, 2021). Children with identified additional learning support needs will not be considered for age-related expectations. Attainment relative to the child’s targets on the Learning Support Plan will be considered. Additional learning support needs include special educational needs or disabilities, exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences, developmental delays or significant changes in the child’s life which may affect development such as the birth of a new sibling or moving homes, for example.

Examples of Developmental Benchmarks

It is important to note that these are general guidelines, and there can be a wide range of individual differences in development. Some children may achieve these benchmarks earlier, while others might reach them later.

Age	Cognitive	Social Emotional
0-1 Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reacts to sounds and voices. Follows objects with eyes. Explores objects by touching and mouthing. Recognises familiar faces and objects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops a bond with nurturing primary caregivers. Smiles at familiar faces. Shows signs of distress when separated from caregivers.
1-2 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begins to solve simple problems (e.g., finding hidden objects). Shows interest in cause and effect (e.g., dropping objects to see what happens). Imitates others' actions and gestures. Follows simple instructions (e.g., "wave bye-bye"). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages in parallel play, playing alongside other children but not necessarily interacting with them. Shows possessiveness over toys and objects.
2-3 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sorts objects by shape and colour. Begins to understand simple time concepts (e.g., "now", "later"). Matches objects to pictures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages in cooperative play with other children. Demonstrates empathy and comfort towards others in distress.
3-4 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises some letters and numbers. Begins to understand concepts like big and small, heavy and light and counting. Follows simple two-step instructions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages in pretend play with roles and themes. Takes turns and shares during play. Shows more independence from parents. Begins to understand and express emotions verbally.
4-5 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draws recognisable shapes and simple pictures. Starts to understand the meaning of print-numbers, letters and their sounds, some words. Begins to understand concepts of time, space and numbers. Engages in more complex problem-solving tasks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages in more complex play with rules. Develops friendships and shows concern for others' feelings. Recognises and names emotions in themselves and others.

Examples of Developmental Benchmarks

It is important to note that these are general guidelines, and there can be a wide range of individual differences in development. Some children may achieve these benchmarks earlier, while others might reach them later.

Age	Communication and Language	Physical
0-1 Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cries to communicate needs. Coos and babbles. Responds to familiar sounds and voices. Makes eye contact with person speaking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lifts head and turns it while lying on the stomach. Begins to roll over. Grasps objects with hands. Sits with support, then independently.
1-2 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begins to use single words to communicate. Follows simple one-step instructions. Points to body parts when asked. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walks and then runs independently. Climbs stairs with help. Begins to scribble with crayons. Feeds self with fingers and spoon.
2-3 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses short sentences (2-3 words). Asks simple questions (e.g., "What's that?"). Begins to use pronouns (e.g., "me", "you"). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jumps with both feet. Kicks a ball. Copies simple lines and shapes.
3-4 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaks in sentences of 4-5 words. Asks more complex questions (e.g., "Why?"). Uses pronouns correctly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hops on one foot. Catches a ball with arms extended. Holds a pencil with a tripod grip. Dresses and undresses with some assistance.
4-5 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses sentences with more than five words. Tells stories and describes events in detail. Speaks clearly and is mostly understood by new people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skips and hops on one foot. Catches a bouncing ball. Forms letters and numbers with increasing accuracy supported by models. Dresses and undresses independently.

PERFORMANCE STANDARD

2

Promoting our children's emotional well-being and civic and environmental understanding



<h2>Introduction</h2>	<p>This performance standard evaluates children’s development predominantly in the Social Emotional domain. Children’s ability to manage their own behaviour and to self-regulate are crucial skills which are the foundation for overall well-being, social interactions, academic success and future life outcomes. In essence, managing behaviour and developing self-regulation skills provide children with the tools they need to navigate the complexities of the world around them. These skills not only contribute to immediate positive outcomes but also have far-reaching implications for children’s future success and well-being.</p> <p>Children’s understanding, appreciation and respect for their own and other cultures and religions is an important feature of developing self-esteem, self-identity and tolerance. Children who have a secure understanding of our environmental challenges and the importance of caring for the environment are more likely to contribute to the preservation and the long-term sustainability of the environment.</p>	
<h2>Quality Indicators</h2>	<p>2.1 Social emotional learning</p>	<p>2.2 Children’s understanding of and appreciation for culture, religion and the environment</p>
<h2>Key Aspects</h2>	<p>Managing behaviour Self-regulation Emotional security and interactions with adults Positive child interactions</p>	<p>Cultural understanding and appreciation Understanding and appreciation of religion Involvement in environmental issues</p>

Glossary of Terms

- **Behaviour** - How children conduct themselves-their actions, reactions and functioning in response to everyday environments and situations.
- **Emotional security** - The feeling of being safe, confident and free from any apprehension.
- **Self-regulation** - The ability of children to understand and manage their own behaviour and reactions to feelings and things happening around them. It includes being able to: regulate reactions to strong emotions like frustration, excitement, anger and embarrassment, calm down after something exciting or upsetting and focus on a task.



Quality Indicator 2.1 Social emotional learning

Children with identified needs will not be considered for age-related expectations. Attainment relative to the child's targets on the Learning Support Plan will be considered.

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
2.1.1 Managing behaviour			
Almost all children demonstrate positive behaviour and confidently demonstrate their understanding of the reasons behind rules while recognising the impact of their behaviour on others.	Almost all children demonstrate positive behaviour and conduct throughout the day. They are aware of and follow the rules and expectations appropriate to their age and know their actions can affect others.	Most children display acceptable behaviour and follow the rules and expectations and show a developing understanding of why rules are in place.	Behaviour is poor for a significant minority of children. Children often fail to follow rules or expectations leading to a disorderly environment. They have little understanding of how their actions may affect others.
2.1.2 Self-regulation			
Almost all children effectively manage their own feelings and behaviour. They recognise and appropriately express a range of emotions and use various coping strategies to deal with challenging emotions.	Almost all children manage their own feelings and behaviours well. They recognise basic emotions and understand how to manage them in appropriate ways.	Most children are developing an understanding of how to manage their own feelings and behaviour.	A significant minority of children struggle to manage their own feelings and behaviour.
2.1.3 Emotional security and interactions with adults			
Almost all children emotionally thrive and have a strong sense of identity and self-esteem. They show high levels of emotional security and well-being and interact confidently and effectively with adults, including new adults to their early childhood setting, as developmentally appropriate.	Almost all children have a sense of security and display emotional well-being. They have healthy emotional bonds with early childhood staff caring for them and interact with adults positively in response to warm and nurturing care. They accept guidance and affirmation from early childhood staff.	Most children show they are developing emotional well-being and self-esteem. Children cooperate with adults and follow instructions as appropriate.	Children lack a sense of security and belonging. They demonstrate emotional unrest. A significant minority of children lack the appropriate skills to interact positively with adults.

2.1.4 Positive child interactions

Almost all children engage in respectful interactions with their peers and others, forming respectful friendships as expected.

They begin to advocate for acceptable behaviour.

Almost all children interact positively with others of different ages in pairs and in small groups to develop friendships as expected. They collaborate with other children to accomplish common goals.

They show respect in how they relate to others and resolve conflicts for themselves with little support and encouragement from early childhood staff, as age-appropriate.

Most children cooperate with others and form friendship groups at developmentally expected stages.

They are starting to show respect and consideration for others but need support from early childhood staff to resolve conflicts.

A significant minority of children lack the appropriate skills to interact with their peers respectfully.

Exemplar for “Good”

2.1.1 At age-appropriate levels, almost all children demonstrate positive behaviour and conduct throughout the day. Although children may test limits and boundaries as a typical part of development, they follow rules and expectations at an age-appropriate level. Children share toys, materials and space with their peers, although this may be developing for infants and toddlers. Children have positive interactions through effective communication, by expressing themselves in a respectful manner, using words instead of resorting to physical actions. Children demonstrate empathy and kindness as they begin to understand and respond to the feelings and needs of others. They take responsibility for their own actions and develop an understanding that their choices and behaviours have consequences.

2.1.2 As children develop, they learn to identify their own emotions and understand how to manage them. Children use pictures to share how they feel and often relate to characters in books as they read about emotions. Older children label their emotions using words or through art or drama. Children use age-appropriate strategies to manage their emotions effectively. For example, they use deep breathing techniques,

talk through frustrations, accept comfort from adults, utilise the calming areas and sensory resources provided and persevere through challenges. Infants and toddlers will require higher levels of support from caring adults as they learn to self-regulate.

2.1.3 Children develop a sense of emotional security and gain confidence in navigating new experiences. Children respond to nurturing care, positive feedback from staff and develop a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence. They tackle new challenges with enthusiasm. Children express and validate their emotions in a safe and supportive environment.

Children form healthy emotional attachments to adults caring for them. Infants and toddlers demonstrate a close bond with key adults who provide care and comfort. When infants become mobile, they explore their environment while using the secure adult as a base, often returning to them before venturing off again. Children accept comfort from the adult, helping them to calm down and cope with frustration. Older children show secure attachments with key adults by talking with them openly, asking them for support when needed and accepting guidance and affirmation.

Exemplar for “Good” (continued)

2.1.4 As children progress through the stages of play (unoccupied, solitary, spectator/onlooker, parallel, associative, cooperative) and develop socially, they form positive interactions and friendships among their peers. Children of different ages interact and engage in shared experiences. Through collaborative efforts, children develop relationships, learn from one another and work towards common goals. Children may collaborate to build a structure using blocks or create a collage. As they communicate, share ideas and distribute tasks, they actively listen, compromise and support one another. Through these collaborative endeavours, children learn the value of teamwork and the joy of achieving shared goals.

Children may discuss their favourite books, share personal stories or talk about their cultural traditions. They appreciate differences and foster meaningful connections with their peers. Together, they use puppets to retell and roleplay familiar stories and scenes. They engage in imaginative play scenarios together, such as running a pretend grocery store or building a town with blocks. Through these activities, children negotiate, compromise and work together to create a shared play experience. In group activities or games, children take turns and wait patiently for their chance, although younger children may need support.

At age-appropriate levels, children demonstrate respect in their interactions with others and resolve conflicts with minimal support and guidance from early childhood staff. They use the necessary skills to navigate social interactions. Children treat their peers with kindness and respect, fostering an inclusive social environment.





Quality Indicator 2.2 Children's understanding of and appreciation for culture, religion and the environment

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
2.2.1 Cultural understanding and appreciation			
<p>Almost all children can confidently and clearly share information in a variety of ways which demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of Caymanian heritage and culture as well as other cultures.</p>	<p>Almost all children demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of Caymanian heritage and culture and other cultures.</p>	<p>Most children show an age-appropriate understanding of Caymanian heritage and culture.</p>	<p>Less than three quarters of children demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of Caymanian culture and heritage.</p>
2.2.2 Understanding and appreciation of religion			
<p>Almost all children can confidently and clearly share information in a variety of ways which demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of world religions, including Christianity.</p>	<p>Almost all children demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of world religions, including Christianity.</p>	<p>Most children show an age-appropriate understanding of world religions, including Christianity.</p>	<p>Less than three quarters of children demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of religion.</p>
2.2.3 Involvement in environmental issues			
<p>Almost all children can confidently and clearly share information in a variety of ways which demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of the importance of protecting the natural environment. They initiate and participate in schemes which support environmental sustainability and conservation when supported by family or early childhood staff.</p>	<p>Almost all children demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of environmental issues. When supported by family or early childhood staff, they participate in environmental conservation and preservation activities.</p>	<p>Most children demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of environmental issues and participate in a few events which support sustainability and conservation when supported by family or early childhood staff.</p>	<p>Less than three quarters of children demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of environmental issues.</p>

Exemplar for “Good”

2.2.1 and 2.2.2 Almost all children demonstrate that they are aware of Caymanian heritage and culture as they participate with reverence in the singing of the national anthem and national song. They regularly interact with and identify National Symbols. They are able to share information regarding their visits to culturally relevant sites such as Pedro St. James, the National Museum, the Heritage House or the Little Cayman Museum. Children imitate the behaviours they observe in their family, community and media. This includes imitating the way people dress, eat, celebrate, worship and interact with others. During pretend play, children may reenact cultural events, roles or daily activities they have seen or experienced as well as religious practices and observances. Children listen to, retell and share information of traditional stories or books about Cayman heritage and culture, as well as other cultures, and stories relevant to religion, including Bible stories. Children show their understanding of culture and religion by observing and participating in rituals and practices that are significant to their community.

Children create art and crafts which reflect cultural and religious themes and symbols. When older children engage in artistic activities, they may use culturally specific designs, colours and materials, thus demonstrating their understanding of cultural expressions. Children may show an understanding of cultural norms around food by participating in mealtime rituals, trying traditional dishes and understanding the significance of certain foods in Cayman and other countries. Children often display curiosity about differences they notice in people around them. They may ask questions about cultural and religious practices, clothing, language and other aspects that are new to them.

It is essential to note that cultural understanding in young children is a gradual process, heavily influenced by their environment, experiences and interactions with caregivers, peers and the broader community.

2.2.3 Children know about the Cayman environment and environments around the world. They help to keep their immediate surroundings clean and orderly and understand the reciprocal relationship between themselves and the environment.

Almost all children demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of environmental issues. Children exhibit a natural curiosity about the world around them. They show interest in nature, animals, plants and weather, asking questions about their surroundings and the changes they observe. They display empathy towards animals and express concern when they see animals in distress or harmed. Children take part in activities like gardening, caring for pets or observing insects. They have a sense of responsibility and a nurturing attitude towards nature. This care and empathy can extend to the environment as they recognise the importance of preserving habitats for animals and their well-being.

Children engage in activities that promote conservation, such as recycling, reusing items or reducing waste. They begin to grasp the concept of environmental responsibility and its impact on the planet. Through discussions, stories and gathering information in other ways, they may start to understand the cycles of nature and how human activities can impact the environment. Children participate in environmental activities like tree planting, beach clean-ups or creating eco-friendly crafts. Participation in such activities fosters environmental awareness and action. Children may vocalise concerns about pollution, littering or the well-being of animals. Through drawings, paintings and crafts, children might express their love for nature or their understanding of environmental issues.

PERFORMANCE STANDARD

Ensuring effective teaching to support our children's learning and development

3



<h2>Introduction</h2>	<p>This performance standard reviews the quality of teaching and learning. The effectiveness of how adults support children to develop and learn is fundamental to raising standards and achieving excellence. When evaluating the quality of teaching, it is essential to understand that the word 'teaching' in relation to young children does not imply a particular 'top-down' or formal way of supporting learning. Teaching is much broader and more subtle than that and covers the many ways adults help children learn. Babies and young children are social beings and competent learners from birth. They are not passive in learning and learn best by doing rather than being told. They enjoy participation in 'hands-on' and 'brains-on' activities. Children learn when they are given responsibility and allowed to make errors and decisions. Their choices and interests are the driving force for building knowledge, skills and understanding. Educators will want to reflect on the impact of what adults do on children's learning and should consider the pedagogical approach and the adults' understanding of how young children learn. The observation, assessment and planning cycle is central to effective early childhood practice. Staff observe how children interact in play and learning and use this information to identify where children are in their developmental journey and to consider ways to support, strengthen and deepen children's current learning and development.</p>		
<h2>Quality Indicators</h2>	<h3>3.1 Teaching</h3>	<h3>3.2 Learning</h3>	<h3>3.3 Observation, assessment and planning</h3>
<h2>Key Aspects</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning and teaching strategies Early childhood staff's knowledge of how children learn and develop Balance of child-initiated and adult-directed play and learning The use of the environment to support learning Quality of adult-child interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's engagement and attitudes to learning through play Making connections and applying learning in real-world contexts Children's responsibility for their own learning Self-awareness as a learner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing formative observational assessment cycle as integral to the teaching and learning process to meet children's needs Records of observations and documentation of learning Self-reflection

Glossary of Terms

- **Accurate assessment** - Reflects the child's true abilities and performance level. Accurate assessments are free from significant errors or biases that could affect the results.
- **Adult-directed** - Adults take an active role in organising and directing the activities of children.
- **Attitude to learning** - Children's feelings, beliefs and behaviours towards learning experiences which significantly influence their motivation, engagement and outcomes.
- **Child-initiated play** - A form of unstructured play in which children take the lead in deciding what and how to play without adult direction or specific predefined goals. In child-initiated play, children use their imagination, creativity and curiosity to explore and interact with their environment, toys and peers in ways that are personally meaningful to them.
- **Evaluative statements** - Statements made about a child's achievements resulting from observations, assessments and interactions with the child in various learning and social contexts based on learning outcomes and developmental benchmarks.
- **Evidence-based observational assessment** - A systematic method of evaluating children's development using empirical data and direct observation.
- **Reliable assessment** - The consistency and stability of assessment results. A reliable assessment should yield consistent outcomes when administered multiple times to the same child or when analysed by different staff.
- **Valid assessment** - An assessment tool which measures what it is intended to measure. Valid assessments should accurately capture the specific skills and knowledge in the developmental domains they aim to evaluate.

Quality Indicator 3.1 Teaching

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
3.1.1 Planning and teaching strategies			
<p>Effective planning and successful teaching strategies ensure children are provided with an appropriate range of engaging learning opportunities which reflect their interests, learning styles and stage of development.</p> <p>Effective rules and routines are embedded throughout the early childhood setting. Early childhood staff collaborate to make ongoing improvements to the rules and routines to ensure all children's needs are met.</p> <p>All children benefit from seamlessly implemented transition arrangements that ensure continuous support throughout the day.</p>	<p>Early childhood educators plan interesting learning experiences that provide children with a range of stimulating activities tailored to their individual needs and development level.</p> <p>There are effective rules and routines which are consistently shared and enforced in age-appropriate ways to ensure a calm, safe and predictable environment.</p> <p>Transitions between activities and throughout the day are effective and calm and allow children appropriate time for learning, self-care and emotional regulation.</p>	<p>Early childhood educators plan with sufficient detail and teaching strategies provide children with learning experiences that meet their needs; however there may be inconsistency across the age ranges.</p> <p>Rules and routines are in place but not always consistently followed or enforced.</p> <p>While transition arrangements are in place, they are inconsistent.</p>	<p>Planning and teaching strategies frequently do not match the needs of the children.</p> <p>There is a lack of effective rules and routines.</p> <p>Transition arrangements are ineffective.</p>
3.1.2 Early childhood staff's knowledge of how children learn and develop			
<p>All early childhood staff have an excellent understanding of how children learn and use their expert knowledge to facilitate children's learning in inspiring ways.</p>	<p>All early childhood staff have a secure understanding of how young children learn across all age ranges and use their knowledge well to support children's learning in exciting and imaginative ways.</p>	<p>Almost all early childhood staff have suitable knowledge and understanding of the age group they are working with and suitably support children's learning and development.</p>	<p>Few early childhood staff show appropriate knowledge or understanding of how young children learn. Thus, for a significant minority their learning is hindered.</p>

3.1.3 Balance of child-initiated and adult-directed play and learning

All early childhood educators ensure children of different ages engage in an appropriate balance of adult-directed and child-initiated experiences which are purposeful and motivating and support children's choice and autonomy.

An appropriate balance of adult-directed and play-based child-initiated experiences ensure children across all age groups experience meaningful learning opportunities and are given opportunities for independent choice.

Early childhood educators provide a range of adult-directed and child-initiated learning activities, however this may be imbalanced or inconsistent. Children have opportunities to make choices although these are not always meaningful or purposeful.

There is an inappropriate balance of adult-directed and child-initiated learning relevant to the children's stage of development. Teaching is either mainly adult-directed or children regularly free play with no real purpose or meaning.

3.1.4 The use of the environment to support learning

Early childhood staff expertly structure and organise a range of resources and independent learning experiences, both indoors and outdoors, which successfully inspire children to explore, be creative and use their imagination.

Early childhood staff thoughtfully organise well-resourced indoor and outdoor environments which promote children's integrated learning.

A suitable range of resources and activities, both indoors and outdoors, are adequately organised to support children's learning and to encourage exploration and opportunities to use their imagination.

Indoor and outdoor resources and activities do not suitably support children's exploration, imagination or creativity.

3.1.5 Quality of adult-child interactions

Early childhood educators have high expectations of what children can achieve and consistently scaffold and extend children's communication, language and thinking skills through effective interactions, modelling and the use of questions.

Early childhood staff maintain secure, respectful relationships with children which promote a strong sense of identity, high self-esteem, resilience and self-regulation.

Early childhood educators expect all children to achieve well and regularly interact in a purposeful manner to model and extend children's language and thinking skills. They provide challenge to all learners, including high achievers.

Early childhood staff facilitate respectful, warm, nurturing and supportive relationships and consistently make provision for children to develop self-regulation skills. They regularly offer affirmation and guidance.

Through regular interactions, early childhood educators support the development of children's language and thinking skills but do not have sufficiently high expectations of what children can do. Thus children are not always appropriately challenged.

Relationships between early childhood staff and children are respectful and warm but there are insufficient planned opportunities for children to develop self-regulation skills.

Early childhood educators have low expectations of children and relationships are not always warm and nurturing.

Exemplar for “Good”

3.1.1 Early childhood educators thoughtfully plan and implement comprehensive teaching strategies that cater to the diverse needs and developmental levels of children. Their in-depth planning ensures that children engage in a wide range of stimulating learning experiences that are specifically tailored to their individual requirements. Planning shows clear learning objectives matched to children’s current learning to extend or consolidate what children know and can do. Through careful observation, assessment and an understanding of each child’s abilities, early childhood educators design and deliver activities that foster curiosity, critical thinking and creativity. Knowing the importance of child-initiated play, early childhood educators ensure activities across a typical day include individual child-initiated play as well as developmentally appropriate whole group and small group activities.

To maintain a calm, safe and predictable environment, early childhood educators establish and consistently enforce effective rules and routines that are age-appropriate and clearly communicated to the children. The rules and routines serve as a framework for behaviour expectations, promoting a sense of structure and order. Educators employ proactive techniques to support younger children in understanding and adhering to these guidelines, while also encouraging older children to understand how their actions affect others. They engage strategies such as pictures, social stories and visual timetables effectively to convey the expectations and their meaning and purpose. Rules and routines are consistently enforced which provide security and predictability and a sense of calm for children.

Early childhood educators skillfully manage transitions between activities and throughout the day, therefore creating a nurturing and supportive atmosphere that allows children to transition from one activity to another with ease, minimising disruptions and maintaining an optimal learning environment. Transition cues are used effectively as required and expectations are stated positively. During these transitions, early childhood educators actively engage children in meaningful conversations and reflections, fostering their ability to transition independently and positively. They prioritise individual needs, offering gentle guidance and support to help children navigate transitions, thereby promoting a sense of security

and confidence. These well-structured transitions provide children with ample time to reflect upon and consolidate their experiences.

3.1.2 With an awareness of child development and learning theories, early childhood staff employ effective strategies that cater to the unique needs and interests of each child. By utilising a wide range of instructional approaches and resources, they ensure that learning experiences are both meaningful and enjoyable for young learners. Through strong knowledge of how children learn and develop, early childhood educators effectively implement strategies and provide activities and experiences that foster children’s growth across all the domains of development. They also recognise and address potential challenges or delays in development, ensuring that children receive the appropriate support and intervention when necessary.

3.1.3 Early childhood educators possess a deep understanding of the importance of both adult-directed instruction and child-initiated play in facilitating holistic development. Early childhood educators utilise their knowledge to introduce new concepts and skills in a focused and engaging manner. These intentional instructional moments promote essential foundational learning and enable children to acquire new knowledge and develop critical thinking abilities. Simultaneously, early childhood educators embrace the intrinsic value of play-based, child-initiated experiences. By offering a range of materials, resources and provocations, early childhood educators encourage children to follow their interests, make choices and take ownership of their learning. They observe, listen attentively and interact with children, recognising the learning that emerges during these child-initiated experiences. Early childhood educators scaffold children’s learning by asking thought-provoking questions, extending their thinking and offering support when needed, fostering deep engagement and a sense of autonomy. This approach offers children meaningful learning opportunities while nurturing their independence. Through intentional guidance and a supportive play-based environment, early childhood educators create a dynamic and enriching educational journey that empowers children to become confident, self-directed learners.

3.1.4 Early childhood staff plan thoughtful and intentional learning environments to ignite and extend children’s educational experiences. The environments are rich with materials, resources and stimuli that spark curiosity, foster exploration and inspire creativity. By providing a diverse range of opportunities for hands-on engagement and open-ended play, staff create an environment where children are encouraged to investigate, question and make meaningful connections. These purposefully designed spaces effectively support children’s holistic development and nurture their love for learning.

The environment is literacy-rich; surrounding children with meaningful materials to promote their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. These materials are cross-curricula, and include books of various genres and topics, signs and labels that are developmentally appropriate. A literacy-rich environment aims to enhance language and literacy skills by making words and reading a natural part of children’s surroundings. This environment could include labelled objects, accessible books, interactive activities, positive role modelling and resources and materials to support mark making and writing. Displays on the wall are meaningful and referred to during the learning process. They change with the needs of the children, topic of interest or theme and are at the children’s eye level. By fostering exposure to various types of written content, it promotes vocabulary, reading and writing development, laying the foundation for lifelong learning and literacy appreciation.

Indoors, early childhood educators strategically arrange learning centres and displays, ensuring that materials are accessible and appropriately challenging. This encourages children to investigate, experiment and discover through hands-on experiences. Early childhood educators change the material in a timely manner to match the children’s interests and needs. Outdoors, staff curate dynamic play areas that promote development in all domains, with spaces for children to read, develop fine motor and writing skills, as well as to engage in vigorous movement such as running, climbing and jumping, for example. Nature is integrated, offering opportunities for children to explore the natural world and develop an appreciation for the environment. Outdoor activities meet the learning and developmental needs of all children. All children, including infants, have adequate daily opportunities to be outdoors.

3.1.5 Early childhood educators expect all children to achieve well, fostering an environment where each child is encouraged to achieve their full potential. They actively engage children in purposeful interactions, have meaningful conversations and ask thought-provoking questions which promote children’s critical thinking skills.

Early childhood educators create a language-rich environment that supports children’s language and cognitive development. They use language intentionally and purposefully and provide children with opportunities to practice and apply their language skills in real life situations. Early childhood educators also promote a positive attitude towards language and communication and recognise the importance of diversity and cultural responsiveness in language use. Additionally, they actively seek out and incorporate families’ and communities’ languages and cultures into their teaching practice. Teachers model consideration and respect for all the children, intentionally address issues of bias and value differences. They use a range of language-rich activities, such as storytelling, role playing, singing and rhyming to stimulate children’s language development.

Early childhood staff prioritise respectful, warm, nurturing and supportive relationships with each child. They display behaviours which demonstrate their understanding of the importance of emotional well-being and consistently create opportunities for children to develop self-regulation skills. By implementing strategies that promote self-regulation, early childhood educators empower children to manage their emotions, contributing to a positive and harmonious learning environment. The premises and practices consistently provide safe spaces and adequate time for children to retreat, relax and recharge to help them self-regulate when needed. These intentional practices foster the social-emotional growth of children and lay a strong foundation for their overall development and future success. Early childhood staff confidently and sensitively offer guidance and affirmation to children as they support growth of their self-esteem and resilience.

Quality Indicator 3.2 Learning

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
3.2.1 Children's engagement and attitudes to learning through play			
<p>Almost all children demonstrate a positive attitude to learning evidenced by high levels of curiosity, motivation, concentration and enjoyment.</p> <p>Almost all children demonstrate agency and initiative in their learning and consistently demonstrate their skills and knowledge in a variety of contexts.</p>	<p>Almost all children show motivation, interest and enjoyment towards learning.</p> <p>Almost all children are active participants in their learning.</p>	<p>Most children have positive attitudes to their learning.</p> <p>Most children are actively involved in the learning process.</p>	<p>Less than three quarters of children show motivation and are engaged or eager to learn.</p> <p>Children are often passive learners.</p>
3.2.2 Making connections and applying learning in real-world contexts			
<p>Almost all children make meaningful connections and links between new knowledge and what they already know to strengthen their understanding. They often reinforce and apply their learning in a range of authentic contexts.</p>	<p>Almost all children link what they already know with new learning and relate and apply these in a variety of contexts.</p>	<p>Most children revisit their learning and use ideas they have gathered from previous learning to develop their skills and knowledge.</p>	<p>Only a minority of children link what they already know to develop further knowledge.</p>
3.2.3 Children's responsibility for their own learning			
<p>Almost all children drive their own learning with confidence and self-assurance, deliberately making choices which align with their learning goals.</p>	<p>Almost all children are independent learners and frequently choose and make purposeful decisions about their learning.</p>	<p>Most children make choices and decisions in their learning and show developing independence.</p>	<p>Children rarely make choices or lead their own learning.</p>

3.2.4 Self-awareness as a learner

Almost all children regularly reflect on and share aspects of their learning achievements with others. They apply critical thinking and problem solving as they learn.

Almost all children recognise their own learning and take pride in their achievements. They are developing their resilience to setbacks and use their problem-solving skills.

Most children are developing an awareness of their changing and developing abilities and show satisfaction in what they have accomplished.

Less than three quarters of children understand when they are achieving and therefore show minimal satisfaction in their abilities.

Exemplar for “Good”

3.2.1 Children demonstrate positive attitudes to learning, such as exhibiting genuine motivation, keen interest and a sense of enjoyment in their learning. They actively engage in the learning process and eagerly participate in various activities. Children take advantage of the stimulating learning environment. They actively seek out new knowledge and participate in discussions, experiments and hands-on experiences. They demonstrate autonomy and initiative. This active involvement in the learning process not only promotes their development but also cultivates essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and effective communication.

Through their intrinsic motivation and active participation, children constantly seek opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills. The supportive and engaging learning environment created by early childhood educators encourages children to embrace challenges, explore new ideas and enjoy the journey of discovery.

3.2.2 Almost all children demonstrate the ability to connect their existing knowledge with new learning, making meaningful connections and applying their understanding across a variety of contexts. They exhibit a cognitive flexibility that allows them to transfer their knowledge and skills to different situations, demonstrating comprehension of concepts. By drawing upon their prior knowledge, children make

connections between familiar and unfamiliar ideas, facilitating a deeper understanding and promoting critical thinking. Children are adept at relating their learning to real-life situations, demonstrating an ability to apply their knowledge in practical and meaningful ways.

3.2.3 Children demonstrate a good level of independence in their learning, consistently exercising their autonomy by actively selecting and making purposeful decisions regarding their learning. Children navigate through a range of options, carefully selecting activities and resources. They ask questions and engage in exploration.

3.2.4 Children demonstrate an awareness of their own learning process and take pride in their accomplishments. They exhibit a growing sense of resilience, effectively navigating and overcoming setbacks, while utilising their problem-solving skills.

Through self-reflection, children recognise their progress, celebrate milestones and acknowledge their personal growth. They embrace challenges as opportunities for learning and try different tactics when they encounter failure. Through their resilient mindset, they adapt to changing circumstances and persist in the face of difficulties. Children are confident, resourceful individuals who are well-equipped to tackle future challenges.

Quality Indicator 3.3 Observation, assessment and planning

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
3.3.1 Ongoing formative observational assessment cycle as integral to the teaching and learning process to meet children's needs			
<p>All early childhood educators systemically use a comprehensive range of assessment practices to adapt their teaching and the learning environment to meet the needs of the children.</p> <p>As a consequence of effective support, all children make expected progress.</p>	<p>Using a variety of meaningful, evidence-based observational assessment approaches, early childhood educators gather and analyse information to plan effective learning experiences to improve children's learning.</p> <p>Appropriate action is taken when children's needs are identified, and almost all children make expected progress.</p>	<p>Observation assessment is used to indicate where children are in their development journey and early childhood staff use the information to plan learning experiences, although this may not always be effective.</p> <p>Sufficient monitoring of children's progress identifies needs that are addressed with varying success, ensuring that most children make expected progress.</p>	<p>Assessment records are inaccurate or not used to inform planning. Assessment is not completed in a timely and consistent manner or is not used effectively to impact children's achievement.</p>
3.3.2 Records of observations and documentation of learning			
<p>Observation records and all documentation of learning are high quality and significantly meaningful. Evidence is well documented and organised, with evaluative statements which accurately demonstrate children's development.</p> <p>A partnership approach to assessment ensures a comprehensive view of the child.</p>	<p>Recorded observations and documentation of learning are meaningful. Evaluative statements are used effectively which ensure children's development is accurately recorded.</p> <p>Parents and specialist service providers contribute to a holistic profile of children's learning and development.</p>	<p>Observation records and documentation of learning are valid, reliable and accurate. Learning is documented but may not be consistently or meaningfully organised.</p>	<p>Observation records and other documentation of learning are incomplete or not valid, reliable or accurate.</p>
3.3.3 Self-reflection			
<p>Consistent and effective systems are in place so that children become skilled at self-reflection.</p>	<p>At age-appropriate levels, early childhood staff support children to talk about and assess their own learning.</p>	<p>Children are encouraged to assess their own work, although this is not consistent.</p>	<p>Children are rarely asked to think about the quality of their work or that of others.</p>

Exemplar for “Good”

3.3.1 Early childhood staff employ a range of purposeful and evidence-based observational assessment approaches to systematically gather and analyse information about children’s learning. With a deep understanding of each child’s unique learning profile, early childhood educators skillfully utilise this data to plan and implement effective learning experiences that promote children’s growth and progress.

There are multiple methods of collecting information such as direct observations, parent questionnaires and developmental screenings which provide a more comprehensive picture of a child’s abilities. The early childhood staff carry out regular and ongoing assessment which allows for tracking progress over time and identifying changes in development. Consequently, they adjust strategies accordingly. Assessments respect the child’s rights and ensure that the assessment process is fair, non-discriminatory and culturally sensitive.

Appropriate actions are promptly taken to address the unique needs of children. Whether it involves personalised interventions, differentiated learning opportunities or referrals for external support, early childhood educators proactively ensure that children’s needs are met. This approach to assessment and subsequent responsive action fosters an environment of continuous improvement, where almost all children demonstrate expected progress. By consistently monitoring and adapting their teaching practices using assessment information, early childhood educators empower children to thrive and reach their full potential.

3.3.2 Assessment tools are carefully selected, ensuring their validity, reliability and accuracy in capturing meaningful information about children’s development and learning. Early childhood staff ensure assessments meet these criteria; aligning them to the child’s age, cultural background and developmental stage. In order to enhance reliability, standardisation is evident and provides a consistent framework for administration, scoring and interpretation of results. Through comprehensive documentation, early childhood educators capture the richness of children’s experiences, progress and achievements, enabling them to gain valuable insights into each child’s development. Early childhood staff use photographs and videos of children

engaged in learning, portfolios of work, anecdotal records and learning stories, among others, to document learning.

Evaluative statements are employed effectively to ensure accurate and insightful recording of children’s growth. These statements provide a clear understanding of children’s capabilities, strengths and next steps. By employing this evaluative approach, early childhood educators create a comprehensive and reliable record of children’s development, facilitating informed decision-making and tailored support.

Parents and specialist service providers, when applicable, are actively involved in the documentation process, providing valuable contributions to ensure a holistic view of each child. This collaborative approach fosters a strong partnership between educators, families and specialists, working together to support children’s holistic development and provide the best possible outcomes.

3.3.3 Early childhood staff demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting children in articulating and reflecting upon their learning experiences, fostering their ability to assess their progress. Through purposeful interactions and meaningful conversations, early childhood educators create a safe and supportive environment where children can confidently express their thoughts, ideas and understandings. Early childhood educators provide children with exemplars and visual success criteria, for example, to help children self-assess. Early childhood educators model self-assessment and support peer discussion. Role-playing, artistic expression and the use of mirrors to allow children to see themselves engaged in learning are other strategies utilised.

Staff skillfully facilitate discussions that encourage children to share their learning journeys, engage in self-reflection and evaluate their achievements. By actively listening and asking thought-provoking questions, early childhood educators empower children to assess their own learning and to identify areas of growth. This approach promotes metacognitive skills and self-awareness, laying the foundation for lifelong learning and fostering a sense of agency and ownership.

PERFORMANCE STANDARD

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

4



Introduction	An effective early childhood curriculum is grounded in early childhood development principles. It is a carefully structured, rich, stimulating and engaging play-based programme that enables all children to develop holistically. It provides opportunities for children to engage in planned, child-initiated and independent activities in both indoor and outdoor learning environments.
Quality Indicator	4.1 Curriculum quality
Key Aspects	<p>Breadth and balance of the curriculum</p> <p>Curriculum based on play</p> <p>Individualised adaptation and ongoing review</p> <p>Cultural referencing, including to the Cayman Islands</p> <p>Appropriate sequencing to promote continuity and progression</p>

Glossary of Terms

- **Child-initiated** - Learning experiences, activities and interactions that are driven or initiated by the child's interests, curiosities and natural inclinations. In child-initiated approaches, children take an active role in shaping their learning experiences, making choices and directing their exploration within a supportive and guided environment.
- **Curriculum** - A planned and organised set of experiences, activities and learning opportunities designed to support and promote children's development and learning.
- **Play** - An essential and natural activity through which children learn, explore and make sense of the world around them. Play is characterised by voluntary, enjoyable and spontaneous engagement in activities that are often intrinsically motivated. It is not just limited to fun and games. Purposeful play is designed to meet specific developmental needs and interests of individual children. The materials and activities are carefully selected to promote skills development, problem-solving, concentration and independence.
- **Play-based** - An educational approach where play serves as the central and primary medium for learning and development. In a play-based early childhood setting, children engage in various types of play, such as imaginative, constructive, physical and social to explore, experiment and make sense of the world around them. Play is seen as an essential and natural way through which children learn and develop various skills, knowledge and abilities.



Quality Indicator 4.1 Curriculum quality

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
4.1.1 Breadth and balance of the curriculum			
<p>The curriculum is fully inclusive, comprehensive and inspirational, supporting expected progress for all children. Its innovative enrichment activities are well suited to the needs of all children. Strong community links and excursions enrich children's experiences and enhance their skills.</p>	<p>The curriculum is inclusive, interesting, broad and well balanced. It offers a wide range of enrichment activities that enhance children's creativity and development and supports progression in learning for almost all children. Effectively planned links with the community and excursions contribute well to children's learning.</p>	<p>The curriculum meets the requirements of the Cayman Islands. It is interesting at times and is appropriately broad and balanced and supports progress for most children. The curriculum offers enrichment opportunities, though limited, that broaden the children's experiences and improve their skills. Links with the community and planned excursions expose children to other experiences. The curriculum caters to the needs of different groups of learners.</p>	<p>The curriculum is narrow in scope and does not adequately promote the development of relevant learning skills. It does not meet the requirements of the Cayman Islands and the implemented curriculum does not align with the setting's chosen curriculum.</p>
4.1.2 Curriculum based on play			
<p>Play is evidentially central to the successful application of the curriculum. Regular opportunities for play and exploration are developed in conjunction with planning for curriculum implementation.</p>	<p>The curriculum is based on a clear play-based rationale that integrates and develops different areas of learning and development. It carefully takes account of the needs of all children, including children of high ability, those with additional learning support needs and additional language learners.</p>	<p>The curriculum offers experiences for play-based learning, but these are not always consistent or effective.</p>	<p>Opportunities for play are not well planned or included.</p>

4.1.3 Individualised adaptation and ongoing review

Effective adaptations and regular review significantly enhance children's learning and fully meet the aspirations, interests and needs of all children, including children of high ability, those with additional learning support needs and additional language learners.

The curriculum is reviewed with input from leaders, staff, children and parents/carers at the early childhood setting.

There is evidence of regular curriculum review which leads to adaptation based on the needs of all groups of children.

Staff are involved in the review and the child's voice is considered.

The curriculum is reviewed occasionally and generally meets the needs of most children.

The curriculum is rarely or ineffectively reviewed or does not meet the academic and social needs of most children.

4.1.4 Cultural referencing, including to the Cayman Islands

Meaningful opportunities for children to learn about and reflect on Caymanian heritage and culture, as well as other cultures and religions, are embedded creatively and extensively across the early childhood setting.

The early childhood setting places a strong emphasis on environmental conservation and creatively involves children and their families in sharing the commitment to preserve the natural environment of the Cayman Islands and beyond.

There are carefully planned opportunities for children to learn about and reflect upon Caymanian heritage, culture and other cultures and to learn about and reflect upon world religions, including Christianity.

The early childhood setting is concerned with environmental issues and supports children and their families in their understanding of how to preserve the natural environment of the Cayman Islands and beyond.

Aspects of Caymanian heritage, culture and Christianity are incorporated in planned activities.

The early childhood setting brings attention to preserving Cayman's natural environment and children and their families are encouraged to get involved in environmental events.

Few opportunities exist for children to develop an understanding of Caymanian heritage and culture.

There are few opportunities for children and families to learn about and become involved in preserving Cayman's natural environment.

4.1.5 Appropriate sequencing to promote continuity and progression

The curriculum carefully plans for seamless progression.

There are clear progression pathways in the curriculum.

Learning builds satisfactorily on children's previous achievement.

There may be discontinuity in areas of learning from year to year with unnecessary repetition or significant gaps in content.

Exemplar for “Good”

4.1.1 The well-balanced curriculum provides interesting opportunities for children in all developmental domains, ensuring that all children’s needs are addressed. The curriculum is structured to spark children’s curiosity and captivate their interests. A wide array of learning opportunities is seamlessly integrated into daily activities. Effective planning and seamless integration of community links and excursions further enrich the learning experiences of children. Trips can include visits to grocery stores, places of cultural significance or where children can interact with nature and learn about the environment. Community members, such as family members and local artists, visit the early childhood setting to share their experiences and skills with the children, creating meaningful connections and promoting intergenerational bonding. The curriculum ensures that children not only develop essential cognitive skills but also become well-rounded individuals with a strong sense of creativity, curiosity and empathy.

4.1.2 The curriculum celebrates the inherent value of play as a powerful tool for children to explore, experiment and construct their understanding of the world. The curriculum enables children to engage in play-based activities through which children develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, creativity and effective communication. They learn to collaborate, negotiate and regulate their emotions, nurturing social and emotional intelligence. The curriculum is firmly rooted in a clear play-based rationale, seamlessly integrating and nurturing various areas of learning and development through purposeful play opportunities. Play is recognised as the primary mode of learning for children, promoting exploration, imagination and creativity. Through various play activities, children naturally develop in all domains. For instance, in the home-living centre, children engage in imaginative scenarios, encouraging language development, empathy and problem-solving.

For children with high abilities, the curriculum offers differentiated activities that challenge and extend their learning. The curriculum is intentionally designed to accommodate the needs of children with

additional learning support needs. Early childhood educators adapt activities and provide additional support to ensure all children can participate meaningfully. Children with diverse backgrounds are catered to, and the curriculum acknowledges and celebrates cultural and linguistic diversity. Language-rich environments and opportunities for language development are integrated throughout daily activities. By carefully considering the needs of all children, including those with high abilities, additional learning support needs and additional language learners, the early childhood setting creates a nurturing and inclusive environment where each child’s needs are met. Through a commitment to play-based learning and individualised support, the early childhood setting fosters a love for learning and supports each learner.

4.1.3 There is a commitment to continuous improvement and adaptation of the curriculum through reviews conducted at regular intervals. Curriculum reviews may occur annually to assess effectiveness, make necessary adjustments and ensure alignment with current educational standards and best practice. Cyclical reviews may also occur involving the review of different aspects of the curriculum on a rotating basis, ensuring all components of the curriculum are evaluated over time. Ongoing reviews throughout the year may be carried out to determine curriculum coverage, future instructional targets and to make minor adjustments to address immediate concerns. Curriculum reviews can also be initiated when significant changes occur, like shifts in the needs of the community or early childhood setting’s population, professional development or emergent needs, such as a new educational initiative. Regular curriculum reviews ensure that the learning experiences provided to children remain relevant, effective and cater to the needs of all. The curriculum review is a structured and evidence-based process. Observations, surveys, curriculum materials and child assessments are some of the data sources used to inform the review process. Based on the evidence collected, specific adaptations are made to the curriculum to better support the diverse range of learners. Early childhood

educators are encouraged to share their insights, experiences and recommendations for improvement. They actively participate in discussions and provide valuable input that informs the final decisions on curriculum adaptations. This collaborative approach ensures that the review process is comprehensive and draws on the expertise of early childhood educators. The child's perspective is valued in the curriculum review process, though this is an area for continuous improvement.

By regularly assessing and adapting the curriculum, the early childhood setting ensures that the learning experiences provided are responsive to the needs of all groups of children. The collaborative approach, involving staff perspective, fosters a dynamic and effective learning environment that empowers every child to thrive.

4.1.4 The early childhood setting recognises its responsibility in cultivating cultural awareness and environmental consciousness among young learners and knows the role the curriculum plays in this. There are planned opportunities for children to explore Caymanian heritage, culture and other diverse cultures, while also fostering an understanding of Christianity and other religions. Moreover, the early childhood setting is deeply committed to environmental issues, actively supporting children and their families in their efforts to preserve the natural environment of the Cayman Islands and beyond.

Cultural education is thoughtfully woven into the curriculum to instil a strong sense of cultural identity and appreciation among the children. Children are introduced to various aspects of Caymanian heritage, traditions and customs through engaging activities, excursions and visitors to the early childhood setting. The early childhood setting capitalises on opportunities to incorporate cultural awareness regularly.

Through age-appropriate stories, discussions, role-play and crafts, children learn about the beliefs, practices and celebrations associated with Christianity and other religions. This approach fosters respect for diversity and promotes a sense of empathy and understanding towards people of different religious backgrounds.

The early childhood setting actively promotes environmental consciousness, recognising the significance of preserving the natural environment of the Cayman Islands and the broader world. Through hands-on experiences, such as gardening and composting, children learn about sustainable practices that positively impact the environment. During organised activities like family beach clean-ups, children witness firsthand the importance of keeping their surroundings clean and learn about the harmful effects of plastic pollution. To support families in their efforts to preserve nature, the early childhood setting distributes information and organises activities such as tree planting drives, recycling initiatives and beach conservation projects, helping to develop a strong community dedicated to environmental stewardship.

4.1.5 The early childhood setting recognises the significance of clear progression pathways in the curriculum, ensuring a smooth transition for children across all stages of their development. The curriculum is designed with clear progression pathways, allowing children to build upon their learning experiences as they advance through various stages of development. Concepts and skills are scaffolded, ensuring a solid foundation upon which new knowledge is built.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD

Keeping our children safe and well supported

5



Introduction	Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure and when the adults caring for them meet their individual needs. Promoting the health and safety of children requires protection from harm, provision of nutritious food, opportunities for rest and an understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Caring, sensitive adults are essential to children's emotional health and flexible routines that follow children's needs are indicative of effective practice.	
Quality Indicators	5.1 Health and safety	5.2 Support and guidance
Key Aspects	<p>Care and welfare of children including monitoring policies and practices</p> <p>Quality of maintenance and record keeping and compliance with regulatory requirements</p> <p>Provision for and promotion of healthy lifestyles</p>	<p>Supporting children with additional learning support needs</p> <p>Transitions</p> <p>Relationships and support for self-regulation</p>

Glossary of Terms

- **Additional learning support needs** - An umbrella term that describes the continuum of needs that requires additional learning support, including those children with exceptional and substantial needs associated with special educational needs and disabilities categorisation. A child is understood to have additional learning support needs if they require support that is additional to or otherwise different from the educational provision generally made for children of the same age in schools and early childhood care and education centres (The Cayman Islands' Code of Practice, 2021).
- **Adverse Childhood Experiences** - Traumatic or stressful events and experiences that occur during a person's early years, typically before the age of 18, and which can have lasting negative effects on their physical, emotional and psychological well-being. Common Adverse Childhood Experiences include physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect, household dysfunction such as parental substance abuse or domestic violence and other forms of adversity. Young children exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences often face a higher risk of developmental delays, learning difficulties and behavioural problems. These experiences can disrupt the brain's normal development, leading to difficulties in emotion regulation and problem-solving.
- **Special educational needs** - A learning difficulty which requires special educational provision to be made. By reason of characteristics of body or mind personal to the child, the child's educational needs cannot be satisfied otherwise than by making exceptional provision in relation to the child; and, for the purposes of this definition -
 - (a) provision is exceptional in relation to a child if it is substantially different from that which is made of the generality of persons of equivalent age and description; and
 - (b) children for whom English is an additional language or who are gifted and talented are not to be treated as having special educational needs (Education Act, 2016).

Quality Indicator 5.1 Health and Safety

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
5.1.1 Care and welfare of children including monitoring policies and practices			
<p>The early childhood setting has effective procedures to always ensure the safety of children. Early childhood staff vigilantly supervise children at all times. All parts of the premises and operations are safe and secure.</p> <p>The highest priority is given to safeguarding. The child safeguarding policy and practice fully meets requirements. The early childhood setting proactively initiates partnerships with other agencies to help protect children's welfare.</p>	<p>The early childhood setting's policies and procedures ensure that children are safe, well and protected from harm. The children are always actively supervised with appropriate adult to child ratios.</p> <p>Child safeguarding is a priority for all early childhood staff who are secure in their knowledge of child protection. The child safeguarding policy meets requirements and is implemented effectively. Work with partner agencies to protect children's welfare is effective.</p>	<p>The early childhood setting implements the required policies and procedures for maintaining health and safety. Children are kept safe through appropriate supervision and security of all areas of the premises.</p> <p>The child safeguarding policies meet requirements and are enacted by all early childhood staff as required.</p>	<p>Children's health, safety and well-being are at risk at the early childhood setting due to ineffective or inconsistent safety practices or inadequate policies or training. Adult:child ratios are not always observed.</p> <p>Child safeguarding procedures are inadequate or early childhood staff do not have adequate knowledge of child safeguarding procedures.</p>
5.1.2 Quality of maintenance and record keeping and compliance with regulatory requirements			
<p>The environment and resources are clean and maintained in excellent condition. Record keeping is comprehensive and robust.</p> <p>Thorough and complete risk assessments are regularly updated and action is taken promptly to minimise any potential risk or harm to children.</p>	<p>Thorough checks are made regularly and acted upon to make sure the premises are safe and secure. The environment and resources are in good repair. Record keeping, including hazard management drills, is sufficiently detailed and organised.</p> <p>Risk assessments are conducted for relevant situations and activities to ensure risks are minimised or mitigated.</p>	<p>Health and safety checks are sufficiently regular and regulatory requirements are met. The environment and resources are in sound repair and well maintained. Record keeping is in place.</p> <p>Risk assessments are conducted, including for off-site trips.</p>	<p>Regulatory requirements are not met. Poor procedures and practices put children's health and safety at risk. The early childhood setting implements a basic level of hygiene practice but resources are not appropriately sanitised on a regular basis.</p> <p>Risk assessments are ineffective or are incomplete.</p>

5.1.3 Provision for and promotion of healthy lifestyles

Early childhood staff effectively support children's growing understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

Effective systems are in place to ensure continuity of care for all children.

Early childhood staff successfully encourage and promote children's developing understanding of how to keep themselves safe and to lead a healthy lifestyle. Staff plan appropriately to meet children's needs for rest, quiet time and privacy.

Routines at home are taken into close consideration and have a positive impact upon children's well-being.

Early childhood staff adequately support children to understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Systems are in place for children to rest and have quiet time throughout the day, but they may not always be effective.

Home routines may be taken into consideration with infants, but are not always followed.

There is insufficient emphasis upon healthy living. Little consideration is given to children's rest or privacy.



Exemplar for “Good”

5.1.1 Early childhood staff consistently implement policies and procedures, which are compliant with all requirements and this guarantees the safety and well-being of all children. Early childhood staff adhere to these protocols, ensuring active supervision throughout the premises. All adults, including volunteers, have undergone required child safeguarding training, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure the safety of children within the early childhood setting. This training enables them to promptly identify potential signs of abuse or neglect and execute child safeguarding policies with fidelity. Furthermore, there is a commitment to protecting children’s welfare which extends to fostering strong partnerships with external agencies specialised in safeguarding, thereby augmenting the staff’s ability to safeguard children effectively. For example, the Family Resource Centre, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the Early Childhood Care and Education Unit, Fire Services and Police all contribute to safety education for the children at the early childhood setting and provide information for parents and early childhood staff on how to keep children safe and steps to take when a concern arises.

5.1.2 In their commitment to maintaining high standards of safety, security and compliance, the staff adhere to regulatory requirements to ensure the safety and well-being of all children. Any potential hazards or risks are identified and addressed through thorough checks in order to ensure a secure environment. Staff continuously monitor the condition of the premises and resources, ensuring that they are well-maintained and in good repair, thereby minimising the possibility of any safety or security breaches.

Detailed and organised record keeping is at the core of operations. All hazard management drills and safety-related activities, including fire and earthquake drills, are carried out as required and documented, demonstrating commitment to regulatory compliance. Organised records provide clear evidence that all necessary steps have been taken to not only meet the mandated requirements but to also provide tangible evidence of the efficient functioning of the early childhood setting.

As part of a proactive approach to risk management, risk assessments are conducted for all relevant situations and activities. These may include water play, science activities or installation of new equipment. The diligent evaluation process ensures that risks are identified and promptly mitigated or minimised. By continuously assessing potential risks, the safety and well-being of children, staff and visitors is guaranteed.

5.1.3 The staff are dedicated in their efforts to nurture children’s understanding of personal safety and promote a healthy lifestyle. Using age-appropriate strategies, they empower children to recognise and respond to risks. There is an effective, age-appropriate personal safety programme used in the early childhood setting. Through engaging activities and positive role modelling, the staff instils the importance of healthy habits like good nutrition and regular exercise. They create a consistent approach to safety and well-being. The staff’s expertise and commitment yield positive outcomes as children develop essential skills and knowledge, enabling them to make informed decisions, confidently navigate their environment and embrace a lifelong commitment to personal safety and wellness. There are areas around the premises as well as relevant equipment and time during the day for children to rest, have quiet time and privacy as needed.

Through careful planning and communication, early childhood staff prioritise the well-being and development of each child. By establishing clear lines of communication, they facilitate uninterrupted care, minimise disruptions and promote a sense of security and familiarity for the children. Moreover, the early childhood setting recognises the importance of home routines and makes conscientious efforts to incorporate them appropriately. By aligning care practices with home routines, they create a consistent and familiar environment, positively impacting the children’s well-being and fostering a sense of stability in their development. Care routines at the early childhood setting are closely aligned to home routine for infants and new children to the setting. Children are transitioned to the routine of the early childhood setting as appropriate.

Quality Indicator 5.2 Support and guidance

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
5.2.1 Supporting children with additional learning support needs			
<p>The policy for additional learning support needs is fully embedded in practice. Early childhood staff identify developmental concerns, additional or special educational needs early and proactively plan intervention and ongoing support to ensure all children make expected progress.</p> <p>Beneficial partnerships among adults create a unified approach in meeting the unique needs of each child, providing comprehensive care and support.</p>	<p>An effective policy and procedure for children with additional learning support needs which meets all requirements is well established and consistently implemented. The timely identification of needs of individual children ensures effective support for all learners. This leads to expected progress for almost all children.</p> <p>There is an effective system for parents, staff and external service providers to collaborate to meet the needs of children with additional learning support needs.</p>	<p>The policy for additional learning support needs is known and followed by most early childhood staff to ensure that the early childhood setting identifies and supports children with additional learning support needs.</p> <p>There is a system for parents, staff and external service providers to collaborate to meet the needs of children with additional learning support needs although this may not be consistent or effective at times.</p>	<p>Inconsistent criteria, poor judgements or incomplete information result in unsatisfactory provision for children who may have additional learning support needs.</p>
5.2.2 Transitions			
<p>Effective transitions into, from and across all stages of the early childhood setting are well embedded. Parents play an active part in preparing for and managing the transition; they are well supported throughout.</p>	<p>Transitions into, from and across all stages of the early childhood setting are well managed to ensure that children and their parents are supported. In addition, parents receive helpful guidance and support through all transition times.</p>	<p>Transitions into, from and across all stages of the early childhood setting are adequately structured and managed. Parents are informed about transition procedures.</p>	<p>Transitions are ineffective.</p>

5.2.3 Relationships and support for self-regulation

Early childhood staff are effective in responding to the social, emotional and developmental needs of children, including self-regulation.

Early childhood staff develop and model healthy, positive relationships and interactions.

Staff-child interactions are positive and nurturing. All staff know the children well and are responsive to their social, emotional and developmental needs.

Early childhood staff effectively provide strategies, support and resources necessary for children to self-regulate.

Relationships are respectful and secure and the atmosphere is calm and caring.

Early childhood staff provide support for children as they learn to self-regulate, but this may not meet the needs of all children.

Relationships between early childhood staff and children are generally not positive.

Support for self-regulation is ineffective.

Exemplar for “Good”

5.2.1 The early childhood staff consistently implements policies and procedures specifically designed to cater to the unique needs of children with additional learning support needs which not only meets all the regulatory requirements, but is also well established in everyday practice. By consistently integrating this policy into their operations, the early childhood staff ensures that all children with additional learning support needs, including special educational needs, receive the support and accommodations they require to thrive academically and personally, making at least expected progress.

One key aspect of this well established policy is the timely identification of individual children’s needs. Through careful observation, assessment and collaboration with parents, teachers and external service providers, the specific requirements of each child are identified and understood. This proactive approach allows for tailored and targeted support, ensuring that all learners receive the necessary support.

Through specialised interventions, personalised Learning Support Plans and a dedicated team of educators and support staff, children with additional learning support needs, including special educational needs, are supported to make at least expected progress. This comprehensive support system ensures that every child receives the necessary tools and

accommodations. Early childhood educators create, implement and regularly review Learning Support Plans for children with additional learning support needs, including those who may have been exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences.

The early childhood setting places great importance on collaboration among parents, staff and external service providers to meet the needs of children with additional learning support needs. Through regular and open communication channels, all stakeholders work together to share valuable insights, exchange information and develop holistic strategies to support these children effectively.

5.2.2 When children transition into their early childhood setting, all early childhood staff offer warm and nurturing care supporting the child to form secure attachments as they settle into the new setting. Early childhood staff have systems and processes in place to support children and their parents during transitions. Communication with new parents is timely and effective, providing information which helps them support their child with the transition. Good systems and practices have been developed to ensure that children feel supported and confident as they move from one stage to another.

Transitions between different stages are managed to ease any potential challenges for both children and parents. Early childhood staff engage in proactive planning, gradually introducing children to new routines and environments. During transitions, children may spend time in the new classroom, interacting with the staff and peers to familiarise themselves with the changes ahead. Similarly, parents are provided with regular updates and guidance, ensuring that they are well-informed about the transition process and can actively participate in supporting their child's journey.

As transitions into a new phase of education can be both exciting and challenging for families, the early childhood staff strive to provide helpful guidance and support throughout the entire process. Through clear communication channels, informative workshops, supporting visits to the new setting and personalised consultations, the early childhood setting ensures that parents have the resources they need to actively participate in their child's educational journey. Staff utilise tools such as social stories to help children understand what to expect during the transitions. They support parents as they make arrangements to visit the new setting and also welcome staff from the new setting into their early childhood setting to gain relevant information about the children to support the transition process. Staff competently answer questions and listen to concerns children may have about the transitions. Special consideration is made for children with additional learning support needs, including special educational needs, during transitions. Staff ensure they use relevant modes of communication to support the child, participate in multidisciplinary team meetings and extend the transition times and arrangements to meet the child's needs, for example.

5.2.3 Early childhood staff create a warm and caring environment and consistently interact with all children in ways that foster their personal and social development. Adults ensure they consistently engage with children at their level, create safe spaces and times where each child can have communication, comfort and interaction with trusted adults. Staff are effective at supporting children to self-regulate. Staff ensure that they know the children well through conversations with other adult carers, observations, communication with each child and noticing

features of art work and play, for example. Staff are aware of major life events such as changes in family dynamics like the birth of new siblings or the separation of parents and offer support as needed during these times. They support children who may be exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences in order to mitigate the potential negative effects and to promote their healthy development.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD

Leading and managing in partnership with parents and the community

6



Introduction	Children thrive and are successful in an early childhood setting that is well led and managed. This standard focuses upon the impact of leadership on improving children’s progress and development in the early childhood setting. Practicing in a professional manner requires that leaders have skills, knowledge, values and attitudes appropriate to early childhood. Leadership vision and direction should be supported by clearly communicated policies and procedures to guide and determine practice, all resulting in improving and raising standards. Leaders include all who have a senior or middle management role in the early childhood setting.			
Quality Indicators	6.1 Leadership	6.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning	6.3 Links with parents and the community	6.4 Staffing and the learning environment
Key Aspects	Leadership and impact upon children’s outcomes Inclusivity Staff development and well-being Distributed leadership Advisory body	Process Monitoring Impact	Communication and feedback Involvement and collaboration Links with the community	Staffing Deployment Learning environment Resources

Glossary of Terms

- **Advisory body** - An essential component of leadership of the early childhood setting which comprises the owner(s) and at least one other individual such as a parent or community stakeholder with relevant expertise and experience. The advisory body plays a pivotal role in the strategic planning process and holding leaders to account for standards and outcomes.
- **Inclusivity** - A practice that embraces and accommodates the diverse abilities, cultures and needs of all children. There is a sense of belonging and respect for each child, ensuring equal access to opportunities.
- **Leadership** - Refers to the ability of educators and administrators to guide, inspire and effectively manage the learning environment and educational programmes for young children. Strong leadership plays a critical role in fostering positive and developmentally appropriate experiences for young learners. Key aspects of leadership in early childhood education include vision and direction, premises and resources, curriculum development, professional development, communication and parent and community engagement.
- **Self-evaluation** - The accurate identification of an early childhood setting’s strengths and weaknesses across the main areas of performance. Effective self-evaluation focuses on the impact the early childhood setting’s work has on the outcomes of children. The findings from self-evaluation should be used to inform the early childhood setting’s future priorities for improvement.



Quality Indicator 6.1 Leadership

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
6.1.1 Leadership and impact upon children's outcomes			
<p>Leaders are innovative and forward thinking and this has led to high quality learning experiences and outcomes for all children.</p>	<p>Leaders are effective and place appropriate focus upon children's achievements. As a result, children's development has improved or they maintain already high standards.</p>	<p>Leaders are competent and committed and this has led to improvement in children's outcomes.</p>	<p>Leadership is ineffective. Consequently, children do not make the progress of which they are capable or they regress. Achievements are likely to be weak.</p>
6.1.2 Inclusivity			
<p>Leaders actively promote tolerance and respect through policies and practice and adopt an inclusive approach to ensure the participation and enjoyment of all children regardless of their abilities, religious beliefs or cultural backgrounds.</p>	<p>Leaders emphasise respect and tolerance and ensure a fully inclusive approach so all children attending the early childhood setting have full access to the range of learning opportunities on offer.</p>	<p>Leaders are developing an inclusive early childhood setting and have policies and practices which promote tolerance and respect; however, these are not fully embedded.</p>	<p>Leaders do not promote an inclusive early childhood setting.</p>
6.1.3 Staff development and well-being			
<p>Meticulous attention to performance management and professional development ensures staff's practice continually improves to the highest standard. Staff receive regular concise feedback on their performance and a culture of self-reflective practice is embedded throughout.</p>	<p>Leaders improve staff practice, teaching and learning through effective systems of supervision, performance management and professional development. Training activities are tailored to meet identified staff needs and have a positive impact on practice.</p>	<p>Arrangements are in place for performance management and professional development, but may not always have a positive impact on the overall quality of the early childhood setting. Staff are provided with developmental feedback to support improvement which is usually reflected in practice.</p>	<p>There is no plan for professional development and the performance management of staff has little or no impact on practice.</p>

<p>Staff's well-being is prioritised. Consequently staff engagement, job satisfaction and morale are high.</p> <p>There are cohesive systems based upon a shared vision which enable staff to proactively make recommendations and take action to improve the quality of service.</p>	<p>Staff's needs are well catered to and all employment requirements are fulfilled. Professional development, planning and administration duties are mostly arranged during the work day. There is high staff morale.</p> <p>Effective systems and a collegiate ethos ensure meaningful collaboration among the staff.</p>	<p>Staff's well-being is considered, but is not always a priority or effectively catered to.</p> <p>There is evidence of systems which support staff collaboration.</p>	<p>Staff morale is generally low and staff's well-being is not effectively catered to.</p>
<h3>6.1.4 Distributed leadership</h3>			
<p>A distributed leadership model is embedded across the early childhood setting and all leaders are effective in their roles which helps to ensure all aspects of the work of the early childhood setting are of high quality.</p>	<p>Distributed leadership builds and empowers individuals and teams. All leaders are qualified and experienced for their roles and carry them out effectively.</p>	<p>There are leaders at different levels but they are not always clear about their roles or do not always carry out their responsibilities effectively.</p>	<p>Leadership is ineffective. Not all roles and responsibilities are clear and teamwork is not well developed.</p>
<h3>6.1.5 Advisory body</h3>			
<p>The advisory body is well established and plays a proactive and supportive role in the strategic planning process.</p> <p>The advisory body has formal, critical and diagnostic meetings with leaders to ensure that internal data and self-evaluation judgements are accurate.</p> <p>The advisory body takes a proactive approach in supporting the early childhood setting to meet all statutory and regulatory requirements.</p>	<p>The advisory body is actively involved in the strategic planning process.</p> <p>The advisory body expects senior leaders to ensure the accuracy of internal data against reliable developmental benchmarks and self-evaluation judgements.</p> <p>The advisory body has a secure knowledge of statutory and regulatory requirements and effectively supports the early childhood setting to meet these requirements.</p>	<p>The advisory body is aware of the strategic planning process and improvement plans.</p> <p>The advisory body has a limited understanding of how to hold leaders accountable for the accuracy of assessment data and the self-evaluation judgements.</p> <p>The advisory body has an appropriate knowledge of statutory and regulatory requirements but does not always provide the requisite monitoring or support.</p>	<p>The advisory body is not sufficiently aware of the strategic planning process.</p> <p>The advisory body does not understand the basis for the self-evaluation judgements and does not hold leaders to account for the accuracy of the assessment data.</p> <p>The advisory body has insufficient knowledge of statutory and regulatory requirements or does not support the early childhood setting to meet these requirements.</p>

Exemplar for “Good”

6.1.1 Leaders at all levels are effective at implementing strategies and support to ensure that children’s development improves significantly over time or maintains already high standards. Leaders at all levels communicate a clear vision of the early childhood setting and, as a consequence, all staff are committed to their part in achieving the vision. The remits of leaders are clearly defined, understood and aligned to priorities. Leaders influence decision making and initiate and lead improvement activities. They ensure that the focus upon development priorities results in improved learning outcomes for all children.

Through the implementation of evidence-based instructional strategies leaders have facilitated progress in children’s development or maintain already high standards. Leaders foster positive adult-child relationships, implement developmentally appropriate positive guidance techniques and facilitate opportunities for social interaction ensuring children’s social and emotional development. Leaders ensure policies and practices across the early childhood setting are in compliance with regulatory agencies and that all staff play their role in implementing these consistently to ensure children’s well-being and development.

6.1.2 By adopting an inclusive approach, leaders ensure all children attending the early childhood setting have full access to the range of learning opportunities on offer. Leaders may establish protocols for addressing bullying or discrimination, ensuring that every child feels valued and protected within the early childhood setting. Leaders foster an inclusive environment by embracing diverse perspectives, fostering positive relationships among children and encouraging empathy and understanding. They organise activities that celebrate various cultures and religions, invite families to share their traditions and customs and encourage children to appreciate and learn from each other. Leaders ensure that every child, regardless of their ability, is provided with equal opportunities to participate and enjoy all aspects of the experience at the early childhood setting. They work closely with early childhood educators to adapt activities, materials and learning environments to meet the individual needs of each child.

To solidify their commitment to inclusivity, leaders actively engage families. They communicate openly with parents and caregivers, encouraging them to share information about their child’s cultural background, religious practices or specific needs. By valuing and incorporating the perspectives and experiences of families, leaders foster a strong partnership that reinforces the importance of tolerance, respect and inclusivity both within the early childhood setting and in the wider community.

Leaders create an environment that celebrates diversity, encourages empathy and removes barriers to inclusivity. Their commitment is evident in activities that promote understanding, adaptation of learning environments and curriculum and strong partnerships with families.

6.1.3 Leaders demonstrate their commitment to continuously improving staff practice, teaching and learning through effective systems of supervision, performance management and professional development. These systems and approaches ensure a positive impact upon practice resulting in a skilled and motivated staff.

Through regular observations, feedback sessions and effective evaluations, leaders provide valuable guidance and support to early childhood educators. By identifying areas for improvement and recognising exemplary practices, leaders empower staff to continuously enhance their teaching skills and instructional techniques. From regular classroom observations, leaders provide feedback that highlights effective strategies for engaging children, promoting learning and creating a nurturing environment.

Leaders invest in efforts to ensure staff’s growth and skill development through planned staff professional development. By identifying individual staff needs, leaders tailor training activities to address specific areas of improvement or to introduce new pedagogical approaches. By providing relevant and targeted professional development opportunities, leaders empower early childhood educators to acquire new knowledge, refine their teaching methods and stay abreast of best practices within the field.

Importantly, leaders recognise the value of catering to staff's needs and ensure that all legal employment requirements are fulfilled. They prioritise a supportive and conducive work environment by offering planning and administrative times mostly during working hours. This enables staff to effectively manage their workload, balance their professional and personal commitments and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

The positive impact of effective leadership on staff morale is also evident within the early childhood setting. By fostering a culture of recognition, appreciation and open communication, leaders create a supportive and motivating ethos. They acknowledge staff achievements, celebrate successes and encourage a collaborative and positive work environment. This, in turn, leads to higher staff morale and job satisfaction, which directly benefits the quality of provision and the overall learning experience of the children. Early childhood staff work in collaboration to accomplish the vision of the early childhood setting and to support all learners.

6.1.4 Effective leadership is not confined to a single individual but is distributed among capable and qualified individuals throughout the early childhood setting. This gives staff the ability to assume leadership roles beyond their classrooms. Experienced educators are assigned responsibilities such as curriculum development, mentoring new staff, special educational needs and leading professional development initiatives. By engaging in these leadership roles, staff gain valuable experience, enhance their instructional abilities and contribute to the early childhood setting's overall success. Distributed leadership empowers teams by fostering collaboration, shared decision-making and collective problem-solving. When team members are encouraged to contribute their unique expertise and perspectives, it creates a culture of trust and mutual respect. This approach ensures that decisions are made collectively, leading to increased team cohesion, innovation and adaptability.

6.1.5 The involvement of an advisory body is essential for informed decision-making and the achievement of strategic goals. This body brings diverse perspectives and expertise to ensure that the early childhood setting's goals, policies and procedures comply with regulatory requirements and best practice in the sector. They actively participate in the planning process, providing valuable insights and guiding decision-making.

The advisory body expects senior leaders to ensure the accuracy of internal data, including assessments of children's developmental benchmarks and progress. They require early childhood staff to use reliable developmental benchmarks and assessment tools to track each child's growth and provide appropriate interventions when needed. By ensuring accurate data collection and analysis, the advisory body supports the early childhood staff in making informed decisions to improve teaching practices, tailor individualised Learning Support Plans and assess the overall effectiveness of the programme. Additionally, the advisory body holds leaders accountable for the accuracy of self-evaluation.

The advisory body possesses a secure knowledge of statutory and regulatory requirements relevant to early childhood education. They stay updated on local licensing regulations, health and safety guidelines and educational standards. This knowledge enables them to support the staff in meeting these obligations and ensures the well-being and optimal development of the children. They work closely with senior leaders to review policies and procedures, ensuring compliance with health and safety standards, staffing ratios and curriculum guidelines.

Quality Indicator 6.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
6.2.1 Process			
There are systematic and comprehensive arrangements in place by which leaders are able to accurately evaluate the work of the early childhood setting. This has resulted in a culture of critical self-review.	Systems and procedures for evaluating the work of the early childhood setting are collaborative. As a result of effective self-evaluation processes, leaders know their early childhood setting well.	There are systems in place to monitor the work of the early childhood setting, including observations of teaching and learning and other strategies.	Arrangements for self-evaluation are poorly developed or disorganised. Leaders do not have an accurate understanding of the early childhood setting's strengths and weaknesses.
6.2.2 Monitoring			
Ambitious development plans are focused upon the correct priorities. They include achievable goals that are rooted in the findings from the early childhood setting's rigorous self-evaluation processes. Improvements are rapid and wide ranging.	Development plans are in place and correctly address aspects requiring improvement. Planning and regular review by leaders lead to notable improvements in key aspects of the work of the early childhood setting.	The early childhood setting's priorities are based on a sound analysis of its performance and actions are taken to address weaknesses.	Planning for improvement lacks appropriate detail and/or is not based on realistic priorities.
6.2.3 Impact			
All of the recommendations from the previous inspection report have been met in full as well as other relevant, self-identified early childhood setting improvement priorities.	There has been good progress in addressing all of the recommendations from the previous inspection report and against the current improvement plan.	Satisfactory progress has been made in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report.	Little or no progress has been made in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report.

Exemplar for “Good”

Systems and procedures for self-evaluation are in place. Consequently, leaders know the early childhood setting well. Effective procedures generate valid and reliable evidence from a range of sources including performance management data pertaining to all staff, regular and effective observations and surveys of stakeholder views. Staff are fully involved in the process of self-evaluation. The self-evaluation information is analysed by leaders, shared appropriately with all staff and other stakeholders and used effectively to identify key priorities for immediate

and long-term improvement. The arising development plan includes strategies that are fit for purpose. On a regular basis, leaders and staff evaluate improvement plan targets. The early childhood setting’s development planning and actions, including the response to the previous inspection report, have led to improved outcomes for children. Good progress in addressing the recommendations and the goals from the improvement plan is evident.



Quality Indicator 6.3 Links with parents and the community

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
6.3.1 Communication and feedback			
<p>The early childhood setting maintains successful and creative methods of communication, which keep parents and other relevant adults well informed about children's development, health, care and learning. Consistent high-quality engagement with parents and carers has created a partnership approach to children's learning and development.</p> <p>Comprehensive and regular reports to parents document all aspects of children's development and progress. Reporting arrangements are used effectively so parents can best support their child's learning and development.</p>	<p>There are regular and reliable two-way communication methods established between early childhood staff and parents regarding children's development, health, care and learning. Parents' views are consistently sought and considered.</p> <p>Reports on children's progress and achievement are sufficiently detailed and regular and include comments on how parents can support their child at home and their next steps in learning.</p>	<p>There are regular methods of communication between early childhood staff and parents regarding children's development and care. These are mostly one way. Parents are kept up to date with the main events.</p> <p>Reports to parents are regular and based on accurate information about children's progress and achievement.</p>	<p>Communication between the early childhood setting and parents is irregular. Information from the early childhood setting tends to be one way, reactive or improvised. Parents are unclear about how to communicate with early childhood educators and the leadership of the setting.</p> <p>Reports are infrequent and contain vague information about important aspects of children's development and progress.</p>
6.3.2 Involvement and collaboration			
<p>There are embedded systems in place to support regular and ongoing involvement of parents and other carers in the work of the early childhood setting. This positively impacts children's progress and development.</p>	<p>The early childhood setting has effective systems in place to enable collaboration with and involvement of parents and other carers. Home routines, traditions, religious and cultural observations are respected and maintained as necessary.</p>	<p>Systems are in place to encourage involvement and collaboration of parents. There is consideration of home routines and cultural observations.</p>	<p>Systems to involve and collaborate with parents are ineffective or do not exist.</p>

6.3.3 Links with the community

Strong partnerships with other early childhood centres and schools help to enrich the curriculum and promote excellence in teaching practice. Staff are able to reflect on their pedagogy and develop their practice as they share their knowledge with others in the community.

Effective use of human and material resources in the local community enrich the children's experience.

Links with other early childhood centres and schools broaden the range of activities and resources available to children or strengthen teaching practice.

Children benefit from regular and meaningful participation in local events and celebrations both inside the early childhood setting and in the community.

Links with other early childhood centres and schools are being established and are yet to have an impact on the learning experiences of children.

The early childhood setting arranges experiences in local events, celebrations and visitors from the community.

There are few effective links with other settings or schools and infrequent opportunities for the early childhood setting to engage with the local community.

Exemplar for “Good”

6.3.1 Regular and reliable two-way communication methods between staff and parents is crucial for fostering a strong partnership focused on children's development, health, care and learning. Open and transparent communication channels enable parents to actively engage in their child's experience at the early childhood setting and to share important information about their child's needs, interests and milestones.

Parents and early childhood staff maintain open lines of communication through various channels, including in-person communication, digital platforms and regular progress discussion settings. These communication methods ensure that parents are informed about their child's daily experiences, progress and any important updates. Through timely notifications and open communication, the early childhood setting establishes a sense of trust, allows parents to plan and prepare accordingly and encourages their active involvement and support.

Consistently seeking parents' views and providing opportunities for their active participation in decision-making processes are essential for building a collaborative relationship. This approach acknowledges parents as valuable partners in their child's development and creates a sense of ownership and shared responsibility.

Regular and sufficiently detailed progress reports include all developmental domains and are based on valid, accurate and reliable information. They play a vital role in keeping parents informed about their child's development, achievements and areas for growth. Reports provide comprehensive insights into the child's development, along with next steps. The progress reports are provided to parents at regular intervals, such as the end of each term.

Exemplar for “Good” (Continued)

6.3.2 Establishing effective systems for collaboration with and involvement of parents and other caregivers is crucial for creating a nurturing and inclusive environment. Recognising the significance of home routines, traditions and religious and cultural observations helps to build an inclusive community that respects and embraces the diversity of families.

Staff actively engage in conversations with parents and other carers to understand and respect the home routines and traditions of each child. This could involve parents sharing information about their child’s daily routines, cultural celebrations or religious observations. Staff incorporates this knowledge into the daily schedule, lesson plans and classroom activities, ensuring a respectful and inclusive environment that honours each child’s background.

Parents are regularly invited to participate in parent-teacher meetings, focus groups and surveys to share their views, suggestions and concerns.

6.3.3 Establishing links with the wider community, including other educational institutions, is vital for broadening the range of activities, unique learning opportunities, resources and teaching practices provided to children. Creating connections with other early childhood centres and schools builds collaboration and shared learning opportunities that benefit both the children and early childhood educators. This leads to improved practice and fosters a sense of community. Similarly, educators may visit other early childhood centres or schools or invite guest speakers to share their pedagogical approaches, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and professional growth among the staff. Early childhood educators may model their expertise, innovative teaching approaches and successful classroom practices with fellow educators from other centres or schools. This provides an opportunity to model and explain effective teaching practices. Sharing pedagogy with others strengthens the overall quality of early childhood education and promotes professional growth among educators.

Participation in local events and celebrations within the community offers unique learning opportunities for children in an early childhood setting. Immersion in the cultural fabric of the community promotes a sense of belonging, fosters social connections and improves the children’s understanding of the world around them.



Quality Indicator 6.4 Staffing and the learning environment

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
6.4.1 Staffing			
<p>All early childhood staff, including leaders, are well qualified for the roles they play and knowledgeable of current trends of the sector.</p> <p>There is a strategic approach to recruitment and retention. The advisory body and leaders regularly assess the effectiveness of recruitment strategies.</p>	<p>All early childhood staff, including leaders, are committed and qualified for the roles they play. They are skilled in early childhood education and knowledgeable in the curriculum of the early childhood setting.</p> <p>Successful recruitment and effective staff transition plans ensure good progress and development among the children.</p>	<p>Most early childhood staff are appropriately qualified for the roles they play and have appropriate skills to support the overall development of this age group of children.</p> <p>Recruitment procedures ensure that the early childhood setting has sufficient staff to deliver the curriculum.</p>	<p>Weak staffing and/or recruitment practices affect the smooth running of the early childhood setting and children's progress.</p>
6.4.2 Deployment			
<p>All staff are used resourcefully and effectively to promote and enhance children's care and learning and to ensure the early childhood setting runs well.</p>	<p>Staff, including leaders, are deployed effectively to support children's care and learning and ensure the smooth operation of the early childhood setting. They are all clear about their roles and responsibilities and carry them out effectively.</p>	<p>Staff are deployed appropriately as needs arise across the early childhood setting.</p>	<p>Staffing numbers are inadequate or deployment of staff does not meet the needs of children in each group.</p>

6.4.3 Learning environment

Leaders ensure that the entire premises and all learning environments are creatively and effectively resourced and utilised. They effectively forward plan to ensure learning environments will cater to the needs of all children and keep pace with evolving best practice in the sector.

The entire site is fully inclusive and well adapted to meet the needs of all the children attending the early childhood setting.

Leaders have mechanisms in place to ensure the premises are effective and support security and learning. They hold staff to account to ensure the learning environment is prepared to inspire learning.

The early childhood setting is accessible and adapted to the needs of children.

Leaders offer support to staff to ensure the premises are suitable for children's learning and development. All children are safe in the early childhood setting.

The early childhood setting is accessible.

Leaders do not play an effective role in providing learning environments conducive to children's development. The site is not appropriate for the children in many aspects.

6.4.4 Resources

Leaders are proactive in ensuring that the early childhood setting's resources and facilities are creatively designed and arranged to enhance individual learning.

Leaders support staff and hold them accountable for facilities and a range of resources which are child-friendly, well designed and arranged for children to use effectively.

Leaders play a role in ensuring the site's facilities are appropriately designed, and resources are appropriately deployed for the children.

The site or resources are not appropriate for the children in many aspects.

Exemplar for “Good”

6.4.1 Qualified, committed and skilled early childhood staff is crucial for creating an environment that supports optimal child development. Staff members who possess the necessary experience and qualifications, certifications and training in early childhood education bring a deep understanding of child development and best practices to the setting. All early childhood staff, including leaders, have appropriate qualifications and certifications relevant to their roles. All staff have appropriate training in CPR/First Aide, Child Protection and developmentally appropriate learning experiences for children.

Successful recruitment and effective staff transition plans are essential for maintaining a high-quality learning environment where children have secure attachments. Careful selection and on-boarding of new staff members ensure a seamless transition and continuity of care and instruction for children.

Recruitment prioritises the selection of candidates who align with the early childhood setting’s vision, mission and educational philosophy. Thorough interviews, background and reference checks and observations help identify individuals who demonstrate a strong commitment to early childhood education and possess the necessary qualifications and experience. Once hired, new staff members go through a comprehensive on-boarding process which includes mentorship, orientation to the curriculum, policies and procedures and opportunities to collaborate with existing staff. This ensures a smooth transition for children and enables new staff members to effectively contribute to children’s progress and development. Children have time to feel secure with the new staff. Staff are passionate about their work, dedicated to ongoing professional growth and invested in the well-being and development of each child.

6.4.2 Effective staff deployment is crucial to support children’s care and learning, as well as ensure the smooth operation of the early childhood setting. Staff members are effectively and strategically deployed based on their qualifications, experience and areas of expertise as well as the needs of individual children and groups. Early childhood educators are also assigned to specific roles, such as Child Safeguarding Lead, Curriculum Co-ordinator or Assessment Lead, to ensure effective implementation of the early childhood setting’s programmes. This strategic deployment ensures that the skills and strengths of each staff member are maximised, leading to an enhanced learning environment for the children.

Staff, including leaders, have clear roles and responsibilities and this promotes efficient teamwork, accountability and effective communication among staff members. Clear roles and responsibilities ensure that everyone understands their specific contributions to the overall functioning of the early childhood setting. Effective implementation involves being proactive, organised and committed to providing high-quality care and education to the children.

Staff members actively and diligently carry out their assigned roles. Early childhood educators prepare engaging lesson plans, materials and resources. They create a nurturing and stimulating environment, facilitate children’s social interactions and respond to individual needs and interests. Effective implementation of roles ensures that the early childhood setting operates smoothly and children receive the care and support they need for their optimal development.

6.4.3 Leaders have mechanisms in place to ensure that the premises effectively support the security and learning of children. This includes creating and maintaining a safe, stimulating and inclusive environment where children can reach their full potential. Leaders ensure that there are adequate and appropriate areas, equipment and material for children to use as they learn to self-regulate.

Leaders conduct regular safety inspections and risk assessments to identify and address potential hazards or security vulnerabilities within the premises. This may involve implementing safety protocols, such as secure entry systems, age-appropriate safety equipment and clearly defined emergency procedures. Additionally, leaders collaborate with staff and parents to create an engaging and inclusive learning environment that meets the diverse needs and interests of all children, ensuring resources, materials and learning spaces are accessible and reflect the cultural backgrounds of the children.

Leaders hold staff accountable for an inspiring early childhood environment which promotes learning for all children. This includes providing guidance, resources and support to foster a culture of continuous improvement.

Leaders conduct regular classroom observations, curriculum reviews and professional development sessions to assess and enhance the quality of the learning environment.

Leaders prioritise creating an accessible and inclusive environment that caters to the diverse needs of all children. They advocate for adaptations and modifications to ensure that the early childhood setting accommodates individual abilities, preferences and cultural considerations. This may involve installing ramps, handrails or wheelchair-accessible facilities to ensure that children with physical disabilities can move around independently. Leaders encourage staff members to provide individualised support and adaptations, such as visual schedules or sensory accommodations, to meet the specific needs of children with disabilities or sensory sensitivities. Through leadership support, the early childhood setting is a place where all children feel welcome, valued and empowered.

6.4.4 Leaders ensure that the early childhood setting's resources and facilities are child-friendly, well-designed and arranged for children to use effectively.

Leaders in the early childhood setting provide support to staff members in creating child-friendly facilities that promote optimal learning and engagement. They ensure that a range of resources, equipment and arrangements within the early childhood setting are created with the children's needs and interests in mind. Leaders also promote cultural inclusivity by incorporating diverse materials, visuals and celebrations that reflect the backgrounds and traditions of the children and families in the early childhood setting. Leaders work closely with staff to evaluate and enhance the early childhood setting's resources. They collaborate with early childhood educators to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of learning materials, furniture and play areas. Leaders ensure that there are age-appropriate toys, books and manipulatives available in each classroom. They also support staff in organising learning centres that encourage hands-on exploration and provide opportunities for children to develop their skills and interests across all domains.

Leaders hold staff accountable for utilising the early childhood setting's resources and facilities effectively. This involves establishing clear expectations, providing guidance and training and monitoring the utilisation and maintenance of materials and spaces. Leaders ensure appropriate resources are procured and that they are adequate in quality and quantity to ensure ongoing learning opportunities for all children at the early childhood setting.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD

7

How good is our early childhood setting overall?



Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
<p>The early childhood setting is effective in almost all aspects of its performance. There are numerous examples of excellent and innovative practice. Leaders have proven success in driving forward improvements.</p> <p>Across all quality indicators, judgements are at least good and a majority are excellent.</p> <p>It is expected that the excellent judgements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress • Teaching • Leadership • Self-evaluation and improvement planning <p>The early childhood setting is fully compliant with statutory requirements from the Ministry of Education and other regulatory agencies in terms of policy and practice.</p>	<p>The early childhood setting performs well in all major aspects of its work. The senior staff are capable of leading further improvement.</p> <p>Across all quality indicators, most judgements are good or better.</p> <p>It is expected that the good or better judgements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress • Teaching • Leadership • Self-evaluation and improvement planning <p>The early childhood setting is compliant with all regulatory requirements and guidelines.</p>	<p>The early childhood setting has no significant weakness. The senior staff are aware of aspects of the early childhood setting requiring improvement and they understand what is necessary to address them.</p> <p>Across all quality indicators, most judgements are judged satisfactory.</p> <p>The satisfactory or better judgements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress • Teaching • Leadership • Self-evaluation and improvement planning <p>The early childhood setting is compliant with all regulatory requirements.</p>	<p>The early childhood setting has evident weakness. It lacks the capacity to improve to the degree required without considerable support.</p> <p>Across all quality indicators, a majority are judged weak.</p> <p>There is weak performance in either of the following quality indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching • Leadership <p>OR</p> <p>The arrangements for protection and support present significant health and safety risks to children and/or staff.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>There is obvious gaming of the system and leaders and/or staff intentionally provide information during the inspection process that is misleading or inaccurate.</p>



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