

PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS – OPENING HOURS (29/03/11)

(No. B/101) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the pre-primary schools, he will state if Government proposes to extend the opening hours thereof up to 6.00 p.m and, if so, give details thereof.

Reply: A proposal has been made to my Ministry by the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment for pre-primary schools to offer child minding services before and after normal school hours. The rationale behind this measure is to offer facilities to women in employment and those wishing to obtain a full time job in order to improve their economic status and social well-being.

Following a survey carried out by the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA) which involved discussions with Managers of Pre primary schools, it was found that out of 829 private pre-primary schools surveyed, 123 of them were already offering such services and were operating till 6 00 p.m.

The normal school hours of Pre primary schools registered with the ECCEA under

The Education (Pre-Primary Schools) Regulations 1997 is from 8.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. These regulations which govern the operations, registration and supervision of pre-primary schools do not cover child minding services.

It has therefore been proposed that the necessary legal framework be provided so that all pre primary schools willing to offer child minding services, can do so after registering with the ECCEA. Such facilities would be offered by pre–primary on an optional basis against payment of appropriate fees by parents.

Pre-primary schools registered with the ECCEA and opting for child minding services will be allowed to operate as from 7.00 am till 6 p.m. even during holidays for children aged 3 – 5 years. In such cases it would be ensured that children have adequate rest time and appropriate creative activities, under appropriate supervision.

A Certificate of Registration will be issued by the ECCEA provided that the Pre Primary meets the requirements in terms of -

- Physical conditions
- Sanitary conditions
- Health and Safety conditions imposed by relevant authorities
- Availability of Equipment
- Qualified Staff

The provision of child minding services requires qualified staff in child care. In this regard, MIE is offering a basic course in child care.

The ECCEA will ensure regular supervision in all pre primary schools that would offer child minding services.

As regards the necessary legal framework, the ECCEA in consultation with my Ministry has already worked out new draft regulations, namely, the Early Childhood Care and Education (Registration of Pre-Primary schools) Regulations 2011 which will -

(i) cover existing provisions pertaining to registration of pre primary schools falling under the Education (Pre Primary schools) Regulations 1997 made under Education Act 1957;

(ii) incorporate the relevant provisions for child minding services. Such provision will cover *inter-alia*, prescribed qualifications, supervision and control and operating hours;

The new regulation will be made under section 20 of ECCEA Act.

The draft regulations are being cleared with the State Law Office.