

Happy Days Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY297068
Inspection date	11 December 2007
Inspector	Margaret Coyne
Setting Address	Ecton Brook Community Centre, Ecton Brook Road, Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN3 5DY
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Registered person	Happy Days Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Happy Day Pre-school opened in 1996 and moved premises in 2004. They operate from the community centre adjoining Ecton Brook Primary School. It is situated in a residential area of Northampton. The group have access to a main play room with adjacent toilets. In addition to this, there is a quiet room, office and kitchen facilities. All children share access to an outdoor play area. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group is open each weekday morning from 09:00 to 11:30 and from 12:30 to 15:00 on a Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. There is an optional lunch club for children to attend. Children stay for either a variety of sessions or full day care. The group is open for approximately 38 weeks of the year.

There are currently 58 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these 40 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs eight staff. Of these, five staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications and three members of staff are working towards a qualification. The pre-school receives support from a qualified teacher and the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through well-planned daily routines. Older children have a very good awareness of how and why we wash our hands and when it is important to do so. For example, before meals and snacks and after messy activities. Younger children are well supported by staff as they learn through example and gain an understanding of germs. The children are protected from infection through well-managed hygiene routines which are practiced by the pre-school. For example, the nappy changing and disposal routines, the sick child policy and the consistent good practice by staff as they wear aprons and disposable gloves when changing nappies or pull-ups. Overall, the high standard of cleanliness throughout the nursery contributes to the children's good health. Staff are well informed about children's health issues and all relevant records and documents are in place, including, consent forms, medication and accident records. A high percentage of the staff hold first aid certificates. They are confident if they have to administer first aid to a child and take appropriate action to keep them safe, happy and healthy.

Children benefit from a healthy diet. The pre-school has implemented a healthy eating programme and great care is taken with the planning and preparation of snacks. A menu is displayed along with additional information leaflets regarding healthy food choices. Children are given wide choices of wholesome nutritious foods such as pitta breads, tuna, sweetcorn and pasta, cheese and crackers, sandwiches, fruit and vegetables. Snacks are provided in accordance to their needs and any allergies or dietary requirements are complied with. Children sit in key worker groups and snack times are a happy social occasion where children join in conversations and learn good table manners. Their independence is encouraged as they cut foods, spread butter on toast and help themselves to beans. Children are introduced to new tastes and experiences through the snacks and activities they take part in. They learn about food that is healthy as they make vegetable soup. They go to the shop to buy the vegetables, then prepare and chop these. When the soup is cooked and blended the children are able to eat it. This activity is also extended in their role play as they use the vegetables in their greengrocery shop. Some children have opportunity to stay for the lunch club and bring healthy packed lunches in from home. Again this is observed as a lovely social occasion for staff and children.

Children enjoy physical activities in both the indoor and outdoor areas. These contribute to their good health and body control. They have opportunity each day to get fresh air either in the playground or by going on walks in the local area. The playground activities are incorporated into the planning which provides ample space for children to run around. They develop peddling skills on the tricycles and manoeuvre things such as wheelbarrows when they are emulating the builders next door. Many other opportunities are available such as music and movement, circle games, and the use of equipment to climb, crawl up, under and over and to balance. Children move spontaneously around the room, developing a good awareness of the space around them and negotiating obstacles. Staff are on hand to support and guide the children's play helping them gain the confidence to participate. They handle one-handed tools such as brushes, glue sticks, pencils and scissors, and are learning new skills such as sewing. This

develops children's dexterity and hand and eye co-ordination and strengthens small muscles effectively.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is paramount to the organisation of the pre-school. Staff are clear in their responsibilities to keep the children safe. They recognise hazards and take positive steps to minimise these. Systematic risk assessments are carried out and extra care is taken due to the building work that is going on, on the premises. The setting is well planned with lots of space for children to move freely and safely around activities. Staff help children gain an awareness of keeping themselves safe in the group as they explain and practise simple procedures such as emergency evacuation and the boundaries to follow to keep safe such as not running inside. Children handle equipment safely such as scissors, sand, needles and saws. Staff effectively explain safety to the children in a simple but positive manner aimed at their level of understanding and this enables them to operate safely within their environment.

Well-implemented safety and security precautions are in place to promote and safeguard the children's welfare. For example, all staff working with the children are vetted, visitors must sign in and out of the building and the front door is kept locked. Extra care is taken on any outings with the children. Higher ratios are maintained and children learn about staying together and road safety. This is extended as they practise this in the group with a road safety kit.

The building is purpose built and provides a warm and attractive setting for children to play and learn. Their art work is well displayed and colourful and informative posters are used around the children's areas and in the corridors for parents to see. Designated areas are set up in a pleasing way to encourage children to participate in activities. For example, the book area has comfortable child size seating and soft cushions, the creative area is colourful and equipment is accessible and the role play areas are fun and exciting. Supervision is high and staff are well deployed around the room to support the children's play, enjoyment and learning.

Children use a broad range of safe, good quality and developmentally appropriate toys, furniture and equipment. These are well organised throughout the pre-school room in low-level storage units to encourage children to become independent and gain safe access to their resources. Children play an active role in their own safety by helping to tidy toys away and therefore gain a respect for their toys and equipment. Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted through current policies and procedures for the protection of children. Staff have updated their knowledge and understanding through training in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. Their good practice ensures any concerns are dealt with in a sensitive manner and a confidential system is in place to record and refer any concerns about a child in their care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, content and secure throughout the pre-school. They enter with confidence and happily access the stimulating and challenging range of activities that are set out for them. Secure relationships are forming with staff and other children. Older children seek out friends to share their play with and younger children share activities with adults as they begin to develop their independence. Staff have a sound awareness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and this has a positive impact on children's overall development, confidence and

security. Staff plan activities in line with this framework linking activities and themes to the Foundation Stage planning. Staff know the children very well and are able to ensure that they can access the activities according to their stage of development and abilities. For example, during an activity where children are learning to sew on plastic canvass. Staff adapt this for the younger children by selecting other resources that they can manipulate such as threading cards and bead counting frames.

Older children learn about responsibilities and are able to make errors, decisions and choices as they select activities and share their play with others. Children exhibit high levels of confidence and security and this has been achieved by the consistent support and direction of staff. Older children are encouraged to resolve their differences when any conflicts arise. They are encouraged to talk about it and find their own solutions. For example, when waiting for a turn at the computer they learn to share time with others. This provides children with tools to become aware of others and negotiate differences. Children are engaged and motivated as they take part in the activities on offer. Their concentration levels are growing as they sit for extended periods at an activity that interests them. For example the 'Winter Wonderland' was a popular activity as children explore how the glitter salt feels and how they can drive cars and trains through it. They understand that it represents snow and use many descriptive words, using their imaginations to talk about it.

Many interesting themes and topics take place throughout the year using both planned and spontaneous learning opportunities. For example, the pre-school is having a new building constructed next door and the children have taken part in a theme relating to building. They have used grit and bricks to build with, carried bricks in their wheelbarrow and created a new office in the classroom which they have designed and equipped for themselves. A letter from the 'builder' compliments them on their efforts.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a successful knowledge of the Foundation Stage and ensure children have a challenging range of activities to occupy and stimulate them. Staff gain an excellent awareness of children's starting points from information sheets filled in with parents and use this to plan the next steps in their development. Consistent staff impacts on children's high levels of confidence and security. Staff know the children well and have created a realistic balance between adult-led and child-initiated play. Staff are kind and caring role models who praise and acknowledge the children's efforts and achievements. This helps children succeed and builds their self-esteem. Staff encourage children to participate by making the activities interesting and aimed at the their individual abilities. This extends their capabilities and arouses their natural curiosity to learn through their play. The interaction between staff and children is fun and caring as they enjoy their time together. Staff maintain children's interest and help them increase their concentration skills because they make activities interesting and adapt or extend these when they are out for more than one session. Staff are secure with the early learning goals which reflects on the progress the children make. Their open-ended questioning skills are excellent as they encourage children to think for themselves and take part in discussions. Planning is detailed and covers all areas of learning comprehensively. Although, staff understand how to adapt activities for less or more able children, the plans do not clearly document how this can be achieved to support children's individual development. Staff all have input into the planning for the activities which gives them ownership and helps them present these to the children in a challenging manner. The planning includes the aims and objectives which helps staff understand what they hope for children to achieve. An

evaluation of activities ensures they are meeting the needs of all children. Staff are enthusiastic and dedicated and this impacts on the children's enjoyment and learning.

Children have a strong sense of belonging as they seek out friends, join in activities and clearly know the routine. Behaviour is generally good because the children know what is expected of them and good relationships have been developed between staff and children. Children's independence is well developed in all areas of play and with self-care skills. They access equipment to extend their own play and initiate and extend games and activities themselves. Staff are adept at stepping back letting a child take over the activity using their own imaginations. Children enjoy using language in their imaginative play and share personal events with others. They enjoy books and will sit comfortably together in the book area as they share stories. Children share information books and discuss things that they have seen. For example, a child was able to share the process of how dinosaurs became extinct and how we find their bones. Older children are learning sounds of letters and most can recognise their own name. However, a lack of labels on familiar objects around the room limits children's emergent reading and word recognition skills. Older and more able children confidently write their own names on their work and some can extend this by copying other words. For example, a child wrote the words in their Christmas card. Children confidently count and can recognise written numbers and match objects. Ample opportunity is provided for all children to write or make marks; they use writing for a purpose in the role play areas as they make tickets to see Father Christmas and make marks and letters in the salt tray.

Resources for simple problem solving, measuring and weighing are freely available to increase children's mathematical thinking as they apply their own skills and this underpins their knowledge and experiences. Practical activities increase children's sorting and counting skills as they use Compare Bears, count bricks and can work out how many cups and plates they need when they lay the table for snack time. They weigh ingredients for the cooking activities and can recognise shapes and relate these to shapes in the environment. Staff introduce children to a wealth of size and positional language which they go on to use in their own play experiences. Staff provide children with opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. They have fun with the computer and this shows their growing skills and knowledge of the mouse and keyboard functions. They access various learning programs to support their literacy and numeracy skills. Children explore as they take part in hands-on experiences when growing lettuce, beans and tomatoes, discovering how things grow and change. They have regular opportunity to visit the local area, buying vegetables at the shop, exploring nature and discovering their local community as they look at Christmas decorations.

Creative activities give children a sense of achievement as they are able to create spontaneously, using their own imaginations and skills. Other group events enable children to participate in a collage or themed pictures for the pre-school walls. They thoroughly enjoy making their Christmas cards and pictures using Christmas shapes to print with. They can access a range of different textures and techniques to create such as marble painting and using materials such as glitter. Children's imaginations are uninhibited as they make up imaginative games often inviting staff to join in such as playing together in Santa's grotto, playing in the Winter Wonderland and dressing up. Staff give children opportunity to select resources for themselves to create their own role play areas and extend and build on these using their own imaginations. A group of children have great fun dressing in the insect and duck masks and admire themselves in the mirror. Children use music to develop their physical skills as they take part in music and movement and ring games. They have planned opportunities to use the musical instruments and create sound and rhythm for themselves.

Children's achievements are clearly linked to the stepping stones. Staff use on-going observations in a purposeful manner to plan the next steps in children's learning. Written observation and accompanying photographs give clear examples of children's progress and achievements across the stepping stones. These identify any gaps in a child's learning which staff use when developing future planning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have access to a meaningful range of resources and activities to promote a positive view of the wider world and increase their awareness of diversity. Inclusion of all children is high on the staff's agenda. This helps them plan activities that encourage and develop children's understanding and respect for others. For example, by looking at different cultural celebrations and events alongside more familiar ones. At present children have been learning about the Christmas story sharing the nativity story and taking part in a nativity show for parents. Alongside this they have been discussing Hanukkah and Passover learning a Hebrew spinning top game called Dreidel. Staff have very positive attitudes and respect and value each child. This helps children relate to others and learn to respect themselves and those around them. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. All children's needs are well documented and implemented. Children thrive in their environment where they are engaged and nurtured free from any type of stereotyping. Children are provided with sensitive learning opportunities so their understanding of diversity and the world is fostered.

Staff are clearly committed to supporting each and every child in order to meet their needs. Suitable systems are used to support any children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A Special Educational Needs officer works closely with children and parents, and one to one support for children is arranged. The pre-school ensures that each child has the right to the same experiences and to develop alongside their peers. Detailed pre-registration forms gain full information from parents about each child in order to meet their needs effectively.

Children have a positive understanding of the boundaries within the pre-school and respond to direction from staff. They eagerly respond to the consistent approach followed by all staff and this impacts clearly on their security and confidence as they know what is expected of them. Children develop high levels of self-esteem as they are able to resolve differences and gain a clear understanding between right and wrong. This also has the effect of building their managing skills and self-reliance as they operate independently. In most areas staff have effective skills for managing behaviour. However, on some occasions they are unsure of the strategies to employ to help a child learn to manage and control their own behaviour or to defuse situations by distracting and engaging a child. Generally, children share in the responsibility for their own behaviour as they learn to listen to others, share and wait turns and while showing kindness to others. Staff are good role models for the children, creating a calm, positive, fun and interesting environment in which they thrive. Staff have high expectations for the children and are generally consistent in their managing behaviour.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. This contributes significantly to the children's sense of belonging, security and well-being. Parents play an active role in their child's care with the regular exchange of information. They are invited to consultation times, fund raising and a Christmas concert. Staff present themselves in a professional manner while being approachable and friendly. This helps parents feel secure, at ease and confident with the care provided for their child. This impacts on the children's sense of security, trust and confidence. Parents are fully informed about their child's progress and achievements and their involvement

impacts greatly on the children's health and well-being and their care and learning. A high level of information is available to parents, including, all policies and procedures and information on the National Curriculum. The planning of activities is displayed and parents receive additional activity information in the monthly newsletters. This helps them to extend activities at home with their child. Parents comments and views are actively sought and questionnaires detail positive comments from parents about the high standard of care and education their children receive. A complaints policy is shared with parents so they are aware of the procedures to follow should they wish to raise any concerns. A clear complaints record is kept and made available to parents on request.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the nursery is good. The manager works closely with the supervisor and deputy supervisor along with a supportive committee. The management team have a strong awareness of their roles and responsibilities. They enhance their knowledge through continual training and workshops and encourage staff to attend additional training to update their knowledge and experiences. Action plans have been implemented and high priority has been given to reflective practice and evaluation of their care and learning programs. The team have been supported by appropriate bodies such as development workers and the local authority. The management team are responsible for all aspects of the pre-school including a robust recruitment and induction system. The staff team are well supported by annual appraisals and one to one pastoral care.

Staff have a secure knowledge of the National Standards and implement these throughout the setting. This is enhanced with their knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage. High regard for the welfare of the children, their group sizes, adult support and deployment, and well-planned activities, contribute to children's well-being, enjoyment and achievements. A positive, motivated and dedicated staff team has been developed. Opportunities for children to play and learn are enriched because staff draw on different strengths and experiences. This promotes the care and learning opportunities for children. Positive links with the main school and the local community are established and this helps when children move on to school. A qualified teacher from the adjoining school works within the pre-school to support staff, planning and the overall learning of the children.

The premises are very well organised. Indoor space is effectively arranged to maximize the play opportunities for children through the different age groups and abilities. It provides children with safe, imaginative areas and resources which they can access independently. Routines are in place to ensure all areas of play and learning are organised. These also take account of part-time children so they have opportunity to participate in the weekly activities.

The manager committee and staff team have a clear and positive vision for the future with exciting developments happening as they move buildings to incorporate a Children's Centre. Appropriate policies and procedures are well implemented to keep children healthy and safeguard their welfare. All records and documents are up to date. These are all securely kept and available for inspection. Staff promote an inclusive environment where each child clearly matters and they organise time, staff, activities, resources and space to ensure all children benefit from their time spent within the group. The committee has been recently reformed with some new members and they are aware of their roles and responsibilities through a training course instigated by the pre-school manager. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to develop outcomes for children in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework, to continue to develop staffs knowledge of the Foundation Stage, including, providing more challenge for older or more able children, to ensure observations and assessments are regularly completed and to develop the use of evaluation to monitor the quality of teaching.

Staff have completed training for the 'Birth to three matters' framework and have reviewed the curriculum planning to ensure it is incorporated into this. The resources and equipment are age-appropriate to ensure all children can access them. Staff have sought advice from the early years advisory teacher and now ensure activities can be adapted to provide sufficient challenge for older and more able children. However, this is not yet documented on the planning. A member of staff carries out observations on a weekly basis and updates written observations and assessments, including, photographic evidence. Time management is looked at to allow more time on planning afternoons for staff to complete assessments to provide a clear picture of children's progress. The evaluation of the quality of teaching is continually assessed with the advisory teacher and actions are documented and implemented to improve the groups practice and recognise strengths in their teaching.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure staff's handling of behaviour is developmental appropriate, respecting individual children's level of understanding and maturity.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop planning to ensure there are regular opportunities to provide further challenge for older and more able children

- extend the use of labels around the room to increase children's awareness of word recognition with familiar objects.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk