

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Happy Days Playgroup,
Dungannon

Report of an Inspection
in April 2010

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Happy Days Playgroup
Address:	School Lane Brackaville Coalisland DUNGANNON Co Tyrone BT71 4NW
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	28 April 2010
Date of previous inspection:	26 April 2004

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	24	13
• in their immediate pre-school year	24	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	24	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	0	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	1	-
• with English as an additional language	0	-
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	-
Attendance:		
• attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	85%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	4	0
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	4	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	1	0

Number of: **	
Students	1
Trainees	0

** Total placements since September of current year

3. Details of Sessions

Duration of morning session	Duration of afternoon session	Number of days open in previous year
3¼ hours	2½ hours (2 days only)	190

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	24
Percentage returned:	58%
Number of written comments:	6

HAPPY DAYS PLAYGROUP, COALISLAND, DUNGANNON, CO TYRONE, BT71 4NW (5AB-0187)

1. Happy Days Playgroup is situated in School Lane, Brackaville, just outside Coalisland. It is accommodated within a spacious, purpose-built mobile classroom. A new leader, assistant leader and assistant have been appointed since the last inspection, and there has been extensive development of the outdoor play area. An early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation (EYO) has been in post since the beginning of this academic year; prior to her appointment, the centre was supported for short periods of time by a number of specialists.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this centre is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The centre has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children are confident, highly motivated and engage enthusiastically in discussions about their play. They explore the play opportunities independently, making choices about their activities and resources, and making creative use of all the available space both in the playroom and in the outdoor environment. The children respond very positively to the staff's high expectations and collaborate maturely, in pairs and small groups, to create and resolve challenging activities. They have well-honed observation skills which they use continually to learn about the world around them. Their fine and gross motor skills are very well-developed.

4. The children have a keen interest in language and the meaning of new words; they use a wide range of descriptive and accurate mathematical language in discussions about their learning experiences and the objects they create, and have excellent listening skills. They make extensive use of books for reference, 'reading' and enjoyment, both in the playroom and in the outdoor area; they can all identify their own name in print and many can also write their name confidently. They integrate mark making and early writing very naturally and constructively into all areas of play. The staff create detailed education plans (IEPs) for those children experiencing difficulties with aspects of their learning; these plans are informed by comprehensive observations of the children at play and are shared and regularly reviewed with the parents. The reviews of the IEPs indicate that the children make good progress.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The atmosphere in the centre is very welcoming, happy and relaxed; the vibrant learning environment promotes the children's creativity and sense of enquiry, and celebrates their many achievements. The programmes, routines and resources have been skilfully planned to meet the interests, abilities and needs of the children and to make optimum use of all the available time for learning. There are excellent opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The adult interactions with the children are of a consistently high quality. The staff build effectively on the children's ideas and interests, challenge their thinking and promote a healthy attitude to appropriate risk-taking.

6. The staff's observations, evaluations and planning are skilfully integrated and are consistently of a high quality. The planning is underpinned by the staff's understanding of the pre-school curriculum, and by their knowledge of the children's individual needs and progress. The planning identifies clearly the learning intentions, progression and challenge for the children, and is amended appropriately in response to the children's ideas and spontaneous play.

7. There is very effective communication with the parents to encourage them to contribute to the children's learning experiences, to help them to support their child's learning at home, and to keep them informed of their child's progress. Appropriate transition and curricular links are being developed with the local primary schools. The staff have also taken photographs of year one classrooms, playgrounds and amenities in each of the primary schools; these are effectively used to familiarise the children with their new settings and as a basis for small group discussion.

8. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the centre is outstanding. This is characterised by the excellent relationships at all levels, by the effective integration of children with additional needs into all aspects of the provision and by the provision of First Aid training for the parents.

9. The centre has very good, comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

10. The centre gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. This is evidenced through the formal learning programme, the healthy snack routine, the opportunities for the children to grow, care for and handle a wide range of fruit and vegetables, and through regular energetic play.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

11. The leader is an excellent role-model in all aspects of the centre's provision; she provides outstanding leadership and management, has a clear vision for the strategic development of the centre, and effectively deploys the staff to make best use of their individual interests and strengths. She is very effectively supported by the skilful, creative team, who share her enthusiasm and commitment to meeting the needs of all of the children.

12. Self-evaluation to promote improvement is an integral, well-established element of the centre's practice; through this process, the staff and management committee have identified appropriate priorities for the centre's development over the next three years. A key element of the self-evaluation process is the ongoing consultation with the children and the parents and, in particular, the opportunities for the children to contribute to planning the development of the outdoor learning environment.

13. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Fourteen of the parents (58%) responded to the questionnaire and six made additional written comments. Most of the parents indicated high levels of satisfaction with the quality of the provision in the centre. In particular, they expressed appreciation of the caring, approachable staff, of the wide range of learning experiences provided for the children and of the regular information to help them support their children's learning at home. The responses from the staff and management questionnaires were also highly supportive of the work of the centre. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the centre.

14. The key strengths in this playgroup include the:

- highly motivated, independent and well-behaved children;
- children's keen interest in language, their excellent listening skills and their well-honed observation skills which they use continually to learn about the world around them;

- skilfully integrated observation, evaluation and planning;
- very effective links with the parents and wider community;
- consistently high quality adult interactions with the children; and
- the outstanding leader and creative, dedicated staff team.

15. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The playgroup has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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