



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



Providing Inspection Services for
**Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

Happy Days Playgroup Newry

Inspected: October 2008

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Happy Days Playgroup
Address:	Meadow and Armagh Road Community Centre Killeavey Road NEWRY Co Down BT35 6ET
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	7 October 2008
Date of previous inspection:	20 March 2003

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	23	12
• in their immediate pre-school year	20	2
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	20	0
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	2	0
• with a statement of special educational needs	0	0
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	3	3
• with English as an additional language	0	0
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	3	0
Attendance:		
• attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	95%	95%

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	2	3
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	2	1
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	0

Number of: **	
Students	0
Trainees	1

** 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
2½ hours	2½ hours	189

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	33
Percentage returned:	67%
Number of written comments:	8

HAPPY DAYS PLAYGROUP, NEWRY, CO DOWN, BT35 6ET (5AB-0462)

1. The pre-school centre is situated within a community complex in the centre of Newry, Co Down. Since the last inspection there have been several staffing changes; the current leader was appointed two years ago.

2. The parents, staff and management group were given opportunities to express their views about the pre-school centre through the inspection questionnaires. A majority of the parents responded to the questionnaire and eight made additional comments. Those who responded indicated a high level of satisfaction with the overall provision of the pre-school centre and praised the work of the staff. The responses to the questionnaires from the staff and the management group were wholly positive. The responses have been taken into account as part of the inspection and shared with the staff.

3. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good. Among the strengths are the supportive and inclusive ethos, the well-settled, co-operative children and the effective links with parents and the wider community.

4. The pre-school centre has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education but the following minor area needs to be addressed:

- to update the child protection training to include all of the staff.

5. The pre-school centre gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The children, for example, are actively involved in preparing the daily fruit snack and have helped in the planting and growing of various grains in raised beds in the outdoor area. The staff also provide opportunities for the children to take part in purposeful physical activity through the planned use of the adjacent community hall and the outdoor play area.

6. The main strengths within the pre-school centre's educational and pastoral provision are as follows.

- The staff and management have worked hard to provide a bright, stimulating and inviting learning environment for the children which is enhanced by displays of the children's own art work and family photographs. The addition of natural and authentic resources helps sustain the children's interest, and the development of the outdoor play area and sensory garden extend the learning opportunities for the children.
- The daily timetable is well organised to provide a good balance between extended periods of free play and purposeful group activities; transitions are managed effectively and smoothly. The snack routine provides appropriate opportunities for the development of the children's social skills and independence.
- There is a strong sense of team-work among the staff who display enthusiasm and commitment as they work hard to provide coherent and well organised activities for the children. Individual staff skills are exploited well to develop and extend learning opportunities for the children.

- The quality of the staff interactions with the children is very good; the effective use of questioning extends the children's learning and the staff encourage the children to engage in lengthy periods of concentrated, purposeful play.
- There are very good opportunities for learning across all the areas of the pre-school curriculum, particularly in the areas of language development, early mathematical experiences, physical development and movement and the world around us. The staff also use a range of activities to effectively promote the children's personal, social and emotional development.
- The pre-school centre leader is enthusiastic, committed and effective; he is a very good role-model and is well organised. In the relatively short time since his appointment as leader he has demonstrated his ability to provide a strategic vision for the future development of the pre-school centre.

7. The pre-school centre has a three-year development plan in place which has identified appropriate areas for development. These include further development of medium term planning, the extension of provision for outdoor play opportunities and appropriate professional staff development. The early years specialist has made a very good contribution to the overall development of provision in this pre-school centre. The support provided is well focused, in particular the cluster training and the guidance in self-evaluation.

8. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this pre-school centre is very good. The pre-school centre is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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