

# The Dales Playschool

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	400291
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 September 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Christine Anne Rice
<b>Setting Address</b>	Town Hall, Main Street, Grassington, North Yorkshire, BD23 5BD
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<b>Registered person</b>	The Dales Playschool
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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?

The Dales Playschool, which is a committee run group, was registered to provide day care in 1970. It is situated in the village of Grassington. The group is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 09.30 to 15.00 and on Wednesday from 09.00 to 12.30. Children may attend for a variety of sessions according to preference.

The group offers full day care for children aged two to five years. There are currently 24 children on roll. This includes 22 children in receipt of nursery funding. The children are drawn from the local area and surrounding villages.

The group is based in a purpose-built room on the ground floor attached to the rear of the town hall. It has the use of a large playroom and supporting kitchen, toilets and storage. There is access to a secure outdoor play area to the rear of the property.

The group has five staff, who are assisted by several parent volunteers. All of the staff hold early years qualifications to National Vocational Qualification level 3 and two members of staff are working towards more advanced qualifications. The group receives the support of the local authority advisory service.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

The children's health is promoted as the staff encourage good hygiene practices. For example, tables are cleaned with anti-bacterial cleaner and the staff use gloves and aprons when changing nappies. The staff encourage children to wash their hands at appropriate times, such as before eating and after going to the toilet. Older children know that they need to wash their hands as there are germs they cannot see. However, at busy times, some younger children, new to the setting, forget to follow the routine.

There are comprehensive policies to protect the children's health, such as with regard to medication, illness and accidents, which are properly recorded with parental signatures. The staff are vigilant, noticing if there is a pattern of accidents occurring in the setting so that they can examine the reasons why and act to reduce their number. Further protection is afforded the children as the entire staff have up to date first aid and food hygiene certificates, plus the health visitor makes regular visits to promote good health.

Children benefit from the healthy snacks which the setting and parents provide. These include dips, various fruits, plus cheese and honey, which the children spread on the crackers. The children learn about healthy eating and develop independence as they slice and chop fruit to make kebabs. Additionally, the setting provides tips for parents about healthy lifestyles, including healthy eating, with ideas for packed lunches. Children stay refreshed as water is constantly and freely available throughout the day. At snack time, they choose a drink of water and milk, which they independently pour into their own beakers.

All the children, including those in receipt of nursery education, have ample opportunities for fresh air and exercise as they make good use of the adjacent outdoor playground and the hall attached to the premises. They push large containers of toys and equipment into the playground, so that they can extend their learning outdoors. The children enjoy the freedom of the outdoor space, running around the playground, weaving in and out of each other's paths, kicking and catching balls. They use alternate feet to ascend the small climbing wall and to walk up the steps to the top of the slide, before zooming down gleefully. The children move in a range of ways, hopping and jumping over shallow beams, which they balance on. They are able to judge their body space as they squeeze beside another child to sit down for a story and they recognise the effects that exercise has on their bodies, as they observe that their hearts are beating faster. The children are developing fine motor skills as younger children snip around leaves, whereas older children skilfully cut out whole leaves. In addition, the children are able to use tools for modelling and shaping, such as rolling and cutting dough.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

The children are cared for in a warm, welcoming and safe environment, where there is good evidence of children's play and activities with attractive displays of the children's work, such as a gallery of their paintings and a collage rocket. There is a very good range of age-appropriate resources, which are on trolleys at child height so that they are readily accessible. Arts and crafts materials are easily accessible as the staff have removed the art cupboard doors.

Staff provide a very good and balanced range of equipment that meets the needs of the children attending. For example, there are child-sized tables and chairs and a cosy settee where children can relax and look at books. Toys and resources are stimulating, fun and interesting for the children. For instance, there are construction toys, dough to mould, a variety of art and craft materials with paintbrushes and rollers, jigsaws, games and sand and water play.

Children are safeguarded, as potential risks to children are effectively minimised. For instance, the entrance door is locked and as an added precaution a buzzer sounds when it opens, so that strangers cannot enter unnoticed and children cannot leave unattended. Clear risk assessments are used indoors, outdoors and when the children go on outings. The children practise the fire escape plan regularly, so that when the fire alarm sounds, they know exactly how to keep themselves safe. Consequently, the children, like the staff, leave the building calmly and quietly, before safely assembling outdoors. Recognising that there may be an occasion when the children cannot return to the premises, in the event of a real emergency, the staff make enquiries to find an alternative safe haven, where the children may wait until their parents collect them.

The children's welfare is protected because there is a good standard of knowledge of child protection matters, including the procedures to follow in the event of a concern within the setting. All of the staff have undertaken child protection training and there is a clear written policy, which is understood by staff and shared with parents.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Children blossom in the provision, which caters extremely well for the needs of all ages attending. All the staff are well trained and put their knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework to excellent effect alongside the Foundation Stage, enabling the children to develop the activities according to their needs and interests. The children enjoy access to a most broad range of stimulating activities and resources, which they freely choose. Choices include, for instance, various art and craft activities, such as painting at an easel, painting with a brush or roller and painting leaves. There are pencils and crayons for mark making, construction toys, jigsaws, dressing up, the home corner and water play which spills over into the sandpit as the children decide to make rivers. Children are totally absorbed in all the activities.

The interaction of all the staff with all the children is exceptionally good, with stimulating questions to make the children think, helpful suggestions to extend their play and constant praise to boost their self-esteem. Consequently the children are very happy, at ease and settled in their environment. Children play and learn in a fun and friendly environment. The staff are very attentive to their needs and inclusive in their care of the children. They recognise when, for instance, children may benefit from more frequent attendance or a different pattern of attendance, such as attending at different times when the sessions are quieter. Relationships between the children and staff are excellent. When, for example, the children approach the staff for help, the staff happily oblige, though ensure that the children are assisted to be as independent as possible in order to maximise opportunities to bolster the children's confidence. Children are relaxed in the company of the staff, they chat freely about their homes and families and generously offer to share their lunch and conkers.

The children are equally happy playing cooperatively with others or playing on their own with a train set. They enjoy excellent opportunities to develop their imagination. For instance, they use different tools for painting and modelling, incorporating natural materials, such as leaves in their paintings and collages. They are 100% involved as they listen enthralled to the story

of 'Goldilocks and the three bears', joining in with their bear props. The children so engage with this theme that they carry it forward into other areas of their play, such as in the home corner, where children re-enact the narrative, bringing yogurt 'bowls' of oats from the measuring table to give the bears porridge for breakfast.

## Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good, so that children make good progress towards the early learning goals. The staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage, they plan a varied and stimulating range of activities, which cover the six areas of learning and are responsive to the children's interests. For example, children have the freedom to continue their play and learning outdoors. When they are engrossed in the story of 'Goldilocks and the three bears', they go outdoors and recreate the house, using balancing beams and taking oats for the bears' breakfast. All staff share in the formulation of the plans so that the children benefit from the experience and talent of everyone in the setting. Focused activities include clear learning intentions in terms of the stepping stones and include differentiation to maximise the learning of all the children. Observations of the children inform future planning and the next steps in learning, which are noted in the planning, but not the children's individual profiles. This means that comprehensive information about the next steps are not so readily accessible for each child, which detracts from their overall effectiveness. The staff are enthusiastic, confident and react very positively with the children, answering their questions, stimulating their thoughts and giving them lots of encouragement.

Children enjoy mark making for a purpose, drawing long lines on a large piece of paper to represent a road and adding small circles to signify the car wheels, which they place underneath the toy cars on the floor. Staff draw out the interests of the children, so that those who are particularly interested in writing, independently put their names on their paintings, whereas younger children who are not ready to do this yet, receive help. The children recognise their names as they self-register for snacks and they spontaneously read books in the cosy quiet corner. Children talk through activities as they 'drive' the train and stop to pick up passengers. They talk to the group about familiar activities, such as going to the beach, enjoy singing familiar nursery rhymes and retell the narrative of the 'three bears' story with accurate detail, using different tones of voice for each bear.

Children have good opportunities to develop their number skills through everyday routines, such as counting the number of children present, singing number rhymes and counting down from 10 to one as the rocket 'blasts off'. Consequently children count confidently to 10 and older children count beyond. Children recognise numerals as they complete number jigsaws and fit together the number hopscotch. The children understand and use positional language as they draw circles inside squares. They recognise that the sun is a circle, find big and little leaves and enjoy experimenting with space and measure as they pour more water into the tray.

The children separate from their carers confidently and soon settle to gainful activity. They feel secure as they trust the staff and seek out friends to share experiences. They become highly involved in their activities and persevere for a considerable length of time, for example, when they use diggers in the sand tray. The children are very independent, selecting activities, deciding when to have snacks and managing their own care as much as possible. For instance, older children make good attempts to button their coats, whilst younger ones seek help appropriately.

Children develop knowledge and understanding of the world through a good range of activities. Outdoors, they examine a butterfly, remembering from previous experience at playschool that butterflies grow from caterpillars. They think about the effects of gravity as water runs down the hill and they learn about the 'push' and 'pull' of magnetism as they play with magnetic blocks. They notice changes in the environment, remarking that today it is sunny, but on Monday it was raining. The children construct helicopters and rockets with bricks and are confident in using technology. For example, children new to the setting competently master the use of various computer programs and they use the digital camera to take photographs of their work and other children's.

The children have good opportunities for creative play, including painting, drawing, role play and musical activities. They enjoy close observational drawing of flowers and when they paint leaves and have excess paint on their hands, the staff helpfully assist by providing a large piece of paper for them to make hand prints. Children notice the effects of mixing colours, make box craft models and enjoy musical activities. For instance, some children hide and guess the sounds that the other children make with the instruments, such as the sound of rain or shells on wood. The children smile proudly when they guess correctly.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children are valued and helped to feel good about themselves in accordance with the setting's equal opportunities policy. They have a sense of belonging and act responsibly by hanging up their aprons on their pegs. The children are familiar with the routines and stop to listen when the staff shake the tambourine. They are helpful at tidy up time and kindly hold the gate open into the playground for the children to walk through. Children learn about their community and the wider world through activities, such as visits to the local primary schools and to shops in the village. The setting welcomes visitors, such as the police, ambulance staff, fire fighters, as well as children with their pet lambs and rabbits, plus grandparents who 'henna' paint the children's hands. Relationships with the community are good as villagers bring in recycled paper and local businesses and charities support the setting. The children learn about the diversity of the world through access to a good range of resources, such as books, toys, posters and a persona doll, which reflect positive images. This is supplemented through celebration of a range of festivals, such as darkness and light with bonfire night and Divali. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

There are effective arrangements to care for children with learning difficulties and disabilities, as there is an appropriate policy and two trained 'special educational needs coordinators', who have relevant experience. In addition, staff operate a key worker system and work in partnership with parents and other professionals to meet the individual needs of the children. The staff manage the children's behaviour positively and consistently by simply and swiftly encouraging children to move on from any negative behaviour. Additionally, they use lots of praise and encouragement, rewarding children with stickers. Consequently, children learn responsible behaviour and behave well, sharing and taking turns.

Partnership with parents is outstanding. The setting has excellent relationships with parents. Recognising the importance of the parents as the main educators and carers of the children, staff very positively encourage parents to share in their children's education. Staff canvas the views of parents through suggestions and questionnaires. In response to a questionnaire, the staff set up most successful open days at which parents are encouraged to participate in the activities of their children. Parents comment that they now understand how much children can

learn from, for instance, playing with sand and appreciate how the various areas of learning overlap. These hands-on experiences are backed up with a brochure containing high quality, clear information about the practices of the setting and the Foundation Stage. In addition, parents are invited to view their children's profiles at any time and add to them with, for example, ballet or swimming certificates, pictures or photographs. Consequently, the children benefit enormously from this holistic approach. Settling procedures are totally flexible, with many parents staying to help when their children join the setting and staff offering to meet children in their own homes.

Communication is excellent, starting with the preparatory information that parents share with the setting and continuing with daily verbal feedback. Policies are always available for parents to view in the entrance and weekly information sheets keep parents informed about activities, with constructive and thoughtful ideas of how they can support their children's learning at home. Further information about playschool topics, forthcoming events and general information about the children's health and welfare is provided through regular newsletters. Additional links are fostered through 'Rover' the travelling dog, who visits different cultural settings and places of interest with the children.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The playgroup is well organised by three joint leaders, who generally work on different days and communicate effectively with each other through regular conversations, meetings and the use of a message book. Children benefit from the combined energy and talents of the staff, who are all fully qualified and compliment each other well. Staff work constructively as a team, they know their roles and seamlessly share responsibilities to ensure that the setting runs effectively. Being committed to improvement, the staff are reflective and actively pursue further training courses, such as anti-bias awareness training, textural play and peer observation.

The policies and procedures, which are well thought out and clear, provide a sound structure for the efficient management of the setting. All the required documentation, such as emergency contact and registration details, are easily accessible and stored securely. The registration system is effective and this clearly shows when staff, visitors and children are present. Adult-child ratios are generous, which assures the good standards of care of the children.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is outstanding. The leaders are extremely forward thinking and very receptive to new ideas and suggestions. They highly value all the staff and the contributions of parents and the community. There are excellent systems in place to organise and evaluate the delivery of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Most notably, staff are open and honest in sharing observations and evaluations of each other's practice, so that they can all learn and make improvements for the benefit of the children. Staff devote a whole afternoon every week to a meeting, where they evaluate their work and discuss observations of the children, both of which inform the plans for the following week.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection, the provision was asked to improve the registration system and the staff's knowledge of the child protection procedures.

Since the last care inspection, the provision has ensured that the times of attendance are recorded for staff and children. In addition, the staff have all completed specific training on child protection, so that their knowledge and understanding has improved. These improvements have impacted positively on the organisation of the setting and the safety of the children.

At the last education inspection, the provision was asked to improve the assessment procedures and increase opportunities for parents to be involved with their children's learning.

Since the last education inspection, the provision has improved the children's assessment, which now informs future planning and openly encourages parents to be involved with their children's learning. Both of these changes are having a positive effect on the children's education.

### **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 that all children follow the routine for hand washing.

#### **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):

- continue to develop assessment procedures to include the next steps for learning in the children's individual profiles.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)