

Happy Tots Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	219912
Inspection date	13 September 2007
Inspector	Paula Jane Hayhow

Setting Address	2-4 Blackfriars, Rushden, Northamptonshire, NN10 9PQ
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Registered person	Colleen Walker
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Type of inspection	Integrated
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Type of care	Full day care
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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 Tots Playgroup was registered in 1999. It is privately run. The playgroup operates from a converted shop building within the Blackfriars area of Rushden in Northamptonshire. A maximum of 25 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 08:55 to 11:55 and 12:00 to 15:00 term time only. On occasions the group can operate in the holidays, when there is staff available. All children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 42 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 20 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area and this includes the surrounding villages and towns. The group has systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs two full-time and four part-time staff to work with the children. Three staff members have appropriate early years qualifications. Two staff members are currently on training programmes.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean, well-maintained environment. They are learning good hygiene practices and their immediate welfare is promoted because staff have a good understanding of the policies and procedures involved. They clean tables before snack with anti-bacterial cleaner and use hand washing preparations before snack and mealtimes. Children collect nose tissues when needed, put their hand over their mouths when coughing and wash their hands thoroughly after touching the pet rabbit. They regularly have opportunities to discuss the relevance of this with staff at snack time. These routines ensure that children's health is promoted and they are prevented from the spread of infection. Their independence is being encouraged as they manage bathroom facilities unaided, help themselves to drinks from the drinks dispenser and assist with laying the table for snack time.

Children are nourished and gain an appreciation of healthy eating through options offered at snack time, which include fruits, cheese and plain biscuits. Parents supply the mid-day snack and are encouraged through the playgroup's Food Policy and discussions to provide healthy options. This helps in limiting food high in fat, sugar, salt, additive, preservative and colourings. The children's special requirements with regard to health, allergies and diet are very well documented.

Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities which contribute to their good health. They develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills and co-ordination as they participate in structured activities, such as singing and movement sessions and activities using the musical instruments, parachute and climbing frame. The children have access to an outdoor play area daily, where they use apparatus, such as bicycles, scooters, hoops, tents, balls and rockers to promote their co-ordination and physical abilities. The use of small equipment, such as pencils, glue spreaders and small construction pieces aid the development of children's finer manipulative skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment where their work is displayed and resources are attractively arranged for easy accessibility. Their safety is prioritised and staff carry out daily hazard checks, identifying concerns and taking steps to remove or minimise these. However, their safety is affected as they have access to vacuum cleaner's trailing wires and the toilet seat is broken. Children have a good understanding about taking responsibility and keeping themselves and others safe. They are consistently given clear explanations by staff and understand the importance of tidying toys away in order to prevent accidents. The staff regularly carry out fire drills with the children to enable them to have a clear understanding of the action to take in the event of fire. They are also taught the rudiments of road safety and practise this on their walks around the town.

Children independently select toys and activities from a good range of quality play materials which are regularly checked to ensure that they are clean and safe. On outings children are well supported through high adult ratios, the availability of first aid items, mobile telephones and the vigilance of the staff who check the venue before the visit takes place. Children's welfare

is well promoted as staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures and would know how to report and follow up any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are secure and settled. They are keen to participate and are enthusiastic about the activities and play opportunities provided. Children are confident in their relationships with each other and with staff. The settling-in policy for new children is well featured and staff are caring, offering appropriate support. For example, they ensure new children have sufficient support to access the play materials, such as chalking pictures outside and supplying their particular comforters when tearful. The children are developing their confidence and make good relationships with each other and with staff, happily discussing their activities and proudly showing their work. Children's work and photographs are displayed, promoting their sense of belonging and value, some having been professionally framed.

Children's interest is maintained and their natural inquisitiveness is encouraged because they are able to freely access the resources, exploring these and determining their own play. The play area is set up in designated areas, inside and out, which the children know and they are encouraged to move freely from one activity to another. Staff make good use of open questions to encourage the children to think further and extend their knowledge, such as asking children the colour and shape of an articles and discussing what happens when torches are switched on and off.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress and their overall development is promoted because staff have a sound knowledge of the Curriculum for the foundation stage and combines this with their experience and knowledge of child development. The majority of activities are child-initiated, with staff providing support and encouragement whenever needed. For example, a staff member working with a group of children accessed each child's level of understanding and modified her activity accordingly. The younger children enjoyed looking through the different coloured water bricks and could name each colour. The older children were encouraged to put two of the bricks together to make a third colour and they discussed the differing shades created. Children's progress is balanced as staff have developed various planning and assessment methods. Children's achievements are clearly linked to the stepping stones. Staff observe the children and record their progress. They identify each child's next step and this is used when planning the day's learning. Each child has a photograph album which includes many examples of their play and written observations of what they have achieved. However, the written assessments do not clearly show children's starting points, which could lead to a delay in highlighting potential areas of concern and assessing early progress.

Children participate in a range of activities which include opportunities to engage in imaginative role play scenarios, construction, outdoor play and a variety of crafts activities, such as painting, sticking shapes and play dough. Children's knowledge is extended as they participate in themed topics, providing some opportunities for them to look more closely at subjects, such as 'The Colour Red' and 'Different Textures'. They explore colour, shape, and discuss what lemons taste like after they have been squeezed and how soft cotton wool is. Children are beginning to interact with others, initiating conversations and using language to explain their thoughts and negotiate activities. An example of this, is a group of children dressing up as fairies, asking

each other how they looked. Another group of children building castles in specific colours discussed who would be making which castle, for example, 'you can make the red one and I'll make the yellow one'. They show a developing awareness of their own needs and are able to meet these, for example, using the bathroom facilities independently, packing away the toys and using tissues and disposing of them correctly.

Children are gaining knowledge of their community through the provision of a range of resources and activities. These include visitors to the setting, such as the mini zoo where the children had first hand experience of touching and feeling snakes, locust and tarantulas. They are developing an appreciation of technical equipment through scenarios, such as pretend shops and vets where they use equipment, such as table computers, cash registers and calculators. Children participate in construction activities and show developing skills in these areas, for example, children playing with plastic bricks are able to build both vertically and horizontally, working out which size and shape to put on next. Children are encouraged to gain an appreciation of their senses and change through activities, such as investigating how ice melts, cutting up fruit like lime to see the segments, smell the zest and taste the sourness.

Children have opportunities for mark making and to develop early writing skills, for example, writing menu orders in the cafe and a few can write their names on their craft work. Daily stories and rhymes are thoroughly enjoyed by the children and this encourages their understanding of subjects, such as the life cycle of the butterfly or what they may encounter on a bear hunt. The children enjoy telling these stories again to themselves and the other children, sometimes using puppets as props. The children's imagination was encouraged when the group hatched a duck egg. They were fascinated by the incubator and the display relating to this. It is still a firm favourite and relevant to the children as they go to look at it and talk to the staff about how they looked after the duck, feeding and caring for another living creature. However, there are few examples of the written word available to the children to view and therefore there are some opportunities missed to promote fully children's knowledge of written letters and words.

Children are developing their understanding of the concept of numbers and use mathematics to solve everyday problems, for example, counting how many chairs and plates are needed at snack time. They use mathematical language when playing, such as describing the biggest and smallest elephants and pointing out which one is the middle size one. Children's physical development is promoted as they develop an awareness of different forms of movement through organised activities, such as music and movement sessions, using musical instruments and action rhymes such as 'Five Little Ducks'. The garden is well equipped and the children have many opportunities to balance, jump, peddle and climb on the apparatus provided.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed and respected as individuals. They are offered a wide range of opportunities and resources to promote their understanding of the world around them and increase their awareness of other cultures and ways of life. These include celebrations connected with Chinese New Year, Easter, Divali, Christmas and particular days, such as Pancake Day. The children enjoy watching the local Pancake Races and eating the flat cakes afterwards. The children gain an appreciation of their immediate environment on local walks to the shop, post office and library. Their understanding of the wider world is further developed by visitors who come to see them, such as the fire man, police officer and health visitor. Children are caring and considerate to each other and the staff. Their behaviour is good as they choose their activities and competently organise turn-taking and the sharing of dressing-up clothes and

bicycles. They respond well to staff and carry out their requests, such as listening to each other at circle time or checking 'whose turn is it now'. The staff have a positive approach to the children and are good role models which promotes good behaviour and good manners. For example, the children help pack away the toys cheerfully and remember to say 'please', 'thank you' and 'excuse me, can you read me this book'. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Parents are kept well informed of the group's procedures and practices through a welcome prospectus, parent's notice boards and thorough discussions with staff. There is a policy folder available to parents which includes the playgroup's policies and procedures. These have been abridged to summarise the relevant points and are readily available on the notice board. This ensures that parents understand the setting and how their children will access the play, learning and enjoy their time at playgroup. The parents and key worker have a productive relationship, where staff inform parents of their child's activities throughout the session and seek feedback from parents through daily dialogue. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their requirements clearly identified as there is a practical policy relating to this. The staff are skilled in implementing the policy and in identifying particular needs. They work sensitively with parents and other professionals to ensure that children are offered the most appropriate care and support. The staff have displayed simple 'Makaton' signs around the room and the children use these to help communicate with each other.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress and learning through daily dialogue, an informative parent's notice board and photograph albums. The notice board contains information about a number of issues including the Curriculum for the foundation stage and the 'Birth to three matters' framework. There are pictures displayed of the children's which relate to the different aspects of learning thus providing parents with a fuller understanding of their learning and how this can be developed through play. The assessment files are recorded in both written and picture form and parents are encouraged to view their child's progress through photographs and explanation captions.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall, children's needs are met. Children's care is promoted well through the support provided by experienced, committed and qualified staff. Their organisation of the play area is managed well as they arrange designate areas for specific play resources and regularly modify these to add variety and challenge. Good organisation of all play resources ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities and opportunities both within the building and outside. For example, the children have access to a well equipped garden and on walks around the town and the farm the group ensure that there is a high adult presence.

Staff work very well as a team, knowing each other's strengths and supporting new staff members so that they feel secure and settled in the play groups' daily routines. There are secure procedures in place for checking that all staff are suitable to work with children. There is a clear staff induction process, regular appraisals and daily staff meetings which ensure that the playgroup's policies, procedures and learning programme are fully understood and consistently applied. Children's details are collected at placement time and the staff are given extra information relating to the children through the form 'I and You ' which includes the children's likes, dislikes, favourite toys, special words, sleeping patterns and family makeup. This aids the staff in developing securing relationships with the children and their family. However, some entries in the medication book have not been countersigned correctly and some policies and

procedures are not consistently reviewed to include the latest information, which could lead to parents receiving out of date information.

The leadership and management is good. Children's learning and development is promoted and their overall welfare improved by the clear understanding that the play leader has of her role and responsibilities. She ensures that all policies and procedures are adhered to, regularly evaluating the play session and discussing improvement with the staff at the daily group meeting. The play leader fully includes staff members in the planning and organisation of the play sessions, benefiting from their particular skills and knowledge. There is a strong commitment to training and new ways of working and this develops staff's skills and expertise. Training courses are reviewed and shared with other members of staff thus promoting all the staff's understanding of subjects, such as the working with children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The staff actively promote relationships with the local school through open invitations for teachers to visit. They share with the playgroup their expectations. The play leader acts as a good role model, encouraging a relaxed and positive atmosphere within the setting, helping all staff to feel valued and motivated. Sessions are generally well planned, with a balanced range of activities throughout the session. Children are given sufficient time and resources to complete their activities and tasks. Their progress is tracked through ongoing assessments and monitoring. Staff pay attention when planning future work, ensuring that the needs of each child are met and the development of all children is promoted.

Improvements since the last inspection

The playgroup were asked at the previous inspection to devise a non smoking policy and to include the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer in the child protection statement. These were to be made available to parents. They were asked to ensure a daily attendance record is maintained for children and staff showing times of arrival and departure. They were also asked to ensure that children have access to an appropriate range of activities and resources that promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

The playgroup have included a non smoking policy within the parent's folder and has devised a policy relating to what action to take in the event of an allegation made against staff or students. This is within the child protection policy. All policies are available to parents. The group have developed a secure registration system which documents the staff and children's arrival and departure times. The playgroup have increased their play provision to include resources to promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, such as puzzles, books, small people play and dolls. These measures further improve the children's safety, welfare and security.

With regard to the provision of funded nursery education, the group was asked to review planning of the educational programme to ensure that resources are used effectively to stimulate and challenge children; to ensure that learning intentions are clearly identified and that activities to cover all areas of communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development are provided.

The playgroup have revised their planning to incorporate all areas of play. The planning includes the educational programme and clearly identifies the stepping stones, extension of the activity for the more able child and records the learning intention. These measures further improve the children's education and learning.

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):

- improve the daily risk assessment to include areas such as the positioning of the vacuum cleaner and replacement of the broken toilet seat
- ensure that written records of medications administered to children are clearly signed by parents in acknowledgement of their entry and policies are regularly reviewed and updated.

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 methods for assessing children so that these show their starting point so that progress can be charted and any issues highlighted at an early stage
- increase opportunities for children to view written letters and words.

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