

# FINDING THE MISSING PUZZLE PIECE WITH HAPPY DAYS CHILDCARE

Happy Days Childcare is located on the grounds of their local primary school, adjacent to woodlands which they use regularly. They were the first early years setting to engage with Food for Life West Northamptonshire and have attended hands on training and webinars whilst using Food for Life resources to support their activities.

Happy Days prioritise food, considering it a safety net for children so they can grow and thrive. All snacks provided by the nursery include at least one fruit or vegetable and they ensure there is a variety across the week. They distribute guidance on what makes a healthy packed lunch to parents and carers, which includes both standards like 'no extremely high sugar foods' and plenty of food inspiration.

Being in an area of high deprivation means access to good food can be limited. Like the majority of the country, they can see the impact of a multi-generational loss of connection to good food and a loss of cooking and growing skills. Happy Days are determined to be a piece of the solution puzzle which helps turn things around.


In future, they plan to develop activities that will interact with green spaces and nature, to inspire people to make the most of these public places and ensure children without gardens can connect with the outdoors as well.



Through current growing activities, children learn about sustainability by using resources they have to hand. In one activity, they used old milk bottles to make watering cans. Not only is this better for nature and climate, but it also makes growing activities accessible.

Happy Days have also put their cooking training to good use, making flatbreads each fortnight which are affordable, easy to make and a great alternative to other ultra-processed foods. The children love getting involved in both the making and eating process and they go down a treat at snack time. This is a huge step for an early years setting and a testament to their commitment to embedding a good food culture. Next, they plan to begin using herbs from the garden in more recipes after having success with using using home-grown mint in a raita dip alongside the flatbread.





Happy Days Childcare have linked growing activities to all seven of the EYFS curriculum areas, including:

- Communication & Language – talking with the children about the growing activities they are doing and discussing them as the plants grow. Increasing their confidence to express themselves using their voices both when learning new words and extending their vocabulary and when recalling parts of the plants and the gardening experiences.
  - Physical Development – getting outside and moving around. The setting has noticed that the children are more eager to access the outdoors since having the growing areas, as they are excited to see how the plants have changed and grown. Children have become more confident to handle and use tools and equipment when planting.
  - Personal, Social & Emotional Development ('PSED') – children have increased their confidence and self-esteem, taking pride when they notice their impact when caring for plants. It has helped their emotional wellbeing to collaborate with peers and work together to plant and care for plants.
  - Literacy – linking the growing activities to story books e.g. Casper's Beanstalk, which tells the story about how we prepare for growing, and Jack and the Beanstalk. The children have been using their mark-making skills to write words linked to the parts of the plants and drawing pictures of them. They have used recall and sequencing to show the various stages of the plant, from seed to seedling to plant.
  - Mathematics – the children have been using their counting skills to count seeds out to plant, comparing sizes by measuring the growth of plants, recording and making comparisons to each of the plants, using size language such as big, small, tall etc. They have looked at shapes of the plants and seeds.
  - Understanding the world – it has encouraged the children to observe and notice change around their local community, especially the woodland next to the setting. They have been enthusiastic in observing and discussing other areas which are growing plants, e.g. near the local shops, which has green space being cared for by the Ecton Brook Residents Association. Children are learning about respecting these areas, as well as the safety aspect of them.
  - Expressive Arts & Design – the children have been taught to recycle milk cartons into watering cans and to help care for the plants and planters which are displayed around the garden. They have recycled toilet rolls to make their own beanstalk, together with old boxes for a castle as described in Jack and the Beanstalk. They have used different construction materials to make plants and flowers and have acted out the story in using their imagination and role play skills.
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