

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC159
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Name of Service:	Happy Out Preschool
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Address of Service:	Unit 4 Charleville Business Park, Bakers Road, Charleville, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P56 YW90
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Name of Registered Provider:	Kate Gaffney
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	04/12/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Second Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick.
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Inspection undertaken by:	F Collins
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

Happy Out pre-school is a sessional service located on the outskirts of Charleville. The service is provided from a commercial unit in Charleville Business Park.

The premises comprises of a large entrance lobby, a sessional room, a smaller adjacent playroom and adult and child sanitary facilities. The service has an outdoor play area to the side of the premises and has daily use of the indoor activity centre which is accessed via an internal door.

There is adequate parking to the front of the building to facilitate safe drop off and collection and for parents who walk to the service with their children there is space in the entrance lobby for buggies to be parked during the service operating times.

The hours of operation are from 09.30 - 12.30 daily and for 38 weeks of the year.

The service is registered to provide school aged care.

Staffing

There are currently four adults working in the service. All four staff are providing direct care to the children attending. All staff in the service hold appropriate qualifications in early childhood education and care.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*

(c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and

(d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) There was the named person in charge. The person in charge was in the service when the inspector arrived and remained in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(b) The roster indicated that the person in charge was onsite during the operation of the service and there was a named deputy should the person in charge not be in attendance.

(c) There was a clear management structure identified in the service, with the person in charge and the deputy person in charge named. There were in addition to the four staff working in the service, two relief staff members named should their assistance be required.

(2) There were three staff employed/relief in the service since the last inspection. All three staff files were assessed along with the Garda Vetting disclosures for all six staff.

(a) Of the six validated references required one was available from a past employer.

(b) Of the six references required, five validated references were available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) All six staff held in date Garda vetting. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all six staff.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The recruitment policy was reviewed and all of the necessary requirements for the policy were recorded.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

- (1) The person in charge ensured that there were adequate staff working in the service at all times to meet the needs of the children in attendance.
- (3) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained. There were four adults working directly with nineteen children attending the sessional service on the day of inspection.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

Basic Needs:

- The service promoted healthy eating, and the children ate their snack together and each group of children had an adult supporting them who sat with them during their snack.
- Cutlery was provided if required for snack time.
- No child in the service required nappy changing on the day of inspection. Children were able to go to the toilet independently.
- Any child who required assistance with hand washing was supported with same.
- Sleep was not provided for in the service and children were not observed to ask for a rest. The children who chose to opt out of activities during the session used the quiet area and sat on the cushions and chatted together.

- Children were allowed to choose their activities inclusive of art activities, tabletop activities and activities that allowed for imaginary play by using the kitchen, dolls house and pretend play with water activities as a child was observed to wash animals and 'brush; them. The staff moved about to support the children but allowed them to choose and play with whom and what they wished.
- The children's mobility was not hindered at any time, and the children could move about freely.
- The children that required additional assistance were provided with this support as needed and guidance for staff was available with up-to-date inclusion plans as required.

Supporting Relationships Around Children

- The children were noted to be familiar with the adults who worked in the service daily and the children were comfortable with them and sought out their assistance as required.
- The staff had a plan for managing emotions in the service and had cue cards available should a child not be able to voice their emotions; they could identify with pictures on the cards. This was observed to be used throughout the morning. A staff member was observed to comfort a child who was upset sharing toys and assisted them to settle with different toys.
- The adults were relaxed when speaking with the children and there were no raised voices noted during the inspection.
- The staff team appeared to work well together.
- Staff operated in partnership with parents as demonstrated with the conversation at drop off and collection. The parents who opted into a speech and language development programme were observed to participate in the programme where the therapist worked with the parents early in the session and following this the parents and children worked together to promote language development.

Physical And Material Environment:

- The indoor environment consisted of one large care room, a smaller room where the parent meeting was held and where children who needed to take a break from the larger group could play supported by a member of staff. The main care room had child height tables and chairs where the children were observed to eat and do their arts and crafts and other tabletop activities. There were open shelving units that were accessible to the children and at their height which allowed the children to be independent in their activities.

- There was a supply of varied equipment such as arts and crafts, Montessori equipment and shape sorters as an example for fine motor development, Imaginary games with kitchens and a selection of dolls, buggies and carriers for babies.
- At the front of the room the children had access to the quieter area, a cushioned area with books should the children require a rest or wish to opt out of activities.
- The service demonstrated a language rich environment and had opted into a Health Service Executive programme to promote speech and language development. Stories were told where children interacted with the educator, songs were sung and children were spoken to in small groups and individually.
- The materials and equipment were easily accessible to the children.

The Outdoor Environment:

The outdoor environment consisted of one outdoor area and one activity centre. The outdoor area to the side of the building was small and covered in artificial grass, the area was partially covered to protect the area from the rain and was laid out with ride on toys and with sand and planting areas. The other area used for gross motor play was the activity centre through not outside it was used when the weather was poor to allow the children to run, jump, play on larger toys and take risks when sliding, jumping and climbing.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

There was adequate and suitable equipment and materials available for the children to play with during the sessional service. There were baskets of Montessori toys, kitchens, playhouses and dress up units. There was access to ride on toys for exercise such as exercise bicycles and a glider available with the seats suitably covered. There was equipment such as water trays, tuff trays and equipment such as brushes available to the children to promote sensory development. The equipment was at a height that was accessible to children and children were aware of where and how they could access this equipment.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The service was secured by a high gate to the side, which was always closed, and was occasionally opened to allow access to the side and outdoor area.
- The main door into the service was secured with an appropriate lock. This prevented unauthorised exit by any of the children to the front of the building and prevented unauthorised access to the children by any adult.
- The doors within the service were secured by electromagnetic locks.
- The windows were at a height that could not be reached by the children.
- There was no staircase accessible to the children in the service.
- All toys and equipment observed on the day of inspection were in good condition and free from any pinch or crush points.
- There was no heavy furniture at a height that could tip over on to the children observed.
- The electric flexes observed were in good condition and out of reach of the children.
- The storage facilities were inaccessible to the children.
- There were no hot drinks consumed in the service.
- There was no kettle accessible to the children in the service.

Infection Control:

- The children were observed to wash their hands after playing in the activity centre, after messy play, after using the toilet and before snack time.
- Staff were also observed to wash their hands frequently especially if observed to help children to blow their nose, hands were washed after disposing of the tissue.
- The paper towels used following hand washing were disposed of in lidded bins that were pedal operated.
- There was hot water accessible in all the sinks that was thermostatically controlled. The hot water in the children's toilets was recorded at 40.1 and 40.3°C respectively. In the adults' toilets the hot water was recorded at 38.9°C. There was liquid hand soap and paper towels available at all sinks.
- The snacks provided to the service were stored in the fridge following arrival and before snack time preventing the growth of bacteria on perishable items.

- The tables where the children were eating were cleaned with appropriate disinfectant prior to the children having their snack.
- School bags were stored off the ground on a trolley preventing contamination. Snacks that contained perishable items were stored in the fridge before snack time.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was administered in the service during the inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- The service operates as a sessional service and no child slept or asked to sleep during the operation of the service on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- The fire exit door was unobstructed throughout the inspection. Tables were an adequate distance away from the door so as not to block it.
- The firefighting equipment was safely tethered to the wall.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that there was a mechanism of signing in the children on arrival and again of signing them out when they left the service. The staff were responsible for signing the children in and this was recorded on an IT application.

- (3) (a) The registered provider ensured that no person other than those listed above were allowed enter the premises without their entry being approved by a staff member.
- (b) A visitor book where the visitors to the service signed in was in use and the inspector was requested to sign in and out of the service. Evidence of previous visitors to the service signing in was available.