

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC175
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Name of Service:	Happy Days Montessori Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Ardnagaoithe, Bantry, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P75 Y009
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Hennessy
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	08/05/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	27	PM	20
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Child & Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Hospital Grounds, Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, West Cork
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Inspection undertaken by:	M Carney
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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 Days Montessori is a private based part time and sessional service providing an early years care and education for children aged from 2 to 6 years.

It operates from 08:45am to 14:00pm and 12:30pm to 17:30pm daily.

The service is situated within a purpose-built wing of the registered providers private residence on a perimeter road within the environs of Bantry in west Cork.

Facilities include 4 interlinked playrooms, a designated sleep and relaxation room and sufficient toilet accommodation.

The children have access to a secured courtyard to the rear of the property and a large front garden, namely Everland.

There are adequate care parking spaces for the safe arrival and departure of the children with their families.

Staffing

There are 7 adults attached to the service, this includes the registered provide who works directly with the children, 3 childcare professionals and 3 additional child care professionals who are employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).

Each of the childcare professionals had attained Quality Qualification's Ireland (QQI) in childcare training

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 inspections 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, deputy manager, 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)

The registered provider was the person in charge. A deputy manager had been appointed to deputise as required.

(b)

On inspection of staff rosters it was evidenced that both or either the registered provider or deputy were on the premises for the duration of service operation.

(2)(a) & (b)

Each of the staff members files were reviewed, the following information was available –

There were 14 written references on file from past employers and from sources the registered provider considered to be reputable on file. Each referenced had been verified.

(c)

There were 7 up to date Garda vetting disclosures on file, dated from October 2020 to January 2023.

(d)

Police vetting was available for 2 adult that had lived outside the jurisdiction of Ireland for a period longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4)

Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in childcare training were on file for each staff member, ranging from Level 5 to Level 8.

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.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 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) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

- (1)
On the day of the inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.
- (2)
There were 27 children present during the morning session, 13 attending on a sessional basis and 14 were availing of the part time service. There were 7 staff members present.
There were 9 children attending the afternoon session with 3 adults in attendance.
The adult child ratio was correct.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- Each of the children's registration forms were reviewed and the following sections of the Regulation were found to be compliant –
- (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g), (h) and (i).

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult: child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
The following records were available which pertained to the service –
- (a) to (i).
- (j) There was a recording book to detail any medications administered to a pre-school child attending the service. There were no recent entries.
- (k) There was a recording book to detail any accidents or incidents that had occurred in the service. The most recent entry was recorded on the 23 February 2023, it described a minor incident which had been duly reported to the parent as evidenced by the countersignature.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

The registered provider made available a welcome booklet which had been designed to provide information in relation to the service for both parents and prospective parents.

It had incorporated the subsections of Regulation 16(1) (a) to (g).

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 children were provided with snacks and lunches in a timely manner with mealtimes being staggered during the morning session. The children in Tracey's room sat for lunch at approximately 10:40am and children present in Rhonda's had lunch at approximately 11:00am.
- Mealtime was a sociable, unhurried event. Children assisted with laying the table with glass beakers, cutlery and plates and handing out the stored lunches to friends.
- Staff members sat with the children and joined in pleasant conversation and assisted some of the children with opening cartons and cutting fruits.
- Children attending on a part time basis had additional food items to consume when the sessional children had departed 12:35pm.
- Children attending the afternoon session had their main meal at 1:45pm.
- Drink bottles were observed to be easily accessible to the children so that they could help themselves to drinks when thirsty.
- Staff members assisted with toileting and gently reminded the children to wash hands afterwards.

- Additional hand washing was observed after the children had played outside and prior to lunch.
- The children were assisted to address appropriately in waterproof overalls and protective boots for outdoor play.
- Indoor soft shoes were stored in an orderly fashion so that the children could return from the garden and put on their shoes independently.
- Aprons were available to protect the children's clothes during art and messy play activities.
- Each child had their own low hooks to stow bags and coats.
- A compact room with a tiered level was devoted to rest and relaxation. It was furnished with soft matting, throws and cushions for the children's comfort.
- There was generous clear floor space in each of the play areas to allow each child to enjoy free play, socialisation and investigation of their environment in a closely supervised manner. In addition, children had direct access to a secured courtyard and front garden.

Physical and Material Environment –

- Happy Days Montessori Pre-School operated 4 inter-linked playrooms which the supervised children rotate around so that they capitalise on each individual setting.
- The playrooms were bright airy and well maintained.
- The playrooms were furnished with a sufficient number of child sized tables and chairs that were clean and well maintained.
- The rooms were laid out in a manner to encourage thematic play and provide a wide range of Montessori and play experiences.
- Low-lying open display units displayed many resources which were easily accessible to the children, for example, tabletop, fine motor skill materials such as jigsaws and matching games.
- Construction play with blocks and bricks were observed being enjoyed adjacent to a wall of photographs depicting different types of buildings such as Taj Mahal, the London Eye and the Great Wall of China to inspire the children's imagination.
- A wooden track and train set was available and enticed assembly.
- A clinical surgery was installed and equipped with a wide range of accessories such as doctors and nurses apparatus to encourage pretend play.
- There was a wide range of children's books pleasingly displayed.
- There were arts and crafts, chinks, gluing and scissors materials for the children's enjoyment.

- Wall art included murals of Disney characters and colourful jungle and underwater scenes.
- Children’s family photographs were exhibited.
- Both the courtyard to the rear of the premises and the front garden, namely Everland were generously equipped with a wide range of activities for the children’s learning and entertainment.
- The courtyard provided a hard surface for the riding of bikes and gross motor skill equipment.
- There was evidence of the children’s planting.
- A canopied area was available so that children could play and avail of fresh air in wetter weather.
- Everland provided a lawned and bark surface so that the wooden playhouses, see saws, balance boulders, slides and climbing frames could be enjoyed safely.
- Mature trees and shrubs were well maintained and provided the children with secret tunnels and hidey holes decorated with fairies, ladybirds, bugs and wide life animals.
- There was a large sand pit to provide messy play with spades and buckets and wheelbarrows.

Supporting Relations around the Children

- The generous adult child ratio allowed for small group activities and one-to-one engagement with the children.
- Only quiet tones were used by the adult whilst communicating with the children with good eye contact being maintained and clear direction.
- Staff members were positively engaged with each child and the atmosphere was one of attentive, unhurried calmness; this was evidenced during play activities, mealtimes and whilst toileting and hand washing was conducted.
- It was reported that staff meetings were held every 3 to 4 weeks to discuss matters arising, curriculum planning and staff requirements.
- Staff members had completed fire training.
- Parents were communicated with via a digital application to inform of service notices.
- One-to-one communication with parents was utilised via the application, for example photographs of their child’s activities.
- The service arranged local transportation to drop off children with staff supervision into the town to assist parents with collection.
- Parents with specific talents and skills were invited to conduct presentations to the children, it was reported that most recently farmer Dave visited to introduce the children to young chicks.

Implementation of Programme of Care

- The registered provider made available documents and records of the planned short term and long-term programme of activities.
- Each child had their own folder/workbook which maintained a record of the activities they had participated in, and skills mastered. There were photographs of special occasions such as Halloween dress up and party, Chinese New Year and Mother’s Day.
- The folder included a learning journal which detailed the children becoming familiar with the Irish language, practising yoga and mindfulness and learning about wildlife hibernation.
- A daily timetable evidenced that a wide range of activities were offered to the children, for example time allotted for free play, mealtimes, outdoor play and socialisation.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The service had a healthy policy in place.
- All food and drink items were supplied by the parents.
- A large larder fridge was available, which was clean and well maintained with fresh supplies of milk and the children’s lunches stored in an orderly manner.
- Only healthy, nutritious, varied and suitable food items were observed being eaten during the children’s lunch meal, such as, ham and cheese sandwiches, wraps, rice cakes, fruits and cereal bars.
- Children attending on a part time basis had additional food items to be offered later in the session.
- The children had access to their own water bottles so that they could help themselves to fluids when they were thirsty.

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:

- Happy Days Montessori was suitably secured so that a child could not leave the premises unsupervised.
- The main door which led to the playrooms was secured so that unauthorised was restricted.
- The staff members bags and belonging were stored out of reach of the children in the registered provider's home.
- Montessori and play materials and resources were found to be in a good state of repair with no pinch points or sharp edges.
- Cables and flexes were not accessible to the children.
- Visibility strips had been applied to the glazed doors to pre-empt a child from crashing into the glass.
- The emergency exit doors were unobstructed.
- Steps to the lower garden had been installed and handrails for the children's safety.

Infection Control:

- The service was clean and well maintained.
- Hand washing practices were observed regularly during the session.
- The children had access to 4 separate child sized toilets and 4 wash hand basins.
- Thermostatically controlled hot water registered at 29 degrees Celsius, liquid soap, toilet tissue and wall mounted paper dispensers for hand drying.
- There was a designated toilet for adult use in the registered providers home.

Administration of Medication:

- It was reported that there were no children in the service that required medication, however an appropriate recording book was made available in the event of a child requiring medications.
- Staff members were familiar with the procedures that are to be followed when administering either prescribed or non-prescribed medications.

Safe Sleep:

- The service was categorized as a part time service and a sleep facility was required. It was observed that a sleeping bag and linen was available for children that required a sleep.

Fire Safety:

- In conversation with the staff members, it was apparent that they were aware of the procedures that were needed to be followed in the event of a fire.
- The fire exit was unobstructed.
- Fire cylinders were safely tethered.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-
(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and
(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

- (1)
Records informed that 4 staff members had first aid responder training certification (FAR). The expiry date was September 2024.
- (2)
The service had 2 wall-mounted first aid boxes which were suitably equipped with the recommended requisites. There were no medications stored in the first aid boxes.
The provision was available to the staff members but out of reach to the children.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-*
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and*
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.*
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The registered provider submitted a file with details of the fire drills that had been conducted in the service. The last recorded fire drill had taken place 27 April 2023. It recorded the number of children and staff members present.

(4)

The service had a fire evacuation plan displayed so that a visual route was detailed to evacuate the building safely in the event of a fire.