

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015CE055
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Happy Hippo's Pre-School
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Cratloekeel, Cratloe, Co. Clare
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<b>Eircode:</b>	V95 A5YW
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Elaine Counihan
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	11/02/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	27	PM	26
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Station Road Ennis County Clare.
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	A. McCarthy & J. Hayes
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspectors

### 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

### Description of service

Happy Hippo's Pre-School was established in 2007 as a privately operated full day, part-time and sessional childcare facility in Cratloe, County Clare. The service provides care for children ranging in age from six months to six years, Monday to Friday from 07:30 to 18:00. A school aged childcare service is provided each morning and afternoon in a prefabricated modular structure to the rear of the building.

The service is facilitated in a two-storey modified house. The baby room, adjacent sleep room, the toddler room and the kitchen are located on the ground floor. The playful tigers and the happy monkey's rooms and are located on the first floor. The care rooms include: the baby room (age range: thirteen months to twenty-two months of age), the toddler room (age range: two to three years), the playful tigers (age range: four to five years) and the happy monkeys (age range: three to four years). The pre-school outdoor play areas for the preschool children are available to the side of the premises and the school aged childcare is located to the rear of the premises.

### Staffing

Twelve adults are employed by the service. On the 11 February 2025 the registered provider, ten childcare workers and an auxiliary person who prepares, cooks and serves the dinner were present. The registered provider is the owner and the manager of the service and works in the service as an administrator, provides relief in the rooms and collects and drops off the children to the local national school.

### 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 and safety. The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations:

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d) and (4)

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels (1) (3) (8)(a)

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service (i)(j)(k)

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child (1)(a)

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 25 - First aid (1) (2)(a)(b)

Regulation 29 – Premises (c)(d)(e)

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements (2)

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report. 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 inspectors wish 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*

*(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 and a person was available to deputise in their absence.

(b)

The registered provider and a named person to deputise was available at all times during the inspection.

(2)

Twelve files were available in respect of the registered provider and the adults employed by the service. The findings included the following:

- (a) Fifteen written and validated references from past employers in respect of adults working in the service were available.

(b) Nine written and validated references were available in respect of adults working in the service from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the twelve adults employed by the service. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available in respect of one adult working in the service who had not lived in another state for a period longer than six months.

(4) The nine adults working directly with the preschool children held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

### 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.*

*(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*

*(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,*

#### Compliance Information

- (1)  
During the inspection an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children in attendance.
- (2) On the 11 February 2025 the ratio of adults caring for children was maintained. Nine adults cared for the twenty-seven children in attendance in the morning and nine adults cared for twenty-six children in the afternoon.

(8)(a) During the inspection more than two adults were available in the service at all times.

## 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:*

- (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)
- (i)  
A staff roster was available detailing the rostered hours for all the adults employed to work directly with the children.
- (j)  
Eighteen records of medication administered to the pre-school children were reviewed in the service's administration of medication record book. These records detailed signed parental consent for medication administered to children attending the service.
- (k)  
Sixteen accident, incident and injury records were reviewed in the service's record. The records were adequately completed and detailed a signed parental signature after the accident occurred.

### 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

(1)(a)

The children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service through the provision of appropriate activities, interactions, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and developmental stage of the children. Four care rooms were in operation during the inspection.

#### Basic Needs of Children:

The adults treated the children in a caring and respectful manner and positive behavioural strategies were used during interactions. The adults conversed with the children in a sensitive manner, used soft tones of voice, engaged with the children at their level and responded promptly to their cues for assistance and comfort. The children were encouraged to be independent in play and learning, whilst caring for their belongings, at mealtime and whilst using the toilet. Staff supervised and treated the children in a respectful manner during nappy changes and toileting. Nappies were changed frequently and on an individual need's basis. The children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care and nasal care appropriate to their age and level of development. The children's sleep was attended to on an individual basis and an alternative area and activities were offered for children who did not wish to sleep. The infants were encouraged to feed themselves and promoted to be independent. Appropriate crockery and feeding utensils were provided in each room and mealtimes were observed to be relaxed and unhurried. Additional food was provided for children when they indicated they wanted more. Dinners which consisted of cooked chicken, mashed potatoes and sweetcorn were provided by the service and snacks were provided by parents and refrigerated as required. The adults offered praise and encouragement and children were respected and supported in their choice of individual and group engagement in activities. The children in each room were offered a range of developmentally challenging play and learning activities and the children were observed to be fully engaged and included in all activities in the indoor and outdoor environments. The children transitioned from the indoor to the outdoor area for play based activities.

### Physical and Material Environment:

The care rooms were bright, spacious and well-resourced and were laid out to enable the children to freely move and play. The children were engaged in a range of constructive, imaginative and sensory play-based activities. The children were offered a range of developmentally challenging play and educational activities and observed to be fully engaged as they transitioned from the indoor to the outdoor environment. Learning aids and creative work were displayed on the walls in the care room. A variety of opportunities for play and learning activities were available and accessible in the indoor and outdoor environments with defined areas of interest. The care rooms were appropriately resourced with pretend play wooden houses, wooden activity units, and dress up areas. Soft furnishings, mats with adjacent reading materials were used by the children to rest and relax. Low level shelving units were accessible to the children with a range of manipulative, sensory, imaginative and constructive toys and learning materials for the age and level of development of the children. The outdoor play area is located to the side of the service for the preschool children. This area was accessed by the children during the inspection. The children wore all weather clothing and footwear and had access to a swing, a slide, a climbing frame, a pretend playhouse and a large range of ride on vehicles and bicycles. The children were observed to thoroughly enjoy their time in the indoor and outdoor environments.

### 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:

- A key coded, bell operated system was in place at the entrance door to monitor the safe entry and exit of the children to and from the childcare facility. Unauthorised persons are recorded in the visitors' book.
- The outdoor areas were secured with fencing and gates to protect the children within.
- Storage facilities were secured and inaccessible to the children.
- The blind cords were appropriately secured to the windows throughout the service.
- The highchairs were maintained in adequate condition with fitted safety harnesses in the baby room.

- Evidence of completed risk assessments were available demonstrating measures taken by the registered provider to maintain the service.

### Infection Control:

- The service was maintained in a clean condition. Completed cleaning schedules were available demonstrating measures taken by staff to clean the service.
- The manager and staff demonstrated an awareness of the criteria for exclusion of children who are infected with/carrying an infectious disease from childcare settings. A copy of the exclusion criteria is detailed on the enrolment forms completed by parents, in the infection control policy, and on the service noticeboard at the entrance to the service.
- The sanitary facilities were equipped with warm running water, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lidded, lined pedal operated bins. Two nappy changing areas were available on the ground floor.
- The observed nappy changes were completed in accordance with the service's infection control policy. A nappy changing procedure was displayed in the each of the nappy changing facilities.
- The children washed their hands at appropriate intervals after activities, using the toilet and outdoor play and before mealtime.

### Administration of Medication:

- The adults demonstrated an awareness of the service's administration of medication policy and procedure.
- Documentation was available for the adults to record medication administered to the children.

### Safe Sleep:

- The adults demonstrated an awareness of the service's safe sleep policy. The children's sleep observations were recorded by the adults every ten minutes. These observations included the children's colour, position and breathing.
- The sleep room adjacent to the baby room accommodated standard sized cots with wipeable mattresses for the children to sleep. Low level beds and individual blankets were available for the children who required sleep in the toddler room.
- Individual cellular blankets were placed over the children during sleep periods.
- An electronic thermometer was available for the adults to measure and monitor the room temperatures.

### Fire Safety:

- The adults had evidence on file of up-to-date fire safety training.
- The fire exit routes and passageways were clear from obstruction.

- The fire exits routes and fire assembly points were readily identified with signage. A fire action notice was displayed at all the fire exit points in the building.
- The service demonstrated evidence of completing monthly fire drills to prepare the service to respond in the event of fire.

### Outing:

- The registered provider stated that outings were not undertaken by the service.

## 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)  
Three adults working in the service had a record of up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training and at least one of these adults were available to the children in the service at all times.

(2)(a)  
A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in the kitchen. The adults working in the service were familiar with the location of the first aid box.

(b)  
The first aid box was available for use by the adults in the event of an emergency.

### Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

#### Regulation 29 – Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-*

- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

#### Compliance Information

- (c)  
The care rooms were adequately lit by artificial and natural lighting. The childcare facility was adequately ventilated through natural and mechanical means of ventilation.
- (d)  
The indoor and outdoor environment were clean and maintained in a clean and hygienic manner. Clean
- (e)  
The childcare facility was equipped with an adequate number of sanitary facilities for the children enrolled and the adults employed as follows:
- Four toilets and three hand wash basins were available for use by the children in attendance.
  - Two nappy changing areas were available for use.
  - Two adult toilets were available for use by the twelve adults employed in the service.

#### Non-Compliance Information

- (c)  
The room temperatures in the baby room, the toddler room, the playful tiger room and the happy monkey's rooms were not maintained within the recommended levels of 18 to 22 °Celsius. The registered provider stated that the boiler heating system was not working and needs to be replaced, and the service is awaiting a maintenance person to resolve this issue. It is acknowledged that an electric heater was provided in each room, and the children were dressed in warm clothing. The following room temperatures were recorded:

Name of Rooms	Room Temperature Measurements:
The Baby Room	16.4°Celsius
The Toddler Room	13.4°Celsius
The Playful Tigers	16.8°Celsius
The Happy Monkey's	16.9°Celsius

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective and Preventive Action

(c)  
The boiler has been replaced and is functioning effectively. The boiler will be serviced to ensure any issues will be foreseen and dealt with as soon as possible.

### Supporting documentation submitted

(c)  
A copy of the maintenance service certificate.

## Summary Comment

Based on the corrective and preventive actions and supporting evidence submitted by the registered provider the area of non-compliance under Regulation 29 (c) is addressed. The regulatory requirement is met.

### Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

#### Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

*(2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.*

#### Compliance Information

(2)  
The registered provider ensured that the minimum clear floor space was available for the children attending the baby and toddler room on the ground floor and the playful tiggers and happy monkey rooms on the first floor.