

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015CN023
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Happy Days Childcare Services Ltd
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	17 Fairgreen, Belturbet, Co. Cavan
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<b>Eircode:</b>	H14 DH56
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	David Coyle
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	27/03/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	56	35Z	35
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	S Mc Kenna and S Taaffe
<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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable.
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### Description of service

Happy Days Childcare Services Ltd is a community-based childcare facility located in a housing estate in Belturbet, Co. Cavan. The childcare service operates from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and provides full day care, part time and a sessional service to a maximum of 70 children aged 1 to 6 years. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. There are four care rooms in operation, three within the main building (Preschool 1 and 2 on the ground floor, and Preschool 3 on the first floor) and the Toddler room is in a prefabricated building to the rear of the main building. School aged childcare is also provided. An outdoor play area is available which includes three separated areas to the rear, side and front of the premises. Car parking for set down and collection is provided to the front of the premises.

### Staffing

A total of 23 adults are employed to work with preschool children. Fourteen staff work directly with the preschool children which includes one staff member who is employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).

A service manager, an administration person and three staff who work with school aged children.

A cook works in the kitchen supported by a staff member on a community employment programme, with two additional community employment staff working in a supernumerary capacity in the preschool and school aged rooms. In addition, a student was present on college work experience. The registered provider is not centre based.

In addition to the above, a caretaker and two cleaners attend the service out of hours in the morning or evening times, the service manager confirmed they are not present while the service is in operation and children are present.

### 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 21 Equipment and Materials, Regulation 22 Food and drink, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 25 First Aid, Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures and Regulation 28 Insurance.

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 service 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 service had a designated person in charge who is the service manager, and a named person in charge to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the service manager it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.

(c) A management structure was in place, which was clearly identifiable through review of the staff roster, and discussion with the staff team.

Following a review of previous inspection records and in discussion with the service manager it was confirmed that eight new staff members had commenced employment in the service since the last inspection which was

carried out on 02 July 2024, and one student is being facilitated to be present in the service on work experience since January 2025. The full staff files for the eight new staff and one student were reviewed.

In addition, Garda vetting disclosures were reviewed for all 22 staff members employed in this service.

- (2)
- (a) A total of 13 written and validated references from a previous employer were on file.
- (b) A total of 5 written and validated references from a reputable source were on file.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the eight new staff and one student. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for 21 employed staff.
- (d) A review of the employment history for the eight staff and one student, demonstrated that two staff had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. The required police vetting for the two staff was available on file.
- (4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the four new staff employed to work with pre-school children, held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications. A qualification for one staff member employed to work with school aged children was not required. A qualification for three staff on a community employment scheme and one student were not required, as they work in a supernumerary and training capacity.

### 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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at full capacity.

Two adults cared for 15 children aged 3 years 6 months to 4 years 1 month in Preschool 1.

Three adults cared for 20 children aged 4 years 3 months to 5 years 2 months Preschool 2.

Two adults cared for 11 children aged 4 years 2 months to 6 years in Preschool 3.

Two adults cared for 10 children aged 2 years 4 months to 3 years 1 month in the Toddler room.

In addition to the above, one staff member on a community employment was present in Preschool 3 and one student was present in the Toddler room.

The service manager was office based and can cover in the care rooms where required.

(8) A review of the staff rosters demonstrated that there are at least 2 adults on the premises while the full day care service is in operation.

### 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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

### Compliance Information

The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that the children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

### Basic Needs

The older children were observed to use the toilet independently, with gentle reminders given to younger children who were in the process of toilet training. The younger children in nappies had their nappy changed at scheduled times and more frequently if required.

Children's appearances were cared for through the availability of self-care tissue stations in the care rooms where children were observed to independently clean their own noses. Aprons were provided and observed in use for messy play activities such as water play.

The younger children availed of a sleep between 11.30am to 1pm in the Toddler room. Cosy areas which included soft child sized sofas, soft mats and cushions were provided in each of the care rooms where children could take time out from their day to rest and relax.

The children in the Toddler room and Preschool 2 had a change of environment during the inspection and played outdoors for a short time due to the wet weather on the day. The children from the preschool rooms were observed to use the sensory room within the prefabricated building for an allocated time in the afternoon.

### Supporting Relationships

A key worker system was in place in each of the care rooms. The staff in the Toddler room advised the inspector that time is given for children to form close relationships with staff, and where strong connections are present between the child and adult, the key worker is then assigned to the relevant child.

Staff were observed to cross cover in rooms on the day of inspection, with children appearing familiar to each of the staff that cared for them.

The staff used gentle encouragement for children to turn take and share and encouraged positive interactions. Praise was given when positive behaviour was observed between children and their peers.

The staff and student were observed to act as positive role models, speaking in a calm manner and engaging with the children down at their level. The staff and student were observed to sit with the children during the inspection which enhanced the play and experiences for the children, for example in the Toddler room the children engaged in sand play consistently for at least 20 minutes, and the staff were observed to add in additional resources and materials of interest to the children which further enhanced their play and learning experiences in this activity to include hiding the cars, and making "pasta" and "spuds and chicken" for dinner. In both Preschool 1 and Preschool 2 children's behaviour was observed being managed in a calm manner with staff members using effective age-appropriate strategies including problem-solving, distraction and re-direction to prevent minor issues from escalating, all the while showing the children respect and kindness.

The staff were observed to demonstrate sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for children and their families. Parental wishes and requests were met, and strong communication between parents/carers and staff was observed at the children’s collection times. Parents and carers were observed to enter the care rooms to collect their child and engaged in conversations with the staff team about how their child had been that day. A digital application is used to provide further information to parents/carers such as the timing of sleeping, eating and toilet/nappy times for the younger children. Observations were also observed to be communicated to parents in this way.

Individual folders to include children’s creative art work are compiled throughout the term and sent home at end of the year or when the child progresses from one room to another.

Discussions about the children’s home life was observed which demonstrates familiarity between the children and staff who care for them. Strong community links were observed through photos on display of local groups being involved in events within the service. A community event was planned for the upcoming weekend which included supports from the service.

The staff in each of the care rooms communicated frequently with one another, with countdown times provided until the next activity, which ensured transitions were smooth for children moving on from one part of the daily routine to the next. Photographic routines and schedules were on display in the care rooms, which provided visuals for children to visually learn what comes next in their day.

The staff team and management were observed to work well together and clear lines of communication and information sharing was evident. Staff meetings and training takes place on a regular basis.

### 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

The indoor play environments were bright, spacious and welcoming. Displays of children’s recent creative work, family trees, birthday charts and photographs of the children and staff in the Toddler room when they were babies were presented at the children’s level on the walls throughout the service.

The five care rooms were set up with clearly identifiable play areas, which were suitable and age appropriate for the children in attendance in each care room.

The play materials were well organised, available and accessible at low levels within the children’s reach. There was a sufficient quantity of play materials provided for the number of children in attendance in each care room. The equipment available to be children was observed to be durable, easy to clean and were presented in good condition.

The materials available for children’s use were observed to be developmentally appropriate, with toys provided that included various levels of challenge and complexity.

There was adequate and suitable furniture in all care rooms which were appropriate for the age range of children in attendance.

The play materials were laid out in designated resourced areas such as home corner areas, construction areas, book areas, tabletop activities, sensory areas, and arts and crafts.

Areas observed to be of interest to children on the day of inspection included sensory play with playdough, sudsy water and sand. Role play in the home corner was also observed to be a popular choice on the day.

Additional resources and equipment are also available in storage areas.

The outdoor areas were enclosed by a mixture of concrete walls and wooden and metal fencing with ground surfacing of concrete paths, patio, soft surface and artificial grassed play areas. There was an adequate supply of outdoor play materials in the outdoor areas, equipment provided in the area located at the rear of the premises included ride on and push-a-long toys, rockers, climbing structures, seating, a mud kitchen, a slide and building blocks. The area to the side of the premises had tables, a play garage with cars and a whiteboard. The play equipment provided in the enclosed area located at the front of the building included a wooden climbing frame with slide attached, self-propel cars, tricycles, 2 fixed spring sit-on rocking toys and a water table.

### 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

A menu was available and on display. A breakfast options of cereal or toast is available in the mornings in the care rooms. A morning snack taken in from home for children attending the Preschool rooms included a variety of yogurts, sandwiches, crackers, cheeses and a selection of fruit. The morning snack which is served at 10am to the Toddler room, is prepared on site by the cook was rice cakes, blueberries and banana and was served suitable for the children’s ages.

The hot meal served on the day at approx. 1pm to all care rooms was pasta carbonara with bacon and grated cheese. The hot meals listed on the menu, while taking into consideration the age of children provided for was suitable and nutritious.

An afternoon snack of vegetable soup and bread rolls was served to the children at 3pm.

The children in all care rooms had access to their drinks throughout the day.

The service manager advised the inspectors that if the quantity of food taking into consideration, the child's time spent in the service was not adequate, that additional food items can be provided to the children.

### 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 following safety measures were observed on the day of inspection:

- The premises were appropriately secured to prevent a child from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- A visitor log is maintained, and the inspectors were requested to sign in upon arrival.
- The garden areas were observed to be secured with high level walls and fences, with lockable gates.
- The children were observed to be appropriately supervised during the inspection.
- The toys and play equipment available in the indoor care rooms were observed to be maintained in good repair.
- Risk assessments were available for review and completed up to date.
- The kitchen is located away from the care rooms and is inaccessible to the children.
- The window in the care room on the first-floor level was fitted with a window restrictor. The blind cords present in care rooms were observed to be secured.
- Handrails provided on the stairways and ramps were suitable for the use of both children and adults. Floor coverings were maintained in good repair.
- Storage areas were inaccessible to the children.
- Cleaning agents were observed to be stored out of the reach of the children.
- Fire exits remained free from obstruction during the inspection.

### Infection Control:

The inspectors observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

- Warm running water, hand soap, pedal operated bins and individual use paper towels were provided at each handwash area. Appropriate hand washing practices were observed after nappy changing and toileting times.
- Nappy changing procedures were carried out in line with the services policy, and the use of disposable gloves and aprons were observed in use.
- The waste bins were stored in a secure area outside.
- Sanitary areas were ventilated either by openable windows or mechanical ventilation or air exchange units.
- Snacks taken in from home by the children were stored in the fridge until snack time.
- Cleaning schedules were available for review and completed up to date. The service was presented in a clean and hygienic manner throughout.

### Administration of Medication:

- Staff outlined the procedure for administering medication if required. Records to include prior consent and parental signature following administration each day were available for review.
- Care plans for children where required were provided.

### Safe Sleep:

- There were no children present under the age of 2 years.
- There were stackable beds available for the use of children aged 2 years and over.
- Individual bed linen was provided and stored in labelled boxes for each child that sleeps while attending the service.
- The stackable beds are set up in the sensory area in the prefabricated building at 11:30am each day to facilitate children's sleep.
- Sleep records detailing the children's sleeping position, breathing pattern and skin colour at 10-minute intervals were available for review.

### Outing:

- The staff advised the inspectors that regular outings take place such trips to the local library and walks in the town. Risk assessments for each outing were available for review. The staff outlined to the inspectors the steps they take in preparation for outings and in line with the risk assessment procedures, to include the that the children wear hi vis jackets and use a "walking crocodile" rope for children to hold on to, and that an emergency backpack with materials to include first aid equipment is taken on each outing.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### General Safety

1. Garda vetting was available for 22 staff members and one student. However, one of the staff vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. The painted surfaces on the climbing structure in the outdoor area to the front of the premises were observed to be flaking and peeling with significant sections of bare wood exposed which were rough to touch. This posed a risk of a child sustaining an injury from splinters when using the climbing frame.

#### Infection Control:

3. Play materials and resources were stored in a corner section of the sanitary area upstairs. In addition, coats were observed to be stored in the Toddler nappy changing area. The storage of the play materials and coats poses a risk of cross contamination.
4. The child sized sofa in Preschool 2 was extensively torn along a seam leaving the inner foam exposed. This was an infection control hazard as the sofa could not be thoroughly cleaned.

#### Safe Sleep:

5. A staff member did not remain in the sensory room at all times when children were sleeping on stackable beds. This posed a risk that children who were awake could leave their beds unsupervised and climb, trip, fall, disrupt the sleep of or cause harm to another child. While staff members were observed entering this room at 10-minute intervals to carry out sleep checks during the inspection, children sleeping on stackable beds require direct supervision within the care room at all times.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

1. At the time of the inspection, the vetting process had been initiated, but the clearance had not yet been returned. To correct this, we followed up with the vetting authority to expedite the process and received the completed vetting shortly after the inspection. To prevent future occurrences, we have implemented a tracking system to monitor the status of all vetting applications. Applications will now be submitted at least 6 weeks prior to any scheduled inspections. Weekly checks will ensure progress is monitored, and any delays are followed up promptly.
2. The slide was initially booked for sandblasting as part of maintenance. However, during further inspection, it was found to be too worn to safely undergo this process. As a corrective measure, the slide and attached

climbing frame were immediately removed from use, and a new unit was ordered. To prevent similar issues in the future, all equipment scheduled for refurbishment will undergo a detailed condition assessment prior to any maintenance booking. This assessment will be completed at least two weeks in advance to allow time for alternative actions if needed.

### Infection Control:

- A door has been ordered and will be installed to enclose the storage area and prevent contamination. Additionally, all toys stored in the area were deep cleaned to ensure they meet hygiene and safety standards. To prevent future contamination, the storage area will remain enclosed at all times, and a monthly cleaning schedule has been implemented for all stored toys and equipment.
- The torn child-sized sofa was removed and replaced, age-appropriate and safe alternative to meet safety and comfort standards. Other couch has been sent for repairs. All furniture used by children will now be inspected quarterly to ensure it remains in good condition and compliant with safety guidelines. Any damaged or unsuitable items will be flagged for immediate replacement.

### Safe Sleep:

- The relevant policy was updated to clearly state that staff must remain in the room during children's sleep times to actively monitor their safety and well-being. All staff have been informed of the updated policy and briefed on the importance of continuous supervision during sleep periods. A staff checklist has been introduced to confirm presence during each sleep session, and compliance will be monitored during routine audits.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

Updated Garda vetting certificate for one staff member.  
Photographic evidence of the removal of slide with the area cordoned off.

#### Infection Control:

Photographic evidence that the corner storage area is now empty.  
Photographic evidence of new sofa in place.

#### Safe Sleep:

A copy of the updated sleep policy to include "A member of staff will supervise sleep for the duration."

### Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 23.

## 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) Following review of staff files and the staff roster, it was evident that the registered provider ensured that there was a member of staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR) on the premises at all times, this was evidenced by four in date FAR certificates on file.

(2)(a) & (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available on the premises and were stored in each care room in accessible and conspicuous locations and out of the reach of children. Additional supplies were available in the office.

## 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 fire fighting 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) A record of fire drills that take place was available, with the most recent dated fire drill recorded on 16 January 2025.

(b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers were dated 03 March 2025, and smoke alarms were dated 05 July 2024.

(4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed throughout the service, which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.

### Non-Compliance Information

(1) (a) The most recent dated fire drill was recorded on 16 January 2025, and not monthly as required to familiarise both adults and children of the correct procedures to follow in the event of a fire.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

A fire drill was immediately conducted upon identifying the lapse, and all staff and children participated to ensure familiarity with evacuation procedures. The fire drill log has been updated to reflect this, including detailed notes on the procedure and outcomes. A monthly fire drill schedule has now been created and integrated into the setting's compliance calendar to ensure regular practice. The designated Health & Safety Officer is responsible for coordinating and recording each drill. Reminders have also been set within the team's shared calendar to ensure drills are not overlooked.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of fire drills carried out and recorded on 28/03/2025, 16/04/2025 and 14/05/2025.

### Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has adequately addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 26 (1) (a).

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

*A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.*

### Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for up to 80 children attending the service on a Full-Day care basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28 March 2024 to 27 March 2025.