

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CN025
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Name of Service:	Happy Hours Community Playgroup Ltd
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Address of Service:	Ballinagh Community Centre, Ballinagh, Co. Cavan
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Eircode:	H12 V8X5
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sinead Rudden
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	08/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	33	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84.
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Mc Kenna
Title:	Early Years Inspector

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 Hours Community Playgroup is located within the community centre in Ballinagh village. The childcare service provides a sessional service to a maximum of 44 children aged 2 to 6 years. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service operates Monday to Friday 9am to 12.30pm, 38 weeks per year. There are three care rooms located on the ground floor level. A large outdoor area with a section of covered area was available. Adequate parking was available beside the building.

Staffing

There were eight adults present on the day of inspection working directly with the children, of which one adult was availing of a CE scheme. The registered provider is not centre based.

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 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 co-operation of the person in charge, designated 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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The service has a designated person in charge, and a named person in charge in the absence of the registered provider.

(b) A staff member was identified as the deputy person in charge, upon the inspectors unannounced arrival in the absence of the person in charge, who arrived shortly after the inspector's arrival. A review of the staff roster demonstrated that at all times when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.

(2) The staff files for 8 adults, of which one adult was availing of a CE scheme were reviewed on inspection.

(a) (b) Two written and validated references from past employers, and or reputable sources in the absence of past employments were on file for 8 adults.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 8 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all eight employed staff.

(d) A review of employment history for the 8 adults, demonstrated that two adults had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. The required police vetting for the two adults was available on file.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 7 of the 8 adults working with children, held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications. The one adult on a CE scheme is in training, and supernumerary.

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

(3) 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:

- Three adults cared for 9 children aged 2 years 11 months to 5 years 2 months in the “Yellow Bubble” room.
- Three adults cared for 12 children aged 2 years 11 months to 4 years 8 months in the “Orange Bubble” room.
- Two adults cared for 12 children aged 2 years 11 months to 4 years 8 months in the “Green Bubble” room.

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 following observations are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic needs:

- The children take in their own food and drinks for snack time which included a selection of fruit, meat, sandwiches, wraps, crackers, cheese and yogurts. The lunches were stored in the refrigerators until snack time. Children in all three care rooms had access to their drinking bottles throughout the pre-school session. The adults in the Green Bubble room were observed to encourage children to have a drink after physical play outdoors.
- Children were observed to wear aprons during a messy play activity in the Yellow Bubble room. They were also observed to be dressed appropriately while playing outside on the day of inspection. Children who wet or soiled their clothes, were promptly changed and soiled clothing sent home. Each child had their own coat hook, with individual cubby holes or shelving areas available to them, where they stored their own personal belongings such as creative art pieces or their preschool bags.
- Children were encouraged to be independent in their toileting routine. Adults provided assistance to any children who required additional supports at toileting time. Adults remained close by, if children needed assistance.
- Three main care rooms namely Yellow Bubble, Orange Bubble and Green Bubble were set up to include a variety of play areas. Staff advised the inspector that children in each group change rooms each day. The care rooms were set up with different areas of interest allowing children daily access to a large range of materials, equipment and play opportunities. The indoor environments included areas such as home play areas, sensory wall, soft rest areas with books, table top toys, painting, chalkboards, jigsaws, dressing up, small world toys, Montessori materials, building blocks and creative areas.

Children were observed to have freedom of choice in their pre-school environment, this was observed at numerous times throughout the session where children chose different toys and areas to play within. Areas for rest were provided throughout to include soft mats, beanbags, cushions, soft child sized sofa and a small armchair.

- The designated outdoor area had a variety of grassed, stoned, concrete, tarmac and soft mat ground surfacing. There was heavy rain on the day of inspection, so the children availed of outdoor play in the covered area. Areas of play included a tunnel, soft mats, a slide, sand tray, table with drawing materials and a train set which were observed in use on the day. A storage shed with large ride on and push along toys was located in the outdoor area. An outdoor play kitchen, sand pit, planting area, wall mirrors and gravel pit area were available in the uncovered outdoor area.

Supporting Relationships:

- The adults and children were observed to engage in positive conversations throughout the inspection. The adults were observed to comfort and reassure any child that may have become upset. Adults engaged in small group or one to one activity which provided children further opportunities for discussions of their own interests. Discussions observed included conversations about where people lived, holding hands while crossing the road, the colours of stop and go lights, and reminders to wear their seat belts in the car. The service was taking part in road safety week, with stories and activities based around the theme of road safety. The children in the Orange Bubble room were observed to take part in a role play activity pretending to be cars and bikes in their room, practicing stop and go actions with red and green coloured discs.
- The adults were observed to use positive words of encouragement when praising children. Children were observed to have 'helper' jobs on the day of inspection such as the waving hand and the turning on and off the light. Written and photographic routines were on display in each care room, allowing children to understand what comes next in their daily routine. Transitions were observed to flow smoothly. Music time with lights off occurred just before snack time, this period was observed to be a calming and relaxing time for the children, which then led into handwashing time for the children prior to having their snack.
- The children in attendance were familiar with the routine, and they appeared content and happy in their play environments. On the day of the inspection the children were actively engaged and were observed to play with a variety of tabletop toys such as jigsaws and connecting toys. Children also engaged in small world and role play activities, reading books, painting car wheels and making tracks.

Displays of creative artwork such as finger-painting autumn trees and children's own individual creative pieces were on display.

- The staff team were observed to work well together on the day of inspection. Communication with parents occurs at drop off and collection times, and via email for policies or service updates.

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:

- All cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- The main gate and external door to the service was secured upon the inspector's arrival and remained secured throughout the inspection. The outdoor space was enclosed with walls and gates.
- Storage areas and the kitchenette area remained inaccessible to children.
- Play materials and equipment were observed to be safe and suitable for the developmental age of the pre-school children present in the service.

Infection Control:

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

- Play equipment and toys used by the children were maintained in a clean and hygienic manner.
- Children's lunches were stored in the fridge.
- Children were assisted to wash their hands following toileting and before snack times.
- Warm running water, hand soap and paper towels were provided for handwashing.
- Self-care stations with tissues and pedal operated bins were available to children throughout the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A light in the sanitary area located off the care room did not have the required protective cover in place.

Administration of Medication:

2. Three care plans for children requiring specific medication to include details of the signs and symptoms, and the steps for staff to follow in an emergency were not available. It is acknowledged that pre-medication consent forms for antihistamine medication and an inhaler were completed for two children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

A new light fitting has been purchased, and an electrician has changed the light in the bathroom. Any light that is not correctly covered with a protective covering will be replaced with a new light fitting.

Administration of Medication:

Care plans have been completed with the help of the parent. Any new child who starts to attend the preschool who needs to have medication on the premises – the parent will be asked to fill in a care plan for their child and this will be kept in the preschool.

Supporting documentation submitted

Purchase invoice of new light fitting.

Care plan submitted.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has 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) There was a person trained in First Aid Response (FAR) on the premises at all times, which was evidenced by three in date FAR certificates on file and the relevant adults were present on the day of inspection.
- (2) (a) Designated areas were assigned for the storage of First Aid boxes in each care room.

Non-Compliance Information

- (b) The first aid box reviewed on the day of inspection contained inadequate materials for the number of children attending the service. The items that were available, which included antifebrile medication, were past the expiry date.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The manager and the first aid officer went through the first aid kit and removed anything that was out of date. A new first aid kit was purchased with contents for 26-50 people. The first aid kit will be checked yearly by the manager and the first aid officer before reopening in September. Anything that has expired will be removed and new equipment will be purchased.

Supporting documentation submitted

Purchase invoice of new first aid kit.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 25.

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

- (a) A record of fire drills that take place was available, with the most recent dated fire drill recorded on 01/10/2024.
- (b) The maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers and smoke alarms was dated within the recommended annual servicing frequency, due for renewal in December 2024.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed in the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.

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 44 pre-school children attending the service on a sessional basis. The policy showed that the service was insured until 27/03/2025.