

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DS152
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Name of Service:	Happy Friends Playgroup
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Address of Service:	35 Raheen Road, Tallaght, Dublin 24, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D24 Y6R6
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Prior
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	07/02/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	11	PM	n/a
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	The Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Dublin 8
Inspection undertaken by:	R. Brien
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 Friends Playgroup is a sessional service which provides care to children aged 2 to 6 years. The service is registered to operate a morning session from 09:00 to 12:00 and an afternoon session from 12:30 to 15:30, Monday to Friday. On the day of inspection, the service was only operating the morning session.

The service operates from a purpose built single preschool room located in the rear garden of the registered provider's own home. A portion of the garden has been designated for outdoor play.

Staffing

The service currently employs 3 staff including the registered provider. There were 3 staff working directly with the children on the day of inspection.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations:

- 9 (1)(a)(b),(2),(4)- Management and Recruitment,
11 (1),(3),(8)(c) – Staffing Levels,

19(1)(a)(b) – Health, Welfare and Development of Child,

23 Safeguarding, Health, Safety and Welfare of Child,

25 First Aid

26(1)(a) Fire Safety Measures

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.

Additional Information

An Immediate Action Notice was issued on 08 February 2024 under Regulation 23 as there were no up to date maintenance records available for the fire fighting equipment and the smoke alarm system.

The registered provider submitted a response on 09 February 2024 which was deemed to satisfactorily address this non-compliance.

Acknowledgments

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

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and

(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

(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)(b) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (2) The files of three adults were reviewed as part of the inspection including one adult who commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 20 May 2021. Documentation was reviewed in respect of these adults and met regulatory requirements as follows:
- (a)(b) Of the six validated, written references that were required, five were available from a past employer and one was available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for three adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4) Records were available evidencing that the three staff members who were employed to work directly with the children held the required qualification or equivalent.

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.

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

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.

(3) The minimum ratio of adults to children for sessional care services was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were eleven children attending being supervised by three adults on the day of inspection.

(8)(c) Not applicable, the service is not operated single-handedly.

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

(1)(a)(b)

The service had a healthy eating policy in place and staff reported that children bring in their lunch from home. Lunch took place at 10:40. Children were given a drink with their meal. Staff sat with children during their lunch. Children were observed engaging in conversation with staff and their peers during their meal and staff supported children who needed assistance with their lunch.

Children were given responsibility appropriate to their age and were encouraged and supported to be independent. The inspector observed children using the toilet as they needed, getting their own lunches, cleaning up after their lunch and play and putting on their own coats. Staff were observed cleaning children's noses as required. Staff provided an appropriate level of supervision whilst supporting the children's independence during play and lunch time.

The service had a key person system in place and staff demonstrated a good awareness of the needs of each child in their care and responded to children's cues promptly. Staff displayed warmth and sensitivity during all interactions with the children and were observed supporting children in their play. Staff were observed to use distraction, gentle tones and praise when promoting positive behaviour in line with the service's behaviour policy. Staff were observed acknowledging children's achievements and efforts positively.

Transitions within the service were managed with the use of a timer and children appeared to be familiar with the daily routine. The atmosphere in the service appeared calm and relaxed. Children's choices were respected with

children given the opportunity to choose their own play equipment and activities during free play and outdoor play.

Staff described how they communicate with parents daily about their child at arrival and collection time and through the use of an online application.

The care room was bright and was arranged into defined areas of interest providing children with the freedom to play and explore. Designated areas of interest included small world toys, a home corner and imaginary play area, sensory play and a library area. The care room provided a range of developmentally appropriate play experiences for the children and was adequately resourced with a variety of materials. Children's artwork was displayed throughout the care room.

The environment was laid out to support the children's independence. Low level hooks were provided for coats. Play materials were observed to be accessible to the children on low level shelving. Low level tables and chairs were available in the care room.

An enclosed outdoor play area was available outside the care room with shock absorbent surfacing. The outdoor area was well resourced with a range of developmentally appropriate play equipment.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

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

Compliance Information

The inspector found by observation of practice, review of documentation, discussion with staff and inspection of the premises that the registered provider had taken the following steps to safeguard children attending:

General Safety:

- The entrance door to the service was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised.
- The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection appeared in good working order.
- Medicines and cleaning agents were stored safely out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available to facilitate hand washing. Staff were observed to carry out hand washing as appropriate. The children were supported to wash their hands at regular intervals including after using the toilet and before meals.
- An infection control policy was in place to inform practice. The premises, equipment and materials appeared clean and maintained in good condition.
- Waste was managed appropriately with the use of pedal bins.

Non-Compliance Information

Fire Safety:

1. An Immediate Action Notice was issued on 08 February 2024 as there were no up to date maintenance records available for the fire fighting equipment and the smoke alarm system. Maintenance of the fire fighting equipment had last taken place on 15 September 2021. Maintenance of the smoke alarm system had last taken place on 18 October 2021.

The registered provider submitted a response on 09 February 2024 which was deemed to satisfactorily address this non-compliance.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Fire Safety:

New fire extinguishers fitted and certificate supplied. Fire alarm maintained and certificate supplied.

No preventive actions submitted.

Supporting documentation submitted

Fire Safety:

Written evidence was presented to demonstrate the corrective actions submitted by the registered provider.

Summary Comment

The corrective actions as stated by the registered provider have been deemed to address this non-compliance.

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) A person trained in first aid was immediately available to the children at all times on the day of inspection.

(2)

(a) A first aid box was safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous location within the service.

(b) A first aid box was available to the adults and children in the service at all times.

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

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) A written record was available detailing monthly fire drills that had taken place in the service. The last fire drill had been recorded as undertaken on the 08 January 2024.