

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DS216
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Name of Service:	Happy Feet Early Learning Centre
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Address of Service:	1 Blackthorn Hill Close, Rathcoole, Dublin 24, Co. Dublin
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Name of Registered Provider:	Kelly O 'Hickey
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	18/09/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	30	PM	28
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child and Family Agency, 7th Floor, Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8.
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Mulhern & M. Redmond
Title:	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
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Description of service

Happy Feet Early Learning Centre is one of three early years services operated by the registered provider. The service operates from a two-storey facility in a residential area of Rathcoole. An outdoor area is located to the rear of the building. Children are allocated to one of four rooms according to their age and stage of development. A separate sleep room is available to children attending the Yellow room. The service offers a full-day care, part-time and sessional service to children aged 0-6 years between 7:30am and 5:30pm.

Staffing

There are 14 staff employed to work in the service including the registered provider and the chef.

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 areas of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19(1)(b) - Health welfare and development of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection under this regulation included the 'Yellow' and 'Purple' rooms.

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 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 service had a person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) The person in charge was on the premises throughout the inspection. The staff roster provided for the person in charge or deputy to be present at all times of opening.

The inspection focused on the recruitment records for six adults who had commenced working in the service since the previous inspection. Regulation 9(2)(c) was inspected for all adults.

(2)

- (a) & (b) References with a record of verification were available for all six adults. References had been sourced from reputable sources for two adults who had only one previous employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all adults.

(d) International police vetting was required for two adults. This was available for one adult.

(4) Five adults had been recruited to work directly with the children. Records were available evidencing they held the required qualification.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d) International police vetting was not available for one staff member for whom it was required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

An application was made for the outstanding police vetting. However, the staff member has resigned since the inspection. Vetting will be obtained prior to employment when an employee has resided outside of Ireland for a period of longer than six months as an adult.

Supporting documentation submitted

E-mail from staff member stating police vetting has been applied for.

Summary Comment

(2)(d) International police vetting is no longer required as the registered provider has stated that the staff member has resigned. The effectiveness of the preventive actions will be assessed on the next inspection.

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) An adequate number of adults were working with the children. Eight adults had been allocated to work directly with 30 children. The person in charge and deputy were available to help and cover staff breaks as needed.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was always maintained.

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-

(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

Inspectors observed that suitable care practices were in place. Children moved freely, exploring the environment within their rooms and the outdoor area. Rooms were maintained at a comfortable temperature. The children were provided with food, snacks and drinks at regular intervals. Staff sat with the children when they were eating, engaging in conversation and allowing ample time for them to finish.

Staff supported the children to manage their personal care. Low level hooks were available for hanging coats and personal items. Bibs were provided to protect the children's clothes from becoming soiled or wet when eating.

Children were supported to clean their hands and faces at appropriate times. Children’s nappies were changed at scheduled times and in between when required. Staff used these opportunities for warm one-to-one interactions.

Babies attending the ‘Yellow’ room were placed to sleep in the adjoining sleep room according to their individual routine. Children in the ‘Purple’ room were provided with an opportunity to sleep after lunch. Staff told inspectors that children are provided with the opportunity to sleep outside of this time if they show signs of tiredness.

Children were made comfortable for sleep with staff removing their outer clothing and providing soothers to those who used them.

Staff demonstrated warmth and affection in their interactions with the children through use of soft and gentle tones throughout the inspection. Inspectors observed that children were promptly comforted by staff when they became upset. An app was used by staff to share information about each child’s day with their parent/guardian.

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 registered provider had taken measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the children as outlined in the examples below:

General Safety:

- Entrances/exits were secured to prevent unauthorised access or a child leaving unsupervised.
- Cleaning products were stored safely out of reach of children.
- Cables and blind cords were secured out of reach of children.
- Heavy furniture was secured to prevent tipping.

Infection Control:

- Children's hands were washed before eating and after outdoor play to prevent the spread of infection.
- The Pre-school rooms and sanitary facilities were observed to be in a clean condition.
- Sanitary facilities were equipped with liquid soap and paper towels for handwashing.
- Pedal operated, lidded bins were available for the safe disposal of waste.

Safe Sleep:

- Children were placed to sleep in appropriate facilities including standard cots according to their age and stage of development.
- Inspectors observed staff checking sleeping children at 10-minute intervals and maintaining a record of the checks.
- The temperature of the rooms was maintained between 16-20°C when children were sleeping to prevent overheating.
- Appropriate bedding was used to prevent overheating.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

Appropriate procedures for preventing the spread of infection when changing children's nappies were not followed. Inspectors observed staff re-dressing children and cleaning the changing mat wearing gloves that were used to remove soiled/wet nappies, posing a risk of cross contamination.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

All staff will change gloves after changing a nappy and before re-dressing children and cleaning the changing mat. The nappy changing procedure includes this step. All staff have been re-trained on the procedure and agreed to abide by the procedure for all nappy changes.

The onsite manager will observe nappy changes to ensure that the procedure is followed step by step to prevent any cross contamination and ensure infection control. The nappy changing procedure is posted at all nappy changing stations for staff undertaking this task.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Copy of staff certificates titled 'Nappy Changing Procedure' from an external company dated 6 November 2023.

Summary Comment

The actions have been deemed to appropriately address the non-compliance. This will be assessed in practice on the next inspection.