

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY102
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Happy Tots
-------------------------	------------

Address of Service:	Barnaderg N.S., Barnaderg, Tuam, Co. Galway
----------------------------	---

Eircode:	H54 EW71
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Caroline Lohan
-------------------------------------	----------------

Service type:	Part Time
----------------------	-----------

Date of Inspection:	03/04/2025
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	9
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	---

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Clinical and Administration Building, Block A (First Floor Green Corridor), Merlin Park University Hospital. Galway. H91 ER2D
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel
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
---------------------------------	----------------

Description of service

Happy Tots is a private, part-time, early years care and education service which accommodates children aged from two to six years of age. Operating hours are from 09:20 until 13:45, Monday to Friday for 48 weeks of the year. The Early Years Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated within these hours from 09:20 until 12:20 for 38 weeks of the year and a school age care service is available in the morning from 08:00 until 09:00 and in the afternoon from 14:00 until 18:00.

The service operates from a classroom, which has its own entrance, within Barnaderg National School which is located in the rural village of Barnaderg in north county Galway. There are two children's toilets available within the care room and the adult toilet and children's nappy changing rooms are located in the main school corridor, both within easy access from the care room. A kitchen area is cordoned off in the care room. The children have shared access to three secure outdoor play areas including a natural play area, grass area and a ball court.

Staffing

There are five staff employed in the service including the registered provider, who was unavailable. In addition, a transition year student is on placement one day per week.

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 regulations:

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

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

Regulation 15 – Record of a Pre-school Child

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service (1) (i)

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

Regulation 20 – Facilities for Rest and Play (1) (b)

Regulation 22 – Food and Drink

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 24 – Checking in and out and record of attendance (1)

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

Regulation 26 - Fire safety Measures (1) (a) (b) and (4)

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the designated person in charge, named person, 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 ensured that there was a designated person in charge and a named person available to deputise, as required.
 - (b) The staff roster indicated that either the designated person in charge or named person were on the premises while the early years children were present.

- (2) Recruitment files of all five staff members and the student were reviewed:
- (a) Nine of the twelve required validated references were from past employers.
 - (b) Three of the required twelve validated references were from sources other than past employers.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the five adults for whom they were required. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. The student under 18 years of age did not require Garda vetting.
 - (d) Staff files indicated that no international police vetting disclosures were required as none of the staff had lived outside of Ireland as an adult for more than six consecutive months.
- (4) Staff files viewed on the day indicated that the five staff members in the service had obtained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education, 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) The registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in attendance.
- (2) The minimum adult child ratios were met. There were 17 children in attendance with 3 staff members in the

morning and 9 children in attendance with 3 staff members in the afternoon.

- (8)
- (a) The registered provider ensured that there were two adults on the premises while the early years children were present. The staff roster confirmed that the designated person in charge and the named person were on the premises when the early years children were in the service.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1) A sample of eleven children's pre-school records were reviewed, all eleven were noted to include the information listed from (a) to (i) above.
- (3)
- (c) The children's pre-school records, furnished to the inspector, were available on the premises.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;
- (c) details of the adult: child ratios in the service;
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;
- (e) the facilities available;
- (f) the opening hours and fees;
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;
- (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.

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the registered provider and the named person were available from the staff recruitment files.
 - (b) Details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide was available on information on the notice board.
 - (c)-(f) Adult/child ratios, type of care programme and facilities and opening hours and fees were available on

information on the notice board of the service.

- (g) The policies, procedures and statements required under Regulation 10 were available in the service's policies and procedures folder available in the service.
 - (h) Details of attendance by each of the 17 early years children on the day of inspection was recorded in the attendance records of the service. These records indicated that children attending the service from the 31 March 2025 to 2 April 2025 had been signed in between 09:15 and 09:30 and were signed out by 13:45 by a staff member.
 - (i) The staff roster was available on a wall of the service and detailed staff who were present, absent and also, the times of their lunch breaks.
 - (j) Administration of medication forms were available for three children which had been signed by staff, parents/guardians and a witness as required.
 - (k) A sample of thirteen accident/incident reports were viewed which indicated that all of the required information was available on each of the thirteen reports.
- (3) The records referred to in paragraph (1) were open to review, on the premises, by the inspector.

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

Basic Needs:

- Children in the room were observed accessing the toilets by themselves and staff were nearby to remind children to wash their hands. Staff were observed bringing children inside to access the toilets when they were playing in the outdoor area, ensuring their needs were being met.
- Nappy changing was carried out regularly and was noted to be handled in a positive and sensitive manner. Staff were observed speaking to children during this time and using it as an opportunity for warm one to one interactions.
- Children involved in messy activities were observed putting on aprons to protect their clothing.

- Independence was encouraged and children were observed putting on their jackets and boots for outdoor play by themselves, staff were nearby to assist if required.

Supporting children's relationships:

- Children's behaviour was consistently managed in a positive manner by staff, with an emphasis on positive reinforcement and encouragement. An example was a staff member discussing with two children the merits of turn taking and sharing when a child left down a toy momentarily and another child lifted the toy to play with it.
- A key-worker system was in place in the service with named staff members assigned the responsibility for creating relationships with a designated group of children and their parents. A staff member stated that they record individual observations of their key children which are documented on the service tablet and available for parents to view twice weekly. The children's views were expressed by emoji's and the observations were linked to Aistear, the curriculum framework and Siolta, the quality framework.
- Scrapbooks belonging to each child, which had been put together by staff, were available in the library for the children to view. These documented the children's individual interests and emergent curriculum throughout their time in the service. Examples included photographs, artwork and themed activity materials. Children were observed reading these throughout the inspection and were excited to share their scrap book experiences with their friends.
- Communication with parents/guardians was stated as being mainly verbal at drop off and pick up, as observed on the day, by phone and also on a digital platform available on the service tablet.
- During meals and table top activities staff sitting with children were observed listening and engaging in social conversation which helped to promote a relaxed atmosphere. Staff were heard using a range of strategies including modelling and demonstrating, explaining, open questioning and engaging the children in shared thinking and problem solving.

Physical and material environments:

- The care room was laid out in clearly defined areas. A range of play based materials and Montessori equipment was available that offered exploration and stimulated the imagination, which enhanced the learning needs of children across all developmental areas.
- Equipment and toys were laid out in baskets on low-level shelving which encouraged choice and promoted independence, which the children were observed exercising throughout the morning.
- A range of books were available in the library which supported children's language and development.

- The various outdoor areas offered alternative changes of environments for the children. On the morning of the inspection the inspector observed the children in the outdoor play area digging and clearing a flower bed. A range of developmentally appropriate equipment was provided in the fully enclosed outdoor play area which provided opportunities for the children to practice their gross motor skills of climbing on the climbing frame and trees, balancing on the obstacle course and crawling through the tunnel. Staff stated that the children had shared use of a ball court and a grass area.

Programme of activities:

- Activities were child led, and children had the opportunity to express their views, take the lead and exercise choice in relation to activities and in accessing play equipment throughout the inspection. Examples included children being offered the choice of playing indoors or outdoors, choosing resources and a painting activity organised for one child who requested it.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

Compliance Information

(1) (b)

- There were two sleep mats and individual bed linen available for children who wished to rest and or sleep.
- A rest area with a large mat, 12 individual vinyl circular seats and a bean bag chair was available along with a library with age and stage appropriate books for children to read while resting or sitting away from noisy activities.
- The lights in the room could be turned off to provide ambient lighting.

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

The service promoted healthy eating;

- The food on offer to the pre-school children was provided by both the parents/guardians and the service.
- Mid-morning snack was served at 10:45 and lunch available from 13:00. Children were observed eating yogurts, mixed sandwiches, crackers with peanut butter, bite sized pieces of fruit and scones with butter.
- Alternative food was available should a child request food if hungry or not like the food on offer.
- Water was available throughout the day.
- A six-week menu plan was available on the notice board for parents/guardians to view.

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 service entrance, located at the left side of the national school, was secured on arrival. A bell was available to inform staff of adults arriving and the glass window panes in the door facilitated staff to see who was at the door before opening. This ensured that no unauthorised adults could gain entry without the staff member opening the door.
- The handles of the two large windows in the care room were fitted above adult height making them inaccessible to the children, preventing any accidents from occurring.
- Two blind cords were secured on hooks, out of reach of the children.
- Handrails were fitted above the ramp at the entrance of the service to facilitate all children to be able to access and exit the service safely.
- Toys and equipment appeared well maintained and in good condition in both the indoor care room and outdoor play areas.

- Flexes and cables from the computer and fridge were secured and stored out of reach of the children in the care room.
- The kitchen units, under the sink, were fitted with safety catches to prevent access by the children.
- Cleaning agents in the care room and in the nappy changing area were observed to be stored on high shelving, out of reach of the children.
- The perimeter of the three outdoor play areas were secured with metal and wooden fencing and metal and wooden gates preventing children from leaving the areas unsupervised.

Infection Control:

- All sinks in use by the adults and children in the service were supplied with thermostatically controlled hot water, 34.8°C, dispensing soap and paper towels for hand drying.
- Handwashing was observed before and after toileting, eating of food, messy activities and when coming in from playing in the outdoor play area.
- Staff were observed sanitising the tables before and after food, ensuring the surfaces were hygienic.
- Staff in the nappy changing area were observed following the nappy procedure of the service with staff disposing of gloves and aprons after each nappy change.
- Children's personal belongings were stored on hooks and cubby areas away from the floor areas.
- The cleaning checklist in the care room was found to be up to date.

Administration of Medication:

- Temperature reducing medications were available, noted to be stored in their original containers and were in date.

Safe Sleep:

- The temperature of the care room, where a child would rest or sleep, if required, was recorded as 18°C. This is within the recommended sleep room temperature of between 18°C and 22°C for children over 12 months.
- Documentary evidence, furnished to the inspector, indicated that sleep templates were available for children who availed of sleep. The records, furnished to the inspector, indicated that the last record was dated the 11 October 2024. It included details of the child's colour, position, breathing and the temperature of the sleep room. These checks were noted to be carried out every 10 minutes, as required. Staff stated that no child had slept in the service since the last record was completed.

Fire Safety:

- All emergency fire doors were unobstructed, aiding the quick evacuation of children and adults in the event of an emergency.
- The fire evacuation point was visible on the fencing of the ball court near the entrance of the service.
- Fire extinguishers were observed to be anchored, with brackets, to the walls of the school.

Outing:

- The service had insurance for outings. Staff stated they bring the children to the nearby pitch for St. Patrick's day and to the community centre for the coffee morning organised by the service for mother's day.

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 First Aid Responder (FAR) certificate was available to evidence that one adult had FAR training completed. In addition, a confirmation email from a training provider of dates booked before the end of April 2025 for a second staff member taking part in first aid responder training was furnished to the inspector.

(2) (a)(b) The suitably equipped first aid boxes, stored within easy access of the adults, were available 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
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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) The inspector observed that written records were available of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service. The record of the most recent fire drill was dated 1 April 2025, with previous dates noted as 3 March 2025 and 25 February 2025.
 - (b) Written records were available detailing the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment in the service along with the smoke alarms. The firefighting equipment and smoke alarm records were both dated 11 March 2025.
- (2)
- (c) Both the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm records were open to review on the premises on the day of inspection.
- (4) The notice of the fire drill procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were located on a wall beside the fire exit door.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A written policy was available to evidence that the service was insured for 24 pre-school children on a part-time basis. Details included public liability and fire and theft, with the expiry date recorded as 27 March 2026.