

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KK034
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Name of Service:	Happy Days Montessori
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Address of Service:	Fiddown, Piltown, Co. Kilkenny
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Eircode:	E32 TN24
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Name of Registered Provider:	Debbie Stokes
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	17/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Ely Hospital, Child and Family Agency, Ferrybank, Wexford
Inspection undertaken by:	E Mc Garry
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 Days Montessori is in Fiddown a rural village in South Kilkenny. The service is registered to provide a sessional service to 22 early years children from 2 to 6 years of age. The service provides an Early Years Care and Education scheme (ECCE) from 9.30am to 12.30pm Monday to Friday for 38 weeks per year. The service operates from the ground floor of a two-storey building on the main street in the village. The service consists of one large preschool room. There are toilets, an office area, a small kitchenette and an enclosed outdoor play area to the rear of the service.

Staffing

There are three staff employed in the service including the registered provider who also works directly with the children. All staff held the minimum of level 5 and above in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

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 inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

Compliance was assessed under the following regulations:

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Regulation 9 Management and recruitment,
Regulation 10 Policies and procedures,
Regulation 11 Staffing levels,
Regulation 17 Information for parents,
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.
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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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)(b)

The registered provider was the designated person in charge on the day of the inspection and remained in the service for the duration of the inspection. There was also a person available to deputise if required.

(2)(a)(b)

Following a discussion with the registered provider and on review of documentation, it was established that there were three staff employed in the service.

All required written and validated references were available on file for all staff working in the service.

(c)

There was Garda vetting available on file in the service for all staff. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate regulatory notice to renew Garda vetting every 3 years for all staff.

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(d)

Police vetting was not required as no staff member had lived in a state other than Ireland for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

There were qualifications on file for all staff working directly with preschool children. These staff held an award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Qualifications Framework.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

There were written policies, procedures and statements, as specified in Schedule 5 available for the service. The policies reviewed for this inspection were the policy on healthy eating and behaviour management in the service. These policies and procedures were complete and specific to the service.

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)

There was at all times an adequate number of staff working directly with the children attending the preschool service during the inspection.

(3)

At 10.40am

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There were 18 children aged from 2 to 6 years in the care of 3 staff.

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.*

Compliance Information

A sample of 10 enrolment forms were reviewed by the inspector. The forms reviewed were found to have all requirements from (a) to (i). These forms were completed by parents when their children were enrolled in the service.

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Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

The parents of children were given an information booklet when their children were enrolled in the service. The inspector reviewed the information contained in the booklet. The service provided parents with information as required under regulation 17. The information provided for parents contained an outline of the curriculum, the hours of operation, contact details and the facilities available within the service. There was also information included on funding schemes available for parents to apply for.

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 registered provider had ensured there was adequate and suitable furniture, play work materials and equipment in the service for the learning and enjoyment of the children attending.

The service consisted of one large preschool room. The room was set up with care and attention for the children. There was an extensive dress up area. There were approximately 40 outfits for the children to enjoy during free play. There were a set of storage boxes which had handbags, jewellery, hats, wigs and shoes for the children to play with. All these accessories were stored in labelled boxes which were easily accessible to the children.

Of note in the room was an extensive home corner which had designated rooms. There was a kitchen and a bedroom for children to play in. The kitchen area had a table and chairs in the middle of the area similar to a real kitchen. Children were observed sitting at the table and role playing a home situation.

There was a construction area which had miniature tools, a doll's house and a range of Montessori equipment such as dressing frames, blocks and spindles and polishing bowls.

The registered provider had also purchased several outdoor waterproof suits and wellies to facilitate outdoor play during wet weather. These suits were stored on a rail beside the exit to the outdoor area and were easily accessible to the children.

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There was a supply of paints, crayons and paper for children to use. There was original artwork displayed of hand prints the children had done.

There was an extensive collection of story books and picture books for children to look at while relaxing on the couche in the service.

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

There was a healthy eating policy in place. Parents provided all the snacks for the children. Children were observed enjoying their morning snack. They were given a variety of healthy snacks such as sandwiches, fruit, yogurt and diced vegetables. The service provided all the drinks for the children which was water from drink bottles provided by parents and filled by the staff in the service.

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 entrance door was secured to prevent children from leaving unsupervised and to prevent unauthorised people gaining access to the service. The front door was secured. There was a small wooden fence inside the front door. This was used to ensure the safe collection of children by their parents. The entrance to the service was directly on a footpath in the village. Access was gained to the service by ringing the bell. The large outdoor area to the rear of the service was safe, suitable and secure. The service was observed to be in good repair with no obvious maintenance required.

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Infection control:

The service appeared to be clean and well maintained. There was thermostatically controlled warm water available in all wash hand basins in the service. There was liquid soap, disposable paper towels and foot pedal bins available throughout the service. The children were supported in washing their hands, after using the toilet and after messy play.

Outings:

The service facilitated outings. There was a policy in place to demonstrate the procedures adopted to facilitate safe outings for the children. For example, the location for the outing should be familiar to staff and a risk assessment should be carried out prior to the visit with the children.

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 responder course immediately available to the children. There was evidence that one other staff member had trained in a first aid responder course and was waiting for certification that they had completed the course.

(2)(a)(b)

There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position available to the children attending the service.

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)

There was a record of fire drills which had taken place in the service. The last fire drill was carried out in February 2026.

(1)(b)

There was a record available to demonstrate the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment in the service. This maintenance was last carried out in June 2025.

(4)

There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire displayed in a conspicuous position in the hallway of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

There was no evidence that the wired smoke alarm had been serviced in the last calendar year. All wired smoke alarms in preschool services are required to be serviced annually.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The wired smoke alarm was serviced shortly after the inspection on the 10 March 2026. The registered provider has engaged a company to service the alarm as required throughout the year.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the document confirming the smoke alarm was serviced on 10 March 2026 was received by the inspector.

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Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was adequate insurance in place to cover the number of children the service was registered to accommodate.