

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KY053
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Name of Service:	Happy Hearts Childcare
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Address of Service:	The Green, Barraduff, Killarney, Co. Kerry
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Eircode:	V93 FNK3
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Cahill
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date(s) of Inspection:	27/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	65	PM	47
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Department, Child & Family Agency, Hospital Grounds, Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, Co Cork P81 PD78
Inspection undertaken by:	Ms. O'Reilly
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	N/A
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Description of service

Happy Hearts Childcare is a registered privately owned early years service that provides education and care to children from 1 to 6 years offering a choice of sessional, part time or full day care service and for the children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The current opening hours are from 8am to 6pm each day Monday to Friday. The service operates from a detached two storey purpose-built childcare facility located in the rural village of Barraduff, Killarney, Co Kerry. There are four playrooms, two administration offices and kitchen/staff room and utility room. There are adequate adult and children's toilets and nappy changing facilities. There is a designated, partially covered outdoor play areas to the rear and side of the building. There is adequate set down to the front of the building for the safe arrival and departure of parents and children.

Staffing

At time of inspection, there were 11 of the 13 adults employed at the early years setting involved in the direct care of the children who attend. Each of the 11 adults who work with the children hold a relevant award in Early Childhood Care and Education. The registered provider/person in charge was office based and available to assist with the inspection process on day of inspection. In addition, a new person in administration had been employed since the last 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/ safety/ premises and facilities. 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.

Additional Information

Since the last inspection dated the 26 September 2024, the service reported that the staff and management had completed a mentor-based support program with Better Start, Quality Development Service. In addition, the service had received support and further retraining from Kerry County Childcare on the services child safeguarding policies and procedures including staff code of behaviour while working with children in the service.

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
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;
- (b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and
- (c) these Regulations.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) There was a named person in charge and two named deputies available to deputise as required.
 - (b) The person in charge and the two deputies were present on the premises on day of the inspection.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in place and the staff have a clear understanding of the lines of authority and accountability in the service.
- (2) Documentation was assessed in relation to the requirements of Regulation 9 for two newly appointed staff who had commenced employment in the service since the last inspection dated the 26 September 2024. The following records were available for the 2 adults:

(a) Of the required 4 references, two references were from previous employers with the required records of validation on file.

(b) The remaining two references were from another source other than a previous employer with records of the required validation on file.

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available on file in respect of the two adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. There were four renewed Garda vetting from existing staff.

(4)
There was evidence that the new staff member that worked directly with the children had attained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework for Qualifications.

(7)
(a) With the support of Kerry County Childcare, management and staff have completed further training and reviewing the implementation of core policies and procedures of the service since the last inspection dated the 26 September 2024.

Induction training for all new staff included a mixture of reading policies with a sign off on having read and understood the policies and working in the rooms during the induction period. A copy of the sign off record on all the policies read by the new staff member on induction who works directly with the children was on file at time of inspection.

The registered provider/person in charge had commenced recorded supervision meeting with each staff member. Team meeting had taken place on a monthly basis with recorded minutes of meetings on file on day of inspection. Annual training on core policies and procedures is planned on a yearly basis. The next review of the services core policies and procedures is planned to take place in August 2025.

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

The following amended policies were examined and deemed to meet the requirements:

- Behaviour Management Policy
- Accident and Incident Policy

It was noted the service had a child safeguarding statement and a staff code of behaviour in place.

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) During the period of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the early years children in attendance.

(2) Taking into consideration the age range of the children present in the service and the duration of their stay, the adult to child ratios were maintained in line with the required ratios, as follows:

On the day of the inspection there were 11 adults working across the 4 care rooms. There were 65 children present in the morning, and 47 children present in the afternoon. Also present in the service was the registered provider/person in charge and one person in administration. The school aged care children that arrived in the afternoon to the service were not included in the total number of children present in the afternoon

During the period of inspection, the ratio of staff to children was maintained as per the regulations and an adequate number of adults were working directly with the early years children on day of inspection.

There were 4 care rooms in operation and the following child adult ratios were identified

Ground Floor

Toddler Town

There were 21 children, 6 children were aged between 1 and 2 years and 15 children were aged between from 2 and 3 years present with 4 adults in attendance in the morning. There were 19 children aged from 1 to 3 years present with 4 adults in attendance in the afternoon.

Honey Tree

There were 16 children aged from 3 to 5 years with 3 adults in attendance in the morning and there were 12 children present with 2 adults in attendance in the afternoon.

First Floor

Wonderland

There were 11 children aged between 3 and 6 years attending this room, 5 children attending on a sessional basis and the 6 children attending full day care were accommodated in the Happy Trails room in the afternoon. There were 2 adults in attendance in the morning. This room caters for school aged children only in the afternoon.

Happy Trails

There were 18 children present aged from 3 to 6 years with 2 adults in attendance in the morning. There were 16 children present aged from 3 to 6 years with 2 adults in attendance in the afternoon.

(8)(a)

It was observed on day of inspection and on review of the weekly staff roster there were two adults present at all times while the service was in operation.

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

(1)(a) to (i)

A sample of 12 of the children's registration forms. were reviewed and all were found to contain all of the elements of information as required by Regulation 15(1) (a) to (i) inclusive.

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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

On the day of inspection, a sample of each of the following records were reviewed

- (1)
- (h) Electronic records of the children’s attendance in each room including, the time they arrived and departed from the service each day were individually recorded under the child’s name, in the service electronic application device.
- (i) Electronic records of the weekly staff roster were maintained in the service that recorded each staff members arrival and departure daily to the service. The staff roster indicated the staff rostered in each room and the time they went on lunch break each day.
- (k) Electronic records of all accidents/incidents were individually recorded under the child’s name and sent to the parent/guardian to read and sign, with details on how they are dealt with or treated. There is an emphasis in the service on the importance of communicating clearly with parents about incidents as they occur, to ensure this the staff also contact the parents /guardians by telephone along with the electronic record sent to parents

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

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

Basic needs:

- Care routines, such as nappy changing, handwashing and sleep time were managed sensitively, with adults noted to speak kindly and calmly to the children and soothe the younger children to sleep.
- Only low tones were observed during communication and positive reinforcement was observed during one-to-one communication indoors and during supervision of outdoor play.
- The children were afforded ample time to eat and drink at a relaxed pace. Support and assistance offered by the adults during mealtimes was appropriate to the age and stage of development of the children in their care for example, toddlers had the opportunity to feed themselves.
- It was observed that the highchairs in the Toddler Town room were not used at any time other than mealtime on day of inspection.
- The children who attended the older ECCE rooms were observed to freely access and use the adjoining sanitary facilities, as needed.
- There was adequate space in the care rooms to accommodate a variety of play activities.
- A mixture of adult led play and child directed play was facilitated in each room and during outdoor play.
- The children were observed playing outdoors in group and singular play closely supervised by staff.
- Nappy changing was incorporated into the daily routine at frequent intervals and as the need arose. This care practice was observed to be managed by adults in a caring and sensitive manner, as they chatted warmly to the children throughout.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:

- The staff members were observed to be kind, patient and caring to each child as observed during caring duties, facilitating play and one-to-one engagement.

- Since the last inspection, Better Start, Quality Development Service, have completed a quality support program with management and staff in relation to the care and support of children while attending the service.
- The service reported that staff operated in partnership with parents. Staff recorded the details of the child's day while in the service for example meals/snacks, activities, observations and sleep were recorded individually under the child's name in the service's electronic application device.
- The adults were observed to demonstrate patience and kindness in their interactions with the children, as was noted when the children's efforts were readily acknowledged and when children were calmly assisted to resolve minor conflicts.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The 4 playrooms in operation were child friendly, bright, and spacious and laid out with special interest areas with materials largely accessible to the children.
- The Toddler Town room had adequate space and soft areas for children to crawl and walk. The rooms were laid out for the younger child allowing them to explore their environment in a safe way and avail of the age-appropriate equipment such as, pull along toys, handheld toys, sound making materials and construction. Other play equipment available to the children included shape sorters, activity centres, push toys, books and wall mirrors.
- The playrooms for the older preschool children had interest areas that included a wide range of tabletop activities and games to encourage sociable interaction. There were cars and trucks, a fine motor skills area, a home corner suitably furnished with dolls, buggies, dress up and small utensils to prompt imagination and pretend play. There were reading areas and a variety of art and craft materials.
- There were an adequate number of highchairs and child sized tables and chairs available in each room for the number of children in attendance.
- The shelving was set low to display play materials which were mostly plastic and wooden in nature and easily washable. The low shelving facilitated easy access to the materials by the children.
- There is a large, partially covered, well resourced, outdoor play area provided beside the premise. The outdoor play area has an all-weather and tarmac surface. In addition, there was two large outdoor spaces that had roof and side covered, so that the children could avail of outdoor play in all weathers. The Toddler Town room had their own designated partially covered, well equipped outdoor play space within the outdoor play area. Even though it was raining all day, the children in the four playrooms were observed suitably dressed while playing outdoors on day of inspection. Play equipment in the outdoor

area included a slide, balance beams, see-saws, wall mounted blackboard with chalk and play balls and tyres. There were ride on toys such as trucks and bikes to allow mastery of gross motor skill play.

- (3) On day of inspection there were no practices observed that were disrespectful, degrading, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful, carried out in respect of a child attending 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

- On day of inspection the food and drink provided by the parents for the mid-morning snack and the individual hot lunch time meal were observed to be healthy and nutritious with age-appropriate size quantities served to the children.
- There were highchairs available for the younger children. On day of inspection, there were four children that had their lunch meal using a highchair and were observed to be assisted with feeding in an unhurried manner. The remaining children in the Toddler Town room were seated at low tables and were sitting in individual low size age-appropriate chairs at the table. The
- The children’s drinking water bottles were accessible to the children within all the care rooms outside of allocated mealtimes.
- The children were provided with appropriate cutlery and crockery at snack and mealtimes.
- Fridges were available for the storage of perishable items in all playrooms.

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:

- On the inspector's arrival at the service, the main entrance door was found to have been secured and was maintained secure when not in use. A magnetic key code pad was present at the main entrance door. This restricted unauthorised access or from a child leaving the premises unsupervised.
- Internal doors were also operated with magnetic key code pads for staff. The children could not access staff rooms, storage areas, the sluice room or the kitchen.
- There were no cleaning agents observed accessible to the children.
- The first aid boxes were appropriately stored and inaccessible to children.
- There were no cables or trailing flexes within the children's reach in the playrooms.
- The outdoor play area was adequately secured with a block wall, locked gates and the building.
- Water temperatures at the wash hand basins were thermostatically controlled, so as not to exceed 43°C.
- The staff members bags and belonging were stored out of reach of the children.
- The windows at adult height were opened in the playrooms and children's toilets.
- The stairwell was suitably lit with handrails situated at child height so as to prevent a child from stumbling.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid soap and disposable paper towels were in place at the wash hand basins in the adults and children's toilets and nappy changing facilities on day of inspection.
- Observed handwashing by the children was observed before mid-morning snack, lunch and after toileting.
- Pedal operated bins were in place for the disposal of paper towels throughout the service.
- In general, the playrooms, toilets and nappy changing facilities in the service were visibly clean on day of inspection. There were weekly cleaning schedules on display.
- Good cleaning practices were seen for example the tables were sanitised after each activity and prior to the mealtime.
- Non-contact bins were available for the storage of used nappies.
- The adults and children had access to sufficient toilets and wash hand basins on day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- Ten-minute sleep checks were recorded by the adults monitoring the sleeping children, individually under the child's name in the service's electronic application device.
- The children aged between 1- and 3-years rest needs were facilitated in the designated sleep rooms beside the Toddler Town room. There were 15 standard cots with safety mattresses for children under two that required a sleep with individual accompanying bed linen. The cots were well spaced, clean and in a good state of repair.
- Each of the well-fitting safety mattresses was covered with a waterproof mattress cover.
- The children over two rest needs were met during a planned sleeping period after lunch.
- There were a sufficient number of suitable sleep equipment available with designated suitable bed linen for each child over 2 years who wanted a sleep while attending the service.
- The air temperature reading of the designated sleep room was reading between 18°C and 19°C on day of inspection which is an accepted air temperature range for a sleep room catering for children aged between 1 and 3 years

Fire Safety:

- Emergency fire exit doors were noted to be maintained free from any obstruction on day of inspection.

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) The registered provider did ensure that there were staff available at all times with appropriate first aid responder (FAR) training. A sample of four FAR certification on file indicated that at least four staff members present on day of inspection held current up to date training.

(2)

(a) The first aid boxes were safely stored out of children's reach in the service. The first aid boxes were stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises.

(b) The fully equipped first aid boxes were available at all times to adults if in the event that a child may require treatment.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

- The registered provider ensured the service was insured, with insurance for 96 children, records detailed the category of service covered, full day care, the name and address of the premises and details regarding public liability cover, fire, theft, buildings, and outings cover.