

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH032
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Name of Service:	Happy Days Playschool
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Address of Service:	Old School, Dromiskin, Dundalk, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A91 P70H
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Name of Registered Provider:	Lena Langan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	07/02/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	41	PM	8
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre Castleblayney Co. Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Flood
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 Playschool is a privately owned service that commenced operation in 1985. The service provides sessional care and education to pre-school children aged from 2 to 6 years of age and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service caters for a maximum of 44 children and operates the morning sessional service from 8.45am to 11.45 am and the afternoon session operates from 12.15pm – 3.15pm. The service operates from an old school building located on the grounds of the local primary school in Dromiskin. There are four care rooms in operation namely Rooms 1, 2,3 and 4 with access to adjoining sanitary facilities. There are two secured main entrances that lead out onto a secure outdoor space.

Staffing

The registered provider and nine staff are employed to work in the service.

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.

Acknowledgments

The inspector would like 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.

(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 deputy person to deputise as required. The deputy person was on the premises when the inspector arrived and was present throughout the inspection. The registered provider arrived on the premises at approximately 11.15am and was present for the remainder of the inspection.

(c) When questioned staff were familiar with the management structure within the service and the roles and responsibilities of the various staff members.

(2) Ten staff files were reviewed including files for the registered provider, eight childcare staff and 1 additional adult who carries out administrative and maintenance duties.

The following vetting documents were available:

(a) & (b) There were 2 written references available for the registered provider and 9 staff members. References were validated as required.

(c) A processed Garda Vetting Disclosure was available for all 10 members of staff. However, the registered provider did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Following a review of the staff files presented, international police vetting was not required at this time.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that nine members of staff, including the registered provider who work directly with the preschool children held at least the minimum required level 5 childcare qualification on the National Framework of Childcare Qualifications or a qualification deemed 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.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at 10.45am and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In Room 1 there were 10 preschool children aged 3-4 years being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In Room 2 there were 11 preschool children aged 3-4 years being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In Room 3 there were 11 preschool children aged 3-4 years being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In Room 4 there were 9 preschool children aged 3-4 years being cared for by 1 staff member.

The registered provider arrived on the premises at 11.15am and was present for the remainder of the inspection.

- In the afternoon session which commenced at 12.15pm, there were 3 staff including the registered provider present with 8 preschool children.

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

There were 4 rooms in operation on the day of the inspection: namely Rooms 1,2,3 & 4

A sampling process was therefore used and as such Rooms 3 & 4 are the subject of Regulation 19.

(1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that children's learning, development, and well-being was facilitated in the service:

Basic Care Needs

- The children's care needs were attended to on a regular basis for example, hands were washed before snack times and after toileting, noses were wiped frequently.
- Independence with toileting was promoted for the children who were toilet trained, and discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required. Additional support was also provided e.g. *"that's it your hands are nice and dry...good girl...we might give them another dry, cause they will get cold outside..."*.
- The service was observed to adopt a healthy eating policy. The snacks and lunches were provided by the parents and were stored appropriately in the fridges located in each care room. The children also brought their own drinks bottles/ cups from home which were accessible as required.
- Throughout the care rooms, children were observed to be provided with sensitive care and nurturing interactions by all staff.
- The children had free movement in the care rooms. Some of the children were observed to access the soft area to read a book, or to take a break from activities.
- All children had a change of environment to the outdoor areas located on the premises and were dressed appropriately for the cold weather outside.

Supporting Relationships

- A key worker system was in place in the service. The staff when questioned were familiar with their allocated key children and this promoted the development and sustainment of relationships between the children, their parents, and the staff in the service.
- Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children and staff in all the rooms. For example, “*you’re doing a lovely job with the rocket...would you like to show it to mum when she comes...?*”.
- The staff described a variety of methods of communications with parents and amongst the staff themselves. When questioned the staff explained that the majority of discussions with parents and carers takes place at ‘drop off and collection’. A small messaging service, newsletters and emails are also used to provide parents with information about the planned curriculum and monthly associated activities that are happening in the service. Parent-teacher meetings are also reported to happen to discuss each child and their experiences in the service. The staff have their own communication small messaging service and report at regular staff meetings to plan the curriculum and to discuss supports for the children attending the service.
- Scrap books were available for each child and are in development in the service. These provide a documentary and photographic story of each child’s development in preschool. The staff report that these books are sent home on a regular basis for parents and family to view.

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.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises,

Compliance Information

(1)(b) A suitable comfortable rest area was available in each of the care rooms, with soft seating, mats and cushions provided, should a child need to rest or take a break from activities during the day.

(3)(a) Outdoor area

The children were observed to access the enclosed outdoor play area that extends from the front to the rear of the building and was divided into 4 separate areas. Areas 1 and 2 and the sensory area were observed in use during the inspection. The registered provider stated that areas 3 & 4 were not used during the winter months as they are deemed too 'slippy'.

Area 1 was located to the front of the service. It has a wood chip surface and was partially covered by a number of well-developed trees in the area. The children have access to a variety of interest areas and equipment that support many areas of development, including; a large, covered sandpit with supporting play equipment, a wooden teepee, a mud kitchen, age appropriate slides, a tunnel for climbing through, tree stumps, a picnic table, and a variety of toy boxes and play mats that the children were observed to use for play. A shed was also provided in this area for the storage of toys and equipment.

Area 2 was located in front of Area 1 and has a variety of surfaces including tarmac and grass. The children were observed to access a variety of ride-on equipment including, bikes, trikes, cars and scooters. Picnic tables were also available.

Area 3 was located off Room 3 and has a tarmac surface. This was not in use for outdoor play during the inspection.

Area 4 was located in front of Area 3 and had a tarmac surface. This area was not used for playing however, the wooden shed which is located here has been transformed into a sensory room and was accessed by the children. A variety of sensory toys and equipment were available including, soft mats, cushions, mirrors, bubble lamps, sensory mats, a variety of sensory balls and black out blinds.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- Garda vetting was available for all 10 staff members including the registered provider. However, 3 of these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Actions

The registered provider applied for the garda vetting's that were out of date. There is now a reminder alert on the calendar so there will be a notification when the garda vetting forms need to be renewed

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence of updated Garda vetting documents.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances together with documentary evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that adequate insurance cover was in place for a maximum of 44 preschool children. The certificate available detailed an expiry date of 27/03/2025.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and

Non-Compliance Information

- (d) Some areas of the service were not maintained in a proper state of repair, including;
1. Large black damp patches and peeling paint was observed on the walls and ceiling of toilet rooms 3 & 4.
 2. The paint was observed peeling of the ceiling in toilet Room 1

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Actions

The ceiling in the toilet area has been replaced. The toilet area has been repainted. Further information was

provided by the registered provider who confirmed that the toilet areas will be monitored going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of completed works.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances together with documentary evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 29 have been adequately addressed. This will require assessment at the next inspection.