

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK081
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Name of Service:	Happy Days Montessori
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Address of Service:	Homestead, Gortboy, Newcastlewest, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V42 V326
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Name of Registered Provider:	Anne O Sullivan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Day 1 of Inspection:	12/12/2024
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Day 2 of Inspection	13/12/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	17
No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	15

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Office, 2 nd Floor Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick.
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Inspection undertaken by:	M Riordan
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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 Day's Montessori School, located on the outskirts of Newcastlewest in County Limerick, offers two preschool sessions daily: 9:00 am to 12:00 pm and 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm, Monday to Friday. The school has a capacity to accommodate 22 pre-school children per session. It follows the Montessori method and operates from a purpose-built room next to the provider's home, with nearby sanitary facilities. The school also features a well-equipped outdoor play area, including a large, sheltered space to ensure outdoor activities in all weather conditions.

Staffing

The registered provider owns and manages the service. There are 5 additional staff employed to work at the service with 3 staff members employed through the Access and Inclusion model. All staff hold the required qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education. The registered provider has completed the LINC programme, a course designed to promote inclusion of children with additional needs in the early years setting.

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 wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the days 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 was present on the day 1 and day 2 of the inspection. There was a named person available who was able to deputise if required.

(b) During the period of the inspections, the registered provider was present, and the staff roster indicated that this person or their deputy were always available on the premises.

(2)(a) All staff files were examined. Two written and validated references from past employers were available for all staff working at the service.

(b) All references were from past employers or from other reputable sources such as schools or colleges.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for all staff working at the service. All disclosures were dated within the last 3 years.

(d) Police vetting was available for 4 staff member who had resided in another state for a period longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) All staff working directly with children held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education

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) The registered provider insured at all times that there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children during each of the sessional services.

(3) On the day 1 of the inspection there were 18 pre-school children and 5 adults on the premises for the morning session. There were 17 pre-school children and 3 adults present for the afternoon session. On the day 2 of the inspection there were 15 pre-school children and 5 adults on the premises for the morning session. There were 15 pre-school children and 3 adults present for the afternoon session. The adult child ratio was correct overall on both days.

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:

The service manager ensures that each child's learning and development is supported within the daily activities of the service. A healthy eating policy is in place, with parents providing nutritious snacks and drinks for the children. Perishable items are stored appropriately, and drinks are placed on low level shelves for easy access.

Children have unrestricted access to bathroom facilities, with tissues and wipes available at all times, and waste is disposed of in foot pedal operated, lidded bins. On the first day of the inspection, children wore Christmas jumpers, and Santa Claus visited, with gifts exchanged and photographs taken.

Children spend significant time outdoors daily, with the option to choose between indoor or outdoor activities. A sheltered outdoor space ensures children can play outside in any weather.

Physical and Material Environment:

Both the indoor and outdoor environments are welcoming, safe, and offer developmentally appropriate challenges for children. Play materials are organised into specific interest areas, with topics displayed at the children's eye level. All materials are clearly labelled and placed on low shelves to encourage independent learning. As the children master tasks, new materials and equipment are introduced to further challenge them. There is a variety of equipment that is rotated to align with the changing programs, interests, and skill levels. Low tables and chairs are available for both tabletop activities and mealtimes. A Santa Claus grotto in the quiet area allowed children to interact with Santa.

The outdoor play area is well-resourced, with a large, sheltered space for year-round play. The area is covered with synthetic grass, reducing injury risks, and includes imaginative play zones such as mud kitchens, a gardening area, climbing, crawling, sliding, balancing, and cycling opportunities. Wall-mounted blackboards on the fencing provide mark-making opportunities. The outdoor area is securely enclosed with a high timber fence, and children are supervised at all times when outside.

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:

Upon arrival, the preschool door was securely locked, and access to the building was controlled by a staff member to prevent unauthorised entry and ensure children were not able to exit unsupervised. The outdoor play areas were safely enclosed with high walls and fences, ensuring children were always supervised while outside.

All emergency fire doors were unobstructed, and safe storage was provided for all cleaning agents.

Infection Control:

A high standard of operational hygiene was observed throughout the service. A written cleaning record was available, demonstrating that all areas, both internal and external, were cleaned regularly.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

The pressure in the hot water tap was too low for effective use, leading to children only using cold water for handwashing. To ensure proper infection control and hygiene practices in the service, thermostatically controlled hot water is essential. This would allow for effective handwashing, supporting the health and safety of the children in the preschool.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

Following the inspection of the service a new valve was fitted to the faulty water tap to ensure there was adequate water pressure in the hot water tap at all times. All repair works at the service will be carried out as soon as issues arise.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

Details of the repairs completed by the company who carried out the work was forwarded to the Office of the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventative actions completed by the registered provider. The noncompliance identified under the regulation has been adequately addressed.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The building appeared to be of sound and stable structure both internally and externally and no obvious defects were noted on inspection.
- (b) The premises appeared safe and secured. The front door was locked and all who entered the building were checked in by a member of staff. The outdoor area was well secured preventing any unauthorised access to or exit from this area of the service.
- (c) All areas were well lit by natural light and by artificial light when needed. There was no evidence of mould, mildew, stale smells, stuffiness or condensation.
- (d) The areas outside were all well maintained and routine cleaning schedules were in place for all internal and external areas.
- (e) There were an adequate number of toilets available in the service for both the preschool children and the adults present each day at the service.

Non-Compliance Information

- (e) There was 1 wash handbasin available for the Preschool children in the sanitary accommodation. A second wash hand basin was required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has sourced a company to install a second wash hand basin close to the sanitary accommodation in the facility. This area of the service will be reviewed at next inspection.

Supporting documentation submitted

Details of the company employed to carry out the required works were forwarded to the Office of the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective action detailed by the registered provider. The noncompliance identified under the regulation has been adequately addressed.