

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015OY006
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Name of Service:	Happy Days Pre-School
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Address of Service:	21 Pairc na hEórnán, Ballinagar, Co. Offaly
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Eircode:	R35 DT89
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sarah Cuskelly
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	13/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	NA	PM	13
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
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Inspection undertaken by:	C. O' Connor Hughes
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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.
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Description of service

This Early Year's Service provides a sessional service operated by a private provider. The age range of children enrolled in the service is 2 to 6 years of age. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service operates from 08:45-11:45 and 12:00 to 15:00 Monday to Friday.

The Early years' service is located on the ground floor of a domestic two storey house in a rural area in the village of Ballinagar, Co Offaly. The pre-school consists of two rooms incorporated into one large pre-school room, a lobby area and sanitary accommodation. An outdoor play area is available at the rear of the pre-school room.

Staffing

The registered provider and two staff members were working directly with children for the afternoon session. The staff member employed for the morning session stayed for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider attended the closing meeting.

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 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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 is the designated person in charge and a named person was available to deputise in the service.

(b)

The registered provider was present for the duration of the inspection.

The files of the registered provider and two staff members were reviewed.

(2)(a)(b)

Two written references were available in respect of the registered provider.

Two written validated references were available in respect of the two staff members from previous employers.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the registered provider and staff members.

The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was not required as the registered provider or staff members had not lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(3)

The registered provider had ensured that each staff member was fully vetted prior to commencing employment in the service.

(4)

The registered provider and staff members working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 6 and 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.

(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 ratio of adults to children was adequate during the inspection.
- (3)
There were thirteen children attending the service supervised directly by the registered provider and two staff members.

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)
In a sample review of eleven child enrolment records information relating to (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h) and (i) was available in respect of children attending the service.

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;*
- (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.*

Compliance Information

(1)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1) (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)(i)(j) and (k).

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

(1)(a)

There was a calm and happy atmosphere in the service as children learned through play. Children were offered various play opportunities and activities consisting of free play, creative play, sensory play and children participated in circle time supported by the adults. One to one and small group work was observed during the afternoon session.

Children were encouraged to be independent and supervised by the adults when using the toilet and washing their hands before snack time. Parents provided a healthy snack for the children which included sandwiches, fruit, crackers and water to drink. Conversations and interactions were observed as the children took their time and enjoyed their lunch assisted by adults as required.

Adults were supportive of the children in their care, soft language tones were used with individual names during interactions with the adult and child. Adults were respectful towards children using positive praise upon completion of a task or activity. Adults were familiar with each child and their personality. Transitions were seamless as children were given five minutes notice to change from one activity to another. Children requiring extra support were offered assistance as needed. Access and inclusion plans were available for children. Good teamwork was observed between staff.

The pre-school room was bright and colourful. Family photographs and teaching aids for children were displayed. A poster display featuring the local community and its amenities was noted. A range of developmentally appropriate experiences to meet children's learning needs was available to children. Areas of interest included a home area, construction area, large library display and a play tent for rest. Age and stage appropriate toys and materials were accessible to children on low level shelving. The outdoor play area was sheltered in part and consisted of a patio and astroturf surface. Toys and equipment included a swing on a wooden unit, playhouses, a toy kitchen, cars, scooters and tractors. Children had the opportunity for outdoor play and dressed appropriately assisted by the adults if required.

The service operates in partnership with the parents as a verbal handover is given on collection. A short messaging system (SMS) is used to communicate updates to parents. The registered provider stated one to one meetings are held with parents as needed.

An introduction to pre-school is held in August every year for children and their parents to inform them of pre-school resources and facilities for the upcoming pre-school term. A parent handbook is available for parents to familiarise them with the operation of the pre-school service. The child's learning record depicting the child's play activities and child developmental observations are shared with parents on a regular basis.

Evidence of the Early Childhood Curriculum with short term and medium planning was observed.

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 met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents. The inspector signed the visitors book on arrival.

Parents were observed to drop their children to the front door of the service, were greeted by the staff member and children were handed over safely to the staff member.

Infection Control:

The premises was visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning records were available and reviewed.

Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after toileting.

Warm water, hand paper towels and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation in the service. A window was open to all for natural ventilation in the sanitary accommodation.

The temperature of the water at the wash hand basins was recorded at 37.5 degrees Celsius.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available if a child presented with a high temperature. Medication was stored safely in the pre-school room.

Fire Safety:

The fire escape routes were unobstructed from the pre-school room. A fire assembly point was noted in the front garden of the pre-school service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1)

The records of arrival and departure reviewed verified that each child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by a staff member.

(3)(a)

All entry to the service with the exception of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) was approved by a staff member.

(4)

The visitor log is retained throughout the annual operation of the service.

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 and one staff member were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises.

(2)(a)
A first aid box was located in the pre-school room.

(b)
A first aid box was accessible to children in the pre-school 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)
A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 19 December 2024.

(b)
The smoke alarms and firefighting equipment in the premises were serviced on 10 October 2024.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in conspicuous position in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service. The expiry date noted was 27 March 2025.