

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015OY026		
Name of Service:	Happy Days Montessori School		
Address of Service:	Whiteford, Crinkle, Birr, Co. Offaly		
Eircode:	R42 HF86		
Name of Registered Provider:	Maria Ryan		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	12/06/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM 19
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, Primary Care Centre, Church Avenue, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.		
Inspection undertaken by:	K. Murphy		
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		

Description of service

The service is registered as a full day care service to accommodate children aged 2 to 6 years of age. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE). The Early Years' Service is located in a residential area, in the village of Crinkle, near the town of Birr, County Offaly. The service is located in a ground floor adapted premises attached to the home of the registered provider. Two interconnected pre-school rooms are provided. An outdoor area is available to the children to the front of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider who provides a support role in the service and two staff members were present and working directly with the children on 12 June 2024.

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 co-operation 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.*

(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 available in the service. A named person was present and available to deputise if required.

(b)

The registered provider was present throughout the inspection.

Five files including the registered provider were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)

The required number of written validated references were available from past employers in respect of the files reviewed.

(b)

The required number of written validated references were available from a source other than a past employer in respect of the files reviewed.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the files reviewed.

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

(d)

Police vetting was available in respect of one staff member who lived outside the state for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4)

Staff members working directly with children as part of the adult to child ratio held qualifications at levels 5 to 8 in Early Childhood Care and Education 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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(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)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(4)(a)(b)

There were nineteen children attending the service supervised directly by three adults.

(8)(a)

The staff attendance records indicated that two adults are on the premises at all times.

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 twelve child records the details relating to (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)(i) were in place in respect of the children.

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;

(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 (h)(i)(j)(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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The children were supported to be self-caring, suitable to their age and stage of development including self-feeding, self-toileting and caring for their belongings. Healthy eating was encouraged, and a selection of sandwiches, fruit and dairy products were provided by parents for snack time. Potable water was available to the children to drink.

Adults were observed to be positive towards children evidenced by individual names used, eye contact and praise for children on completion of activities. Consistent staff were present in the service. Minor disputes between children were observed to be handled calmly by staff to prevent escalation. Good teamwork between the staff members was observed during the inspection. A verbal handover was provided to parents and guardians at collection time at the end of the morning session.

The pre-school rooms were equipped with low level tables and chairs. Low level open shelving with play equipment was accessible to the children. A range of materials including paint, play dough, dolls, dolls houses, buggies, puzzles, blocks, trucks, animals and fine motor skill toys including pegboards, jigsaws and shape sorters were available to the children. In the outdoor area children were observed playing with bikes and trikes. Arts and crafts activities were note as the children undertook preparations for their forthcoming graduation day.

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-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child 19 to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(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)(a)

Adequate and suitable indoor and outdoor facilities were provided on the premises.

(b)

Soft furnishings were available in the service for any child who required rest or relaxation.

(2)(a)

The children used an area to the front of the service for outdoor play. The perimeter was secured to the front with a wall and wooden gate and to the side by shrubs and a net fence. A tarmac surface area was in place. Toys and equipment included a selection of ride on cars, scooters, bicycles, a toy kitchen and a wooden “shop” unit.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)

The protective covers on the metal handles of one scooter and two bicycles were worn away. Exposed sharp edges were noted which posed a potential risk of injury to a child.

This non-compliance was previously noted on the inspection of 25 January 2022.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

2)(a)

The registered provider stated in the response that the scooter and two bicycles in which there was exposed sharp edges have been discarded from the service.

Management and staff will ensure that all outdoor equipment is safe to use for the children at all times and in the event of equipment being damaged, such equipment will be removed from the service.

Summary Comment

The corrective action stated by the registered provider should meet the regulatory requirement. The practices as stated will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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 was secure to keep the children safe within. A visual confirmation of identity system was in operation at the front door to allow for entry to the service.

Infection Control:

Hand sanitizing for children was facilitated before snack. Children washed their hands after using the toilet.

The premises were visually clean. Toys and materials were easily cleanable.

Warm running water, liquid soap and hand towels stored in dispensers were available in the sanitary accommodation. The water temperature at wash hand basins was recorded at 23 degrees Celsius.

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

Openable windows allowed for natural ventilation in the pre-school rooms and sanitary accommodation.

Administration of Medication:

No medicine was administered at the time of the inspection. A record book was available to record any medicine administered to a pre-school child.

Fire Safety:

Fire evacuation routes were identified and were free from obstruction.

Outing:

The registered provider stated that outings were not undertaken by the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A child was observed wearing hooped earrings which posed a potential injury risk if another child pulled the child's earlobe.
2. Visibility strips were not in place on the glazed panels of the double-glazed entrance door, the double-glazed door and the single glazed door in the main pre-school room.
3. In the main pre-school room, a television was not in a secure position, located on top of a countertop which posed a potential injury risk to a pre-school child.
4. In the main pre-school room electrical cables and a telephone charger cable were not secured and were accessible by pre-school children which posed a potential injury risk to a pre-school child.
5. The plastic pedal from the foot operated pedal bin in the main pre-school room was not in place leaving an exposed metal lever which posed a potential injury risk to a pre-school child.

Infection Control:

6. The nappy changing mat in the sanitary accommodation was torn with exposed foam noted which present as a potential infection control risk.

Administration of Medication:

7. Temperature reducing medication was not available if required by a child with a high temperature. Once notified the registered provider took a corrective action and arranged that an antifebrile agent was available on site until such time as an antifebrile agent was purchased for the service.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The registered provider stated in the response that management spoke to the parents about the wearing of jewellery and the parents agreed to remove the jewellery. Management have decided to include in the welcome booklet for all children that such jewellery cannot be worn in the service. If parents do not take heed of such advice management will verbally communicate the dangers of such jewellery.
2. The registered provider stated in the response that visibility strips have been purchased and fitted on the doors. Management will ensure that visibility strips will always be in place going forward. (Photograph included)
3. The registered provider stated in the response that the television was immediately removed and put into storage until management decides where it will be safely located. Management will ensure that such equipment will be always in a secure position going forward.
4. The registered provider stated in the response that the area was immediately cleared of electrical cables and telephone chargers and the area is now non accessible to children. Management will ensure that such wires will not be accessible to children going forward. (Photograph included)
5. The registered provider stated in the response that the bin was removed and replaced the evening the inspection was carried out. Management and staff will ensure that the bin provided in the service will be fully operational. (Photograph included)

Infection Control:

6. The registered provider stated in the response that the nappy changing mat was removed the same day and replaced with a new one. Management will ensure that such equipment in the sanitary accommodation will be checked and updated regularly. (Photograph included)

Administration of Medication:

7. The registered provider stated in the response that temperature reducing medication was made available in the service the evening the inspection was carried out. Management will ensure going forward that such medicine will be always available in the service. (Photograph included)

Summary Comment

In respect of the corrective actions taken photographic evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate, reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement. The practices as stated will be reviewed on the next 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)

Four adults are qualified in first aid response (FAR) and two were present and available on the premises.

(2)(a)

A first aid box was available in the main pre-school room.

(b)

A first aid box was readily available 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 firefighting 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 carried out in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 25 January 2024.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms were serviced in February 2024.

(4)

Fire evacuation procedures were noted in conspicuous locations in the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Fire drills were not carried out monthly. The lack of regular fire drill practice since 25 January 2024 may impede the safe evacuation of children in the event of a fire in the premises.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(a)

The registered provider stated in the response that the service carried out a fire drill on the 13th of June with all children. (Fire drill record for June 2024 included)

Management will ensure that monthly fire drills will be carried out without fail going forward and such drills will be recorded.

Summary Comment

In respect of the corrective actions taken documentary evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate, reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.
The practices as stated will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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 and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2025.