

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015RN025
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Name of Service:	Happy Feet Childcare Ltd
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Address of Service:	Knockroe, Castlerea, Co. Roscommon
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Eircode:	F45 FE04
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Name of Registered Provider:	Anita Flynn
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	14/03/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	41	PM	32
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, Government Buildings, Roscommon, Co. Roscommon
Inspection undertaken by:	A. Kennedy
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 feet childcare is a privately owned and operated childcare facility which has been in operation since 2010. This is a full day care service which also offers part-time and sessional care. The sessional care is offered from 9.00hrs to 12.00hrs and full day care from 8hrs to 18.00hrs

The pre-school comprises of two indoor playrooms namely room 1 the Butterfly room and room 2 the Rainbow room. The premises has its own kitchen. The pre-school children have access to outdoor play areas to the rear, and front of the pre-school, for children's physical play activities, exploration, and fresh air.

Staffing

There are nine adults employed to work in the service, eight work directly with the children and one person is employed to prepare the meals on the premises. A transition year student and a student presently completing a BA in early childhood care and education were also on the premises on the day of the inspection.

The registered provider is the person in charge and works directly with the children.

The adults held a relevant major award in Early Childhood Care and Education with five with level 5, one adult holding a level 7 and three adults holding a level 8.

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, deputy 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) There was the designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service.

(b)
The registered provider was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived. Staff rosters indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available on the premises at all times when the pre-school children were present.

The files for the nine staff and two students were reviewed.

(2)
(a)&(b) Eighteen written validated references were on file for the nine staff.
Four written validated references were on file for the two students. The references were from a past employer or from a source other than the past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available in respect of nine staff.
The service did adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Evidence was provided of three garda vetting applications which were due to expire March and May 2025.

(d) Three staff had worked outside the jurisdiction, for six months or more, while over the age of 18 years of age, and had the required police clearance.

(4) The eight staff who were working directly with children, held a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), at a Level 5 to 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education. Copies of qualifications were on file for the eight staff working directly with the children

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) At all times during the period of the inspection, the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.
- (2) At 10.10hrs, on the morning of the inspection, there were 41 children present between the ages of 2 years 6 months-to 5 years There were 5 staff directly caring for these children.
- At 13.30hrs, in the afternoon, of the inspection, there were 32 children present between the ages of 2- 6 months to 5 years. There were 4 staff, directly caring for and supervising these children.
- (8)(a) The registered provider ensured that there were 2 staff on the premises at all times while the pre-school was operating.

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

- Nutritious meals were provided by the service and the children's snack were provided by the parents which consisted of sandwiches, scones, wraps, a selection of fruits and cheese which were served at regular times and no more than 3 hours apart.
- Each child had enough time to eat and enjoy their meals and snacks without being rushed.
- The tables and chairs were suitable for the children's ages and stages of development.
- The staff encouraged children to feed themselves independently, according to their age and stage of development.
- The crockery, cutlery and drinking utensils were suitable for the children's ages and stages of development.
- The staff responded to children's individual personalities, sensitivities and needs in relation to nappy changing and toileting. On the day of inspection, it was advised that one child wears a nappy and was changed on a regular basis.
- The privacy and dignity of a child having their nappy changed was maintained. The older children in the pre-school rooms, had unrestricted access to the toilets and did not have to wait to use the toilet. The staff used the correct language surrounding toileting and nappy changing. The staff responded to children's cues quickly.
- The children had plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance. Play activities and experiences were developmentally appropriate and suitably challenging. The children had opportunities to move about freely and explore their environment.
- The children were observed at free play, making puzzles, drawing/ painting, playing house / kitchen, using transport vehicles on tracks, and at dress up / pretend play. The children were observed stacking, constructing, shape sorting, at magnetic play, connecting, and playing with animals and figurines. The children were observed doing action songs and games with the adults.

- The children were observed practising for the St Patricks Day parade and were dressed in outfits to mark St Patricks Day.
- In the outdoor area the children played with sand and water, on bikes and trikes, on the slide and swing set, in the playhouse, drawing and colouring, and playing group action games. They were also observed playing on the climbing frame.
- The staff acknowledged a child’s achievements, ‘well done’, ‘that’s great’ and the children were observed chatting, laughing and having fun.
- The staff supported children in forming and sustaining positive relationships by having a key person system for each child, showing respect for each unique child and developing their trust,
- Listening to the voice of the child as they communicated their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children’s cues, gestures, and body language,
- The staff used soft tones of voice, used the child’s individual name, and got down to their level and made eye contact.
- providing opportunities for individual and small group activities and play, leading to increased social awareness, co-operation, collaboration, teamwork, and a sense of belonging,
- It was advised by the person in charge that they work with parents and guardians by sharing knowledge and observations of the child’s interests, strengths, developmental and care needs, approaches to learning, changes in their life, and any other concerns. The inspector was informed that they verbally provided parents with daily information on their child’s experiences in the pre-school including the child’s likes, interests and preferences and play activities engaged in. This information was provided at collection times and via text messages and by phone calls.
- The staff were observed helping children to find solutions, supporting them, and talking to the children in a variety of ways, discussing, questioning, modelling, and commentating, extending a child’s activities and initiating games and activities. The staff provided significant opportunities for the child to decide their play activities and experiences. The inspector noted the staff acknowledged a child’s achievements ‘that is great’ ‘well done’ and used questions such as ‘what should we do next?’, ‘is there any other way to do this?’, to allow children to critically think and explore.
- On the day of the inspection the staff showed kindness. They were thoughtful, supportive, and reassuring whilst caring for the children. They cared for children by being supportive while the children engaged in free play, role play, and creative play. A climate was fostered where the children knew their boundaries. The staff supported children to enter social groups, and to learn to help and positively engage with other

children. They encouraged and praised children for specific, positive, and appropriate behaviours. Children were given positive alternatives, rather than just being told 'no'. Children were supported in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. The children could identify, name, and explore their feelings both positive and negative.

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 external door was appropriately secured to prevent a child gaining unsupervised access and unauthorised persons gaining access to the premises.
- The external outdoor play area was secured by fencing and two gates so that unauthorised persons could not access or enter the area, or children could not exit unsupervised.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- The heating system was thermostatically controlled, to ensure the temperature was maintained between 18°C to 22°C.
- The water was thermostatically controlled with a temperature reading of 37.4°C, on the day of inspection.
- Documented risk assessments for the playrooms and outdoor play area were available for review.
- Cleaning products were stored on shelves in the sluice room inaccessible to the children.
- Exit routes and doors were free from obstruction. Emergency lit signage pointed to exit routes.
- There were foot pedalled lidded bins in the sanitary areas and playrooms.

Infection Control:

- Staff prompted and supervised the children to wash their hands before eating and following toileting, messy play, and outdoor play.
- Adequate liquid soap and paper towels were available at the wash hand basins in the sanitary areas.
- The toys and play equipment were maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

- A cleaning and disinfection schedule was available in the service. There were suitable cleaning products available in the service.
- The inspector noted high contact areas, were cleaned regularly, as per best practice guidance.
- The outdoor play equipment was cleaned prior to/ after a child's use, with documented records maintained.
- Adequate supplies of disposable tissues were readily available in the playrooms.
- There were foot pedaled lidded bins in the sanitary areas and the playrooms.
- A refrigerator was available for the storage of perishable foods in each of the rooms.

Administration of Medication:

- There were no medications administered to a child on the day of the inspection.
- The registered provider demonstrated knowledge of safe practices with regards to the safe storage and administration of medication should it be required.

Fire Safety:

- Monthly fire drills were carried out on the premises to ensure the children were familiar with the procedure in event of an emergency
- All exit routes from the service were free from obstruction during the 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 service provided evidence that a person trained in first aid for children was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service. Four adults had current training in first aid.

(2)(a) The first aid boxes were appropriately stocked with items safely stored and easily accessible by the adults i

(b)The service demonstrated that the first aid boxes were available to the children attending 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) A record of fire drills was maintained on the premises, and it was noted that the last monthly fire drill was recorded as conducted on the 17th of February 2025.
- (b) A record of maintenance of firefighting equipment confirmed that an annual service was conducted in August 2024 and the fire alarm was serviced on the 3rd of September 2024
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was on display in the lobby area.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

- The service's insurance with an expiry date of 27th of March 2025 for 44 children and included the following -
- public liability insurance,
 - insurance against fire and theft,
 - buildings insurance,
 - insurance for outings undertaken as part of the service provision
 - the service also had the new certificate with an expiry date of 27th of March 2026.