

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO017
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Name of Service:	Happy Days Creche
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Address of Service:	Clarion Village, Ballytivnan, Sligo, Co. Sligo
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Eircode:	F91 A2FP
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sandra Loftus
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	20/06/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	83	PM	74
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
Inspection undertaken by:	L Costello and Y Coyne
Title:	Early Years Inspector and Inspection and Registration Manager

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 Creche is situated within the Clarion village complex of Sligo town and is one of two private operated services in the county. The service is registered to provide a full day care service catering for children aged 0 - 6 years. The hours of operation are from 7.30am to 6.30pm catering for a maximum of 95 children. A school age service is also provided

Staffing

On the day of inspection there was 29 adults employed in the service. This included the deputy person in charge who was supernumerary on the day, two adults were working in the kitchen and a bus driver. The registered provider was not present on the day of inspection.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 25 and 29: These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the regulations outlined above. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the following rooms: Baby Room, Toddlers, Tweenies and Preschool.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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) (b).

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(2) (a) (b).

On a previous inspection on the 08th of December 2024 six staff members files were reviewed. The remaining 27 adults' files were reviewed on this inspection.

Written and verified past employer references or references from another source in the absence of a past employer, were available in respect of 27 adults employed in the service.

- (c)
Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 29 staff. However, the service 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 for one adult. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.
- (d)
International police vetting was available for one adult employed in the service that had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.
- (4)
15 adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to meet the regulatory requirement.

Non-Compliance Information

- (4)
Two adults who are presently studying a level 8 in childcare did not have the required letter of temporary qualification recognition of their current qualification equivalence by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). It is acknowledged that this letter had been applied for prior to the day of inspection. In addition, a further two adults did not have the certification of their qualification available to inspectors on the day.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the Registered provider stated:

I have contacted the department and left a message to request that they prioritise the letters outstanding since April 24. I have applied for recognition of one staff members certificates and the other works in afterschool so qualification is not required.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence submitted

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive action submitted by the registered provider adequately addressed the non-compliance found on inspection.

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) There were 17 adults working directly with 81 children on the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service. A review of a sample of attendance records showed that an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children during service hours of operation.

(2) The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the morning of the unannounced inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as outlined below:

The Baby room: 3 adults cared for 3 children aged under 1 year and 4 children aged from 1 to 2 years of age.

The Toddler room: 3 adults cared for 12 children aged from 1 to 2 years of age.

The Tweenies room: 3 adults cared for 14 child aged 2 to 3 years of age and 5 children aged 3 to 4 years.

Playschool: 3 adults cared for 21 children aged from 2.5 years to 5 years of age.

Preschool room: 4 adults cared for 16 children aged from 3 years to 5 years of age.

The Sessional room: 1 adult cared for 4 children aged from 3 years to 5 years of age.

At 14:10 the adult child ratios were as follows:

The Baby room: 3 adults cared for 3 children aged under 1 year and 4 children aged from 1 to 2 years of age.

The Toddler room: 3 adults cared for 12 children aged from 1 to 2 years of age

The Tweenies room: 3 adults cared for 13 children aged 2 to 3 years of age and 5 children aged 3 to 4 years.

Playschool: 3 adults cared for 21 children aged from 2.5 years to 5 years of age.

Preschool room: 2 adults cared for 15 children aged from 3 years to 5 years of age.

The Sessional room was closed in the afternoon.

(8)

The registered provider ensured that there was always at least two adults on the premises when children were present as evidenced in a sample of attendance records reviewed.

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

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that no corporal punishment is inflicted on a pre-school child whilst attending the service

Compliance Information

Basic Needs:

The service operated a four-week meal plan which provided breakfast dinner and snacks for the children availing of full day care. On the day a main meal of chicken, carrots and potato mash was provided which the children appeared to enjoy. Snacks on the day included a variety of fruit, apples, bananas and strawberries and breadsticks and crackers. The service also catered for the various food preference and intolerances including halal, vegetarian and dairy intolerances. Alternatives to the main meal of pasta and vegetable sauce was provided where a child did not like potatoes. Children in the baby room had bottles of milk provided from home that were given throughout the day, bottles were stored in the fridge and warmed by standing in hot water if required.

Highchairs were provided for the younger children and independence promoted throughout with the use of age-appropriate utensils.

Nappy changing was observed and positive engagement and interaction with the children were observed throughout this process. The older children who were toileting independently were prompted to do so and supervised from a distance. Some children were being toilet trained and the service provided pottys to assist in this transition for the preschool children.

The sleep needs of the younger children were met, this was observed on the day by infants in the baby room sleeping as needed at various times throughout the day. Sleep was monitored by physical checks from staff a minimum of every ten minutes. Standard cots were provided with individual bed linen which was observed to be changed after use in the baby sleep room. The older children in the tweenies room had a structured sleep time from 12.30 to 14.00. The children were brought to a separate room to aid sleep, this room had sufficient floor beds laid out in a darkened room. Staff members remained in the room while children slept.

Physical and Material Environment:

The Baby room was laid out to facilitate sensory experiences for the infant through colour, wall mirrors and musical toys. The floor surface provided an area of soft matting and cushions to allow for the younger children to lie comfortably while being stimulated with overhead hanging toys. Resources of building blocks and shape puzzles assisted in the development of fine motor skills for the younger child. Open shelving in the corner of the room was equipped with various materials and resources which were introduced at various times throughout the day ensuring the children were stimulated with a variety of toys and resources. The walls in the baby room were decorated with pictures of the children's family which established the connection from home to creche.

The tweenies room was decorated with the children's artwork which added colour to the room. Open shelving equipped with tabletop activities, arts and crafts and puzzles allowed the children to direct their own sense of play. A home corner equipped with a kitchen and resources, dolls and dress up area gave the children an opportunity for role play and to develop their imagination. The construction area equipped with building blocks, trucks and cars assisted in fine motor skill development.

The outdoor play area provided a change of environment for the children. The outdoor area was sectioned into three different areas for use by different groups of children. Resources included bikes and trikes, ride on toys and footballs. In one area a climbing frame and mud kitchen was provided. On the day staff members were observed to play outdoor games with the children this included tag, jumping and hopping. Chalk was also provided to the children so they could draw on the walls and ground.

Programme of Activities:

The programme of activities and learning completed in each room was displayed at the entrance to each room in a scrap book format, and accessible to parents when dropping or collecting their child. Evidence of goal planning in line with the Aistear model was provided with the various themes completed throughout the year. Learning goals for the month of June included Father's Day, summer and learning about insects.

Supporting Relationships:

Staff members were observed to be respectful, in their interactions towards the children in their care. The younger children were held and cuddled as needed throughout the day. There was evidence of familiarity between the staff and children as conversations were had about activities over the weekend and plans with family members. Children were observed to be comfortable in their surroundings and appeared to have fun with the staff members laughing and joking.

The service took measures to support the children's relationships including keeping parents and guardians informed of the daily activities. This was completed by a written daily log for the children in the younger rooms to include sleep times, nappy changes and food intake throughout the day. Verbal handovers also took daily exchanging important information with the parents. Pictures of families displayed on the walls in the care rooms ensured children's connection to home was maintained.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) (b)

The practice observed transitioning the children from lunch to afternoon sleep in the toddler room was not managed appropriately to facilitate children to prepare to sleep. In the toddler room at 12.20pm staff began to bring beds in to the room sporadically resulting in children trying to play, jumping on tables, while one staff member told the children 'no' ...'be quiet' ' stop playing.'. This was in contrast to the transition to sleep in the tweenies room where the sleep room was set up prior to entering, room was dimmed, and staff spoke in a gentle voice soothing children to sleep.

(1) (b)

Portable drinking water was not freely available throughout the day in the Toddler or preschool room. This was in contrast to the tweenies and baby room where portable drinking was available at all times stored on low level shelving accessible to the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

(1) (b)

A staff meeting was held and the following was decided:

- Following discussion, children will be removed from the room while it is being set up for sleep
- Water is usually provided, and will continue to be provided

Supporting documentation submitted

Minutes of staff meeting submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive action submitted by the registered provider adequately addressed the non-compliance found on 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 main entrance into the service was found to be secured upon the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service, which prevented persons entering unauthorised and children from leaving the building unsupervised.
- All cleaning products in the care rooms were stored on high level shelving out of the reach of children.
- Materials and resources were maintained in a good state of repair.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the preschool children.
- Highchairs in the baby room were fitted with harness safety straps.
- Leads and flexes were secure and inaccessible to the preschool children.
- The outdoor perimeter was secure with waste bins stored out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

- There were adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to mealtimes and after messy play and snack times in all care rooms.
- Children in the tweenies room were observed to wash their hands regularly including before snacks and meals and after coming in from outdoor play.

Administration of Medication:

- The service had a medication administration policy in place and when interviewed staff were aware of their responsibilities for the safe administration of medication.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had a designated sleep room with a total of three standard cots, standard cots were also available in the sleep room adjacent to the toddler room.
- The sleep room temperature measured 18°C on the day of inspection which is line with the required safe sleep temperatures.

- Children in the tweenies room who required sleep were brought to a designated room where floor beds were provided, lights dimmed and were supervised by staff members during rest time.

Fire Safety:

- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in all the care rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. On the day the children in the baby room and the toddler room were not observed to be supported to wash hands prior to snack times and after coming in from outdoor play.
2. At approx. 09.47 in the baby room an infant was observed to be lying on a pillow drinking a bottle of milk. It is acknowledged that when this was brought to the attention of staff by the inspector, staff member picked up the infant and held the infant while being bottle fed.
3. Garda vetting was available for all 29 staff members. However, one adult's vetting disclosures was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'

Infection Control:

4. The nappy bin in the baby room had a broken foot pedal resulting in staff members using their hands to open and close bin, posing a risk of cross contamination.
5. The bin in the tweenies and pre-school room for disposing of paper towels did not contain a lid and this bin was used to dispose of used tissue paper and rubber gloves, therefore posing a risk of cross contamination.
6. The aprons for nappy changes provided by the registered provider in the tweenies room were stored hanging over the door of the children's toilet posing an infection control risk.
7. A number of soothers in the toddler room were stored on top of a bookshelf, not in individual containers to reduce the risk of contamination.
8. When a sippy cup or cutlery fell it was picked up of floor and given back to the child thus posing a risk of contamination.
9. Wet clothes used to clean children's faces and hands after mealtimes in the toddler room were left on a window sill in the care room for some time prior to use posing a risk of infection control.
10. The nappy changing area in the pre-school room was untidy with cleaning brushes resting with nappies and other items of storage.

11. Each child in the toddler room was given a floor bed which was to have their own individual name as bed linen was individual and changed weekly. On the day it was observed that there were only names on two floor beds and therefore children were placed in any bed for naptime resulting in a risk of cross infection.

Safe Sleep:

12. Three of the mattresses in the designated baby sleep room were torn with exposing foam, resulting in an inability to clean the mattresses effectively.

Fire Safety:

13. An emergency exit door in the Kitchen leading out to the children's outdoor area was tied to a crate for increased ventilation. This would potentially lead to an obstruction in evacuation in the case of an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider gave the following information:

General Safety:

1. Staff Meeting to ensure awareness of good hygiene practices regular checks will be carried out
2. Staff members spoken to about practice and regular checks will be carried out.
3. Garda Vetting received.

Infection Control:

4. New Bin purchased; regular checks will be carried out.
5. New Bin purchased; regular checks will be carried out.
6. Aprons will be stored on a shelf.
7. Staff advised of non-compliance. Soothers will be stored in individual containers
8. Staff advised of non-compliance at staff Meeting.
9. Cloths will be stored in a basket.
10. Area tidied and staff advised to keep area tidy.
11. All beds are now named and will be checked regularly.

Safe Sleep:

14. New mattress protectors purchased and will be checked regularly.

Fire Safety:

15. Crate removed, and staff advised this is not to happen again

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Staff meeting minutes submitted.
2. No evidence submitted.
3. Garda vetting submitted.

Infection Control:

4. Photographic evidence submitted.
5. Photographic evidence submitted.
6. Photographic evidence submitted.
7. Photographic evidence submitted.
8. Staff meeting minutes submitted.
9. Photographic evidence submitted.
10. Photographic evidence submitted.
11. Photographic evidence submitted.

Safe Sleep:

12. Photographic evidence submitted.

Fire Safety:

13. Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive action submitted by the registered provider adequately addressed the non-compliance found on inspection and will be reviewed on 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)
On the day of inspection two staff members on duty were trained in First Aider Response (FAR) training and were available to the children attending the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) (b) In the toddler room the first aid box was not suitable equipped. A number of items such as plasters and bandages were out of date with an expiry date of May 2023.

First aid boxes were available in all care rooms, however the stock in the first aid boxes had an expiry date of May 2023.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

First aid boxes removed from individual rooms and the main first aid box stored in the office will be used.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive action submitted by the registered provider adequately addressed the non-compliance found on inspection.

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) sound and stable structure,

On a visual inspection the service appeared to be of a sound and stable structure with no obvious defects.

(b) safe and secure.

On arrival to the service the doors were secure with a buzz entry system ensuring that no unauthorised access or unsupervised egress could occur. The perimeter of the outdoor area consisted of a high block wall.

(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated.

On the day the service was adequately lit throughout with dimmed lighting available in the sleep rooms in the form of wall lights. On the day the service appeared adequately heated. Windows were openable and provided ventilation. Mechanical ventilation was in operation in the sanitary areas.

(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired.

The service appeared well maintained, a painting schedule had been in place since the last inspection on the 8th of December 2023 and this has nearly been completed resulting in a clean fresh appearance in the service.

(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

There was sufficient sanitary accommodation for the needs of the children on the day. This included nappy changing areas for those younger children and toilets available for those children who were toilet trained.