

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020RN002
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Name of Service:	Happy Feet Childcare Tarmon Preschool
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Address of Service:	Tarmon National School, Tarmon, Castlerea, Co. Roscommon
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Eircode:	F45 K298
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Name of Registered Provider:	Anita Flynn
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	04/04/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	n/a
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, Government Buildings, Convent Road, 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

This service is a privately operated service which commenced in September 2020. It is registered to provide a sessional service for children aged two to six years. The hours of operation are from 9.15hrs to 12.15hrs, Monday to Friday and it operates for 38 weeks of the year. The service is operated from a room within the local primary school which is situated approximately three miles from the town of Castlerea. Separate sanitary accommodation is provided for the preschool children and the outdoor area to the rear of the premises is shared with the primary school.

Staffing

There are three adults employed in service along with two relief staff. Two adults were present on the day of the inspection. The registered provider does not work in the service and has employed a manager to manage the service. A student on a work placement was also in attendance.

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. 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 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,

(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 a designated person in charge operating the service and a named deputy to deputise in the event of an emergency.

(b) The manager was present in the service at all times during the inspection. A review of the staff rosters indicated that the manager or their named deputy were present whenever the service operated.

(2) From a total of five adults employed in the service, and the student on work placement, the personal files of the six adults were reviewed.

(a)(b) Twelve written validated references were from a past employer or a source other than a past employer were on file in respect of the five staff and the student on work placement

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the five adults and the student on placement.

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.

(d) Not applicable as none of the adults had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period in excess of six months.

(4) Relevant documentation of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Qualifications framework was furnished for the five adults.

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) 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.

(3) Documentary evidence of the staff rosters indicated that adult child ratios were adhered to.

On the morning of the inspection, there were 14 pre-school children, aged 3 to 5 years, being cared for by two staff members.

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

- 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 tables and chairs were suitable for the children's ages and stages of development.
- The children had unrestricted access to the toilet and did not have to wait to use the toilet. The staff used the correct language surrounding toileting.
- The children were observed at free play, at messy play with cornflour, chocolate powder and cereal, making puzzles, drawing, playing house / kitchen, using transport vehicles, and at dress up / pretend play. The children were observed stacking, constructing, shape sorting, connecting, and playing with animals, vehicles and figurines.
- The children had the opportunity to rest or relax in a designated cosy area in the playroom
- 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.
- The staff provided 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 person in charge advised that the theme of the week was the farm, and the service invited a parent to bring his tractor to the service for the children to see. The children really enjoyed this activity and they each got to sit on the tractor.
- 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.

Physical and Material environment

- The pre-school room was spacious, bright, and colourful. The room was laid out with clearly defined areas of play to include a storage press with an abundance of arts and crafts supplies to include paint, glue, brushes foam shapes, scissors, glitter, sponges, stampers, paper and card.
- Large and small-scale construction (plastic and wooden blocks) and manipulative materials; picture books, problem solving toys (e.g. jigsaws), role and pretend play (e.g. a play kitchen with a wooden coffee machine and food mixer, dolls, buggies and accessories), shopping trolleys, cash registers and food items, a farm with play accessories, a dolls house with play accessories and small world toys (e.g. play animals, transport toys, play figures).

- A soft matted area with child sized couches, cushions and blankets was provided as a reading area should a child wish to relax or opt out of activities.
- There was low-level shelving with equipment and materials accessible to the children.
- An extensive outdoor play area was located to the rear of the pre-school premises, and this consisted of a soft pore area with climbing frames, a playhouse, seating, an artificial grassed area with goalposts and a selection of balls, a polytunnel to enable the children plant and sow fruits and vegetables, a running track and a football pitch.

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 entrance door to the primary school, the door to the preschool room and the gates in the external outdoor play area were secured so that children could not leave the areas unsupervised and unauthorised persons could not enter the area.
- Fire doors were unobstructed.
- All cleaning agents were stored inaccessible to the children.
- Leads, cables, and flexes were secured and or inaccessible to prevent any trips or strangulation hazard.
- The playroom temperatures were thermostatically controlled, and maintained between 18°C to 22°C.
- Thermostatically controlled warm water not exceeding 43°C to facilitate hand washing was available to facilitate hygienic hand washing.
- Heavy equipment and furnishings were anchored appropriately.
- The playroom windows were high and thereby inaccessible to the children.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- There were no pits or ponds in the designated outdoor areas to cause any risk of injury to the pre-school child.
- The staff clearly identified to the early year's inspector, the drop off and collection procedures for children.
- A system was in place to ensure that daily records of attendance were kept for all the children, attending the pre-school.

Infection Control:

- Children were observed washing their hands after toileting, outdoor play, messy play and after blowing their noses. The children washed their hands under supervision prior to consuming their snacks. The adults were observed regularly washing their hands including after disposing of tissues into bins.
- Suitable hand washing facilities were provided with supplies of liquid soap.
- The playroom and sanitary accommodations had foot operated lidded bins.
- The pre-school room and sanitary areas were well ventilated with the windows open throughout the inspection.
- Tabletops were cleaned immediately prior to children's snack break.
- Mouthed toys were removed after use and sterilised appropriately.
- Fixtures, fittings and play resources were observed to be in a hygienic condition.
- The adults showed awareness of the services procedures including the management of suspected infection when questioned.
- A refrigerator was provided for the storage of perishable foods.

Administration of Medication:

- There were no medications administered to the children on the day of the inspection.
- The staff 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.
- Exit routes from the service were free from obstruction during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. The child sized couch in the preschool room was ripped and frayed which could prove difficult to effectively clean.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

The manager of the service submitted a written response to the office of the early years inspectorate to advise

1. Tape was immediately put on couch to ensure effective cleaning, and the couch has been since been removed from the pre-school room for repair.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

Photographic evidence of the repaired couch was submitted to the office of the early year's inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The Early Years Inspectorate has assessed the actions taken and the evidence submitted and deems it to meet Regulation 23.

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. Three staff members had current training in first aid for children.

(2)(a) A first aid box was available in the preschool room stored on a high shelf. This contained an adequate quantity of first aid items for the numbers of children attending the service at any one time. and was readily available in the event a child required first aid treatment.

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 written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service.
The last recorded fire drill was on 14/03/2025.
- (b) A record of the number, type, and maintenance record of firefighting equipment in the service was on file.
Records indicated that the annual service of the firefighting equipment was dated 04th of April 2025 and for the smoke and fire detection system was dated 10th of January 2025.
- (4) Notices were displayed within the preschool room of the service of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire in the premises.

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 27th of March 2026 was for 22 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.