

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

School Age Services

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2021GY001SA
Name of School Age Service:	Happy Feet Preschool and Afterschool
Name of Registered Provider(s):	Mary Dunne
Address of School Age Service:	Meadowbrook Court, Meadowbrook, Loughrea, Co. Galway
Eircode:	H62 N263

Date of Inspection:	10 March 2025			
Number of school age children present during inspection:	AM	N/A	PM	17
Registration status:	Registered			
Conditions (if applicable):	Not applicable			

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Child and Family Agency, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	K Folan A Spain
Title:	Early years inspectors

Authority to Inspect
Tusla's 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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

School Age Services

Description of Service:

Happy Feet Preschool and Afterschool is a privately owned school age service. It offers school age care for children aged 4-15 years from Monday to Friday from 1:30- 6:00p.m. The service caters for a maximum of 27 children. There is a preschool service onsite which operates from 9:00a.m. -2:00p.m. The service is located in a residential housing estate in Loughrea town, east Galway. Rooms in use in the school age service include two playrooms, a kitchen, sanitary accommodation for children and staff and an office and staff area. An enclosed outdoor play area is available at the back of the service with direct access from one of the playrooms.

Staffing:

The service is staffed by six adults. The registered provider also works directly in the service. An additional staff member is available to drop and collect children in attendance in schools in the vicinity of the service.

Additional Information:

This inspection was completed as a result of information received by the inspectorate

Legislation

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of School Age Services in Ireland, and its role is to promote and monitor the safety and quality of school age care provision in accordance with the following legislation:

- The Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Part 12.
- Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.
- The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018).

A school age service means any early years service, play group, day nursery, crèche, day-care or other similar service which:

- caters for children under the age of 15 years enrolled in a school providing primary or post-primary education,
- provides a range of activities that are developmental, educational and recreational in manner, which take place outside of school hours, the primary purpose of which is to care for children where their parents are unavailable, and
- the basis for access to which is made publicly known to the parents and guardians of the children referred to in point (a) above.

It is the responsibility of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of school age children and the above legislation authorises Tusla to assess compliance with the Regulations.

Inspection Methodology:

The inspection is unannounced to assess compliance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018), Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, and the Child Care Act 1991, Section 58 as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

The findings on inspection are gathered through a triangulation method, including:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation.
- Direct observation.
- Discussion with relevant staff.

This inspection aims to determine the extent to which service is appropriate for the care, safety, and wellbeing of children in accordance with the regulations cited above.

Inspection findings are documented in the School Age Services 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 corrected the non-compliance and how they will prevent them 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 CAPA 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.

Acknowledgements:

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the co-operation of the children, registered provider, person in charge, and staff who were present on the day of inspection.

Summary of Findings:

On the day of inspection, the registered provider was found to be compliant in:

- Regulation 8: (1) (a)(b)(c)(d) (2): Vetting disclosures;
- Regulation 9: (1)(2)(4): Staffing levels;
- Regulation 10: Policies;
- Regulation 12: Insurance;
- Regulation 13: Complaints;
- Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures

- (1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service 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.*
- (2) The procedures specified in paragraph 1 shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the school age service.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

(1)(a)(b)

Two written and validated references were held on file in respect of the six staff members working in the service, the bus driver and the registered provider.

(c)

A Garda vetting was held on file in respect of all staff working in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

International police vetting was available in respect of one staff member who had lived outside of the state for over six consecutive months as an adult.

(2)

Records available confirmed that all the necessary vetting procedures as specified in paragraph 1 were conducted prior to the appointment of staff to work in the service.

Regulation 9: Staffing levels

- (1) *Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of competent and suitable adults on the premises while the service is operating.*
- (2) *Without prejudice to paragraph (1), a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is a minimum ratio of 1 adult to 12 children at all times while the service is operating.*
- .
- (4) *A registered provider of a school age service shall ensure that the school age children attending the service are appropriately supervised at all times.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

- (1)
- Two staff members cared for four preschool children at 1.40p.m. in the service and on arrival of the inspectors. On departure of preschool children and the arrival of school age children, 4 staff cared for a total of 17 children in the service in the afternoon.
- (2)
- Records of children's attendance and staff rosters were reviewed for the month of March 2025. Records reviewed confirmed that the maximum number of children in daily attendance was 18 children with 4 staff members present on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and 3 staff members present on Thursdays and Fridays.
- (4) Children were observed to be appropriately supervised by staff. Staff were observed to assist children indoors while completing homework. Staff kept observation over children while they played freely outside.

Regulation 10: Policies of a school age service

A registered provider of a school age service shall ensure that the policies and statements specified in Schedule 6 are in place for the service.

Regulatory Requirement Met

The following policies were assessed and contained information to support the staff in their care practices:

- Complaints policy
- Policy on managing behaviour
- Policy on the dropping off and collection of children

The inspectors reviewed the above policies, and they contained the information required as per Schedule 6 of the regulations to support staff in their practice.

Regulation 12: Insurance

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

Regulatory Requirement Met

The service was insured to provide care for 27 school age children attending the service. The insurance was valid from 28 March 2024 to 27 March 2025.

Regulation 13: Complaints

- (1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies—*
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*
- (2) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that—*
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the school age service, and*
 - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.*
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall—*
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and*
 - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

(1)(a)(b)(c)

The complaints policy was available for review by the inspectors. The policy detailed the procedure of how to make a complaint and how the complaint would be dealt with. It outlined that the complainant would be kept informed of the complaint's procedure. There was a child friendly complaints policy outlining how the children could make a complaint if required.

(2)(3)

The registered provider advised the inspectors that no complaints had been received by the service.

Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013

It shall be the duty of every person providing an early years service to take all reasonable measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending the service and to comply with regulations made by the Minister under this Part.

Regulatory Requirement Met

During the inspection the inspectors observed the health, safety and welfare of children being supported by the following:

- The door to the service was secure and remained secure throughout the inspection.
- Staff were observed speaking to children in a kind and respectful way.
- The children appeared happy and were observed completing homework with staff providing help when needed.
- The children engaged in energetic play outside with the children competing against the staff in an obstacle course.
- Staff in the service confirmed to the inspector that they had read the Child Protection Policy and were aware of the Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Liaison Person in the service. Training records held on file evidenced that all staff had read the services Child Protection Policy.
- Hard copies of the service policies and procedures were available in the hallway in the service for staff working in the service to refer to and for parents to view on request. The registered provider advised that the policies and procedures including any updates were sent electronically to staff and parents.
- Safety belts were provided for children in the services transport bus for school collection. A child friendly collection policy was available to the children which detailed how the children would be collected and transported to the service.
- The inspector reviewed the accident and incident book for the school age service. Incidents recorded for the 11th and 15th February 2025 were observed to be signed by the staff member who witnessed the incident and a parent of the child on collection in keeping with the accident and incident policy for the service.