

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2024DY002
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Name of Service:	The Happy Castle Creche
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Address of Service:	Scoil Ui Chonail GAA Club, 95 Clontarf Road, Dublin 3
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Eircode:	D03 F862
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Name of Registered Provider:	Rachel Doherty
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	05/12/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	17
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Floor 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Finnegan Hayes
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

The Happy Castle Creche is a privately operated childcare service which uses two rooms in a GAA club in a residential area; one care room is currently in use for early years children. The service offers full day care to children aged 2-6 years from 8am to 5:45pm, Monday to Friday and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. An enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the service.

Staffing

The registered provider employs five staff to work directly with the early years children two of whom were present on the day of inspection including the person in charge. Three additional staff are also employed to work with school aged children in the service. The registered provider does not work directly with the children in the service but did attend the service to support the 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 announced and focused on the area of governance and health, welfare and development of child. 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, 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)(b) The service had a designated person in charge and a designated person to deputise as required. A named person in charge is present in the service at all times during the opening hours.
- (2) Discussion with the registered provider and a review of the roster showed there are five staff employed to work directly with the early year's children. The full file of these five staff were reviewed. Garda vetting declarations for three staff who work with the school aged children were also reviewed as they have access to early years children in the service.
- (a) Seven written and verified references were available from a previous employer in relation to four staff members.
- (b) Three written and verified references were available from a source other than a previous employer in relation to two staff members.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for eight staff members. 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 for two staff members who had lived in a country other than Ireland for a period of six months or more.
- (4) Evidence was available to show that five staff members who worked directly with the children held at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) (2) The registered provider ensured there was adequate staff available to care for the children and ratios were observed to be maintained throughout the inspection; Two staff were caring for 17 children aged 3-4 years.

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic Needs:

- The service had a calm and welcoming atmosphere, and children were observed to be engaged in a range of activities when the inspector arrived in the service.
- The service operates had a weekly menu in line with their healthy eating policy. The menu consists of two meals and two snacks; Dinner and two snacks are provided by the service while tea is provided by the parents.
- Water was available and accessible to children on a low shelf in the care room.
- A cosy area which consisted of a mat and bean bags was available for children who needed to rest or take a break from activities.
- Children were dressed appropriately for the weather during outdoor time and were observed wearing winter coats and hats.

- Transitions were managed effectively, and a calm atmosphere was maintained. Staff provided a verbal cue when transitions were due to begin, and children were given time to finish playing and prepare for the transition.

Physical and Material environment:

- The care room had clearly defined play areas and was stocked with a variety of materials and equipment suited to the age and developmental stage of the children. Adequate props and supporting equipment were available in each area to extend the children's play and learning experiences.
- Toys and materials were housed on low-level shelving which allowed the children to access the toys and promoted independent play.
- A range of books were available which supported children's engagement in early literacy experiences.
- Children moved freely around the room without constraint which supported the child's need for choice and autonomy in their play.
- A visual daily routine supported children's understanding of the sequence of the day and the concept of now and next which provided security and comfort to the children.
- The outdoor area provided a natural play environment for the children; with areas of grass, bark flooring, decking and wooden play materials. The equipment available included; a mud kitchen with supporting equipment, a shop with food and shopping baskets, chalk boards and two sandpits.

Supporting Relationships around Children:

- Staff were respectful, kind and caring in their interactions with the children and supported children to problem solve and redirecting play when risks were observed.
- Staff were observed to engage the children in play and conversation supporting their relationships.
- A key worker system was in place in the service which promoted familiarity and consistency while supporting children's development.
- Parental information sharing was facilitated through a parent noticeboard which showed the service menu, staff photos and service information and an electronic software application which was used to share details of the children's day with the parents including food and activities.