

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK083
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Name of Service:	Happy Times Preschool
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Address of Service:	St. Brigids Church Hall, St Patricks Road, Hilltop, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 R9H6
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Name of Registered Provider:	Maeve Daly, Patricia Kiely
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	05/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	21	PM	13
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Year Inspectorate Office, Estuary House 2 nd Floor, Henry Street, Limerick.
Inspection undertaken by:	M Riordan
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).

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Description of service

Happy Times Pre-School is a privately managed sessional preschool service, based in St. Brigid's Community Hall on St. Patrick's Road, Limerick City. Operating Monday through Friday, the service runs a morning ECCE programme from 9.00 am to 12.00 pm and an afternoon session from 12.30 pm to 3.00 pm. The facility can accommodate up to 22 preschool children per session. Situated adjacent to the community centre's main hall, the preschool features a well-equipped playroom alongside a well-resourced outdoor play space at the side and rear of the building.

Staffing

There are 2 registered providers who work together at the facility each day. An additional 2 staff members assist them for both the morning and the afternoon session. All four staff were present on the day, when the unannounced inspection was carried out.

All staff working at the service have achieved a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education. Staff engage regularly in ongoing training and professional development.

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

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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 providers, 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*

(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,*

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(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) The registered providers were available on the day of the inspection and there was a named person who could deputise if required.

(b) The registered providers were present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(2)(a) There were written references available in respect of all staff employed at the service. All references were validated.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, references from an alternative source were provided.

(c) Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána were available for all adults on the premises. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting from another state was not required for any member of staff.

(4) All staff members held the required qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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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) The service operates a morning session and an afternoon session. On the day of the inspection there were 21 preschool children present with 4 staff for the morning session, and 13 children present with 4 staff for the afternoon session. The adult child ratio was correct.
- (3) At all times the service ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to in the service.

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

BASIC NEEDS:

The service implemented a healthy eating policy, with staff providing a nutritious snack every day for the children. A wide variety of fruits, breads, crackers and noodles were served on the day of the inspection. Children helped with the preparing and the serving of the lunch. A fridge was provided for the safe storage of perishable foods and children's drinks were easily accessible to them throughout the session.

The toilet facilities next to the preschool room were freely accessible, allowing staff to maintain adequate supervision of the children at all times. Nappy changing facilities were available if needed. The library corner offered soft furnishings for relaxation.

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Outdoors, children had access to a well-equipped play areas for active play.

Supporting Relationships around children.

The service promoted a strong sense of belonging, connectedness, and wellbeing through the development of positive relationships with parents and guardians of the children. Prior to enrolment, the registered providers conducted meetings with prospective families to facilitate tours of the pre-school and present school policies. Ongoing parental engagement was sustained through maintaining an open-door policy and encouraging daily informational exchanges during arrival and departure times. Parents were invited to attend a teddy bears picnic with the children each year in the service. Peer relationships were developed through a structured balance of small and large group activities, which successfully fostered cooperation, collaboration, and group cohesion. Collaborative transition planning for children moving to local primary schools took place with teachers from the local school visiting the service to meet the children before they enrolled. Organisational stability was influenced by the long-term retention of the same core staff team

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The service operates from a spacious, well-resourced preschool room with direct access to an adjacent large community hall, which accommodates active sports during inclement weather. To the rear of the premises, a well-structured outdoor space featured synthetic grass, offering dedicated areas for gardening, digging, climbing, balancing, and imaginative play. Inside, the classroom was organised into distinct, accessible interest areas. A comfortable library corner equipped with a large soft couche, floor mats, blankets, and cushions served as a quiet rest area where children relaxed during story time. Messy play and sensory exploration was facilitated through large sand trays, while low-level, open shelving displayed lots of clearly labelled toy boxes. Waist-high tables and chairs serve dual purposes for tabletop activities and dining. Art and mark-making materials were stored within easy reach to promote independence, and children's artwork and educational posters were displayed at eye level throughout the room.

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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 internal and external doors to the premises were secured. Staff allowed access to all who entered the facility. All outdoor play areas were enclosed with high railings and gates, ensuring children could not leave this area of the service unsupervised. Children were supervised at all times when outdoors. All toys and play equipment were noted to be in good condition and free from pinch and crush points. All hazardous cleaning agents were stored out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

The service was cleaned on a regular basis with a high standard of operational hygiene noted in all areas of the preschool. A detailed cleaning programme was in place. All tabletop surfaces were cleaned prior to and after mealtimes.

Fire Safety:

All fire exits from the premises were clear and unobstructed.

Outing:

Plans were in place for all children to visit a local farm and parents were invited to attend the outing if they wished.

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.*

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Compliance Information

(a) The building appeared to be of sound and stable structure both internally and externally and no obvious defects were noted on inspection.

(b) The premises indoors and outdoors appeared safe and secured. A buzzer system on the entrance door ensured all who entered the premises were checked in by an authorised person.

(c) All areas were well lit by natural light and by artificial light when needed. There was no evidence of mould, mildew, stale smells, stuffiness or condensation.

(d) All areas inside and outside were well maintained, and routine cleaning schedules were in place for all internal and external areas.

(e) There were an adequate number of toilets, and wash hand basins in the service for the number of children and adults present each day. A disability access toilet was available if required. A nappy changing facility was also available.