

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015OY006
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Name of Service:	Happy Days Pre-School
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Address of Service:	21 Pairc na hEórnán, Ballinagar, Co. Offaly
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Eircode:	R35 DT89
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sarah Cuskelly
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	11/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	14
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly R35 K1W4
Inspection undertaken by:	R Flynn
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 Days Preschool is a sessional service offering morning and afternoon care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years, Monday to Friday between 08.45-11.45pm and 12:00-15:00pm. The preschool operates from a two-story domestic dwelling located in a residential area in the town of Ballingar, Co Offaly. The premises consists of a hallway and two preschool rooms incorporated into one large pre-school room. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the back of the premises. Car parking and set down is available on the road outside the preschool.

Staffing

The registered provider employs three adults to work in the service. The registered provider works directly with the children and facilitated the inspection on 11 June. Three childcare staff were present on the day of inspection and the registered provider.

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, and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations

- Regulation 9(1)(a)(b)(c), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d),(4) – Management and Recruitment,
- Regulation 11 (1)(3)– Staffing Levels,

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- Regulation 19(1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of Child,
- Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials,
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child,
- Regulation 25(1), (2)(a)(b) – First Aid,
- Regulation 26(1)(a)(b), (4) – Fire Safety Measures
- Regulation 28 – Insurance

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, 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,*
- (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 and a named person to deputise as required.

(b)

The named person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(2)

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the registered provider it was determined that one new staff member had commenced in the service since the last inspection on the 13 January 2025. The staff file of the newly employed staff member was reviewed and the following was noted;

(a)

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One written validated reference was available from a previous employer and

(b)

One written validated reference was available from a reputable source.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all three staff employed and for the registered provider. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was not required for the new staff member as they had not lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

(4)

Staff members working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 6 – 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the preschool children on the day of inspection.

(3)

The ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of the inspection.

For the morning session there were 17 children aged between 3-6 years being supervised directly by 3 adults.

For the afternoon session there were 14 children aged between 3-6 years being supervised directly by 3 adults

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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

Children were observed eating a packed lunch provided by their parents. Lunches consisted of a variety of sandwiches, yoghurts, crackers and fresh fruit. Drinks were provided to the children in plastic cups during snack time and when requested. The children sat together at low level tables while eating and engaging in conversation with each other.

Regular hand washing was observed throughout the morning as children washed their hands before their snack, after toileting and after outdoor play. Self-toileting was supported, and children were supervised as necessary.

Supporting relationships

Staff members were observed to be warm, kind and respectful towards the children in their care.

The service-maintained craft books for each child with children's artwork and photographs of their activities and learning, which are provided to parents at the end of the year. Photographs and names of each child in attendance was placed on the child size chairs.

A family wall displayed photographs of the children and their families. A community board displayed a map of the local area such as the national school, church and preschool. This helped the children feel connected to home and their wider community. Child friendly pictures of the day's routine were positioned at child's level on a door. This supported the children to feel secure and independent. Children and staff celebrated a child's birthday by gathering together to sing happy birthday.

Staff communicate with parents during drop off and collection times. An electronic messaging application is also used to provided updates and announcements.

Physical and material environment

Open shelving displayed a variety of accessible play equipment which nurtured independence, facilitated choice and encouraged curiosity and spontaneous play. The children sat together on child sized chairs when participating

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in tabletop activities such as playing with sand. The children were observed to participate in a group activity of counting, sign language and singing.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

A wide variety of age and developmentally appropriate equipment was available indoors and outdoors. Toys, materials and equipment available for the children to use and play with included jigsaws, wooden puzzles and shape sorters.

Children were encouraged to use the available materials such as beads, wooden puzzles, wall mounted latch and clutch boards for sensory play, and jigsaws which were organised and grouped on open storage units at the children's level.

Defined areas of interest included a kitchen corner, a small world house with play furniture, a low train track table and tool bench. A large range of books and small vinyl couches and chairs were available in the reading area of each room.

Children had access to an outdoor area throughout the day. A large outdoor play area with natural grass was provided at the back of the preschool and a smaller enclosed roofed outdoor area was provided at the front of the premises. Ride on equipment such as cars, tractors and scooters were available to the children in the garden. A tyre swing was located in the outdoor roofed area, as well as a slide, containers of vehicles to play with and a sand and water table in the garden. Part of the outdoor areas was covered with a plastic corrugated roof, which provided for the continuation of outdoor play in inclement weather.

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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 entrance door to the pre-school was securely locked and controlled by staff to prevent children exiting the pre-school unsupervised and to prevent unauthorised access.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. Cleaning products were stored in the kitchen/office area, out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

Liquid soap and warm water were available for hand washing. Paper hand towels were accessible to children from wall mounted dispensers. The children were supported to wash their hands before snack time and after using the bathroom.

Mechanical ventilation was in place in the sanitary accommodation as well as openable windows. The preschool was well ventilated with openable windows.

A fridge was available in the preschool for children to store their lunches and perishable food items.

Administration of Medication:

The registered provider informed the inspector that no child attending the service was on specific medication. Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and was stored safely in the kitchen. No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

All fire exits were clear of obstruction. The fire assembly point was located at the front of the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

Pedal operated bins were not in place in the service for the disposal of contaminated waste. Bins observed in the service had swing lids, staff and children were observed to open the lids with their hands when disposing of waste such as paper hand towels.

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Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

Two new pedal bins have been purchased for use in the preschool. The old refuse bins have been removed from the preschool.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

Photograph of new pedal bins viewed.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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)

Two staff members were qualified in First Aid response (FAR). A staff member qualified in FAR was available on the premises during the operational hours of the service.

(2)(a) (b)

A suitably equipped first aid box was located in the preschool room and accessible to adults caring for children in the pre-school service.

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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 fire fighting 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 recorded on 07 June 2026.

(b)

Records were kept of the maintenance of the firefighting equipment and the smoke detection system which were last serviced on 07 January 2026.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for twenty-two children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2027.