

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2018GY511
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Name of Service:	Happily Ever After
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Address of Service:	Tuam Community Centre, Bishop Street, Tuam, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H54 DK03
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Name of Registered Provider:	Claire McGrath, Sara Walsh
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	26/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	54	PM	42
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspector, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Children & Family Agency, H.R Building, Merlin Park, Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel and F. Kelly
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

Happily Ever After childcare is a private early years care and education facility established in 2018. Service provision includes full day care, part-time and sessional services. Business hours are from 07:30 until 18:30, Monday to Friday, 51 weeks of the year. While registered to accommodate children aged from 0-6 years of age, children currently attending are aged from 6 months to 6 years of age. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated in the morning between the hours of 09:00 until 12:00, school term time only.

The service is located in the town of Tuam in county Galway. It currently operates six care rooms namely: Babies (not in operation on the day of inspection) and Toddlers located on the ground floor with Playschool, ECCE 2, Naionra and a room in use for School Age Care on the first floor. There are three designated sleep rooms in use; two on the ground floor for Babies and Toddlers and one on the first floor for Playschool children. There is a service kitchen on the ground floor, where food is prepared daily in the service and a staffroom kitchen on the first floor of the building. A sensory room and a separate library room are also in use on the first floor. There are adult and children's sanitary facilities available throughout the service along with nappy changing rooms. The office is located on the first floor and there is a large outdoor play area located within the quadrangle which encompasses the inner service walls.

Staffing

There are 17 staff employed by the service, 14 of whom were working on the day of inspection including both registered providers and 2 ancillary staff working in the kitchen. In addition, a student had just commenced work placement.

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

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

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered providers, named persons, 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) The two registered providers were the designated persons in charge and there was a named person who was able to deputise as required.

(b) During the period of inspection, the registered providers were on the premises and facilitated the inspection.

Following a review of the service files and discussion with the registered providers it was confirmed that there were 17 staff members employed in the service. It was noted on the day that there was 1 student on placement. A total of 18 files were reviewed on the day of inspection

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- (2)(a) There were 31 of the required 36 written and appropriately validated references available from their most recent employer for the adults working in the service.
- (b) There were 5 of the required 36 written and appropriately validated references available from a source other than the previous employer for the adults working in the service.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 18 staff and students. The service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years.
- (d) Police Vetting disclosures were available for the two adults working in the service that had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of over six months.
- (4) All adults working directly with children have obtained an award in Early Childhood Care and Education from a Level 5 to a Level 8 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.*
- (8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*
- (a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.*

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered providers were working in the service on the day of inspection. Both were covering breaks and lunches ensuring that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.
- (2) The adult/child ratios were met.
- There were 54 children in attendance with 10 adults and 1 student in the morning and there were 42 children in attendance with 10 adults in the afternoon.
- (8)
- (a) The staff roster confirmed that there were two staff members on the premises while the early years children were present.

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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

Basic Needs:

- A three-week menu plan was displayed in the entrance area of the service for parents/guardians to view. Food observed being consumed on the day was healthy and nutritious.
- Food and snacks were observed to be served regularly throughout the day. The service provided snacks for Babies, Toddlers and Playschool children while the parents/guardians provided snacks for the ECCE 2 and Naionra children. The registered provider stated breakfast was served between 08:00 to 08:30 with children being offered a choice of oat and wheat-based cereals with milk.
- Mid-morning snack was on offer from 10:00 and examples included yogurt, fruit, cheese and bread. Lunch in the Toddler care room, served at 11:30, was observed to consist of pasta with broccoli and tomatoes. Staff stated the older children have lunch at 12:30.
- Mid-afternoon snack in the Toddler care room was observed being served at 14:30 with the children enjoying sandwiches with a variety of fillings including cheese, ham and chicken. Staff stated the older children have mid-afternoon snack at 15:30.
- Additional food was available and children who requested more food in the Toddler care room were accommodated.
- Water was observed to be easily accessible from individual water bottles placed in baskets in all the care rooms in use. Children from the Toddler care room were observed drinking from two handled cups while older children in the care rooms had individually labelled bottles from home. Water jugs were available in the Naionra care room to replenish empty bottles, if required.
- Children in the Toddler care room were observed wearing bibs while eating to protect their clothing.
- Wash hand basins in use by the adults and children were supplied with thermostatically controlled hot water, dispensing soap and dispensing paper towels.
- Rest areas furnished with vinyl seating and sofas were available in each of the care rooms where children could sit away from noisy activities.

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Supporting Children's Relationships:

- Staff members in the Toddler care room were observed practising sign language with the children to ensure that the needs of all the children were being met. The inspector observed one child using sign language to ask for more food in the afternoon at snack time in the care room.
- A key-person approach was in place in the care rooms with named staff assigned responsibility for a designated group of children. Staff in the ECCE 2 care room stated they carry out observations of the children and these were noted to be linked to both national curriculum and quality frameworks.
- Various methods of communicating with parents/guardians were stated as being in use including verbally at hand over in the morning and in the evening. Staff stated a message board was in use in the Toddler care room to ensure messages were communicated to parents/guardians regarding each child's personal needs.
- Staff stated management have an open-door policy regarding individual staff meetings. Planning meetings were held weekly and supervision with management took place as and when required.

Physical and Material Environment:

- Suitable age and stage appropriate tables, chairs and highchairs were observed in the care rooms where the children could sit comfortably and safely while carrying out activities throughout the day.
- The library room was observed in use by children from the ECCE 2 care room who were carrying out movement to music activities. These activities provided opportunities for the children to practice their gross motor skills including coordination, balance and rhythm.
- Children from the Naionra care room were observed in the sensory room, in the afternoon, lying down on vinyl mats listening to developmentally appropriate meditation. The sensory room provided a safe space, where the children were observed to have access to different textures, sounds, lights and movement helping the children to develop their sensory systems and self-regulation skills.
- The fully enclosed outdoor play areas provided alternative changes of environment for the children. A range of developmentally appropriate equipment was provided for both the older and younger age groups availing of the service. Opportunities were provided for challenge and safe risk with balance beams and climbing walls visible. Bucket swings were available for younger children and tricycles and rockers provided opportunities to practice gross motor skills of pedalling, coordination, balancing and core strength.

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- The walls of the care rooms were decorated with photographs of the children and their families, individual artwork and theme related activities. Examples included the story of the Hungry Caterpillar made from children's artwork along with sponge prints of caterpillars on the wall of the Playschool care room.

Planning of Activities:

- Children's language development was supported through one to one, group discussions, singing and storytelling which were observed during the inspection. Examples included staff in the Toddler care room singing various nursery rhymes; Wheels on the bus, I am a little teapot and Dingle dangle scarecrow. Flash cards with pictures and words were noted in the ECCE 2 care room where children were involved in a theme of creepy crawlies.
- Observations and assessments of children were available in the Toddler care room which were furnished to the inspector. Staff stated that these helped create a complete picture of the children's holistic development and informed the planning of activities taking the emerging curriculum of the children into account.

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 main entrance door was secured on arrival. Entry was gained by way of buzzers, identified for each room and a keypad ensuring unauthorised adults could not gain entry and children could not leave the service unsupervised.
- The window in the Playschool and ECCE 2 care rooms were fitted with restrictors preventing children from exiting or falling from them.
- Handrails at the children's height were fitted to the stairs to ensure the children could move safely up and down the staircase.
- Safety harnesses were securely fitted to each of the highchairs in the Baby and Toddler care rooms, preventing children from climbing out of the chairs.
- Cleaning agents in the ECCE 2 sanitary area and in the nappy changing rooms were observed to be stored out of reach of the children.

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- The large outdoor play areas were located within the quadrangle which encompassed the inner service walls. This ensured that no unauthorised adults could enter these areas and that children could not leave unsupervised.

Infection Control:

- Individually labelled containers were available for each child's soother in the Toddler care room and a steriliser was available to ensure soothers were kept free of germs.
- Waterproof mattresses were fitted to the 10 cots in the Toddler care room to maintain hygiene and to protect against potential accidents and spills.
- Single disposable gloves and aprons were available in the Toddler and ECCE 2 nappy changing areas, to prevent cross infection.
- A staff member in the Toddler care room was observed ensuring areas were clean and hygienic after lunch by sanitising tables, highchairs and sweeping the floor.
- Staff carrying out nappy changing were observed wearing single use gloves and aprons, changing mats and areas were sanitised after use and nappies were disposed of in pedal operated bins which were lined with sealed lids.
- Children's belongings were stored on hooks in the hallway and in the care rooms, away from the floor areas.
- Cleaning records in the ECCE 2 care room were noted to be completed and up to date.

Administration of Medication:

- The inspector observed a staff member attempt to give a child prescribed medication, which was prepared in line with the service's administration of medication policy and witnessed by a second staff member. When the child refused to take the medication the staff member recorded these details on the child's administration of medication form and informed management immediately.
- A second record was available of the administration of temperature reducing medication which included all the required information.
- Temperature reducing medication, in its original container with an expiry date of 08/2027, was stored out of reach of the children in the Toddler care room.

Safe Sleep:

- The 10 cots and 3 stackable beds in the Toddler sleep room and the 8 stackable beds in the Playschool sleep room were placed at least 50 centimetres apart.

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- The Toddler and Playroom sleep room temperatures were recorded within the recommended limit of 18-22°C, for children over 12 months.
- A listening device was in use in the sleep rooms monitoring the sounds coming from the children.
- Mattresses were the correct size for the cots in use.

Fire Safety:

- The fire assembly point was in the car park at the back of the service, a safe distance from the service.
- Fire extinguishers were noted to be anchored to the walls of the service on brackets.
- Fire doors were unobstructed, facilitating the quick evacuation of adults and children in the event of an emergency.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Mops and buckets were accessible to children in the outdoor area. The wooden gate to the cleaning equipment area was not secured, posing a safety risk to the children.
2. A broom, dustpan and brush were accessible to the children in the Playschool and ECCE 2 care rooms, posing a safety risk to the children.

Infection Control:

3. The metal pedal on the bin in the Playschool care room was observed to be broken posing a risk of cross infection from the number of children and adults opening the lid with their hands
4. Two vinyl corner pieces of soft furnishings in the rest areas of the ECCE 2 and Naionra care rooms were damaged, and the foam was exposed, making them difficult to clean.

Safe Sleep:

5. Physical sleep checks in the Playschool sleep room were not observed to be carried out every 10 minutes in line with the safe sleep policy of the service, posing a safety risk to the sleeping children. The inspector entered the sleep room at 13:25 and examined the sleep records of 3 of the 8 sleeping children. One of the children's sleep checks had last been recorded at 12:55, 30 minutes previously, while the 2 other children's records indicated their sleep checks were recorded at 13:00, 25 minutes previously.

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Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following statements were received from the registered providers

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- (1) The wooden gate in the cleaning area has been fitted with a hook and eye, not accessible by the children. Staff will supervise children to ensure they do not have access to the area while playing in the outdoor area.
- (2) Brooms, dustpans and brushes have been removed from the care rooms. Staff now store these out of reach of the children. New storage areas are planned to ensure that the children do not have access to these cleaning items.

Infection Control:

- (3) New pedal operated bins for the care rooms and the sanitary areas have been purchased to prevent the risk of cross contamination from the number of hands lifting the lids.
- (4) The two vinyl corner pieces of soft furnishings in the rest areas of the ECCE 2 and Naionra care rooms have been repaired and staff will check and report on any defects as they occur.

Safe Sleep:

- (5) Staff have been reminded of the requirement to conduct physical sleep checks every ten minutes.

Supporting documentation submitted

The following photographs, receipts and copies of documents were received in the office of the inspectorate;

General Safety:

- (1) A photograph of the hook and eye device secured to the gate, on the opposite side to the children, preventing children accessing the area.
- (2) The statement from the registered providers has been accepted.

Infection Control:

- (3) Receipts for six pedal operated bins and seven sanitary pedal operated bins.
- (4) The statement from the registered providers has been accepted.

Safe Sleep:

- (5) The statement from the registered providers has been accepted.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) have been 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) There were six staff members that had acquired first aid training, and one staff member had acquired a First Aid Responder training for children (FAR) established by the Pre Hospital Emergency Care Council.

(2)

(a) First aid boxes, which were easily accessible to the staff members, were observed in each of the care rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) There was one staff member that had acquired First Aid Responder training for children, however the registered providers could not demonstrate that a FAR trained person was available to the children at all times during the operational hours of the service.

(2)

(b) The inspectors observed that the following supplies were noted to be out of date in the first aid boxes of the ECCE 2 and Playroom care rooms:

- 4 x Burn Gel expiry date 19/01/2024
- 5 x 20 ml of saline water expiry date 12/24
- 5 x 20 ml of saline expiry date 12/2021
- Expired antiseptic wipes

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) Two staff have recently successfully completed First Aid Responder (FAR) training ensuring that there is an adult on the premises trained in FAR while the children are present. In addition, a staff member returning from leave is also trained as First Aid Responder.

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(2)

(b) All first aid boxes have been checked and expired items have been replaced. The first aid boxes will be reviewed regularly to ensure that there are adequate supplies that are in date and fit for use.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1) Two FAR certificates with expiry dates recorded as 06/06/2027 were received in the office of the inspectorate.

(2)

(b) Receipts for all expired items and additional supplies were received in the office of the inspectorate. The statement from the registered providers has been accepted.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 25 (1) and (2) (b) have been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered providers presented evidence of the service's insurance certificate which indicated that the service was insured to cater for a maximum of 100 children. The certificate was due to expire on the 27/03/2026.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required.

Compliance Information

(d)

- A new door had been put in place in the cubicle of the ECCE 2 children's sanitary area since the last inspection, ensuring the privacy and dignity of the children using the facilities.

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Non-Compliance Information

- (d)
- (1) A vent on the ceiling in the upstairs toilet was covered in dust impeding the circulation of fresh air. This was observed as a non-compliance on the last inspection carried out on the 11 April 2024 in which the registered providers stated, in the corrective and preventive actions, that the vent was cleaned and would be monitored, this was not found on inspection.
 - (2) There was no door on the staffroom kitchen, which was accessible to the children, where there was electrical equipment, posing a safety risk to the children. This had been highlighted on 2 previous inspections carried out on 18 February 2023 and 11 April 2024 in which the registered providers stated that it had been addressed, however this was not found on inspection.
 - (3) Paint was peeling from a pipe located on the ceiling of the upstairs nappy changing area.
 - (4) Tiles were missing in the adult toilet of the Toddler care room, this was highlighted on the previous inspection of 11 April 2024. In conversation, the registered providers stated funding is now in place and quotes are being prepared for the works required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (d)
- (1) All vents have been checked and cleaned. Management and staff will regularly check to ensure that the vents are clean to facilitate the circulation of fresh air and the removal of stale air.
 - (2) A half door with a secure device, which is inaccessible by the children, is now in place ensuring the safety of the children. Staff have been reminded of the importance of keeping the door secured.
 - (3) The area around the pipe of the upstairs sanitary area has been repaired and painted. Management will check to ensure the area remains in a good state of repair.
 - (4) The area underneath the sink has been repaired and the tiles have been replaced. The tiles will be checked to ensure that they are not damaged and repairs will be carried out, if required.

Supporting documentation submitted

The following photographs were received in the office of the inspectorate;

- (d)
- (1) Photographs of cleaned vents. The statement from the registered providers has been accepted.
 - (2) Photographs of the half door fitted to the entrance of the staff room. The statement from the registered providers has been accepted

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(3) A photograph of the repaired and repainted area around the pipe. The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.

(4) A photograph of the area underneath the sink that was repaired. The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 29 (d) (1,2,3 and 4) have been addressed.