

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY089		
Name of Service:	Happy Ways Creche		
Address of Service:	11 Shanliss Walk, Santry, Dublin 9		
Eircode:	D09 XF99		
Name of Registered Provider:	Miriam Caffrey		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time		
Date of Inspection:	01/07/2026		
No of pre-school children:	AM	8	PM 10

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Area 1 2nd Floor, Unit 4/5 The Nexus Building Blanchardstown Corporate Park Ballycoolin Dublin 15 D15 CF9K
Inspection undertaken by:	T. Nelson
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Happy Ways Creche is a full day care service located in a residential area in North Dublin and is one of three services owned by the registered provider. The service provides full day care for children aged 1-6 years. Children attending the service who are eligible to, are brought from the service to a sister service to participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme which is within walking distance.

The service operates from a purpose-built building to the rear of a residential property and comprises of two adjoining care rooms, Room A and Room B. There is a kitchen, a cot room and sanitary accommodation located off the room.

The outdoor play area is situated to the side of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider employs seven staff to work in the service, including the person in charge, three staff who work directly with the children, two cover staff and a general manager. There were three staff present on the day of the inspection including the person in charge. The registered provider does not work in the service.

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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulations 9, 11, 19, 22, 23 and 26 however, on inspection additional non-compliances which posed a risk were identified under Regulation 29. 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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) The registered provider ensured that;

- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and named person to deputise as required.
- (b) A review of the roster and discussion with staff showed either the person in charge or the deputy person in charge were rostered to be present during the operational hours of the service.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in place, and staff reported being aware of this.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that one new staff member had been employed since the previous

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

inspection who worked directly with the children. In addition, Garda vetting for six staff members whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review.

- (a) Two validated written references were available from recent past employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all seven reviewed. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Documentary evidence was available that established that the adult had lived in a State other than Ireland for longer than six months and translated international police vetting was available for that state.

- (4) Documentary evidence was available that the staff member held a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

Non-Compliance Information

- (3) The documentary evidence available did not adequately establish that the relevant checks outlined in (2) had been carried out prior to the staff member commencing. Documentary evidence showed that the checks required were completed on various dates between 1 and 11 months after the staff member commenced employment. This posed a potential safeguarding risk and may allow unsuitable persons access to the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (3) The registered provider reports they completed a full audit of all seven staff files and confirmed that validated references are in place and correctly dated for every staff member. A document retention procedure was introduced on 14/07/2026.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 (3) has been addressed.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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) On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of adults available to the children attending the service to meet their care needs.
- There were three staff available to 8 children present on the morning of the inspection.
 - There were two staff available to 10 children present on the afternoon of the inspection.
- (2) The adult to child ratios were maintained correctly throughout the inspection. For example; a staff member was rostered to prepare meals and offer support in the room in the mornings where required.

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-*
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

Compliance Information

- (1) (b) Appropriate and suitable care practices were observed, as evidenced by the following:
- Those children using the toilet were respectfully asked would they like to go to the toilet.
 - Staff reported nappy changing is scheduled on a regular basis.
 - Staff were observed to use positive engagement strategies such as praise, encouragement, soft low tones, offering solutions and suggestions. These strategies facilitated and promoted positive behaviours in children.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Children had the freedom to move throughout the care room and independently choose their play activity.
- Staff were observed to verbally indicate the transitions during the day; for example, from play to snack time and prepared the room in advance.
- The adult-led activities such as story time and a dance activity were timed to suit the interest shown by the children.
- Staff were familiar with the needs of the children and were warm and responsive to their cues, for example when the children indicated they had enough of outdoor play, staff responded immediately and came back indoors.
- Parent and family engagement was facilitated by the sharing of information via a software application and conversation at drop-off and collection.
- There was time set-aside for the handover of children returning from the sessional service, allowing for the sharing of relevant information, for example a child had a minor fall in the sessional service, which staff were informed of, and an accident and information record was shared to give to the parents.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured adequate and nutritious food and drink was available for the children. For example:

- There was documentary evidence available that menus were planned in advance.
- The children were provided with a breakfast in the morning on arrival of toast and cereal, a lunch at 11.30am, a hot meal at 2.00pm and a snack at 4.00pm.
- Children were served a lunch of jam sandwich with fruit, and a hot meal of chicken with mashed potato and vegetables. Staff reported that carrots and hummus would be served for the afternoon snack.
- All meals were prepared onsite in the service kitchen.
- Drinks of water were available to the children throughout the day.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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

The following measures were taken to safeguard children:

General Safety:

- The entrance to the service was secured when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service, and entry was monitored via a closed-circuit camera and managed by staff. This restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The internal door was secured with a latch which was up high out of reach of children which restricted their unsupervised movement out of the room.
- Staff were observed to appropriately supervise children in their play, for example to intervene in a timely manner when required and to remove a damaged toy from circulation.
- The kitchen was observed to be inaccessible to children throughout the inspection.
- Staff discussed the measures they have taken to cool the care room in the case of warm weather, for example water play, provision of drinks, closing the blinds.

Infection Control:

- Staff were observed to support children to handwash prior to lunch.
- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and single use hand towels were available at the wash hand basin used by the children and the staff members.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were observed to be clear of obstruction.
- All children were accurately recorded as present on the attendance log.

Outing:

- There was a document available assessing the risk for the children who left the service to go to the other service operated by the registered provider for the ECCE session.
- A first aid kit was taken on this outing.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The following in the outdoor area posed a risk to children:

1. There was stagnant, dirty water in a bucket within reach of the children in the outdoor area. Stagnant water can harbour bacteria which is harmful to children if ingested.
2. The wood surround of the door to the shed in the outdoor area was damaged leaving a splintered and unfinished surface which posed an injury risk to children.
3. The bottom panel of the exterior of the door to the outdoor area was damaged leaving a surface which posed a potential scrape or pinch risk to children.
4. A wooden log and decorative owl which were stacked on a press in the outdoor area were unstable and posed a potential injury risk to children.
5. Trailing ivy which was potentially accessible to children by the bench in the outdoor area posed a risk should a child get entrapped in it.

The following in the care room posed a risk to children:

6. The radiator cover on the radiator in Room A was not secured to the wall and posed an injury risk to the children.
7. Chairs and highchairs were stacked too high in an unstable manner posing an injury risk should they topple.
8. Curtains hanging from curtain poles from the two windows and door to the outdoor play area were accessible to the children. The curtain pole by the doorway was loosely secured to the wall. These posed a potential risk should children attempt to pull at the curtains.

Infection Control:

The following posed significant increased risks of infection for the children:

9. There was a significant build-up of grime, dust and dirt on the walls, floors, skirting boards and other painted surfaces throughout the care rooms and the sanitary area of the premises. This was accessible to the children. This was further aggravated by areas within the premises that were damaged or required maintenance. These are detailed under Regulation 29.
10. The cot mattresses were heavily stained and not suitable for use. It is acknowledged that the person in charge reported that there are currently no children attending who sleep in a cot. This was identified as a non-compliance on the last inspection and the actions put in place failed to prevent a recurrence.

11. Soothers were observed to be stored uncovered and unlabelled on an open shelf in the care room. This posed an increased risk of cross contamination.
12. The material on the booster chairs was observed to be heavily stained, posing a potential increased risk of cross contamination. It is acknowledged the person in charge reported these chairs are no longer in use.

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The registered provider reports that the bucket was removed. Staff were informed at a team meeting and an amended outdoor safety checklist is now in place to check safety issues.
2. The wood frame of the shed door was replaced. Staff were informed at a team meeting and an amended outdoor safety checklist is now in place to check safety issues.
3. The registered provider reports that they are waiting for the door to be replaced. Staff were reminded at a team meeting about checks, and an amended outdoor safety checklist is now in place to check safety issues.
4. The registered provider reports the items were removed on the day of the inspection. Staff were informed at a team meeting and an amended outdoor safety checklist is now in place to check safety issues.
5. The registered provider reports a contractor was hired to clear the ivy. Staff were informed at a team meeting and an amended outdoor safety checklist is now in place to check safety issues.
6. The registered provider reports a contractor was hired to secure the radiator cover as an interim measure ahead of a planned new heating system to be installed. Staff were informed at a team meeting and a monthly premises check template to check safety issues is in place.
7. The registered provider reports that staff were reminded at a staff meeting the chairs are to be stacked no more than five high and highchairs will not be stacked.
8. The registered provider reports the curtains, and curtain poles were removed from the service entirely on 02/07/2026 and replaced with thermal blinds fitted with cord safety devices.

Infection Control:

9. The registered provider reports that a full deep clean was completed in the premises and an out-of-hours cleaning regime has therefore been introduced with effect from 08/07/2026 to include a monthly deep clean outside operating hours and a steam clean every three months.
10. The registered provider reports the mattress were disposed of and wipeable mattresses were purchased.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

11. The registered provider reports that soothers were removed from the open shelf on the day of the inspection (01/07/2026). Each child's soother is now individually labelled with the child's name and stored in its own covered, sealed container, and this is checked daily by the room staff.
12. The registered provider reports the booster chairs are no longer in use and have been disposed of.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Documentary evidence.
2. Photographic and documentary evidence.
3. Photographic and documentary evidence.
4. Documentary and photographic evidence.
5. Documentary evidence.
6. Photographic evidence.
7. Documentary evidence.
8. Photographic evidence.

Infection Control:

9. Photographic and documentary evidence.
10. Documentary evidence.
11. Photographic and documentary evidence.
12. Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider address 10 of the 12 non-compliances identified. The findings documented at points 3 and 5 remain non-compliant as the registered provider's response did not provide adequate assurance that the non-compliance had been rectified.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 firefighting 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 record of fire drills was available on the premises with the last drill dated as having been carried out on the 2 June 2026.
 - (b) An up-to-date maintenance record was available for the Fire extinguishers and smoke alarms in the premises which detailed that both had been maintained on the 19 November 2025.
- (4) A procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was on display in the care room.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

- A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated
 - (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required

Non-Compliance Information

- (c) The temperature of the care room exceeded the recommended ambient temperature of 18-22°C in a care room. The temperature recorded by the inspector between 11.41am and 12.31pm ranged between 23.3°C to 24.2°C. Staff reported that they had recorded temperatures of over 25°C the week previous when there had been significant warm weather. It is acknowledged evidence was shown to the inspector that the general manager had made arrangements on the day of the inspection to lease air conditioning units.
- (d) The registered provider did not ensure the service was cleaned, maintained and repaired as required. The following was observed which had a significant impact on providing a hygienic care setting:

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

1. The flooring in the care room had gaps and tears which resulted in an uneven surface allowing for a build-up of dirt. The following was identified:
 - There was a large gap by the wall in Room B following the removal of a shelving unit.
 - There was a hole in the flooring near the entry to the kitchen.
 - There was a tear in the flooring near the wall by the exit to the outdoor play area.
2. The flooring in sanitary area was torn around the toilet and piping by the sink, leaving a surface that was not sealed and ineffective for cleaning.
3. The wooden casing for the piping in the sanitary area was not effectively painted, leaving a surface that was not sealed, swollen and ineffective for cleaning.
4. The paint on the woodwork throughout the care room was chipped throughout leaving a surface that was not sealed, swollen and ineffective for cleaning. For example, the radiator covers, the skirting boards, the door frame, the door and the gate partitioning Room A and B.
5. The plaster and paint on the walls were chipped throughout the care room leaving a surface that was not sealed and ineffective for cleaning.
6. Tiles were cracked in places in the care room, for example by the exit to the outdoor area and there was a plastic residue on the tiles in Room A. This left a surface that was not sealed and ineffective for cleaning.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (c) The registered provider reports that air conditioning units were leased the day of the inspection and will ensure room temperatures will be maintained withing the recommended range. Permanent wall-mounted air conditioning/heating units are to be installed in September 2026
- (d)
1. The registered provider reports that a contractor will be engaged with plans for new flooring to be fitted.
 2. The registered provider reports that a contractor will be engaged with plans for new flooring to be fitted.
 3. The registered provider reports that a contractor will be engaged with plans for new casing for the piping to be fitted.
 4. The registered provider reports that a contractor will be engaged with plans for works to be completed.
 5. The registered provider reports that a contractor will be engaged with plans for works to be completed.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

6. The registered provider reports that a contractor will be engaged with plans for works to be completed.

Supporting documentation submitted

(c) Photographic evidence.

(d)

1. Documentary evidence.
2. Documentary evidence.
3. Documentary evidence.
4. Documentary evidence.
5. Documentary evidence.
6. Documentary evidence.

Summary Comment

This regulation remains non-compliant as the registered provider's response did not contain any corrective actions to address the findings at 29(d)points 1 to 6.