

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH034
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Name of Service:	Happy Dayz Creche
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Address of Service:	Sandy Lane, Blackrock, Blackrock, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A91 V832
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Name of Registered Provider:	Deborah McCrea
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	07/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	23	PM	5
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	No.18 The Grange Plantation Walk Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Skinnader
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 Dayz Creche has operated as a privately run childcare service since 2005. They provide full day care, part-time and sessional education and care to pre-school children aged from 3-6 years of age. The service is open from 8am – 6pm each weekday and caters for a maximum of 25 preschool children. The service operates from a purpose-built building in a residential area of Blackrock Co. Louth. There is 1 main care room, a small quiet area outside the care room, nappy changing and sanitary accommodations, a kitchen and an office area at the front door.

Staffing

There were 4 adults employed in the service all of whom worked directly with the children. A student was also employed 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/ 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 -

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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.

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Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

On the day of inspection, it was observed that a new cabin was situated in the outdoor area and children from the Preschool Room were observed to have access to the cabin. It is acknowledged that there was no increase in the number of children attending the service and that a change in circumstances form has been submitted in relation to the use of this new cabin.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

No increase in numbers but a file was submitted and sent back as we did not have the fire certificate on time.
Still awaiting fire certificate.

Make sure all documents are in line and ready to submit before application is opened.

Summary Comment

A change in circumstances submission has been made and remains in progress. The registered provider must ensure that no further changes to the service is undertaken without prior approval of the Early Years Inspectorate.

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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.

(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 system in place to designate a named deputy person to deputise as required. The person in charge was on the premises when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service and remained throughout the inspection.

(c) There was a clear management structure in the service and staff were familiar with the deputy person in charge.

The staff files for all 4 staff members and the student were reviewed.

(2)(a) and (b)

- There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for 3 members of staff.

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- One staff member had 1 written and validated reference.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for all 4 staff members and the student. Garda vetting disclosures were found to be within the 3-year re-vetting timeframes.

(d) Not applicable as following a review of the staff files presented on the day of inspection, international police vetting was not required as none of the staff members had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of greater than 6 months as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that the 4 members of staff, who worked directly with the pre-school children held at least the minimum required level 5 Childcare Qualification or letter of equivalency.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)

- One staff member required a second written and validated reference.
- The student required 2 written and validated references.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A second written and validated reference has now been obtained and validated for the staff member.

The student has now obtained two written references and validated.

Monthly checks or quarterly checks will have to be carried out on all staff files to ensure all are up to date with training, vetting and first aid certs.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of references submitted.

Summary Comment

The Inspectorate reviewed the registered provider's response and supporting documentation. The response is accepted. The non-compliances are addressed.

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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.*
- (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) During the period of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.
- (2) The following adult: child ratios were observed in the care room when the inspector arrived at the premises:
- Preschool Room 1:**
- There were 23 preschool children (aged 3 to 5 years) attending this room with 4 staff.
- The child adult ratios were correct.
- (8) Documentary evidence was available to show there were a minimum of 2 adults on the premises at all times.

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

- There was 1 care room in operation on the day of inspection.
- (1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that children's learning, development, and well-being was facilitated in the service.

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Basic needs:

- The children had free movement in the care room and all children got a change of environment to the outdoor area. The children were dressed appropriately going outside.
- Independence with toileting was promoted and nappy changing facilities were available for any child who required their nappy changed. Nappies were checked and changed as needed. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children after toileting.
- The children in the Preschool Room all brought in their own lunches which consisted of a selection of sandwiches, yogurts, cheese, wraps, chopped veg, rice cakes and bread sticks. Dinners were also brought in by the children and reheated in the service.
- Children's drinks were freely accessible to the children.
- Handwashing was observed before snack and dinner time and after being outside.
- Staff were familiar with the plan in place in the service to support a child with additional needs.

Supporting Relationships:

- Communication with parents was predominantly informal at drop off and pick up. Email and a telephone messaging application were also used. The service stated they operate an open-door policy where a parent is a free to come in.
- The staff were observed to use gentle soft tones and positive language when communicating with children for example " *have I any helpers today?.....I have great helpers*". " *...it will be lunchtime in the next few minutes love*".
- Staff were observed to sit with the children and partake in interesting conversations with the children during snack/ lunchtimes.
- Minor behavioural issues such as pushing were dealt with swiftly by staff and not allowed to escalate.

Physical and Material Environment

- There were a good range and variety of age-appropriate toys and materials available in the care room. These supported many areas of development such as fine motor skills, role play and sensory development.
- Toys and equipment were positioned on open low-level shelving in all rooms which promoted independence and facilitated choice for the children enabling them to choose which items they wished to play with.
- There was a "Quiet Area" next door to the care room where children could take a break from activities, sit, rest and read a book or use some of the dress-up clothes.

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Programme Of Activities

- A daily schedule was on display in the room in pictorial format.
- Planning consisting of the children's emerging interests was on display in the room.
- Activities that promoted the children's language development such as the social conversations between the staff and children were observed.
- Some of the children's art and photographs of activities from the year were collected in the children's scrapbooks – "My Learning Journal".
- Butterfly painting artwork was on display in the service.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. There were sharp unprotected corners on a wooden shelving unit. These were a potential injury risk.
2. The flooring at the entrance to the care room was lifting and a potential trip hazard and falls risk.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. All corners now have been covered to protect sharp edges from causing potential injury or risk.
Check all corners of tables and shelving for risks on a monthly basis to ensure safety of the children.
2. The flooring has been fixed. The registered provider is looking into replacing the lino flooring of the main room. Awaiting a quotation and then confirmation of installation. All flooring will be checked monthly to ensure the safety of the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence.

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Summary Comment

The registered provider's response and supporting evidence has been reviewed and accepted. The non-compliances 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.

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider did not ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service. For example; when the person with FAR training was away from the service on school drop offs or pickups and when away on their lunch breaks.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All staff and students are now fully trained in First Aid. All staff have been FAR Certified as of the 30/05/2026. Check dates and training yearly and plan ahead for any training needed.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of FAR Certs x 3.

Summary Comment

The registered providers response was reviewed and accepted. The non-compliance is addressed.

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.

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Compliance Information

- (1)(a) A record was maintained of all fire drills which had been completed in the service, the last recorded 27/5/26.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarm system dated 08/25.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Documentary evidence was available of adequate insurance cover for up to 45 children expiring on 27/3/27.