

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC002				
Name of Service:	Cottage Childcare				
Address of Service:	Ballymacmoy, Killavullen, Mallow, Co. Cork				
Eircode:	P51 RP02				
Name of Registered Provider:	Yvonne O'Keeffe				
Service type:	Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	22/11/2024				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>9</td> <td>PM</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> </table>	AM	9	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	13 Market Square, Mallow, Cork. P51 DD5Y.				
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel				
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).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

Cottage Childcare is a private sessional early years care and education service in operation since 2013. It is located opposite Killavullen National School in the village of Killavullen, a rural area of North Cork. The service is registered to accommodate children aged from 2 to 6 years of age and opening hours are from 9:00 to 12:30, Monday to Friday, 38 weeks of the year. The Early Years Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated within these hours. Cottage Childcare operates from a converted single storey cottage consisting of a small entrance hallway leading to the two adjoining care rooms namely; Penguins and Dolphins. A kitchen and adult sanitary area are located off the Dolphin care room with both care rooms having direct access to children's sanitary areas. A secure outdoor play area is accessible from the Penguin care room, located at the rear of the service.

Staffing

There are three adults working directly with the children in the service including the registered provider and an adult employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). Two relief staff members are available in the event of staff absence.

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.

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, deputy, 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*
- (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) The registered provider was the designated person in charge and a named person was available to deputise.
 - (b) The staff roster evidenced that the registered provider and the deputy were available, on the premises, at all times.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure available on the notice board in the porch of the Ladybird classroom. In conversation, staff stated they were aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- (2) The recruitment files of all five adults were available and reviewed;
- (a) There were eight validated references from past employers.
 - (b) There were two validated references from sources other than past employers.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all five adults. However, the Service did not adhere to the re-vetting time frames as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.
 - (d) There was an international police disclosure on file for one adult who had lived outside of the State for a period of six consecutive months or more as an adult.
- (4) Qualification certificates on file indicated that each of the five adults had obtained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, ranging from levels 5 to level 7, 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.

(8)
(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1) Observation of staff on the day and the staff roster evidenced that there were an adequate number of adults available while the pre-school children were present in the service.

(3) The adult/child ratios were met.

There were six Penguins and three Dolphins in attendance, aged between 2 years 6 months and 5 years old, with three adults, one of whom was an AIM Support Worker.

(8)

(c) The registered provider, who works in the service, does not operate the sessional service single handedly.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

(a) the name and date of birth of the child;

(b) the date on which the child first attended the service;

- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
- (c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1) A sample of nine children's pre-school records were reviewed, all nine were noted to include the information listed from (a) to (i) above.
- (3)
- (c) The children's pre-school records, furnished to the inspector, were available in the service.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

- (1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-
- (a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child.

Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS:

- The service promoted healthy eating. Children were observed eating nutritious food at 10:40 and again 12 noon which had been prepared by the parents/guardians. Examples included filled sandwiches, pasta, mixed fruit and yogurts.
- Individual water bottles were available at all times from an easily accessible basket placed on a nearby shelf.

- Spare clothes were available for each child. Staff were observed changing children coming in from outdoor play who were wet from experimenting and playing with melting ice in the outdoor play area. Staff interactions were heard to be sensitive and caring with the children.
- Children in both care rooms were observed accessing the sanitary areas independently. Staff were nearby to provide assistance and were heard reminding children to wash their hands after toileting.
- A rest/quiet area was available where children could sit away from noisy activities. The area was furnished with a mat where the children could sit comfortably, and vinyl cushions were available in the Penguin care room. Shelving in the area provided easy access to sensory equipment and nearby lighting helped to create a calm environment.
- Children's independence was promoted with staff observed supporting and encouraging children with self-help skills. Examples included children taking off their coats and hanging them up on individual hooks, putting their perishable food into a basket and their individual water bottle into a basket.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS:

- A keyworker system was in place with staff members assigned the responsibility for a designated group of children. Staff furnished the inspector with daily observations which documented what the child was doing, what they needed help with and what the future plan for the child would be.
- Staff were observed sitting on the floor at the children's level, listening intently to the children's conversations and using strategies to extend their thinking and learning. These included using open questions, explanations and providing feedback.
- Children's behaviour was consistently managed in a positive manner by staff, with an emphasis on positive reinforcement and encouragement.
- Various forms of communication were stated as being in use to inform and exchange information with parent's guardians. Examples included a messaging application, email and verbally at drop off and collection times. A staff member furnished the inspector with the latest news reel which was sent to parents/guardians at the end of the previous week. It contained photographs of the children involved in various themed activities.
- Staff stated meetings take with the registered provider each Wednesday and appraisals take place each term. The inspector was presented with written details of recent weekly meetings, dated 20 November and 6 November 2024, which included topics such as planning, activities, critical incident training and cultural resources.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The care rooms were laid out in clearly defined areas with equipment and resources which provided play opportunities to enhance the learning needs of the children across all developmental areas.
- Toys and resources were accessible from drawers and baskets positioned on low-level shelving which the children could easily access. These offered the children choice and promoted independence.
- The walls were decorated with a wooden visual daily schedule with pictures of the children in the service portrayed in each part of the schedule, photographs of the children at play
- The secure outdoor area offered an alternative play environment. Children playing outdoors were observed to have access to toys and equipment such as bikes, ride-ons, cars and balls which provided opportunities for the children to practice their gross motor skills of cycling, throwing and catching. Sand was available for sensory play while the playhouse and the mud kitchen offered opportunities for role and imaginary play.

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES:

- Observations, linked to Aistear the curriculum framework, were furnished to the inspector which documented each child's personal development and interests. These observation informed the planning of the curriculum. Projects detailing children's emergent interests, including a project on swimming, were visible on the walls of the service.
- Children's language was supported through one to one and group discussions, songs and storytelling which were observed throughout the inspection. Staff and children were heard singing theme related songs, a polar bear action song, and guessing the animals with verbal clues.

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. The registered provider answered the doorbell ensuring that no unauthorised adult could gain entry. The inside of the door was secured with a thumb twist cylinder and a security device preventing children leaving the service unsupervised.
- Internal doors, including the kitchen, were secured to prevent children from accessing unsafe areas.
- Window openings were inaccessible by the children, preventing the risk of any accidents occurring.
- Indoor and outdoor toys appeared in good condition and were well maintained.
- No flexes or cables were visible in the care rooms.
- Cleaning agents were stored in a container in the adult toilet which was inaccessible to the children.
- A staff member in the Dolphin care room was observed clearing up spillages on the floor at the sink area in the children's sanitary area preventing the children from slipping on the wet floor.
- The outdoor area was secured with high metal panelling. A wooden gate, located on the perimeter fencing was fitted with a safety device ensuring that children could not leave the area unsupervised.

Infection Control:

- On arrival staff were observed storing a basket with children's perishable food into a fridge to prevent the food from deteriorating.
- The sinks in use by the adults and children were supplied with thermostatically controlled hot water, ranging from 35.1°C to 37.2°C, dispensing soap, paper towels and hand dryers. Pedal operated bins were available for the disposal of paper waste.
- Child friendly handwashing pictures with words were visible at the sinks in the children's sanitary area providing a visual reminder of the steps for hygienic health practices.
- Toilet cleaning routines were noted to be completed and up to date, ensuring the areas were kept sanitised.
- Children were observed washing their hands regularly including before and after food, after toileting and coming in from outdoor play.

- Staff were observed sanitising the tables and sweeping the floor ensuring the areas were hygienic and clean.

Administration of Medication:

- Temperature reducing medication was stored in its original container on a high shelf inaccessible by the children in the kitchen.

Safe Sleep:

- No children were observed sleeping on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Firefighting equipment was secured with brackets on the walls of the service.
- The fire assembly point was visible on a wall opposite the service, a safe distance away.
- The emergency fire doors were unobstructed facilitating the quick and safe evacuation of the children and adults in the event of an emergency.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

(1) Garda vetting was available for all five adults. However, one vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI- RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider;

General Safety:

(1) The Garda vetting application was submitted on the day of inspection.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

(1) A copy of a Garda vetting disclosure was received in the office of the inspectorate for one adult for whom it was required.

Summary Comment

The action taken by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 23.

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 First Aid Responder certificates on file along with the staff roster indicated that staff trained in first aid were available at all times while the pre-school children were in the service.

(2)

(a) (b) A well-stocked first aid box, easily accessible to the adults at all times, was available throughout the inspection process.

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.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(c) an authorised person.

(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) The registered provider furnished the inspector with the details of the latest fire drill which had been recorded on 25 October 2024. Previous fire drill records indicated that fire drills are carried out on a monthly basis, as required.

(b) Documentation detailing the recent servicing of both the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms were noted to have been dated August 2024.

(2)

(c) The records referred to in paragraph (1) were open to review by the inspector on the premises.

(4) The notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was observed on the wall of the entrance hallway.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the service was insured. Documentation was available which stated that the service was insured for 31 children on a sessional basis. The expiry date was recorded as 27 March 2025.