

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC021				
Name of Service:	Anchor Playschool Meelin Limited				
Address of Service:	Community Centre, Meelin, Co. Cork				
Eircode:	P51 WP5W				
Name of Registered Provider:	Tina Dunston				
Service type:	Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	11/10/2024				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>5</td> <td>PM</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> </table>	AM	5	PM	N/A
AM	5	PM	N/A		
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

Anchor Playschool Meelin LTD is a private sessional service in operation since 2020, currently under new management since September 2023. The service is registered to accommodate children aged from 2 – 6 years of age and operating hours are from 9:00 until 12 noon, Monday to Friday, 38 weeks of the year. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated within these hours. A school age service is in operation in the morning from 7:00 until 9:00 and in the afternoon from 13:40 until 18:30.

The service is located in the rural village of Meelin in North Cork. It operates from a room within the community centre, which is located directly opposite the local national school. The playschool is accessed through a secure outdoor play area, situated to the side of the building, which is covered and leads directly into the playroom. Within the playroom the children have direct access to a sanitary area and a large community hall. There are three adult sanitary facilities - one of which has a nappy changing area, a separate meeting room and a kitchen situated to one side of the community hall area.

Staffing

There are three adults employed in the service; two of whom were working directly with the children on the day of inspection. The registered provider was not service based.

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. 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 manager, deputy 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 ensured that there was a designated person in charge and a named person available to deputise.
 - (b) The staff roster evidenced that both the designated person in charge and the named persons are available, on the premises, while the pre-school children are present.
 - (c) Staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities in the service.
- (2) Recruitment files, of the three adults working directly with the children in the service, were reviewed;
- (a) (b) There were six validated references; five from past employers and one from a source other than a past employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all three adults, demonstrating compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) No international police vetting was required as none of the adults had lived outside of the State for a period of six consecutive months or more as adults.
- (4) Qualification certificates on file, for the three adults, indicated that each had obtained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, at level 5 or above, the National Framework of Qualifications.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that there were, at all times, an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.
- (3) The adult/child ratios were met. There were five children in attendance with two adults during the sessional 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, and*
- (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

BASIC NEEDS:

- Staff stated breakfast in the breakfast club is available from 8:00 until 9:00 in the morning and consists of oat or wheat-based cereal.
- Morning snack, provided by the parents/guardians, was observed being served in the playroom after 10:30. The food which included ham sandwiches, cheese, yogurt and peppers was observed to be healthy and nutritious in line with the service's healthy eating policy.

Alternative food was available should a child be hungry or not like the snack they had in their snack box. In conversation, staff stated no children had allergies.

- Cutlery and crockery were readily available, and the children were observed drinking from individual water bottles.
- Children were observed using the toilets independently and staff were available nearby to supervise handwashing.
- Children were observed to be dressed appropriately, with hats and coats on, for outdoor play. Staff were noted assisting children with zips on their jackets to ensure they were warm while playing outdoors.
- There was space for the children to move and explore in both the indoor and outdoor play areas.
- Staff were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours; the inspector observed a staff member reminding a child to use gentle hands while involved in a dispute over a toy with another child.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS:

- Staff were observed engaging positively with the children throughout the morning. During table top activities staff were heard praising children's efforts and giving encouragement in relation to each child's chosen activity. Examples included children completing a marble run on the floor and staff sitting with the children making suggestions and listening to the children's ideas while acknowledging their achievements.
- Various methods of communication were stated as being in use to communicate and exchange information with parents/guardians. Staff stated in conversation that they speak with parents/guardians at drop off and collection times and that there is both an instant group and individual messaging system in place.
- Staff stated informal meetings take place daily in regards to planning of activities and any issues that arise. The short-term planning of activities and curriculum were visible on the notice board in the service.
- The inspector observed that staff communicated with each other throughout the morning in relation to the children and their needs.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The indoor and outdoor areas were laid out to facilitate sensory experiences through arts and crafts in the indoor area and a sand trough in the outdoor play area.
- A range of equipment was available which promoted opportunities for imaginary play including a home corner with a kitchen, dolls and clothing.

- A range of books were available in the rest/quiet area in a basket which supported the children's language, and a staff member was heard reading a book about colours and emotions in which the children were encouraged and prompted to express their views.
- The equipment and resources were stored on low-level shelving making them easily accessible while promoting choice for the children and encouraging independence.
- The outdoor play area provided an alternative learning environment where opportunities were available for practicing gross motor skills of climbing and sliding on the slide. A mud kitchen with resources was available for imaginary play and sand was available for sensory play. The area was covered overhead facilitating outdoor play in all weathers.

Non-Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS:

- (1) The inspector observed that the rest/quiet area of the service required further development; equipment was sparse and there was no seating available where the children could sit and relax/rest.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider:

- (1) Two child sized couches have been added to the rest/quiet area. Further development is planned with new seating planned. Staff have been asked to inform management weekly of the need for new equipment.

Supporting documentation submitted

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

- (1) Photographs of the two new wooden couches with cushions in place in the rest/quiet area and the new maintenance/equipment book.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 19.

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 doors were secured upon arrival preventing unauthorised adults from entering the service and unsupervised children from leaving.
- The internal door, between the hall and the care room, was secured preventing children from leaving the room, unsupervised.
- Windows openings in the care room were above adult height making them inaccessible to the children.
- All toys and equipment appeared well maintained and in good working order in both the indoor and outdoor areas.
- All flexes and cables were stored out of reach of the children preventing accidents from occurring.
- Cleaning agents were stored in a cupboard in the locked kitchen and on the high window sill in the children's sanitary area, both of which were inaccessible by the children.
- The cord in the children's nappy changing area was placed out of reach of the children.
- Safety matting was placed under the slide in the outdoor play area helping to reduce the risk of accidents.
- The perimeter of the outdoor play area was secured with metal fencing and a metal gate with a sliding bolt, ensuring no child could leave the area unsupervised.

Infection Control:

- Sinks in use, by the adults and children, were supplied with thermostatically controlled hot water, dispensing soap, paper towels and a hand dryer.
- Children's coats and belongings were stored on individual hooks, away from the floor area.
- Staff were observed sanitising the tables after snack was finished.
- Children were observed washing their hands before snack and after toileting.

Administration of Medication:

- Temperature reducing medication, stored in its original container, was available from a high shelf in the care room, only accessible by the adults.

Safe Sleep:

- No children were observed sleeping during the morning session.

Fire Safety:

- The fire extinguishers were observed to be secured to the walls with brackets.
- The fire assembly point was located in the outdoor area, a suitable distance from the service.

Outing:

- Staff stated that no outings take place in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

- (1) Contrary to the service's infection control policy, handwashing practices observed by the inspector were inadequate to control the spread of infection. Staff failed to notice that children disposing of used tissues, after blowing their noses, did not wash their hands. In discussion, staff members were unaware that the children wiping their noses needed to wash their hands after disposing of the tissues to prevent cross contamination.
- (2) The pedal on the pedal operated bin in the care room was broken, posing a risk of cross contamination as the inspector observed children using their hands to open the bin lid to deposit the used tissues.
- (3) Contrary to the service's infection control policy perishable food was not stored in the fridge in the service. At snack time the inspector observed children removing perishable food from their bags which were hung on hooks in the playroom, posing a risk from the food spoiling. In conversation, staff were unaware of the requirement to store perishable food in the fridge.
- (4) The inspector observed that no cleaning schedules were available in the care room or in the children's sanitary areas to evidence that the areas had been cleaned regularly to prevent the spread of infection.
- (5) The inspector observed that there was no nappy bin or disposable aprons available in the nappy changing area to prevent cross contamination. In conversation, a staff member confirmed that they were waiting on both of these items to be delivered.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

The following statements were received from the registered provider;

- (1) A staff meeting was held, and staff were reminded of the importance of handwashing after using tissues to prevent cross contamination.
- (2) A new pedal operated bin has been installed in the care room.
- (3) A new fridge is in operation in the care room. Staff were reminded at the staff meeting of the importance of storing perishable food in a fridge to prevent the food from spoiling.
- (4) A service book with all templates was given to staff. Cleaning schedules are in operation in the care room.
- (5) A new nappy bin and disposable aprons have been added to the nappy changing area.

Supporting documentation submitted

The following photographs and documentation were received in the office of the inspectorate:

Infection Control:

- (1) A copy of a memo issued to all staff with a reminder of the importance of handwashing.
- (2) and (5) Photographs of the new pedal operated bins and the disposable aprons.
- (3) A photograph of the new fridge.
- (4) Photographs of the template book.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances 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) A certificate was available to evidence that a staff member had First Aid Responder (FAR) training completed.

The staff roster confirmed that the person trained as a FAR was available at all times.

(2) (a) (b) A first aid box, located in a cupboard in the care room, was within reach of the adults in the service, and available at all times.

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)

(b) Written records were available recording the number, type and maintenance records of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms. The firefighting equipment certificate was dated October 2023 and the smoke alarm certificate was dated 27 August 2024.

(4) The fire action notice was visible on the emergency fire exit door of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) There were no written records available of any previous fire drills that had taken place in the service. In conversation the manager stated that no fire drills had taken place since the new term commenced in September 2024 and they were awaiting templates from the registered provider. Not carrying out fire drills poses a safety risk for the adults and children in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider:

- (1)
- (a) Fire drill records are now in place and staff will carry out and record monthly fire drills.

Supporting documentation submitted

The following documentation was received in the office of the inspectorate:

- (1)
- (a) A copy of a recent fire drill, documented on the new fire drill record template, was recorded on 18 October 2024.

Summary Comment

The action taken by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 26.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate, with an expiry date of the 27 March 2025, was available to evidence that the service had cover for twenty-two children on a sessional basis.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The building appeared of sound and stable structure.
- (b) The main fire exit door and the outdoor perimeter of the play areas were secured to prevent unsupervised children leaving or unauthorised adults from entering these areas.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d)
- (1) The inspector observed that the hot water tap in the care room was constantly running unless switched off by a mains handle on the wall. In conversation, the manager stated that it was not possible to turn off the tap at the sink.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider:

- (d)
- (1) Arrangements have been made with maintenance personnel to replace the hot water tap in the care room.

Supporting documentation submitted

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

- (d)
- (1) A new combination fitting at the care room sink replacing the faulty hot water tap. The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.

Summary Comment

The action taken by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 29 (d) (1).