

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015CC023 |
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| Name of Service: | Ann Long's Pre-School |
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| Address of Service: | Corbally, Ballinora, Waterfall, Co. Cork |
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| Eircode: | T12 RD74 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Ann Long |
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| Service type: | Part Time |
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| Date of Inspection: | 03/12/2024 |
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| No of pre-school children: | AM | 40 | PM | 13 |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|

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| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurrabraher Cork |
| Inspection undertaken by: | D Prendergast |
| 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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| Conditions if applicable | N/A |
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Description of service

Ann Long's Pre-School was established in 1998 and operates as a play based, early years service, with an emphasis on outdoor play provision. It is registered to provide part time care for children aged two to six years. However, it currently caters for children from the age of two years and eight months. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated from 9.00am to 12.00pm, each Monday to Friday, over 38 weeks annually. The service is open from 9.00am to 2.00pm daily.

Situated in a rural area of Waterfall in Co. Cork, the service is provided from the grounds of the registered provider's private residence. Within the main, two-storey building, there are two care rooms, namely an Seomra Mór, located on the ground floor and the Upstairs room, on the first floor. The third care room, referred to as the Studio, operates from an adjacent single storey building. The children have access to two outdoor play environments on site.

Staffing

Five adults work at the setting, all of whom are involved in the direct care of the children. This includes the registered provider, and one adult employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) support scheme. All five of the adults have achieved a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education. A student was also undertaking a work placement at the time of the inspection.

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-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

(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 designated person in charge of operating the service was the registered provider. The requirement for a deputy person in charge was also met and was detailed in writing.
 - (b) For the duration of the inspection, the registered provider was available.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of the five staff members and one student attached to the service, were assessed. The following information was obtained:
- (a) A total of 12 written and validated references were required. Ten of these references were from previous employers.
 - (b) Two written and validated references were from sources other than previous employers.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all six adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with

the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for 1 of the 2 adults who had lived outside the State, while over the age of 18 years.

(4) Records demonstrated that five of the adults had achieved a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, ranging from level 6 to 8, on the National Framework of Qualifications. A qualification was not required in respect of the student.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)

(d) The required police vetting was unavailable for one of the adults who had resided in another jurisdiction for a period that exceeded six consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The written reply from the registered provided outlined that the staff member has applied for the required police clearance, from the relevant country. Going forward, the registered provider will ensure that staff have the correct police clearance in place.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the completed police vetting application and an excerpt from the staffing policy.

Summary Comment

The proof of application for police vetting is accepted as meeting the Regulatory requirement. This will be viewed at the next inspection.

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) At all times during the period of inspection, it was observed that there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in attendance.

(2) Adequate adult to child ratios were observed in all care rooms, which were in operation as follows, during the sessional service:

| Room Name and Age Range of Children | Number of Children Present | Number of Adults Present |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| An Seomra Mór (3 – 4 ½ years) | 21 | 2 + 1 AIM support |
| Upstairs Room (3 - 4 years) | 9 | 1 |
| The Studio (2 years and 11 months - 3 ½ years) | 10 | 1 |

Thirteen of these children remained to attend part time care, with two adults available. The student was not included in the adult child ratios.

Non-Compliance Information

- (8)
- (a) Review of the staff and child attendance records indicated that a minimum of two adults were not consistently present throughout the hours of operation, as required. This practice was confirmed during discussion with the registered provider. For example, the records demonstrated that on 29 November and on 2 December, only one adult was present in the service from 1.00pm to 2.00pm, during which time children were also in attendance.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has extended the hours of qualified staff, who previously finished at 1pm. These staff members will now work until 2pm. As a preventive measure, it will be ensured that two qualified staff are present at all times, during the part time service.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of signed statements from two staff members, confirming that they have increased their working hours and an excerpt from the staffing policy.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider was assessed and deemed to meet regulatory compliance with Regulation 11.

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

(1)(a)

Basic needs:

- The children were accommodated to have a snack break at 10.40am in the Upstairs room. During this time, the staff member was observed to sit alongside and supervise the children and offered assistance as required. Shortly after midday, a second snack was facilitated in an Seomra Mór, for the children who attended beyond the sessional service.
- The children’s reusable water bottles were available within their reach, should they require additional fluids. For example, in the Studio room, the children’s water bottles were stored on a low-level table and children who attended an Seomra Mór were observed to retrieve their water bottles from their bags, as needed.
- Boxes of tissues were accessible at the children’s eye level, which promoted the development of self-care skills.
- The children’s independent use of the sanitary facilities was encouraged, with supervision and verbal prompts provided by the adults, as the need arose.
- The layout of the care rooms afforded children the ability to move freely, as they initiated and participated in various activities. Both outdoor play spaces were also utilised during the morning.
- Suitable outdoor clothing and footwear were worn by the children, as they explored and played in the outdoor environments.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

Compliance Information

(1)

(b) Each of the three care rooms included a cosy area, where children could take time to relax. Furnishings in these quiet spaces included cushions, beanbags, a sofa and bookshelves. Stackable beds and linen were available, should any of the children require sleep while in attendance at the setting.

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 entrance doors to both buildings were found to be secure upon the inspector's arrival and were maintained secure when not in use.
- Both outdoor play areas were securely enclosed. A combination of high-level fencing, gates and hedging were in place, to reduce the risk of a child exiting while unsupervised.
- High-level shelf storage was ensured for cleaning agents and aerosols.
- It was observed that there were no electrical cables or flexes accessible to the children.
- Firefighting equipment was tethered.

Infection Control:

- Across the service, wash hand basins were adequately equipped to support effective handwashing. The children were observed to wash their hands after using the toilet, before eating and after returning from playing outdoors.
- It was noted that the tables were sanitised before and after snack time, in an Seomra Mór. The floor was also swept, once the children had finished eating.
- In each care room, the children's perishable foods were refrigerated, prior to the mid-morning and afternoon snacks.
- Individually labelled wall hook storage was provided for the children's coats and bags.
- Open windows in the care rooms ensured a supply of fresh air throughout the morning.

Administration of Medication:

- The administration of medication was not observed over the course of the inspection.
- Medication maintained at the service was stored out of the children's reach and had been clearly labelled.

Safe Sleep:

- None of the children were noted to sleep during their attendance.

Fire Safety:

- The service's fire exits were free from obstruction.

Outing:

- Not applicable, as an outing from the setting was not undertaken.

Non-Compliance Information

Administration of Medication:

The expiry date had passed on one of the medications that were held in respect of a child. This posed a risk that expired medication, which may be unsafe to use, could be administered to a child.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

In her written reply, the registered provider stated that the child's parents have supplied the service within date medication. Going forward, it will be ensured that all medication has not passed the expiry date.

Supporting documentation submitted

A photograph of the replacement in-date medication and a written excerpt from the policy on safeguarding health, safety and welfare of children.

Summary Comment

The corrective action implemented 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) The available First Aid Responder (FAR) certificates demonstrated that three of the adults had completed this training. At least one of these adults was consistently on duty at the service, during the hours of operation.

(2)

(a)&(b)

Three first aid boxes were accessible on the premises, with each stored in an area that was easily retrieved by adults, while out of reach of children. Sufficient supplies were maintained and were 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)
- (a) Documentation in relation to completed fire drills was presented for review. It was noted that the most recent fire drill was undertaken on 15 November 2024.
 - (b) The number and type of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in place, were outlined in writing. Maintenance records demonstrated that the firefighting equipment was serviced on 16 September 2024 and the smoke alarm system was tested on 6 November 2024.
 - (4) Fire evacuation notices were clearly displayed in the care rooms.