

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC035
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Name of Service:	Ballyclough Playschool
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Address of Service:	The Community Centre, Ballyclough, Mallow, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P51 E793
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Name of Registered Provider:	Marie Mortell
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	11/11/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	13 Market Square, Mallow, Cork.
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Inspection undertaken by:	B. Fraher and F. Collins
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Title:	Early Years Inspectors
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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

Ballyclough Playschool is a private sessional service in operation since 1989. The service facilitates the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme between the hours of 9.20 am and 12.20 pm. The facility is registered to take children from 2 years to 6 years of age and currently children attending are aged from 3 years to 4 years old. The service is open Monday to Friday, 38 weeks of the year.

The service is operated out of the side room of the community centre and access is through the main hall or through a side entrance if required. The service has access to the community playground on the same site.

Staffing

There are two staff currently employed in the service, the registered provider and on staff member who is working under the Access and Inclusion Model Scheme. An additional adult was available to the service to provide emergency cover if needed.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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,*

(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 deputy was available to deputise as required.
- (b) The registered provider and the deputy were on duty at the service when the inspectors arrived. The staff roster indicated that both were available at the service during the hours of inspection.
- (2) The recruitment records in relation to three staff employed in the service were the subject of the inspection.
- (a) Of the six references, three references were from previous employers with records of validation on file.
- (b) Of the six references, three were from another source other than a previous employer with required records of validation on file.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained and were on file for each of the three staff.
- (d) Police vetting was on file for one staff member who had resided outside of the jurisdiction for a period of longer than six consecutive months.
- (4) The two staff members employee working directly with children attending the service have achieved at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework. The third staff member was the emergency contact person or worked as relief support on a supernumerary basis only, this person did not hold an early years care and education qualification.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The following policies were reviewed and were found to meet the necessary requirements:

- The outings policy
- The inclusion policy, which contained a policy on special needs
- The healthy eating policy

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) At the time of inspection, there was adequate adults available for the direct care and supervision of the children.

(3) The adult/child ratios observed during the inspection were as follows:

There were two adults directly caring for ten children in attendance.

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:

- Snacks which were provided by parents/guardians were observed to be healthy and nutritious. Examples included sandwiches, fruits and yogurts.
- Water was available to the children throughout the day.
- The children were observed accessing the toilet area as required and assistance was given by staff if needed.
- Children who wished to rest while they attended the service could avail of a soft seating area of a child size couch.
- Children had room to move about and explore in the care room.
- A child that required additional support had a 'My Inclusion Plan' completed with the staff in conjunction with the parents/guardians. The staff were aware of the supports that the child required.

Supporting relationships:

- During snack time staff members sat at each table and engaged in conversation with the children, assisting them if needed.
- The children were given sufficient time to finish their snacks without being rushed.
- The atmosphere in the care room throughout the inspection was observed to be relaxed and pleasant.
- Parents were spoken to at drop off and collection where the activities of the day were discussed as needed.
- Staff engaged with the children in both group and individual activities by getting down to their level and maintaining eye contact while discussing, questioning and helping the children with their chosen activities.

Programme of Activities

- Staff supported children to engage in a science experiment with an egg as part of science week encouraging creative thinking.

- Staff encouraged children to practice a new letter of the week, naming objects, people and activities that start with this letter. Children were shown the letter on a large card encouraging the children to learn through sight and sound.
- Children engaged in tabletop activities such as building puzzles with staff, and colouring and writing encouraging fine motor development.
- The staff followed a plan for the day and the children appeared to know what to expect throughout the morning and transitions were managed well.
- The service had a weekly preschool programme. This included circle time, language development, arts and crafts, maths and science, motor skills, both gross and fine motor and sensory play.

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:

- When the inspectors arrived, the registered provider was securing the door to the premises. This restricted unauthorised access into the building and helped to prevent the risk of children exiting while unsupervised.
- The windows in the care rooms were safe and were not accessible to the children.
- The toys and play equipment assessed were in good condition and were free from pinch and crush points.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- The temperature of the hot water varied from 16.3°C to 42.7°C. These temperatures were at a level which prevented the risk of scalding to a child.
- First aid boxes were stored out of reach of the children.
- Sharp items such as scissors were noted to be stored out of reach of the children.
- No electrical cables were seen to be accessible to the children.

Infection Control:

- A cleaning schedule was observed to be in place and staff were seen to clean table surfaces before and after meals.
- Handwashing facilities were accessible to the children, with warm running water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- Lidded pedal bins were in use for the disposal of waste.

- The care rooms were well ventilated with windows openable for adequate air exchange.
- Children's coats were stored off the ground on hooks preventing them from becoming contaminated.
- A refrigerator was available for the storage of perishable foods and staff were seen to place the children's snacks in the refrigerator on the children's arrival.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not observed to be administered to the children at the time of inspection. The registered provider informed the inspector that no child was currently required medication.
- Temperature reducing medicine was stored out of reach of children and was in date.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were noted to be free from obstruction.

Outing:

- The children did not go to the playground on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. There was a large, unanchored shelving unit in the room. This was accessible to the children. This posed a safety risk should the children climb it and cause it to fall over on top of a child.

Infection Control:

2. The inspector observed that the staff did not encourage the children to wash their hands prior to eating at snack time. This posed an infection control risk to the children.
3. The inspector observed a staff member to change a child's nappy to be changed without using gloves or an apron and failed to clean the nappy changing mat following this process. These issues are contrary to the infection control policy which states personal protective equipment is worn and the unit is cleaned following each use. This posed a risk of contamination and cross infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The shelving unit has been secured to the wall. Staff will ensure shelving remains anchored.

Infection Control:

2. The registered provider has stated that the staff will ensure that the children wash their hands prior to eating. This is included in the daily routine of the service.

3. The registered provider has stated staff will ensure gloves and aprons are worn when changing a child's nappy and has also stated that the staff will clean the nappy changing mat following each use.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. A photograph of the secured shelving unit was received in the office of the inspectorate.

Infection Control:

2. The assurance received from the registered provider is accepted that the hand washing policy will be implemented.

3. The assurance received from the registered provider that staff will wear appropriate personal protective equipment and will clean the changing mat following use is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

Following receipt of the corrective and preventive actions and the assurances from the registered provider, the requirements of this Regulation have been met.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) On children's arrival to the service each child was observed to be checked in by a staff member.

(b) A record of visitors to the service was maintained by the registered provider.

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.
- (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 inspector was provided with a list of monthly fire drills which were recorded in writing. The most recently undertaken fire drill was dated the 1st of October 2024.
 - (b) The certification of servicing for the firefighting equipment indicated that it was carried out on the 26th June 2024. The certification of testing for the fire alarms was dated the 20th June 2024.
- (2) (c) All records were furnished to the inspector on request.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedure was displayed on the wall beside the door into the main hall.

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,
 - (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated
 - (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and
 - (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

Compliance Information

- (a) From a visual assessment, the building appeared to be of sound and stable structure.
- (b) The building appeared safe and secure.

(c) Within the care room natural lighting was provided through windows, and this was supplemented with artificial lighting. Oil was used for heating the premises.

(d) The indoor care room was noted to be maintained in a clean condition.

(e) Both the children's and adult toilets were accessible in the main hall of the premises. Children had access to two sinks and two toilets and adults had access to one sink and one toilet. A wall mounted changing unit was also available.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) to (6), a registered provider shall ensure that adequate clear floor space is available in the premises for the work, play and movement of children attending the pre-school service.

(3) A registered provider of a sessional pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre shall ensure that a minimum of 1.818 square metres of clear floor space is available for each child attending the service.

(6) Subject to paragraph (7), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are no more than 22 children in a room in the service at any time.

Compliance Information

(1) There is adequate clear floor space provided in the care room, for the free movement of children.

(3) The minimum amount of clear floor space has been ensured. The care room was measured at 49.52SqM.

(6) The registered provider had ensured that there were no more than 22 children in the care room of the service at any one time.