

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC062
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Name of Service:	Bluebell Childcare
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Address of Service:	Cluain an Óir, Belgooly, Kinsale, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P17 D654
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Name of Registered Provider:	Tom Stapleton
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	22/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	74	PM	50
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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).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

Bluebell Childcare is privately owned full day care service, which was established in 2013. It is registered to accommodate children aged 0 to 6 years. This includes children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, which is provided over 38 weeks annually. The service is open 50 weeks of the year, with daily opening hours from 7.30am to 6.00pm.

Located in a residential area of Belgooly in Co. Cork, the two-storey, purpose built premises comprises five operational care rooms; the Sunflower, Snowdrop, Primrose, Buttercup and Marigold rooms. Children's sanitary facilities are available adjoining their respective care rooms and there are three sleep rooms in place. The building also includes a staff room, staff sanitary facilities, an office, a kitchen, a laundry room and storage areas. The children have the use of a designated outdoor play space, at the side and rear of the premises.

Staffing

The early years service employs 18 adults, including the registered provider, who is not based at the setting. Each of the remaining 17 adults are involved in the direct care of the children. This includes the manager, who is available to assist in the care rooms. In addition, a student was 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 person in charge, 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) An adult had been assigned as the person in charge at the childcare facility and the service also had a nominated deputy.
- (b) The person in charge arrived at the premises at the same time as the early years inspector and remained present for the duration of the inspection.
- (2) Since the previous inspection on 31 January 2024, it was established that six adults, including one student, had commenced working at the service. Therefore, recruitment records in respect of these six adults were assessed.
- (a) Of the 12 required written and validated references, 8 had been obtained from past employers.
- (b) A further four of the written and validated references on file were from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all six staff. It was also noted that Garda vetting which had expired since the previous inspection, had been renewed in respect of two additional staff members. This was in compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, which requires services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was available for one adult, who had lived in another jurisdiction for longer than 6 consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years.
- (4) Copies of certificates in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications, or as recognised by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) were available on file in respect of the five staff members. A qualification was not required for the student.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (b) Review of the staff roster and discussion with the service manager confirmed that there were periods during the hours of operation when neither the person in charge nor the deputy were present at the setting, as required. The manager's rostered hours of work for the current week were from 9.00am to 3.00pm and the inspector was informed that the deputy was based at another childcare service for the week, to cover staff absences.
- (2)
- (d) The available police vetting in respect of one of the adults had not been translated into English, by a reputable source of translation.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)
- (b) The response outlined that when the service manager or the deputy are not present, two lead educators are trained to facilitate an inspection and carry out the duties of the person in charge. This is in place with immediate effect. Going forward, it will be ensured that a person in charge is present at all times during opening hours.
- (2)
- (d) The police vetting for the staff member in question has since been translated. As a preventive measure, it will be ensured that all staff members who require police vetting will have their documents translated into English.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1)(b) A copy of the staff roster.
- (2)(d) A copy of the translated police vetting.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted by the person in charge are accepted in meeting the regulatory requirements.

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 policy on Healthy Eating was reviewed and was deemed to include the necessary requirements.

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 onsite inspection, it was observed that a sufficient number of adults were involved in the direct care of the children.

(2) The requirements of the regulation in relation to the minimum ratio of adults to children within the rooms, were adhered to as follows:

Morning:

Room Name and Age Range of Children	Number of Children Present	Number of Adults Present
Sunflower (3 – 4 ½ years)	20	2
Snowdrop	8	2

(11 months – 1 ½ years)		
Primrose (1 – 2 ½ years)	11	2
Buttercup (3 – 4 years)	20	2
Marigold (2 – 3 ½ years)	15	2

A student was not included in the adult child ratios. The person in charge was also available to provide cover in the care rooms.

Afternoon:

Room Name and Age Range of Children	Number of Children Present	Number of Adults Present
Sunflower (3 – 4 ½ years)	11	2
Snowdrop (11 months – 1 ½ years)	8	2
Primrose (1 – 2 ½ years)	11	2
Buttercup (3 – 4 years)	8	1
Marigold (2 – 3 ½ years)	12	2

(8)

(a) At least two adults were present at all times throughout the inspection period. This practice was also evidenced through the staff roster.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

Compliance Information

(1)
(j) A sample medication administration record was reviewed on the digital application, that was used to record this practice. Written parental consent had been obtained for staff to administer specifically prescribed medication and said information was presented for review.

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:

- On the day of the inspection, the children were accommodated to eat and drink at frequent intervals; the mid-morning snack was observed at 9.55am in the Sunflower room, lunch was served shortly before midday in the Primrose room and an afternoon snack was facilitated at 2.55pm in the Snowdrop room.
- Mealtime atmospheres were observed to be relaxed and sociable; plenty of time was afforded for children to enjoy their meals and the assistance offered by adults was appropriate to the children's developmental stage. Feeding bibs were available for the younger children, along with suitable, easily handled cutlery.

- Drinking water was accessible to the older children, should they become thirsty outside of routine meal breaks. In the Snowdrop room, the children’s sippy cups were visible on a high-level shelf and staff advised that these were offered to the children at various intervals during the day.
- Staff reported that nappy changing was carried out frequently throughout the day and as required. Children who were toilet trained were supervised when using the sanitary facilities and were reminded to wash their hands.
- During discussion with staff in the Snowdrop room, it was confirmed that in addition to facilitating routine nap times, staff also accommodated children to sleep according to their requirements, for example, if a child were to display signs of tiredness.
- Each care room included a cosy area, for any child who may need to take time to rest.
- Staff members displayed kindness towards the children and were responsive to their needs. For example, a child who had begun making a jigsaw on a window shelf was offered a chair by an adult, so that they could engage in the activity more comfortably and in one of the younger care rooms, adults were observed to clean the children’s faces, after they had finished eating.
- The spacious layout of the care rooms supported the children to move freely within their environments and to actively engage in their chosen tasks.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The service’s Healthy Eating policy referred to the availability of weekly menu plans, which were noted to be displayed at the setting.
- Daily lunch meals were supplied by a registered catering company, refrigerated on arrival and reheated as needed. The corresponding menus were observed to include a variety of food groups and ingredients. The other meals and snacks offered to the children were provided by the service, apart from the sessional service snacks, which were supplied by the children’s parents or care givers.
- At the time of inspection, the mid-morning snack in the Sunflower room consisted of sandwiches, crackers, yogurt, cheese and a variety of fruit, with water to drink.

- Beef ragu with potato croquettes and vegetables was served for lunch and this was followed by an afternoon snack of soup, with bread. Water was available as a drink at mealtimes.
- It was reported that some of the children had food intolerances or dietary requirements. The inspector was advised that meal ingredients were adjusted accordingly, to reduce the risk of a child ingesting an allergen.
- The person in charge confirmed that additional snacks were available, should a child become hungry outside of the routine mealtimes. This was in keeping with the Healthy Eating policy.

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:

- Entry to the service was via an electronic keypad, located immediately alongside the main entrance door, with a doorbell in use for parents and visitors. Exit through the same door was controlled by a door release button, which was located at adult height. These safety mechanisms ensured that the risk of unauthorised access and the risk of a child exiting the premises while unsupervised, were minimised.
- The outdoor play areas were secured by a combination of walls, fencing and secured gates.
- Visibility markings were provided on glass panel doors at child height, which reduced the risk of a child sustaining a collision injury.
- In the Primrose room, it was noted that the door to the adjoining kitchen was secured by staff when not in use, which prevented the children from gaining unsupervised access to this area.
- Cleaning agents were maintained out of the children's reach.
- Radiator covers were observed to be in place.
- First aid cabinets were either wall mounted at a height that was inaccessible to children or located in an area of the service that was inaccessible to children.
- Firefighting equipment was securely wall mounted.
- There were no cables or trailing flexes within the children's reach.

Infection Control:

- Wash hand basins were supplied with warm running water, liquid soap and sensor operated paper towel dispensers. Handwashing was observed after use of the toilet facility.

- Within the nappy changing areas, the children's nappies, wipes and barrier creams were either maintained on labelled shelves or in individually labelled baskets. Single use aprons and gloves were readily available for use during nappy changing procedures and pedal operated nappy disposal bins were also in place.
- A combination of wall hooks and cubby shelves were used to store the children's coats and bags, above floor level.

Administration of Medication:

- The administration of medication was not observed.
- Medication held at the setting was found to be inaccessible to children, in-date and appropriately labelled.

Safe Sleep:

- The air temperatures of the small and large sleep rooms that adjoined the Primrose room were respectively measured at 21°C and 22°C, while occupied by children. These temperatures fell within the required range of 18°C to 22°C, for children aged over 12 months. The sleep room adjoining the Snowdrop room had a recorded air temperature of 21.9°C, at 12.12pm, when this room was in use by children aged over 12 months.
- Handwritten sleep logs were available for review and reflected regular 10-minute interval checks of sleeping children.

Fire Safety:

- There were no fire safety concerns noted.

Outing:

- Not applicable, as an outing did not take place.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. Thirteen of the 19 cot mattresses in use across the 3 sleep rooms were not waterproof or fitted with waterproof mattress protectors, as required to reduce the risk of cross infection.

Safe Sleep:

2. The air temperature within the Snowdrop sleep room was not consistently maintained within the recommended limit, for safe sleep practice. An air temperature of 21.1°C was recorded at 11.10am, while this sleep room was occupied by a sleeping child, aged under 12 months. The required temperature range for this age group is 16°C to 20°C.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. The response stated that all 13 mattresses have been fitted with new waterproof mattress protectors. As a preventive measure, monthly checks will take place to inspect cots. It will be ensured that cots are clean, that mattresses are protected and that there are no rips or tears.

Safe Sleep:

2. The written reply stated that the air temperature will be controlled by regular ventilation. The air temperature will be checked before each sleep time and the sleep room will be ventilated, to ensure the correct air temperature is maintained.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

1. Photographic evidence.

Safe Sleep:

2. Photographic evidence demonstrating an air temperature of 17.7°C.

Summary Comment

The corrective actions implemented by the person in charge 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)
Current First Aid Responder (FAR) certification was available for one staff member.
- (2)(a)(b)
The service's first aid cabinets were fixed in locations that were out of the children's reach and the supplies within were available at all times.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)
A FAR trained adult was not consistently available to the children, during the service's operational hours. The adult who held FAR certification was rostered to work from 9.00am to 3.00pm daily, during the current week. It was acknowledged that nine other staff members held paediatric first aid certificates, however, a FAR trained adult is required to be available to the children at all times.

(2)(a)(b)
Insufficient first aid supplies were maintained. There were no sterile eye pad dressings available and the small supply of various sized wound dressings were noted to be out of date.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)
Two additional staff members have been booked to attend a FAR training course, beginning on 11 February 2025. It will be ensured that a FAR trained adult is on the premises at all times during the hours of operation.

(2)(a)(b)
The first aid cabinets have been checked and replenished. As a preventive measure, first aid cabinets will be checked fortnightly, to ensure that adequate supplies are available at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1) A copy of the booking confirmation for the FAR course.
(2)(a)(b) Photographic evidence and a copy of the receipt for the purchase of first aid supplies.

Summary Comment

The response from the person in charge was assessed and accepted in meeting the requirements of Regulation 25.