

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015CC073 | | | | |
| Name of Service: | Bright Start Montessori Pre-School | | | | |
| Address of Service: | Southside Community Centre, Sandfield, Mallow, Co. Cork | | | | |
| Eircode: | P51 DK2W | | | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Liz Hourigan | | | | |
| Service type: | Sessional | | | | |
| Date of Inspection: | 19/06/2023 | | | | |
| No of pre-school children: | <table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>25</td> <td>PM</td> <td>12</td> </tr> </table> | AM | 25 | PM | 12 |
| AM | 25 | PM | 12 | | |
| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | 134 Bank Place, Mallow, Cork. P51 EC59 | | | | |
| 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).

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| Conditions if applicable | Not Applicable |
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Description of service

Bright Start Montessori Pre-school is a private early years service offering a morning sessional service from 8.30 am until 11.30 am and an afternoon sessional service from 11.45 am until 2.45 pm. Both sessional services facilitate the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. The service is registered for children aged from two years of age to six years old and currently children attend who are aged from two years eight months old to six years of age. The service operates Monday to Friday, 38 weeks of the year.

Bright Start Montessori Pre-school operates from Southside Community Centre, which is a single storey building, located in a busy residential area of Sandfield in the urban town of Mallow in North Cork. The service is adjacent to Scoil Ghobnatan National School. It comprises two care rooms namely Tiger and Butterfly, three children's toilets, one adult toilet and a kitchen area. The children have access to a secure, dedicated outdoor play area accessible from the rear of the building.

Staffing

There are six staff employed including two AIM Support Workers and the registered provider

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 inspections 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 is the designated person in charge and the deputy is the named person.
- (b) The designated person and deputy were both in the service when the inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection. Staff rosters indicated that either the designated person or the deputy were available, in the service when the pre-school children were present.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in place and staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- (2) Recruitment records in relation to the six adults working in the service were reviewed.
- (a) (b) There were nine validated references from past employers and three from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau were available for all six adults.
- (4) Five of the six adults working directly with the children, all held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 6 or above on the National Qualifications Framework. The sixth adult held a Letter of Eligibility to practise from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (d) An international police disclosure was missing for an adult who had worked outside the State for a period of six consecutive months or longer.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was submitted by the registered provider:

- (2)
(d) International police vetting in respect of the employee is currently being processed.

Supporting documentation submitted

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

- (2)
(d) A copy of a receipt of application from the international police.

Summary Comment

The requirement for this Regulation has been met. The international police vetting will be reviewed on 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.

(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 at all times that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children at all times.
- (3) Attendance records and staff rosters indicated that adult child ratios were met. There were seventeen children in attendance with four adults in the Tiger care room in the morning and eight children in attendance with two adults in the Butterfly care room. In the afternoon only the Tiger care room was in operation, there were twelve children in attendance with four adults.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) A sample of twelve Pre-school children's records were reviewed. Each record was found to contain particulars (a) to (i) above.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;
- (e) the facilities available;

- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the designated person in charge, deputy and staff were available in the staff recruitment files.
 - (b) The details of the class of service and the age profile of children were available on the Tusla registration certificate which was displayed on the notice board in the reception area.
 - (c) Details of the adult/child ratios were available in the policies and procedures folder of the service.
 - (d) (e) The type of care programme and facilities were available in the policies and procedures folder of the service.
 - (f) Opening hours and fees were available on documentation located on the parent's notice board in reception.
 - (g) The policies, procedures and statements were available in a folder for parents and the manager stated that these are sent at the beginning of term to all parents/guardians.
 - (h) Daily attendance, signing in and out, of the children was recorded by staff on an electronic application on a tablet in each care room, these were noted to be current and up to date.
 - (i) Details of the staff rosters were available on the day of inspection, these had been completed up until the morning of the inspection.
 - (j) Twenty-three records of the administration of medication were sampled. These were observed to be complete and included the parent's, staff and witness's signatures.
 - (k) Four accident/incident reports dated from 30 November 2022 until 8 June 2023 were reviewed and were found to contain the necessary particulars.

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

BASIC NEEDS:

- The children were observed eating healthy and nutritious snacks prepared by the parents/guardians which aligned with the service's healthy eating policy. Examples of which included beef sandwiches, crackers, waffles, yogurt and a variety of citrus fruits and berries. Water was available throughout the morning from individual bottles and water jugs.
- Each child had access to age and stage appropriate cutlery and crockery for use during snack.
- Individual inclusion plans were implemented by staff in line with the child's needs. At snack time staff invited a child in the sensory room over to the snack table several times. The child made it very clear that they did not want to leave the area. Staff observed the child and when the child was ready, they made their way over and sat down. In discussion staff stated that this is a strategy they use which works well for the child.
- Children in both care rooms were encouraged to manage their own personal care including accessing the toilet independently, staff were available nearby to provide support.
- Children playing in water were observed wearing aprons to protect their clothing.
- Staff working in the Tiger care room were understanding and responsive to children experiencing challenge in sharing play equipment, suggesting positive strategies for turn taking with toys and equipment.
- Children had room to move and explore in their respective rooms, and all children were observed playing outdoors on the day of inspection.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS:

- During snack staff members sat at each table and engaged in social conversation while helping the children to open packaging. Three children were observed being given sufficient time to finish their snack without being rushed. The atmosphere was noted to be relaxed and pleasant.

- Staff engaged 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.
- Communication with parents was mainly through an electronic application where staff stated parents/guardians are informed and sent pictures of the children's daily activities, examples were furnished to the inspector. The service also sends information regarding trips by email and staff were observed on the day exchanging information with the parents at drop off and pick times.
- Minutes of regular staff meetings were available. Staff stated that informal meetings happen daily and as the need arises with discussions including planning, resources and current issues discussed.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- Both rooms were laid out in clearly defined areas. Each area was equipped with materials and resources which provided opportunities to enhance the learning needs of the children across all developmental areas. Examples included home corners with play kitchens and dressing up, arts and crafts, sensory areas with sand and water, fine skills with threading and pegs, construction and puzzle areas.
- Children were seated at the tables during snack time and tabletop activities. Children sat at a comfortable height as the tables and chairs were age and stage appropriate.
- A selection of Montessori materials was available in the Tiger care room including knobbed cylinders, counting rods, sound boxes, locks and keys and materials for sorting including socks.
- Materials and resources were located on low-level shelving which encouraged independence and choice for each child.
- A sensory room was incorporated into the cupboard area of the Tiger care room. Children could enter through a cupboard door or an opening at their level. The area contained a floor mat, pipes through which the children could drop balls, a black board for mark making, a sensory board with a switch, wheel, artificial grass, abacus and shapes with coloured panels.
- The outdoor area provided a range of developmentally appropriate equipment which encouraged gross motor skills including cycling, crawling, balancing, pushing and pulling. Looking after plants was encouraged with the children able to water their plants which included sunflowers, strawberries, tomatoes and sunflowers. The children got the water from a water butt with recycled water. Sensory play was facilitated with tap water in the tuft tray to wash the babies along with soapy bubbles and sponges. Imaginary play opportunities were provided from a rocket ship made by the children, an area set out as a school bus, playhouses, and a mud kitchen.

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES:

- Each child had a learning journal which gave an account of their experiences in the service. It included observations of the children, linked to Aistear the curriculum framework, along with seasonal artwork and photographs of the children involved in activities. The inspector observed the observations were signed by the parents and the journals were ready to go home with the children on the day of inspection.
- Both care rooms were observed operating activities which encouraged the children to concentrate and listen for short periods. Examples of these activities included a game called pop-up-pirate where the children had to choose and give the colour of the sword before inserting it into a barrel.
- Children’s language development was supported through a range of strategies indoors and outdoors including singing songs including “Twinkle, twinkle little star” and reading stories including “Sally’s amazing colour book”. Both rooms were observed using a bucket with interesting objects such as a monkey who swung on a bar with staff emphasising “Monkey goes up, monkey down, and monkey goes all the way around” all of the children joined in.
- Children were facilitated to make their own choice in selecting play equipment and activities that they wanted to engage in with staff available indoors and in the outdoor play area. Turn taking was promoted in a number of activities including tabletop games involving match numbers and outdoor activities like passing the potato.

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:

- All entry and exit doors were secured preventing unauthorised adults entering or children leaving unsupervised.
- The openings for the windows in the care rooms were located out of reach of the children.
- All indoor and outdoor toys and resources were in good condition and well maintained.
- The heavy equipment in the Tiger care room, including storage shelving, was noted to be secured.
- All flexes and cables were secured out of reach of the children.
- Storage facilities were secured including the oil tank outside which was inaccessible.

- Cleaning agents were located on high shelves and in the kitchen, out of reach of the children.
- Waste indoors was secured in pedal operated bins and outdoors - behind a metal railing which was inaccessible to the children.
- The kitchen area was secured with a gate ensuring children could not access the area.
- The outdoor play perimeter was secured with high metal fencing and a bolted gate.

Infection Control:

- Children and adults had access to thermostatically controlled hot water, ranging from 34°to 38°C, dispensing soap, paper towels, and pedal operated bins for the disposal of waste.
- Adults in both care rooms were observed cleaning and sanitising all areas after the serving of food and between sessions.
- The care rooms were adequately ventilated from fresh air circulating from the open windows and the open door to the secure outdoor play area in the Tiger care room.
- Cleaning rotas were available in each care room which were up to date and completed.
- Hooks were available on the walls for children to hang their belongings away from the floor area.
- Perishable food was noted to be stored in the fridge of each care room, preventing spoilage.

Administration of Medication:

- Anti-febrile medication was available which was in date and stored in its original container, out of the reach of children on a high shelf in the Tiger care room.

Safe Sleep:

- Rest/quiet areas with soft furnishings including vinyl sofas and chairs were available for children who wished to sit quietly away from noisy activities.

Fire Safety:

- The fire door in the Tiger room was unobstructed.
- The fire assembly point was visible on the opposite side of the secure outdoor area, a suitable distance from the service.
- Fire extinguishers were secured to the wall. Click or tap here to enter text.

Outing:

- The sessional children in the afternoon in the Tiger room were going on an outing to Mallow search and rescue. The staff followed their outings policy procedure, for example a risk assessment was viewed which had been carried out, consent had been sought from parents, adults trained in first aid were available, and staff had a mobile phone and contact details of the parents/guardians in the event of an emergency.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- (1) Two children were observed at snack time in the Tiger care room with whole grapes, posing a safety risk from choking. When made aware of this the staff member immediately removed the grapes and cut them up, making them safe to eat.
- (2) A large doll's house in the Butterfly room was not anchored, posing a tipping or falling risk if a child were to attempt to climb on it.

Fire Safety:

- (3) The two main entrance fire exit doors were fitted with key locks impeding the quick evacuation of adults and children in the event of an emergency, should the key not be available.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The following statements were submitted by the registered provider:

General Safety:

- (1) The healthy eating policy has been amended to exclude grapes.
- (2) The doll's house has been removed from the Butterfly room. Furniture which is free standing will be anchored or secured in the future.

Fire Safety:

- (3) The key locks on the two main entrance doors were removed and replaced with thumb twist cylinders.

Supporting documentation submitted

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

General Safety:

- (1) A copy of the healthy eating policy with the inclusion of excluded grapes allowed in the service.
- (2) A photograph with the doll's house removed from the Butterfly room.

Fire Safety:

- (3) Photographs of the newly fitted thumb twist cylinders on the two main fire exit doors.

Summary Comment

The requirements for this Regulation have been met.

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) Certificates were available to evidence that five adults had participated in First Aid Responder (FAR) training.

The adults were available while the pre-school children were present in the service.

(2)

(a) (b) There were two suitably equipped first aid boxes available at all times, these were stored on shelves in the care rooms which were easily accessible to the adults.

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-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
 - (b) an employee, and
 - (c) an authorised person.
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation
- (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) A record in writing was available of the fire drill which took place in the service. The last drills were recorded for both the morning and afternoon session on the 12 June 2023. Previously recorded monthly fire drills were noted on the fire log.
 - (b) Written records were available recording the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms. The certificate for the firefighting equipment was recorded as 26 October 2022 and the smoke alarm certificate was dated 16 January 2023.
- (2) The records referred to in paragraph one were open to inspection by the inspector.
- (3) The registered provider was aware that the records referred to in paragraph two are retained for five years.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were noted in each care room on the wall at the exit doors. It was also available on the notice board in the reception area of the service.

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 is insured. The insurance covered the service for 33 children on a sessional basis. Examples of particulars covered included: Public liability, fire and theft, outings and contents and equipment. The expiry date was noted as 27 March 2024.