

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC088
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Name of Service:	Catherine's Playschool
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Address of Service:	2 Leeview Court, Cobh, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P24 W265
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Name of Registered Provider:	Catherine O'Halloran
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	26/09/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	9	PM	9
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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

Catherine's Playschool is a privately owned early years service. While it is registered to cater for children aged 2 to 6 years, it currently caters for children from the age of 2 years and 10 months. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated from 9.00am to 12.00pm and from 12.30pm to 3.30pm, each Monday to Friday, over 38 weeks of the year.

Located in a residential area of Cobh in Co. Cork, the service is provided from the single-storey extension adjoining the registered provider's private residence. It consists of one care room, with an adjacent children's sanitary facility. An outdoor play area is available at the rear of the building.

Staffing

Five adults are employed at the early years service, four of whom are involved in the direct care of the children. Each of these four adults has attained a relevant award in Early Childhood Care and Education. This includes the registered provider and two adults employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) support scheme. The adult who does not work directly with the children undertakes general maintenance and administration. In addition, there is one relief staff member attached to the service.

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, 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 registered provider was in charge of the early years service and a deputy person in charge was available to deputise, in the event of her absence.
 - (b) The registered provider was available throughout the inspection process.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of the six adults attached to the setting were assessed for compliance and the following was noted:
- (a) Seven written and validated past employer references were on file.
 - (b) A further five written and validated references had been obtained from sources other than past employers.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all six staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

- (d) Not applicable. Review of the relevant documentation indicated that none of the staff members had lived outside the State as adults.
- (4) The five adults who worked directly with the children all held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on 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) At the time of inspection, it was observed that there was an adequate number of staff working directly with children.
- (3) Upon the inspector's arrival, two adults were responsible for the care of nine children, who were aged three to four and a half years. A third adult arrived shortly before 11.00am. There were also nine children, aged three to four and a half years, attending the afternoon sessional service and these children were under the care and supervision of three adults.

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:

- Shortly after 11.00am, the mid-morning snack was accommodated. This was observed to be conducted at a relaxed pace and the adults readily assisted the children to open food packaging and containers.
- The registered provider advised that children who were in the process of toilet training were provided with appropriate support. It was observed that the other children accessed the sanitary facilities independently and were offered prompts and reminders from the adults.
- Children's need for rest and relaxation was met through the provision of a cosy area, where they could take time to read books and relax.
- A box of tissues was available at the children's level, which enabled them to attend to their own personal hygiene.
- Children had sufficient space to move around the care room and explore their chosen activities during free play. Adult led movement and exercises to music, were also incorporated into the daily routine.

Supporting relationships around children:

- Adults were observed to be supportive and encouraging towards the children in their care. For example, one of the staff members communicated in a kind, patient and playful manner as she assisted children with jigsaw puzzles.
- The children were acknowledged for their efforts to tidy up, following free play and had opportunities to carry out 'helper' tasks, such as giving out cups and lunch boxes, which promoted a sense of belonging and working together.
- Teamwork among staff was evident through regular verbal communication in relation to the daily routine and the children's individual needs. The inspector was further advised that meetings were held

approximately once per month, as well as daily informal discussion. A messaging application was also in use, to share relevant information.

- Methods of communication with parents included informal conversation at arrival and collection times, phone calls and a messaging application, which was used to share notices, details regarding upcoming events and photographs. In addition, the registered provider stated that meetings with parents were facilitated as needed.

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 risk of unauthorised access and that of a child exiting the service while unsupervised, were adequately controlled; the main access door was maintained secure when not in use and the outdoor play environment was fully enclosed by a combination of fencing, walls and a secured gate.
- The door that led from the care room to the private residence was secured with a high-level hook, which reduced the risk of a child gaining unsupervised access to this area of the premises.
- There were no cables or trailing flexes accessible to the children.
- Blind cords were anchored with appropriate tension devices.
- Safe storage of cleaning agents was ensured.
- All of the examined play materials were free from pinch points.
- A soft landing area of bark chippings was provided underneath the slide in the outdoor play area.
- The wooden beams in the outdoor sheltered area were padded, which helped to reduce the risk of injury to a child.

Infection Control:

- The adults ensured that children washed their hands before the mid-morning snack and after using the toilet facility. This practice was supported by the availability of warm water and liquid soap at the children's wash hand basin. Individual use cloths were provided for hand drying.
- Perishables snacks were stored in the refrigerator up until the children's mid-morning meal break.

- The care room appeared clean and tidy. Corresponding cleaning records were displayed and maintained up to date. Tables were observed to be sanitised before the mid-morning snack and staff attended to additional cleaning duties in between the morning and afternoon sessional services.
- The children's coats were appropriately stored on wall hooks.
- An open window in the care room allowed for natural ventilation throughout the morning.

Administration of Medication:

- The inspector did not observe medication being administered to any of the children during the inspection period. Further to this, the registered provider advised that none of the children were in receipt of medication.
- Temperature reducing medication was stored safely out of the children's reach and was in-date.

Safe Sleep:

- None of the children were noted to sleep during the inspection period.

Fire Safety:

- A fire drill was conducted, as per the inspector's request. During a brief introduction, the children were reminded of the procedure and demonstrated familiarity with same, when asked questions by one of the adults. The children were then led outdoors towards the front of the premises and once assembled, one of the adults called the roll to ensure that all of the children were present. This practice supported a safe and timely evacuation in the event of a fire.

Outing:

- An outing from the service did not take place.

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) One of the adults held current First Aid Response (FAR) certification and this adult was present throughout the service's operational hours, in accordance with the staff roster.
- (2)
- (a) The first aid box was stored on top of a cupboard, which was inaccessible to children.
 - (b) While the service was in operation, the first aid box was consistently available, should its use be required.

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) Records indicated that fire drills were undertaken on a monthly basis, with the most recent documented on 6 June 2024, before the summer break. A fire drill was also observed on the day of inspection.
 - (b) The number and type of firefighting equipment was maintained in writing. Servicing records demonstrated that both the firefighting equipment and the wired smoke alarm were serviced on 10 January 2024.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were visible in the main care room.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

- The children present were adequately supervised throughout their attendance. This included during free play activities, handwashing practice, snack time and for the duration of the fire drill.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service was insured to provide sessional care for up to 11 children to attend at any one time, as per the available certificate, which was valid until 27 March 2025.