

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC119
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Name of Service:	Curious Minds Pre-School
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Address of Service:	West End, Millstreet, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P51 FH51
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Name of Registered Provider:	Marie Sheehy
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	16/05/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	26	PM	26
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	13 Market Square, Mallow, Cork. P51 5DDY
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Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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

Curious Minds Pre-school is a privately operated early years service which provides sessional, part-time and full day care and education to children aged from two years to six years of age. While registered to operate from 7.15 am in the morning until 6.00 pm in the evening the service currently opens from 7.15 am until 5 pm, 50 weeks of the year. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated in the morning from 9.00 am until 12 noon in both care rooms and in the afternoon from 2.00 pm until 5.00 pm in the Butterfly care room, Monday to Friday, 38 weeks of the year. A school age service is available with a breakfast club in the morning from 7.15 am until 9.00 am.

The service is located in the rural town of Millstreet, Northwest Cork. It operates from a single storey purpose built childcare facility comprising of an entrance area which leads to a large care room (Butterfly) off which there is a second care room (Dolphin), office, kitchen, and sanitary facilities for the children and adults. There are secure outdoor play areas to the front, rear and side of the premises.

Staffing

The service employs ten staff including two adults who work under the access and inclusion model and one maintenance worker. On the day of inspection there were six staff working directly with the children. The registered provider was not on the premises.

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 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 manager, 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 ensured that there was a designated person in charge and a deputy available on the premises. Both the designated person in charge and the deputy were on the premises when the inspector arrived.
- (b) The staff roster indicated that either the designated person in charge or the deputy were on the premises while the early years children were present in the service.
- (c) There was a clear management structure displayed with photographs and roles and responsibilities in the reception area of the service.
- (2) Recruitment files for all ten staff and the registered provider were reviewed;
- (a) There were ten validated references from previous employers.
- (b) There were twelve validated references from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all eleven adults. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) International police vetting was available for two adults who had resided outside the State for a period of six consecutive months or longer as adults.
- (4) Nine adults working directly with the children held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications. The remaining two adults did not require childcare 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.

(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) The registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working with the children at all times.

(2) The adult/child ratios were met.

Dolphin Room (2 years – 6 years)

There were five sessional, two part-time and one full day care child in attendance with two adults in the morning. In the afternoon the three part-time children

Butterfly Room (2 years – 6 years)

There were seven sessional, six part-time and five full day care children in attendance with four staff in the morning and there were eighteen children in the afternoon with four staff members.

(8) (a) The staff roster indicated that there were at least two adults on the premises at all times.

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.*

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the registered provider, manager, deputy, staff and maintenance worker were available from the staff recruitment files.
 - (b) Details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide was available on the Tusla certificate which was displayed in the reception area at the entrance to the service.
 - (c)-(f) Adults child ratios, type of care programme, facilities available, opening hours and fees were available from the information leaflet which was available for parents/guardians to view on the notice board in the reception area.

- (g) The policies, procedures and statements required under Regulation 10 were available in the service's policies and procedures folder in the service and on a software package which all parents/guardians of the service can access.
- (h) Details of daily attendance by each pre-school child for each care room were recorded on the child's record on a software package on the care room's digital devices. These were furnished for the inspector to view.
- (i) The staff roster was furnished to the inspector at the opening meeting which included staff absence and staff hours of work. A separate sign/out sheet was available for the inspector to view.
- (j) One record of administration was available which had the necessary information. Staff stated no other medications had been administered.
- (k) A sample of seven accident and incident reports were reviewed. These were noted to have the necessary particulars required for compliance.
- (3) The records referred to in paragraph (1) were open to review in the service by the inspector.

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-*
- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child 19 to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and*
- (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)
- (a) With regard to the number of pre-school children, their respective ages and the amount of time they spent on the premises, there was a variety of age and developmentally appropriate materials and equipment. These were available both indoors and outdoors providing opportunities to enhance the learning needs of all of the children present.

(b) In each of the care rooms the children could rest or sit away from noisy activities. They had access to cushions, blankets, sofas and mats. Three stackable beds were available with individual bed linen should a child require to rest or sleep. The amount of light in the areas could be adjusted by lowering the blinds on the windows and the lights could be switched off in the care rooms.

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 parents/guardians provided all food.

- Breakfast in the service was available from 7.15 am until 8.45 am. Staff stated this is usually an oat or wheat-based cereal with fruit.
- Mid-morning snack was observed being served in the Butterfly room at 10.30 am, and the food which included filled sandwiches, chicken, brioche and fruit was observed to be healthy and nutritious in line with the service’s healthy eating policy.
- A variety of hot lunches were served for the full day care children at 1.30 pm and again at 3.00 pm including chicken, noodles, eggs, sausages and pizza.
- Water was available for the children at all times from individually labelled bottles which were within easy access in both care rooms.
- Individual cutlery and crockery were available, as required.
- In discussion staff stated that food alternatives were available should a child be hungry. A variety of foods were observed in a storage box in the kitchen for this purpose.

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 external and internal doors were secured to prevent unauthorised adults from gaining entry or children leaving the premises unsupervised.
- The kitchen and adult sanitary areas were secured with sliding bolts to prevent children accessing unsafe areas.
- There were stickers visible on the low-level glass panels of the fire exit doors in Dolphin care room, preventing children from banging into them.
- All windows were secured preventing children from exiting or falling from them.
- A hand rail and ramp were accessible from the Dolphin care room facilitating children to make their way safely to the outdoor play area.
- All of the toys and equipment in the indoor area were in good condition and well maintained. A number of outdoor wooden pieces of equipment including a nest swing, climbing gym with slide and a child's wooden car, which could seat four children, were new since the last inspection.
- Waste was stored in two bins outdoors which were housed securely in a custom-made wooden storage box, which was secured with sliding bolts, which were inaccessible to the children. In discussion staff stated the bins were emptied on a weekly basis.
- Indoor waste was secured in pedal operated bins in each care room and in the kitchen.
- Flexes, in both care rooms, were stored out of reach of the children.
- The TV in the Butterfly room was secured with metal brackets.
- The perimeter of the outdoor play areas was secured with high metal fencing and high bolted gates.

Infection Control:

- Wash hand basins, in use by the adults and children, were supplied with thermostatically controlled hot water, dispensing soap, paper towels and pedal operated bins for the disposal of waste.
- Children were observed washing their hands after outdoor play and before and after mealtimes.
- Perishable food was observed to be stored in the fridge preventing it from spoiling.
- Cleaning schedules were observed to be completed and up to date.

- Adults carrying out nappy changing were observed to be wearing disposable aprons and gloves. Nappies were removed and stored in a pedal operated nappy bin, the area and mat were sanitised after use with disinfectant and a disposable cloth, and both the adult and child washed their hands after the nappy was changed.
- A tissue station was available in the Dolphin care room, which was placed within reach of the children, aiding in the prevention of infection control.
- Coats and belongings were stored on hooks, off the floor area.

Administration of Medication:

- Anti-febrile medications were stored in their original containers, out of reach of the children.

Safe Sleep:

- No children were observed sleeping on the day of inspection.
- A physical sleep check was furnished to the inspector which was recorded on 15 May 2025 on a software package on the service's digital device. This evidenced that ten-minute sleep checks were carried out while the child was sleeping which recorded the position, colour and breathing of the child along with the room temperature.

Fire Safety:

- The emergency fire exit doors were unobstructed to enable the quick evacuation of children in the event of an emergency.
- Fire assembly signs were visible in the outdoor play areas.
- Fire extinguishers in the Dolphin care room and in the reception area were secured with brackets to the walls.

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 four adults had current First Aid Responder training completed. The roster indicated that there was a person trained in first aid available while the early years children were present.

(2) (a) (b) There was a large well stocked first aid box, which was available to the adults at all times. The box was located in the kitchen.

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.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(c) an authorised person.

(3) 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) Written records of monthly fire drills were available in the service. The last fire drill recorded was dated 11 April 2024, with previous dates including 6 March 2024 and 14 February 2024.
- (b) Written records were available recording the number, type and maintenance records of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms. Both the firefighting equipment and smoke alarm certificates were dated 9 April 2024.
- (2)
- (c) All records referred to in paragraph (1) were open to review by the inspector.
- (4) The fire procedures were located on the wall of the care rooms and in the reception area.

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 was insured. The certificate indicated that the service is insured for thirty-three children, nine of whom can be full day care. The expiry date of the certificate was noted as 27 March 2025.