

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:	30/06/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	8
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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).

Conditions if applicable	Not Applicable
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Description of service

Curious Minds Pre-school is an early years setting offering a choice of full day care, part-time and sessional services for children aged two years to six years of age. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated in the morning between 9.00 am and 12 noon and in the afternoon from 12 noon to 3.00 pm, term time only. While the service is registered to open between 7.15 am and 6.00 pm, current opening times are from 7.15 am until 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday, 50 weeks of the year. A school age service is available with a breakfast club available from 7.45 am until 9.00 am and afterschool club from 2.00 pm until 6.00 pm.

Curious Minds Pre-school operates from a single storey purpose built childcare facility located in the rural town of Millstreet, Northwest Cork. The service comprises of an entrance hall, 1 large care room (Butterfly) off which there is a second care room (Dolphin), office, kitchen, and sanitary facilities for the children and adults. There is a secure outdoor play area to the front and side of the premises.

Staffing

Seven of the sixteen staff employed were working on the day of inspection, including the registered provider. A student was also on placement.

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, deputies, 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 was the designated person in charge and two named staff members were available to deputise.
 - (b) The staff roster and attendance records indicated that either the designated person and or the deputies were available when the children were present in the service.
 - (c) A clear management structure was available in the entrance hall with staff photographs detailing staff names, positions and rooms.
- (2) The registered provider confirmed that three adults had begun working at the service since the previous inspection undertaken on 17 February 2022. Therefore, recruitment records in relation to these adults and the student on placement were reviewed.
- (a) (b) There were six validated references from past employers and two validated references from sources other than past employers.
 - (c) Garda Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau were available for each adult and the student.
 - (d) International police vetting disclosures were available for two adults who had lived outside the State for a period of six consecutive months or longer.
- (4) All three adults working directly with the children each held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications. The student on placement did not required any 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 ratio was met. There were ten children (two full day care, four part-time and four sessional), aged from two years and two months to five years of age, along with ten school age children in attendance with four adults until 10.30 am when three additional adults, who were rostered on, came on duty. In the afternoon there were eight children and eighteen school age children, aged from five years of age to ten years of age, in attendance with seven adults.

(8) The staff roster indicated that there were two adults on the premises at all times when the children were in the service.

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) The records of eight children were sampled on the day of inspection. All were found to contain particulars (a) to (i) above.

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:

- Food observed being served on the day of inspection was healthy and nutritious. All snacks and meals were provided by parents, the service had alternative food available if it was needed. Staff stated that breakfast is available from 7.00 am until 9.00 am. At 10.15 am the children were observed eating mid-

morning snack which consisted of yogurts, toast, cheese, sausages, pancakes and a variety of fruits. Hot food was observed being served at 1.00 pm and again at 3.00 pm with children enjoying bolognaise and pasta, chicken, potatoes and vegetables, sausage rolls, fish fingers, carrots and peas, and toasted sandwiches. Staff stated that a mid-evening snack was available for the children who remained in the service.

- Cutlery and crockery were available for each child and water bottles and cups were visible throughout the day in baskets in each care room.
- Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their age and stage of development, which was observed to include collecting tissues, toileting and dressing to go outdoors. Staff were on hand to provide help and assistance where required.
- In each of the care rooms the children had the chance to relax with soft seating in the form of child sized sofas with soft padded seating, cushions, and blankets available.
- The children could move freely between both rooms with all children observed in outdoor play on the morning.
- Staff working with children were responsive in promoting positive strategies to enable the children to share toys and resources and transition between activities. These included timers in the outdoor area for the sharing of equipment and music being played when it time to tidy up time.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS:

- Throughout the day staff were observed sitting with children at the tables and engaging in social conversations with them. Staff members sat at the children's level talking to them in a variety of ways, discussing, questioning and commentating. The children appeared happy and chatted to staff about holidays that they were going on and activities they wanted to do.
- Staff were heard encouraging children to be mindful of the feelings of those around them which promoted an ethos of friendship and working together.
- Sibling interaction was facilitated. There were planned opportunities for siblings to move from separate care rooms to join, interact and spend time together such as outdoor play and eating together at meals.
- The registered provider furnished the inspector with examples of information and activities which had been shared with parents via a software application. The information included details of the children's meals, nappy changes and activities. Staff stated further methods of communication are used to exchange information including verbally at drop off and collection times and by phone or text.

- Staff stated that informal staff meetings happen daily with discussions around curriculum planning, resources and various issues. Minutes for formal meetings, which were documented as happening every month, included topics such as child development, training and planning were furnished to the inspector to view.
- Staff were observed to work well together as a team, frequently collaborating and communicating with each other in relation to activities and the children's needs.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- Both care rooms were clearly laid out providing opportunities to enhance the learning needs of the children across all developmental areas.
- The equipment was stored in baskets located on low-level shelving which was easily accessible to the children.
- Suitable tables and chairs were provided in the care rooms for the children.
- The walls in the care room were decorated with family trees with pictures of the children with their families, birthday trains detailing each child's name and birthdate and seasonal artwork.
- A range of developmentally appropriate equipment was provided in the fully enclosed outdoor play area. Children had access to equipment which promoted gross motor skills of cycling, bouncing, throwing and catching. Sensory materials including compost were available with vehicles. Water was available from a water butt which had been filled by a staff member from the outside water tap. These materials provided opportunities to engage in meaningful play experiences and open-ended discovery. Children were able to engage in imaginary play in the well-resourced mud kitchen and explore with the water and music walls.

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES:

- Development checks were completed for each child along with observations which helped create a complete, well-rounded picture of each child. The observations were linked to Aistear, the curriculum framework, and detailed the child's interest and needs in the service.
- Children's language development was supported through one to one, group discussion and songs including "It's a beautiful rainbow in the sky and My name is Joe".
- Curriculum planning for the year was available in the entrance hall with topics for the season of summer including summer transport and under the water.
- Children were facilitated to make their own choice in selecting play equipment and activities that they wished to engage with.

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 main gate to the service was secured upon arrival. A bell was in place on the gate which was answered by a staff member who opened the front door of the service. These safety measures ensured that no unauthorised adults could enter the service. Exiting the building was achieved by pressing an electronic switch in the entrance hall, which was located out of reach of the children, ensuring children could not leave the premises unsupervised.
- The kitchen and adult sanitary area were secured with high bolts ensuring children could not access unsafe areas.
- The window openings were located out of reach of the children.
- The windows in the care rooms were fitted with blind cords secured on hooks to make them safe.
- A ramp with a handrail was fitted to the exit door of the Dolphin room facilitating access to the outdoor play area.
- The toys, indoors and outdoors, appeared in good condition.
- Heavy equipment and furniture were secured to prevent tipping and falling.
- Indoor waste was stored in pedal operated bins.
- Cleaning agents were stored in the kitchen, in a high cupboard, out of reach of the children.
- The TV was securely mounted.
- The outdoor area was secured with high metal fencing and a bolted gate with an added safety clip. The front area had been extended since the last inspection and this was secured with the same metal fencing.

Infection Control:

- Hot water was available in the wash hand basins in use for the adults and children along with dispensing soap, paper towels and pedal operated bins for the disposal of paper waste.
- The children were observed washing their hands before eating meals, after toileting and coming in from outdoor play.
- Tissues were available for children to wipe their noses and staff were on hand to ensure children washed their hands after use.

- The tables were disinfected before and after the serving of food by staff members.
- Perishable food was stored in the fridge and made available at mealtimes.
- Children’s belongings were labelled and stored in individual cubby areas next to the changing areas. The staff member changing a child was observed following the service’s nappy changing procedure by ensuring that disposable gloves and an apron were worn, disinfecting the area after use and disposing of the nappy in a sealed, lidded and lined nappy bin. Both the adult and child washed their hands after the nappy changing procedure was completed.

Administration of Medication:

- Anti-febrile medication was available in a high kitchen cupboard, it was stored in the original container and was noted to be in date.

Safe Sleep:

- Stackable beds and individual linen were available for children who required a rest or sleep.

Fire Safety:

- All fire doors were unobstructed.
- Thumb twists cylinders were fitted to the fire doors aiding the quick evacuation of children and adults in the event of an emergency.
- The fire evacuation notice was located in the outdoor area a safe distance from the service.
- Firefighting equipment was secured 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 on file indicated that there was at least one adult with First Aid Responder (FAR) training available at all times.

(2)

(a) (b) The first aid equipment was stored in the kitchen and was easily accessible to the adults at all times. The kitchen was inaccessible to the children with bolts securing the double doors located at the top of each door.

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) A written record was kept of the monthly fire drills that had taken place in the service. The last drill was recorded as taking place on 15 June 2023.

(b) A written record was available detailing the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms. The maintenance certificates were dated 3 October 2022 and 28 March 2023 respectively.

(4) The fire procedures were displayed on the care room wall next to the exit door.

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 33 children on a full day care basis. The expiry date of the certificate was noted as 27 March 2024.