

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC161
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Name of Service:	Friend's Forever Childcare
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Address of Service:	Beara Community School Campus, Cametrigane, Castletownbere, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P75 DN84
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Name of Registered Provider:	Martina Doody
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	24 January 2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	53	PM	44
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Child & Family Agency Early Years Inspector Inspectorate Hospital Grounds, Coolnagarrane Skibbereen West Cork P81 PD78
Inspection undertaken by:	M Carney
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

Friends Forever Childcare is registered to operate a full day, part time and sessional early years care and education for children aged 0 to 6 years.

It operates daily from 7:30am to 17:45pm daily.

The premises is situated on the perimeter of Castletownbere, a rural coastal town; located behind the local secondary school it enjoys views of spacious outdoor playing fields, the harbour and Bere Island.

The service operates from a modern, purpose-built facility which operates 4 care rooms, a large sensory room, sufficient toilet and nappy changing facilities, a designated sleep room, staff room, kitchen and storage spaces.

The children have direct access to many thematic and secured outdoor play areas. There is also ample car parking to allow the safe arrival and departure of the children with their families.

Staffing

There are 14 adults attached to the service, this includes the registered provider, manager, 10 childcare professionals, a cook and a volunteer.

Each childcare professional had attained Quality Qualification's Ireland (QQI) in childcare training from level 5 to level 8.

On the day of the inspection there were 2 students present.

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 areas of governance, health, welfare and development of child, safety, premises, and facilities. 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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the manager, 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.

(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)

On the day of the inspection the manager was the person in charge. A deputy had been appointed to deputise as required. Both the manager and the deputy were present on the day of the inspection and available to facilitate the process.

(b) Review of the staff rosters indicated that either the manager or the deputy was on the premises for the duration of service operation.

(2) A total of 14 personal files were reviewed and the following information was obtained –

(a) There were 19 written references from past employers with records of validation attached.

(b) There were 9 written references from sources that the registered provider considered to be reputable with records of validation attached.

(c) There were 13 up to date Garda vetting disclosures on file.

(d) There were 2 police vetting disclosures on file for 2 adults who had lived and worked outside of the jurisdiction of Ireland for a period of 6 consecutive months or longer.

(4)

Each of the childcare professionals working in the service had certification of Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in a childcare course from Level 5 to Level 8.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) & (b)

At the time of the inspection there were 2 transition year students on the premises without the required references on file.

(2)

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was out of date in respect of 1 adult.

(d) Police vetting was not available for 1 adult who had lived outside the jurisdiction of Ireland for a period longer than 6 consecutive months or longer.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action & Documents Submitted

The registered provider stated that -

(2) (a) & (b)

The required references were obtained for the transition year students. In addition, the school was contacted and informed that going forward all students will need to have 2 references in place prior to having contact with the children.

A copy of the letter to the school was submitted.

(2)(c)

Garda vetting has been requested in respect of the adult who had an out-of-date Garda vetting disclosure on file. The recruitment policy has been updated to state that Garda vetting disclosures must be renewed every 3 years. A copy of the Garda vetting application and an excerpt from the recruitment policy was submitted.

(2)(d)

The outstanding police vetting in respect of 1 adult was submitted.

Summary Comment

Documentation in the form of scanned references, email, Garda vetting applications and police vetting disclosures were submitted to the early years office; they were reviewed and found to be satisfactory in meeting the 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 following policies were reviewed in line with the requirements for this regulation:

The policy on the administration of medication, the policy on behavior management, policy on safe sleep, and the healthy eating policy.

Each policy was found to contain the relevant information, thereby was compliant.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)

There was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children as described below -

(2)

Red Room

There were 8 children aged from 1 to 2 years present on a full and 2 children attending on a part time basis. There were 3 adults in attendance.

Yellow Room

There were 6 children on full day care basis and 4 children attending part time aged from 2 to 3 years. There were 2 adults in attendance.

Green Room

There were 15 children in total with 6 attending on a full day care basis and 8 on a part time provision. They were aged 3 years and had 2 adults in attendance.

Blue Room

Children attending this room were aged 4 to 5 years. There were 18 children in total with 9 categorised as sessional and the remaining 9 were attending on a full day care basis. There were 3 adults in attendance.

The adult child ratios were correct in all the rooms.

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;*
- (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;*
- (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)

Twenty-five random samples of the children's registration forms were examined to ensure that the above information had been recorded.

The following elements of Regulation 15 were compliant - (a), (c), (d), (e), (f), (h), (i).

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

(b) The date of commencement of the child's attendance was not entered on 5 registration forms.

(g) The name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner was not entered on 1 registration form.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action and Supporting Documents Submitted

The registered provider stated that the outstanding information required on the children's enrolment forms has been completed.

Going forward all enrolment forms will be checked for correction completion when the parents return the forms.

A sample of the completed enrolment forms was submitted.

Summary Comment

Submitted documents were reviewed and found to satisfactorily meet the Requirements.

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;*
- (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

The following information was reviewed from the service records –

- (h) Each playroom had registers to record the children’s attendance on a daily basis.
- (i) A copy of the staff roster was made available for examination and was found to be accurately maintained.
- (j) The Red room and Yellow room each had a log book and the Blue and Green playrooms shared a log book which detailed the correct recording of all medications administered to a child in the service. These logbooks had been developed by an agency affiliated to childcare service. The entries were reviewed, and the information was found to be accurately recorded. For example, the last medication administered in the Yellow room was an over the counter medication given on the 19 January 2024.
- (k) Likewise, logbooks for the recording of all accidents and incidents were maintained in both the Red room and Yellow room, with the Blue and Green room sharing a log book. These books also had been developed by a childcare agency. Entries were inspected and found to be accurately recorded for example, the last accident recorded in the Red room was on the 22 January 2024, this involved a minor accident; the parents had counter signed the entry to evidence that the information had been passed on.

Non-Compliance Information

(a) On the day of the inspection there were 2 students on the premises availing of work experience on Wednesdays. They did not have proof of identification or records of experience on file.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action & Supporting Documentation Submitted

The registered provider stated that –

- (a)
- Students availing of work experience will be requested to forward proof of identification prior to being permitted access to the children.
- The recruitment policy has been updated and the local informed of these requirements.
- An email addressed to the local school was submitted to evidence that this had been actioned.

Summary Comment

The Requirement has been met.

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

Compliance Information

Basic Needs -

- Children attending the facility on a part time and full day care basis were offered all their food and drink requirements. A two weekly menu was in operation; on the day of the inspection the children were observed eating a fresh ingredient spaghetti bolognese which had been cooked on the premises. Meals were served promptly and were hot and appetising. The children were seated comfortably at low tables and child sized chairs with staff members sitting nearby to assist with feeding.

- Younger children were seated in highchairs that were positioned in a sociable way, so that they could view their peers and mimic the correct table etiquette.
- Bibs and aprons were worn by the younger children to protect clothing.
- Children attending on a sessional basis were given the option to eat lunches prepared from home; observed lunches were healthy and nutritious with plates being offered and a choice of cutlery and bins for the disposal of wrappings and cartons.
- In addition, healthy snacks were offered mid-morning and midafternoon. Breakfast was available for children that required this meal.
- The children were encouraged to use the toilets independently, staff members gently reminded them to flush and hand wash.
- Nappy changing was carried out in a flexible manner, assisted with mounting the nappy changing unit, spoken to and then gently assisted with dressing, hand washing and replacing bags and belongings.
- Prior to outdoor play the children were assisted with dressing appropriately; it was a cold frosty day and children were reminded to put on hats gloves and scarfs.
- Each child had their own coat hook and space for bags and personal belongings.
- Children had spare clothes for use in case of spillages.
- Aprons were available for the protection of the children's clothing during arts, crafts and painting activities.
- Rest areas were developed in each playroom. The children were observed opting out of tabletop play or returning from the outdoor play areas to sit, relax and enjoy picture books as they so wished.
- A designated sleep facility was available to the children attending the red room. Staff members were prompt to identify the children's tiredness and gently persuade them to prepare for sleep. Comfort blankets and soothers were provided as required to ensure a comfortable and relaxed sleep.
- Children over the age of 2 years had access to stackable beds which were positioned in a designated corner of the Yellow room. This area was suitably separated and supervised from the active children so that rest was assured.
- Many spacious outdoor play areas offered the children a change of scenery and fresh airs and robust play experiences.

Physical and Material Environment –

- The service occupied a single storey, modern, purpose-built facility which was observed to be clean and in a good state of repair.
- Each of the 4 playrooms were bright, clean and well maintained. Playrooms had many windows with openable sections which allowed for natural light and ventilation.
- Rooms were furnished with sufficient child sized wooden tables and chairs, low level display units so that the children could easily access play resources.
- Highchairs were available to the younger children that were clean and well maintained. Strapping secured so as prevent the children from slipping whilst eating and enjoying activities.
- In addition, the babies and non-ambulant children attending the red room the red room had access to a cordoned area which allowed for safe play and crawling. Age-appropriate equipment encouraged pull-up and balance such as a low slide and climbing apparatus.
- Playrooms were laid out in a manner to encourage thematic play and provide a wide range of opportunities and play experiences.
- Adequate storage was available for the service to rotate and store play materials.
- There were home corners with dress up and items to encourage pretend play.
- Tabletop activities included fine motor skill materials such as matching games, threading, peg boards, jig saws and puzzles.
- There were small and large construction items, trucks, road vehicles and road mats.
- The walls of the service were adorned with the children’s birthday charts, arts and crafts and their family photograph displays, for example the Blue room displayed an astronaut birthday collage.
- Children attending the red room had access to their own compact outdoor play area. Child friendly matting had been installed for the children’s comfort and safety.
- The area was equipped with many gross motor skill materials such as a low slide, a playhouse and ride on toys.
- The main central playground was available to the older children and was generously equipped with gross motor skill resources surrounding a large climbing frame and playhouse.
- Multi-sensory play experiences were provided in the outdoor garden and included water and sand play.
- Safety matting had been installed for the children’s safety and comfort.
- It was stated by a staff member that the rich risk area was not currently in use.

Supporting Relations around the Children:

- The staff members were observed to be observed to be kind, patient and caring to each child.
- Only low tones were used during communication and positive reinforcement was observed during one-to-one tabletop and floor play.
- The children were kindly supervised when taken to the toilet.
- The service operated a digital application for communicating with the parents when children's photographs and information regarding service news was shared.
- Liaison books were maintained in the Red room so as to provide a daily update to parents regarding their child's activities, both indoor and outdoors, food and drinks consumed, sleep periods and nappy changes.

Programme of Care:

- Each playroom displayed a daily routine which indicated sufficient time allocated for free play, activities, meals, outdoor play and circle time.
- Displayed templates depicting short term, medium and long-term planning of the curriculum was available, for example in the Green room the children were participating in a project 'all about me', the 'five senses' and 'hibernation'.
- Children had workbooks and evidence of observations and of their progress being documented. These incorporated photographs of children involved in activities.
- On the day of the inspection the older children availed of the bright yet cold weather to enjoy outdoor games and the gross motor skill play equipment.

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

- Friends Forever Childcare had a healthy eating policy in place which was adhered to as observed by meals eaten and snacks offered to the children on the day of the inspection.
- A hot midday meal was cooked on the premises and offered to the children attending on a full day and part time care basis. A 2 weekly menu planned was made available by the cook and it included meals such as Mexican stew and chicken casserole. On the day a fresh ingredient spaghetti bolognese was provided in a hot and appetizing manner.
- Breakfast was available as required, healthy snacks such as crackers cheese and fruit were offered mid-morning and midafternoon.
- Children attending on a sessional basis had their own healthy lunches provided by their parents. Items seen eaten included healthy sandwiches, wraps, crackers, yogurts, fruits and chopped vegetables.
- Additional food items such as crackers and cheese was stored in the kitchen in the event of a child feeling hungry between meals.
- Each child had access to their own labelled water bottles, they were stored on shelving and water stations.
- The cook was able to confidently share information around special diets that were required and was able to refer to a displayed list of the children who had allergies. Birthday treats were managed according to the service healthy eating policy.
- Bottles of formula were suitably stored in the small kitchen alongside the Red room. A bottle warmer was available although it was expressed by the room leader that the children enjoyed their milk at room temperature.

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:

- Friends Forever Childcare operated a secured electronic buzzed entry system to prevent unauthorised access and ensure that a child could not leave the premises secured. It operated a keycode system so as to restrict unauthorised access or from a child leaving the premises unsupervised.
- Internal doors were suitably secured with either a keycode system or raised locks so as to prevent the children from accessing storage rooms or the kitchen and staff areas.
- The low windows in the playroom were not openable at the children's level.
- Cables and flexes were secured.
- The playgrounds were suitably secured.
- The staff members bags and belonging were stored in the staff room.
- Play materials were found to be in a good state of repair with no pinch points or sharp edges.

Infection Control:

- The service was observed to be clean and well maintained.
- Wall mounted sanitising products were used by staff members.
- Good cleaning practices were seen for example the tables were sanitised after each activity and prior to the mealtime.
- Hand washing practices were observed by both the staff and the children.
- The children had access to sufficient child sized toilets and wash hand basins; the toilet facilities were clean and well maintained. providing liquid soap, hot air dryers and wall mounted paper towel dispensers.
- Toilet areas had hand wash posters to remind the children to hand wash after using the toilets.
- Each playroom had additional sink units for clean up after painting and messy play.
- Thermostatically controlled hot water registered at 41 degrees Celsius.
- There were 3 nappy changing facilities on the premises. The units were clean and in a good state of repair. Nappy changing policies were displayed to prompt staff in using the correct nappy changing technique, for example the use of single use aprons and to wash the children's hands after the procedure.
- The correct non-contact nappy bins were in use.

- Children's individual toiletries were stored in an organised, neat and clean manner.
- Dummies and soothers were suitably stored.
- Nappy bags were safely out of reach of the children.
- Tissues were available to the children for nasal hygiene.
- There were supplies of protective gloves and single use aprons for adult use.
- Pedal bins in use were non-contact.
- A sluice room was available to the staff for the storage of mops and buckets.

Administration of Medication:

- Children in the service requiring medications had the correct documentation in place.
- Staff members were familiar with the procedures that were to be followed when administering either prescribed or non-prescribed medications.
- Medications were stored safely and according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Safe Sleep:

- A spacious designated sleep room was available which was furnished with 6 standard cots. A smaller room accommodated 2 cots which were used for settling the children and to avoid waking the sleepers.
- The cots were suitably spaced, clean and in a good state of repair.
- The cots had well fitted mattresses and 6 of the cots were either wipeable or fitted with mattresses protectors.
- Each child under the age of 2 years was designated a cot for the duration of their attendance. The children had their own individual cellular blankets and bedding which were laundered on the premises.
- Duvets and pillows were not in use.
- Children were observed being prepared for sleep; tight clothing and shoes were removed, and the children were placed in safe sleep positions.
- The room leader explained that 10-minute physical observations were logged; they recorded the colour, position and breathing of each sleeping child. Review of the hard copy templates evidenced that they were accurately maintained.
- The ambient air temperature of the sleep room registered at 18.5 degrees Celsius.
- Stackable beds were available for the children requiring a sleep over the age of 2 years. Individual linen was available for the beds.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were unobstructed.
- Fire cylinders were suitably anchored to the walls.
- The manager stated that the staff members were familiar with the fire safety procedures that are needed to be followed in the event of a fire.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. The mechanical ventilation vent in the nappy changing room was observed to be dusty and posed a risk of cross infection

Safe Sleep:

2. Two of the standard cot mattresses did not have a wipeable surface or mattress protectors which posed a risk of cross infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action & Supporting Documents Submitted

1. The registered provider stated that the mechanical vent in the nappy changing room has been cleaned.

This task has been added to a daily checklist and scheduled for cleaning.

A photograph of the newly cleaned vent was issued.

2. A photograph of 2 newly purchased mattress protectors was submitted to evidence that the non-compliance had been addressed.

Summary Comment

Documentation in the form of photographs were submitted to the early years office; they were examined and found to adequately meet the non-compliant sections of 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)

The staff members personal files evidenced that each childcare professional was in receipt of paediatric first aid which had been completed in November 2023.

Two adults had certification to evidence that they had recently completed first aid responder (FAR) training. The expiry date was November 2025.

(2)(a) and (b)

There was a total of 3 first aid boxes situated within the play areas. They were stored out of reach of the children but accessible to the staff. The first aid boxes were suitably stocked, with medication stored separately. Additional medical supplies were available in the staff office in readiness to restock and replenish the boxes.

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) The manager made available a fire log recording book with details of the most recent fire drill; this had been carried out on the 10 January 2024. It detailed that the entire service had participated and had taken 3 minutes to complete.

(b) The fire logbook listed the number of firefighting equipment in the service. The maintenance record records informed that the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises had been serviced on the 18 September 2023.

(4)

Fire evacuation notices were displayed throughout the service to provide direction in the event of a fire.

Staff members were familiar with the fire assembly points.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The manager provider made available an up-to-date insurance certificate, which detailed that up to 83 children were adequately insured at any one time to attend on a full day care basis.

The expiry date was the 27 March 2024.