

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC180
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Name of Service:	Héronswood Childcare Centre
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Address of Service:	49 Silverhill, Heronswood, Carrigaline, Co Cork.
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Eircode:	P43 RT18
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Cleary
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	26/11/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	104	PM	79
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Marys Health Campus Gurranabraher Cork T23X440
Inspection undertaken by:	B Fraher and J Russell
Title:	Early Years Inspector and Inspection and Registration Manager

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

Description of service

Heronswood Childcare Centre is a privately operated service that caters for children aged 0 to 6 years. It provides full day-care, part-time care and sessional care and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. Daily operating hours are from 8.00 AM to 6.00PM. The Service operates from a purpose built two storey building that is situated in a residential area. There are six care rooms namely the Baby room, the Fledgling room, the Junior Day Care room, the Blue room, the Green room and the Red room. There is a large outdoor area situated to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

There were 39 adults attached to the service including the registered provider, two chefs and two students. On the day of inspection there were 25 adults on the premises of which one was supernumerary as a student, and one was a chef. The other 20 adults were working directly with the children and the 3 persons in charge were available to provide care and cover if needed.

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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of Child and under regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included 4 rooms, the Green room, the Baby room, the Junior Day Care room and the Fledgling room. It did not include the Blue room and the Red room.

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 registered provider, person in charge, 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 had ensured that a designated person in charge and a deputy person in charge were assigned to the service.

(b) The person in charge was on duty at the service when the inspectors arrived to do the inspection. Two further persons in charge arrived at a later time. All three persons in charge were available during the inspection and attended the closing meeting.

(c) There was clear evidence on inspection of the management structures in place and the specific roles of each member of staff in the care rooms.

(2) Recruitment records for all 39 adults attached to the childcare facility were assessed for compliance. The following information was noted:

(a) From a total of 78 written and validated references, 58 had been provided by past employers.

(b) A further 20 written and validated references were from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 39 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Documentary evidence indicated that 11 staff members lived outside of the jurisdiction for longer than six consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years, and the required police vetting was obtained and on file.

(4) Records demonstrated that 34 of the adults had achieved at least a Major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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 and were found to meet the necessary requirements

- The healthy eating policy
- The infection control policy
- The sleep policy.

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) At the time of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults responsible for the direct care and supervision of the children in attendance at all times.

(2) Minimum adult to child ratios were observed in all care rooms, over the duration of the inspection. The inspector noted that the student was not included in the ratio on the day of inspection.

The ratio was as follows:

Morning:

Room name and age range of children	Number of children present	Number of Adults present
Baby Room (11 months to 16 months)	11	4
Fledgling Room (19 months to 27 months)	17	4
Junior day Care (2 years and 3 months to 3 years and 2 months)	18	3 and 1 student
Blue Room (3 years to 4 years)	18	3
Green Room (2 years 11 months to 4 years and six months)	21	3
Red Room (3 years 8 months to 4 years 10 months)	19	3

Afternoon:

Room Name and age range of children	Number of children present	Number of Adults present
Baby Room	10	3
Fledglings room	17	3
Junior day care	18	3 and 1 student
Blue Room	16	3
Green room	18	3

(8) (a) The service operates with at least two adults present at all times. This was observed on the day of inspection and as evidenced through examination of the staff roster.

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

(1)(a) On the day of inspection, the following information was obtained through direct observation and discussion with the staff:

BASIC NEEDS:

- All meals and snacks were prepared on the premises for children in full day care by the chef and were observed to be healthy and nutritious. Sessional children brought their own lunches, and they were refrigerated. Shepards pie with peas was seen to be eaten by the children at dinner time and second portions were offered if they wished. The menu displayed showed wheat cereal had been given in the morning and homemade carrot and leek soup and chicken sandwiches were planned for the afternoon. A vegetarian option was also offered to the children.
- The inspector was informed that some of the children had specific dietary requirement. These requirements were communicated to the designated cook.
- During mealtimes, the adults remained with the children and assisted as required. The children were afforded sufficient time to enjoy their food and conversation was encouraged by staff.
- Young children had the opportunity to feed themselves appropriate to the ages and stages of development and children's independence was encouraged by allowing them to clean off their plates and bowls afterwards.
- Water was readily available throughout the day in each care room and both milk and water were also offered at mealtimes as seen in the Green room.
- Suitable cutlery was provided in each care room along with appropriate seating in the form of highchairs or waist high tables and low-level chairs.

- The layout of the care room supported the children to move freely within their environment and to actively engage in their chosen tasks.
- Outdoor games and activities were promoted and observed at the time of inspection with the children, climbing, using slides and on wheeled cars. A roofed outdoor area allowed outdoor play at all times of the year.
- Children were seen to be dressed appropriately outdoors wearing coats and hats. Independence was encouraged with children observed putting on and taking off outdoor clothes themselves. Staff in the Junior room were observed assisting children with zips. The green room staff informed the inspector that they use the outdoor area three times daily.
- Children were also encouraged to blow their own noses, dispose of the tissue and wash their hands, as seen in the Junior toddler room.
- The individual sleep needs of younger children were met, and this was observed on the day by children sleeping at various intervals in the Baby room. Older children were facilitated with a scheduled rest time for example in the Junior toddler room, a rest time was provided for all the children at a set time.
- Children in the baby room were observed to be free to lie, roll, creep, crawl, pull themselves up, learn to walk in a safe space.
- The adults working with the children were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours which was seen in the Junior day care when two children were hitting each other with cushions. The staff member supported the children to find a positive solution when experiencing challenges.
- Nappy changes were observed to be carried. Staff in the baby room informed me that nappies were changed three times while in the service and more often if needed. Older children in the Green room were seen to access the sanitary area independently with staff available if needed. Staff in the Junior room were seen to assist children in toilet training in conjunction with a plan with the parents.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS:

- During meals the staff members sat at the table and engaged in social conversation with the children promoting a relaxed atmosphere. Staff held and interacted with the children in the baby room. The staff members came to the level of the child when feeding the young children or when assisting children to feed themselves.
- The staff members demonstrated warmth and sensitivity in their interactions with the children. For example, in the baby room, Staff communicated positively with the babies using soft and gentle tones,

offered reassurance by sitting near them on the floor as they explored and promptly comforted any child who became upset.

- In the Green room, staff supported children to engage positively with one another and the children were encouraged in play activities such as acting out a storey and dancing that required taking turns and sharing. Staff members were heard encouraging children to be mindful of their feelings of those around them which promoted an ethos of friendship and working together.
- Family pictures were evident in the care room walls which promoted a sense of family for the children.
- Staff stated they work in partnership within the service. This was seen in the Baby room as sleep plans were altered daily in conjunction with the parents after discussion of the previous night's sleep. The service used a software technology application (An App) to provide information to parents in relation to updates on eating, nappy changes, activities, sleep and sleep checks.
- Many children demonstrated a sense of pride in their success during the day and were observed calling on the staff to share their achievements. Staff were heard praising and encouraging children in the Green room when they were discussing hibernation and the meaning of nocturnal.
- The staff readily acknowledged and encouraged the children's efforts and accomplishments, focusing on children's actions, interactions and play activities.
- Staff were seen singing a tidy up song, while tidying along with the children in the Junior toddler room before going outdoors. This promoted a sense of responsibility and independence for the children.

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:

- When the inspectors arrived, the entrance door and each care room door was secured to the premises. This restricted unauthorised access to the building and helped to prevent the risk of children exiting while unsupervised.
- The toys and play equipment assessed were in good condition and were free from pinch and crush points.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.

- The temperature of hot water throughout the care rooms inspected and the sanitary accommodation varied from 24.9° to 41.2°c.
- All blind cords were secured by tension devices and not accessible to the children.
- The care room windows were adequately secured to ensure a child could not exit or fall out.
- Visibility stickers were available on the glass panelled door in the Baby room.

Infection Control:

- Handwashing facilities were accessible to the children, with warm running water, liquid soap and wall mounted paper towel dispensers available. Children were observed to wash their hands after they used the toilet and staff were observed reminding them.
- Children coats were stored off the ground on wall hooks.
- Lidded pedal bins were in use for the disposal of waste.
- Staff in the Baby room informed the inspector that cleaning happens as they use toys, and in the evening before finishing. A cleaning company also come to the premises three times a week and at the weekend to do a deep clean.

Administration of Medication:

- The inspector observed that a child was prescribed emergency medicine. This child had signed parental consent for medication administration and an action plan was stored with the medicine for the staff caring for the child. Staff informed the inspector that they had received training on the administration of these medicines.
- One child had been given temperature reducing medicine on the day of inspection, which was not observed by the inspector but was noted from the records. Parents were contacted by phone for consent and two staff had signed that this was administered. A staff member informed the inspector that parents would sign for this on the collection of the child. This was in line with the medication administration policy.
- Temperature reducing medicines were stored out of reach of the children and the bottles checked were in date.

Safe Sleep:

- The air temperature in the two designated sleep rooms and in the care rooms used for sleeping were maintained within the required temperature range of 16°C to 20°C for children aged under 12 months and between 18°c and 22°c for children over 12 months.

- Staff remained with the children who were asleep on stackable beds in the care rooms as seen by the inspector in the Junior toddler room.
- Staff were noted to maintain sleep records in relation to children's colour, breathing and position at 10-minute intervals and it was noted from the records that this was carried out for the duration of the child's sleep.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were noted to be free from obstruction.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. The inspector noted two children sleeping in the cot sleep room with a distance of 19cm between the two cots. Cots are to be maintained at a 50cm distance for infection prevention. Having cots this close together increases the risk of cross infection.

Safe Sleep:

2. Stackable beds were noted to be used in the Fledgling room where the children were aged between 19 months and 27 months on the day of inspection. On discussion with staff in the room and the three persons in charge, the inspector was informed that all children who are cared for within this room sleep on stackable beds regardless of age. *Tusla's Guidance for the Early Learning and care sector on sleep provision for children under 24 months* states that the use of floor mats and stackable beds for children under 24 months are not sufficiently conducive to sleep for children in this age range.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following statement was received from the registered provider:

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. One cot has been removed from the sleep room to allow adequate distance between the cots. This distance will be maintained in the future.

Safe Sleep:

3. All children will be accommodated on appropriate floor beds, and the service is in the process of purchasing these.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

1. The statement from the registered provider is accepted.

Safe Sleep:

2. The statement from the registered provider is accepted.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances under regulation 23. This will be reviewed at the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-*
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and*
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (c) an authorised person.*
- (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 inspector was provided with a list of monthly fire drills. The most recent fire drill was undertaken on the 12th November 2024.
 - (b) The certification of servicing for the firefighting equipment indicated that it was carried out in June 2024. The certification of testing for the smoke alarms was dated the 8th October 2024.
- (2)
- (c) All records were furnished to the inspector on request.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed in each care room inspected.