

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC227		
Name of Service:	Little Hands Childcare		
Address of Service:	Farranferris Education & Training Campus, Redemption Road, Cork, Co. Cork		
Eircode:	T23 YW62		
Name of Registered Provider:	Noreen Hegarty		
Service type:	Full Day		
Date(s) of Inspection:	06/06/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	76	PM 69
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Administration Office, St Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher, Cork		
Inspection undertaken by:	C Stokes, J Russell		
Title:	Early Years Inspector, Inspection & 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

Little Hands Childcare is a registered community based early years service in operation since 1996. This service provides education and care to children aged from 1 to 6 years offering a choice of sessional, part time and full day care service and for the children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The current registered opening hours are from 7:30am to 5:45pm each day Monday to Friday. The premises is located within an educational training campus situated in a residential area in the north side of Cork city. Seven rooms have been adapted to provide an early years service. There are 3 Nursery Rooms. Nursery 1 and 2 rooms catered for children from 1 to 2 years, Nursery 3 room catered for children 2.5 to 3 years. Pre-school 1B catered for children 2 to 2.5 years and Pre-school 2A cater for children from 3 to 3.5 years. Montessori A and Montessori B caters for children aged over 2 years and 8 months. Lunch is prepared and cooked from a kitchen located within the training campus and served to the children by the adults in the service. There are 3 designated separate sleep rooms beside each of the three nursery rooms. The service has two outdoor play areas which operate on a rotational basis among the care rooms in the service.

Staffing

The registered provider is service based and was present on the day of inspection. There were 28 adults present in the service. The 18 staff working directly with children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education between levels 5-8 on the National Framework of Qualifications, in addition to this there were five Community Employment (CE) childcare staff and one supernumerary adult. Also present were an administrator and two cleaners.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation

- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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*

(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 service had a named registered provider and two named deputies.

(b) The registered provider and two named deputies were working at the service when the unannounced inspection commenced and the three remained available throughout the inspection process.

(2) 31 adult's files were reviewed, 28 of whom were present on the day of inspection.

(a) There were 40 written and validated references on file from past employers.

(b) There were 22 written and validated references available from sources other than previous employers.

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau was in place for all adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was in place for three early years practitioners, who had lived outside the jurisdiction.

(4) A recognised award in Early Childhood Care and Education had been attained by 22 early year practitioners. One adult was in the process of obtaining a qualification and was not counted the adult child ratios as a result.

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) At all times during the period of the inspection, the registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained as follows:

Morning:

Room	Qualified Adults	Children
Nursery 1	2	9
Nursery 2	2	10
Nursery 3	2	9
Preschool 1 B	2	11
Preschool 2 A	2	17
Montessori A	2	16
Montessori B	2	15

Afternoon

Room	Qualified Adults	Children
Nursery 1	2	9
Nursery 2	2	10
Nursery 3	2	10
Preschool 1 B	1	4
Preschool 2 A	3	17
Montessori A	2	15
Montessori B	2	8

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:

- Breakfast, snacks, and meals were observed to be served throughout the day with appropriate gaps between meals/snacks. Adults were observed to sit with the children and interact to make the mealtime a social occasion. The crockery, cutlery and drinking utensils used for the main meal and snacks were suitable for the children's age and stage of development. Appropriate levels of independence were encouraged by the adults at snack and mealtimes.
- Children were encouraged and supported to develop independence regarding personal care, particularly, with hand washing after outdoor play and prior to meals.
- Nappy changing was observed to occur regularly throughout the day. For those children who were toilet trained they were supported to be independent by the adults.
- Quiet/sleep time was facilitated in the 3 Nursery Rooms with 3 individual sleep rooms which facilitated sleep for children under 2 years with 20 cots and stackable beds were in place for children over 2 years to facilitate sleep in the Nursery 3 sleep room. In the other playrooms, cozy areas for rest and relaxation were evident.
- Children's need for mobility was met with both outdoor play areas being used on the day of inspection. Children had access to outdoor play, in designated areas and at designated times.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:

- The adults advised the inspector that the service operated in partnership with parents, with regular emails/newsletters for sharing information with parents. The adults also operated a system whereby the adults communicate messages to parents in daily communication sheet including information on meals & snack's, nappy changing, sleep and activities that their child experienced during the day.

- The adults described that regular observations on the children are maintained each term and these contributed to the emergent curriculum based around the children’s expressed interests. Parents can ask to see their child’s observations according to the adults.
- The adults were observed to show positive regard for the children on the day of inspection, with encouragement and praise for specific tasks in a warm and caring manner for example during tidy up/transition times and mealtimes where nurturing and enthusiastic interactions were observed.
- The adults were observed to support the children in their interactions with their peers and were noted to be caring and warm in their support of assisting the children to integrate into the daily life of the setting, particularly with turn taking and sharing.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The indoor environment of the playrooms was child friendly and bright. Each room was laid out in defined interest areas, for example, a home corner, arts/crafts, dolls, role play, small world, transport, construction area, playhouse dolls and puzzles were available in addition to the special interest materials.
- Sensory play was facilitated with play dough and water play in various playrooms.
- A quiet corner was in place to facilitate quiet time. This quiet corner was equipped with soft seating, for example, sofas.
- There was open shelving with play materials and items laid out so that the children could identify and access them easily and independently.
- Children’s artwork was on display at an appropriate level for children. The artwork was linked to the themes and, for example, birthday walls, family walls and class photos.
- There was a variety of materials and defined interest areas in the outdoor areas.
- The outdoor areas had an artificial, all-weather surface. The emphasis on children having access to the outdoor area on a twice/three times daily basis was supported by two well-equipped outdoor spaces, which were used on a rotational basis.

Programme of Activities

- The service offered a play-based curriculum, and playful opportunities were supported throughout the early learning and care programme. A daily routine was on display in each playroom.
- Each child had a learning story observation followed by a narrative capturing how the adults intended to incorporate and extend the children's interests into the planned programme of activities. The observations were recorded regularly and in conjunction with recording the children's milestones for the individual children.
- Language development was encouraged with songs and books/story time.

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 external doors were appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the preschool. The outdoor area was secured.
- Blind cords were secured, and no electrical cables or leads were observed to be accessible to the children.
- Cleaning chemical/products were inaccessible to the preschool children.
- The staircase was in good condition with appropriate handrails and was well lit.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, paper towels/electric hand dryers were in place for hand washing/drying.
- Waste in the playrooms was disposed of in appropriate lidded pedal bins.
- Handwashing prior to dinner was observed.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned down prior to and after snack/meals.

Administration of Medication:

- No medicine was observed to be administered on the day of inspection. Staff spoke competently about the medicine administration process and storage and individualised care plans were in place for children requiring an auto-injector pen.

Safe Sleep:

- There were 10 cots in each of the Nursery 1 and 2 sleep rooms There were 9 stackable beds observed in the sleep room of Nursery room 3. All were standard cots in good condition with appropriately fitted sheets.
- Records were available of the ten-minute checks conducted on the children in the sleep rooms.

Fire Safety:

- No serious fire safety concerns were noted as escape exits were unobstructed.

Outing:

- No outings were observed on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

Safe Sleep:

1. There was insufficient space between the cots Nursery room 1. The required 50cm was not in place between 2 cots as the space was compromised by the storage of toys and play materials in this sleep room, which are prohibited to ensure safe sleep.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action & Supporting evidence

Safe Sleep:

1. The registered provider responded to state that the storage of toys and play materials have been removed and the cots spaced to ensure 50cm between each cot. The registered provider submitted photographic evidence to demonstrate this action. The registered provider added a sleep room risk assessment checklist for staff to ensure that there is no storage in the sleep room and the space between cots is sufficient.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted by the registered provider was assessed and deemed to meet the regulatory requirements of this regulation.

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 registered provider ensured that a record of the fire drills was maintained. The most recent fire drill was dated 23 May 2024.
- (b) The registered provider ensured a maintenance of the fire extinguishers and smoke alarms were maintained. These records were dated May 2024 and June 2024 respectively.
- (4) A notice of the fire evacuation procedure was on display on the wall both upstairs and downstairs in the service.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

- A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-*
- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
 - (b) safe and secure,*
 - (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
 - (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
 - (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) From visual inspection the premises appeared of sound and stable structure.
- (b) From visual inspection the premises appeared safe and secure.
- (c) The service was kept adequately lit, heated, and ventilated on the day of inspection. Windows were observed to be opened for fresh air and natural ventilation. Playrooms were heated to an appropriate temperature within the required range of 18-22 degrees Celsius.

(d) The service was presented in a clean condition.

(e) There was a sufficient sanitary provision within the service, within the ratio of 1/11 toilets of toilets and nappy changing facilities for children and 1/8 toilets and sinks for adults. This is detailed as follows:

Room	Toilets/changing units	location
Nursery 1	1 changing unit/ 1 sink	Individual nappy changing area
Nursery 2	1 changing unit / 1 sink	Individual nappy changing area
Nursery 3	1 changing unit / 1 sink	Individual nappy changing area
Montessori A	2 wc & 2 sinks 1 changing unit	Adjacent to room
Preschool 1 B	1 wc & 1 sinks 1 changing unit/ 1 sink	Across corridor
Preschool 2 A	2 wc & 2 sinks	Adjacent to room
Montessori B	2 wc & 2 sinks	Adjacent to room
Staff toilets	4 wc & 3 sinks	Off hallway