

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC230
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Name of Service:	Little Miracles Childcare
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Address of Service:	Granary Court, North City Link Road, Lady's Well, Cork, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	T23 D789
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Name of Registered Provider:	Ciara Horgan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	31/07/24
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No of pre-school children:	AM	26	PM	21
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Admin Building, St Marys Health Campus, Cork, T23X440
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Inspection undertaken by:	M.O' Reilly
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

Little Miracles Childcare is an established privately owned early years service that first opened in 2006. It is registered to accommodate children aged from 1 to 6 years. Daily opening hours are from 8am to 6pm each day Monday to Friday. Little Miracles Childcare, is a purpose-built childcare facility located on the ground floor of a five-storey apartment complex. The premise is situated on the entrance to a residential apartment complex located within walking distance of Cork city centre. The setting provides three care rooms, toilet and nappy changing facilities, two sleep rooms, kitchen, staff room and an administration office. There are two partially covered outdoor play areas.

Staffing

There were 15 adults in employment at the service, all work directly with the early years children and hold a relevant award in Early Childhood Care and Education or hold a letter of qualification recognition from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). A student was undertaking a work placement at the time of inspection. The registered provider who is the named person in charge was on leave at time of inspection.

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.

Additional Information

This inspection was triggered by information received by the National Early Years Feedback and Concerns Department.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the deputy 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) There was a named person in charge and named deputies to deputise as required.
 - (b) One of the named deputies was the person in charge and was present when the inspector arrived at the premise on the day of the unannounced inspection and was available throughout the inspection process.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in place in the service that identified the lines of authority and accountability in the service with the registered provider /person in charge and two named deputies to deputise when the registered provider was not in the service.

- (2)
- Sixteen adult files were reviewed. This included the registered provider and staff employed in the service and a student on work placement.
- (a) There were twenty-five validated references on file from past employers in respect of the adults.
 - (b) There were seven validated references from sources other than past employers in respect of the adults.
 - (c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available on file in respect of each of the sixteen adults. The service did adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Eight of the nine police vetting records were available on file for the nine adults who had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of six months or more, while over the age of eighteen years.

- (4)
- The adults who worked directly with the children hold a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education or hold a letter of qualification recognition from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (d) Processed police vetting record for one adult was not available on file in the service on day of inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

In the written response the registered provider/person in charge stated the following:

Corrective and Preventive Action

- The adult that had no police vetting at time of inspection, was a student on work experience. The student had been on site for four days prior to the inspection, and as the day of inspection was her last day in attendance, the service did not pursue getting her police vetting.
- The service now has a checklist that will accompany each work experience student on file as well as employees staff detail, this will alert management to any documents outstanding.

Supporting documentation submitted

- The written response received from the registered provider is accepted as evidence.
- A copy of the work experience file checklist. (includes police vetting record when required for example, police vetting from country of origin of adult)

Summary Comment

- Correspondence forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate was examined and deemed to meet the requirement of Regulation 9 (2) (d), of the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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 assessed and were deemed to meet the requirements:

- Complaints Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Policy on Accidents and Incidents

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)
The person in charge ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in each room on day of the inspection.

(2)
During the period of inspection, the ratio of staff to children was maintained as per the regulations and an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children in each playroom.

Wobbler room- there were eight children in attendance in the morning and three children in the afternoon. The children were aged between one and two years with two adults in attendance. It was observed that the the person in charge relieved staff for lunch time in the Wobbler Room at time of inspection.

Toddler room- there were seven children in attendance in the morning and eight children in the afternoon. The children were aged between two and three years with two adults and one student on work placement in attendance in the morning and two adults in the afternoon.

Preschool room - there were eleven children in the morning and ten children present in the afternoon aged between three and six years with two adults in attendance.

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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(h) The attendance of each child on a daily basis was recoded on the roll book.

(i) A weekly staff roster was maintained in the service that outlined the times that each staff member commenced and finished in the service each day. The name of the staff member that relieved staff for lunch breaks each day was also recorded.

(k) The service had a record to detail any accidents or incidents that had occurred in the service. Each entry had been counter signed by the child's parent to evidence that the information had been relayed.

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:

- The children appeared to enjoy the hot meal provided at lunch time by a catering food company. The staff reheated and served the food. The children were afforded ample time to eat and drink at a relaxed pace. Staff members were readily available to provide assistance, as well as providing individual feeding bibs for the younger children.
- Drinking water was accessible to the children within the care rooms outside of allocated mealtimes.

- Attention was given to the children’s personal hygiene, for example, it was observed, the children’s hands and faces were cleaned once they had finished eating and staff were observed to assist children to clean their noses.
- Care routines, such as nappy changing, handwashing and sleep time were managed sensitively, with adults noted to speak kindly and calmly to the children and soothe the younger children to sleep.
- Child height hooks and storage shelving was available to the older child to encourage independent dressing and organisation of their personal belongings.
- There was adequate space in the care rooms to accommodate a variety of play activities. The children in all rooms were observed playing outdoors during the morning and afternoon on day of inspection. In the morning the children aged between one and two years from the Wobbler room were observed around a container of pasta and coloured rice with accompanying play equipment located in the outdoor play area. The seven of the eight children (one child was asleep) appeared to enjoy this sensory group activity under the close supervision of staff.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The key person system was evident in the service, which supported children to form secure relationships with the adults involved in their care. The staff members were observed to be kind, patient and caring to each child as observed during caring duties, facilitating play, one-to-one engagement and when children were calmly assisted to resolve minor conflicts.
- An online application was predominantly used to share information with parents regarding their children’s activities of daily living. Phone calls, a messaging application and informal face to face discussion at arrival and collection times, were also incorporated.
- The children appeared happy and content and familiar with the daily routine and staff were observed to interact in a caring manner with the children building their confidence and communication skills within the setting.

Physical and Material Environment

- The three rooms in operation were child friendly, bright, and spacious and laid out with special interest areas with materials largely accessible to the children.
- The Wobbler room had adequate space and soft areas for children to roll and crawl and walk. The room allowed the younger children to explore their environment in a safe way and avail of the age-appropriate equipment such as, shape sorters, activity centres, pull along toys, handheld toys, sound making materials and construction.

- The Toddler and Preschool rooms had interest areas that included, a range of tabletop activities and games to encourage companionable interaction, there were cars and trucks, a fine motor skills area, a home corner, buggies, dress up and small utensils to prompt imagination and pretend play.
- Child sized tables and chairs were available in each room.
- Rest areas were available to the children in all rooms to allow the children to opt out of play activities and relax if they so wished.
- Walls of the care rooms were decorated with birthday charts, family photographs and posters.
- The playrooms had access to secured outdoor play areas which had an all-weather surface
- There was a wide range of ride on and push toys, playhouses, picnic benches, balance apparatus, see saws and slides to encourage the children to master gross motor skill play while playing outdoors.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The parents/guardians of the children that attended full day care service had a hot meal at lunch time which was reheated on site. The food was served to the children by the adults in the service. The food for the mid-morning snack was provided by the parents and mid-afternoon snack provided by the service was nutritious, with age-appropriate portion sizes for the age of the children
- The children were provided with appropriate cutlery and crockery at snack and mealtimes.
- Fridges were available for the storage of perishable foods in each playroom.

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:

- Upon the inspectors' arrival at the service, the main entrance door was found to have been adequately secured and was maintained secure when not in use.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of the children's reach.
- First aid boxes were appropriately stored and inaccessible to children.
- Restrictive opening devices were in place on the low-level cupboards in the Wobbler room.
- No cables were within reach of children on the day of inspection.
- The two outdoor areas were noted to be fully enclosed and secured. The wall mounted awning was observed in use in the outdoor play area when the wobblers were playing outdoors.

Infection Control:

- There was liquid soap and paper towels in the hand washing facilities across the service.
- The tables in the creche and playschool room were sanitised prior to lunch and snack mealtimes.
- Handwashing by the children was observed before the mid-morning snack and lunch and after toileting, nappy changing and outdoor play in both rooms.
- Pedal operated bins were in place for the disposal of paper towels.
- The colourful play mats in the playrooms were clean.

Safe Sleep:

- Ten-minute sleep checks were recorded in writing for each sleeping child by the adults monitoring the sleeping children in the Wobbler and Toddler rooms. The records reflected physical checks in relation to the colour, breathing and position of children, as they slept.
- The children's rest needs in the Wobbler and Toddler rooms were facilitated in two designated separate sleep rooms. There were adequate numbers of standard cots with safety mattresses for children under

two that required a sleep with individual accompanying bed linen. There was an adequate distance between each cot.

- Each of the safety mattresses was covered with a waterproof mattress cover.
- There were a sufficient number of suitable floor beds available with designated suitable bed linen for the older child who wanted a sleep while attending the service. There was no child that required a sleep in the preschool room on day of inspection.
- The air temperature reading of both sleep rooms where the children were observed sleeping was within the normal range of between 17⁰C and 19.6⁰ Celsius. Accepted air temperature range is between 16⁰C and 20⁰C for rooms where children are sleeping.

Fire Safety:

- A record of monthly fire drills was presented for examination.
- All fire exits were noted to be free from obstruction.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

- While supervised hand washing was observed at time of inspection, throughout the service, water temperatures at the wash hand basins were thermostatically controlled but the warm water was not sufficiently warm enough when hand washing to prevent the potential risk of cross infection. Recorded water temperatures in the wash hand basins in the children's toilets and nappy changing areas were between 10 °C to 15⁰ C at 10:30, 12:30 and 14:00 hours on day of inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- Since the inspection, the service had plumbers to carry out works on the heating system, and they have resolved the issue with the hot water. Electricians were also on site, ensuring wiring to the heating system is reconfigured again to avoid issue re-occurring with hot water. All staff members have been made aware of a new checklist that the registered provider /person in charge has introduced. The staff member in charge will be responsible for checking the temperature of the water in the wash hand basins in each room of the service daily and documenting same. The service has purchased a water thermometer to do so.

Supporting documentation submitted

- A copy of the invoice from the Plumber and a copy of the service hot water temperature checklist was forwarded to the early years service department and deemed satisfactory.

Summary Comment

- Correspondence forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate was examined and deemed to meet the requirement of Regulation 23, Infection Control, of the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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) There were two staff working in the service on day of inspection that had a current certified First Aid Responder certificate (FAR).

(2)

(a) The first aid boxes were safely stored out of children's reach in the service.

(b) The first aid boxes were available at all times to adults if in the event that a child may require treatment.

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.
- (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 record of monthly fire drills carried out was available and indicated that the last fire drill took place on the 12th July 2024
 - (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment was maintained. It was recorded that the fire equipment was last serviced in October 23 and the emergency fire alarm system was last tested and serviced in August 2023.
- (4)
- The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

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 the service was adequately insured, with insurance for 44 children until 27/03/2025. The records detailed the category of service covered which was full day care, the name and address of the premises and details regarding public liability cover, fire, theft, buildings, and outings cover.