

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC259
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Name of Service:	Martina's Playschool
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Address of Service:	The Old School House, Riverstown Community Centre, Glamire, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	T45 W992
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Name of Registered Provider:	Martina Conroy
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/06/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	33	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurranabraher Cork
Inspection undertaken by:	D Prendergast
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect

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

Conditions if applicable	Not Applicable
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Description of service

Martina's Playschool first notified in 2006. It is a privately owned play based, sessional service that offers care and education to children aged two to six years. Daily opening hours are from 9.00am to 12.00pm, in conjunction with the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme.

The service is situated in an urban area of Glanmire in Co. Cork and operates from a community centre. There are two operational care rooms, which have adjoining sanitary facilities for children. A staff sanitary facility is also available, along with a kitchen and an office.

Staffing

There are nine adults employed at the childcare setting, all of whom work directly with the children, including the registered provider. Two adults are employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Support Scheme and there is one relief staff member. All nine of the staff members have attained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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 the child, safety, premises and facilities. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 10, 11, 19, 22, 23, 25, 26 and 29; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed significant risk was identified under Regulation 16. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

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

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

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

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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 registered provider had assigned a person in charge to the early years service.
 - (b) When the unannounced inspection commenced, the named person in charge was working at the service and remained to facilitate the duration of the inspection process.
- (2) The person in charge confirmed that five adults had commenced working at the service since the previous inspection was undertaken on 22 June 2021. Therefore, recruitment records in relation to these five adults were reviewed.
- (a) Of the 10 required written and validated references, 9 had been obtained from past employers.
 - (b) One of the references was from a source other than a previous employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting was on file for each of the five adults.

(d) Review of staff employment history records demonstrated that police vetting from other jurisdictions was not required for three of the five adults.

(4) Copies of major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications, were available in respect of all five staff members.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (b) During separate discussions with the person in charge and another member of staff, it emerged that staff were unclear as to who would fulfil the role of deputy person in charge, in the event that the person in charge was absent. A written record outlining this information was also unavailable.
- (2)
- (d) International police vetting disclosures were unavailable for two staff members, who had lived outside the State as adults, for more than six consecutive months.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)
- (b) A staff meeting was held the day following the inspection, regarding who would fulfil the role of deputy person in charge if needed. The manager has now appointed a staff member who has accepted the role and responsibilities. A written record has been made of said meeting where staff roles within the setting were clarified. If the deputy manager is absent, a named staff member will be in charge and their name will be added to the sign in the hall, for parents and staff to see.
- (2)
- (d) Of our two staff members who did not have police vetting disclosures, one has commenced the process of obtaining same and it will be forwarded as soon as it is received. The second staff member has contacted their previous employer and requested that their police vetting is forwarded.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1)(b) The statement from the person in charge is accepted as evidence.
- (2)(d) Copies of the relevant police vetting were received in respect of the two adults.

Summary Comment

The non-compliances identified under this regulation have been adequately addressed.

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.*
- (3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

Compliance Information

- (1) During the period of inspection, it was observed that there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.
- (3) The adult child ratios were correct and met the requirements of the regulation, as outlined in the following table:

Time	Room Name and Age Range of Children	Number of Children Present	Number of Adults Present
9.52am	Room 1 (3 – 5 years)	20	3 + 1 AIM support
9.56am	Room 2 (3 – 4 years)	13	2 + 1 AIM support

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 service's policy on Healthy Eating was assessed and deemed to 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:

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(j)&(3)

Signed parental consent for staff to administer the medication that had been prescribed to two of the children, was not available on file. Provision to document and record the administration of medication was also unavailable.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A form was created to record any medication administered to children and to obtain parental consent for staff to administer medication. The parents signed the forms the day after the inspection and the forms are now in each of the children's files. The service now has the parental consent/ record of administration template ready for all children who may require this in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

A template copy of the new medication form was forwarded, along with the required written parental consent for the administration of medication, in respect of the two children.

Summary Comment

The corrective action implemented by the person in charge has addressed the non-compliance identified under regulation 16.

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

(1)(a)

Basic needs:

- At 10.40am, the mid-morning snack took place in Room 1 and was observed in Room 2 shortly afterwards.
- The independent use of the toilet by the children was encouraged and supervised as appropriate, by the adults. A nappy changing facility was available adjacent to the care rooms for any child who may require nappy changing while in attendance.
- The children's reusable water bottles were stored at a level that was accessible to them, should they need additional fluids outside of the allocated mealtime.
- Cosy areas were provided in both care rooms, to meet the children's need for rest and relaxation.
- Within the two care rooms, there was adequate space available to accommodate the children's freedom of movement, as they participated in both structured and free play activities.

Supporting relationships around children:

- Mealtime was noted to take place in a relaxed environment. There was a focus on social interaction and conversation and the children were assisted as required by the adults.
- Staff members competently led structured activities and created a playful atmosphere, which encouraged the children to participate. For example, during story time in Room 2, the children appeared engaged and joined in with actions and sounds, as the story progressed.
- The inspector was advised that methods of involving and communicating with parents included an online application, phone calls, informal discussion at arrival and collection times and a messaging application. The online application was used to share daily photographs as well as child development observations, information about curriculum activities and messages regarding upcoming events.

- Each week, time was allocated for staff to meet in order to discuss and plan for activities and events and to update policies, as necessary. Detailed written records to this effect were maintained and presented for review.

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 children’s snacks were supplied by their parents or guardians and included sandwiches, bread rolls, pasta, rice cakes, crackers, cheese, yogurts and fruit such as bananas, apples, grapes and strawberries, with water or juice to drink.
- The inspector was informed that some of the children who attended had food allergies. In response, the service operated a nut free policy and ensured that the children did not come into contact with the relevant allergens.
- The person in charge advised that flexible mealtimes were accommodated at the service and that if a child expressed hunger before or after of the mid-morning snack time, they were free to select a snack from their lunch box. This was also stated in the service’s Healthy Eating policy.

Non-Compliance Information

A nutritious snack had not been provided for one of the children and a suitable alternative was not subsequently offered to the child, who was observed to eat two packets of crisps for their meal break.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Staff spoke to the parents of the child who was not provided with a nutritious snack and the parents included fruit and oat bars over the last two weeks of playschool, before the summer break. Cheese and crackers will be provided as a healthy option if staff encounter this issue in the future. A notice will be sent to parents specifically highlighting the importance of nutritious snacks, encouraging the healthy options and explaining that a treat will only be allowed on a Friday. Any unhealthy food items will be sent home.

Supporting documentation submitted

The statement from the person in charge is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The response from the person in charge was accepted in meeting the requirements of the regulation.

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:

- Firefighting equipment was securely wall mounted.
- There were no training flexes or cables accessible to the children.

Infection Control:

- The children were supervised while washing their hands before the mid-morning snack. Hygienic handwashing and drying was supported through the provision of warm running water, liquid soap and single use paper towels, at each of the children's wash hand basins.
- After snack time in Room 2, the floor was swept and table tops were sanitised. Further cleaning of the care room was observed when the children had been collected.
- Wall hook storage was in place for the children's coats and suitable storage was also provided for the children's bags.
- The care rooms were supplied with a natural source of ventilation, through open windows.

Administration of Medication:

- The administration of medication was not observed at the time of inspection.
- During discussion, staff demonstrated that they were familiar with the procedure for administering the medication that may be required for two of the children.
- The medication held on site was suitably stored, labelled with the children's names and was noted to be in date.

Safe Sleep:

- None of the children were observed to sleep.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exit routes were maintained free from obstruction.

Outings:

- Not applicable, as outings were not included as part of the programme of activities.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The risk of unauthorised persons gaining access to the early years service was not appropriately managed. Upon the inspector's arrival, the main entrance door was found to be opened back, with no staff member present and while the door to Room 1 had been secured, this was easily opened via a thumb turn lock and the inspector was able to walk directly into the care room.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

On the morning of the visit, scaffolding had been erected on both sides of the school. As a temporary measure, it was determined safer for the children to access the playschool through the front door, rather than going under the scaffolding. Staff were at the front door to receive children at 9am, but the door was left open when the children went into the classrooms. The front door is normally locked, with a doorbell to alert staff if someone wishes to gain access. The front door was closed for the rest of the session and only opened by staff at home time. If the front door must be open to allow access in the future, a member of staff will be given the responsibility of supervising the door and will not leave it unattended, unless it is locked.

Supporting documentation submitted

The statement from the person in charge is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance identified under this regulation has been adequately addressed.

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) One staff member, who worked at the service held current First Aid Responder (FAR) certification.

(2)

(a) Two sufficiently stocked first aid boxes were easily accessible to adults, while out of reach of the children.

(b) The first aid boxes were consistently available, should the need for their use arise.

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 fire drills which had been previously undertaken at the service were recorded and maintained on file, with the most recent fire drill dated 16 May 2023.

(b) The number and type of the available firefighting equipment were listed. According to the maintenance records, the firefighting equipment was last checked on 7 November 2022 and the wired smoke alarm was tested on 12 April 2023.

(4) A fire evacuation notice was clearly visible on the notice board at the entrance to the service.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

Compliance Information

(e) Two children's toilets and two wash hand basins were available adjoining each of the care rooms. The staff sanitary facility was provided adjacent to the care rooms and consisted of two toilets, two wash hand basins and a nappy changing table, with a changing mat.

Non-Compliance Information

(e) Warm running water was unavailable at the two wash hand basins in the staff sanitary facility, where the nappy changing table was also located.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The caretaker had not turned on the warm water in the staff sanitary facility on the morning of the inspection. It was turned on by a member of staff during the visit. Normally, the caretaker would turn on the warm water in the staff toilets and has been asked to ensure that it is always turned on. As a preventive measure, the first member of staff to enter the playschool will check that all of the water switches are turned on and this task has been included in the morning checklist list.

Supporting documentation submitted

The statement from the person in charge is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The response from the person in charge was accepted in meeting the requirements of the regulation.