

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC267
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Name of Service:	Midleton Community Forum CLG
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Address of Service:	Community Building, Oakwood Lodge, Youghal Road, Midleton, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P25 WP38
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Name of Registered Provider:	Zoe O'Brien
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	08/05/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	23	PM	14
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurrabraher 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	N/A
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Description of service

Midleton Community Forum CLG caters for early years children, aged one to six years, with options of sessional, part time or full day care available. It is a community-based service, that has been in operation since 2004. Children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme are facilitated from 8.45am to 11.45am, each Monday to Friday, over 38 weeks of the year. Daily opening hours are from 8.30am to 5.45pm and the service is open 48 weeks of the year. The childcare facility also provides a registered school age service.

Located in a residential area of Midleton, in Co. Cork, the service operates from a detached, single storey premises. It consists of two care rooms for early years children, each with adjoining sanitary facilities and a school age room. There is a designated sleep room adjoining the Creche, along with a small kitchen. The outdoor play environment is directly accessible from all of the care rooms and the service also includes a reception area, offices, a staff room and both staff and school age sanitary facilities.

Staffing

The service currently employs 10 adults, of whom 8 are involved in the direct care of the early years children. This includes the registered provider, who is based at the setting and is available to assist with the care of the children, as needed. Two of the adults work solely with the school age children.

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

A referral was made to the Fire Safety Officer on 9 May 2024, in relation to the internal sleep room adjoining the Creche room.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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 was the person in charge at the childcare facility. A named deputy had also been identified, to deputise as required. Written information was available to this effect.
- (b) The registered provider facilitated the duration of the inspection process.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of all 10 adults who worked at the service were assessed and the following was established:
- (a) Seventeen written past employer references were available, with suitable records of validation for each.
- (b) Three written and validated references were in place from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 10 staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Employment history records demonstrated that police vetting from another jurisdiction was required for one of the adults and the relevant documentation was in place, along with a translation into English.
- (4) Written evidence was on file regarding the attainment of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, in respect of each of the eight adults who worked directly with the early years children. It was noted that one of the adults who worked with the school age children also held a relevant award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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) There was a sufficient number of adults available to the children during the period of inspection.

(2) The registered provider ensured that the requirements of the regulation were adhered to. The rooms were in operation as follows:

Morning:

Room Name and Age Range of Children	Number of Children Present	Number of Adults Present
Pre-school (3 - 5 years)	13	2
Creche (1 ½ - 3 years)	10	2

The registered provider was also available to provide assistance in the rooms, if required and another adult was assigned to cover staff breaks.

Afternoon:

Room Name and Age Range of Children	Number of Children Present	Number of Adults Present
Pre-school (3 - 5 years)	8	1
Creche (1 ½ - 3 years)	6	2

(8)

(a) At least two adults were present at all times throughout the inspection period. This practice was also evidenced through 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, and

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic needs:

- A mid-morning snack was facilitated shortly after 10.00am in the Creche and the hot lunch meal took place from 11.50am in the Pre-school room. It was reported that an afternoon snack was usually accommodated at approximately 3.00pm.
- The children chatted freely with one another, as they enjoyed their food in a relaxed, slow-paced and playful environment. Adults readily assisted the younger children to open their lunch boxes and food packaging.
- Within the care rooms, the children's reusable water bottles were either stored on a low-level shelf or on a table, which ensured that liquids were freely and consistently accessible.
- Nappy changing was accommodated for the younger children and the older children were observed to freely access and utilise the sanitary facilities that adjoined their care room.
- The children's need for rest, relaxation and comfort was met through the provision of inviting cosy areas in each of the care rooms. These spaces included sofas, soft floor mats, soft toys, cushions and books. A designated sleep room was available adjoining the Creche, for children aged under two years, who required sleep.
- The layout of both care rooms supported the children to freely partake in various activities and routine tasks. Outdoor play was also observed, during which time children had opportunities to engage in more active movement and exploration, such as cycling, balancing and climbing.

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

- A Healthy Eating policy was in place. The inspector was advised that food for the children’s mealtimes was supplied by their parents or guardians.
- On the day of inspection, the mid-morning snacks in both care rooms were noted to be suitably nutritious and varied, with options such as sandwiches, yogurts and a selection of fruit. Water was available as a drink. In the afternoon, the children’s hot meals included chicken curry and spaghetti with meatballs. While two of the meals provided for children in the Pre-school room were observed to consist of chicken nuggets and chips and chicken nuggets and spaghetti, it was noted that these children had eaten a nutritionally balanced snack earlier in the day.
- The registered provider informed the inspector that one of the children had food intolerances. This was managed through engaging with the child’s parents, to obtain information regarding their child’s dietary requirements and through subsequently ensuring that the relevant foods/ingredients were not included in any of the snacks that may be offered by the service.
- During discussion with the registered provider, it was confirmed that if a child expressed that they were hungry outside of routine meal breaks, snacks were available and would be offered. This was in keeping with the Healthy Eating policy.

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 main entrance door was noted to be secure upon the inspector's arrival and was maintained secure when not in use. Within the building, access to the early years area of the service was secured by keypad entry.
- The outdoor play environment was enclosed by a combination of high-level fencing and secured gates.
- In the outdoor play space, a shock absorbing surface was suitably located underneath a balance beam, a seesaw and climbing equipment, which included a slide.
- First aid boxes and cleaning agents were stored out of the children's reach.
- Within the care rooms, cables from electrical equipment were secured and inaccessible to children.
- Fire extinguishers were securely wall mounted.
- A safety clip was in place to anchor the blind cord in the sleep room.

Infection Control:

- The children's wash hand basins were provided with a supply of warm running water, liquid soap and disposable paper towels. Children were observed to wash their hands after playing outdoors and before eating. One of the adults in the Creche room was also noted to wash their hands, before assisting the children with their snacks. Adult supervision was ensured as the younger children undertook handwashing, while older children were provided with verbal reminders.
- The weekly and monthly cleaning records displayed in both rooms were noted to have been maintained up to date. Staff were also observed to undertake cleaning during the inspection. For example, in the Preschool room, the tables were sanitised and the floor was swept, after the morning snack.
- In the Creche sanitary area, the children's toiletries, such as wipes and barrier creams, were stored in individually labelled shelves, which minimised the risk of cross infection.
- Adequate ventilation of the care rooms and sanitary areas was ensured through open windows and mechanical ventilation.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not observed to be administered on the day of inspection.

- The medication which may be required for two of the children was noted to be labelled, in-date and safely stored.

Safe Sleep:

- The ten-minute interval checks of sleeping children that were carried out by staff members, had been recorded on a digital application and were available for review. These included monitoring of each child's breathing, colour and position.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were maintained free from obstruction.

Outing:

- No outing was conducted during the inspection period.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The door that provided access to the kitchen was not maintained secure, while not in use and was observed to be opened back, during part of the morning. This posed a risk of a child entering the kitchen while unsupervised and coming into contact with harmful items, such as the sharp implements which were stored in one of the drawers.

Infection Control:

2. The perishable foods provided for the children's mid-morning snack break were not refrigerated at the service prior to consumption, which increased the risk of food spoilage. In the Creche, it was observed that the children's lunch boxes were retrieved from their bags, which had been stored in the hallway. During discussion with staff in the Pre-school room, it was also confirmed that children's perishable snacks had not been refrigerated. It was acknowledged that other meals were refrigerated.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The written response stated that a hook was placed on the door frame to secure the kitchen, while not in use. As a preventive measure, staff will continue to lock the kitchen when it is not in use.

Infection Control:

- Following the inspection, two small fridges were purchased to store the children's morning snacks. This system is working well and all of the children's morning snacks are now stored in these fridges.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- A photograph of the kitchen door key, placed on a high-level wall hook.

Infection Control:

- Photographic evidence in relation to the new fridges.

Summary Comment

Following the corrective action implemented by the registered provider, regulatory compliance is determined to have been met.

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-*
- is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and*
 - is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.*

Compliance Information

- (1) Certification of completed and current First Aid Response (FAR) training was available in respect of nine of the adults who worked at the service.
- (2)
- First aid boxes were stored in locations that were easily accessible by the adults, while out of reach of the children and adequate supplies were maintained.
 - The first aid supplies were readily and consistently available at all times.

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 monthly fire drills which had been conducted were recorded in writing. It was noted that the children and staff in the Preschool room had undertaken a fire drill on 30 April 2024 and the most recent fire drill carried out from the Creche room was dated 15 April 2024.
 - (b) Details were available regarding the number and type of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms. According to the servicing documentation, the firefighting equipment was last checked on 2 October 2023 and the wired smoke alarm was tested on 11 March 2024.
- (4) A notice, which outlined the steps to be followed in the event of a fire, was displayed in the Preschool room.