

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC269
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Name of Service:	Ms Ellie's Playschool
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Address of Service:	28 Copperalley Close, Youghal, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P36 C603
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Name of Registered Provider:	Eleanor Ahern
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	21/11/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	13	PM	N/A
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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

Miss Ellie's Playschool is a play based sessional service, that first notified in 2006. Children aged two to six years are accommodated and can avail of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme from 9.00am to 12.00pm, each Monday to Friday, over 38 weeks of the year.

The service is located on the perimeter of Youghal, in Co. Cork and is provided from a room within the registered provider's private residence. Adjoining sanitary facilities are available for the children and there is an outdoor play environment accessible directly from the care room.

Staffing

The service employs four adults, all of whom work directly with the children who attend. This includes the registered provider and one relief staff member. The four adults have each attained a relevant award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, deputy person in charge 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) A named person in charge and a deputy had been assigned to the service.
- (b) Both the registered provider and the deputy were on duty at the setting when the inspection commenced and remained present for its duration.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of all four of the adults employed at the service were reviewed.
- (a) Seven of the 8 required written and validated references had been provided by past employers.
- (b) One of the references had been obtained from a source other than a previous employer and a record of validation was also in place.
- (c) Garda vetting documentation was held for each of the four adults.
- (d) As none of the adults had resided in another jurisdiction for a period of longer than six consecutive months, while over the age of 18, police vetting was not required.
- (4) There was documentary evidence on file to demonstrate that the four staff employed to work directly with the children had each achieved a certified qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education, at level 5 or 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. The registered provider had also completed the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years, special purpose award.

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) The registered provider ensured that there was a sufficient number of adults working directly with children, throughout the duration of the inspection.
- (3) The required adult to child ratios were adhered to; 2 adults were working with 13 children, who were aged 3 to 4 ½ years.

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:*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (b) Written information regarding the type of service offered and the age range of children accommodated was on file.
- (c) The ratio of adults to children was specified within the service's policies and procedures.
- (h) A roll book was used to document the daily attendance of all children. A sample review of four weeks was deemed satisfactory.
- (i) Weekly staff rosters were maintained.

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:

- The mid-morning meal break took place shortly before 11.00am. The children sat together at two of the tables and were observed to chat with one another, as they enjoyed their snacks in an unhurried environment. The adults readily assisted the children with peeling fruit and opening food packets.
- The children could access their reusable water bottles from their individually allocated storage baskets, which were positioned at their eye level, on a low shelving unit. Two of the children were noted to retrieve their own bottles during free play activities, when they required a drink.
- The children were observed to use the easily accessible toilet facilities in an independent manner, while an adult was available to provide verbal reminders.
- Children's need for rest and relaxation was met through the provision of a cosy area, with soft furnishings, books and an overhead canopy.
- Sufficient space was provided in the care room for the number of children present to freely move about and explore the environment.

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 door that provided access to the care room remained secure when not in use, including when the inspector arrived to undertake the unannounced inspection. This safety measure reduced the risk of unauthorised access.
- The risk of a child exiting the premises while unsupervised was also minimised. The outdoor play space, which was located immediately in front of the care room door, was securely enclosed by walls and a gate, with sliding bolts fitted on the interior side of the gate.
- The available firefighting equipment was appropriately tethered.
- A wall mounted cabinet was in place to ensure that the first aid supplies were inaccessible to the children.
- The door which led to the private residence was secured, which prevented the children from gaining unsupervised entry to this area of the premises.
- Cleaning agents were stored on a high-level shelf, out of the children's reach.
- Visibility markings were in place on the glass panelled door.
- There were no cables accessible to the children.

Infection Control:

- A supply of warm water, liquid soap, paper towels and a pedal operated bin were available for handwashing, which was observed to be undertaken by children. The adults were noted to use the hand sanitiser provided.
- A supply of cleaning agents and equipment was available in the service. It was noted that tables were sanitised before the snack break and the floor was later swept.
- Reusable plastic plates were provided for the children's use at snack time.
- An open window in the care room allowed for a supply of fresh air.
- Individual, photograph labelled baskets were in use for the appropriate storage of each child's personal belongings, which included their bags and coats.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed to be administered. Further to this, the registered provider informed the inspector that none of the children were in receipt of medication.

Safe Sleep:

- Not applicable, as none of the children were observed to sleep during the inspection period.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were maintained obstruction free.

Outings:

- An outing was not observed.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

Refrigeration of the children's perishable snacks prior to consumption, was not ensured, which increased the risk of food spoilage. Examples of the perishable snacks included yogurt drinks, cheese slices and ham sandwiches. Such foods were stored in the children's bags until the mid-morning snack.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The response from the registered provider outlined that the children's lunchboxes were stored in the children's insulated bags and that parents had been asked to let a member of staff know if foods required refrigeration. As a corrective action, a letter has been sent to parents, requesting that all perishable snacks be placed in a separate zip-lock bag, which will be placed in the fridge at the start of the session. Going forward, the service will include this information in the policies and procedures and ensure that it is implemented from the start of each academic year. Any new staff will also be informed. A staff member will separate the perishable items from the lunch, should a parent forget to ensure this and a reminder will be given to the parent.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the letter to parents was forwarded.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has demonstrated that the non-compliance identified under regulation 23 has been resolved.

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 members employed at the service who had completed First Aid Responder (FAR) training. The corresponding certificates were valid until 12 March 2025.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (a)(b)
- The first aid cabinet was not sufficiently equipped, as the following required materials were unavailable:
- 6 triangular bandages
 - 2 eye pads
 - 6 large wound dressings
 - 3 extra large wound dressings

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The response received stated that the first aid cabinet has been restocked with the required equipment. In addition, there will be a review of the first aid cabinet at the end of each term, to ensure it is sufficiently equipped.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the recently purchased first aid supplies and a copy of an order confirmation for the remaining required supplies.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted by the registered provider are accepted in meeting the regulatory requirements.

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 undertaken at the service were documented, with the most recent drill dated 26 October 2023.
 - (b) A record which contained details regarding the number and type of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms was made available. The documentation provided demonstrated that the firefighting equipment was last serviced on 16 December 2022 and the wired smoke alarm was tested on 15 October 2023.
- (4) The procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were clearly displayed next to the fire exit door.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

Adequate cover for a sessional category service was in place, as per the available insurance certificate.