

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC272		
Name of Service:	Model Farm Road (Cork) Childcare Ltd		
Address of Service:	Model Business & Technology Park, Model Farm Road, Cork		
Eircode:	T12 WP96		
Name of Registered Provider:	Seán O'Mahony, Elaine Bermingham		
Service type:	Full Day, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	02/08/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	107	PM 89
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurrabraher Cork T23X440		
Inspection undertaken by:	C Stokes & D. Prendergast		
Title:	Early Years Inspectors		
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		

Description of service

This service was established in 2006 as a privately owned Full day care service. It is registered to open from 7.30 to 6pm daily. It is registered to cater for preschool children aged 0-6 years. It offers the ECCE scheme and a play-based pedagogy across the centre. The centre has 11 rooms, of which 8 were in operation on the day of inspection.

Staffing

There are currently 40 adults attached to the service. This includes the two named registered providers, one of whom is not service based. A total of 39 adults are involved in the direct care of the children, with 3 of the staff working with both early years and 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. The inspections 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 registered provider, 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) One of the registered providers was in charge of operating the service. A manager and two named deputies, who could deputise in her absence, had also been appointed.
 - (b) The service manager was present at the childcare facility when the inspectors arrived and one of the registered providers arrived within half an hour. Thereafter, either the registered provider or the manager was available to facilitate the inspection process.
- (2) The manager confirmed that nine adults had commenced working at the service since the previous inspection was undertaken on 19 September 2022. Therefore, recruitment records in relation to these nine adults were reviewed, along with those of two adults, whose files had not been assessed previously. The following information was obtained:
 - (a) Sixteen of the written and validated references had been sourced from past employers.
 - (b) There were six written and validated references on file from sources other than previous employers.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures were in place for each of the 11 adults.
 - (d) International police vetting disclosures were available for six staff members, who had lived outside the State as adults, for more than six consecutive months.
- (4) Ten of the adults held a relevant award in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications, or as deemed equivalent by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). A letter of Qualification Recognition from the DCEDIY was on file for the other adult.

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

(2) The ratio of adults to children was adequate in all playrooms. On the day of inspection, 9 care rooms were in operation.

Room	Adults	Children-Morning	Children- Afternoon
Baby (0-14 months)	3	6	5
Wobbler (1-2 years)	3	13	12
Toddler	4	14	14
Playschool	5	18	18
Preschool 1	1	8	24 (Combined with room 2)
Preschool 2	2	16	
Cabin	2	10	11
Montessori 1	4	22	15
Total	24	107	89

*In the afternoon preschool rooms 1 and 2 join where there were 24 in 2 rooms for the morning, there were 24 in 1 room in the afternoon for snack (preschool 1) and the group played outside together with combined numbers. In addition, there were 2 staff for break cover.

(8) (a) There were at least 2 adults available on the premises throughout the duration of the inspection, and at all times in accordance with 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

Basic Needs

- Mealtime and snack time was observed to be a pleasant and social experience, where adults talked to and assisted the children as required. The atmosphere was relaxed and not hurried. In particular, staff in the baby room were observed to assist the children with self-feeding, baby led weaning and to help and encourage the older children as appropriate in an enthusiastic and considered way. Adults placed a tablecloth on the table and sat with the children in the various rooms during meal/ snack times.
- Nappy changing was observed to occur regularly and sensitively. Staff were observed to be kind, considerate, caring, and professional when changing nappies, for example, staff in the playschool room encouraged the children to climb the steps to the nappy changing unit and to find their own nappies and wipes to make nappy changing a fun and interactive part of the routine.
- The children's need for mobility was met with the outdoor area being used 2 or more times daily as observed on inspection.
- The children's need for sleep was met as children had access to several (four) designated sleep rooms for the children under 2 years to sleep on demand from the baby, wobbler and toddler rooms. The older children had access to stackable beds which were placed in the toddler and playschool care rooms. Children attending the preschool 1 and 2 rooms had access to stackable beds as required. In the cabin and Montessori 1 room, no children were observed to sleep/rest on stackable beds or sleep mats, but these rooms had areas for children to relax.
- Staff were observed to communicate with children in a warm and caring manner and in a way to help them feel safe, secure and at ease.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

Compliance Information

(1) (a) There were adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and outdoors. The indoor environment of each room was laid out in defined interest areas. The outdoor area was also laid out with a range of developmentally appropriate toys and materials to offer stimulating and challenging opportunities for play and learning.

(b) Stackable beds were available for the children in the Toddler room, Playschool, and Preschool rooms. Set sleep times, after lunch were well established in these rooms where all children were observed to sleep. In addition, there were several designated sleep rooms, two baby sleep room with 10 cots, a wobbler sleep room with 11 cots and additional cots located off a vacant wobbler room and a toddler sleep room with 9 cots to accommodate sleep on demand for children under 2 years

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 service.
- The outdoor area was secured.
- Blind cords were secured.
- Cleaning chemical/products were inaccessible to the preschool children.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, paper towels/electric hand dryers were in place for hand washing/drying.

Administration of Medication:

- No medications were observed to be administered on the day of inspection. Staff were aware of the storage and medical consent and appropriate practices around medicine administration as outlined in conversation with the inspector

Fire Safety:

- No fire safety issues were observed.

Outing:

- No outings were observed on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A portable heater was observed in the baby sleep room on a shelf. The use of portable heaters in services is prohibited due to the risk of a burn injury.
2. A general safety issue was noted in the outdoor area with respect to wooden equipment including a wooden shed, canopy, climbing wall of the slide and wooden cladding on the walls of the preschool 2 room. These wooden structures were showing signs of splintering and sharp edges which may cause injury to a child. In addition, a briar was growing through the fencing adjacent to the digging area of the Montessori 1 room, which may cause injury to a child. Issues regarding splinters from wooden structures and maintenance of the outdoor area were noted in the previous report of 19 September 2022, to which the registered providers had responded to state that such issues would be noted in the outdoor equipment periodic checklist and attended to.
3. A broken radiator cover in the preschool 2 room, damaged bookshelf in Montessori room2 and rusting area in the preschool 1 toilets had potential to cause injury to a child.

Infection Control:

4. Warm running water, required for effective handwashing, was unavailable at all of the children's wash hand basins, with the exception of the wash hand basins in the Cabin room, during the morning. Temperature readings ranged from 18.9°C to 23.4°C. It is acknowledged that the temperature of the water increased in the afternoon with the exception of preschool 1 and 2 rooms, after the issue was raised with the registered provider. Cold temperatures may impede hand washing leading to the spread of infection.

5. Torn nappy changing mats were observed in the three nappy changing areas, it is acknowledged that these were replaced on the day of inspection. However, this may lead to the spread of infection.
6. There was a strong malodour in the three nappy changing areas noted both in the morning and afternoon on the day of inspection. Three nappy bins were slow to open with the foot pedal and the disposal chute was observed to be soiled and not in a clean or hygienic condition, which may lead to the spread of infection. A malodour was found on the previous inspection of 19 September 2022 in the nappy changing areas to which the registered providers responded that adults were advised to ensure the lids are closed on the bins. It is acknowledged that new nappy disposal bins were purchased since the previous inspection, however, these were observed not to be used/cleaned/emptied to prevent a strong malodour in the nappy changing facilities throughout the three nappy areas, which may lead to the spread of infection.
7. Two nappy changing areas were observed to be over-used which may lead to the spread of infection for example 13 playschool children used 1 nappy changing mat and 14 toddlers used 1 nappy changing mat when the ratio of nappy changing mats and sinks to children is 1 to 11, this was not observed in practice.
8. A staff member was observed to return to a care room wearing the plastic apron after nappy changing which may lead to the spread of infection.
9. Staff and children were observed to use the same sink for hand washing after nappy changing without any cleaning of the sink and taps between its shared use, and this practice may lead to the spread of infection. The dual use of the sink between adults and children after nappy changing had been noted in the previous inspection report of 19 September 2022, and the registered providers responded to state that staff were instructed to disinfect/sanitize the sinks areas specifically before any child uses the sink and after the adult has used it, however this was not observed on the day of inspection.
10. One cot mattress was observed to have a torn cover and have exposed foam. This mattress could not be adequately cleaned and may lead to the spread of infection.
11. No waterproof mattress covers were observed in the cots where cots were shared between children. This may lead to the spread of infection.
12. Foot-operated, lidded pedal bins were not observed in each of the children's toilets for the disposal of paper towels which may lead to the spread of infection.

Safe Sleep:

13. A temperature beyond the safe range of 16 to 20 degrees Celsius was observed in the baby, wobbler, and toddler sleep rooms where the rooms were 21, 20.5, 21.2 and 21.8 degrees Celsius respectively. An issue with room temperatures during sleep was noted in different room locations in the previous inspection report of 19 September 2022 to which the registered providers advised that an air-conditioning unit was being installed in the playschool room and other rooms would have doors/windows opened frequently. However, on this inspection the room temperatures related to the designated sleep rooms.
14. Some babies were put to sleep on their tummies or sides rather than on their back, contrary to best practice, and to the services own sleep policy, which was on display in the sleep room. The child's position was noted on an online application as tummy/ side, and staff were unaware of the policy of the service when asked.
15. Sleep checks were not conducted every 10 minutes as required. In the baby room, the records for the day previous to the inspection showed gaps of 20, 23 28, and 14 minutes respectively in relation to 2 records sampled. The sleep checks may have been conducted more frequently but the online record did not reflect 10-minute sleep checks.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action & Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. The portable heater was removed from the baby room shelf and all portable heaters were removed from the building according to the response from the registered provider.
2. The safety issues in the outdoor area were addressed by the registered provider by actioning covering all identified sharp areas and removing the briar. Photographic evidence was submitted by the registered provider for each concern noting these issues will continue to be monitored, and the equipment in its entirety will be removed from the playground once the registered provider considers it to be beyond repair/restoration.
3. The damaged radiator cover was covered, bookshelf covered and area of rust in toilet was painted, and photographic evidence submitted by the registered provider. Staff were reminded of the defect book to notice maintenance/ wear and tear issues.

Infection Control:

4. The registered provider advised that the boiler had been turned off overnight and reignited in the morning by the person in charge and by the afternoon water temperatures were restored. An electrician had been booked, prior to the inspection, to replace the under-sink water heater in the Pre-school Rooms, as one of the two units has a fault which caused the switch to trip according to the registered provider.
5. The registered provider stated that the torn nappy changing mats were replaced with new mats that were on the premises at the time of inspection. Spare nappy changing mats are always available onsite and staff have been instructed to replace any frayed changing mats at the first sign of degradation as per the notice and picture of supplies submitted as photographic evidence.
6. The registered provider requested parents provide scented nappy bags for the disposal of used nappies into the appropriate nappy bins.
7. The registered provider identified a process of ensuring nappy changing stations maintain a ratio of 1 to 11 children for their use. Toddler & Playschool staff were instructed to use alternative changing areas, specifically the 5-station, designated Changing Room. When changing more than 11 children, the same 11 children will be assigned to the single changing station, located in the Toddler & Playschool toilet area, while the remaining children will be assigned to the designated Changing Room.
8. All staff who are responsible for nappy changing, were reminded to dispose of their aprons before returning to the care room. A notice of reminder was also displayed on the wall in the changing room, which was submitted as evidence by the registered provider.
9. While the practice of sanitizing the dual-use sinks was being conducted, the registered provider acknowledged that this practice was only being implemented at 4 set times throughout the day. The staff have since been reminded to sanitize the dual use sinks after every use. A notice of reminder was also displayed on the wall in the changing room, which was submitted as evidence by the registered provider. In addition, changing stations, and the required number of additional sinks, will be added to the Sluice Room (which adjoins the designated Changing Room) with the aim of no longer having any changing stations elsewhere in the building according to the response from the registered provider.
10. The torn cot mattress was disposed of and replaced. Bi-monthly checking of the mattresses is now included in-room equipment check list. Any rips or tears will be reported to management and replaced. This check list was submitted as evidence by the registered provider.
11. Waterproof mattress covers were ordered for all fabric-based mattresses.

12. Foot operated bins were ordered for the children’s bathrooms and evidence of purchase was submitted by the registered provider.

Safe Sleep:

13. The registered provider outlined the existing practice of cooling the rooms for sleep as closing the blackout blinds early in the day and opening the windows/doors. This will be monitored, and the installation of air conditioning will be further examined according to the response from the registered provider.
14. The registered provider advised that staff were issued with a copy of the service’s Safe Sleep policy by a member of management. The purpose and benefits of which were further explained to staff and staff spoke with the parents of the babies who have a preference to sleep on their tummies/sides. The parents were reminded of the Safe Sleep policy and were encouraged to place their children on their backs, feet to the end of the cot and with appropriate bedding, when putting them to bed at home. Parents were notified that their children will be placed into the cots in a similar manner. A copy of the service’s Safe Sleep policy will be given to all new parents and staff, at the time of their induction.
15. The staff set a reminder/alarm on their tablet, to sound every 9 minutes, to ensure that the sleep checks are conducted and recorded every 9-10 minutes and photographic evidence was submitted by the registered provider.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence provided by the registered provider was assessed and accepted as meeting the regulatory requirements of this regulation.

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) Nineteen of the staff members held in-date certified First Aid Responder (FAR) training, which ensured that at least one FAR trained adult was available to the children at all times.
- (2)
- (a) The required first aid supplies were accessible in a cabinet and a drawer, in the main reception area.
 - (b) Said supplies were available throughout the hours of operation, should a child be in need of 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) The fire drills which had been conducted at the service were recorded in writing, with the most recent fire drill dated 4 July 2023.
 - (b) A document, which detailed the number and type of firefighting equipment was available. A certificate of maintenance for the firefighting equipment indicated that an inspection was undertaken by a fire safety company on 7 November 2022. The wired smoke alarm was tested on 17 September 2022.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedure was displayed in most of the care rooms and in the hallway.