

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC295
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Name of Service:	The Lighthouse Centre
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Address of Service:	Unit 3a The Link Road Business Park, The Link Road, Ballincollig, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P31 R680
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Name of Registered Provider:	Fleur Dunphy, Marta Golik, Sinead Walsh
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Service type:	Part Time
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Date of Inspection:	29/09/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	12	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	2 nd Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick, V94 XT5F
Inspection undertaken by:	S O'Brien
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

The Lighthouse Centre is an early years service that caters for children with a diagnosis of autism. The service is located in a business park on the outskirts of Ballincollig, Co Cork. The service caters for children aged 3 to 6 years. The service operates from 8am to 12pm and 12:30pm to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday. The setting has two care rooms. The main care room is located upstairs with sanitary facilities for the children and a small care room for sensory and smaller groups is located on the ground floor. There is an outdoor play area located at the rear of the premises.

Staffing

There are 16 adults attached to the service. This included three registered providers, childcare educators and students. The registered providers are based in the service. On the day of inspection, there were eight staff members present in the service. There were six students on work placement also present.

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 inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under:

- Regulations 9: Management and recruitment
- Regulation 11: Staffing levels
- Regulation 15: Record of a preschool child
- Regulation 16: Record of a preschool service
- Regulation 19: Health, welfare and development of child
- Regulation 23: Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child
- Regulation 24: Checking in and out and record of attendance
- Regulation 25: First aid

However, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under:

- Regulation 8: Notification of change of circumstance.

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 registered providers, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) On discussion with the registered providers and reviewing the attendance records the following change had not been notified to the agency 60 days before the change took place:

- The service was operating from 8am to 12pm and from 12:30pm to 4:30pm each day. The service was registered to operate from 8:30am to 12:30pm and from 12:45pm to 4:45pm.

It is acknowledged that the registered provider submitted an application to the change of circumstance department on the day of inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Corrective Action

The registered providers stated in their response that a change of circumstance application was submitted and approved.

Preventive Action

One of the registered providers has taken responsibility for reporting any changes to the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documented evidence of the approved change of circumstance application was submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The registered providers response and the documented evidence submitted was reviewed and has met the regulatory requirements.

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) The service had a designated person in charge and two named persons available to deputise if needed.
 - (b) The designated person in charge and the two named persons were on the premises for the duration of the inspection.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in place in the service, and all adults were aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- (2) Sixteen recruitment files were reviewed including the three registered providers and six students.
- (a) Twenty-one of the references were from a past employer and were validated.

(b) Eleven of the references were from a reputable source and were validated.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 16 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting disclosures were available for six adults who had lived outside of a state for longer than six consecutive months.

(4) Nine adults working directly with the children held a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or a qualification deemed relevant by the minister from level 5 to level 9. The students on work placement did not require a qualification.

Non-Compliance Information

(4)

One adult working directly with the children did not hold a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or a qualification deemed equivalent by the minister.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Corrective Action

The registered providers stated in their response that the adult has enrolled in a level 5 course in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Preventive Action

The registered providers stated that they will no longer accept component certificates for qualifications.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documented evidence of a payment receipt for the level 5 Early Childhood Care and Education course was submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The registered providers response and documented evidence was reviewed and has met the regulatory requirements. This will be reviewed on next inspection.

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) The registered providers ensured there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children on the day of inspection.

(2) On arrival to the service, there were 12 children aged between 3 and 4 years being cared for by 8 adults, therefore the service was adhering to the minimum adult to child ratios

(8) On review of the staff roster, it was clearly outlined that there were at least 2 adults on the premises at all times while the service was in operation.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

(a) the name and date of birth of the child;

(b) the date on which the child first attended the service;

(c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;

(d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;

- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

(1) A sample of 12 children records were reviewed and were observed to be complete and contained the relevant information outlined from (a) to (i).

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:

- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

Compliance Information

(1) The following records was reviewed:

- (i) The service had a staff roster available which outlined the start and finish times of each adult working in the service.

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

- Children were observed having their lunch when the inspector arrived at the service. The lunches consisted of sandwiches, yoghurts, cheese and fruit. The children had individual water bottles which were also available to them throughout the day.
- The adults supported the children with communication. Children used different methods of communication such as picture exchange communication system (PECS) books and electronic applications. The adults adapted their method of communication based on the individual needs of each child. The voice of the child was listened to by the adults.
- Children were encouraged to be independent with the support of the adults. This was observed when the children were putting on their coats to go outdoors.
- The children were supported with toileting when needed. Nappy changing was carried out at regular intervals and when required.
- The children had several opportunities to play in the outdoor area throughout their day.
- Both the indoor and outdoor environment had resources to promote each child's learning and development.
- Individual care plans were available for the children who required them. These plans supported the adults in developing activities to support each child's learning and development.

Supporting relationships

- The care room was observed to be a relaxed environment with children observed interacting in smaller groups and one to one with the adult. The adults used low tones of voice when interacting with the children and ensured they were at the child's level at all times.
- Adults were observed sitting with the children during mealtimes and was a relaxing environment for the children to sit and enjoy their food.
- It was observed that there was a sense of teamwork and collaboration between the adults, students and the registered providers in the service.
- The adults outlined the importance of communication with each child's parents and guardians. The adults were observed communicating with the parents and guardians throughout the day and on collection.
- The adults used timers and audio cues to support children with transitions and taking turns. This was observed when a child wanted to play on the swing but needed to wait their turn.
- The adults were observed using positive language towards the children. This was observed when an adult said, 'You're a superstar, good job'.

Programme of activities

- The children's emotional development was supported by the children spending time in the quiet area and sitting in the hammock swing. This allowed for the children to take some time away from the larger group.
- Children were observed playing on the swings, climbing frame and trampoline in the outdoor area which supported their physical development and movement.
- Activities were child led, and the adults allowed the children have choice in relation to their engagement in activities. This was observed when some children spent longer periods of time in the outdoor or indoor environment.
- The children were observed playing with sensory equipment which supported them in regulating their emotions and exploring different textures.

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 entrance door was secured on arrival to the service.
- The outdoor area was a secure area for the children to play in with a gate and fence. On discussion with the registered provider, it was outlined that risk assessments were carried out each morning prior to the children entering the area as the outdoor area is located to the rear of the building.
- The stairs in the premises were observed to have a handrail and was adequately lit. The floor covering was observed to be in good condition during the inspection.
- Cleaning agents were observed to be stored out of reach to the children on inspection.
- Toys and play equipment were observed to be in good condition on inspection.

Infection Control:

- Perishable food items from the children's lunches were stored in a refrigerator to prevent food spoilage.
- Warm water, soap and paper towels were available to the children and adults in the sanitary areas. Children were observed washing their hands after toileting and nappy changing.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were observed to be clear and free from obstruction during the inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The inspector reviewed the attendance records of the children in attendance in the service, and it was observed that each child was checked in and out of the service.

(3)

(a) The inspector was requested to check in and out of the service on arrival and departure.

(b) There was a daily record kept in the service of the entry of any such person to the service.

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) Four adults held an in-date certificate in First Aid Responder (FAR). At least one adult that held First Aid Responder training was on the premises while the service was in operation.

(2)

(a) The first aid box was safely stored and easily accessible to the adults in the event of it being required. On discussion, the adults were aware of its location in the care room.

(b) The first aid box was stored out of reach to the children. The first aid box was observed to be fully stocked.