

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC380
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Name of Service:	St. Mary's Preschool
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Address of Service:	St. Mary's National School, Orilia Terrace, Cobh, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P24 FR98
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Name of Registered Provider:	Lorraine Peterson
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	28/09/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	11	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

St. Mary's Preschool is a sessional early years service, that is registered to cater for children aged two to six years. This includes children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, which is facilitated over a 38-week annual period. Registered daily opening hours are from 8.45am to 12.15pm.

The service is provided from a classroom within St. Mary's National School, in Cobh, Co. Cork. Adjoining children's sanitary facilities are available and the children have the use of an outdoor play area, located beside the building.

Staffing

There are four adults attached to the service. This includes a relief staff member and the registered provider, who is based in a neighbouring early years setting. Each of the four staff members holds 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 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, 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) The service had a designated person in charge and a named deputy person in charge had also been assigned, to deputise in her absence.
 - (b) Both the person in charge and the deputy were on duty at the service for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider also attended the closing meeting.
- (2) The recruitment records of one adult, whose files had not been previously assessed, were reviewed, along with the qualifications of all staff members.
- (a) Both of the required written and validated references had been sourced from past employers.
 - (b) There were no written references from sources other than previous employers.
 - (c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available for the staff member.
 - (d) Following review of the adult's curriculum vitae, police vetting was not deemed to be required.
- (4) Records on file demonstrated that a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education was held by each of the four staff members. The awards attained ranged from level 6 to level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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) Throughout the period of inspection, an adequate number of adults were observed to work directly with the children in attendance.
- (3) The adult child ratio was correct and maintained; there were 2 adults responsible for the direct care and education of 11 children, who were aged 2 and a half to 4 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:*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (i) Daily staff rosters had been completed and were displayed in the care room.

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:

- During the sessional service, a mid-morning snack was facilitated at 10.45am. This part of the daily routine was observed to be relaxed and unhurried, with conversation and social interaction encouraged. Staff members were readily available to assist any child who required help to open lunch boxes or food packaging.
- Drinking water was offered to the children during free play activities and the children could also access their water bottles from their bags, which were stored on a low-level shelf in the care room.
- The children were encouraged to utilise the adjoining sanitary facilities in an independent manner.
- The children's respiratory hygiene was promptly attended to; one of the adults was observed to assist a child to clean their nose.
- The children's need for rest and relaxation was met through the provision of a cosy area, which consisted of a vinyl sofa, positioned next to a book shelf. A second area of soft furnishings was also available.
- When minor disputes arose among children, the adults intervened to prevent such incidents from escalating. On one occasion, an upset child was comforted and reassured by one of the adults in a warm and caring manner.
- The spacious care room enabled children to move freely, as they initiated and participated in various activities. Outdoor active play was also accommodated, which allowed for increased range of movement.

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

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) Appropriate indoor and outdoor play equipment was in place and was readily accessible to the children who attended the service. Examples of the range of materials on offer in the care room included a tool bench and play tools, building blocks, a wide selection of hand-held vehicles, books, magnetic shapes, train sets, animal figures, dolls and accessories, a fire station and play kitchen units.
- The outdoor play space was equipped with a climbing frame, slides, hand held vehicles, digging toys, picnic bench seating with incorporated messy play materials, a shop stall and a play kitchen. Additional equipment was maintained in an adjacent storage container.

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 key locked from the exterior, which reduced the risk of unauthorised persons gaining access to the early years service. The care room door that provided access to the rest of the school, was secured with a high-level sliding bolt. This minimised the risk of a child exiting the care room, while unsupervised.
- The outdoor play area was secured through a combination of high-level fencing and a gate. Additional moveable partitions were also utilised to create a smaller enclosure, while the area was occupied by the children.
- Low-level electrical sockets were fitted with safety plugs.

- A heater in the care room was wall mounted above the children's reach, which reduced the risk of a child sustaining a scald injury.
- There were no blind cords on the care room windows.
- Firefighting equipment was safely tethered.
- Soft landing mats were provided in the outdoor play space.

Infection Control:

- Suitable handwashing facilities were available in the children's and adults' sanitary areas. Warm running water, liquid soap and paper towels were provided.
- Handwashing was observed at key intervals; the children washed their hands after using the sanitary facilities, before eating their snack and after outdoor play. An adult was noted to wash their hands after assisting a child to clean their nose.
- A refrigerator was in use to store the children's perishable snacks. This ensured that such foods were maintained within the safe temperature range of 0°C to 5°C.
- The care room appeared clean and well maintained. Staff were noted to sanitise the tables before the mid-morning snack. Cleaning records for both the indoor and outdoor environments were displayed and maintained up to date.
- Wall hook storage was provided for the children's coats and their bags were stored on a shelf.
- Open windows in the care room ensured adequate ventilation.

Administration of Medication:

- The person in charge informed the inspector that none of the children were in receipt of medication.

Safe Sleep:

- No child was observed to sleep at the time of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- There were no fire safety concerns noted.

Outings:

- Not applicable, as the inspector was advised that outings were not undertaken.

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) The service provided evidence that two staff members held up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training.
- (2)
- (a) The first aid box was stored on a high-level shelf in the care room.
 - (b) The first aid box was available in the pre-school service at all times, throughout the hours of operation.

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) A written record was available regarding the monthly fire drills which had been completed at the service. The most recent fire drill took place on 13 September 2023.
 - (b) A list of the number and type of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms was made available. Records from a fire safety company indicated that the firefighting equipment was last serviced on 8 March 2023 and that the wired smoke alarm was tested on 8 June 2023.
- (4) The service's fire evacuation procedure was displayed on the care room wall.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service was insured to provide care for up to 22 children to attend at any one time, with cover valid until 27 November 2023.