

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015CC384
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	S O F Childcare
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Newtwopothouse, Mallow, Co. Cork
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<b>Eircode:</b>	P51 TP22
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Siobhan O'Flynn
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	24/02/2026
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	33	PM	16
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Second Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick.
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<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	F Collins
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<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector
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### 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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
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### Description of service

SOF Childcare is a full day care service based in Newtownpothouse, North Cork just off the main N20 Cork-Limerick Road. The service operates from a converted house where the upstairs section is not in use, and the ground floor has been converted into a two roomed childcare premises with adult and children's toilets and a kitchen.

The two care rooms, the Swan (older children) and Ducklings (younger children) cater for pre-school children. The school aged care service is operated out of the Swan room morning and evening.

The service offers full day care, part-time and sessional services for 47 weeks of the year with scheduled closures for two weeks at Christmas and three weeks during the summer holidays. The service facilitates the Early Childhood Care and Education programme for 38 weeks of the year.

The service operates between the hours of 07.30-18.00 hours, Monday–Friday with the sessional service running from 09.00 -12.00 daily, catering for children aged from 2 to 6 years.

The children have access to a secured outdoor play area that consists of a large concrete surface and an area that has been covered with artificial grass. There is a large, covered space (the outdoor classroom) also available to the children.

### Staffing

There were 11 staff employed in the service; this included the registered provider.

All staff working directly with children in the service held a recognised qualification in Early Childhood Care & Education at level 5 or above on the National Qualifications Framework or held a letter of equivalence from the Minister

### 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.

## Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, deputy 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-*

*(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*

## Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a deputy person in charge on the premises on the day of inspection. The person in charge was the registered provider at inspection.
  - (b) The person in charge or the named deputy person in charge were on the premises at all times during the operation of the service.
  - (c) There was a clear structure in the service that identified the management structure. Each care room had a room leader, childcare staff and where required had staff employed under the Access and Inclusion Model Scheme.
- (2) Eleven adults work in the service; no new staff member had commenced since the last inspection however three files were assessed for Garda Vetting renewal.
- (c) Updated Garda vetting disclosures were on file for the three adults who work in the service that required their Garda vetting to be renewed. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting' requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

### 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.*

#### Compliance Information

(1) Both care rooms were in operation on the day of inspection, with adequate adults available to care for the needs of the children in attendance.

(2) The adult child ratios were correct in both rooms as observed throughout the day.

- The Swan room (children aged 3-5 years) had two qualified staff caring for 17 children in the morning. In the afternoon this room was used by the school aged children.
- The Duckling room, there were 16 children (aged between 2-4 years) attending in the morning and were cared for by four adults.
- The pre-school children that remained on for full day care all came together at 12md when the sessional service ended. For the afternoon there was 16 children aged between 2-5 years being cared for by four to five adults. The adults were able to cover for each other's breaks and ensure the numbers remaining caring for the children was adequate.

### 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:*

- (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;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

## Compliance Information

- (1)
- (f) There were individualised care plans available for children that required same, these plans were specific, individualised and indicated in a step-by-step process how to manage the illness/allergy/special need of the children that required same.
- (i) There was written parental consent available for medical treatment for four children as assessed.

## 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;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

## Compliance Information

- (1)
- (i) The staff roster was available and along with this the list of staff breaks was available and accessible to all staff. This was posted at the side of the fridge.
- (k) Details of accidents and incident were reviewed across both care rooms, eleven forms in total were reviewed. The forms were completed fully, had full child details, record of the particular incident and also signatures of parents and staff inclusive of management. This indicated good practice in the management of accident and incidents and ensuring parents were made aware of the event.

## 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:

- The needs of the children around food and drinks were met. The children were offered their snack mid-morning, and all of the children ate together. The children had access to their drinks at all times, and the water bottles were on suitably low shelving where the children could be independent in accessing them. Drinks of milk and water were offered at dinner time, and the service promoted a healthy eating policy and examples of the food provided for the snacks included fruit, sandwiches, yogurts, cheese and crackers. Dinner served was chicken and pasta bake with vegetables blended into the sauce. Cheese was also offered to those that wished for same. Additional food was offered where children did not eat a big meal with children given fruit options of bananas and apples.
- The children in the service were supported to be independent in toileting and the staff supported this and supervised hand washing.
- Children that required nappy changes had these changed on routine and if needed.
- Rest and relaxation areas were child sized couches in both care rooms which the children could access at any time. Additional floor cushions were available to the children when they sat as a large group for circle time and story time.
- The children from both care rooms played outside in the morning, the children dressed up for outdoors in waterproof clothing.
- There was no restriction on the movement of the children, and the children were observed to move about freely.
- Care room temperatures were recorded at 21.2°C at 9.38 in the Swan room and at 20°C at 11am in the Swan room.

### Supporting Relationships:

- The staff within the service were consistent and were working in the service for a number of years. The children knew their carers well and were engaged with them in their activities throughout the morning. Children sought the support of the staff when needed.
- The staff were observed to support and engage with the children in their activities outside and supported them if they required help however not creating an adult lead approach to the play activities.
- The staff sat with the children during snack and dinner time and engaged with them, assisted them as required and created a social space.
- Family walls were displayed in each care room with the children eager to show who their family was and connected with the photographs.
- Communication with parents was at drop off and collection.

### Physical And Material Environment:

- The care rooms were well developed with many areas of interest, appropriate height tables and chairs and access to library and rest areas.
- There were sand tables outside to support sensory play, home corners in each care room to promote imaginary play. Books to read and promote storytelling to support speech and language development. Fine motor development was supported through access to arts and crafts materials, blocks and bricks.
- The activities outdoors were organised to promote risk taking and large motor development.
- There were adequate materials available to the children who could choose their activity independently or with help. The toys and activities were age appropriate to the ages of the children attending the service.
- The care room had accessible shelving with materials that were accessible to the children promoting independence.
- Adult sized chairs were available.
- The children's artwork was displayed throughout the service.

### Programme of Activities:

- The plan for the day was displayed in each room, and the children could see this when transitioning from one activity to another as observed in the Swan room.
- Transitions were managed by the staff giving notice to the children of cleaning up and of the next activity and when needed gave additional time to the children who were slower to eat snack and dinner.

**Outdoor Area:**

The outdoor area was easily accessible. The children had access to a large concrete area where the children played with push along toys and ride on toys. The artificial grass area had climbing toys. They also had access to sand play equipment in the outdoor classroom. Children had access to this secure area daily.

**Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service**

**Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials**

*A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.*

**Compliance Information**

The registered provider ensured that there were suitable and adequate equipment and materials available to the children in the service.

The rooms had adequate quantity of materials for the numbers of children attending. The equipment was suitable and would be able to promote the sensory, motor, speech and language and emotional development of the child. The outdoor area also had suitable equipment and materials for the age range of children attending. There was access to slides, playhouses, ride on toys, sand trays, large motor equipment such as hoops.

**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 gate at the side of the premises was secured by electromagnetic lock and the doors to each of the two care rooms was also secured by electromagnetic lock. The staff wore fobs which allowed them to open these gates and doors. Keypad access was also available to the staff. These measures ensured that the children were secure and could not gain access to the car park or the road outside. These measures also ensured that no unauthorised adult could gain access to the service.

- The emergency fire exit doors were unobstructed with no play materials or tables blocking access.
- The windows were at a height that were not accessible to the children, and there were no blind cords accessible. The blackout blinds that were hung from hooks for sleep time did not have any cords attached.
- The children did not have access to the staircase.
- The shelving units that were high were secured to the wall and did not pose a risk to the children.
- The play equipment assessed on inspection was in good condition and free from pinch and crush points.
- All flexes and cables assessed were in good condition and out of reach of the children.
- Waste both indoors and outdoors was managed with lidded bins that were pedal operated
- All medicines were kept in their original containers which were clearly labelled and kept in a high press in the Duckling's room.
- There was safe storage for cleaning agents for use in the care rooms with locked storage near the adult toilet.
- The outdoor area was secured with fences and gates that were locked and therefore the children could not access the roadway or other source of danger.
- There were no ponds, pits or other hazards identified in the outdoor area.

### Infection Control:

The service followed best practice guidelines in the management of the spread of infection for the following:

- The cleaning of the tables was evident with staff cleaning tables before and after snack time and after messy play.
- There was hot water available in the children's and adult toilets. Liquid soap and paper towels were available at all sinks to ensure the children and staff could wash their hands as required, and paper waste was disposed of in pedal operated lidded bins.
- Snacks were stored in the fridge before snack time to prevent contamination and potential illness from perishable items contained in the snacks.
- Children were observed to wash their hands after messy and outdoor play, after toileting and before eating.
- The bags and coats were stored off the ground on hooks or in individualised storage boxes which prevented contamination and cross infection

### Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed to be administered on the day of inspection.
- The service had safe practices in place for the management of emergency medication that needed to be brought to the service daily and be handed over to the adult collecting the individual child.

### Safe Sleep:

- One child required sleep on the day of inspection with a staff member remaining in the care room with them. Sleep checks were completed and recorded on the care application system and previous records were reviewed.

### Fire Safety:

- The firefighting equipment was safely tethered to the walls.
- The registered provider had ensured safe practices around fire drills were practiced with paper records used for fire drills to ensure they had true records of the children attending and onsite.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### General Safety:

1. The kitchen door though closed was not secured, this may give potential access to the children in the Swans room to the kitchen where hot ovens, cleaning agents and kitchen equipment was accessible. This poses a risk to the children who may get access to the kitchen.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

1. The door to the kitchen was immediately locked when identified it was unlocked. The staff were sent a reminder to ensure the kitchen door is closed and locked at all times.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

1. A copy of the message sent to all staff has been received.  
A photograph of the notice on the kitchen door requesting all staff to ensure the door is locked has been received.

### Summary Comment

The requirements for this regulation have been met following the corrective and preventive actions taken as outlined in the response from the registered provider.

## Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

### Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-*

*(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*

### Compliance Information

(j) The repairs to the skirting boards in the hallway were completed.