

# 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>	09/06/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	35	PM	13
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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.

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

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 ECCE 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.

The service caters for children aged from 2 to 6 years.

There are sanitary facilities adjacent to both rooms.

An area within the Swan room converts to a sleep area in the afternoon.

Other facilities on the premises include a kitchen, storage areas, toilets for the adults and a staff room upstairs.

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 outside.

### 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations:

Regulation 9 (1), (2), (4)

Regulation 10

Regulation 11 (1) (2)

Regulation 19 (1) (a)

Regulation 22

Regulation 23

Regulation 25

Regulation 28

However, on inspection additional non-compliances which posed a risk were identified under:

Regulation 15 (f)

Regulation 29

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations 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 provider, deputy persons 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) The service had a designated person in charge and a deputy person in charge on the premises on the day of inspection. On the day of inspection, the person in charge was the registered provider. In the event the person or deputy person in charge were not on the premises a further deputy was able to deputise.
- (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 workers and where required had staff employed under the Access and Inclusion Model Scheme.
- (2) Eleven adults work in the service, all 11 adult files were assessed for completeness.
- (a) Of the 22 references required 19 references, validated as required were available from past employers.
- (b) Of the 22 references required 3 validated references were available from a source other than a past employer.
- (a) Garda vetting disclosures were on file for all 11 adults who work in the service. The service also 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.
- (b) Police vetting was available and translated for one staff member who resided outside the jurisdiction for greater than six months as an adult.
- (4) All 11 adults held relevant qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the national qualifications framework or a letter from the Minister deeming them to have an equivalent qualification.

### Part III – Management and Staff

#### Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

*A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.*

#### Compliance Information

The following policies were assessed:

- The complaints policy.
- The administration of medication policy.

These policies provided clear guidance to the staff.

### Non-Compliance Information

The following policy was assessed and did not contain the required information to guide the staff:

1. The healthy eating policy did not indicate how food was prepared and stored in the service. Not indicating how food is stored particularly food that is brought in from children's homes may allow for this food not to be stored correctly and may cause illness in children.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The healthy eating policy has been updated and will be reviewed regularly to ensure it is up to date.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

1. A copy of the healthy eating policy has been received.

### Summary Comment

The requirements for the policy as requested has been achieved.

## 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) Both care rooms were in operation on the day of inspection. There were adequate adults available to care for the needs of the children in attendance.
- (2) The adult child ratios were correct in the care rooms as observed throughout the day.
  - The Swan room (children aged 2-3 years) had four qualified staff caring for 20 children in the morning. One of these staff were employed under the access and inclusion model scheme (AIM). In the afternoon this room was used by the school aged children.

- The Duckling room, there were 15 children (aged between 4-5 years) attending in the morning and were cared for by three adults. There were 13 children being cared for by four adults in the afternoon.

(8) (a) The roster provided to the inspector by the person in charge identified that a minimum of two staff were on the premises at all times during the operation of the service.

### 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;*

#### Non-Compliance Information

(1) (f) The registered provider did not hold on file or have available to the staff the details of the information required to provide emergency assistance in the event three children required same. Three children were noted to being in potential need of emergency medication, which was available onsite, however a guide for staff on when to use this, e.g. the signs and symptoms for the child were not available to guide the staff should the need arise. Not having accurate plans in place may delay the administration of the emergency medication to the child that may require same.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

(1) (f) A detailed care plan has been put in place for all children that require same for medication administration in the service. These plans have been drafted between the setting and parents and are easily accessible to all staff working with the children should the need arise.

##### **Supporting documentation submitted**

(1) (f) A copy of the template care plan has been received.

#### Summary Comment

The requirements as set out in the regulations as inspected have been achieved.

### 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:

- Meals the snacks on the day of inspection were served at appropriate times. Breakfast had been given before the inspector arrived onsite, snack was served to the children at 10.30, dinner was served at 12md, the afternoon meal was served at 2.30pm. The registered provider stated that a further snack would be available to the children who remained in the service after 5pm.
- Children were provided with drinks throughout the day. Drinks bottles were always accessible to the children and children brought their drinks outside when using the outdoor spaces.
- Assistance was given to the children that required same and children were observed to be encouraged to be self-sufficient where possible. Staff were observed to be on hand to support the children to open packaging if needed. Appropriate crockery and cutlery were available and used.
- Staff supported the children with toileting when required and no child was in nappies, all had been toilet trained.
- The children in both care rooms were observed to wash their hands before snack and dinner, after outdoor play and after messy play.
- Sleep was facilitated at a scheduled time after dinner in the Swan room for the one child that required same. This child was supervised at all times during their sleep time.
- All children could move about freely and there was no restriction placed on their movement. Children played outdoors for long periods both before and after snack time and for those remaining in full day care they were playing outside again in the afternoon.

### Supporting Relationships:

- Each staff member was assigned to a care room. The children were accustomed to the staff and sought out assistance when needed.
- The children were observed to play alone at the sand trays and play in small and large groups with the many outdoor activities. The children also played together or participated in large group activities with the staff such as telling stories or reading.
- The groups supported each other especially playing with the sand, with the hoops outside and when playing ball.
- Parents were observed to be spoken to at drop off and collection. Communication with parents was also via the services web-based application.
- The staff appeared to work well together and supported each other when managing breaks and when going outside as a larger group. When outside the staff placed themselves in various points to support each other and to support the children

### Physical And Material Environment:

- The indoor environment consisted of two care rooms. Both rooms had child height tables and chairs which were easily accessible to the children. There were open shelving units that were accessible to the children and at their height and therefore the children could access or choose their own activities. This supported choice and independent thinking for the children.
- Rest areas were accessible to the children in both care rooms where the children could opt out of activities or rest if needed.
- The service demonstrated a language rich environment with books being read and the staff talking with the children at their level. This was also observed when the staff supported large group activities where each child had to respond to the theme of the day regarding 'Fathers Day'.
- The materials and equipment were easily accessible to the children and the children completed artwork in honour of their fathers as a gift for 'Fathers Day'.

### Outdoor Environment:

- The outdoor environment was extensive and consisted of three areas.
- The outdoor classroom area was covered and protected on three sides from the elements. This area housed the sand trays, large activities of blocks and construction. The children appeared happy to be outside and all children were appropriately dressed.

- There were two other areas, a large concrete area where ride on toys were used, where the children used hoops to jump in and out of and where ball games were played.
- The artificial grass area was where the climbing equipment and large playhouses were accessible to the children who were observed to hide, play 'house' and use the slides.

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

#### Regulation 22 – Food and drink

*A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.*

#### Compliance Information

- The food and drink in the service was provided in combination between the parents/guardians and the service.
- The snack provided in the service in the morning was provided by parents/guardians. The snacks observed were healthy and consisted of crackers, cheese, yogurts, fruit and berries, and sandwiches.
- Drinks of water were freely available and encouraged.
- The main meal (dinner) which was given to the children at 12.00 was provided by the service and on the day of inspection consisted of mashed potatoes, carrots, parsnips, cabbage and bacon. The children were offered gravy and chose how much and if they wanted it. Fruit was available for after dinner for those that requested some. Additional mashed potatoes and gravy were also available. Portion sizes were large, and each child was observed to eat their meal.
- The afternoon meal was served at 2.30 with sausage rolls, chopped fruit and freshly made Maderia cake served to the children.
- A menu was available to review and indicated a variety of main meal and afternoon meal provision throughout the week.

## 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 secured as required with keypad/fob entry accessible to the staff. This prevented any child gaining access to the carpark or the main road when the side gate was secured. This also prevented unauthorised adults accessing the service.
- Internally the doors to the staff toilet, the kitchen and to the storeroom in the Swan room were secured with coded entry systems.
- The emergency fire exit doors were clearly identified and were unobstructed. These doors were push bar operated and if opened by a child were alarmed so the staff would be aware immediately of the door being opened.
- The opening for the windows was secure and these openings were not accessible to the children.
- The glass doors had a panel though the centre which indicated its presence to the children attending.
- The electrical cables observed were in good condition and out of reach of the children.
- The toys and play equipment assessed were in good condition and free from pinch and crush points.
- Heavy equipment and furniture were secured to the walls to prevent them falling should a child climb on same.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach on high shelves or in secured presses.

##### Infection Control:

- The children were observed to wash their hands before meals and snacks, after painting and after outdoor play. The children were assisted with hand washing by the staff if needed.
- There was hot water, liquid hand soap and paper towels available at all children and adult toilets and at the sinks in the care rooms.
- The nappy changing areas were clean and well maintained, however were not currently in use. There were named individual shelves for the storage of nappies and toiletries for the children that required same.
- There were pedal operated bins available throughout the service.

- All coats and bags were stored off the ground in individual shelves in the Ducklings room and on individual coat hooks for the children attending the Swan room, this minimised contact with the floor and minimised cross infection.

### Administration of Medication:

- No medication was administered on the day of inspection.
- Emergency medication was available and stored out of reach of children for the three children that may need same.

### Safe Sleep:

- Ten-minute sleep checks were carried out on the child who slept in the Swan room. A staff member remained in the room with this child who was sleeping on a sleep mat.

### Fire Safety:

- The fire doors as observed on the day of inspection were unobstructed and accessible in the event they were required.
- Firefighting equipment was suitably fixed to the walls.

## 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.*

### Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider insured that staff trained in first aid for children were at all times immediately available to the children. Eight staff held up to date training in FAR first aid. A further staff member held a basic first aid qualification.

## 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 as a full day care service with a capacity for 50 children. The expiry date of the insurance was 27.03.2026.

## 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*

#### Non-Compliance Information

(d) The service was not maintained as required. The skirting boards in the hallway where the children from the Swan room stored their coats and bags was missing and exposed an area between the wall and the ground that contained dirt and debris and was not easily cleaned.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

(d) The skirting boards have been replaced and the hallway cleaned, the registered provider has assured that all maintenance issues will be checked frequently and maintained as required.

##### **Supporting documentation submitted**

(d) A photograph of the varnished skirting board replaced has been received.

#### Summary Comment

The outstanding requirements as inspected have been achieved.

## Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

### Regulation 32 – Complaints

*(1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-*

- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
- (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
- (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*

(2) *A registered provider shall ensure that-*

- (a) *a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and*
- (b) *the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.*

## Compliance Information

- (1) (a) The registered provider had a complaint policy for the service that would be followed in the event a complaint was received by the service.
  - (b) The complaints policy indicated how each complaint would be dealt with.
  - (c) The procedures contained within the policy indicated how the complainant would be kept informed.
- (2) (a) The registered provider had records available for review on two complaints received by the service.
- (b) The steps set out on the services policy were followed when the registered provider dealt with the complaints received.