

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC410		
Name of Service:	The Children's House Preschool		
Address of Service:	Drominaar, Whitechurch, Co. Cork		
Eircode:	T34 NT29		
Name of Registered Provider:	Marie Sheehan		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date(s) of Inspection:	06/03/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	24	PM n/a
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Administration Office, St Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher, Cork		
Inspection undertaken by:	C Stokes		
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		

Description of service

The Children’s House preschool was established in 2000 as a private sessional service. It offers ECCE provision from 8.50 to 11.50am, Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year. The service is a play-based blended indoor/outdoor provision. The ethos of the service is a pedagogical approach that supports children as capable, competent and agentic learners.

Staffing

The registered provider is service based. All four adults working directly with children including the registered provider have a major 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 child/ safety. 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, 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 has a designated person in charge and a named person who can deputise.
 (b) At all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the deputy person in charge are on the premises.
 (c) There is a clear management structure in the setting as described in the settings introduction policy.
- (2) The staff recruitment files were examined as part of this inspection.
- (a) When the recruitment files of all 4 adults was reviewed two written and appropriately validated references were available in respect of 4 past employers
 (b) Two written and appropriately validated references were available in respect of 4 sources other than past employers.
 (c) A completed record of Garda vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau was available for the 4 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 was not required as no adults had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period exceeding 6 months.
- (4) A certificate of a major award in Early Childhood care and education at a minimum of QQI level 5 on the National Qualification framework was on file for 4 adults.

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) At all times during the period of the inspection the registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.
- (3) The ratio of adults to children was adequate with 4 adults including the registered provider working with 24 preschool children.

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:

- Adults were observed to interact and encourage/assist the children to make the rolling snack time a social occasion, while encouraging independence. Children had access to their water bottles at all times.
- The children were largely trained using the toilet and were supported appropriately by the adults to use the toilet. A small number of children were in pull-up nappies.
- There was a cosy corner in the home area to provide for the children's need for rest and relaxation during the morning, in addition there was a cosy corner in the outdoor playhouse for their relaxation.
- The setting placed significant emphasis on outdoor play and learning to meet the needs of children in their setting, the children were observed to be largely outdoors for the morning, with free movement between indoors and outdoors. Therefore, the children's need for mobility was met in this setting.
- The adults were observed to support the children to interact positively with each other, for example, with turn taking/sharing and joint work.
- There was a calm and positive approach to managing behaviour. The adults modelled speaking in low tones and supportive interactions.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:

- The registered provider advised the inspector that the service operated in partnership with parents, with a parental communication online application in use and an open-door approach. The service works supportively with parents to ensure children are appropriately clothed for this outdoor service.
- Parents received emails/texts from the service and there was a parents evening for induction before the term in September to help parents support their children to settle in the service, according to the registered provider. Parents were also communicated with about visitors to the service.
- The setting had many forms of documentation of the children's care and learning for parents. The registered provider described that regular observations on the children were maintained in learning journals and that parents receive pictures from the service twice a month.
- The adults were observed to show positive regard for the children on the day of inspection, with encouragement and praise for specific tasks in a warm and caring manner for example during mealtimes, and outdoor play where nurturing and enthusiastic interactions were observed.
- The setting was integrated into the local community, particularly parent talks, visits from a local farmer, a visitor with a bearded dragon and other interests from the children.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The indoor environment of the main playroom was spacious and bright and laid out in defined interest areas, including sensory area, home corner, book area, arts and crafts, construction etc. There was open-shelving available in the playrooms with play materials and items clearly labelled and laid out so that the children could identify and access them easily and independently.
- The playrooms were sufficiently equipped with sufficient and appropriate materials to facilitate free play and provided a stimulating environment that promoted the engagement of all children. A second smaller playroom was available for small group work/art projects.
- The registered provider informed the inspector that the children were mainly outdoors and that the setting operated a blended indoor/outdoor provision for mixed age groups.
- The main playroom opened out directly on a specified outdoor area for the children.
- There was a variety of materials and defined interest areas in the outdoor areas, including a construction area, mud kitchen/home corner, quiet area, arts area, water wall, music wall, tuft tray, glass painting, tractor tyre, sandpit, tunnel, and play shed with cozy area.
- There was a large canopy area for all weather use. This area was used as the restaurant for the rolling snack time and for arts and crafts.

- The registered provider stated that toys materials were rotated to create special interest areas in the outdoor space. The variety of toys and play materials available in the creatively constructed outdoor area promoted independence, participation and gave the children opportunities for free choice and freedom for child-led activities. The front of the premises had a large area for ride on toys and games which can be used when the gates are closed according to the registered provider. Real tools were available under adult supervision for appropriately challenging and stimulating play.

Programme of Activity

- The setting had a medium- and long-term curriculum plan and the short-term plan was informed by the children's emerging interests. These interests were captured by the adults on a whiteboard in the indoor playroom.
- The written children's observations recorded how adults would support the child with their emerging interests and further development.
- These monthly observations were linked to Aistear- the Early Years Curriculum Framework and Siolta the Early Years Quality Framework.
- The children's journals were sent home to parents once a year and go home with the children at the end of the year.

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

- The registered provider ensured that a person trained in first aid was always available. Three adults were trained in FAR.
- (a)(b)The registered provider ensured that a fully equipped first aid box, was readily available.

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

- (4)The fire evacuation procedure was on display at the fire point in the indoor playroom.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) (a)While there was a record of fire drills in the setting, there was no monthly drill in November 2023 or February 2024.
- (b) There was no recent record of the maintenance of the fire extinguishers and smoke alarms, to indicate annual or more often servicing. The records dated to 12 October 2022.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)(a) The registered provider advised that monthly fire drills will be maintained.
- (1)(b) The registered provider advised that the fire extinguishers and smoke alarms were serviced subsequent to inspection and will be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1)(b) The registered provider submitted evidence of the service record for the fire extinguishers dated 15 March 2024 and the fire alarm service record dated 25 March 2024 to the offices of the early years inspectorate on 27 March 2024.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence provided by the registered provider were assessed and deemed to adequately address the issues of non-compliance under this Regulation.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was appropriate insurance for a sessional service for 33 children.