

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC420
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Name of Service:	The Treehouse Playschool
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Address of Service:	Lisnagar Demense, Rathcormac, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P61 YE97
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Name of Registered Provider:	Emma O'Keeffe
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	19/06/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	36	PM	25
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	13 Market Square, Mallow, Cork. P51 DD5Y
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Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel
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Title:	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).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

The Treehouse Playschool is a private, sessional, early years care and education service in operation since 2011. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated in the morning between the hours of 9:00 am until 12 noon and in the afternoon from 12.45 pm to 15.45 pm. The service is registered to accommodate children aged from 2 years to 6 years of age and children currently attending are aged from 2 years 8 months to 5 years old.

The service is located within a residential estate in the rural village of Rathcormac near Fermoy in East County Cork. It operates from a single-story building which has two large care rooms, adult and child sanitary areas, an office and a kitchen. A secure outdoor play area is located at the rear of the service and a large carpark is available at the front of the service. A breakfast club is in operation from 7.30 am until 9:00 am and an afterschool club operates from 4.00 pm until 5.00 pm.

Staffing

There are nine staff employed in the service including one AIM support worker and the registered provider.

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 and 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, 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-

- (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 registered provider was the person in charge and a named person was available to deputise.
 - (b) The staff roster evidenced that either the person in charge or the deputy were on the premises, at all times.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure available in the service. In conversation, staff with staff they were aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- (2) The recruitment files of all nine adults were available and reviewed;
- (a) There were nine validated references from past employers.
 - (b) There were seven validated references from sources other than past employers.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all ten adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting time frames as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.
 - (d) International police vetting was on file for one of two adults for whom it was required.
- (4) Qualification certificates on file, for each adult working directly with the children, indicated that all nine adults had obtained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, ranging from levels 5 to level 8, on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (d) An international police vetting disclosure was not on file for one adult who had lived outside the State for a period of six consecutive months or longer as an adult.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider;

- (2) (d) An application has been submitted for international vetting by the employee and a copy will be sent on when it becomes available.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (2) (d) A copy of the adult's international vetting was received in the office of the inspectorate on the 2 August 2024.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 (2) (d) has been addressed. The international vetting will be reviewed on the 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.

(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) The inspector observed that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children throughout the inspection.

(3) The adult/child ratio was met.

Classroom 1 (2 years 8 months – 5 years)

There were sixteen sessional children in attendance in the morning with three adults and twelve children in attendance in the afternoon session with three adults.

Classroom 2 (3 years – 5 years)

There were twenty pre-school children in attendance with four adults, one of whom was an AIM support worker, in the morning session and there were thirteen children in attendance with four adults in the afternoon.

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.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1) A review of twelve children's pre-school records was carried out; eight records were found to contain the necessary particulars, (a) – (i), above.
- (3) The above records were open to review on the premises by the inspector.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (e) A record of authorisation for collection was missing for one child;
 - (f) Four individual records of details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child were missing in respect of four children;
 - (h) One record of immunisation was missing in respect of one child.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statements were received from the registered provider;

- (e) The authorisation details have been completed and stored on the child's record.
- (f) Two records of details of illness, disability, allergy or special need have been added to two children's files. The additional two children have since left the service.
- (h) The immunisation details of the child have been added to their file.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (e) A copy of the authorisation details for the child were received in the office of the inspectorate.
- (f) Copies of two children's details of illness, disability, allergy or special need were received in the office of the inspectorate. The statement from the registered provider that the additional two children have since left the service has been accepted.
- (h) A copy of the immunisation details of the child were received in the office of the inspectorate on 02/08/2024.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 15

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;
- (c) details of the adult: child ratios in the service;
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;
- (e) the facilities available;
- (f) the opening hours and fees;
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the registered provider, manager and of every employee, were available in the staff recruitment files in the service.
 - (b) Details of the class of service and the age profile of children, for which the service is registered to provide, were available in the parent/guardian information handbook and on the Tusla Registration Certificate visible on the notice board in the reception area of the service.
 - (c), (d), (e) and (f) The details of the adult/child ratios in the service, the type of care or programme provided, the facilities available and the opening hours and fees were available in the service's parent/guardian information

handbook.

- (g) The policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10; were available in a folder in the service and on the service's computer.
- (h) Details of attendance for each child in Classroom 1 and 2, in both the morning and afternoon sessions, were recorded in separate attendance books, which were furnished to the inspector during the inspection.
- (i) The weekly staff roster was presented to the inspector on arrival.
- (3) The records referred to in paragraph (1) were open to review, on the premises, by the inspector.

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:

- Food observed being served at 11.00 am had been prepared by the parents/guardians. Examples included filled sandwiches, pesto pasta, a variety of fruits along with cheese and yogurt.
- Water and juice were available from individual water bottles and from a jug located nearby on a shelf where cutlery, crockery and cups were also stored.
- Transitional activities were available for children who had finished their snack and those who required longer to finish their snack were facilitated.
- Children were observed being escorted in groups to the toilet and an adult was nearby to provide assistance, if required.
- A nappy changing unit was available in the Classroom 2 sanitary area. No children were observed being changed on the day of inspection.
- Children in Classrooms 1 and 2 had access to rest/quiet areas fitted with soft furnishings including sofas, cushions and soft toys where they could sit quietly away from noisy activities. Book shelving was provided in the rest/quiet area in Classroom 1, and children were observed using this area throughout the morning and afternoon sessions.

- Independence was promoted and supported with children observed putting their snack away in their bags by themselves, putting rubbish into the bins during snack and washing their hands before and after snack.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS:

- Throughout the morning staff members were observed sitting at the activity tables and on the floor engaged in conversation with the children. Examples included conversations where the staff were heard asking open questions, challenging children's thinking and providing feedback.
- A key worker system was observed in place in the service with key staff assigned responsibility for ensuring that children's individual inclusion plans were implemented.
- Staff members demonstrated warmth and sensitivity in their interactions with the children. A staff member was observed physically comforting and verbally reassuring a child in Classroom 1 who was visibly upset.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- Both classrooms were laid out in clearly defined areas with age and developmentally appropriate toys and resources which provided opportunities to enhance the learning needs of the children across all areas.
- The layout of the two classrooms allowed staff to supervise the children as they moved between activities.
- Materials and resources were located in baskets on low-level shelving which encouraged independence and provided access at the child's level.
- A range of age and stage appropriate books were available in the rest/quiet area of Classroom 1 which supported the children's language development. Staff members were heard reading stories throughout the morning including "Dinky Donkey" and "Going on a Bear Hunt" and the children joined in with parts of the stories.
- All children were observed playing in the secure outdoor play area during the day. The area was partially covered enabling the children to play outdoors in all weathers. A range of developmentally appropriate equipment was provided including sand and water play providing opportunities for sensory experiences, wooden kitchen, dolls and a pirate ship providing opportunities for imaginary, and role play and a balancing walk way creating opportunities for children to practice skills that develop coordination, balance and movement.

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 secured on arrival. The buzzer was answered by a staff member, preventing unauthorised adults from gaining entry. A key pad was also in operation for staff to enter the service.
- Windows were secured preventing children exiting or falling from them.
- All indoor and outdoor toys and equipment appeared in good condition and well maintained.
- Flexes for televisions were secured by way of an electrical conduit.
- Indoor waste was stored in pedal operated bins.
- Cleaning agents in the care rooms and sanitary areas were stored on high shelving which was inaccessible to the children.
- The kettle was stored in the locked kitchen.
- Finger pinch guards were fitted to the doors in the sanitary areas, preventing the doors closing on a child's fingers.
- The outdoor play area was secured on one side with the service walls and on the other with a high concrete wall and two high gates, inaccessible by the children.

Infection Control:

- Perishable food was observed to be stored in the fridges of Classrooms 1 and 2.
- There were four children's toilets and one adult toilet. Each sink in use by both the adults and children was supplied with thermostatically controlled hot water, ranging from 34.1°C to 39°C, foam dispensing soap, paper towels and pedal operated bins for the disposal of paper waste.
- Windows were open allowing for the circulation of fresh air.
- Disposable aprons and gloves were observed in both Classroom 1 and Classroom 2 sanitary areas.
- Cleaning schedules in the bathrooms were complete and up to date.
- Each child had access to an individual hook to hang their hoodies, bags were stored on shelving off the floor area.
- Staff were observed sanitising the tables before/after food and between sessions. Floor sweeping was also observed, ensuring the areas were kept safe and clean throughout the day.

Administration of Medication:

- Anti-febrile medication was available and stored securely in the office.

Safe Sleep:

- No children were observed sleeping in the sessional services.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency fire doors were unobstructed
- The visible fire assembly sign was located a safe distance from the service, on the wall of the carpark directly accessible from the service.
- Firefighting equipment was visible in the two care rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- (1) Garda vetting was available for all nine adults. However, one vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI- RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Infection Control:

- (2) The mechanical fan in the sanitary area of Classroom 1 was filled with dust restricting the flow of fresh air into the area.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The following statements were received from the registered provider;

General Safety:

- (1) A Garda vetting application was submitted for the employee.

Infection Control:

- (2) The fan was cleaned and has been added to the cleaning rota.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- (1) A copy of the renewed Garda Vetting disclosure was received in the office of the inspectorate on 26/07/2024.

Infection Control:

- (2) A copy of the cleaning rota with the fan added was received in the office of the inspectorate and the statement from the registered provider, that the fan was cleaned, has been accepted.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23.

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) Certificates were available to evidence that four adults had completed First Aid Responder (FAR) training. The staff roster indicated that there was at least two adults available at all times trained in first aid.

(2) (a) (b) The suitably equipped first aid boxes/bags were located in the reception area and in the care rooms. They were easily accessible to the adults at all times.

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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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) Written records were available of the monthly fire drills which took place in the service. The dates recorded of the most recent fire drill in Classroom 1 was recorded as 22 May 2024 and in Classroom 2 - 12 June 2024.
 - (b) Written records were available detailing number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. The firefighting equipment record was dated August 2023 and the smoke alarm record was dated 15 September 2023.
- (2)
- (c) The records referred to in paragraph (1) were open to review in the service by the inspector on the day of inspection.
- (4) The notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were located on the walls of both Classrooms and in the office.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was insured. A certificate was available to evidence that the service was insured for 22 children on a sessional basis and the expiry date was noted as 27 March 2025. Details included cover for public liability and fire and theft.