

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015CC459
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Walterstown Community Playschool
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Walterstown, Cobh, Co. Cork
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<b>Eircode:</b>	P24 KO34
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Noel Murtagh
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<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	24/05/2023
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	18	PM	N/A
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurranabraher Cork
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	D Prendergast
<b>Title:</b>	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).

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

Walterstown Community Playschool was established in 2003. It is a community based sessional service that is registered to cater for children aged two to six years. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is provided daily from 9.00am to 12.30pm.

The service operates from an old primary school, which is located in the rural village of Walterstown in Cobh, Co. Cork. The community centre building consists of a single storey detached premises, within which the service has the use of two care rooms, child and adult sanitary facilities and a kitchen. An outdoor play space is available for children's use at the front of the building.

### Staffing

There are seven adults attached to the early years service, five of whom are involved in the direct care of the children, including one Community Employment (CE) participant and one relief staff member. The registered provider and the secretary are not service based.

### 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 and safety. 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 person in charge, deputy, 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*
- (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 had ensured that a person in charge and a deputy were assigned to the service.
- (b) The deputy person in charge was present in the service when the inspector arrived and remained available for the duration of the inspection. The person in charge arrived later in the morning to facilitate the remainder of the inspection.
- (2) The deputy confirmed that 1 adult had commenced working at the service since the previous inspection was undertaken on 23 April 2021. Therefore, recruitment records in relation to this adult were reviewed, along with the qualifications of all staff members. Two written references were available as follows:
- (a) There were two references on file from past employers.
- (b) Neither of the references were from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting from the National Vetting Bureau was available in respect of the adult.
- (d) Not applicable. Police vetting was not required, as the staff member had not resided outside the State for a period of longer than six consecutive months, as an adult.
- (4) Three of the adults had achieved major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications and copies of the relevant certificates were maintained on file. A qualification was not required in respect of the CE participant.

### Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (b) Records were unavailable to demonstrate that the two past employer references had been suitably validated.
- (4) Evidence of attainment of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications, was unavailable for one of the adults.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(b)

The two written previous employer references have been validated by the designated person in charge of the service. All staff files have been checked to ensure that validated references and Garda vetting are held in respect of all adults working in the service. Staff files will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the necessary documents are held on file.

(4)

The major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications, is now available and held on file. The manager has taken on the role of ensuring that all necessary and relevant files are kept securely.

### Supporting documentation submitted

(2)(b)

A record of validation in respect of both references, dated 25 May 2023, was received on the same date.

(4)

A copy of the qualification in respect of the staff member.

### Summary Comment

The person in charge has demonstrated that the non-compliances identified under regulation 9 have been resolved.

### 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 the time of inspection, there was an adequate amount of adults responsible for the direct care and supervision of the children.
- (3) The adult to child ratios met the requirements of a sessional category service as follows:  
In Room 2, there were 2 adults and 1 CE participant working directly with 18 children, who were aged 2 years and 9 months to 5 years. Room 1 was not in operation on the day of inspection.

## 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:

- The mid-morning meal was noted to take place shortly after 11.00am. A relaxed environment was evident, as the adults sat and ate with the children and sufficient time was afforded for children to enjoy their snacks.
- The children could freely access the sanitary facility, which was located in between the two care rooms. Colourful handwashing posters were displayed as a reference for handwashing practice. The adults were observed to check in with the children as they used the sanitary facilities and offered helpful prompts and reminders.
- Both care rooms were spacious and allowed the children to freely explore the various materials and activities on offer.
- Opportunities for the children to rest and relax as required, were provided through the incorporation of rest areas in Room 1 and Room 2.
- As the weather on the day of inspection was sunny, staff members ensured that sheltered spaces were available to the children while outdoors; two teepees were in use and a picnic blanket was placed in a shaded area.

## 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 available tables and chairs were observed to be suited to the age and stage of development of the children in attendance. Display furniture was predominantly low-set and easily accessible to the children.
- Since the previous inspection, thematic interest areas had been developed in Room 2, with items of similar use displayed together. For example:
  - In the ‘Construction’ area, there were hand held vehicles and car garages, along with a wooden fire station, fire engines, play tools and hard hats.
  - A nature table was stocked with pine cones, shells, bird’s nests and leaves.
  - The play kitchen area was well resourced with play food, utensils and empty food containers.
  - The home corner included furnished dolls’ houses, a child sized table and chairs, dress up clothes, dolls and accessories.
  - There was a large double-sided easel, with both chalkboard and white board surfaces, for mark making activities. Art and craft materials were accessible in an adjacent area.
  - A variety of jigsaws were provided in a plastic drawer unit.
  - Other materials included a veterinary play centre, barn houses and animal figures.
- Room 1 was not in operation on the day of inspection. However, this care room was noted to be equipped with similar materials, which supported various types of play and exploration.
- Outdoors, there was a combination of tarmacadam and shock absorbing surfaces underfoot and the play space was enclosed by walls, railing and gates. The area with the soft fall surface included a slide, see saws and a carousel. The children also had the use of tee pees, picnic blankets, push toys and a container of toys, which had been brought outside from the care room.

### 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 service’s Healthy Eating policy was evidenced in practice through the snacks supplied by the children’s parents or guardians. These were noted to include sandwiches, bread rolls, crackers, filled wraps, rice cakes, yogurts, cheese and fruit such as sliced grapes, blueberries, satsumas and strawberries, with water to drink.
- The children had easy access to drinking water during the sessional service, including when playing outdoors; a large container was used to store their reusable water bottles and was positioned at child height.
- The inspector was informed that none of the children who attended had specific dietary requirements or allergies.
- During discussion, the deputy person in charge advised that if a child expressed that they were hungry outside of the allocated mealtime, a snack would be provided.

### 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 to the service was maintained secure when not in use, which minimised the likelihood of unauthorised persons gaining access. A door sensor alarm was fitted on the interior, which, along with a thumb turn lock, reduced the risk of a child exiting the premises while unsupervised.
- First aid boxes in both care rooms were stored out of the children’s reach.
- Radiator covers were fitted, which reduced the risk of a scald injury to a child.
- There were no cleaning agents accessible to the children.
- Fire extinguishers were securely wall mounted.
- In Room 2, a high-level, tethered fire guard was in place in front of the disused fireplace.

### Infection Control:

- Wash hand basins were equipped with a supply of warm water and liquid soap, with either papers towels or an electric hand dryer available for hand drying. It was noted that the children were supervised by adults when washing their hands and this took place after using the toilet, following outdoor play and before snack time.
- The toilet cubicles and wash hand basins in the shared children's sanitary facility were labelled for separate use by the children who attended the two care rooms.
- Individual lidded containers were available for each child to store their bags and personal belongings.
- Refrigerated storage was provided for the children's perishable snacks.
- Room 2 was naturally ventilated through open windows.

### Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed to be administered to a child during the period of inspection.
- The inspector was informed by both the deputy and the person in charge that none of the children who attended were in receipt of medication.

### Safe Sleep:

- None of the children were noted to sleep.

### Fire Safety:

- Fire exit routes were maintained obstruction free.

### Outings:

- Not applicable. The inspector was informed that outings were not undertaken as part of the programme of activities.

## Non-Compliance Information

### General Safety:

1. The risk of unauthorised access to the outdoor play area and the risk of a child exiting the premises during outdoor play, were not prevented. The three gates, which formed part of the enclosure surrounding this play space, were not secured and could be easily opened from both sides.

### Infection Control:

The following increased the risk of cross infection:

2. In the outdoor play environment, a large volume of bird excrement was evident on two separate areas of the shock absorbing surface, adjacent to where the children were playing.

3. Areas of the staff sanitary facility were not maintained in a clean condition. Cobwebs were visible around the window and in the corners of the ceiling and the shower tray was dirty. This was also found at the previous inspection on 23 April 2021.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

1. All 3 gates, which form part of the enclosure surrounding the outdoor play space, are now fitted and secured with locks at adult level to prevent the risk of unauthorised entry to or exit from the play area. The aforementioned measure came as a recommendation from the Fire Safety Officer. The locks will be checked on a monthly basis to ensure they remain in safe working order.

#### Infection Control:

2. The cleaning of the outdoor play area has now been added to the staff cleaning roster. This ensures that the outdoor play area is now cleaned daily. The staff cleaning roster will be checked and updated bi-weekly to ensure all indoor and outdoor areas meet the relevant hygiene standards.
3. The staff sanitary facility has been added to the staff cleaning roster. This ensures that the facility is cleaned daily by a member of staff to meet adequate hygiene standards.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence to demonstrate that the locks are in place on the gates.

#### Infection Control:

2. & 3. The statements from the person in charge are accepted as evidence.

## Summary Comment

The response from the person in charge is accepted in meeting the requirements of the regulation.

### 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

- (2)
- (a) Two first aid boxes were provided; one in each of the care rooms. Sufficient supplies were maintained and the first aid boxes were stored in locations that were out of the children's reach, while easily accessible by adults.
- (b) The first aid boxes were available throughout the hours of operation.

#### Non-Compliance Information

- (1) An adult with current First Aid Response (FAR) certification was not consistently available to the children, as required. None of the adults had completed said training. It was noted that two of the staff members had up to date paediatric first aid.

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

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

Confirmation of placement on a First Aid Response course, which is being organised by Cork County Childcare, is awaited. The manager has taken on the role of ensuring that all members of staff have the necessary certifications and that such certifications are kept on file at all times.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the invoice for the upcoming FAR course, which has been booked for two adults.

#### Summary Comment

The corrective action implemented by the person in charge has addressed the non-compliance identified under regulation 25.

### 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) The monthly fire drills undertaken at the service were documented.
  - (b) A record, which contained details in relation to the number and type of firefighting equipment was made available. The certificate of servicing for the firefighting equipment indicated that this was carried out on 22 June 2022 and the wired smoke alarm was last tested on 19 September 2022.
- (4) A notice, which outlined the steps to be taken in the event of a fire, was displayed on the door in Room 2.

#### Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The last recorded fire drill was noted to have taken place on 27 March 2023. Fire drills should be conducted on a monthly basis, to ensure that children and staff members are familiar with safe fire evacuation procedures.

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

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

At a staff meeting held subsequent to the inspection, it was indicated by the person in charge that fire drills must be conducted in the service on a monthly basis. Minutes of the meeting were subsequently dispatched to all staff in the service. The designated person in charge was assigned responsibility for both conducting and recording monthly fire drills.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the most recent fire drill, dated 12 June 2023, was forwarded.

#### Summary Comment

The person in charge has demonstrated that the non-compliance identified under regulation 26 has been resolved.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

A certificate of insurance was displayed and included details of cover for up to 35 children attending the sessional service. The certificate was valid until 27 March 2024.