

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC475
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Name of Service:	Togher Playschool
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Address of Service:	Togher, Dunmanway, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P47 D628
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sarah Hodkinson
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	19/11/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	13	PM	n/a
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child & Family Agency Hospital Grounds, Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, West Cork P81 PD78
Inspection undertaken by:	M. O Reilly
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
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Description of service

Togher Playschool is a registered privately owned early years service in operation since 2011. The service provides education and care to children from 2 to 6 years offering a morning and afternoon sessional service and for the children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. At time of inspection the children were aged between 3 and 6 years. The registered opening hours are from 09:10 to 12:10 hours and from 13:00 to 16:00 each day Monday to Friday.

Staffing

At time of inspection, there were 4 adults employed at the early years setting involved in the direct care of the children who attend including the registered provider. Each of the 4 adults holds a relevant 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/ 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/ 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*

(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) There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider/ person in charge was present when the inspector arrived on the premises and remained for the duration of the inspection.

(2)

The recruitment records in relation to 4 adults who were employed at the service were the subject of the inspection.

(a) Of the 8 required references, all 8 references on file were from previous employers with records of required validation on file.

(b) Not applicable, as all the required references were from a previous employer and not from another source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for each of 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) There were 3 required processed police vetting records on file for 3 adults who had resided outside of the jurisdiction for a period longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) The 4 adults attached to the service had achieved major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education with copies of the relevant qualifications on file.

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) A sufficient number of adults were observed to work with the children who attended the service.

(2) At the time of inspection, the adult to child ratios were in adherence to the requirements of regulation as follows:

There were 3 staff and 13 children in attendance in the morning session. The adult child ratio was correct.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) to (i)

A sample of the children's registration forms were inspected, and it was found that they detailed and included all the information as listed above.

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:

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

(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)
- (h) Details of attendance by each child was recorded. The records indicated the arrival and departure time of each child on a daily basis in the service.
- (i) There was a daily record in place that indicated when each staff member commenced and finished each day in the service.
- (k) There was a hard copy Accident and Incident book. A sample of the accident and incident records on file were reviewed. All accidents and incidents records were signed by the parent and staff members. The parent/guardian received a duplicate copy at collection time following the accident /incident pertaining to their child.

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:

- On inspection, a relaxed and calm environment was provided for the children, and it was observed that the adults spoke kindly and offered encouragement to each child.
- Staff were observed to demonstrate patience and kindness in their interactions with the children, as was noted when the children's efforts were readily acknowledged.
- The children's parents and guardians provided all food and drink items. The mid-morning snack was offered in a timely manner and the children assisted with laying the table in preparation for their meal.
- This was a sociable event, children and adults sat in a circular manner held hands and sang a song in thanks for the meal that was about to be eaten. A child was nominated to light the candle. The event was unhurried, and children were observed to enjoy this large group activity that was cultural, sensory and promoted language development.
- The children's arts and crafts were displayed and related to paper lanterns that each of the children had made. A planned night walk was occurring in the coming days where the early years children will each carry their lantern on a night walk accompanied by staff and parents.
- Children's behaviour was managed in a competent and positive way and the adults were observed to support the children and handle any minor behavioural issues promptly.
- The children were largely independent using the toilet and were supported appropriately by the adults to use the toilet, if necessary.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- Togher Playschool is situated within a classroom in a rural national school. It was bright, child friendly and well maintained with lots of natural materials in the room layout and play materials.
- The room was laid out in a considered and thematic way, with age-appropriate activities and play materials easily accessible from the wall mounted wooden low shelving. Independent access to all the materials fostered children's autonomy and freedom of choice.
- Elements of Steiner philosophy items included wooden and natural materials. There was a wooden kitchen and shop area where child sized utensils were deliberately displayed to invite play and curiosity.
- There was a tippee for the children to opt out of scheduled activities and enjoy quiet time. A rest area was developed so that the children could sit and relax. A supply of cushions was available to facilitate rest time as seen after the mid-morning snack and again after outdoor play when staff and children sat together

and a story of choice by one of the children was read allowing the children to look at the picture book and follow the story that was being read to them.

- A fish tank was strategically placed for the children to enjoy the activities of a fish named “Frankie”.
- The playroom had high south facing windows which were openable and allowed for natural light and ventilation.
- There was a variety of materials and defined interest areas in the designated secured spacious outdoor area located within the school grounds. The surface of the outdoor area was mainly covered with tarmac and a fenced section with bark mulch. The balance beam, slide, climbing frame and story time seating area had a bark mulch surface. There was a playhouse, blackboard, planters and sand box allowing a variety of play activities for the children when playing outdoors.

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 had a healthy eating policy in place, and this was closely adhered to as observed by the healthy, varied and nutritious lunches provided by parents and carers and observed being eaten by the children. For example, sandwiches, wraps, rice cakes, chopped fruits and vegetables.
- There were generous supplies of plates, cutlery and stainless-steel beakers for the children’s use provided by the service.
- A system was in place whereby the lunch boxes were switched to the service fridge when the children arrived in the morning so that the perishable items of their meal were safely stored.
- A jug of water was provided by the service and each child was given water to drink with their lunch.

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:

- Entry to the service was possible via the main entrance door to the national school and this was observed secure when not in use on day of inspection. This minimised the risk of unauthorised persons gaining access to the premises and reduced the likelihood of a child exiting, while unsupervised.
- The openable windows in the playroom were situated at a high level so the children were not able to reach them.
- The outdoor play area was securely enclosed by a combination of the school building, fences and secured gates.
- All of the available cleaning agents were stored out of children's reach.
- The play equipment was mostly made of natural materials and were found to be in a good state of repair with no pinch points or sharp edges.

Infection Control:

- Throughout the service, wash hand basins were equipped with warm running water, liquid soap and paper towel dispensers, for hygienic hand washing and drying. Handwashing by the children was observed before lunch, after toileting.
- Good cleaning practices were seen for example the tables were sanitised after each activity and prior to the mealtime.
- There was an additional sink unit in the playroom which allowed for clean up after the mid-morning snack, art and painting activities.
- Lidded, foot pedal operated bins were available for waste and disposal of single used paper towels throughout the service
- A fridge was available for the storage of perishable food items in the service

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) The registered provider did ensure that there were staff available at all times with appropriate first aid responder (FAR) training. The FAR certifications on file indicated that staff members held current up to date training.

(2)

(a) The first aid box was safely stored out of children's reach in the service. The first aid box was stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises

(b) The fully equipped first aid box was available at all times to adults if in the event that a child may require treatment.

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

(1)

(a) A record of monthly fire drills carried out was available and indicated that the last fire drill took place on the morning of the 14/10/2024.

(b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment was maintained. It was recorded that the fire equipment was last serviced on the 18/09/24 and the emergency fire alarm system was last tested and serviced on the 04/10/2024.

(4)
The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

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 adequately insured, with insurance for 22 children until 27/03/2025. The records detailed the category of service covered which was sessional, the name and address of the premises and details regarding public liability cover, fire, theft, buildings, and outings cover.