

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CE012			
Name of Service:	Brigit's Hearth			
Address of Service:	Raheen Wood Estate, Tuamgraney, Co. Clare			
Eircode:	V94 XD37			
Name of Registered Provider:	Veronica Crombie			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	25/04/2024			
No of pre-school children:	AM	22	PM	21
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Quality and Regulation Directorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Ennis Primary Care Centre Station Road Ennis County Clare V95TY4E			
Inspection undertaken by:	A.McCarthy			
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

Not applicable

Description of service

Brigit's Hearth is a private service operating in a purpose-built, two-storey building on the grounds of Raheen Woods, in Tuamgraney, County Clare. Care and education are provided Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 15:30 to children ranging in age from one to six years. The early years educators facilitate a Steiner and Pikler educational and care approach within the indoor and outdoor environment on a sessional, part-time, and full day care basis. The indoor environment comprises of the pink room, the playroom, a dining room, a kitchen, a sleep room, an office and sanitary facilities. The outdoor environment comprises of an enclosed sensory, play and climbing area, a barn and an orchard.

Staffing

Seven adults are employed by the service. On the 25 April 2024 the registered provider, and five early years educators were present. The staff working directly with the children held qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the national framework of Qualifications.

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 focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 25, 26 and 28. 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. 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)

On the 25 April 2024 the registered provider and a designated person in charge were available as required.

(b)

Both the registered provider and the designated person in charge were available on the premises at all times.

Seven files were available for the adults employed by the service. These files were reviewed, and the following was noted:

(2)(a)

Ten written and validated references from past employers were available.

(b)

Four written and validated references were obtained from a source other than a past employer.

(c)

Garda Vetting disclosures were available in respect of the seven adults working in the service.

(d)

International police vetting was available in respect of five adults who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

(4)

The registered provider and five adults working directly with the children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education ranging from level 5 to 8 or an equivalent on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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)
An adequate number of adults worked directly with the children who attended the service.
- (2)
The minimum ratio of adults cared for the children at all times during the inspection. On the 25 April 2024 five adults cared for twenty-two children in the morning and five adults cared for twenty-one children in the afternoon.
- (8)(a)
During the inspection more than two adults were available on the premises at all times.

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)

The children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the indoor and outdoor environment through the provision of appropriate activities, interactions, materials, and equipment, having regard to the age and level of development of the children. Two rooms were in operation during the inspection.

Basic Needs of the Children:

The atmosphere in the service was calm and relaxed. A child centred approach was evident during all interactions and activities. The adults were observed to be respectful, gentle and kind towards the children in their care. Each child was listened to and given time to converse and express their thoughts and feelings. The children's nappies were changed on an individual need's basis and conducted in a sensitive manner. The children freely explored their environment and guided their own activities whilst being supported when required by the adults. The adults were very attentive to the children's needs and the children's behaviour was managed in a competent and positive manner. The children's social and domestic skills were supported as they assisted with preparing the food. For example, preparing the vegetables for the soup, baking bread and peeling fruit that had been collected from the orchard. The tables were laid out for their peers with crockery by the children. The children and adults sat together during mealtime and this period was observed to be relaxed and calm. The children were offered additional portions on request.

The indoor and outdoor environment provided a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for the children which promoted choice, self-directed, imaginary play and learning. The play materials and equipment included naturally sourced materials and equipment and most of the supporting materials were created by the adults working in the service.

The outdoor play areas were spacious, and a variety of surfaces were noted including grass, sand and soil. This included a natural environment that had various interest areas which catered for and promoted challenging play and learning for the children. The children from both rooms transitioned from the indoor and outdoor environment throughout the day. The children engaged in digging the sand, watering the plants, picking flowers, cutting and peeling fruit, a walk in the meadow, climbing and balancing exercises. The adults engaged in mindful movement activities and musical statues using a tin whistle which the children thoroughly enjoyed.

Supporting Needs Around Children:

A key person approach was observed in the pink room and playroom. The adults had an awareness of the children's individual preferences and capabilities. The adults were observed to make good eye contact with the children, listened attentively and responded promptly to the children's needs. The children's lead was followed by the adults, and the children were supported individually, and in group play through the use of music, song and conversations. The children were notified in advance of any transitions in care, encouraged to share and take turns and consulted in all activities. The adults worked cohesively to facilitate the programme of care and learning and communicated in a positive manner with parents or guardians during drop off and collection periods from the service. An informal approach was observed during interactions between the parents and the early years educators.

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 internal and external entrances to the service was appropriately secured to monitor people's entry to the service. The internal and external entry and exit points prevented children exiting or unauthorised persons accessing the service.
- The materials and equipment throughout the service were maintained in good condition.
- Storage areas were secured to prevent the children accessing the contents within.

Infection Control:

- The indoor and outdoor environments were maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.
- The sanitary facilities were appropriately equipped to promote good hand hygiene practices.
- Both the children and the adults washed their hands at appropriate intervals after activities, toileting and before mealtime.
- The children's bedlinen and personal care items were clean and stored individually.

Administration of Medication:

- The person in charge confirmed that medication is not routinely administered. A policy and supporting documentation were available for staff to use in the event that medicine is required.

Safe Sleep:

- The sleep room accommodated four standard sized cots for the infants to sleep. Low level beds and mattresses were available for children to sleep in the sleep room.
- The sleep room temperature was recorded as 19.2 degrees Celsius during the inspection. A thermometer was available in the sleep room for staff to measure and monitor the room temperature.
- Upon discussion, staff demonstrated an awareness of the service's safe sleep policy. The children's sleep observations were recorded by staff every ten minutes on a written record. These observations included the children's colour, position, and breathing.

Fire Safety:

- The fire exit doors and passageways were clear from obstruction.
- The fire exit routes, and fire assembly points were readily identified with clear signage.

Outing:

- An outing was not undertaken during the inspection. A service policy was available to inform practice.

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)
One adult had a record of up to date First Aid Response (FAR) training and four adults maintained up to date training in paediatric first aid.

(2)(a)
A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in an accessible position in the service.

(b)
A first aid box was available for use by the adults in the event of an emergency.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Evidence of current insurance cover was available for twenty-eight children attending the service on a full day care basis. The expiry date noted was 27 March 2025.