

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CE012
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Name of Service:	Brigit's Hearth
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Address of Service:	Raheen Wood Estate, Tuamgraney, Co. Clare
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Eircode:	V94 XD37
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Name of Registered Provider:	Veronica Crombie
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Dates of Inspection:	03/10/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	24	PM	20
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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
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Description of service

Brigit's Hearth is a not-for-profit service operating in a purpose-built, two-storey building on the grounds of Raheen Woods, in a rural area in County Clare. 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 and the playroom, a kitchen, a sleep room, and sanitary facilities. The outdoor environment comprises of an enclosed open ended play area, a barn and an orchard. Care and Education is provided to children ranging in age from one to six years, Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 15:30.

Staffing

On the 3rd of October 2023 the manager, an administrative staff member and five early years educators were present. The registered provider was not present during the inspection and is part of the board of management. The staff working directly with the children held qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 9 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, safety, premises and facilities. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required. The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 19(1)(a), 23, 25, 26, 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. 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.

Additional Information

Governance:

On the 5th of October 2023 an immediate action notice was issued by the inspectorate in relation to regulation (9)(2)(c). The registered provider responded on the 6th of October 2023 outlining the corrective actions and interim measures taken by the service. The two required garda vetting disclosures were submitted on the 17th of October 2023.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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)
- The service had a named designated person in charge and a person available to deputise in their absence.
- (b)
- The person in charge or a named deputy were on the premises throughout the inspection. The staff roster provided for the person in charge or a named deputy to be present at all times.

(2)
Eight files were available and reviewed by the inspector in respect of the adults working in the service. The findings included the following:

(a)
One written and verified past employer reference was available. Six written references from past employers were available.

(b)
Four written references from a source other than a past employer were available.

(c)
Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of six adults employed by the service.

(4)
The manager and the five adults working directly with the children held qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 9 on the national framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)
(a)(b)
1. Five references with evidence of verification from past employers were not available in respect of three adults.
2. Eight written references that were available were not verified by the service.
3. A second reference in respect of one adult was deemed unsuitable as the adult had a record of engagement in previous employment. The reference sourced was not from this previous employer.

(c)
Garda vetting disclosures were not available in respect of two adults. On the 4th of October 2023 an immediate action notice was issued by the inspectorate in relation to this non-compliance.

(d)
International police vetting was not available in respect of four adults.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)

(a)(b)

All staff files have been checked to ensure that validated references, Garda vetting and police vetting where applicable will be held on file in respect of all adults working in the service. Staff files will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the necessary documents as required are held on file.

(c)

The registered provider responded on the 6th of October 2023 outlining the corrective actions and interim measures taken by the service. The two required garda vetting disclosures were submitted to the inspectorate on the 17th of October 2023. Garda vetting will be carried out and completed prior to any new staff members start date.

(d)

International police vetting has been secured in respect of two staff members who lived abroad and were submitted to the inspectorate. Two more are being sought.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Copies of verified references.
- Copy of Garda vetting disclosures.
- International Police vetting certificates and confirmation of the applications for the outstanding vetting.

Summary Comment

Based on the corrective and preventive actions submitted to the inspectorate by the registered provider the areas of non-compliance in relation to Regulation 9 (2)(a)(b) and (c) are addressed.

The area of non-compliance under Regulation 9 (2)(d) will be addressed upon receipt of the international police vetting for two adults. The service has provided a copy of the international police vetting applications and shall submit a copy of the international police vetting to the inspectorate upon receipt. The areas of non-compliance will be reviewed on 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.

(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)
On the 3rd of October 2023 an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children attending the service.

(2)
During the inspection the ratio of adults supervising the children was maintained at all times. Five staff cared for the twenty-four children in the morning and twenty children in the afternoon.

(8)(a)
The staff roster demonstrated that more than two adults were available at all times during the operation of the service.

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)
The service maintained records for the twenty five children enrolled in the service. The records included the required particulars outlined from (a) to (i).

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 of the Children:

The atmosphere in the service was calm, relaxed and child centred. The staff members 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 in a sensitive manner. The younger and older children freely explored their environment and guided their own activities whilst being supported when required by the staff. The staff members were very attentive to the children's needs and the children's behaviour was managed in a competent and positive manner.

The staff members sat with the children during mealtime and engaged with the children in conversation and song which ensured that the experience was relaxed and sociable. The children were offered additional portions on request. The children's social and domestic skills were supported as they assisted with preparing the food for example, baking bread and using fruit from the orchard at snack time.

The indoor environment provided a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for the children which promoted choice, self-directed and imaginary play and learning. The play materials and equipment included naturally sourced materials and equipment and some of the supporting materials were created by staff working in the service. The outdoor play areas were spacious. This included a natural environment that had various interest areas which catered to and promoted safe challenging play and learning for the children. The children from both rooms transitioned from the indoor and outdoor environment throughout the day.

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 external and internal entrances were appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and to prevent unauthorised access to the service.
- A book was available documenting the arrival and departure of any visitors to the service.
- The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the safe storage of materials and equipment.

Infection Control:

- The indoor and outdoor environment was maintained in a clean condition.
- The children's individual bedlinen was observed to be clean and appropriately stored.
- A large area was available to store the children outdoor clothing and footwear.
- The children's and adult's hands were washed at appropriate intervals.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not administered during the inspection. Documentation was available in the event prescription and non-prescription medication was required.

Safe Sleep:

Appropriate safe-sleep practices were observed for children:

- The children were placed to sleep in standard cots and mattresses and were checked by the adult caring for them every ten minutes.
- A staff member remained in the sleep room while the children were placed to sleep and recorded the children's observations.
- The room temperature was maintained between 16-20 degrees Celsius.
- The staff demonstrated a good knowledge of safe sleep practices.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits and passageways were clear from obstruction.
- A fire assembly point was readily identifiable in the service.

Outing:

- The manager confirmed that outings are not undertaken by 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)

Four members of staff had up to date first aid training for children available.

(2) (a)

The first aid box was stored out of the reach of children in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in the service.

(b)

A first aid box is available for use by the adults in the event of an emergency.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

First Aid Responder training was not available for any staff employed by the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)

Two staff members have recently enrolled in First Aid Responder (FAR) training. Training for one staff member was complete on the 23rd of October 2023, the service awaits certification. Training for another staff member was postponed until the new year as not enough people registered for the course to go ahead. The service will ensure at least one staff member will have complete and current FAR training, with them participating in refresher training every two years. Annual checks will be carried out.

Supporting documentation submitted

Nil

Summary Comment

Based on the registered providers response the area of non-compliance under Regulation 25 (1) is addressed. The practice will be reviewed on next inspection.

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)

A record of fire drills that have taken place was available in the service. A fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 3rd of October 2023.

(b)

Records for the number, type and maintenance service of firefighting equipment and smoke alarm system were available in the premises. The most recent service for the firefighting equipment and smoke alarm system took place on the 19th of May 2023.

(4)

Fire action notices were 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

Up to date insurance cover was available for twenty-six pre-school children attending the service. The policy is valid until the 27th of March 2024.