

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015CE082 | | |
| Name of Service: | Little Einsteins Montessori Preschool | | |
| Address of Service: | Cúsheáin, Belkelly, Ogonnelloe, Co. Clare | | |
| Eircode: | V94 R9YV | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Anita Sheedy | | |
| Service type: | Sessional | | |
| Date of Inspection: | 29/11/2023 | | |
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 10 | PM 4 |
| 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

Little Einsteins Montessori Preschool was notified as an early years' service in 2012. The service is located on the outskirts of the rural village of Ogonnelloe, County Clare. The service operates Monday to Friday, offering a morning and afternoon session from 08:45 to 11:45 and 12:00 to 15:00 for children ranging in age from two to six years of age. The sessional service is facilitated in one room in the owners domestic dwelling. The children have access to a secure outdoor play area adjacent to the preschool room. A larger outdoor area is also available for the children to use to the rear of the service.

Staffing

On the 29th of November 2023 the registered provider and a member of staff cared for the children in attendance. The adults working directly with the children held a level 6 and a level 8 qualification 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 may also focus on other areas as required. 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, the member of 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 was the designated person in charge and a person was available to deputise in their absence.

(b)

The registered provider was available throughout the inspection.

(2)

Two files were available and reviewed by the inspector. The findings included the following:

(a)

Three past employer references were available and validated where required.

(b)

One reference was obtained from a source other than a past employer.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the two adults employed by the service.

(d)

International police vetting was not required as the two adults had not lived in another state for a period longer than six months.

(4)

The adults working directly with the children held a level 6 and a level 8 qualification 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.

(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 registered provider ensured that the children attending the pre-school service were supervised at all times.
- (3)
On the 29th of November 2023 the minimum ratio of adults caring for the children was maintained at all times. Two adults worked directly with the ten children in attendance in the morning and the four children in attendance 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-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,

(b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and

(c) an authorised person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

Compliance Information

(1)

Enrolment forms were available for the number of children registered in the service. These forms were reviewed and detailed the required particulars outlined in (1) (a)-(i).

(3)

The children's registration forms were open to inspection in the service.

(4)

The registered provider confirmed that the records referred to in paragraph (1) are retained for a period of two years after the children cease to attend the service.

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 inspector observed the children's learning, development, and well-being to be supported by the two members of staff. The staff demonstrated respect and sensitivity towards the children using soft, gentle tones of voice, positive language and by offering praise and encouragement consistently. The children were consulted in advance of changes in activities and learning and the transitions in the programme were completed with ease. Children were encouraged to be independent with their personal belongings, at mealtime and while using the toilet. The children's individual cues for assistance were responded to promptly and in a sensitive manner. The registered provider demonstrated an awareness of each child's interests, and preferences. The service operated an open-door policy for parents and the staff communicated informally with parents upon the children's arrival and collection from the service and by phone.

Physical and Material Environment:

The children transitioned from the indoor to the outdoor environment during the sessional period. The children engaged in a range of activities that included open ended play, singing, nursery rhymes, sensory play, colouring exercises, board games and peg boards. The staff present supported children at play in both individual and group activities showing them how to share and take turns. Mealtime was observed to be a relaxed and sociable occasion, the children sat together and conversed amicably together.

The indoor environment offered a range of play and learning experiences. Developmentally appropriate, challenging, creative and enriching experiences. All the play and work equipment were on shelves and in toy boxes which were easily accessible to the children. Some of the materials on the shelving included a range of jigsaws, blocks (plastic, wooden, foam) pegs and boards, play dough, items for threading, sorting and matching, magnets, polygons, shape sorters, art and craft materials, musical instruments, dolls houses and books.

Designated areas included a home corner with a pretend kitchen unit, a pretend farm area, construction area, arts and crafts and a reading area. The various interest areas supported learning across all areas of development, fine motor skills, language development, cognitive development, sensory and imaginative development. Appropriate furnishings of low-level tables and chairs were available to facilitate mealtimes and table-top activities. The care room walls were illustrated with colourful murals, decorated with educational posters, family photos and the children's artwork.

The two outdoor areas were spacious and well planned with distinct interest areas. The play areas were safely enclosed and located to the side and rear of the building directly accessible from the care room. The outdoor equipment included: swings, a slide, a climbing frame, a goalpost and footballs, a tree house, pretend play kitchen, diggers, tractors and chalkboards. The children engaged in running and chasing games in the outdoor area.

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:

- Both internal and external access to the service were appropriately secured with a key coded and bell operated system.
- The outdoor areas were secured by a fence, hedging and a gate.
- The children's arrival and departure times were recorded in a logbook.
- Cleaning agents were secured appropriately out of reach of the children.
- The equipment and materials within the service were maintained in good condition.

Infection Control:

- The service was maintained in clean condition and records of completed cleaning schedules were available.
- Running warm water, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lidded bins were available in the sanitary facility. Child friendly posters were available as prompts demonstrating good hand hygiene practices.
- The children washed their hands at appropriate intervals.

Administration of Medication:

- The registered provider confirmed that medications are not administered in the service.

Fire Safety:

- The fire exits and passageways were clear from obstruction.
- The fire assembly point was readily identifiable to the rear of the service.
- The service completed monthly fire drills to prepare for evacuation of the service in the event of a fire.

Outing:

- The registered provider 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)

The registered provider had a record of up to date First Aid Response training.

(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 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)

Records were available to demonstrate that monthly fire drills were carried out in the service. The last fire drill took place on the 9th of October 2024.

(b)

Up-to-date records of the number, type and maintenance service were available for the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system. The most recent service of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system took place in November 2023.

(4)

A fire action notice was available demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire.

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 eleven children attending the sessional service. The policy is valid until the 27th of March 2023.