

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CN019
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Name of Service:	Cootehill Community Childcare
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Address of Service:	Drumnaveil, Cootehill, Co. Cavan
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Eircode:	H16 NH28
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Name of Registered Provider:	Jenine Smith
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	03/12/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	58	PM	29
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Mc Kenna
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

Cootehill Community Childcare is a community service operating from a purpose built two storey premises beside a housing estate in Cootehill Co Cavan. There are four care rooms in operation, the Baby Room, Toddler Room, and the Senior Pre-school/School Age Room located on the ground floor, and the recently opened Junior Preschool Room is on the first floor. The service is registered to provide full day-care, part-time and sessional care to preschool children aged 6 months to 6 years. The service operates from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday catering for a maximum of 80 children. School aged childcare services are also provided. Ancillary accommodation includes a kitchen, two offices, laundry room, staff room and a locker room. Outdoor play areas are provided to the rear and side of the premises. Car parking is available to the front of the premises.

Staffing

There are 21 staff members employed in the service. This includes two co-managers, an administration person, a chef, 16 staff members who work directly with the pre-school children, and one adult on an employment programme. The registered provider does not work in the service.

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 inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9: Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11: Staffing Levels, Regulation 19: Health, Welfare & Development of Child and Regulation 23: Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child.

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 co-managers, 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 designated person in charge, and named persons to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named persons in charge were on the premises.

(2) The staff files for 21 adults were reviewed.

(a) (b) A total of 42 written and validated references were on file.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 21 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) A review of the employment history for the 21 adults, demonstrated that 3 adults had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. The required police vetting for the 3 adults was available on file.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 18 adults employed to work with children, held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. A qualification for three adults was not required.

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 day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed:

Four adults cared for 13 children aged 9 months to 1 year 9 months in the Baby Room.

Four adults cared for 13 children aged 2 years to 2 years 10 months in the Toddler Room.

Three adults cared for 12 children aged 2 years 11 months to 3 years 6 months in the Junior Preschool Room.

Three adults cared for 20 children aged 3 years 5 months to 4 years 6 months in the Senior Preschool Room.

In addition to the above the two co-managers were office based, assisting in the care rooms if required.

(8) (a) A review of the staff roster and discussion with the co-managers demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises while the service was in operation.

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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

The following examples demonstrated how the registered provider ensured that the children's learning, development, and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic Needs

The service promoted healthy eating, with a 3-week menu in place, where snacks and meals were provided at regular intervals throughout the day. Breakfast cereal is served in the morning time and a morning snack was served at 11am. The children attending the Junior and Senior Preschool rooms take in their own snack for this time. A hot meal of beef stew with potatoes, carrots and peas was served to all children between 12.15-12.30pm, plus drinks of milk served with this meal. A snack at 2.30pm was served with a further snack available to the children in attendance at 4pm. Although most of the meal times were set times, the younger babies slept in line with their own routine, and the adults accommodated for snacks, meals and bottles around these times. The babies and younger children were fed by the adults in line with their age and stage of development. All children were given adequate time to enjoy their snacks and meals. The children were observed to avail of drinks throughout their day. Staff outlined that dietary and parental preferences were in place for meals and drinks consumed by the babies and younger children.

The children in the Baby Room were observed to have their nappies changed at scheduled times, and outside of these times where their routine required. The adults engaged in conversation with the babies and younger children throughout the nappy changing process. The children were observed to talk, babble and smile while

communicating with the adults during these times. The older children were observed to use the toilet independently, with adults remaining close by for support if needed.

Care was given to the children appearances, with bibs used at meal times and faces and hands cleaned after snack and meal times. Spare clothing was available if a child required their clothes to be changed. There were aprons available in the care rooms for messy play activities such as painting and water play. The children in the Junior and Senior Preschool rooms availed of a change of environment to the outdoors and were observed to be dressed appropriately for the cold weather on the day of inspection.

Rest areas were provided in all care rooms, to include soft mats, cushions, soft seating and soft sofas. These areas allowed children to take some time out to rest during their time in the service.

The care rooms were laid out to allow for free movement of children from one area to another. The adults were observed to provide various opportunities for movement and change of positions for the younger babies. Outside of meal times the babies were observed to enjoy floor play, tummy time, activity centre time and to relax in low-level chairs.

The adults were observed to comfort children that appeared upset and get down to the children's level to discuss in age-appropriate ways, how to solve any minor disagreements.

Supporting Relationships

A key worker system is in place, allowing the children to form strong relationships with their key person.

Minimal staff changeover was observed with a staff roster and designated staff allocated to each room, which ensures consistency of adults who care for the children.

Curriculum planning was documented and available which linked to the activities on display, such as five currant buns, decorated Christmas baubles, decorated family trees and candy canes.

The adults displayed positive interactions, using positive word of encouragement in soft and gentle tones while communicating with the children. Children were encouraged to interact positively with one another with praise given from adults when they had done so.

Communication with parents is through written daily sheets for children in attendance in the Baby and Toddler rooms to include meal, sleep, nappy/toilet times. Discussion with parents upon arrival and collection of their children were observed. The parents were welcomed into the care rooms at arrival and collection times, which allowed for daily communication opportunities between the management, staff and parents.

The staff team were observed to work well together, with regular staff support meetings, appraisals and staff meetings occurring in the service.

Physical And Material Environment

The indoor environments of all the care rooms were warm and welcoming. The indoor play rooms were comfortable, pleasant and laid out to adequately suit the care needs of the children in attendance.

The displays throughout the service included children's birthdays, family photos and children's creative art work to include recent curriculum themed activities. Each room had a free-standing Christmas tree or a Velcro tree, and discussions were observed between the adults and children about the lights and decorations.

The care rooms were laid out with similar defined play areas to include rest areas with books, kitchen and role play areas, dress up and doll play, construction toys, playhouses and garages with people and cars. Table top toys to include jigsaws and connecting toys were also available. Sensory play materials such as sand, water, pasta and playdough were provided throughout the care rooms. In the Baby Room soft floor mats and a ball pool was provided on the floor for the babies and younger children to play and explore.

Adults were observed to consistently engage with and support children both in the indoor and outdoor play environments. Babies were given bottles in line with their routine with adults using this one-to-one time to talk, sing and smile with the babies. The adults in this care room were also observed on many occasions throughout the inspection to sit with the babies and younger children on the floor play mats and floor areas and engage in play time, singing and tickle games.

A play dough activity in the Junior preschool was observed with adults talking with the children, and cutting gingerbread man shapes, and discussing how many eyes they have. The children in the Senior Preschool took part in a hiding game outdoors, with the adults observed to support and encourage the children throughout this game. The children in the Toddler Room were observed to sit with the adults to take part in a picture card activity. The adults spoke about what was on the picture cards and sang songs or talked about the picture with the children. If the children didn't want to take part in this activity they were observed to play in areas of their choice within the care room.

The materials and play equipment available in the care room rooms were placed on low level accessible shelving or boxes suitable for the age and stage of development of the children within the care room. There was surplus equipment available in all rooms, allowing several children to play in one area at a time. A range of activities to promote fine motor skills were available and in use to include jigsaws and connecting toys.

The adults and children were observed to sing songs at various times throughout the inspection, promoting language development in children, and allowing opportunities of choice, through discussing what songs to sing. There was adequate and suitable chairs and tables in the older care rooms, with low level chairs and tables, and suitable highchairs provided in the Baby Room.

There were five separate outdoor areas available. The outdoor areas were spacious and had a variety of ground surfacing such as soft matting, concrete, gravel and grass, along with some sheltered areas. The areas available included a designated grassed area for the school age children, an area for the Baby room, two large areas shared between the Toddler, Junior and Senior Preschool rooms, and an area with mud kitchens. Climbing structures were available in each play area which were suitable for the age of children in attendance. Ride on trucks, bikes, balls and benches were observed to be used by the children.

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 following safety measures were observed on the day of inspection:

- The main entrance was secured upon the inspectors arrival, preventing unauthorised access to the building. A visitor log was maintained, and the inspector was requested to sign in upon arrival and at time of departure.
- The garden areas were secured with high level fencing and secure gates. The ground surfacing in these areas was maintained in a good state of repair.
- The adults were observed to appropriately supervise the children within their care, both in the indoor and outdoor environments on the day of inspection.
- The play equipment and materials used by the children were maintained in good repair.
- Daily risk assessments were completed in each care room.
- Floor coverings on the stairs was maintained in good repair. Adult and child level handrails were provided. The stairway was adequately lit.
- The kitchen and storage areas remained inaccessible to the children.
- Cleaning agents were observed to be stored on high level shelving, out of the reach of children.
- Waste bins were stored in an area inaccessible to the children.
- Fire exits remained unobstructed during the inspection.

Infection Control:

The inspector observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

- Warm running water, hand soap, pedal operated bins and paper towels were provided for handwashing use. Handwashing practises were observed after nappy changing, after children used the toilet and before snack and meal times.
- The tables were observed to be cleaned prior to and after snack and meal times.
- Children’s snacks taken in from home that contain perishable items were stored in the fridge in each care room until needed.
- Cleaning schedules were in place, with records completed up to date. The service was maintained in a clean and hygienic manner throughout.

Safe Sleep:

- Sleep facilities were provided in a sleep room located off the Baby Room. Five cots with safety mattresses were available. Individual bed sheets and blankets are laundered on site at least once a week, or more often required.
- The sleep room on the day of the inspection was maintained at 20°C.
- Sleep records were available detailing child name, position, breathing pattern, colour and checks recorded every 5 minutes.
- A number of stackable beds suitable for children aged over 2 years were available and set up in the Toddler Room for sleep times. These were observed in use on the day of inspection by children who required a sleep.

Non-Compliance Information

Safe Sleep:

1. In the Baby Room the following safe sleep risks were observed:
 - Fleece blankets were observed in use for all cots in the Baby sleep room. The Baby room caters for children aged under 12 months old. For babies aged under 12 months, cotton cellular blankets should be used.
 - Comforters were observed to remain in cots with sleeping children, which is not in line with the services safe sleep policy which states “comforters will be removed”.
 - A child aged 18 months was observed to sleep on a stackable bed within the care room, which was not fitted with a mattress. There was no care plan available for this child to demonstrate consultation with parents/guardians for the transition of the child to a floor bed. Children aged 15 months upwards can sleep on a floor bed, once a care plan has been completed and the bed is fitted with a mattress of at least 6cm in thickness.

Infection Control:

2. Following nappy changing procedures observed in the Baby Room, the following cross contamination risks were observed;
 - Two staff members were observed to come out into the care room with the apron and gloves on that was used to change a nappy and return the child to the care room to get their hands washed by another staff member.
 - One staff member was observed to wash a child's hands with the same gloves on which were used to change the nappy.

General Safety:

3. Three radiators in the Baby Room had a temperature reading that exceeded 50°C. It is acknowledged that when the inspector brought this to the attention of the room leader on the day of inspection, they adjusted the heating controls on the valves of the radiators. However, this did not adequately reduce the temperature which remained in excess of 50°C posing a risk of injury to a child.
4. Three window blinds in the Senior Pre-school/ School Age Room were unsecured, posing a risk of injury to a child.
5. A bottle of temperature reducing medication was stored in a low-level fridge in the Baby Room, posing a risk of harm to a child.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Safe Sleep:

1. The service has bought cellular blankets for the Baby room for the babies under 12 months old. Management reminded staff in the baby room about the importance of our safe sleep policy and to use cellular blankets on infants up to 12 months old. Going forward we are now going to use cellular blankets for all babies in the sleep room.

All staff were informed by Management that Babies are allowed to use comforters going to sleep and will be monitored during the 5 min checks. During the 5 min sleep checks staff will check comforters and will remove once baby is asleep.

The service has ordered contour cocoon beds with 2 waterproof mattresses, so babies from 15 months can use this bed if suited better. Children in the baby room who are transitioning from a cot to a floor bed can now use the new recommended beds in which we have ordered.

Infection Control:

2. Management have spoken to staff to remind them of the importance of infection control and to always remove gloves and aprons that was used while nappy changing and to dispose of in the foot pedal bins

provided. Signs were put in place in the baby room changing area to remind staff to always remove gloves and aprons when in the changing room before entering the childcare room.

General Safety:

3. The service got a carpenter to make radiator covers for all radiators in the baby room, they are now installed. The Radiator covers will prevent children touching the hot radiators and will keep the room warm also.
4. Management have spoken to staff in the senior preschool and school age childcare room to use the hooks that are provided to secure window blind cords always and these are to be checked regularly throughout the day. Staff to ensure the window blind cords are secure every day and checked throughout the day.
5. All temperature reducing medication to always be stored in the kitchen out of reach of children. All Temperature reducing medication to always be stored in the kitchen not in any of the childcare rooms going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the purchase of cellular blankets and floor bed.

Photographic evidence of poster on display.

Photographic evidence of radiator covers in place, blind cords secured and temperature reducing medication now stored in service kitchen.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 23.