

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CN060
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	The Children's House
-------------------------	----------------------

Address of Service:	48 Ashbrooke Manor, Moynehall, Cavan, Co. Cavan
----------------------------	---

Eircode:	H12XN51
-----------------	---------

Name of Registered Provider:	Antoinette Gibbons
-------------------------------------	--------------------

Service type:	Full Day
----------------------	----------

Date(s) of Inspection:	10/07/2024
-------------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	39	PM	37
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Family Resource Centre, Common's Road, Navan, Co. Meath
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Cunningham, S Taaffe
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

The Children's House is a privately operated Early Years' Service, located in Cavan Town, in operation since 2006. The childcare service provides full day care, part-time day care and a sessional service to children aged from 0 to 6 years and operates from 08.00hrs to 18.00hrs Monday to Friday. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service is a facilitated from a two-storey adapted dwelling resulting in three internal floor levels. There are five care rooms namely, Baby Room (which was not in operation on the day of inspection), Wobbler Room, Toddler Room, Montessori Room 1 and Montessori Room 2. Additional facilities include a kitchen, sanitary facilities (nappy changing areas), sleep rooms and outdoor play area.

Staffing

There are 22 staff employed in the service including the registered provider, two deputy managers, a chef, seventeen childcare practitioners, and one staff member who cares for school aged children.

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 inspectors wish 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
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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 a named person to deputise as required.

(b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

(2) (a)&(b) Forty-four validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 22 staff. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Police vetting was available for 3 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) All childcare staff members who provided direct care to preschool children had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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) There was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced. The following adult to child ratios were observed as follows:

- **The Baby Room:** closed on the day of inspection.
- **The Wobbler Room:** Three staff members cared for 8 pre-school children, aged between 11 months to 1 year 7 months of which the 7 children were attending for full day care.
- **Toddler Room:** Three staff members cared for 11 pre-school children, aged between 1 year 11 months to 3 years all the children were attending for full day care.
- In **Montessori Room 1** there were 17 children attending on a part-time or full day care basis (of whom 4 children were aged 2 years 7 months to 2 years 11 months and 13 children were aged 3 years 5 months to 4 years 11 months) being cared for by 3 staff members.

- In **Montessori Room 2** there were 3 pre-school children aged 4 years 5 months to 5 years 3 months, and 14 school aged children aged 5 to 10 years attending on a full day care basis being cared for by 2 and, at times 3 staff members.

The registered provider and deputy manager arrived at the service shortly after the inspection began and remained throughout the inspection.

(8) Two staff members are present, at all times in the service as required by Regulation 11 (8) as evidenced from examination of the staff roster and staff reported hours of attendance.

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 registered provider ensured a record was kept in writing in relation to the children's details as outlined in Regulation 15(1)(a) to (i). Twelve children's registration forms were inspected, all of which were found to be appropriately completed with the required information

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:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

Compliance Information

(1)(k) The service had a record in writing of accidents, injuries and incidents involving pre-school children.

Fourteen of these records were sampled and found to contain relevant information including parental signatures to document that the parents had been informed and were aware of the relevant incidents that had occurred.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(j)

1. There was evidence in the service that oral anti-biotics had been administered to children in the service at the verbal request of parents without the service having obtained written parental consent and details of the date, time, route and dose of the medication required. Examples of this practice included medication administered in the service on 29/09/2023, 20/10/2023, 21/11/2023, 22/11/2023 and 23/11/2023.
2. Not all medication administration forms maintained in the service were complete as some forms did not include a second staff member's signature to show that the medication had been appropriately checked and the procedure undertaken by 2 staff members.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. When a child is on antibiotics the first dose is always administered by the parent. Staff continue the administration when the child returns to the service. Written consent to administer medication is obtained on the child's registration form. If the child becomes unwell while attending, staff can then administer anti febrile medication. Additionally, form 2 is used, this is completed on all occasions noting type of meds dose time and route given, (as per label that must include the child's name and date) and signed by the parents. However, Form 2 was not used on these two occasions. Staff are always reminded to complete form 2 on all occasions noting type of meds dose time and route given, (as per label) and signed by the parents.

2. Medication is always appropriately given and witnessed just on that occasion the staff member did not sign the form to show they witnessed this. The second consent form other than the daily one will also be filled out. Staff have been reminded to sign as a witness at all times.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has given assurances that medication will be consented by parents and administration witnessed by two staff members. This has been accepted by the inspectorate. This has addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 16.

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic needs:

- All children's individual needs were met with additional care, attention and supervision given as required. Children rotated between their care rooms and the outdoor spaces during the day.
- Staff members were observed changing children's nappies regularly and in a timely manner with warm one-to-one interactions during direct care. Older children were encouraged to become independent and self-caring, suitable to their age and stage of development which included using the toilet, hand washing, caring for their belongings and tidying away after activities and play.
- Children were observed enjoying meaningful play with tabletop activities, art and crafts and free playing with lots of conversation observed. Staff supported children's learning with activities that were observed to be fun and creative. Children enjoyed painting and play dough in the younger care rooms.
- The staff members sat and chatted with the children at mealtimes, helping the children when required whilst encouraging conversation and extending interactions.

- In the Wobbler room sleep was child led with some children availing of an early morning nap. The remainder of the children availing of rest time went to sleep at the scheduled sleep time after dinner in the Toddler Room.
- Transitions were handled smoothly with children being given ample time to complete one activity before starting the next.

Supporting relationships around children:

- Children and parents were greeted at drop off and collection with friendly conversation overheard.
- Staff always used nice soft tones when interacting with the children. Children who became upset were comforted and always reassured, they sought out staff and staff responded warmly.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The family photographs which were on display in most care rooms in Montessori Room 1 and Montessori Room 2 were positioned high on the walls, at or above adult head height and out of the children's line of vision, making them difficult to see from a distance. The positioning of the photographs did not easily enable the children to use the photographs as a means of maintaining links and bridging the gap between the service and home.
2. Several battery-operated toys in the Wobbler and Toddler room were not working. Children do not have meaningful play with the equipment through learning about cause and effect for example by hitting the button their simple action creates a sound or a musical outcome.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Family photos have been lowered down on the wall, put into photo albums or laminated and placed in the reading area. Staff will always consider the age of the children and what is the best way for them to be able to view their photos.
2. Staff carry out assessments on the toys that no longer work with batteries. The toys referred to are very useful and educational during play, for example the big bus can be used as a prop when singing "The wheels on the bus", and therefore not discarded them. There are many other toys that can provide the opportunity to see the cause and effect that happens when a button is pressed etc. As suggested on the day of inspection, we are moving away from plastic battery-operated toys and purchasing more natural resources such as wooden toys.

Supporting documentation submitted

Invoices of additional toys purchased has been submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances Regulation 19.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child 19 to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and*
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a) Adequate facilities were available for the children to play indoors. A large all weather outdoor area was available, divided into two separate spaces with age-appropriate play materials in both sections. Additionally, a grass area was available.

(b) Cosy areas consisting of mats and cushions were available if a child needed to take a break from activities and rest. Children over 2 years were accommodated to sleep on stackable beds in the Toddler room. Two cot rooms were available for the children under 2 years with a total of 9 standard cots. Each child had access to their own bed linen.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The play materials and play equipment in the care rooms were visible and easily accessible to the children on open shelving at their height which supported children to have choices in selecting materials and equipment to play with. Tables and chairs (with the exception of the non-compliance below) were appropriate to the age and stage of development of pre-school children attending the specific care rooms. The care rooms were well resourced and had areas of interest with supporting equipment which incorporated natural/sensorial materials, art and crafts and a range of suitable toys.
- Equipment in the outdoor areas included wooden benches and building blocks, push/pull toys and ride on cars and trikes, two large wooden play kitchens, water tray, tyres, wooden bridge, sea saw, and climbing frame. A storage shed with extra play equipment was available.

Non-Compliance Information

Two children in Montessori Room 1 who were aged 2 years 7 months and 2 years 8 months were observed sitting on chairs that were too high which resulted in the children's legs hanging freely and prevented the children's feet from resting on the floor to support the children to sit in a comfortable and stable position.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

These children were transitioning up to the Preschool Room from the Toddler Room. When the registered provider realised this issue, immediately new tables were ordered and chairs for the Toddler room and brought the old chairs in the Toddler room upstairs for these two children.

Staff will assess the rooms before the children transition.

Supporting documentation submitted

The registered provider submitted evidence of new tables purchased.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 21.

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 menu plan with a selection of meals ranging from meat, fish and poultry with a variety of snacks. For the children attending the service on a full day care basis, breakfast was available from 08:00 to 09:30 consisting of a choice of cereals and toast. The main meal of the day was served between 12:30 and 13:00 hours which was shepherd's pie. Afternoon snack was served between 15:30 and 16:00 which consisted of pancakes, fruit and yogurts. Children drank water from their own beakers or cups which were refilled as required.

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 in place on the day of inspection:

- All cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- The main door to the service was secured and the outdoor spaces were enclosed with walls and gates. These security measures ensured that a child did not exit unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service and outdoor spaces.
- All play materials were placed on stable based shelving units. Play materials and equipment were observed to be safe and suitable for the developmental age of the pre-school children present in the service.

Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed:

- The hand washing policy and nappy changing policy were implemented in practice with appropriate hand washing for staff and children at all times.

Safe Sleep:

- Temperature of the cot room was maintained between 16° to 20°C while children were sleeping.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The following safety measures were not in place on the day of inspection:

1. Garda vetting was available for 3 staff members. However, these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. The door of the cot room within the Wobbler room was not easily openable as it was rubbing off the floor.
3. The exit from the cot room was also obstructed by the storage units which were stored too close to the exit.
4. At 1.05pm it was observed that inadequate space was left between 3 stackable beds occupied by children in the Wobbler Room. Spacing between these beds was less than the recommended distance of at least 50cm apart which could potentially delay staff in accessing children in the event of an emergency and increased the risk of cross infection. It is acknowledged that the beds were immediately re-positioned safely by a staff member as soon as the risk was highlighted by the inspector.
5. The bins provided in the sanitary facilities adjoining Montessori Room 1 and Montessori Room 2 were not pedal-operated. This increased the risk of cross contamination as the lids of the bins were subjected to repeated handling.

Fire Safety:

6. Fire drills were not carried out monthly in the Wobbler room as the last recorded fire drill was the 13/03/24. The service does not carry out a monthly whole service evacuation which is potentially a safety risk.

Safe Sleep:

7. Cot three in the Wobbler cot room had an ill-fitting mattress which was a potential foothold

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. All staff are now garda vetted within 3 years.
2. Door sticking has been sanded.
3. Storage in the cot room has been removed from the fire exit.
4. Only one bed was placed too close to the other one and this was rectified on the day when the inspector pointed it out to the staff member. Staff continue to carry out daily risk assessments and make alterations where needed.
5. Some children can struggle to operate pedal bins, lids have been removed the lids from bins for paper towels only.

Fire Safety:

6. Fire drills were being carried out by each room. Fire drills are now carried out as a whole building.

Safe Sleep:

7. All mattresses are now fitting properly. We continue to carry out daily risk assessments and make alterations where needed.

Supporting documentation submitted

Garda vetting for the three staff members has been submitted to the Inspectorate

Summary Comment

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

- (1) *A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.*
- (3) *A registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) *no person other than-*
 - (i) *pre-school child attending the service,*
 - (ii) *a person dropping or collecting such a child,*
 - (iii) *an employee, or*
 - (iv) *an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and*
 - (b) *a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.*

Compliance Information

(1) A record was kept of each child's time of arrival and departure on a daily basis by the staff members.

(3) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children's parents / guardians, employees or authorised visitors can enter the pre-school. A visitor's book was maintained, there was evidence that visitors were requested to record their attendance.

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 service provided evidence that a person had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a) A First aid boxes was available and safely stored in the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(b) The first aid boxes on the premises were not suitably equipped. The majority of the wound dressings, eye pads and saline solution provided in the first aid boxes in Montessori Room 1, Montessori Room 2 and the Baby Room were out-of-date.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

First aid boxes are restocked with bandages that are in date.

Check dates on all bandages and note when they need to be changed.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of first aid equipment purchased has been submitted to the Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 25

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 was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service.

(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The fire extinguishers were last serviced on the 21/03/2024 and smoke alarms were certified as having been serviced on 27/03/2024.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises

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 that the pre-school service is adequately insured for 72 children, expiry date on the insurance certificate was dated 27/03/2025.