

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CW004
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Name of Service:	Apple Tree Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Slate Row Hall, Hacketstown, Co. Carlow
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Eircode:	R93 PX93
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Kealy
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	17/10/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	13	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early years Inspectorate, Tusla Child Family Agency , Athy Road, Carlow
Inspection undertaken by:	Norma Thornton
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

Apple Tree Preschool is a sessional early childhood care and education (ECCE) service that operates from a community hall, just outside the village of Hacketstown, in north county Carlow. A sessional service is provided to children aged 2 to 6 years between the hours of 09:00 to 12:00 hours. The service operates from a designated classroom within the community hall, which has adjacent child sized toilet facilities. There is a secure designated outdoor play area contained to the side of the large car park at the back of the community hall.

Staffing

There were three staff members employed in the service including the registered provider who also works directly with the children. The three staff members working directly with the children held at least a major award in early childhood care and education at Level 6 to 8 on the National Quality and Qualifications (QQI) framework.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following regulations.

9-(1)(2)(4)-Management and Recruitment,

10-Policies, procedures etc. of a pre-school service,

11-(1)(3)-Staffing Levels,
23-Safeguarding Health, Safety, and Welfare of child,
25-First Aid,
26-Fire Safety Measures,
28-Insurance,
30-Minimum Space Requirements.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the indoor and outdoor physical environments and review of records.

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 registered provider, person in charge, staff member 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 a named person who was able to deputise in the absence of the designated person in charge.

(b) At all times during the inspection, both the registered provider/designated person in charge and the deputy designated person in charge were present on the premises.

(2) Staff files for the three staff members present were reviewed by the inspector.

(a)(b) Two validated references were on file for each of the three staff members from either a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda Vetting certificates were on file for each of the three staff members working directly with the children.

(d) Not applicable as no staff member had lived outside of the State for longer than six months.

(4) The inspector observed that there was a certificate of qualification in early childhood care and education in each staff member's file, demonstrating that each staff member held a qualification ranging from Level 6 to Level 8 on the National Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

On review of documents, the inspector observed that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in schedule 5 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Service) Regulations 2016 were available in the service and open for inspection. The policies were adequate in content and specific to the type of service provided.

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 always ensured that there was an adequate number of staff members directly caring for the children in attendance.
- (3) There were 3 qualified staff members directly caring for 13 preschool 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 service's main entrance was located at the back of the building where a large carpark provided adequate parking space for parents/guardians. The main entrance door could only be accessed when a staff member responded to a call bell system and permitted entry to authorised persons. No unauthorised visitors to the service could gain access to the service and it was observed that children could not exit the building unsupervised. A natural outdoor play area was located to the right side of the back of the building and was secured by a five foot high metal fence around its perimeter.

The inspector observed that all cleaning solutions and equipment were stored safely out of the reach of the children in a designated secure storage area.

The inspector observed that records were maintained of daily risk assessments carried out and recorded on the outdoor play area, prior to children using the area daily.

Infection Control:

Two designated children's toilets, with handwash basins and a designated staff toilet were provided. Each toilet unit and handwash basin was observed to be maintained to a clean standard. Liquid hand soap and paper towelling was present at each hand wash basin and within easy reach of the children for handwashing. Child friendly, health promotion visuals prompted the children to wash their hands, before snack time, after using the toilet, outdoor play and messy play in line with the service's handwashing policy.

Administration of Medication:

No child required administration of medication on the day of inspection. While the service had an adequate administration of medication policy in place, there was no record of a child having required medication to be administered while attending the service.

Outings:

The service did not maintain a policy on outings as it had a policy of not operating outings away from the service and this was communicated to parents as part of their child's registration induction.

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) There was one staff member with current certification in first aid responder (FAR) training for children. A second staff member whose certificate in first aid responder training had expired on 05 October 2023, demonstrated that refresher training had been arranged for the following week. It is acknowledged that a third staff member had certification in basic paediatric first aid training. On review of the staff roster, records demonstrated that a staff member trained in FAR was always onsite while the session was in operation.

(2)(a)(b) A portable first aid box was stored in an obvious position on a shelf in the hall and was always available to the staff and children. The inspector observed that when the staff and children went outside, the first aid box was taken with them. On review of the first aid contents, it was adequately stocked with records demonstrating that its contents were checked monthly by a staff member.

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) On review of fire records maintained by the registered provider, it was observed that fire drills were carried out in the service monthly, with details of each fire drill recorded.
- (b) Maintenance records of the service's firefighting equipment and fire alarms were maintained. The last maintenance check for the fire-fighting equipment was recorded as having taken place on the 03 October 2023, and the last maintenance check for the fire alarms in February 2023.
- (4) A fire procedure notice was clearly displayed at the entrance of the service, detailing the procedures to be carried out in the event of a fire in the service. A fire assembly point was clearly signposted in the carpark.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was a current insurance certificate displayed on the notice board in the service detailing insurance cover for a sessional early years service provision for 22 preschool children.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) to (6), a registered provider shall ensure that adequate clear floor space is available in the premises for the work, play and movement of children attending the pre-school service.

(3) A registered provider of a sessional pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre shall ensure that a minimum of 1.818 square metres of clear floor space is available for each child attending the service.

Compliance Information

- (1) The inspector observed that there was adequate clear floor space provided in the classroom for the children in attendance.
- (3) On measuring and recording the clear floor space, the inspector observed that the classroom provided 40.48 square metres of clear floor space, ensuring that a minimum of 1.818 square metres was available for each of the children attending the service. The maximum number of pre-school children that could be accommodated in the classroom was 22.