

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015CW012 |
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| Name of Service: | Cherish Childcare |
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| Address of Service: | Friars Green, Tullow Road, Carlow, Co. Carlow |
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| Eircode: | R93 AN26 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Melanie Watson |
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| Service type: | Full Day, Part Time, Sessional |
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| Date of Inspection: | 03/10/2023 |
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|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 31 | PM | 23 |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|

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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).

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| Conditions if applicable | Not applicable |
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Description of service

Cherish Childcare is a full day care service located in the residential estate of Friars Green in Carlow town. The service offers sessional, part-time, and full day childcare services between the hours of 07:30 to 18:00, Monday to Friday, for 51 weeks of the year, closing for Christmas week. A sessional early childhood care and education (ECCE) session operates from 09:00 to 12:00 hours. While the service is registered to accommodate children aged 0-6 years it is currently accommodating children from 6 months to 6 years.

The service operates from a purpose-built premises, comprised of four early years classrooms, two sleep rooms, a designated kitchen area and contains three separate outdoor play spaces onsite.

Staffing

There were 14 staff employed in the service including the registered provider, general manager, designated person in charge, early years staff working directly with the children, a designated chef and student. The registered provider does not work in this service but is available if required to.

All staff employed to work directly with the children held a major award in early childhood care and education at minimum Level 5 to Level 9 on the National Quality and Qualifications Ireland (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.

The following regulations were inspected. A sampling process was engaged where appropriate.

- 9(1)(2)(3)(4)-Management and Recruitment,
- 10- Policies, procedures etc. of a pre-school service,
- 11(1)(2)(8)-Staffing Levels,
- 16(1)-Record in relation to Pre-School Service,
- 20(1)(a)(b)-Facilities for Rest and Play,
- 22-Food and Drink,
- 23-Safeguarding Health, Safety, and Welfare of child,
- 25-First Aid,
- 26- Fire Safety Measures,
- 27-Supervision,
- 28-Insurance.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included all four pre-school classrooms.

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 designated persons 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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned, or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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) There was a designated person in charge in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(b) The staff roster demonstrated that the designated person in charge or a named deputy designated person in charge, was always onsite while the service was in operation. This was confirmed with both staff members.

(c) A clear outline of the management of the structure was displayed in the service, identifying the lines of authority, accountability, the roles, and responsibilities of individual staff members in the service.

(2) Staff files for 13 staff and 1 student employed in the service were reviewed by the inspector.

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

(c) Garda vetting certificates were available on file for each staff member and two students working directly with the children, and for all ancillary staff.

(d) Police vetting was available for each of five staff members, who had lived outside of the state for a period longer than six months.

(3) The inspector observed from each staff file that the procedures specified in paragraph (2) had been completed prior to staff members commencing employment in the service.

(4) Certificates of qualifications were available for inspection, for each staff member, who as part of their role were working directly with the children, demonstrating that each staff member held at least a minimum Level 5 to Level 9 qualification in early childhood care and education 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 the service's policies and staff files, the inspector was assured that the registered provider ensured that all required documents specified in Schedule 5, were available in the service and were communicated to the staff as part of their induction process on commencing employment in the service.

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 were always, during the inspection, an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children. The designated person in charge and an additional staff member were supernumerary and available to provide support in any of the four classrooms in operation and to provide relief for staff breaks.

(2) The following adult to child ratios were observed in each of the four classrooms on the morning and afternoon of the inspection.

In the Wobbler room there was 1 staff member directly caring for two infants aged 1 to 2 years throughout the inspection.

In the Toddler room there were 2 staff members and 1 student caring for 9 children in the morning, 1 child aged 1 to 2 years and 8 children aged 2 to 3 years.

In the Year 1, ECCE Playschool room there was 1 staff member directly caring for 8 children aged 2 years 8 months to 4 years between the hours of 09:00 to 13:30.

In the Year 2, ECCE Senior Playroom there were 12 children aged 4 to 6 years directly cared for by 3 qualified staff members.

In the afternoon 3 children aged 3 to 4 years and 10 children aged 4 to 6 years were cared for by 3 staff members.

In the Toddler room, in the afternoon, the 2 same staff members were observed directly caring for 8 children, while the 1 staff member continued to directly care for the 2 children in the wobbler room.

(8) The registered provider and management ensured that there were always at least two adults on the premises.

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:

(a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;

(b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;

(c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;

(d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;

(e) the facilities available;

(f) the opening hours and fees;

(g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

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

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

Compliance Information

On review of documentation the inspector observed the following.

(1)(a)-(k) The registered provider developed, maintained and appropriately stored the following relevant documents and records required in the service: (a) staff records, (b) the type of service and the age profile of the children, that the service is registered to provide, (c) details of the adult: child ratios in each classroom within the service, (d) the programme of care provided in the service, (e) details of the facilities available, (f) the opening hours and fees of the service, (g) the policies, procedures, and statements that the service is required under Regulation 10, (h) each child's daily attendance details, (i) records of staff rosters, (j) administration of medication records and (k) accident and incident records, involving ant early years children attending the service.

A sample of the records reviewed by the inspector were observed to be completed in full, with the relevant details recorded.

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 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) The service contained four early years classrooms, each of which contained a physical environment designed and planned appropriately to meet the needs of the age groups of the children in attendance.

A smaller group of older preschool children, who remain in the service for a part-time or full day care service come together in one of the ECCE rooms in the evenings, for a change of environment and activities, while a school aged service is provided in the other vacant classroom.

There are three outdoor play areas provided onsite, one directly accessible from both ECCE classrooms, which provided clear space for running, bicycle riding, and contained an outdoor quiet area in the form of an enclosed wooden swing area so children could take time away from busy physical activities when outside. A second area, known as the “Orchard play area” was directly accessed from the toddler room and contained natural miniature sized pear and apple trees where children sat happily underneath and were able to pick fruit from. A cement path and grass are provided a variety of surface for playing, riding tricycles, and using push along toys. The staff and children from the wobbler room also used this play area. All the children in the service were observed to avail of outdoor play on a few occasions throughout the inspection.

(b) The service had two designated sleep rooms, containing a total of six standard cots, three in each room for children aged under two years of age. There were three children under two years of age present in the service on the day of inspection, who each had a designated cot to sleep in. There were 20 child sized stackable beds available in the service for children aged over two years to sleep on if required while attending a part-time or full day care service.

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

Throughout the inspection, the inspector observed that each classroom had appropriate physical environments created to meet the needs of the children in attendance. In the wobbler room, soft textured materials such as a soft mat, cushions and soft ball pit provided a variety of interest areas for the young children. Activity centres, pull toys and fixed furniture pieces encouraged the physical development of the children, as they were observed to pull up and walk around furniture pieces.

The three other classrooms had clearly defined interest areas which included rest areas/ reading areas, kitchen/ home areas, art, and creativity areas. Low level shelving in each of the classrooms provided resources of suitable play materials which included varieties of connective and manipulative blocks, jigsaws, and peg boards, reading materials, mobile toys such as cars and trucks and treasure baskets of small world figurines.

In the outdoor area a well-maintained activity centre included a slide, swings, climbing frames and look out house. Ride on balance bikes and push toys were available for the various age ranges attending the service.

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 designated kitchen for the preparation of all meals and snacks onsite. A chef was employed in the service, and was observed by the inspector to prepare, cook and serve food to the children throughout the day. Smells of fresh baking flowed throughout the service during the morning and children were able to inform the inspector that they would have buns as part of their evening snack.

In the mornings, a selection of cereals porridge, boiled eggs with water or milk to drink were available for children who had not had breakfast at home.

Children attending the ECCE service bought a snack from home in line with the service’s healthy eating policy. Morning snack served in the service contained crackers, bananas and raisins.

A three-week menu plan was displayed in the corridor just outside the door of the kitchen for parents to see. On the day of inspection, the main meal consisted of freshly made potato mash, fish fingers, corn, carrots, and peas, with gravy as an option if the child would like some. Evening snack offered homemade fruit buns and yogurts, and evening tea was observed to be freshly made cheese and ham toastie wraps, perfectly sized for the different children’s ages. This correlated with what was documented on the menu plan displayed.

A variety of foods were observed to be offered on the three-week menu plan.

For morning snack times, crackers and cheese, French toast, homemade scones and fruit jam or homemade brown bread and cheese. Dinners offered a variety over the three weeks which included vegetable and cheese pasta bakes, with garlic bread, chicken curry and rice, beef stew with potatoes, spaghetti bolognese, chicken casserole, chilli con carne, cottage pie, pasta carbonara and bacon carrots, peas, and mash. Evening snacks included choices from yogurts, jellies, fruits, breadsticks, cream cheese, grapes and homemade baking such as buns or banana bread. Teas included spaghetti hoops and toast, cheese melty wraps, boiled eggs and toasted soldiers, homemade vegetable soup and brown bread, homemade pizza, eggs and toast and cheese and ham toasties.

The inspector observed each classroom had a drinking water station with jugs of drinking water refilled regularly by staff. Appropriate drinking cups, plates and utensils were provided and children participated in setting the tables prior to mealtimes.

The children frequently informed the inspector of what they thought they were having for their next meal or snack from the enticing smells that flowed from the kitchen or through the kitchen window to the outside play

areas. In conversation with the children on their favourite foods, items on offer on the three-week menu plan were often mentioned.

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:

Access to the service was gained through a large high metal entrance gate and via a keypad call system at the main door. No unauthorised persons could gain access to the service and no child could leave the service unsupervised. The boundary of the service and outdoor area was secured by a 20-foot-high cement wall at the back and with 12-foot-high metal fencing at the sides and front of the building.

The kitchen was inaccessible to all children and to staff who were not assigned to kitchen duties.

Cleaning equipment, materials and solutions were all stored safely and securely in a secure storage area away from the children.

Staff were able to demonstrate that a daily outdoor risk assessment of the outdoor areas and play equipment was carried out daily and outcomes recorded to ensure the physical play environments were safe for the children.

Infection Control:

The toddler and ECCE rooms had adjacent child sized toilet facilities sufficient to meet the numbers and needs of the children in each room. A nappy changing room on the corridor for children requiring nappy changes. All sanitary facilities contained handwash basins, supplied with liquid hand soap and paper towelling, which the children could easily access and use.

Children were observed to use the toilet and hand washing facilities with ease, ensuring they washed their hands correctly after using the toilet, after messy and outdoor play and before snack and mealtimes. Staff were observed to carry out nappy changing procedures in line with the service's nappy changing policy and in adherence with the service's hand washing and infection control policy.

Staff supported children to wash their hands after nappy changing, toileting when required, and blowing noses, helping the children to learn good hygiene practices, and reducing the risk of any potential spread of infection in the service.

Administration of Medication:

The inspector observed two staff members administer medicine in line with the service's administration of medication policy. The medication was stored appropriately, the child was asked its name to confirm it was the correct child, the parents' consent and prescription was checked by both staff, the dosage and route of administration checked by both staff and the record of administration of the medication completed in detail post completion of the procedure.

The inspector observed that the child to whom the medication was administered to was comfortable and familiar with the procedure and was able to inform the inspector of what type of medication it was and what it was for.

Safe Sleep:

There were two sleep rooms available on the service, each containing three standard cots. Staff were observed to ensure that the temperature of both sleep rooms was maintained within the recommended range of 16 to 20 °C. The inspector recorded the temperature of each sleep room at 20 °C. Both rooms were ventilated naturally with open windows and the natural lighting dimmed appropriately with black out blinds.

Staff were observed to physically check and record the room temp and sleeping children's physical checks, which included colour, breathing and sleep position every 10 minutes.

Fire Safety:

The service ensured that fire safety procedures and precautions were carried out as per fire safety guidelines in preschool settings and in line with the service's fire safety policy. On review of records, it was determined that the fire alarm system and firefighting equipment were both serviced annually, and fire drills carried out in the service monthly. There was a clearly designated fire assembly point at the front of the building.

Emergency fire exit doors in the service were clear and well signed and fire emergency procedures to be carried out, in the event of a fire were clearly displayed in the hallway and in each classroom.

Outing:

The service had an adequate outings policy in place, to implement when taking children on an outing away from the service. The policy detailed the preparation, risk assessment and communication with parents/guardians prior to the outing, the precautions, and procedures to be taken prior to and during the outing and the procedures to be carried out in the event of an emergency.

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 were two staff members with current certification in the required first aid responder training for children. At all times while the service was operating, one or both staff members were in attendance. This was reflected in the staff roster reviewed by the inspector on the day of inspection.

(2) (a)(b) A first aid box was available and easily accessed by staff on a shelf in the office. A record demonstrated that its contents were checked monthly and replaced if necessary.

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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
 - (b) an employee, and
 - (c) an authorised person.
- (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) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 02 October 2023.
- (b) The registered provider maintained a record of the number, type and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. The last maintenance check of the fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarm system was recorded as having taken place on 26 May 2023.
- (4) The registered provider ensured that fire procedure notices were in each classroom and on the main corridor.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The inspector observed that staff in each classroom and in the outdoor play area provided appropriate supervision to the children in their care. The design of the classrooms and outdoor play area was planned for clear visibility of the children indoors and outdoors, while both the indoor and outdoor environments also offered opportunities for children to have a rest or quiet time in the rest areas provided, while remaining in the staff's sight.

Staff were observed to work as a team, communicating effectively and ensuring that the correct adult to child ratios were maintained during staff breaks and as staff moved indoors to support children with toileting, for nappy changes or clothing changes.

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 for the service displayed on a notice board in the main hall. The insurance certificate detailed insurance cover for a full day care service provision for 54 early years children.