

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CW017
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Name of Service:	Hillview Early Learning Preschool
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Address of Service:	Wells, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow
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Eircode:	R21 FY96
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Name of Registered Provider:	Eileen Hogan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	22/11/2024
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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

Hillview Early Learning Preschool is a registered sessional early childhood care and education service located in rural Bagenalstown in county Carlow. The service operates from a purpose-built building located on land at the back of the registered provider's private residence. The service is comprised of a spacious classroom with adjacent toilet facilities and a designated kitchen area. A designated securely fenced outdoor play area is provided onsite, to the side of the building, which includes a sheltered outdoor classroom. The service caters for children aged 2 to 6 years and operates from 09:30 hours to 12:30 hours Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year.

Staffing

There were three staff members employed to work in the service. The registered provider does not work in the service. All staff members who as part of their role in the service were employed to work directly with the preschool children held qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 in early childhood care and education 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 inspection focused on assessment of compliance under regulations 9, 10, 11, 15, 19, 23, 25, 26 and 28.

A sampling process was used under regulations 10, 15, and 19. The scope of the inspection included classroom and outdoor play area.

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 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.

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

(2) The staff files for three staff members employed in the service 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 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 5 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 documentation the inspector observed that the written policies, procedures and statements required under schedule 5 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 were available in the service and open for inspection. The service policies were specific to the service and their contents adequate.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that there was an adequate number of staff members directly caring for the children in attendance at the service.

(3) There were 2 qualified staff members, including the registered provider, directly caring for 13 preschool children.

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)(a) to (i) On review of a sample of 12 records of pre-school children, the inspector observed that records of the particulars (a) to (i) were maintained for each preschool child.

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 needs.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The registered provider and staff ensured that children’s learning, development and well-being were facilitated daily in the preschool through provision of a stimulating quality physical environment and play based curriculum. The service was carefully planned with a variety of interest areas which included a reading /library area, large enough so that all the children and staff could sit comfortably together for circle time. The inspector observed that the proportion and comfort of the reading rest area contributed to wards the children’s concentration and participation at circle time. Books were clearly displayed on a wall display and well maintained. Other areas of interest included a well-developed kitchen/ home area, bakery stall, nature table, messy play areas, construction/ transport area, dolls house, art and creativity area and low-level shelving with access to containers of playdoh equipment, small vehicles, animal figurines, manipulative and connective toys, beauty tools, jigsaws and peg boards.

The outdoor area which could be directly accessed from the classroom had an artificial grass and soft play surface. A goal post and children’s seating were permanently in position. When the children went outside, the inspector observed that storage shed contained all their additional ride on toys, balance bikes, scooters and rocking horses, which the children chose once the shed was unlocked by a staff member.

Other children who preferred quieter activities in the outdoor area had a covered over outdoor classroom to play in which also contained an outdoor kitchen, chalkboards and appropriate child sized tables and seating. At snack time, children were observed washing their hands before confidently getting their snacks from the fridge. The children sat and chatted to the staff and inspector about what they had to eat and what their plans for activities after snack time included.

Snacks were all observed to include healthy options such as yogurts, sandwiches, fruit, cheese, bread sticks, dried fruit and home baking which was all in line with the service’s healthy eating policy.

During snack the children explained that they were having “Kindness Week” which the inspector observed was in line with the staff’s documented evidence of short-term curricular planning. When the children gathered at circle time, they spent some time reflecting on visual pictures of kind and unkind acts and sorting them into two corresponding piles. They spoke about kindness, and acts of kindness that would make themselves or others feel good. Afterwards each child handed a “friendship” bracelet to another friend in the group and the inspector observed that as each child gave a bracelet to another child , as a group they ensured that no child was left without a bracelet and everyone got one.

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 was secured at the main entrance with a six-foot-high wooden gate and fence surrounding the perimeter of the purpose-built premises and outdoor play area. Access could only be authorised by staff responding to the call bell system.

Internally an entrance hall door was secured with a high lock. Both systems helped to ensure no unauthorised person could enter the building or that a child could not exit the premises unsupervised.

The inspector observed that the service's cleaning equipment and cleaning products were all stored in a safe designated area, in accessible to the children. The kitchen area was inaccessible to the children and could only be opened with a high handle and sliding bolt.

Infection Control:

The service had an adequate infection control policy in place.

Hand washing was observed to be carried out by both staff and the children, prior to snack times, after using tissues to blow noses, after messy and outdoor play.

Toileting was supported and carried out in line with the toileting policy contained in the service's infection control policy.

Cleaning schedules were available and indicated that these were recorded daily by the staff present, as cleaning tasks were completed.

Administration of Medication:

The service had an administration of medications policy available in the service for instances where it was necessary to administer anti-febrile medication or if a child was on specific emergency medication. At the time of inspection there was no child requiring any medication to be administered. Past administration of medication records demonstrated that the staff followed procedure and recorded details of the administration of medication procedure in line with the service's policy

Outing:

An adequate outings policy was in place in the service for when the staff took children on walks. Staff informed the inspector that outings were limited as the children voiced their preference to stay in their outdoor play area.

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) On review of staff files the inspector observed that there were two staff members employed in the service, who held current certificates in first aid responder (FAR) training. These two staff members were rostered to be present daily with the children in attendance in the service.

(2)(a)(b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available stored on a top shelf in the service and was always available to the children in attendance in the service.

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 drill records maintained, the inspector observed that fire drills were carried out monthly in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 06 November 2024.

(b) Records were available demonstrating that the last maintenance record for the firefighting equipment and for the smoke alarm system was recorded as having taken place on the 31 May 2024.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed on the classroom door and next to the fire exit door.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

On review of the service's current insurance certificate, the inspector observed that the insurance certificate detailed cover for a sessional childcare service for 22 children which was active from 28 March 2024 until the 27 March 2025.