

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CW028
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Name of Service:	Mary's Preschool
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Address of Service:	Mc Grath Hall, Station Road, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow
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Eircode:	R21 WR66
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Lawler
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	17/09/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child & Family, 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

Mary's Preschool is a sessional early childhood care and education (ECCE) service for 2- to 6-year-olds, that operates from a designated classroom located in the McGrath Hall, in Bagenalstown in County Carlow. The service operates from 09:00 to 12:00 and from 12:30 to 15:30 Monday to Friday for the ECCE year. The service has two designated classrooms, use of the adjacent hall for activities during inclement weather and a secure designated outdoor area on the grounds of the McGrath Hall, just opposite the entrance hall to the service.

Staffing

There are currently three staff members employed in the service to work directly with the children. This includes the registered provider. All three staff members hold a Level 8 qualification 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.

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

Regulation 10- Policies Procedures etc of Pre-School Service,

Regulation 15-Record of a Pre-School Child,

Regulation 19-Health, welfare and Development of the Child,

Regulation 23- Safeguarding Health Safety and Welfare of child,

Regulation 25- First Aid,

Regulation 26- Fire Safety Measures

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the indoor physical environment 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, 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 registered provider was designated person in charge on the day of inspection and a named person who was able to deputise as required.

(b) Both the designated person in charge and deputy designated person in charge were onsite during the inspection.

(2) Staff files for the three staff members employed to work directly with the children as part of their role in the service were reviewed by the inspector and the following observations found.

(a)(b) There were two validated references available in each staff member's file from either a past employer or reputable source in the case of a person who had no past employers.

(c) Garda Vetting certificates were available on file for each staff member working directly with the children. The registered provider demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting certificates were on file for two staff members who had lived outside of the State for a period of six months or longer.

(4) Certificates of accredited qualifications were available in each of the staff members' files demonstrating that each staff member held a qualification at the minimum level 5 and above on the national framework of qualifications.

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, the registered provider assured the inspector that all the required documents specified in Schedule 5 were available and open for inspection.

The registered provider confirmed that staff together as a group, were involved in policy review on an annual basis.

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 inspector observed that there was always during the session an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in attendance.

(3) There were 3 qualified staff members directly supervising and caring for 17 children aged 2 years and 8 months to 5 years.

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 the 11 preschool records available for the 11 children registered to attend the service, the inspector was assured that all particulars (a) to (i) were recorded in detail by the registered provider.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b) The inspector observed that the children were confident and familiar with their surroundings in the service. The larger classroom had clearly identifiable areas of interest which included a kitchen/home area, construction area, shop stall and dress-up rail. Each area of interest was well resourced with play equipment to enhance the theme of the area, for example there was a toy toaster, coffee machine, food mixer, weighing scales, ironing board in the kitchen /home area. In the shop stall, there was play money and plastic bank cards, and open-ended materials such as recycled coffee cannisters, salt and pepper containers and other food containers repurposed as products for sale.

A dress up area provided a variety of dress up costumes ranging from uniforms for doctors, nurses, policemen and fire chiefs to princess dresses and accessories.

Sensory trays provided green coloured rice and black spider pasta for the children to play with. A rest and reading area had been created with a soft couch on soft textured rugs. The smaller classroom contained a nature table and appropriately sized children's tables where the children could sit and do jigsaws, play with peg boards, connective and manipulative equipment and paint or create with the many resources available.

The service also had use of the large community hall which provided children with opportunities to create environments of emergent interest. On the day of inspection, they had created the “National Ploughing Championships” with stands which included imaginary cookery demonstrations, sensory trays which contained cereal and blocks and which they children drove miniature vehicles on or transported blocks with miniature tractors and loaders. A transport track had been created for children to ride on their vehicles, balance bikes and tractors.

A secure outdoor play area located on the grounds of the hall was designated for the use of the service. The area was secured with a five-foot wooden fence and provided a natural environment with a grass and bark mulch surface for the children to play on. The area contained three large beech trees which provided shade and shelter. A covered wooden cabin had been erected as an outdoor preschool and contained appropriate child sized tables and chairs.

Children were observed enjoying a wooden castle tower, which they climbed up into, via a wooden climbing panel, providing the children with physical challenge, as they navigated the foot holds and grabbed the handlebars. From the wooden castle tower, they took turns sliding down into the grass below.

A large square sand table supplied with plentiful sand, toy diggers, shovels and containers provided the children with the opportunity for outdoor sensory and messy play as well as plans for imaginary play.

Other equipment included a tennis ball pole, climbing frame, plastic cog wheels for physical and imaginative play, flower shaped chalk boards, and a large outdoor wooden kitchen.

While some of the children played together in groups blowing bubbles from a large bubble tray, other children were happy to entertain themselves exploring the growing boxes and painting with chalk on the flower chalk boards.

The inspector observed that while staff afforded the children to choice to play in groups or to play individually , they regularly checked in with all the children, for example one staff member who observed a child alone picking rosemary took the opportunity to tell the child how clever they were finding the rosemary and extending the conversation to discuss if they liked the smell of the herb and what it could be used for. The child eagerly showed the inspector how rolling the herb between their fingers released a lovely oil.

The staff were observed to respond to the needs of individual children reinforcing positive behaviour and praising them for their great ideas, plans and work.

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 entrance to the service was secured with a call bell system. Staff could view approaching visitors to the service through a glass panel in the door. This assisted in ensuring that unauthorised visitors could not gain entry to the service and that children could not exit the service unsupervised. The service's designated outdoor play area was secured with a wooden fence and was located across the carpark from the entrance to the service. The staff and children transitioned back and forth to the outdoor play area on a walking rope, which each child held onto with a handle.

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 the staff roster, it was observed, there were two staff present in the service that had accredited first aid responder (FAR) training. One of the FAR trained staff was rostered to always be on the premises while the children were in attendance.

It is acknowledged that the third staff member held current basic paediatric first aid training.

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) The registered provider demonstrated that a record of any fire drills carried out in the service was maintained.

(b) Records of the maintenance of fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarms were maintained in the service. The last date of the annual service for the firefighting equipment was recorded as having taken place in November 2023 and for the smoke alarms was recorded as having taken place on the 19 June.

(4) A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the classroom and in the entrance hall, at the entrance door. A fire assembly point was designated to the side of the fence surrounding the outdoor play area.

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 insurance certificate detailed cover for a sessional childcare service for 31 children, expiry date 26 March 2025.