

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CW047
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Name of Service:	Tots Corner Playgroup
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Address of Service:	St Fiaccs Leisure Centre, Leighlin Road, Graiguecullen, Co. Carlow
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Eircode:	R93 AW92
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Name of Registered Provider:	Jackie Malone
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	05/09/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	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

Tots Corner Playgroup is a registered sessional preschool service that operates from the St. Fiacc's Leisure Centre building in Graiguecullen in Carlow town. The service provides a sessional Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) session for children aged 2 to 6 years between the hours of 09:00 to 12:00 and 12:30 to 15:30 for the ECCE calendar year.

The service is based in a designated classroom with integrated toilet facilities for the children. There is a secured outdoor area specifically for the preschool children located in the front of the building. The maximum number of preschool children that the service can accommodate is 20.

Staffing

There are three staff members employed in the service which includes the registered provider. All three staff members work directly with the children and hold early childhood care and education qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 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 21- Equipment and Materials.

Regulation 23-Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the 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, 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.

pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme.”

Compliance Information

(1)(a) There was a 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 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 service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to re-new Garda vetting every three years.

(d) No staff member employed to work directly with the children had lived outside of the State for a period of six months or longer.

(3) On review of staff files and the required documentation, the inspector was assured that the procedures specified in paragraph (2) were carried out prior to any staff member commencing employment in the service.

(4) Certificates of accredited qualifications were available in each of the three staff members' files demonstrating that each staff member held a qualification ranging from the minimum 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 service's policies, procedures and statements, it was observed that the registered provider ensured, that all documents required for compliance with regulation 10 were on file and appropriate in contents for 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.

(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) There was an adequate number of staff members directly caring for the children throughout the inspection.

(3) There were 18 early years children, aged 2 years and eight months to 5 years, present with 3 staff members including the registered provider.

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

There was adequate and suitable furniture, play equipment, materials and resources available to the children both indoors in the classroom and in the outdoor play area.

The staff ensured that the variety of clearly identifiable interest areas available, the dress up /home corner, shop/ stall, dress rail and accessories were all resourced with well-maintained play materials.

Children sat at tables engaged in activities of their choice, picked from the resources provided on the low-level child sized shelves. Staff had visually labelled each clear box of equipment and informed the inspector that a

monthly audit of equipment and play materials was carried out to ensure everything was maintained in good condition.

A rest area comprised of two soft couches and a display shelf of appropriate books was provided for children to rest and opt out of activities when they wished.

The secured outdoor area located in front of the building also provided the children with a variety of interest areas which included a wooden shop and post office, green house for growing flowers and vegetables, an outdoor kitchen and child sized picnic benches. A slide and basketball net provided children with physical challenge to develop motor skills. A large wooden four seater car provided opportunities for imaginary play and water and sand trays provided opportunities for sensory and messy play.

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 healthy eating policy in place which was communicated to all new and existing children's parents/ guardians annually, prior to commencement of the new school year.

At 11:15 hours, the children's lunches were observed to reflect the healthy eating policy with lunches observed to contained healthy food options such as meat, salad and cheese sandwiches, brown bread, home baking, fruits, yogurts, cheese and cold meats. Fresh drinking water was provided in a jug.

The perishable items in the children's lunches were store in individually labelled bags in the refrigerator provided in the classroom.

The inspector observed that children took turns to serve the plates and drinking cups to each table of their friends and then distributed the labelled lunch bags. Staff sat with the children at the tables and had their snack, while engaging in conversations and helping with opening yogurt containers etc. if 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:

Access to the early years service could only be permitted by a staff member upon answering the classroom door. No unauthorised persons could gain access to the service and no child could leave the service unsupervised. The outdoor play area was secured with a five foot metal green fence. Cleaning equipment and cleaning products were securely locked away in the service.

Infection Control:

Daily cleaning schedules and checklists were maintained. There were two children's toilet units located within the classroom which the children could access as required. The two handwash basins were supplied with liquid hand soap and paper towel dispensers which were easy for the children to use independently. Pedal operated rubbish bins were available in the toilets and in the classroom for the safe disposal of tissues and towelling. The staff were observed to monitor handwashing, ensuring children were prompted on occasions of forgetfulness and staff demonstrated to the children how they frequently washed their hands after similar tasks. A personal hygiene station, the "snuffle station" had been created in the service adjacent to the toilets so children could access tissues etc for blowing their nose and washed their hands afterwards.

Outings:

There was an adequate outings policy available specific to the service. The registered provider and staff informed the inspector that the service took the class on a graduation outing to the zoo annually, with the service outing policy implemented prior to, and during the outing.

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 staff files, the inspector observed that two staff members held the required accredited first aid responder (FAR) certificates on file. There were two staff members with FAR accreditation present in the service on the day of inspection.

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

(2)(a)(b) The inspector observed that there was a first aid box and first aid bag on a high shelf in the classroom, which were available for 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 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. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 26 June 2023, before the service closed for the summer months.

(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 buildings alarm system was recorded as having taken place on the 03 September 2024 and for the firefighting equipment was serviced during the inspection, on the 05 September 2024.

(4) A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed just inside the classroom door and in the entrance hall. A fire assembly point was clearly signposted in a safe area of the carpark.

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.