

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL112
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Name of Service:	Nursery Lane Playgroup & After School Club
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Address of Service:	Tievebane, Burnfoot, Lifford, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F93 E2T1
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Name of Registered Provider:	Amanda Lynch
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date(s) of Inspection:	19/04/2023
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Date 2 of Inspection:	21 April 2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	58	PM	-
Day 2	AM	54	PM	-

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F95 XK94
Inspection undertaken by:	L Mc Glynn
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	Non Applicable
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Description of service

Nursery Lane Playgroup and Afterschool club is a privately owned and operated service offering full day, part time and sessional preschool care. The service is located in the rural townland of Tievebane, Burnfoot on the Inishowen peninsula in north Donegal. The service caters for children aged 0-6 years and operates from 7.45am to 6.00pm each weekday. The service is also registered to provide school age care. The service operates from a purpose adapted split level building on the grounds of the registered providers dwelling house. The premises contains four playrooms, two on the ground floor and two on the first floor. One of the rooms on the first floor is solely for use by school age children. The premises also contains a kitchen, sleep room, sanitary accommodation for staff and children. A separate building at the rear of the premises housed an office/staff room. There are four outdoor play areas on site each one secured by boundary fencing.

Staffing

A total of 12 staff members were employed in the service at the time of inspection. This included the registered provider as manager, 10 staff employed to work directly with the children and one staff member to work in the kitchen preparing meals. In addition to this, there were three contract workers employed to do classes with the children on music, movement and physical activity.

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. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19 Health Welfare and Development of the Child and regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of the Child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the baby/toddler room and the upstairs preschool room and did not include the downstairs preschool room.

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 named person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The designated person in charge was present at all times during the inspection. A sample of attendance records reviewed found that the designated person in charge or deputy was available at all times when the service was in operation.

(2) There were 15 adults working in the service at the time of the inspection. Vetting files for nine adults had been reviewed on previous inspection and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement therefore are not included in this inspection report. Of the six vetting files reviewed, the following was available.

(a) and (b)

Two validated references from past employers, including the most recent employer or a source other than a past employer in cases where there were no past employment was available for three adults and one past employer reference for two adults.

(c) Vetting disclosure documentation as issued by the National Vetting Bureau was available for each of the six adults. The inspector was informed that up-to-date vetting had been completed in respect of one contract worker and this was not available on file to review. The registered provider confirmed that the up-to-date vetting would be on reviewed and placed on file prior to the person having access to children.

(4) Evidence of completion of a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) minimum Level 5 in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was on file for the five adults for whom it was required.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) The following documents were not available on file or did not meet the regulatory requirements:

(a) and (b)

- There were no references on file for one adult.
- A written reference from a source other than a past employer had been obtained in respect of one adult whose vetting documentation showed that references should have been sought from previous employers.
- The second reference on file for one adult was from a source not listed as a past employer on their employment record.

(d) There was no record of past employment on file for one adult therefore the requirement for international police vetting could not be determined. There was also no proof of identity for this adult on file.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) (a) and (b) New references have been obtained from the staff members previous employers.

(d) A past employment record and photo identification was obtained for this staff member. This person is no longer employed in the service.

These documents will be on file prior to the person starting employment.

Supporting documentation submitted

A number of documents were submitted with the CAPA response.

Summary Comment

The information submitted by the service has been accepted. The response in relation to outstanding documentation not submitted in relation to one staff member has been accepted on the basis that this person is no longer employed 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) On day one of inspection, there were nine adults working directly with the children at the time of the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service. On day two of inspection, there were eight adults working directly with the children on the inspectors arrival to the service. A review of a sample of attendance records showed that an adequate number of adults were assigned to work directly with the children during the hours of operation.

(2) The minimum adult/child ratios were maintained throughout the inspection.

On the morning of day one of inspection the following adult/child ratios were observed.

- Three staff members were caring for 15 children in the baby wobbler room. There were nine children aged 1-2 years, five children aged 2-3 years and two children aged over three years all attending on a full or part-time day care basis.
- Three staff members cared for 22 children in the downstairs preschool room. All of the children were aged between 2 years 8 months and 5 years. Of the 22 children, 15 were attending on a full or part time care basis and seven attended on a sessional basis.
- There were 21 children in the upstairs preschool room being cared for by three staff members. Of the 21 children, 10 were attending on a full or part time care basis and 11 on a sessional basis. All children in this room were aged between three and five years.

On the morning of day two the following adult/child ratios were observed.

- In the baby/toddler room, 14 children were being cared for by three staff members. There were six children aged 2-3 years and eight children aged 1-2 years all attending on a full or part time care basis.
- In the downstairs preschool room, 20 children aged 3 years and over were being cared for by three staff members. There were 14 of the children attending on a full-time basis and six children attending on a sessional basis.
- There were 20 children aged 3 years and over in the upstairs preschool room being cared for by two adults. Of the 20 children, eight attended on a full-time basis and 12 on a sessional basis.

(8)

(a) A minimum of two adults were on the premises at all times throughout the period of the inspection. A sample review of the staff roster indicated that there are two adults on the premises at all times during the hours of operation.

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

Compliance Information

Meals and snacks were prepared on site for children attending the full day care service and served at regular intervals. The inspector was informed that a morning snack of toast, cereal and banana was served to the children in the baby/toddler room. The main meal was served to children in this room at approximately 11.40am and consisted of potatoes, peas, chicken and gravy. Younger children were seated in high-chairs and fed by staff while older, more mobile children sat at low level tables and fed themselves. Staff provided support and encouragement to children when eating praising children who were beginning to develop the skill. The inspector was informed that milk was provided with the morning snack and individual bottles of water were available in the room and given to children with their main meal. Children attending the upstairs preschool room brought in lunch from home and their lunchboxes contained a range of healthy and nutritious snacks such as sandwiches, yogurts and fruit pieces.

The children's nappies were changed at designated times and more frequently if needed. The staff used this time as an opportunity for one-to-one interaction with the children and engaged in social conversation.

Older children were supported by the staff to be independent using the toilet when they needed to. Sanitary accommodation was available for children adjacent to both the baby/ toddler and the pre-school room providing easy access and facilitating children’s growing independence in mastering this skill. Staff were observed to check in on children who were using the toilet independently and providing reminders about handwashing.

A number of children were placed to sleep at a scheduled time in the baby/toddler room and staff stated that children are facilitated to sleep outside of these times in response to their individual schedule or cues. A designated sleep room was provided adjacent to the baby/toddler room which was darkened to create a restful atmosphere during sleep time. There were rest areas with soft seating provided in both the playrooms for children to relax throughout the day if they wished to.

There was space in both rooms for children to move around freely and engage with the play equipment. Each of the playrooms had direct access to a designated outdoor play area and children were observed playing outdoors at various times during both days of inspection. The outdoor area used by the baby/toddler room had ground covering of impact absorbent tiles with play equipment to develop gross motor skills and encourage physical activity including a low-level slide, ride on and rocker toys. Children attending the upstairs preschool room had direct access to a large open space with football nets and a small climbing frame. A second area adjacent to this housed a larger wooden climb and slide structure with playhouses and a large digging area.

The service uses a digital application to communicate with parents on a daily basis. Staff informed the inspector that each care room has a mobile phone with which they can contact parents throughout the day if necessary. Informal conversations were noted at drop off and collection times where children’s general wellbeing and information about their care was shared. General conversations and interactions between staff and children were observed and noted to be warm and caring with staff responding appropriately to children’s verbal and non-verbal cues. Staff spoke with fondness and warm regard when talking about the children and regularly engaged children in social conversation about their home and family life.

A range of age and developmentally appropriate toys and play equipment were available to the children in the playrooms in low level shelving at child eye level allowing children free access to play activities of their choosing. Both rooms contained items to support children’s cognitive, language and emotional development which were arranged in a manner that created interest areas. The interest areas were well resourced with supportive equipment providing ample opportunities for children to engage in meaningful play. Children were observed in the rooms during periods of free play where preferred play items and areas included the sensory/water play, home areas, construction toys and baby care items. Children were observed in both rooms to play together in pairs or in small groups and the layout of the interest areas allowed the space to facilitate this. The baby/toddler room contained

soft floor mats with a variety of play materials to engage younger babies and provide space for rolling, crawling and sitting. Tabletop activities such as jigsaws, peg boards and shape sorters were readily available in both rooms. A home area in both rooms containing kitchen utensils, doll and baby care items, construction and transport toys presented opportunities for imaginative play. The daily routine within both rooms allowed for unstructured, child led play time at various intervals throughout the day which gave children the opportunity to explore the learning environment.

In conversation with staff members in the upstairs preschool room the inspector was informed that staff plan learning opportunities and activities in response to interests expressed by children. This was observed to be interspersed with topical themes that were introduced by the staff, for example the plan for the week of inspection focused on recycling as a way of celebrating national earth day. The plan for the following week was to centre around mini beasts in response to children’s interests as observed by staff. Staff were heard in conversation with children about what they would like to do the following week as part of their mini beast’s theme and informing the children of how they can begin to explore the theme at home when on a walk or playing outdoors. A scrapbook of observations and learning stories was maintained for each child in this room and given to parents at the end of each term to review.

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 doors leading into the childcare facility were secured so as to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- Internal doors were secured to prevent children accessing unsafe areas and store cupboards containing hazardous objects and materials were secured and out of children’s reach. Cleaning products used in the service were securely stored so as to be inaccessible to the pre-school children.
- There was no evidence of hazards in the indoor or outdoor areas, toys and play equipment appeared in good repair and all electrical flexes and cables were in good condition and out of children’s reach.
- The children were supervised by the staff when using the stairs and prompted to use the handrail.

Infection Control:

- The pre-school rooms and adjoining sanitary facilities presented in a clean condition. A sample cleaning records were reviewed and noted to have been maintained up to date. Staff were observed cleaning the tables, floors and frequently touched surfaces after mealtimes and children's play.
- Liquid soap and thermostatically controlled warm water was available throughout the service to support appropriate handwashing practices for both staff and children.
- The staff wore plastic aprons and gloves when changing children's nappies.
- Children's clothing and personal belongings were stored in individually labelled containers.
- Ventilation was provided in each of the rooms by way of openable windows.

Administration of Medication:

- The service had a policy on the administration of medication and consent for the administration of anti-febrile medication and medical treatment in the event of an emergency was provided by parents on enrolment to the service. Records of medication administered to children were maintained in each room.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had one designated sleep room adjacent to the baby/toddler room containing five cots with appropriate safety mattresses.

Fire Safety:

- All emergency exit routes were free from obstruction.

Non-Compliance Information

Safe Sleep:

1. The air temperature in the sleep room was not maintained with the required range of 16-20°C while children slept. At approximately 12.00md the air temperature was recorded at 21.7°C with four children present.
2. While it is acknowledged that staff were observed carrying out checks on sleeping children, they did not maintain a real time record of the observations to include the colour, breathing pattern, position of the child and the air temperature in the room. Staf informed the inspector that these checks are recorded retrospectively due to issues with a digital application that was being used. Staff agreed to return to hard copy records with immediate effect.

Infection Control:

3. Childrens hand were not routinely washed at the following intervals.
 - Prior to eating.
 - After using the toilet and nappy changing.
 - Returning indoors from outdoor play.
4. Childrens soothers were not stored in a clean, hygienic condition in the baby/toddler room. Soothers were observed loose in individual drawers containing children’s personal items.
5. The soft couches in the baby/toddler room were worn and torn resulting in a risk of cross infection. It is acknowledged that efforts had been made to patch the holes using an adhesive strip. However, the adhesive strip was beginning to split from the material of the couch and as a result, an accumulation of dust and dirt had development on the adhesive.
6. The rolls of toilet paper provided for children in the service was not hygienically dispensed as loose rolls were observed on the floors, radiators and storage units within children’s sanitary accommodation. This has the potential to result in repeated handling of the roll which poses a risk of cross-contamination and is inadequate for infection control purposes. In the absence of paper towels, children were also observed using toilet roll to dry their hands which poses a risk of cross infection.
7. There was an accumulation of rust on the radiator in the sanitary accommodation servicing the baby/toddler room which could not be adequately cleaned.

The non-compliances numbers 5, 6 and 7 are reoccurring from the previous inspection.

8. Childrens lunchboxes in the upstairs preschool room were not refrigerated prior to eating. Lunches were stored in children’s schoolbags in the lobby area and contained perishable items that required refrigeration.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Safe Sleep:

1. We have put a fan in the sleep room so that the room can be cooled down if needed. The staff will carry out regular checks of the room temperature.
2. We have returned to using hard copy records of sleep checks and plan to return to our previous electronic application which worked better for us.

Infection Control:

3. Handwashing is now carried out before and after eating, after messy play, after toileting and nappy changes and after outdoor play. All staff are aware of this routine, and there is a poster on the wall to remind staff. Staff have also used a song with children to reinforce handwashing.
4. Children now have their own individual soother container and staff are instructed to ensure soothers are stored each child's container.
5. The couches have been replaced. Staff will keep a closer eye on any soft furnishing that are ripped and need repairing or replaced.
6. We have provided a free-standing toilet roll dispenser and will ensure it is used by staff and children.
7. The radiator has been painted. Staff will ensure radiators are checked and painted or replaced if required.
8. Childrens lunches are now stored in the refrigerator. Children and parents are informed that this is our policy. They are asked not to bring in foods that children don't like to eat cold.

Supporting documentation submitted

A series of images and documents were submitted to evidence compliance.

Summary Comment

Based on the information submitted by the service, the requirements of the regulation are deemed to have been met.

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)
Staff members with up-to-date training in first aid were rostered to be present in the service at all times during the hours of operation.

(2)
A suitably equipped first aid box was provided in each playroom in an easily accessible location.