

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL122			
Name of Service:	Ready Steady Grow Childcare Centre			
Address of Service:	Glenview Business Park, Donegal Road, Ballybofey, Co. Donegal			
Eircode:	F93 N7FF			
Name of Registered Provider:	Paula O'Doherty			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	16/04/2024			
No of pre-school children:	AM	29	PM	26
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	Not applicable
---------------------------------	----------------

Description of service

Ready Steady Grow Childcare Centre is a privately owned and operated preschool service providing full day, part time and sessional care to children aged 0-6 years. The service is provided between the hours of 8.00am and 5.30pm each weekday with a sessional preschool from 9.00am-12.00pm.

The service operates two care rooms from the ground floor unit of a double story building within a business park and a third room from an adjacent building. Both units have been purposely adapted for the provision of an early year's service.

Staffing

There were nine staff members employed to work in the service at the time of inspection. This includes the registered provider who is on site and works directly with the children on a daily basis. Six other staff members work with children and the remaining two staff members work in the kitchen and on cleaning duties.

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 inspection 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. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the baby and toddler rooms.

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

(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

- (2) At the time of inspection, the registered provider confirmed that there were nine named staff members who worked in the service. Two of these staff members had commenced working in the service since the previous inspection. A review of records demonstrated that the vetting documentation for six of the staff had been reviewed during previous inspection and were found to be compliant under this regulation. With reference to the above listed elements of Regulation 9, recruitment records in respect of the two newly recruited staff members and one staff member whose file was not previously assessed were reviewed and the following information was available:
- (a) (b) Two written and validated references from a past employer, or in cases where the person had no past employers, an alternative source, was on file for three staff members.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (4) Documentary evidence was provided to indicate that three staff members had obtained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or equivalent.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1) (2) On the inspector's arrival to the service, 29 children were being cared for by 5 staff members in 3 care rooms.

- In the baby room, two adults were caring for five children aged 1-2years.
- In the toddler (back) room, one adult was caring for five children aged 2-3 years.
- In the playgroup, two adults were caring for 19 children aged 3-4 years.

When assessed in the afternoon, the following adult child ratios were observed.

- In the baby room, one adult was caring for five children aged 1-2years.
- In the toddler (back) room, one adult was caring for five children aged 2-3 years.
- In the playgroup, two adults were caring for 16 children aged 3-4 years.

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

(1) A record was maintained in writing in the service of the information required in points (a) to (k) of this regulation.

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

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19- Health Welfare and Development of the Child. As a result, the findings relate to the baby and toddler rooms only.

There was a kitchen on site for the preparation of meals and snacks on a daily basis. A menu plan was on display detailing varied and nutritiously adequate foods for each day. On the day of inspection, the main meal consisted of minced beef with potatoes, turnip, carrots and gravy. Milk was served with the main meal and water was available to children throughout the day. Staff encouraged children to be independent when eating their meals. Finger foods were provided to the smaller children in the baby room to promote self-feeding. Staff provided assistance where required. There were low level feeding chairs in the baby room to allow children who were not yet capable of sitting independently, to be seated at a level with their peers, creating a social occasion during mealtimes.

Children in the baby room were placed to sleep in the designated sleep room for a scheduled period of rest in the afternoon. Children were also given the opportunity to sleep outside of this time when required, evidenced by one child being placed to sleep in the morning when showing signs of tiredness.

The older children were also observed to be placed to sleep at a scheduled time on low level sleep beds in the toddler room. Closed window blinds provided a dim light to create a restful atmosphere in the room. Soft seating was provided in both the toddler and baby rooms for children to rest or relax throughout the day as required.

Children who were toilet trained were encouraged and supported to use the toilet independently. Staff promoted and encouraged independence by prompting children on the process, including dressing and handwashing.

Younger children's nappies were changed on a scheduled basis and more frequently if required. Children were observed hand washing at various intervals throughout the day, including after toileting, prior to mealtimes and after messy play. Aprons were available for messy play. Spare clothing was available for each child and children's clothes were changed when soiled or wet.

The two care rooms were equipped with a variety of interest areas that were appropriate for the age and developmental stage of the children attending. The toddler room was laid out in interest areas that facilitated sensory play, promoted children cognitive development and encouraged imaginative play through a construction area, building blocks, art and crafts, sand and water tables, connectors/puzzles/shape sorters and dress up.

The resources were readily accessible to children on low level shelving giving children the opportunity to self-direct play, choosing what station to go to. Where a station was busy, staff encourage children to find an alternative activity and to return to the station when there was space. The practice encouraged turn taking among children and enhanced their social and emotional development by being mindful of others.

The outside area adjacent to the toddler room was equipped with bikes and trikes, tyres and tree blocks all to develop coordination, flexibility and agility at the children's developmental stage. Children in the preschool room had access to the outdoor area on the morning of inspection.

The baby room was equipped with age and developmentally appropriate play materials including a kitchen area, plastic balls, peg boards, shape sorters, building blocks, sensory toys, soft toys and doll/baby care items. A wall mounted mirror in the room provided for the development of children's visual senses and low-level equipment provided a stable base for children's developing gross motor skills. There was an adult sized armchair in the room to facilitate feeding and comforting children.

Staff members were observed to be kind, caring and patient in their interactions with children. Children appeared to be comfortable with the routine of the day and relaxed in their surroundings. Children appeared to have made connections within the group and were comfortable in their social interactions. Staff demonstrated familiarity with children and were heard identifying preferences of individual children and developmental advancements made in the service.

A digital application was used in the service as a mode of recording and communicating with parents. This application provided parents with information on eating, sleeping and toileting patterns of the children throughout the day. Staff informed inspectors that the application is also used to share photos of activities children have engaged in while attending the service.

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 building was secured on the inspector's arrival with a buzzer system alerting staff to visitors. The boundary of the outdoor play area was enclosed with wooden fencing and high-level securing mechanisms on the gate to prevent children leaving the area unsupervised.
- Highchairs were fitted with a five-point safety harness.
- There was adequate storage for cleaning agents and hazardous items in a location safely out of the reach of children. Drawers and cupboards containing hazardous objects were secured and the kitchen was inaccessible to children.
- There was evidence of routine daily checks being carried out by staff to ensure that the water temperature at wash hand basins did not exceed the maximum recommended temperature of 43°C for safe handwashing.
- Blind cords were adequately secured throughout the service.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were available in each of the children's sanitary accommodation to support good hand washing practices. Children were observed washing their hands after using the toilet and before eating.
- Individual soothers were available to children in the baby room and were stored in labelled containers.
- The care rooms and adjoining sanitary facilities presented in a clean condition. Up to date cleaning schedules outlining appropriate cleaning methods and the various areas to be cleaned within the playrooms and sanitary accommodation were available.
- Waste was appropriately disposed of in foot pedal operated bins throughout the service.
- Ventilation in each of the rooms was provided by openable windows which were observed to be open or ajar for periods of the day.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was stored in secure locations within the service and individually labelled with children's names and the expiry date. Records of medication administered in the service were available for review which detailed the child's name, the name of the medication given to the child, the dosage, the time administered and two staff signatures. Staff informed the inspector that each recorded is retained and signed by the parents on collection. A review of records available in the baby and toddler rooms evidenced same.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had one designated sleep room adjacent to the baby room. The sleep room contained six standard cots and stackable floor beds were used by older children in the toddler room. Documented sleep checks at no more than 10-minute intervals were reviewed and observed to be maintained. Each of these checks detailed the colour, breathing pattern and position of the child. The air temperature in the sleep room was maintained within the appropriate range of 16-20°C while children were sleeping. There was a notice on display in the room instructing staff on the actions to take should the air temperature increase beyond safe levels.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exit routes were clear from obstruction on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The low-level windows in the baby room were not fitted with a restrictive opening mechanism posing the risk that a child may exit the service through the large opening.
2. While it is acknowledged that a record was maintained in the service of all children attending, the record of children's attendance in each room was not updated on a real-time basis. The inspector was informed that some children attend the toddler room for a period in the morning before moving to the preschool room. The attendance records in the toddler room were not updated to show that some of the children had moved to another room, as a result, there were more children recorded present than were physically present in the room. Children are required to be signed in and out of each room to ensure that staff have an accurate list of all children in the room in the event of an emergency.

Infection Control:

3. The covering on the sofa in the toddler room was torn, exposing the foam underneath, which cannot be effectively cleaned and poses a risk of infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Restrictive opening mechanisms have now been fitted. All windows have been checked for any risk factors.
2. We have now added a larger column to accommodate time out and in. We have also included in our induction book a reminder to show new staff the proper procedure for maintain an up-to-date attendance record.

Infection Control:

3. The sofa has been removed. Staff have been asked to inform management immediately of any damaged furniture.

Supporting documentation submitted

Images and documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

The information submitted by the registered provider has been reviewed. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

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 up-to-date training in first aid for children. The roster demonstrated that at least one of the staff members is rostered to be on the premises at all times during the hours of operation.

(2) (a) (b) There was a first aid box stored in an accessible location within each of the care rooms.