

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL129
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Name of Service:	Smallworld Childcare LTD
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Address of Service:	Drumlonagher, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F94 FF82
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Name of Registered Provider:	Louise Gately
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	30/04/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	72	PM	62
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F95 XK94
Inspection undertaken by:	L McGlynn and L Costello
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

Smallworld Childcare LTD is a privately owned and operated full day care service located on the outskirts of Donegal Town, County Donegal. The service currently provides full day care, part time and sessional preschool to children aged 0 to 6 years and operates from 7.45am to 6.00pm each weekday. The service is also registered to provide school age care. The premises is located within an industrial unit and comprises of one semi-detached two storey building purposely adapted for the provision of an early years' service. The service consists of five preschool rooms, three on the ground floor and two on the first floor. The ground floor area also houses a designated sleep room and sanitary accommodation for both staff and children. There is an office and sanitary accommodation for children on the first floor as well as the two preschool rooms. There are three outdoor play areas available on site for use by different groups of children, these are located to the front and side of the building.

Staffing

There were 24 adults employed to work in the service which included the registered provider who is on the premises and works directly with the children on a daily basis. Two of the adults work solely with children in the school age service.

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.

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 inspectors wish 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.*

(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.

Compliance Information

- (2) At the time of inspection, the registered provider confirmed that there were 24 staff members who worked in the service. Nine of these staff members had commenced working in the service since the previous inspection. A review of records demonstrated that the vetting documentation for 15 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 nine newly recruited staff members and one staff member who remained in employment in the service following the previous inspection of January 2023 whose file did not meet the regulatory requirement 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 nine 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.
 - (d) International police vetting from the relevant state was on file for the one staff member who required it.
- (4) Documentary evidence was provided to indicate that the seven staff members who required a qualification 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.

(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.

(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) There was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children on the day of inspection.

(3) On the inspectors' arrival to the service, 72 children were being cared for by 14 adults in five care rooms.

- In the baby room, 1 child aged 0-1 year and 4 children aged 1-2 years were being cared for by two adults.
- In the wobbler room, 10 children aged 1-2 years were being cared for by three adults.
- There were 17 children attending the toddler room aged 2-3 years being cared for by three adults.
- There were 22 children attending the senior preschool room aged 3-5 years being cared for by three adults.
- In the junior preschool room, 18 children aged 3-4 years were being cared for by three adults.

In the afternoon, 62 children were being cared for by 11 adults.

- In the baby room, 1 child aged 0-1 year and 5 children aged 1-2 years were being cared for by two adults.
- In the wobbler room, 10 children aged 1-2 years were being cared for by two adults.
- There were 12 children attending the toddler room aged 2-3 years being cared for by two adults.

- There were 16 children attending the senior preschool room aged 3-4 years being cared for by two adults.
- In the junior preschool room, 18 children aged 3-4 years were being cared for by three adults.

In addition to the above, one adult was present in the toddler room on induction training. The registered provider and person in charge were on the premises and available to assist in the rooms during lunch and break times.

(8) (a) A review of the weekly roster demonstrated that there were at least two adults rostered to be on the premises at all times during the hours of operation.

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

Considering the number of children attending each room and their age and stage of development, there was a variety of suitable equipment and materials to support various forms of play.

The baby and wobbler rooms contained a range of play materials and equipment to support the learning and development needs of the children attending. The equipment was laid out in a manner that was attractive and appealing to younger children, inviting them to engage in play. The baby room was subdivided by low level units with the floor area in each section covered in soft matting to facilitate comfortable floor play and physical play. The wobbler room provided clearer floor space for children to move freely and refine their developing physical skills. Ground level units in both rooms contained items of interest such as soft toys, shakers, cause and effect toys and handheld items that were noise making or visually attractive. Children's need to engage in sensory play was facilitated through low-level tuff trays with crushed dried food, wall mounted shatter proof mirrors and homemade musical shakers. There were a range of spaces in the baby room that provided a stable base for children learning to stand and a low-level slide was used by children to develop their physical skills. An overhanging canopy in the baby room with soft seating in one area provided a cosy space for children to relax and an appropriately sized adult chair was available for feeding and comforting children. In the wobbler room, a larger playhouse and kitchen area provided role play opportunities for children and a large floor mat with soft toys offered a relaxing space for children to rest.

There was adequate and suitable equipment available to provide for the sleep needs of the babies and wobblers attending with a designated sleep room adjacent to both rooms containing 10 standard cots.

The toddler room was laid out in a variety of inviting interest areas with an adequate quantity of accessible play equipment to meet the learning and development needs of the children attending. A small climb and slide unit was located at the entrance to the room on a large soft floor mat which allowed children the opportunity to be physically active within the indoor environment. A range of role play items such as dress up costumes, doll and baby care toys, a construction bench, a kitchen area and a vanity unit were readily accessible to children throughout the day. Sensory play items such as a sand tray and tuff tray were also accessible to children throughout the day. A large tent with soft flooring provided a comfortable space for children and sat alongside a reading area with soft child height couches and chairs. Low level shelving units were resourced with a range of tabletop and small world play materials that promoted children's cognitive development and supported children's play in the interest areas. The quantity of play equipment in each area was sufficient to allow children to engage in sustained meaningful play and the routine of the day provided children with opportunities to self-direct their play choosing materials and resources from each area.

The junior and senior preschools room were located on the first floor of the building and were equipped with a variety of resources and play materials suitable to the age and stage of development of the children attending. The junior preschool was laid out with various interest areas including a small world area, construction corner, home corner and dress up and role play area. Equipment was stored on low level open shelving easily accessible to the preschool child. Tables with sand and water provided opportunities for sensory play. A library and rest area supported language development while also providing an area to relax in with comfortable seating.

The senior preschool provided opportunities for imaginative play with defined interest areas. The kitchen and home corner were equipped with play kitchens, dining tables with toy food and utensils. Dolls with dress up clothes, cots and baby changing area were also provided. A construction area included cars, trains rail tracks and a variety of diggers and tractors. A library stocked with a variety of books was provided with size appropriate soft furnishings of sofas, bean bags and chairs providing a comfortable place to read. Open shelving throughout the room was stocked with a variety of puzzles tabletop activities and play based materials all suitable to the age and stage of development of the preschool child.

An area to the front of the building was secured by boundary fencing and partly sheltered by an overhead polycarbonate roof allowing children access to outdoor play in all weathers. The area contained a kitchen unit for role and messy play and low-level tables and chairs. A range of ride on toys were available along with a wooden walking bridge, large plastic blocks, wall mounted mirror and chalk boards. Staff spoke with the inspector about

the range of methods in which they utilise the outdoor space including bringing items of interest out for children to play with.

The area to the side of the building provided an outdoor play area for the junior and senior preschool rooms. This outdoor space was equipped with a variety of tunnels, slides, swings and climbing frames creating opportunities for adventure for the preschool children. The outdoor area was designed with split level interest areas providing resources for gross motor skill development with tunnels and climbing frames and resourced with a variety of bikes, trikes and footballs.

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 main entrance to the service had a bell entry system and an electronic keypad that was controlled by staff to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- The service had an extensive outdoor play area to the front and back of the building. This area was secured by appropriate fencing.
- The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the safe storage of cleaning agents.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper towels were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying.
- Personal protective equipment was available for staff use for hygienic nappy changing practice.
- The rooms and sanitary accommodation presented in a clean and well-maintained condition. Staff members were responsible for routine daily cleaning duties and cleaning schedules were recorded and maintained up to date.
- Staff were observed on inspection cleaning surfaces and floors after mealtimes and children's play.

Administration of Medication:

- There was no medication administered on the day, however on interview staff were knowledgeable with the services policy on administration of medication.
- On a review of medication records, staff had adequately recorded the type of medication administered, the amount, who witnessed the amount and administration and signature of the parent/guardian on collection.

Safe Sleep:

- Children in the baby and wobbler rooms were placed to sleep in the designated sleep room. A sample review of cots demonstrated that they were maintained in good condition, safe for use and equipped with an appropriately sized mattress with the required safety information. Staff in both rooms were observed carrying out physical observations on sleeping children at no more than 10 minute intervals. A review of documentation in the service demonstrated that sleep checks were maintained in hard copy and completed up to date.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency doors were kept free of hazards.
- The procedure for follow in the event of an emergency was on display at the exit point of each room and assembly points were clearly displayed.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The highchairs used in the wobbler room were not equipped with a five-point safety harness and they did not have a footrest to provide a stable base for children while eating.

Infection Control:

2. Appropriate crockery was not always provided to children at mealtimes. On the day at approximately 11.53am, birthday cake was given to the preschool children directly onto a table in the senior ECCE room. Children in the toddler room also ate their snack from their lunch boxes however many of the children placed food items directly on the table while eating. This poses a risk of contamination as no plates were provided.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. New highchairs were ordered that day and delivered the following day consisting of a 5-point harness and footrest bar.

Infection Control:

2. Our policy was updated with the team and new signage to ensure appropriately crockery is now used during all mealtimes, not just dinner. The new signage was displayed, and staff were given reminders during team meetings.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence submitted

Summary Comment

The information submitted by the registered provider has been accepted in addressing the non-compliances identified on inspection.

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) The registered provider had ensured that an adequate number of staff members were trained in first aid and available to the preschool child at all times. On the day of inspection, there were six staff trained in first aid responder (FAR).

(2) (a) (b)

Adequate and sufficiently stocked first aid boxes were easily accessible and stored in a prominent location in the premises and available to the children attending 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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
 - (b) an employee, and
 - (c) an authorised person.
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation
- (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)

A record of monthly fire evacuation drills took place in the service the most recent one recorded on the 26th of March 2024.

(1) (b)

The number and type of firefighting equipment with the most recent service date of August 2023 was provided to inspectorate on the day of inspection. The maintenance record for the smoke alarms on the premises was dated in February 2024.

(2) (c)

This record was made available to the inspector on the day.

(3)

The registered provider is aware of the required retention period of five years for the fire records.

(4)

Fire evacuation notices are displayed in conspicuous locations throughout the premises to ensure safe evacuation.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that adequate insurance was in place in the service for 87 preschool children in a full day care service up until the 27th of March 2025.