

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL146				
Name of Service:	Willowbrook Childcare Ltd				
Address of Service:	4 Willowbrook, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal				
Eircode:	F92 E2F8				
Name of Registered Provider:	Agnes Morrissey				
Service type:	Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	01/10/2024				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>13</td> <td>PM</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </table>	AM	13	PM	-
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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 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
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Description of service

Willowbrook childcare ltd is a privately owned and operated preschool service located in the town of Letterkenny, County Donegal. The service operates a sessional preschool from 9.30am to 12.30pm each weekday for children aged 2-6 years. The service is located in a residential area and operates from the ground floor of a converted dwelling which has been purposely adapted for use as a pre-school premises. There are two preschool rooms, both of which are used by children on a daily basis.

Staffing

There are two staff members employed to work in the service which includes the registered provider who is on site and works directly with the children on a daily basis.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 21 and 27; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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) The files of the two adults working in the service and one adult employed to work in a relief capacity were reviewed on this inspection. The following were deemed to meet the requirements of the regulation.
- (a) (b) There were six references on file from past employers or sources other than a past employer for the three adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all adults. 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 adult who required it.
- (4) Documentary evidence was provided to demonstrate that the three adults 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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.
- (3) The minimum adult/child ratio was maintained throughout the inspection. There were 13 children attending the service, being cared for by 2 adults.

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

There was a healthy eating policy in the service which encouraged parents to send in a small nutritious snack with children each day. The inspector was informed that a reminder is also included in the monthly newsletter to parents of the importance of sending in healthy snack items. Each child had their own bottle of water which was served with the snack. The inspector recommended the service provide water or drinking bottles at a level accessible to children to encourage self-serving.

The children were encouraged to be independent in their toileting needs and a staff member remained close by to provide assistance if required. Children were encouraged and supported to develop self-help and personal hygiene skills. Staff were observed reminding children of the importance of handwashing and hands were washed at appropriate intervals.

Children were observed to have time to move around their environment and select play items. A large portion of time in the morning was dedicated to free play giving children the opportunity to engage in self-directed, child led play. There was evidence of staff positively interacting with children and responding to children's invitations to join their play. Minor disputes between children were resolved with staff support and children were encouraged to be mindful of the thoughts and feelings of others.

Toys and materials that promoted multiple areas of development including fine motor, cognitive and language development were available to the children. Materials stored at children's level on open, low-level shelving units included puzzles and jigsaws, shape sorters, plastic blocks and small world items. Art and sensory play items were also available and children spent time drawing and using playdough on the morning of inspection. A second room which children had access to was laid out in a variety of interest areas to support imaginary play including a play kitchen, construction bench, doll and baby care items, garage with vehicles, a vanity area, drawing easel and dress up items. Children spent time in each of the interest areas within this room moving freely around and making decisions about their play.

There was evidence in the room of staff members planning learning activities for the children over the course of a week and on a broader monthly basis. Children demonstrated familiarity with the routine and structure of the day and transitions ran smoothly with five-minutes notice given to children prior to changeover of activity. Wall displays in the room included children’s art work centred around the current theme and the inspector was informed that plans were in place to create a wall display of family photos.

Children played outdoors on the day of inspection for a sustained period of time. The outdoor play area was located to the rear of the pre-school premises and was accessed from an exit door in the interconnecting corridor between the two playrooms. The outdoor play area had a fully enclosed perimeter with a variety of surfaces including concrete/paving, soft surface tiles and artificial grass. There was equipment in the area to support different types of play including a mud/outdoor kitchen, low level trays with plastic blocks, small vehicles and train tracks. There was also a supply of ride on bikes and trikes. There was ample space for children to engage in energetic play and children were observed instigating races from one end of the area to another.

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

The tables and chairs provided in the service were suitable for the age and stage of development of the children. In discussion with the inspector, it was agreed that an additional child height table would be beneficial during snack time to provide space for adults to sit with children and create a more social atmosphere. There was a sufficient quantity of play materials for the number of children attending the service which was available on low level shelving and was observed to be easily accessible to the children. Additional resources and equipment was also stored in various locations within the service to allow for toy rotation this included a large storage shed in the outdoor area which housed additional resources for both indoor and outdoor play. The materials available for children’s use were reflective of the age of children attending. They were developmentally appropriate, challenging and provided opportunities for meaningful play experiences. Play items were observed to be durable,

easy to clean and well maintained. Large items were secured to prevent the risk of injury by toppling over and there were no hazards observed on the equipment available to children both indoors and outdoors. The equipment was laid out and adequately resourced to allow children to play in pairs or small groups. Comfortable adult seating was available in one of the rooms.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The required ratio of qualified adults to children attending was maintained during the inspection ensuring that each child attending the service was under the supervision of a qualified staff member at all times. It was observed on the day, that constant supervision, primarily by sight occurred to ensure children’s safety. The staff were observed positioning themselves in areas where children were playing both indoors and outdoors allowing for continuous supervision. Staff were also observed accompanying children to the sanitary area for toileting and handwashing. Children were supervised by both staff members when eating.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. In conflict with the services policy on healthy eating which states ‘we do not allow fizzy drinks, sweets, chocolate, crisps, popcorn, nuts or nut spreads’, one child was observed having popcorn for their snack. Popcorn is a choking hazard and is not permitted in a preschool service.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

1. We spoke to parents regarding healthy eating policy which states no fizzy drinks, sweets, chocolate spread, crisps, popcorn, nuts, or nut spreads. We talked to the children about the importance of healthy

eating, children telling us what food they have for lunch. Talking about the food pyramid, and Healthy and unhealthy foods. We encourage children the importance of healthy eating on a daily basis. We will continue to remind parents the importance of healthy eating through daily basis, policy and monthly newsletter.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. A copy of the parents newsletter and images were submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the information submitted. The non-compliance identified under regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.