

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DS050		
Name of Service:	Littlebells		
Address of Service:	Drumfinn Ave, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10, Co. Dublin		
Eircode:	D10 NH70		
Name of Registered Provider:	Elizabeth Fagan		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	27/11/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	28	PM n/a
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	The Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Dublin 8		
Inspection undertaken by:	R. Brien & O. Quill		
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		

Description of service

Littlebells is a community-based service which is registered to provide sessional care for children from 1 to 6 years of age from 09:00 to 12:30, Monday to Friday. On the day of inspection, the service was operating from 09:00 to 12:00.

The service operates from a detached single storey building in an urban residential area in Ballyfermot, south Dublin. There are three care rooms in the service. The Sun room caters for children aged 1 to 2 years. The Ladybug room caters for children aged 2 years and the Butterfly room caters for children aged 2 to 4 years. There is a fully enclosed outdoor play area to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The service currently employs eleven staff including a housekeeper. There were eight staff working directly with the children on the day of inspection. The registered provider does not work directly in the service and was not present on the day of inspection.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9 - Management and Recruitment, 11 – Staffing Levels, 16 – Record in relation to Pre-school service, 19 – Health, welfare and development of child, 23, Safeguarding, health, safety and welfare of child, 25 – First Aid and 26 – Fire safety measures. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16(k) Record in relation to pre-school service.

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 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.*

(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

- (1)
- (a)(b) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required who were both on the premises throughout the inspection.

(2) The files of eleven adults were reviewed as part of the inspection. This included one adult who had commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 21 June 2021. Documentation was reviewed in respect of these adults and met regulatory requirements as follows:

(a)(b) Of the twenty-two validated, written references that were required, eleven were available from a past employer and seven were available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for eleven adults.

(d) Police vetting was available for one adult who had lived outside the State for a period exceeding six months as an adult.

(4) Records were available evidencing that nine staff members who were employed to work directly with the children held the required qualification or equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

A number of issues were identified with how the service manages safer recruitment processes as detailed below:

(2)(a)(b)

- There were no references available in respect of one adult.
- There was no evidence available to demonstrate that two references in respect of one adult had been validated by the registered provider.

(2)(d)

It was not possible to determine whether there was a requirement for police vetting for two staff members as there was no record of experience on file.

(3) The registered provider did not take appropriate measures to ensure that all adults were suitable to work in an early years service prior to their commencement. It is acknowledged that a past employer reference and a reference from a reputable source were available for one staff member however, there was no evidence available to demonstrate that these references had been validated by the registered provider.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b), (2)(d), (3)

Staff will not be employed until all their references are validated. Reference checklist and validation report.

Supporting documentation submitted

Written evidence was presented to demonstrate the corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions as stated by the registered provider have been deemed to address these non-compliances.

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)-

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

- (1) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.
- (3) The minimum ratio of adults to children for sessional care services was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were twenty-eight children attending the service being supervised by eight adults on the day of inspection.
- (8)(c) Not applicable, the service is not operated single-handedly.

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:*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
 - (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
 - (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

- (h) Details of the attendance of each child were recorded at the time of entering and leaving the service.
- (i) The staff roster was available and accurately reflected the adults working in the service on the day of inspection.
- (k) A sample of accident and incidents records were reviewed. These records were signed by staff and parents and were completed appropriately.

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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

The service had a healthy eating policy in place and staff reported that breakfast is provided by the service. Breakfast took place at 10:45 and children were given a choice of cereal. Staff sat with children during the meal and children and staff were observed engaging in conversation with each other. The meal time was observed to be a sociable occasion.

Children's nappies were changed as required and staff were observed interacting warmly with children while providing this care. Children were given responsibility appropriate to their age and were encouraged and supported to be independent. Children were observed cleaning up after their play and putting on and taking off their own coats with staff supporting children as required. Staff provided an appropriate level of supervision whilst supporting the children's independence during play and mealtimes.

Staff displayed warmth and sensitivity during all interactions with the children throughout the inspection. Staff demonstrated a good awareness of the needs of each child in their care and responded to children's cues promptly. Staff were observed to use distraction, gentle tones and praise when promoting positive behaviour in line with the service's behaviour policy. Children's choices were respected with children given the opportunity to choose their own play equipment and activities. Children appeared to be familiar with the daily routine. The atmosphere in the service appeared calm and relaxed.

The care rooms were arranged into defined areas of interest providing children with the freedom to play and explore. Designated areas of interest included construction toys, jigsaws, home corners, small world play, libraries and rest areas.

The care rooms provided a range of developmentally appropriate play experiences for the children and were adequately resourced with a variety of materials. Birthday walls with children's photos were displayed in the care rooms.

The environment was laid out to support the children's independence. Play materials were observed to be accessible to the children on low level shelving and low level tables and chairs were available in the care rooms.

A fully enclosed outdoor play area was available to the rear of the premises. There was a sheltered paved area leading into the outdoor area which had artificial grass, rubber tile and bark surfacing. The outdoor area was well resourced with a range of developmentally appropriate play equipment. All children accessed the outdoor area on the day of inspection. Children were observed to be engaged in their play with adults supporting them as needed. Children were observed engaging in energetic and imaginative play in the outdoor area.

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

The inspector found by observation of practice, review of documentation, discussion with staff and inspection of the premises that the registered provider had taken the following steps to safeguard children attending:

General Safety:

- The entrance door to the service was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised.
- The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection appeared in good working order.
- Medicines, hand sanitisers and cleaning agents were stored safely out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available to facilitate hand washing. Staff were observed to carry out hand washing as appropriate. Children from the Sun room and Butterfly room were supported to wash their hands at regular intervals including after outdoor play and before meals.
- An infection control policy was in place to inform practice. The premises, equipment and materials appeared clean and maintained in good condition.
- Waste was managed appropriately with the use of pedal bins.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. The handwashing practices observed were inconsistent on the day of inspection and at variance with the policy in place in the service. In the Ladybug room children's hands were not washed before their meal.
2. A nappy changing practice observed on the day of inspection in the service was contrary to the service's nappy changing procedure and was inadequate for infection control purposes. A child's hands were not washed following a nappy change.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

At our monthly meeting we focused on our infection control, hand and toilet policy. A new bigger poster was made as a reminder for each room regarding when to wash hands.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

Photographic evidence was presented to demonstrate the corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions as stated by the registered provider have been deemed to address these non-compliances.

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) A person trained in first aid was immediately available to the children at all times on the day of inspection.

(2)

(a) A first aid box was safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous location within the service.

(b) A first aid box was available to the adults and children in the service at all times.

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) A written record was available detailing monthly fire drills that had taken place in the service. The last fire drill had been recorded as undertaken on the 13 October 2023.

(b) The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises was available. The maintenance records for the fire equipment were dated September 2023 and 16 June 2023 for the smoke alarms.

(4) The procedures to be followed during a fire drill and in the event of a fire were displayed in a conspicuous location within the service.