

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DS064
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Name of Service:	Young Explorers' Preschool and Afterschool
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Address of Service:	Dominic's Community Centre, 60 Avonbeg Gardens, Tallaght, Dublin 24, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D24 KW58
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Whelan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	29/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	35	PM	9
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	1st floor Trinity Building, IDA Business Park, Southern Cross Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow.
Inspection undertaken by:	S Quigley
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).

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Description of service

Young Explorers' Preschool and Afterschool is a not-for-profit early years service which is located in a residential area of Tallaght, South County Dublin. The early years service offers an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme on a sessional basis to pre-school children aged 2-6 years. The programme of care is facilitated through an emergent, play-based curriculum. The early years service is registered to operate from 08:45 to 15:00 each weekday and offers both a morning and afternoon session. The service operates from a purpose-built premises within the multi-purpose Dominic's Community Centre in Tallaght. The preschool consists of three classrooms and two large outdoor play areas. A school aged service is also provided in the afternoons.

Staffing

The service currently employs 27 staff members including 12 adults who work directly in the preschool, and 15 adults employed under community employment schemes who work with the preschool and school aged children.

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/ information and records/ 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 15 – Record of a Pre-School Child and Regulation 16 – Record in Relation to Pre-School Service.

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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 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

(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.

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(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

Documentation was reviewed in full in respect of Regulation 9(2)(3)(4) for 16 adults who had commenced employment in the service since the last date of inspection on the 26 April 2023. Regulation 9(2)(c) was reviewed for all 27 adults employed. The following documents were available;

- (2)
 - (a) (b)
 - References were available from two sources for each the 16 adults.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures from The National Vetting Bureau were available for the 27 adults employed.
 - The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) International police vetting was available for six adults who required it.
- (3) Documentation reviewed evidenced the procedures specified under Regulation 9(2) had been completed prior to the adults commencing employment in the service.
- (4) There was evidence to show that three of the adults had attained at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework for Qualifications. Thirteen of the adults did not require a qualification as they were employed under a community employment scheme.

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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) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the pre-school children attending the service during the inspection.

(3) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were 35 pre-school children attending the service being supervised by 10 adults during the inspection.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

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Compliance Information

(1)

Records were reviewed for 12 children attending the service by the inspector. The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of the details relating to (a) to (i) of the above Regulation for each of the 12 records reviewed.

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;*
- (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)

- (h) A record was available in the care rooms detailing the attendance of each preschool child on the day of inspection. A review of documentation evidenced that attendance records had been maintained daily in the service.
- (i) An accurate record was available in the service detailing hours of work for each staff member in the service.
- (j) Written records of administration of medication available in the service. Staff reported medication is not typically administered in the service. However, the necessary documentation was available to record the administration of medications if required.
- (k) Records of accidents or incidents which had occurred in the service were available and detailed all of the necessary information.

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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-

(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

The inspector observed that the children's learning, development and well-being was supported by the staff and the environment. The routine in place afforded the children the opportunity to engage in child-led play. The children moved freely between the indoor classrooms and the outdoor play environments as they pleased.

Equipment was available outdoors to support a range of play experiences.

The indoor areas were laid out to support the children's independence. Low level hooks with photographs were provided for personal belongings. There were clearly defined interest areas including construction areas, home areas, dress up, and spaces for messy play. There was a variety of equipment and materials, including books and mark-making materials visible and accessible to the children on open shelves. Areas with soft seating were available for children to rest or take a break from activities. Children's identity and belonging was promoted through art displays and family photograph walls. Staff reported that the artwork displayed was reflective of the children's emerging interests in recent weeks.

The inspector observed the children engaged in activities of their choice throughout the inspection. These included playdough, construction, messy play, role play, and gross motor play. Staff demonstrated an awareness of the children's dispositions, and recorded children's emerging interests to enhance play and learning experiences by tailoring activities around these observations.

The service offered water and milk to the children throughout the morning. Lunch was provided by the service, a rotating menu was in place and children could choose what they would like to eat. Children were offered more food when they finished and were encouraged to tidy up their plates and place mats when they finished eating. Children used the toilet as they needed with staff reminding them to wash their hands afterwards. The inspectors observed the staff acting in a supportive role, interacting warmly with the children, engaging positively, and using prompts to extend play and learning.

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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 the registered provider, and inspection of the premises that the following steps were taken to safeguard children attending:

General Safety:

The entrance door into preschool area of the community centre was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons gaining access or children exiting unsupervised. The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were safe and in good working order. Cleaning products and hazardous materials were stored securely out of reach of the children. There were no hazards identified in the classrooms or outdoor play areas.

Infection Control:

An infection control policy was in place to inform practice. Pedal-operated, lidded bins were in place to appropriately manage waste. Staff supported children to wash their hands at regular intervals including after outdoor play, and before lunch. Schedules were in place and maintained to ensure the service, equipment and materials are regularly cleaned. Staff members outlined appropriate exclusion periods for adults and children with infectious illnesses were implemented in the service as per the policy.

Administration of Medication:

There was written evidence of prior parental consent for the administration of temperature reducing medication, and there were procedures in place to safely administer and document such medication if required, including in the case of an emergency. Staff members detailed the procedures for administering medication when required during discussions with the inspector.

Fire Safety:

The designated fire escape routes were clearly indicated and free from obstruction on the day of inspection. Staff members adequately outlined the evacuation procedures in place in the event of a fire and stated that fire drills are practiced regularly on a monthly basis.