

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DS170
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Name of Service:	St. Elmo's Preschool
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Address of Service:	Knockmore Snr School, Knockmore Ave, Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D24 TF65
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Name of Registered Provider:	Suzanne Sheridan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	13/03/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	29	PM	18
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	The Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St John's Road West, Dublin 8.
Inspection undertaken by:	S Early O'Brien & G Kavanagh
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	NA
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Description of service

St Elmo's Preschool operates from a building which is located on the grounds of Knockmore Senior School in west Tallaght. The service consists of 3 rooms, a large corridor and sanitary accommodation. There is scheduled access to the school hall daily for activities with use of the school yard for outdoor play. St Elmo's Preschool operates two Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) sessions daily, one from 8:45 to 11:45 and one from 12:15 to 15:15, Monday to Friday for 38 weeks. In addition, the service offers the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) for 41 weeks and provides school aged childcare from 13:30 until 16:00 daily.

Staffing

There are five staff employed to work in the service including the registered provider and two relief staff members. On the day of inspection there were three adults working directly with the children including the registered provider.

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/ records/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations:

- 9 (1)(a)(b)(2)(3)(4) Management and Recruitment
- 11 (1)(3)(8)(a) Staffing Levels
- 15 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)(i) Record of a Pre-School Child
- 19 (1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of Child
- 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child
- 25 First Aid
- 26 (1)(4) Fire Safety Measures
- 28 Insurance

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15, Record of a Pre-School Child.

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

(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.

(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) The registered provider is the designated person in charge of the service and there is a named person appointed to deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 09:45 on the morning of the inspection and was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(2)
Following a discussion with the registered provider and a review of five staff files it was confirmed that two new members of staff commenced employment in the service since the last inspection on 15 November 2022. Documentation was reviewed in respect of these adults and met regulatory requirements as follows:

(a)(b) Of the four written and validated references required for the staff members employed since the last inspection, two validated references were available from a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff demonstrating that the registered provider has adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting disclosures were not required as there was no evidence to suggest that any of the adults working in the service had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months as an adult.

(4)

All adults employed in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Qualifications Framework.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

Two validated references were not available for one staff member. This regulation was non-compliant on the previous two inspection dates, 22 January 2020 and 15 November 2022. The actions submitted by the registered provider following these inspection dates did not prevent the non-compliance from recurring.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Two written and validated references are now on file for the relevant adult. The registered provider will ensure that all paperwork is updated for all staff in the future .

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of two validated references.

Summary Comment

The actions set out by the registered provider are deemed to meet the regulatory requirements and will inform the next inspection.

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)

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 was adhered to during the inspection. There were 29 children attending the service being supervised by 3 adults on the morning of inspection and 18 children being cared for by 3 adults on the afternoon of inspection.

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises at all times.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1) Eleven children's records were sampled and reviewed. The records contained the required information as set out in Regulation 15 (1)(a) to (i).

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

Basic Needs

Heathy eating is promoted in the service and children bring their own lunch from home for snack time in the ECCE session. Water was available to the children from their own bottles.

On the day of inspection, children were given their lunchbox from the fridge and were encouraged to open and close these and their bottles and be responsible for their own belongings. Snack time was a social experience during which time the staff member interacted with and engaged in social conversations with the children.

Children are encouraged to use the toilet and engage in handwashing independently with assistance provided where needed.

Supporting relationships

The children appeared happy and content and were engaged and relaxed within each of the care room. The staff members ensured that the children were supported in all aspects of their physical, emotional and social wellbeing and demonstrated warmth and respect in all interactions with the children

The service had a key person system in place and 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.

The staff described how they communicate with parents daily about their child at arrival and collection time. Staff were observed to work well as a team, frequently communicating with each other in relation to the daily routine and children's needs.

Physical and Material Environment

The indoor environment consisted of three care rooms: The Castle Room, The Elephant Room and The Owl Room. Each room was bright and arranged into defined areas of interest, providing children with freedom to play and explore. Designated interest areas within the room included an arts and crafts and mark making station, a construction area, a dolls house, a dress-up area, a home corner, a play kitchen, and a library area.

Photos of each child's family were displayed in photo frames in the home corner area of the room at their level. Birthday charts and children's artwork were also on display, and this demonstrated a sense of identity and belonging for the children.

Staff informed the inspectors that the children change rooms weekly to enjoy a variety of activities equally. The Castle Room has a relaxed sensory area in a castle in one corner of the room, there is a music corner, home corner and construction corner. The Elephant Room contains lots of arts and crafts and mark making activities, areas of interest supporting scientific enquiry, numeracy and literacy. The Owl Room has a variety of loose parts, dolls, buggies, transport resources and books.

The environments were laid out to support the children's independence. Low level hooks were provided for coats and bags. Play materials were observed to be accessible to the children on low level shelving. Low level tables and chairs were available in the care room.

In the corridor area, used for messy play and snack time, children were engaged in a cutting activity at a large tray on a stand which supports their current interest in hairdressing. There were sufficient and adequate resources available to support children's learning and development.

Staff informed the inspector that children enjoy time in the outdoor play area and in the hall daily, where possible. The outdoor area was surfaced with natural grass and a tarmacadam surface. Children were not observed to play outdoors on the day of inspection but were playing ball games in the hall. Equipment and materials available appear to provide appropriate learning opportunities for the children based on their age and stage of development.

Programme of Activities

During the inspection it was evident that children's individual choice was respected in the daily routine in which they are encouraged to participate. There are picture cues and visual displays on the wall at their level to support them to make decisions on their play throughout the day. Children were observed to make choices on their own play materials within the environment, both individually and as a group. Staff informed the inspectors that where ratios allow, should a child from another care room have a preferred room to play in that they are not scheduled to be in, this will be accommodated.

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 inspectors 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 leading into the service was appropriately secured with a buzzer system to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- Visitors to the premises were required to sign in on arrival to the premises.
- The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection appeared in good working order.
- Cleaning agents, medicines and hand sanitisers were stored safely out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap and warm water were available to facilitate hygienic handwashing for both staff and children.
- Lunch boxes that included perishable food items were stored in a refrigerator in line with safe food guidance.
- Waste was managed appropriately with the use of pedal bins.

Fire Safety:

- On the day of inspection, all emergency exits were observed to be clearly identifiable and were not obstructed.

Outing:

- Following discussion with the registered provider and staff on the day of inspection, they informed the inspector that they do not take the children on outings during the year.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Throughout the inspection, the door to the kitchen, which is a shared space with the primary school, was open, unlocked and accessible to the children attending the preschool. On inspection this door could be

easily opened by a child which may pose a risk of harm to children should they access it unsupervised. In the kitchen, the oven was left on while the area was unattended by staff.

Infection Control:

2. While it is acknowledged that paper towel was available, this was on a roll and handed to the children during handwashing. The paper towel was stored on a countertop for use by children and staff which posed a risk of transmission of infection within the service

Administration of Medication:

3. Procedures and practices in place for children attending the service requiring emergency medication were inadequate and at variance with the service policy, posing a potential risk to the health and safety of children. Documented care plans for two children requiring emergency medication were unavailable.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider has had a meeting to discuss the importance of this door being kept closed at all times with personnel from the primary school.

Signs have been placed on the door to remind staff using this area to keep the door closed at all times.

Infection Control:

Paper towels have been purchased and placed in the dispenser. The registered provider will ensure that there is a supply of these at all times for use by staff and children.

Administration of Medication:

Care plans have now been placed in the care rooms. A care plan template has been developed for future children who will attend the service and may require emergency medication in line with the service's policy.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence of signs on the door

Infection Control:

Photographic evidence of paper towels in the dispenser

Administration of Medication:

Photographic evidence of care plan template.

Summary Comment

The actions set out by the registered provider are deemed to meet the regulatory requirements and will inform the next 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) Two staff members have first aid responder (FAR) certification and are immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a)(b) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was available and safely stored on the premises

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.

(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 drills was available, the last recorded fire drill was documented as having been carried out on 12 March 2025.
- (b)
A record was maintained of when the fire detection system and smoke alarms were last serviced on 11 February 2025.
Firefighting equipment records were available demonstrating that these were last serviced in November 2024.
- (4)
Fire evacuation procedures including child friendly visual aids were displayed in conspicuous places throughout the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had a valid certificate of insurance which expires on 03 March 2026 for a sessional and afterschool service which covers 33 children per session.