

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY060		
Name of Service:	Darndale/Belcamp Integrated Childcare Service Ltd.		
Address of Service:	Darndale/Belcamp Village Centre, Dublin 17, Co. Dublin		
Eircode:	D17 YY96		
Name of Registered Provider:	Ciaran Mulhall		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	15/04/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	103	PM 43
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 2 nd Floor, Unit 4/5 The Nexus Building Blanchardstown Corporate Park Ballycoolin Dublin 15 D15 CF9K		
Inspection undertaken by:	E Hosford and Á Dunne		
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

Darndale Belcamp Integrated Childcare Service is a full day care service located in a residential area of Dublin 17 and is registered to provide early childhood care and education to a maximum of 157 children aged 0 to 5 years old, Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5.00pm.

The service operates from the ground floor of a mixed-use building. The service has 11 care rooms, eight of the care rooms are located in the main building premises: Little Stars, Rug Rats, Teddy Bears, Clever Cats, Honeybees, Twinkle Toes, Wizards and Garden Room along with a cot room, a kitchen, two offices, indoor play area, a sensory room and a soft playroom. In the secondary prefabricated building within walking distance of the main building premises, there are three care rooms: Pixie Room with a cot room and kitchen, Active Learners room with a sensory relaxation room and a kitchen and Little Explorers room with a kitchen.

There is a fully enclosed outdoor play area in the main building, and a play area to the front of the prefabricated building. The service also uses an enclosed public playground which is within walking distance of the premises.

Staffing

Darndale Belcamp Integrated Childcare Service directly employs a total of 65 staff, including the person in charge and two assistant managers who manage the oversight of the service, 46 staff who work directly with the care of the children, 10 staff employed through the Community Employment (CE) scheme who work in the service and are undergoing training, a CE supervisor, a cook, two office staff, one maintenance man and one cleaner.

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,15,16,23 and 31.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15(1)(f),16(1)(k) and 23. As a result, the scope of the inspection included Little Explorers and Active Learners Rooms and did not include Honeybee, Wizards, Clever Cats, Teddy Bears, Little Stars, Rugrats, Twinkle Toes, Garden and the Pixies rooms.

Regulation 11 was inspected across all rooms.

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.

Additional Information

This inspection was triggered as a result of a statutory notification of an incident received to the inspectorate on the 14 April 2025.

An Immediate Action notice was issued to the service on the 15 April 2025 in relation to the Regulation 23- Safeguarding, Health, Safety and Welfare of Child.

On the 16 April 2025 the registered provider responded to the immediate action notice outlining the measures implemented within the service to address safety concerns. Please see details in the body of the inspection report.

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

(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) Two files were reviewed during the inspection for a staff member employed in an administrative role and a student on work experience and present in the service on the day of inspection.

The registered provider had completed the following checks:

(a) The following references were from a past employer.

- One validated written reference for the student on work placement and for the staff member employed in an administrative role

(b) The following references were from a source other than a past employer.

- One validated written reference for the student on work placement and for the staff member employed in an administrative role.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for a staff member employed in an administrative role and a student on work experience. The service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all staff employed.

(d) Documentary evidence showed that neither the staff member employed in an administrative role or the student on work experience had lived outside of the state for six months or more as adults.

(4) Not applicable as neither staff required documentary evidence of at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Affairs.

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.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 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) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(9) In assessing compliance with the adult: child ratios specified in Schedule 6, unpaid workers and, where applicable, the person referred to in Regulation 24(2), shall not be taken into account.

Compliance Information

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service and throughout the inspection with a breakdown in the morning as follows:

In the main building:

- Little Stars - 4 adults to 7 children aged 1-2 years old.
- Rug Rats - 2 adults to 5 children aged between 1-2 years old.
- Teddy Bears - 3 adults to 8 children aged between 1-3 years old.
- Clever Cats - 3 adults to 7 children aged between 2 - 3 years old.
- Honeybees - 2 adults to 10 children aged between 2 - 3 years old.
- Twinkle Toes - 4 adults to 13 children aged between 2 - 3 years old.

- Wizards - 2 adults to 7 children aged between 1 - 3 years old.
- Garden Room - 3 adults to 11 children aged between 3 - 4 years old.

Prefabricated Building:

- Pixies - 3 adults to 9 children aged between 6 -18 months old.
- Active Learners - 3 adults to 13 children aged between 4 - 5 years old.
- Little Explorers - 4 adults to 13 children aged between 4 - 5 years old.

The breakdown in the afternoon was as follows:

In the main building:

- Little Stars - 2 adults to 4 children aged 2 years old.
- Rug Rats - 2 adults to 4 children aged between 1-2 years old.
- Honeybees - 2 adults to 6 children aged between 2 - 3 years old.
- Twinkle Toes - 3 adults to 11 children aged between 2 - 3 years old.
- Garden Room - 2 adults to 5 children aged between 3 - 4 years old.

Prefabricated Building:

- Pixies - 3 adults to 7 children aged between 6 -18 months old.
- Active Learners - 2 adults to 6 children aged between 4 - 5 years old.

(9) Students who were present on the day of the inspection were not included in the adult: child ratios of the rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) While the adult to child ration was correct in the Little Explorers room there was a period of time between 10.00am and 1.00pm where observation demonstrated there was not an adequate number of adults working with the children at all times.

Of the 14 children present with 4 staff members, 3 children required direct one to one support. Two external support staff are assigned to support these children however, they are not present in the service during term time holidays. A further 3 children required support from the Access and Inclusion model staff member. The examples below demonstrate the incidents observed during the time period stated above.

- Children were observed placing materials in their mouth such as sand and an artificial flower. The inspector had to bring one incident to the attention of staff and while they responded to the child, a child accessed a magnetic structure that had been stored on a shelving unit and threw it to the ground. The child then kicked over an art easel and sat on it.

- The atmosphere in the care room was chaotic and noisy which impacted the sensory stimulation of two of the children who then required a transition to a bounce/sensory room in the prefabricated building at 10.15am and 10.46am to facilitate a calmer environment for the children. This further reduced the number of available adults who were also attending to nappy changing and assisting children with using the toilet. At 10.20am, an initial group of two children then four, were observed to jump from wooden blocks to the cosy area, leading to a child hitting their head off a wall at 10.20am. Other children were observed climbing on radiator covers, climbing up on tables and standing on them, emptying boxes of plastic bricks onto the floor and putting the boxes on their heads.
- At 11.00am while children were being assisted to put on their coats for outdoor play and a general tidy up of the room was happening, staff were diverted from a child who climbed up on a table three times and then proceeded to draw on their face with a highlighter pen.
- From 12.06pm to 1.00pm, one staff member was responsible for the setting up of food on plates and drinks in the kitchen off the care room, washing up delph and cutlery after dinner, tidying the kitchen, cleaning the bathrooms and emptying bins. As a result, this staff member could not assist the children in the transition from returning from outdoor play to mealtimes, to getting ready for collection times.
- There were occasions during the session where the children looked to the inspector for assistance or support with play, for example when a child placed sand in their mouth , the inspector had to alert staff and during outdoor play time in the main building , one child took the inspectors hand to go to the swing set for the inspector to push the child on the swing.
- When staff did initiate an activity of play dough and painting, the needs of other children in the care room took their focus and as a result the activities became disorganised and had to be abandoned.
- On review of accident/incident forms between 19 March to 11 April 2025, this demonstrated that a greater number of incidents and accidents occurred within the care room between 12pm and 12.45pm when the 2 external support staff were not available in the care room.
- On discussion with staff, they highlighted that the needs of the children were compromised when the support from the external support agency staff was not available, and this was documented in the staff daily management communication notebook on the 9 April 2025.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) In response to the non-compliances the service has stated the following measures have been implemented.

After the inspection it was agreed that one child could only attend if their support worker was present, their parent and support agency was informed.

The room changed their routine to limit transitions, to have the children collected from the main garden instead of the prefabs providing additional support to the room, and to reduce the workload on the staff team.

The routine is as follows: Dinner served at 11.30am to the room (plated from the main kitchen), plates cleared into the food bin and put into plastic container which can be stored in the buggy that accompanies the children back to the main building when they transition to the garden at 12.00pm.

Parents collect their child from the main building from 12.15pm to 12.45pm.

Following the collection of the children from the main garden one staff member does final tidy of the room (they will stay with the team until the numbers lessen). Other staff remain with the children throughout the final 45 minutes. This has reduced the stress of tidying and washing up; reduces the risk of children getting out at collection times; increases the support from other staff as it is a joint garden time and admin staff are available to support from the main building. This change of routine is more suited to the needs of the children.

Prior to changing the routine, the Little Explorers team, along with all parties to include staff, kitchen team and parents were updated, and written communication was given.

A review will take place with the team to ensure the new routine is working.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Management communication sheet (1)
- Please see timeline of events (2)
- Little Explorers room update (3)
- Note from communication log (4)
- Room meeting (5)

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the service along with the supporting documentation has been reviewed and has addressed the non-compliances.

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:

(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;

*(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
(c) an authorised person.*

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(f)

In the little Explorers room:

1. Details of the care required for seven children was not available to staff to enable them to provide a consistent and uniform approach to their individual care needs.
2. The information recorded in the 'need to know' forms which were available in the care rooms did not clearly detail important information on the care, supervision and strategies required in the care rooms regarding children who had additional care needs to ensure that the children's safety and welfare was maintained.
3. There was no information relating to allergies and preferences for two children in the Little Explorers room.
4. Details of communication with parents about the development and progression for three children with one-to-one support and for four additional children while attending the service, was not available, relevant to the provision of their special care needs and requirements. For example, no written or electronic records were available to demonstrate that staff reported regular progress updates or had engagement with parents regarding the children's learning and developmental plans, milestones reached or information on progression within this care room of the service.

(3)(c)

Details of the care required for seven children in the Little Explorers room was not available to the inspectors on the day of inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(f)

In response to the non-compliances the service has stated the following.

1. Care plans are now visible in the room for each child that requires one and are in an easy-to-read format. These will be available to both the Little Explorers team and the pedagogical leader.

Going forward the care plans will be a communal effort with the team and pedagogical leader. Copies will be kept by both and will provide an ongoing guide for those working in the room on the care needs of each child.

2. Relevant information was updated, and staff were reminded to report any changes in allergies/need to know so that these can be changed on the notices.

3. The allergies and relevant information were updated for the children and is now clearly displayed on the door of the care room alerting staff to children's allergies and preferences.

Staff were reminded to notify the deputy manager of any changes so that notices could be updated

4. Communication to parents has been through direct conversation, meetings with staff and the pedagogical leader and through our children's learning portfolio.

Going forward we will also include a communication book (duplicate book) for the children with special care needs and requirements. We have added a communication duplicate book for staff and parents to record daily written communication.

(3) The care plans have been reduced and put into an easy-to-read format which is available in the room

It has been agreed with the team that support plans will be reduced by our pedagogical leader and in place in the room as an easy to read for all team members.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1)(f)

1. Sample of support and care plan, Little explorers room update, note from communication log and room meeting.

2. Photo of updated need to know forms and Little explorers team update.

3. Little explorers team update and photos.

4. Sample of communication book and note to parent.

(3) Little explorers team update.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the service along with the supporting documentation has been reviewed and has addressed the non-compliances.

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:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1)(k) The details of an incident that occurred in the service on the 11 April 2025 were available and included the required information and included the parental signature on collection of their child.

(3) Details of an incident that occurred in the service on the 11 April 2025 were available for inspection and included the required information.

Non-Compliance Information

(k) On review of six accident and incident forms information was missing as follows:

- The parent's signature and date of signature was missing on one form
- The date of the manager's signature was missing from one form.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(k) In response the service has stated that staff have been reminded of the need to sign and date all accident and incident forms.

A new check sheet is in place at the front of all accident and incident books.

Supporting documentation submitted

(k) Memo to staff

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the service along with the supporting documentation has been reviewed and has addressed the non-compliances.

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:

- In the main building, the entrance to the main building had an electronic automatic door system in place, which was operated and managed by reception staff and the internal doors throughout the premises had handles and latches up high out of reach of children.
- The entrance to the prefabricated building had an electronic door release system, which was managed and operated by staff in care rooms and the internal doors are secured with doorbells and keycode entry for entry.
- The outdoor play space to the rear of the main building and to the rear of the prefabricated building were fully enclosed.
- A record was maintained of all accidents and incidents that occurred in the service.

Outing:

- Outings and trips to the main building and community playground were managed and carried out according to the service outing policy. Children that required extra support were facilitated by additional staff and head counts were completed before, during and after arrival at the destination.
- A written record was maintained for each outing and included the staff and children present, time of departure and return to the service, equipment available to staff, such as first aid box and mobile phones and any incidents that occurred on the outing.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Following an incident that occurred on 11th April 2025 a full review of procedures and practices in place within the Little Explorers room had not been completed to reduce the potential risk of a child leaving the service unsupervised. As a result, and taking account of observations made as outlined in the non-compliance under regulation 11(1), an Immediate Action notice was issued in relation to safety concerns to the person in charge on the 15 April 2025.

- A response was received from the person in charge on the 16 April 2025 with the revised practices and procedures put in place to reduce risk. This included photographic and documentary evidence.
2. A low-level safety gate present in the Little Explorers room could be opened and has been mastered by children, thus increasing the potential risk of a child accessing the communal hallway of the care room, leading to a risk of safety.
 3. The position of a shelving unit within the Little Explorers room created an area away from staff and out of their visual overview of the children, leading to a risk of safety.
 4. The procedure of staff walking children from the prefabricated building to the main building increased the possibility of a further safety risk as staff had to manage manoeuvring a buggy through a narrow gate while trying to supervise children. This interrupted the smooth transition for the children leading to a risk of safety.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. In response the service has stated that a risk assessment was completed, and a new routine was put in place in the room. A new routine and changes have been made according to outline above. This is working well in the room.
2. To address the non-compliance the safety gate in the room has not been changed as the gate leads the children to the toilets. Staff agreed that this would reduce their independence if it was raised or blocked. However, the change in routine means that the door into the corridor is no longer open during the day and the busy time (collection time) when the gate can be left opened is now removed as the children are now collected from the main building. A new routine is in place in the room.
3. The shelving unit has been moved against the wall and the staff informed of the change and reason for it.

4. The room routine has changed to reduce the number of movements between the buildings to only one transition. This is a necessary transition as it brings the children to a safe collection space. All staff are present during this transition (6 staff). Routine has changed to limit the number of transitions between the buildings.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Risk assessment document 16 April 25 communication log
2. Copy of change in routine, included in Little Explorers room update
3. Little Explorers room update
4. Little Explorers room update

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the service along with the supporting documentation has been reviewed and has addressed the non-compliances.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

(e) an incident in respect of which a pre-school child attending the service goes missing while attending the service.

Compliance Information

(e) The registered provider ensured a notification of an incident was submitted to the inspectorate within the required timeframe.