

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015DY210 |
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| Name of Service: | The Children's Place |
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| Address of Service: | 40 Parnell Square West, Dublin 1 |
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| Eircode: | D01 W6Y1 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Judy Byrnes |
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| Service type: | Full Day |
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| Date of Inspection: | 25/02/2025 |
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| No of pre-school children: | AM | 59 | PM | 58 |
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| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Early Years Inspectorate Area 1 2 nd Floor, Unit 4/5 The Nexus Building Blanchardstown Corporate Park Ballycoolin, Dublin 15 D15 CF9K |
| Inspection undertaken by: | T Nelson and C Kerrigan |
| 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).

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| Conditions if applicable | Not applicable |
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Description of service

The Children's Place is a full day care service located in Dublin city centre and is registered to provide early childhood care and education to a maximum of 65 children aged 1 to 6 years old, Monday to Friday. The service is also registered to provide school age childcare. The Children's Place operates over three floors of a converted residential building and has four care rooms to include the Wobbler room (12 to 18 months old), Toddler room (20 months to 3 years old), Pre Montessori room (2 to 3 years old) and Montessori room (3 to 6 years old). There are sanitary facilities located on each floor, and a cot room located on the ground floor. Further sanitary facilities are available for staff. A fully enclosed outdoor area is located to rear of the premises.

Staffing

There are currently 23 staff employed by the service including the registered provider, the deputy person in charge and 15 childcare staff who work with the early year's children and a housekeeper. There are also five staff employed to care for the school age children. Present on the day of the inspection was the registered provider, 15 childcare staff and the housekeeper along with school age staff in the afternoon.

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under:

- Regulation 9(1)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(3)(4) Management and Recruitment
- Regulation 11(1)(2) Staffing Levels
- Regulation 19(1)(b) Health, Welfare and Development of child
- Regulation 21 Equipment and Materials
- Regulation 22 Food and Drink
- Regulation 23 Safeguarding the Health, Safety and Welfare of the Child
- Regulation 28 Insurance

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 9 Management and Recruitment.

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
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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

The registered provider ensured the following:

- (1)(a) The service had a designated person in charge and named person to deputise as required.
- (b) A review of the roster showed either the person in charge or the deputy person in charge were rostered to be present.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in place, and this was displayed in the hallway.

- (2) The staff roster was reviewed and discussed with the registered provider and the full files of a student and eight staff who were new to the service since the last inspection on the 17 January 2024 were reviewed along with Garda Vetting disclosures for five staff members where information available to Tusla showed these had required renewal since that last inspection. The registered provider had completed the following checks:
- (a) Twelve validated written references were available from recent past employers
 - (b) Six validated written references were available from a source other than a past employer
 - (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) Documentary evidence showed that five adults had lived in a state other than Ireland for six months or more as adults and international police vetting from that state was available for inspection.
- (3) Documentary evidence available showed that all of the checks outlined in (2) had been carried out prior to any of the adults having contact with the children in the service.
- (4) The eight staff who worked directly with children attending the service held 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.

Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service to meet their care needs. There were 16 adults available to care for the 59 children present on the day of the inspection.
- (2) The adult to child ratios were correct when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service and throughout the inspection. Twelve staff were allocated to work directly with the 59 children who were present on the morning of the inspection with a breakdown as follows:
- Wobbler room - 3 adults to 13 children aged between 1 to 2 years old.
 - Toddler room - 3 adults to 13 children aged between 22 months to 3 years old.
 - Pre-Montessori room - 2 adults to 10 children aged between 2 to 3 years old.
 - Montessori room – 4 adults to 23 children aged between 3 to 6 years old.

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

(1)(b)

The registered provider ensured the following care practices met the needs of the children in the service:

- Practices such as mealtimes, nappy changing and toileting were observed to be timely, regular and pleasant experiences for the children. Documentary evidence showed that meals provided were regular and varied and that nappy changing was carried out on a regular basis.
- There was adequate sleep facilities provided, and sleep was observed to be led by the needs of the children in the Wobbler room. A child was placed to sleep on arrival at the request of the parent.
- Drinks were readily available throughout the day and were stored in a visible position in the care rooms.
- The staff interacted with the children in a respectful, warm and engaged manner. Appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication such as low tones, eye level contact, touch and other strategies such as providing comfort immediately when required.
- Children were provided with bibs during mealtimes and appropriate clothing for outdoor play. This provides for comfortable experiences throughout the day.
- Daily routines were available and were reflected in practice and staff were familiar with the needs and interests of the children.
- Engagement with families and parents was facilitated via an online software application, and conversation at drop off and collection.
- The children were observed to be relaxed and calm throughout transition periods such as the transition from mealtime to sleep time.

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 service ensured there was adequate and suitable furniture and equipment available, for example:

- Suitable tables and seating were available for the children in the care rooms to provide comfortable experiences for mealtimes and tabletop activities.
- The toys and equipment in the Toddler, Pre-Montessori and Montessori care rooms were laid out on low level shelving, visible to the children, and were grouped in themed areas of interest such as home, art, construction and library areas. Themed areas of interest facilitate children to have a more focused engagement in their play experiences.
- Each of the themed interest areas in these rooms were well resourced with a range of props, materials and accessories accessible to the children.
- Images of the children and their families were displayed throughout the rooms either on the walls or in accessible family books, and children had labelled coats hooks and cubbies for their belongings. This promotes a sense of familiarity.
- Cosy areas were available throughout the care rooms where children could engage in more restful activities.
- The outdoor environment was resourced with slides, climbing frame, ride on bikes and scooters. This equipment facilitated the development of fundamental movement skills such as running, climbing and balance.

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider did not ensure the play and work materials in the Wobbler room adequately met the needs of the children in that room:

1. The play kitchen in the room was not a suitable height for the children in the room. It was too high for the children to adequately engage in successful play, for example the microwave press section was out of reach of the children.
2. The materials in the room were not displayed or organised in manner to encourage children to meaningfully engage in successful play experiences:

- The materials were not stored in a grouped or themed manner; for example, a play box contained unrelated items such as rattles, cars, plastic fruit and blocks.
- The props for the kitchen were not stored adjacent to the kitchen.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The kitchen was replaced with a smaller unit more suited to the children in the room.
2. The room has been divided into specific areas, and the service will ensure to keep these clear divisions in place.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 21 have been adequately addressed.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service ensured there was adequate and suitable food and drinks available. For example:

- The service followed a four-week menu plan for hot meals, and a review of this showed there was a varied selection of food available, with options available for children with additional or alternative diets. These were provided by an external catering company.
- An afternoon snack was provided by parents, and this was stored appropriately labelled and refrigerated.
- Food offered throughout the day included breakfast on arrival, a hot meal at 11.00pm, snack at 2.00pm and a tea at 4.00pm.
- Meals available suited the stages of development of the children in each care room.
- The children were given support and supervision when self-feeding.

Non-Compliance Information

The provision of alternative meals was not in line with national guidelines on food and nutrition which state that a healthy alternative should be offered. A child was offered a brioche as an alternative in the Wobbler room, and staff in the pre-Montessori reported that children are offered a brioche or breadsticks if they do not eat their hot meal. Every hot meal should include ½ to 1 serving of vegetables, 1 serving of either bread, potatoes, pasta and rice, and 1 serving of either meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and cheese.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The service had a meeting with staff and ensure brioche or breadsticks will not be given as an alternative meal and outlined that appropriate healthy alternative meals are available.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the action submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 22 has been addressed.

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 following measures were in place to safeguard children:

General Safety:

- The gate and the main entrance to the service was secured by an electronic release system which was monitored by closed circuit cameras and managed by staff to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- Internal doors had electronic door release systems in place to restrict the unsupervised movement of children throughout the premises.
- The outdoor play area was fully enclosed.

- All cleaning agents and sharp equipment were stored out of reach of the children in locked presses or on high shelves.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children on the day of the inspection.

Infection Control:

- The premises were in a clean and hygienic condition and documented up to date cleaning records were available and displayed in the premises.
- Liquid-soap, single use hand towels and thermostatically controlled warm water were available at all wash hand basins used by the children and the staff members.
- Staff were aware of cleaning practices in relation to infection control and discussed the appropriate cleaning procedures for example the soft play ball pool in the Wobbler room.
- Nappy changing mats were observed to be in good condition and there was an appropriate supply of disposable gloves and aprons available for nappy changing.

Administration of Medication:

- There were care plans available for children who required medication and staff were aware of the practice around the administration of the medication.
- Medication was stored appropriately, out of reach of children and all medication was in date.

Safe Sleep:

- The temperature of the rooms was maintained between the recommended temperatures whilst children were sleeping.
- A log was maintained where the temperature of the room and the colour, breathing and position of sleeping children was checked every ten minutes.

Fire Safety:

- Children's attendance was recorded accurately in attendance logs.
- Fire evacuation procedures were displayed in each of the care rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A cot was positioned near to a cordoned off radiator where the temperature of the radiator was recorded as 50.1°C by the inspector. There was a potential risk the sleeping child in the cot could have access to the radiator.

Infection Control:

The following increased the potential risk of infection:

2. Children's hands were not washed in the Wobbler room prior to dinner.
3. Not all of the cots had a removeable mattress covers in place, and the mattresses in these cots did not have a wipeable surface.
4. Two cots in the cot room were positioned directly adjacent to each other whilst children were sleeping.
Cots are required to be positioned a minimum of 50cm apart whilst children are sleeping.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The sleep room has been rearranged, with cots positioned away from the radiator. This has been marked out on the floor with tape.

Infection Control:

2. Staff were reminded of the importance of handwashing, and a checklist was introduced for handwashing.
3. The service purchased additional mattress protectors to ensure spares are always available.
4. The sleep room has been rearranged, with cots positioned 50cms apart. This has been marked out on the floor with tape.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence.

Infection Control:

2. No Evidence submitted.
3. No Evidence submitted.
4. Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was insured. The insurance certificate display in the hallway showed yearly cover for the number of children and type of service it is registered for and had a commencement date of 28 March 2024.