

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL018
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Name of Service:	Balbriggan Community Childcare
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Address of Service:	Tankardville House, Brecan Close, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K32 WY80
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Name of Registered Provider:	Jean Fay Brady
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	17/02/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	10
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Unit 4&5 Nexus Building, Block 6A, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Dublin 15
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
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Description of service

Balbriggan Community Childcare is a not-for-profit early years' service which has been in operation since 2009. The service is conducted from a single storey restored thatched cottage which was constructed in the 17th Century and is located in a cul de sac in Balbriggan town. Pre-school children from 1 to 6 years are accommodated in the service on a full day care, part-time and sessional basis and childcare services are also provided to school aged children up to 12 years of age. The service operates for 51 weeks each year and is registered to operate from 7.15am to 6.00pm each weekday, catering for a maximum of 54 pre-school children. Eligible pre-school children are facilitated to avail of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.00am to 12.00midday daily for 38 weeks per year. There are 5 care rooms in operation, namely the Farm Room, the Flower Room, the Under the Sea Room, the Jungle Room and the Sunshine Room. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the rear of the premises. On the day of inspection there were two rooms in operation, the Flower room and the Sunshine room as it was midterm, and the ECCE classes were not in operation.

Staffing

The registered provider is the chairperson of the Board of Management of a local community group and is present in the service on a regular basis carrying out administrative duties while not working directly with the children. Twelve staff members are employed within the service to include the designated person in charge, eight childcare staff, a cook, caretaker and a volunteer. On the day of inspection, the registered provider arrived at 12.40pm to facilitate the inspection and attend the feedback meeting

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 under regulations 9,11,19,21,22,23 and 28. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 23 - Safeguarding, Health, Safety and Welfare of child and Regulation 11- Staffing Levels was assessed across all the rooms.

The scope of the inspection included the two open rooms – Flower room, and Sunshine room.

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

Following the submission of their corrective and preventive actions additional information was requested from the service on the 19 March 2025. The information received is included in the body of the report.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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.*

(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 service manager was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person available to deputise as required.

(b) The designated person in charge was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service and the registered provider arrived soon after.

(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(4)

On discussion with the designated person in charge and on review of the service roster it was confirmed that no new staff members had commenced employment in the service since the last inspection in May 2024. Documentation regarding the 13 staff members working in the service had been previously reviewed in May 2024. Garda vetting for one volunteer was reviewed to ensure the service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

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.

(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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the day of inspection and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed when the highest numbers of children were present in each care room during the inspection:

- In the Flower Room there were 5 children aged 1 to 2 years of age being cared for by 1 staff member all day, with support from the PIC and the floater staff member.
- In the Sunshine Room there were 5 children aged 3 to 5 years being cared for by 2 staff members in the morning, one of whom was a volunteer who was present in a supernumerary capacity in this care room for 3 hours daily.
- A staff member employed to cover breaks and relief for staff breaks and support to the care rooms when required was available

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained at the service.

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

(1)(a)

Basic needs:

- Nappies were changed in a timely manner with the staff member heard chatting warmly with the children during these procedures.
- The children in the Flower room were observed being placed to sleep after dinner when they first showed signs of tiredness, in standard cots set up in the care room.

Supporting relationships around children:

- Staff members communicated with parents and guardians daily, both informally during drop off and collection, and through update in real time using an application provided on mobile tablet device regarding each individual child's snacks and meals, nappy changes and sleep times if relevant, and activities. Parents could remotely access this information online throughout the day, in relation to their own child and could message the staff members working in the care rooms if required.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic Needs:

1. The snack and mealtimes in the Flower room were not observed to be a social and engaging event for the children as the staff member used the opportunity to clean the care room, tidy toys away and update the electronic tablet. As a result, the children were not encouraged and assisted to eat their food and try new tastes and textures.
2. Staff did not ensure that outdoor play was prioritised for each child attending the service to enable them to explore and develop their gross motor skills of walking and running. For example.
 - Children in the Flower room did not have outdoor play during the inspection.
 - Children in the Sunshine room did not have outdoor play during the morning of the inspection despite the daily routine of the room documented that from 11.05-11.50am they would go outside. As a result, the children were observed to become restless and frustrated before dinner time.
3. A programme of activities in the Flower room was not evident or developed to support the children and enable them to experience play opportunities. As a result, children were observed to wander round the room with reduced toys and activities available to equipment being removed for cleaning the previous Friday. On discussion with the staff member about planned activities for the children, the staff member suggested that painting would be done. It is acknowledged that painting as an activity was completed but it was observed that the children were given limited support and assistance from the staff member during the activity.

Supporting relationships around children:

4. Engagements between staff and children in the Sunshine room were observed by the inspectors to be at variance with the service policy on supporting children and their behaviour in the service environment. For example.

- Staff did not use praise and positive language when engaging with the children.
- Staff were not observed to apply consistency in their approach to the children and their actions.
- Staff were not alert to the language used by the children in their engagements with each other to ensure that it was kind, fair and appropriate.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In response to the non-compliances identified on inspection the registered provider has responded with the following corrective and preventive actions.

1. The Healthy eating policy has been updated and communicated with staff outlining the importance of social interaction with children at mealtimes. Our positive interactions policy has also been updated to reflect this. Going forward we will ensure that staff follow the healthy eating and positive interactions policies, reviewing them regularly to keep in line with regulations and best practice guidelines.
2. Following the inspection all staff were spoken to regarding the importance of outdoor play. The updated policy on outdoor play was communicated with staff and parents. Going forward we will ensure staff use the out-door space effectively and daily.
3. Following the inspection the routine has been updated slightly. Alternative activities are available such as messy play or sensory play and art activities are more planned. We will ensure that staff stick to their routine as much as possible and they have appropriate activities developed the day before.
4. In response the positive interactions policy was distributed between staff and parents.

New strategies have been put in place to encourage positive behaviour such as reward chart and jobs chart. We will ensure that all staff follow the positive interactions policy.

We are looking at courses on positive interactions and how to apply them with our service.

Giving the children little jobs has helped with behaviour. All children get praised for doing a great job. Art is displayed and praised daily.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Healthy eating policy and evidence of staff training and updating on policy.
2. Revised policy and evidence of staff training and updating on policy.
3. Programme of activities and evidence of staff training and updating
4. Evidence of staff training and updating.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances as identified. This regulation will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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 Sunshine room was suitably resourced with play materials and equipment laid out in defined interest areas to facilitate age-appropriate play opportunities for the children in attendance. The interest areas in each room included home corners, construction areas, soft seating and libraries.
- The family photographs which were on display in Sunshine room were positioned at the children's eye level to enable the children to use the photographs as a means of maintaining links and bridging the gap between the service and home.

- The outdoor play area to the rear of the premises had wooden and metal fencing in place providing four separate spaces for designated groups of children. Each section contained outdoor play equipment suitable for the age and stage of development of the children accessing that particular space. Surfacing included artificial grass, natural grass and hard-surfaced paths. The outdoor play equipment provided included ride on toys, plastic playhouses, slides, activity walls, balls and children’s picnic benches.

Non-Compliance Information

1. During the inspection it was observed that areas of interest in the Flower room lacked supporting equipment to enable the children to extend their exploratory and sensory play experiences at times of their own choosing. For example.

- The play kitchen had no supporting materials such as cups, plates or play food up to 11.38 am when it was returned to the room following weekend cleaning and drying.
- The garage had no supporting equipment and the doll equipment had no dolls available to use with the equipment.
- The access, availability and condition of books was inadequate as some books provided were damaged and torn. This reduced the fun and enjoyment of reading and looking at an entire book for the children, and limited the opportunity for reading to be used by staff members as a means of supporting the children’s language development.
- The dress-up outfits available were stacked randomly in a bundle on the floor which reduced the opportunity for children to see what was available and select a costume of their choosing.
- Chairs were not made available between meals or after a painting activity to give the children the opportunity to sit and engage with tabletop activities such as jigsaws and puzzles.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. In response to the non-compliances identified on inspection the registered provider has responded with the following corrective and preventive actions.

- Following the inspection the kitchen area was stocked with more toys to support play and imagination of all the children’s ages and stages of development. Extra kitchen toys have been added into the classroom and split into two separate boxes, so that new materials can be added in the rotation while others may be cleaned to ensure there is always an adequate supply of kitchen toys and equipment.

- Cars and road signs have been added to the garage area. There is also several small world toys available for the doll's house. The baby doll area has been stocked with doll clothes, dolls, bottles and nappies. A small changing bag as also been added.
- New books have been ordered for the flower room that align with the children's ages and stages of development. We will ensure that there are always adequate toys available for all areas of play to enhance the play and development of all children. We will inspect all books to ensure that they are not broken or torn and discard old and broken books and replace the torn books with new ones.
- The dress up outfits, handbags and hats are hanging up on the hooks for children to see what they are choosing. Ensure all dress up clothes are hung properly and in the right way after use.
- At least two chairs are around the table in between activities for the children to be able to sit at the table when they want to. Additional chairs can be added if more children would like to sit at the table. Always ensure that the chairs remain at the table for the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographic evidence of new books, dress up clothes displayed and supporting play equipment.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances as identified. This regulation will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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 followed a 3-week menu plan which was displayed in the premises. A selection of cereals was available for the children to have for breakfast in the service up until 9.00am daily, if required. A snack of crackers and yogurt was provided at 10am with a hot meal of cottage pie available at 12pm. An afternoon tea of French toast and fruit slices was served at 3pm. Dinners and tea were cooked on site in the service kitchen on a daily basis. Water was available to the children from their own water bottles or in plastic

beakers, positioned at the children's level, allowing the children have a drink should they feel thirsty at any stage.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The practice of offering children additional food at lunch time or an alternative healthy food was not observed by the inspectors in the Flower and Sunshine rooms. As a result, the five children in the Sunshine room who didn't eat their lunch at 12pm did not have food made available again until 3pm. This is at variance with the service healthy eating policy which states that children that have not eaten or who are hungry are offered food at times outside routine meals and snack times.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. In response to the non-compliances identified on inspection the registered provider has responded with the following corrective and preventive actions.
 - Healthy eating policy was updated and communicated with staff.
 - Extra or alternative food has since been offered to children who do not like or eat their food.
 - We will ensure that the healthy eating policy is adhered to and that extra portions for children who would need some more, and fruit or vegetables will be available for children who do not like the food provided.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Evidence of staff training and updating.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances as identified. This regulation will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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:

- The premises was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises, with the entrance doors leading into the premises and the gates leading into the outdoor play area fitted with latches and locks positioned out of the reach of pre-school children.
- Cleaning agents were safely stored on high shelving out of the reach of children.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children during the inspection.

Infection Control:

- The sanitary facilities were observed to have thermostatically controlled warm water not exceeding 43 °C, liquid soap, paper towels and pedal operated bins. The children in the Sunshine room were facilitated to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet.
- Tables were wiped down before mealtimes.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored safely out of the reach of children. No child attending the service was observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- Ten-minute sleep checks including the children's colour, position and breathing were conducted on all sleeping children in the service and recorded electronically on tablet devices in the Flower Room.

Fire Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. There was evidence to demonstrate that regular and routine risk assessments were not completed by staff in the care rooms to reduce the potential risk of injury to a child. For example.

- Two electric trailing flexes in the main hallway of the service were accessible to the children as they entered the building.

- In the Sunshine room an accessible blind cord was loose and not secured, it is acknowledged that once it was brought to the attention of the designated person in charge the caretaker of the building resolved the issue.

2. Procedures and practices around the care of two children attending the service that may require emergency treatment or medication in the event of an allergic reaction was not observed or available to the staff member caring for them on the day of inspection.

Infection Control:

3. There was evidence to demonstrate that there was a lack of regular cleaning schedules completed by staff in the care rooms to support infection control practices. For example.

- Paper towel used by staff in the Sunshine room was not hygienically dispensed to reduce the risk of cross-contamination.
- The covering of an adult chair in the Flower room was observed to be dirty and the covering of children's seating in the Jungle room was observed to be torn and not washable wipeable.
- A vent for the extraction of stale air in the sanitary facilities used by the Sunshine room and the skirting boards in the care room were observed to be covered in a layer of dust.

4. A child's food from home was not refrigerated on their arrival to the service but stored in their bag. This increased the potential risk of bacteria multiplying in the perishable food items.

5. Soother management practice was inadequate; the inspector observed a soother left out on a pillow at sleep time and staff reported that this soother was kept in an open box of spare children's clothes when not in use.

6. Clear guidance was not available for staff to ensure effective and safe practices were carried out when cleaning toys within the care rooms. This increased the potential risk of ingestion of harmful cleaning toxins. For example, toys were washed in an unknown substance that caused discolouration of a paper towel when dried.

7. Nappy changing was not completed in accordance with best practice guidelines as gloves and aprons were not removed in a timely manner to reduce cross infection.

8. In the Flower room the hands of the children were not washed before dinnertime, leading to poor infection control.

9. Sheets and blankets used by children at sleep time were not stored in individual named bags between use but on the mats in the care room. This increased the potential risk of cross infection.

10. Adequate space of at least 50cm was not maintained between three individual cots and one sleep mat set up in the Flower Room when children were sleeping.

Safe Sleep:

11. Sleep practices observed in the Flower room did not ensure that the temperature of the care room was maintained between the recommended 18-22 °C while children slept. For example.

- Staff did not record the temperature of the care room while children slept, as a result, staff were not aware that the temperature of the room was recorded as 24.5 °C at 12.17pm. It is acknowledged that when the inspector alerted the staff to the increased temperature windows and door were opened, and the temperature was recorded as 23.0°C at 1.05pm.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

In response to the non-compliances identified on inspection the registered provider has responded with the following corrective and preventive actions.

1. The trailing wires were immediately removed and plugged into a higher plug socket and the blind cord was fixed on the day of inspection. Maintenance will check all wires and blind cords daily to ensure none are trailing, broken or damaged. Currently looking into alternative options that would not come loose.

2. Care plans were immediately completed for all the children with allergies. These are also displayed on the wall in each classroom and in the children's file in the office. Going forward we will ensure that all care plans are completed for children with allergies and training will be carried out if required.

Infection Control:

3. In response to the non-compliances identified on inspection the registered provider has responded with the following corrective and preventive actions.

- All paper towels are now in the dispensers provided and used by the staff. No paper towels are left in the open air. We will ensure all paper dispensers have paper towels available.
- New covering has been put on the chair in the Flower room. A new children's sofa was purchased for the Jungle room and the old one was removed.
- The vent in the children's toilet was cleaned by maintenance the day after the inspection and they will ensure that all vents are free of dust every week.
- We will ensure that all covers on sofa and chairs are machine washable or easily wiped down and all damaged furniture will be disposed of and new ones purchased when torn or ripped.

4. To address any perishable food a child brings from home will be stored in the refrigerator. Staff will check all food items that come from home and ensure that any perishable items are stored in the refrigerator.

5. All soothers will be stored in individual containers in the child's cubby and given to them when they are going to bed. Soothers will be sterilised after use.

6. The cleaning of toys procedure was updated and communicated with staff. There is a copy in each room explaining how we wash the toys and what we use to clean them and dry them. We will ensure that all staff follow the correct cleaning procedures for toys. Policy will be updated when needed.

7. The nappy changing policy has been updated and communicated with staff. Gloves and aprons are now removed in a timely manner and disposed of correctly. We will ensure all staff follow the nappy changing policy. Policy will be updated when needed.

8. Following the inspection, it was explained to staff the importance of washing hands before mealtimes. Hand washing procedures were communicated with staff and are displayed in the classrooms.

All children wash their hands before every meal. We will ensure all staff follow the hand washing procedure and that children's hands are washed before mealtimes.

9. To address all sheets are being stored in bags with the child's name on it and beds are made up daily.

The sleep policy has been updated to reflect this, and all staff have received the new sleep policy. We will ensure that all staff follow the new sleep policy and put the sheets in individual bags.

10. To address the non-compliance the service has updated the sleep policy, and it has been communicated with staff regarding space between beds or cots.

Space between cots and beds is now measured and kept at the 50cm. We will ensure all cots and beds are maintained at 50cm. Policy will be updated when needed.

Safe Sleep:

11. In response to the non-compliance identified on inspection the registered provider has responded with the following corrective and preventive actions.

- Temperature sheets are now being completed by staff during sleep time. We will ensure that the sleep policy is up to date and that all staff have access to the temperature sheets during sleep time. Staff will ensure that the room temperature always stays within 18-22 °C. If the room temperature goes above this temperature, then we will ensure that windows and doors are opened to allow fresh air flow and re-record the temperature every 15 minutes after the windows and doors have been opened.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence of the flexes restricted.
2. Documented care plan for two children.

Infection Control:

3. The following supporting evidence was submitted along with staff updating on service policy.

- Paper towel in dispenser.
 - Photographic evidence of new cover.
 - Corrective actions.
4. Photographic evidence of food refrigerated along with staff updating on service policy.
 5. Photographic evidence of a soother in a named container along with staff updating on service policy.
 6. Cleaning of toys guidance along with staff updating on service policy.
 7. Nappy changing policy along with staff updating on service policy.
 8. Handwashing policy along with staff updating on service policy.
 9. Photographic evidence of new bags for sheets and blankets along with staff updating on service policy.
 10. Photographic evidence of space between cots along with staff updating on service policy.

Safe Sleep:

11. Sleep practices/ room temps along with staff updating on service policy.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances as identified. This regulation will be reviewed on the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service ensured that adequate insurance was available with an expiry date of 14 January 2026 for a maximum of 54 children.