

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL033		
Name of Service:	Bracken Hill Nursery School		
Address of Service:	Balkill Road, Howth, Co. Dublin		
Eircode:	D13 PR90		
Name of Registered Provider:	Harriette Lynch Kennedy		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	20/11/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	43	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6		
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle		
Title:	Early Years Inspector		
Authority to Inspect			
The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).			
Conditions if applicable	Not Applicable		

Description of service

Bracken Hill Nursery School was founded in 1962 and has been operating as a charitable trust since 2000. The service is located in a prefabricated building on the grounds of Binn Eadair GAA club, Howth, Co Dublin participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme and operates from 9am to 1pm with children attending for a maximum of 3.5 hours within this time frame. A fully enclosed outdoor play area is provided to the side of the premises.

Staffing

The service employs 9 staff members including the service manager who coordinates the day-to-day operational management of the service and works directly with the children. A fitness activity teacher was present in the service on the day of inspection. The registered provider is the chairperson of the board of trustees and does not work directly with the children attending the service.

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.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(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.

(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 service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection.

Eleven files were reviewed including the file for the registered provider, 9 staff members and the fitness instructor who was present in the service were reviewed.

(2)(a) & (b) Two written, validated references were available for the registered provider, 9 staff members and the fitness instructor who was present in the service.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider, 9 staff members and the fitness instructor. Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. The Garda vetting records reviewed demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available for the 3 staff members who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 9 staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with the children in the service including the service manager held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

- (1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.*
- (3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

Compliance Information

(1) 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 to the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In the Room 1 there were 18 children aged 3 years 10 months to 4 year 10 months being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the Room 2 there were 12 children aged 2 years 8 months to 3 years 2 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Room 3 there were 13 children aged 3 years 2 months to 4 years 11 months being cared for by 3 staff members.

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) The following observations are examples on how each child's learning, development and well-being was observed being facilitated during the inspection:

- The atmosphere in the service was warm and child centred. The early years practitioners spoke positively and kindly to and about the children during the inspection and were observed initiating conversations and listening carefully to the children's stories and questions and responding to the children in an interested and engaged manner.
- The children bring their lunch with them from home. Snack time throughout the 3 care rooms in the service was observed to be a relaxed and social experience with practitioners sitting at the tables with the children chatting about their day and upcoming activities.
- The personal care needs of the children were attended to promptly by the practitioners, children were facilitated to use the bathroom as needed with support and supervision provided as required with children gently reminded to wash their hands afterwards. Aprons were available for messy play activities and children were supported in putting their coats on independently before they went outside.
- Comfortable rest areas alongside library resources were available in each of the 3 care rooms in the service to facilitate the children to take a break from activities as they chose throughout the session.
- All of the children in attendance were facilitated in engaging in outdoor play in the well-resourced enclosed outdoor area to the front of the service. Additionally, a fitness class was provided by an outside contractor on the day of inspection which all of the children engaged in enthusiastically.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The interactions between the practitioners and the children were observed to be consistently positive and caring, the early years practitioners-initiated conversations with the children, responded meaningfully to their verbal and non-verbal cues and provided regular praise and encouragement using gentle tones of voice.

- The practitioners demonstrated skilful interaction strategies to support the children’s play, learning and development, as evidenced in occasions when the practitioners acted as a play partners with the children and supported the children’s participation in their chosen activities.
- The children’s photographs and work were displayed in the care room, reflecting the children’s identity, and encouraging children’s sense of belonging in the service.
- Transitions were well supported in the service. A pictorial display of the daily routine and activities was on display at the children’s eye level in the pre-school rooms to support the children to prepare for transitions. Throughout the care rooms verbal strategies were used by the practitioners to inform and prepare children for up-coming activities and movement.

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 was equipped with adequate and suitable furniture and play equipment and materials to meet the needs of the children as evidenced in the following examples:

- Throughout the care rooms the play materials and equipment were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving which nurtured independence, facilitated choice, encouraged curiosity, child-led play and free movement.
- All 3 care rooms in the service were spacious and enabled the children to move around the rooms freely. The rooms were laid out with areas of interest including home areas with a range of accessorial equipment including tableware and cooking utensils. Dress up resources, dolls, buggies and cradles to enable the children to extend their real and imaginary play were provided along with construction areas, a wide range of tabletop play resources and arts and crafts materials which supported all areas of development.
- Throughout the care rooms there were a broad range of books available to support the children’s language development and the children were observed to choose the books they wanted to have read to them.
- The children’s artwork was displayed throughout the care rooms which supports children in feeling valued and appreciated.

- An enclosed outdoor area was located to the front of the service. The area was surfaced with concrete and provided the children with the opportunity for running and free movement. A large sand tray provided the children with the opportunity to enjoy sensorial play, a resourced mud kitchen was provided along with 2 playhouses, an art easel and a blackboard which the children enjoyed using with the chalks provided. A good selection of ride on toys encouraged and supported the children in being active.

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 external doors and internal door of the service was appropriately service were appropriately secured to prevent an unauthorised person from gaining access to the children and prevent children from exiting the premises unsupervised.
- The water temperature in the wash hand basins did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the children in attendance.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- There was warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels provided for hand hygiene at the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation of the service. The children were encouraged to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, and after outdoor and messy play, with assistance provided when necessary.
- Children's lunches which contained perishable food items including meat and dairy products, provided by parents for the morning snack, were refrigerated on arrival to the service. This reduced the risk of bacteria multiplying to levels which could result in food contamination.
- Documented up to date cleaning records were maintained on the premises. The premises and the play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.
- The outdoor sand pit was fitted with a secure lid to prevent contamination by animals and birds when not in use.

Administration of Medication:

- No children attending the service required a medical care plan. No medication was observed being administered on the day.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits in the service were clear and unobstructed.

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.

(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) Records were available in the service to demonstrate that regular fire drills take place. The most recent fire drill was recorded to have been carried out 16/10/24.

(b) There was a record available that detailed the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced on the 05/09/24 and the smoke alarm system was last serviced on 09/09/24.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were on display in the care rooms and corridors of the service.