

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL041
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Name of Service:	Bright Sparks Community Preschool
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Address of Service:	Donabate Portrane Community Centre, Portrane Road, Donabate, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K36 F598
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sandra Mathews
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	29/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	Not applicable.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	2 nd Floor, Unit 4/5, The Nexus Building, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Ballycoolin, Dublin 15
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Inspection undertaken by:	Y. Kelly and S. Cully
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Title:	Early Years Inspector Inspection and Registration Manager
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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

Bright Sparks Community Preschool is a not-for-profit community preschool which is located in a community centre on the outskirts of Donabate village in north Co Dublin. The service provides a part time and sessional preschool care and education to children aged 3 to 6 years and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme from 9.00am to 12 midday Monday to Friday and a part-time service until 1.30pm. The service operates from a room on the ground floor of the community centre with a dedicated entrance door. An outdoor area is located directly outside the care room door where a wooden cabin is located which is used to facilitate small group time and individual work with children.

Staffing

The service employs three staff members, including the registered provider and two of whom work directly with the children on a daily basis. In addition, a worker funded by a Community Employment (CE) scheme was present in a supernumerary capacity. The registered provider does not work directly with the children attending the service. On the day of the inspection there were three adults present in the preschool. A transition year student was also present as part of a work experience programme. The registered provider attended the closing meeting.

Methodology

Tusla 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required. The following regulations were reviewed:

Regulation 9 (1)(2)(4) Management and Recruitment.

Regulation 11 (1)(2)(8) Staffing Levels.

Regulation 19 (1a) Health, Welfare and Development of the Child.

Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety, and Welfare of Child.

Regulation 25 (1) (2) (a) (b) First Aid.

Regulation 26 (1)(a)(b) Fire Safety Measures.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the preschool 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.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff, the student 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 had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as needed.

(b) The designated person in charge was present in the building when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service.

(c) The service had a clear management structure in place with clear roles and responsibilities outlined.

(2) The files for three adults and the student and Garda vetting disclosures for all adults in the service were reviewed and the following was recorded:

(a) Two written references and one written validated reference was available from past employers.

(b) Three written references were available from a reputable source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all five adults in the service including the registered provider. A Garda vetting disclosure was not applicable in one instance due to the person being under 18 years of age. The service also 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 one adult who had lived outside of the state for six months or more as an adult.

(4) Evidence was available to show that the two adults who work directly with the children 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.

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider had not ensured the following:

(2)(a)(b) Two validated written references were not available for the student who was present on work experience placement in the service.

(3) Two references for one adult from a past employer had not been validated prior to commencement of employment.

Three references for two adults from a reputable source other than a past employer had not been validated prior to commencement of employment.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Corrective Actions:

(2)(a)(b) Two written references for the student were submitted and received on 6 February 2025.

Validation of two references for one adult from a past employer were submitted and received.

Validation of three references for two adults from a reputable source other than a past employer were submitted and received. These were received on the 30 January 2025 and the 4 February 2025. Two references for each employee have been produced and verified via phone call and these have been written onto references. References are to be included in staff files.

Preventive Actions:

(2)(a)(b) and (3) The registered provider reported that any new staff members will be required to produce two written references and references will be validated and documented by management prior to start date. References will be filed in the staff folder.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2)(a)(b) Evidence of validated references received on the 30 January 2025 and the 4 February 2025.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances under Regulation 9 have been addressed.

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 the inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service. There were two core staff members and a CE participant working directly with 14 children on the morning of the inspection.

(2) The registered provider ensured that the correct adult to child ratios were maintained in the service. The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

In the preschool room there were 2 adults, including the manager and the educator caring for 14 children aged 3 years to 5 years. In addition, there was a worker funded by the CE scheme and a transition year student on work experience.

(8) (a) The registered provider ensured that there are 2 adults on the premises at all times.

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) Each child's learning and development and wellbeing was facilitated within the preschool in the following ways:

Basic needs:

- The children brought snacks from home. Snack consisted of crackers, rice cakes, yoghurts, cheese, brown bread with jam, and fruit including apples, bananas, mandarins and raspberries. The children have drinking water available in their own water bottles. The children's snack time was observed to be calm and relaxed. Children were observed to sit together and chatted socially during this time and staff offered help to children when needed.
- Identity and belonging were promoted in the service. For example, there was a 'Family Wall' display with photographs of children's families and the children's artwork was displayed in the preschool room. Children's names were on their coat hooks outside of the room.
- There was a cosy area, the 'Calm Corner' observed in the preschool room for the children to relax in as required. The cosy area was equipped with a canopy, sofas, beanbags, mats, blankets and a selection of books for reading and relaxation.
- Children's independence was supported. Children were encouraged to put on coats and hats before going outside to play. Throughout the session, children were given responsibilities such as tidying up. Children were encouraged to use the toilet and wash their hands independently. Children got their own snacks at snack time.

Supporting relationships:

- Staff demonstrated warm and caring interactions with the children. Children were offered comfort and support when needed. There was a welcoming atmosphere in the service.
- Transitions were observed to be well managed; children were given verbal cues to support them with the transitions. Children were involved in transitions and during tidy up time children were observed using visual props such as timers. Children were supported through transitions in the daily routine at their own pace. Routines provided for predictability and comfort for young children.

Physical and Material Environment:

- There was comfortable furniture with small child sized chairs and tables for children to sit when carrying out table top activities or for mealtimes.
- There were many resources available to the children which were divided into areas of interest to support children's choice in their play experiences. There was a Home Corner with kitchen utensils, Art areas with art materials such as paper, crayons, scissors, glue, paint, rolling pins, chalk boards and chalk to support creative art and mark making for children. There was a cosy area for children to relax and a variety of books to provide opportunities for storytelling and early literacy experiences. There were blocks and plastic building bricks for construction and early numeracy. There were table top materials including jigsaws and Montessori materials including wooden cylinders and small world materials including dinosaurs.
- Children were observed playing in the outdoor play area. In the outdoor play area, there were mud kitchens and real-life materials, sand and water play, planting boxes with herbs and areas for digging which provided children with opportunities for sensory play and dramatic play. There were many transportation toys which supported children to move materials around the outdoor environment and promoted opportunities for schematic play. Children were appropriately dressed for the cold weather.

Programme of Activities:

- Children were observed to be given choice in their play experiences. Children could choose to play indoors or outdoors as they preferred. Children had the choice of opting in or out of groups times as they preferred.

- There were small indoor group activities facilitated for children including playing with playdough and glitter and the children were observed making 'glitter cupcakes'.
- An expert from the local nature reserve visits the service on a monthly basis to facilitate a group session about nature and animals with the children. This visitor came to the service on the day of the inspection.
- There is also an outdoor wooden cabin, fitness studio, hall and library available for the children to use.

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:

- On arrival to the service, the inspectors observed that the door was secure and monitored by staff.
- The blind cords in the preschool room were observed to be secured.
- Cleaning agents were not accessible to the children.
- The outdoor play area was securely fenced.

Infection Control:

- Windows were open for circulation of air.
- The sanitary area was equipped with liquid soap. Children were observed washing hands after outdoor play and before snack time.
- Children were supported to change clothes if needed after outdoor play.
- Lidded bins were available for disposal of contaminated items.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were unobstructed in the event of emergency evacuation.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. Hand towels were not hygienically dispensed in the sanitary accommodation. This posed an infection control risk.

2. Although a fridge was on the premises, the children's packed lunches supplied from home were not refrigerated on arrival to the service. This increased the risk of bacteria growth in perishable food items.
3. The window seat sofa in the preschool room was observed to be torn with the foam exposed. This posed an infection control risk as well as a potential choking hazard. It is acknowledged that this window seat sofa was re-covered following the previous inspection but had since torn again.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

Corrective Actions:

1. A new hand towel dispenser has been installed in the sanitary accommodation to prevent handling of tissues.
2. The registered provider reported that children place their lunches in the fridge when they enter the preschool to ensure lunches are kept cool.
3. The window seat has been re-covered with new fabric.

Preventive Actions:

1. The registered provider reported that white tissue roll is now used in the sanitary accommodation and blue tissue roll is used in the classroom to prevent cross contamination.
3. The registered provider reported that any tears will be repaired or replaced in a timely manner.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

1. Photographic evidence of the hand towel dispenser installed in the sanitary accommodation.
2. Photographic evidence of children's lunches in the fridge.
3. Photographic evidence of window seat re-covered with new fabric.

Summary Comment

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were trained in First Aid Response (FAR) and a staff member trained in FAR was available on the premises throughout the opening hours of the service.

(2)(a)(b) An adequately stocked first aid box was observed in the preschool room of the service. This was stored out of the reach of the children but available to staff as needed.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) A record of monthly fire drills was available on the premises with the last drill dated as having been carried out on 21 January 2025.

(b) The number, type and maintenance record for fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms were available.

Firefighting equipment was last serviced in July 2024. Smoke alarms were last serviced on 17 January 2025.