

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL112		
Name of Service:	Sophia Nurturing Centre Donabate		
Address of Service:	Hazel Grove, Portrane Road, Donabate, Co. Dublin		
Eircode:	K36 HR58		
Name of Registered Provider:	Jennifer Foran		
Service type:	Part Time, Sessional		
Date(s) of Inspection:	10/07/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	3	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin, K67 Y5C6.		
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Cully		
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

Sophia Nurturing Centre Donabate is an early years service established in 2005 in a housing association project which provides short term accommodation and support to families and individuals who are emerging from homelessness. The service is registered to provide part time and sessional preschool to children between the ages 0-6 years and operate 2 sessions from 8.30am – 12.30pm and 1.30pm – 4.45pm. Currently, the afternoon session is not in operation. The service is also registered to provide School Age care. The early years service operates from a purpose-built facility within the Sophia Housings Donabate project. The service consists of one spacious care room with a small adjoining room used for messy play, sanitary facilities, a kitchen and an office. The service has an enclosed outdoor play space on the premises designated for use by the Nurturing Centre only.

Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children in the service in addition to administration duties. The childcare resource coordinator was present on the day of inspection to support as needed and is available to the service as relief staff when required. One staff member is employed through a community employment scheme. A member of staff is currently on statutory leave.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child, safety, premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 16, 19, 22, 23, 25, 26 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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 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.

(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 registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a person designated to deputise when required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at 10.15am on the day of inspection and remained present on the premises for the duration of the inspection. The organisation's Childcare Resource Coordinator was also present on the day of inspection as the deputy designated person in charge and facilitated the inspection while the registered provider worked directly with the children during the morning session.

A total of 4 files were reviewed in relation to the staff members of the service. These files included the registered provider, the childcare resource coordinator, and 2 staff who work directly with the children on a daily basis, 1 of which is employed under a Community Employment scheme.

(2)(a) &(b) There were 8 written, validated references available for the 4 adults whose files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 4 adults whose files were reviewed. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available as required for 1 adult who had lived outside the State as adults for more than 6 consecutive months.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that the registered provider, the childcare resource coordinator and 1 staff member who worked directly with the children in the early years service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. The member staff employed under Community Employment scheme and working in a supernumerary capacity did not require a childcare qualification.

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) During the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.
- (2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced on the day of inspection. There were 3 children aged from 2 to 4 years being cared for by 1 adult. The second adult was present in a supernumerary capacity. A third adult was available in the service to support the ratio when needed.
- (8)(a) Two adults were present on the premises at all times, as evidenced in staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained in the service.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

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

Compliance Information

(1) Records were available as specified by Regulation 16 (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)(i)(j) and (k) in relation to the service.

These records were available in folders displayed in the hallway such as folders containing policies and procedures and service information. An accident/ incident and medication records were also available. Information in relation to staff names and qualifications were displayed for the attention of staff and parents/guardians.

(3) The record referred to above were open to inspection by an authorised person.

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

(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)(a) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic needs:

- The staff provided warm and nurturing interactions to the children. They spoke to all children in a positive way and listened attentively to each child. The children were supported to find positive solutions together when they experienced challenges during their daily routine or during interactions with peers.
- The observed mealtime was a social and relaxed time with staff members using this time as an opportunity to talk to the children about their feelings, thoughts and to listen to each other speak. The children were encouraged to serve themselves portions of sauce or pasta and were offered more food when finished.
- Children's personal care needs were sensitively attended to such as toileting and wiping of noses and faces. A child expressed their preference to have their nappy changed by a particular staff member and this was facilitated. This demonstrated that the children felt comfortable to share their preferences with staff as they knew they would be listened to and respected.
- The staff provided several sensory based activities on the morning of the session including sand, water and a light table. There were also other resources available in the room for children to avail of when seeking sensory input and regulation.
- There were comfortable rest areas in the care room including a sofas and cushions at the reading area and small armchairs, child sized sofas and rugs in the sensory/relaxation corner.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The service showed a positive regard towards the families of the children and family links were nurtured in the service with 'My Family' books for each child printed and laminated and on display in the library. This promotes a positive sense of identity and belonging.
- The children appeared to be happy and comfortable in their environment and with the adults caring for them. They called staff by name, invited them to play, looked to them for reassurance or guidance and enjoyed talking with them.
- The staff demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of the children in their care by providing activities and resources that would support their learning and development, and that they would enjoy. They spoke about the children positively and responded to the children's expressions and conversations with interest. The staff created learning opportunities for children to practice positive behaviours during interactions and play.

Physical and material environment:

- The care room was organised with identifiable interest areas to support a range of play and learning experiences. The interest areas included a library corner, a well-resourced home corner with materials to support meaningful play such as real phones, cutlery, pots and pans and packaging, a dolls house, art area, construction area, puzzle area and sensory/relaxation area. A small room adjoining the care room provided opportunity for messy/sensory activities such as painting, light table, sand play and water play.
- The staff had created a darkened sensory/relaxation area behind the curved wall in the care room. This was created to support children to develop regulation skills and have a space to go to relax or regulate. This space included soft lights, child sized sofas and armchairs, soft toys, wall mounted activity boards, a shelving unit with equipment to support self-regulation and a sensory mat.
- An enclosed outdoor area was accessible directly from the care room. The ground was covered with an impact absorbing surface and had a range of materials and equipment to support outdoor play such as bikes, slide, music wall, an outdoor shop and art easel. There was also a treehouse that was partially sheltered the staff referred to as 'the den' with table and chairs available for activities to be facilitated outdoors.
- The materials in the care room were stored on low level shelving units to facilitate children to easily chose and return activities or materials of interest independently.

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 has a rotating 3-week menu available for the early years service detailing a variety of healthy foods available for breakfast, snack and hot lunch. During the inspection the children were observed eating their hot lunch of pasta, sauce and tuna. Drinking water was freely available to the children throughout the day, and milk was offered at mealtimes.

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 gates are appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- The internal doors and windows are appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- Cleaning agents are stored out of reach of children.
- A system of daily indoor and outdoor risk assessments was in place to identify and remove hazards or damaged equipment.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to children on the day of inspection.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled running water was available at the wash hand basins in the service along with soap and paper hand towels.
- The furniture and materials in the care rooms were in good and hygienic condition.
- The service has cleaning checklists on display throughout the care room and premises.

- Suitable disposable gloves and aprons were available and observed being used and disposed of by staff members after each individual nappy change. Pedal operated lidded nappy bins were provided for the disposal of nappies. This practice reduces the risk of cross-contamination.
- The adults and children were observed to wash their hands at appropriate times such as before meals, following outdoor play or following toileting and nappy changing.

Administration of Medication:

- No children were observed having medication administered to them on the day of inspection. There were no children present on the day who required a medical care plan.

Safe Sleep:

- No children currently attending needed a sleep. There was sleep mate and bed linen available in the event a child showed signs of tiredness or asked to sleep.
- The service had a safe sleep policy available and in place to support safe sleep practices when required.

Fire Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.

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 a person trained in first aid for children was immediately available to the children attending the service at all times as evidenced in the training records and staff roster.

(2)(a)(b) First aid boxes were suitably equipped and stored in readily accessible and conspicuous positions in the service.

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) A record was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. Based on the records maintained and as reported by staff members, fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill for the service took place on 05/07/2024.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The firefighting equipment and the smoke detection and alarm system was certified as having been serviced April 2024.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Documentation was available to demonstrate the preschool service was adequately insured. The service is currently insured to accommodate a maximum of 15 preschool children in full day care, with an expiry date 15/07/2025.