

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TTUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL212
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Name of Service:	Mill Bank Kids
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Address of Service:	Mill Bank, Rush, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K56 CX94
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Name of Registered Provider:	Amanda Harford
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	17/04/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	0
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Taaffe
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
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Description of service

Mill Bank Kids was established in 2009, operating as a privately-owned sessional early years service which participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.15am to 12.15pm each weekday for 38 weeks each year. The service is registered to accommodate a maximum of 19 pre-school children from 2 – 6 years in addition to school aged children up to 12 years of age. The service is conducted from one room with sanitary facilities for adults and children and an office all provided in a purpose built premises located to the rear of the registered provider's home. Two fully enclosed outdoor play areas are provided for children's use adjacent to the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider and two staff members work directly with the pre-school children in the service each morning on a daily basis. The school aged children are cared for by the registered provider, the two staff members who work with the pre-school children plus a further staff member who works with the school aged children only during the afternoon when pre-school children are not present.

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/ and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation 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,

(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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;
- (b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and
- (c) these Regulations.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The registered provider is the designated person in charge of the service and a named staff member is appointed to deputise in the absence of the registered provider when required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service on the morning of inspection.

The staff files for the registered provider and the 2 staff members who are present in the service when pre-school children are in attendance were reviewed.

(2)(a)(b) There were 2 written references available for the registered provider and 2 written, validated references available for the 2 staff members whose files were reviewed.

(a) Four of the 6 written references reviewed were from past employers.

(b) Two of the 6 written references reviewed were from sources other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the registered provider and all staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4) The registered provider held a Level 8 major award in Early Childhood Studies and both staff members who work directly with the pre-school children in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

(7)(a) It was evident in the documentation reviewed that the registered provider had provided all staff with appropriate information and training when commencing employment in the service in relation to the service's policies and procedures. This was evidenced in the comprehensive induction records maintained for the staff members. Additionally, records were available which demonstrated that the registered provider and all staff members regularly completed a broad range of relevant certified continuous professional development programmes.

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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1) During the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) On the day of inspection, the registered provider and 2 staff members were working directly with 14 pre-school children aged 3 years 3 months to 5 years 6 months, all attending the service on a sessional basis.

(8)(c) Not applicable as the registered provider and 2 staff members work directly with the pre-school children in the service on a daily basis.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

(a) the name and date of birth of the child;

(b) the date on which the child first attended the service;

(c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;

(d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;

(e) authorisation for the collection of the child;

(f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;

(g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;

(h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;

(i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,

- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured a record was kept in writing in relation to the children's details as outlined in Regulation 15 (a) to (i). All children's registration forms were reviewed and each form was found to be appropriately completed with the required information.

(3)(c) The children's records were open to inspection as requested by the inspector as 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

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following observations are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service:

Basic needs:

- The registered provider and staff members interacted with the children in an interested and enthusiastic manner and were observed engaging with each child warmly and kindly during the inspection.
- The children brought healthy snacks from home, in line with the healthy eating policy of the service. The adults were observed chatting with the children at snack time, encouraging conversation and extending interactions.
- Children who were able were facilitated to use the toilet independently with discreet supervision and assistance provided by the adults when required. The service policy requires the children to be toilet trained in advance of attending the service. One child who had a toileting accident during the session was observed being changed promptly with the procedure handled gently and in a positive manner by the staff member.

- The children engaged in energetic play outdoors whilst dressed appropriately for the intermittent light rain showers that were experienced during the morning of the inspection.

Supporting Relationships around Children

- The children seemed familiar and comfortable with the registered provider and staff members and were observed calling on these adults to proudly share their achievements, with the adults heard to readily acknowledge and praise the children's efforts and accomplishments.
- The adults supported each child's inclusion and involvement in activities. An example of this was demonstrated when one child, rather than going outdoors, chose to stay indoors engaging in a play activity with a staff member until the child was ready to move outside to join their peers. Turn taking and sharing was promoted, this was evidenced by some children working collaboratively together on the day of inspection.
- There was a strong team ethos in the service with the adults observed working collaboratively to support children's play and learning. Regular informative interactions were heard taking place between the adults when coordinating the implementation of activities. At the end of the school year when the ECCE programme had ended, the registered provider supported the staff members to attend the service for an additional week in the absence of the children to undergo relevant training and to make plans for the upcoming school year.
- The service operated in partnership with parents. Parents were spoken to informally on a daily basis during drop off and collection. Folders containing the children's work was maintained for each child and made available to the parents on an ongoing basis.

Physical & Material Environment:

- The pre-school room was well resourced with a wide range of Montessori equipment which was freely available to the children throughout the session. The room was well laid out in a variety of interest areas including practical life, sensorial, numeracy, language and cultural areas.
- Natural, wooden and ceramic materials were particularly evident and readily used in the service.
- Representations of the children and their learning experiences were very visible in the service as evidenced through the broad range of photographs on display. These included photographs taken indoors and outdoors showing the children playing with play dough, flipping pancakes, playing in tents, playing with parachutes, sitting in and climbing on plastic storage crates and using cardboard boxes for play.

- A plentiful supply of books were available in the library area which supported children’s language development.
- Children were facilitated to rest on soft matting and cushions in a quiet area of the pre-school room, if they wished to rest or relax during the session.
- The outdoor area was well maintained and offered the children opportunities to move and play in the open air. Both outdoor play areas were accessible directly from the pre-school room and each was surfaced in artificial grass. The outdoor play equipment was stored in secure weather-proof containers. During the inspection the children were observed playing enthusiastically with balls, hoops, bubbles, stand-on stringed stilts and kitchen cutlery and crockery. Raised planting beds with thriving spring vegetables adjoined the outdoor play area and the adults incorporated these into discussions with the children which were heard during the 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 early years service. Access to the premises was facilitated by the registered provider who, having sight of callers through the glass panels at the front door of the service, opened the secured door to facilitate entry.
- The warm water temperature in the sanitary accommodation did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C and the registered provider stated that the warm water supply in the service was thermostatically controlled. This reduced the risk of injury from scalding for the children in attendance.
- The blind cords were appropriately secured and made safe.
- The play materials and equipment available in the service were stored on stable-based low level shelving which reduced the risk of the furniture from toppling over and causing injury to a child.
- The two outdoor play areas were appropriately secured with gated fencing.

Infection Control:

- A refrigerator was available and used to store perishable items contained in the children's snacks which were provided from home by the parents, reducing the risk of bacteria growth in these food items.
- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet and following messy play and outdoor play. There was running warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels available for hand hygiene at the wash hand basins in the service.
- Tissues were available for wiping noses and appropriate hand hygiene practices were observed being undertaken when staff members assisted children to blow their noses.
- Up to date documented cleaning schedules were available in the service and the service was visibly clean.

Administration of Medication:

- No child attending the service required any medication to be administered on the day of inspection. Administration of medication forms were available to record the details of any medication administered in the service, should the need arise.

Fire Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.

Outings:

- The registered provider stated that the service did not conduct outings.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The service maintained accurate details of all children in attendance during the inspection. The children were entered as present in attendance records noting each child's arrival and departure time on a daily basis.

(3)(a)(b) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children and their parents or guardians, employees, approved students or authorised visitors could enter the service. A visitor's book was maintained and on arrival to the service on the day of inspection the inspector was requested to record their attendance on the premises and the purpose of their visit.

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 and all staff members held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training which ensured that a person with FAR training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a)(b) The first aid boxes were suitably equipped and easily accessible to the staff and available at all times if required.

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 took place on 15/03/2024.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced in July 2023 and the smoke detection and alarm system was serviced on 10/01/2024.
- (4) The evacuation procedure was conspicuously displayed on the premises which contained details in relation to the procedure to be conducted in the event of a fire or emergency in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A current insurance certificate was available with expiry date 27/03/2025.
The registered provider had adequate insurance cover for 20 pre-school children.