

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015FL284

Name of Service: Sticky Fingers Montessori

Address of Service: Skerries Community Centre, Dublin Road, Skerries, Co. Dublin

Eircode: K34 FX61

Name of Registered Provider: Sharon Guinane

Service type: Part Time, Sessional

Date of Inspection: 15/05/2023

No of pre-school children:	AM	43	PM	No.

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.Cully & AM.Coyle

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

Description of service

Sticky Fingers Montessori school is a not-for-profit part-time day-care service located in a community centre in Skerries, Co Dublin. Care and education is provided to children aged between two and six years and the operating hours are from Monday to Friday between 09:30 and 14:30. The service operates from two rooms within Skerries Community Centre and a third care room is located in a prefabricated building on the grounds of the Community Centre. The children had access to a secure outdoor area to the rear of the premises. The service has access to the use of the all-weather pitches in the adjacent leisure centre, but on the day of inspection the pitches were closed to accommodate construction work in the car park of the leisure centre.

Staffing

On the day of inspection, 7 staff members were present including the registered provider. The registered provider does not work directly with the children. Six staff members were employed as early years practitioners and working directly with the children, 1 of which was employed under the Access and Inclusion Model to reduce the adult to child ratio to provide a child with extra care and assistance to support a meaningful preschool experience.

Methodology

The 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, safety, premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

On inspection additional non-compliance was identified under Regulation 8 These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation(s) 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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

(3) Where a registered provider has been unable for good and proper reason to notify the Agency within the time specified in paragraph (1) or (2), as the case may be, of a change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2), the registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing of the change as soon as possible thereafter.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The service was operating outside of its registration status. The service is currently registered with operating hours (AM) 9.30am – 2.30pm. Following discussion with staff and confirmation from the registered provider, inspectors were informed that the services operating hours (AM) are 9.00am – 13.00pm.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider submitted a Change in Circumstance form to the Registrations office via email on 31.05.2023 and is awaiting response to confirm amendment of listed hours of operation.

Summary Comment

Based on the information in the corrective actions submitted by the registered provider the non-compliance has been addressed. This will be reviewed at the next 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 registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person available to deputise as required.

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

Following a review of previous inspection records and in discussion with the registered provider and Class 1 room leader, the inspectors were informed that 1 staff member had commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 05/11/21. The files maintained for this staff member were reviewed and the following documentation was available.

(2)(a) &(b) Two written, validated references were available for this staff member.

(a) Both references were from reputable sources.

(c) A Garda vetting disclosures was available for the staff member whose files was reviewed.

(d) On review of the staff members file, international police vetting was not required as they had not resided out of Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) The staff member whose file was reviewed and who worked directly with children in the service held the appropriate qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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.

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 and remained so throughout the inspection.

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

- In Class 1 there were 16 children aged 3 years 4 months and 5 years 4 months being cared for by 3 staff members one of whom was employed under the Access and Inclusion Model.
- In Class 2 there were 13 children aged 3 years 7 months and 4 years 2 months being cared for by 2 members of staff.
- In Class 3 there were 14 children aged 3 years 10 months and 5 years being cared for by 2 members of staff.

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,

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:

- There was a welcoming atmosphere in each of the rooms with children observed to be engaged in activity and conversation when the inspectors arrived on the day of inspection. The early years practitioners were observed to be attentive and caring in their interactions with the children, demonstrating their familiarity and understanding of the children when they spoke about them.
- Parents provide food for morning snack time for the children. The food provided was observed to be inline with the services healthy eating policy. Children's water bottles were stored in an area that was easily accessible to the children. Snack time was observed to be a relaxed and social part of the daily routine, with children and adults talking together throughout.
- Children's cues and requests to use the toilet were responding to promptly, and children were accompanied to access and use the toilets which were located outside of the care room for Class 1 and 2. Younger preschool children who were in the process of toilet training were supported in the service with sensitivity and care to practice and gain independent toileting skills.
- There were areas for rest in each of the care rooms. Rest areas consisted of mats, cushions and soft toys.
- Children's individual care needs were respected and provided for through the use of individual care plans, flexibility in the daily routine, provision of required resources and materials and by working in partnership with parents and other services.
- On the day of inspection, all children in the service had access to the outdoor area located to the rear of the premises.

Supporting relationship around children:

- The children in all 3 rooms were observed to be familiar with the daily routine and Montessori practices such as rolling their mat's away and pushing chair back to the table. In discussion the early years practitioners shared that children learn this through continuity of routine and on-going communication and support. This helps children to feel safe and secure, allows them to work together as a team and to build trusting relationships with the adults.
- When communicating with children, staff used gentle tones and language, taking opportunities to remind children of class rules rather than critique and support or redirect them when they faced a challenge.
- The service values and respects partnership with parents, and through discussion and observation parents are part of curriculum planning (parents visited to speak about their occupations), children's care (care plans) and are welcomed to the service as there had been previous family events and staff were planning for a summer family event. Family Walls were observed in Class 2 and 3. The early years practitioner in Class 1 noted that their family wall was temporarily taken down as the room in the afternoon by another service provider, but they were open to other ways of providing children access to their family photos.

Programme of activities to support children's development:

- There was provision of Montessori materials with the lead early years practitioner of Class 1 describing how they incorporate Aistear principles into their Montessori practice This could be seen on planning boards in each room where children's interests and questions were considered for the planning of curriculum activities This supports children to feel valued and to experience activities that are meaningful to them. The Montessori practices also encouraged children's self-help skills.

Non-Compliance Information

Physical and material environment that supports children's development:

1. In Class 1, the practical life shelf was turned away so children could not access the materials. In discussion with the early years practitioner, it was explained that these were popular materials with the children and the practitioners preferred the children to focus on activities such as numeracy and literacy in preparation for the transition to school. Alternative materials for similar play and exploration were not provided. There was no provision of a home corner as the play kitchen was stored in the hallway for the duration of the session. This reduced children's opportunity to engage in meaningful role play.

2. The library of books for Class 1 was also in the hallway for the duration of time the inspectors were present. This prevented children from having the opportunity to interact with books of interest which support literacy and language.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider provided information that Class 1 room leader had refreshed the practical life shelf and it is now accessible to the children. A home corners was also improved and added to the classroom. The registered provider stated that having these areas available is part of daily classroom set up.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the reading corner, home corner and practical life shelf was submitted.

Summary Comment

Based on the information in the corrective and preventative actions submitted by the registered provider in addition to the photographic evidence submitted the non-compliances have been addressed.

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 demonstrated by the following examples:

- The tables in each of the 3 rooms of the service were waist height and the chairs were appropriate to the age and stage of the children attending the service.
- Materials and equipment available were stored on low level shelving, enabling children to choose materials of interest and take them to and from the tables with ease. The children demonstrated their awareness of the ethos of the service in taking care of materials and being responsible for returning them to the correct shelf/area.
- The layout of the care rooms reflected the Montessori ethos, in that different shelves had materials for specific purposes such as mathematic, sensorial, culture, language etc. They layout accommodated the safe movement as they took materials to and from the shelves. There was also floor space to accommodate children working on the floor on mats.
- There was a sufficient amount of materials available on each themed shelving unit that was accessible to children.
- The materials available to the children were well maintained, durable and easy to clean.

There was an accessible outdoor space for children of the service to use and enjoy time outside. As this space was not for the sole use of the early years service, fixed outdoor equipment could not be facilitated. The early years practitioners ensured that children had the opportunity to engage in a variety of physical play activities by provide materials and equipment outdoors such as balls, hula-hoops, cones, scooters, bikes, chalk, dolls and prams and other toys. There was also access to tennis equipment belonging to the tennis club. There were ramps and rails providing access to the community centre that children were using in their play, for example, children were pushing dolls in prams up the ramps. There were also trees in the area and children that showed ability to climb them were encouraged to do so.

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:

- Two rooms located in the community centre and the room located in the prefabricated building on the premises were locked from inside the room to restrict unauthorised access. A doorbell was fitted on each door for visitors to request entry.
- Emergency exits were unobstructed

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available in the sanitary accommodation in the service to facilitate effective handwashing.
- The premises, equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

- In Class 1, there was a child on a medical care plan. The required information was on file and available to staff members regarding symptoms and procedure for medication administration. This medication was administered on the day, and staff were observed to follow their medications administration policy and procedure. The relevant paperwork for medication administration was completed to be signed by parents at collection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

In both Class 1 and Class 3, cleaning agents were stored in an unlocked under sink cabinet which posed a risk to children's safety.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Locks have been fitted on both cabinets to ensure that children do not have access to cleaning agents. The registered provider stated that these cabinets are not used by Sticky Fingers staff, but that staff will ensure these are locked during Montessori sessions.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence of fitted locks on both cabinets.

Summary Comment

Based on the information in the corrective and preventative actions submitted by the registered provider in addition to the photographic evidence submitted the non-compliances have been addressed.