

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL333
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Name of Service:	Treehouse Childcare
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Address of Service:	Ballisk Court, Donabate, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K36 FF62
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Name of Registered Provider:	Aileen O'Reilly
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	28/09/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	44	PM	32
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle & S Taaffe
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
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Description of service

Treehouse Childcare is one of two privately owned early years services which the registered provider operates in the greater Dublin area. The two-story purpose-built premises has four care rooms namely the Toddler Room, ECCE room 1 and ECCE room 2 which are located on the ground floor of the service and the Preschool room is located on the first floor. There are 2 designated sleep rooms in the service, one located directly off the Toddler room, and one located alongside the Preschool room. This service is registered to cater for a maximum of 52 pre-school children aged 1 to 6 years on a full day care basis. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme each morning from 9am to 12midday for 38 weeks each year.

Staffing

There are 14 staff employed in this service, 13 of whom work directly with the children including the service manager who provided support across the care rooms as required. A chef is employed in the service. The registered provider was not present in the service during the inspection and is not based in this service. The service manager confirmed that the services' operations manager is present in the service on a regular basis.

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 inspectors wish 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,*

(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.

A total of 14 staff files were reviewed including the file for services operation manager and one staff member who is on statutory leave.

(2)(a)(b) Two written, validated references were available for the 14 staff members whose files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 14 staff members who were or may be present during the service's operational hours.

(d) International police vetting was available for 11 staff members who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that all of the staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with children in the service 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.

(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 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 at the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

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

- In the Toddler room there were 4 children aged 1 year 3 months to 1 year 11 months being cared for by 1 staff member.
- In the Preschool room there were 9 children, of whom 2 children were aged 1 year 8 months and 1 year 9 months and 7 children were aged 2 years 2 months to 2 years 5 months being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the ECCE room 1 there were 11 children aged 2 years 5 months to 2 years 11 months being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the ECCE room 2 there were 20 children aged 3 years to 4 years being cared for by 1 staff member.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained at the service.

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:

- The service provides all meals and snacks which are cooked in the onsite kitchen to children attending the service. Mealtimes were observed to be a social and pleasant experience for the children. Staff sat with the children while they ate, chatting and encouraging conversation with the children. The children in the Toddler room and Preschool room were encouraged and supported to be independent with eating and assistance was provided to the children as required.
- Nappy changing was observed to take place at scheduled times and more frequently as required. During nappy changes the staff members used the opportunity to warmly engage with the children by chatting and singing with them. Older children were supported to be independent in using the toilet with support provided as needed. Bibs were placed on the younger children prior to eating and children's hands and face were washed after eating.
- The children in the Toddler were placed to sleep in cots in either the cot room adjacent to the care room or cots that were taken into the care room after the children had their dinner. One child who was tired prior to dinner was placed to sleep and provided with their dinner afterwards. The children in the Preschool room were facilitated to sleep in cots or sleep mats and the children in the ECCE room 1 were facilitated to sleep on sleep mats on the floor of the care rooms directly after they had their dinner. Each room had a designated area with soft comfortable seating with reading materials available to facilitate rest and relaxation and provide a quieter space for children to relax in.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The children were observed to be familiar and comfortable with the staff members throughout all of the care rooms. The staff members were well acquainted with the children and responded quickly to the children's verbal and nonverbal cues, children were spoken to using their first name with appropriate eye contact and soft vocal tones used throughout interactions.
- In all the care rooms family walls displaying photographs of the children with their families were displayed; this practice supports the transition between home and the service for the children.
- A digital application was used in the service to communicate with parents regarding the children's eating, sleeping, toileting and activities throughout the day. The staff informed the inspector that the app is used to send photographs of activities the children have engaged in and if necessary to reassure parents that their children have settled if they were upset at drop off. Parents were observed interacting with staff members at drop off and collection and receiving verbal updates on their children's daily progress.
- The staff members in the individual care rooms were observed engaging with each other in relation to each individual child's needs, likes and routines, and appropriate hand over of information was provided to staff when relieving for breaks. This ensures a smooth transition of care for the children.

Physical and material environment:

- The care rooms were laid out to facilitate the children's free movement and to enable the children to engage and interact with the play materials that were available on low-level shelves.
- The Toddler room had free floor space for the children to explore and enjoy time on the floor which contributed towards the children's gross motor development. A wall mounted sensory board provided the children with a variety of easily accessible sensory experiences.
- All of the care rooms were laid out with areas of interest including home corners, art resources, tabletop activities in addition to transport and construction resources which were available for the children to engage with.
- Children's artwork was valued and displayed on the walls of the care room and the children's language development was enhanced through the availability of books throughout the care rooms.
- A fully enclosed outdoor area was located to the rear of the service. The area was covered with an artificial grass surface and provided the children with the opportunity for movement and energetic play. A swing, a slide along with a range of push and pull along toys were provided for the children to use. All of the children attending the service enjoyed time in the outdoor play area on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

1. In the Toddler room the children's water bottles were positioned out of sight and reach of the children making it difficult for the children to access a drink should they require it. In ECCE room 1 water was provided to the children with the morning snack at 10.10am but was not available to the children before then.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Child own individual Sippy cup filled with water are placed on the child's picture on a low table at the child level.

Preventive Action

All staff has been notified to ensure that water is available for the children throughout the day.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of water available to children in the Toddler room.

Copy of memo issued to staff regarding water availability to children.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 19 – Health, welfare and development of child has been reviewed and accepted.

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 entrance door leading into the service was appropriately secured. Entry to the service was accessible through a call bell and intercom system which staff members operated.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- Emergency exits were unobstructed.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap and paper hand towels were available at the wash hand basins throughout the service. The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, after nappy changing and following outdoor play.
- Nappy changing was carried out in keeping with the services nappy changing policy.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition and up to date cleaning schedules were maintained.
- Bed linen was individual to each child and a system was in place to wash the bed linen on a weekly basis and more frequently as required.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was stored safely out of reach of the children.

Safe Sleep:

- Sleep checks noting children's colour, breathing pattern and position were conducted at 10-minute intervals on all sleeping children in the service.
- All children aged less than 2 years slept in standard cot on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Fire drill records were maintained in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A door handle was missing on the door leading from ECCE Room 1 to the lobby area of the adjoining sanitary accommodation. This posed a risk of a child being unable to independently and promptly return to the care room after using the toilet or delay a staff member in entering the space in a timely manner if required, a situation which could cause a child to become distressed.
2. A tall shelving unit in ECCE Room 1 was unsecured and unstable and therefore this posed a potential safety hazard if pulled down by or onto a child in attendance.

Infection Control:

3. A mattress cover which was positioned on a cot mattress used by the children attending the Toddler room was thin and not absorbent. This provided insufficient protection in the event of the mattress getting wet or soiled.

Safe Sleep:

- Two cot mattresses provided on 2 cots in the sleep room adjoining the Preschool room, both of which were occupied on the day of inspection, were not firm and felt flimsy to touch, measuring 4cm in height. It is recommended best practice that the minimum mattress depth of a cot mattress is 6cm.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

General Safety:

- Door handle has been replaced.
- The tall shelving unit in ECCE 1 has been repositioned.

Infection Control:

- A mattress with the non-absorbent cover in the Toddler Room has been disposed of and replaced.

Safe Sleep:

- The 2 cots mattresses in the preschool Room measuring 4cm in depth have been replaced.

Preventive Action

General Safety:

- A daily risk assessment is in place and all maintenance are high-lighted and repaired in a timely manner.
- Manager will ensure that all shelving would be secured or placed at a low level.

Infection Control:

- Manager will ensure that all mattress covers would provide sufficient protection in the event of the mattress getting wet or soiled.

Safe Sleep:

- Manager will ensure that all mattresses in the cots would be of appropriate depth.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of replaced door handle.

Photograph of replaced cot mattresses.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been reviewed and accepted.

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) A person trained in first aid including first aid responder (FAR) training was immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service as evidenced in the staff roster and the in-date FAR certifications provided for inspection.

(2)(a) and (b) The first aid boxes were suitably equipped and safely stored in readily accessible positions on the premises, out of the reach of children.

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 all fire drills which had been completed in the service. The records indicated that the most recent fire drill was conducted on 03/08/2023.

(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced in December 2022 and smoke alarms were serviced on the 19/08/2023.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.