

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY032		
Name of Service:	Blath Beag Creche		
Address of Service:	Blath Beag, Clochog, Oranmore, Co. Galway.		
Eircode:	H91 RH99		
Name of Registered Provider:	Aoife O'Driscoll		
Service type:	Full Day		
Date of Inspection:	14/05/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM 18
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	TUSLA - Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway.		
Inspection undertaken by:	H. Heagney		
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

This pre-school is in a housing development, in the village of Oranmore, Co. Galway. This privately operated service offers full day care, from 7.30hrs to 18.00hrs. The service is registered for pre-school children aged 0 to 6 years of age. A child centred play-based pre-school curriculum focusing on emerging interests is provided. The service is operating three playrooms – namely the Baby room, Wobbler room, and Toddler room. The premises have its own kitchen, where children’s meals and snacks are prepared and stored on site. The meals are cooked by a service chef in a partner pre-school and delivered daily. There are two designated sleep rooms with three cots adjacent to the Baby sleep room and four cots adjacent to the Wobbler room. Stackable beds are available for the older pre-school children, sleep provision. To the rear of the premises, there is a secure outdoor play area for children’s play, exploration, and fresh air.

Staffing

The registered provider is on the premises daily and works between this service, a partner pre-school, and a designated school aged service. There is a person in charge and deputy person in charge. There are seven staff, including the registered provider, working in the service. The seven staff hold at least a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a Level 6 to 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education. The staff have documentary evidence of ongoing training and education. Additionally, there is one adult over 18 years of age on a childcare work placement, who was supervised when interacting with the children.

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, and health, welfare, and development of child. 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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

(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) There was a designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputize in the service.
- (b) The person in charge was on the premises when the early years inspectors arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection.
- Documentary evidence indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available, on the premises, when the pre-school children were present.
- The files for the seven staff and the one adult over the age of 18 years on a childcare work placement were reviewed.
- (2)(a)&(b) Sixteen of the sixteen validated written references on file in respect of the seven staff and the one adult on a childcare work placement were from a past employer or a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the seven staff and the one adult over the age of 18 years, on a childcare work placement. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Documentary evidence indicated that three of the staff members had lived outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years, and had the required police vetting. It is acknowledged that where applicable, these police vetting were translated.
- (4) The seven staff working directly with the children had evidence of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a Level 6 to 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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) At all times during the period of the inspection, the person in charge ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.
- (2) On the morning of the inspection, there were 18 pre-school children present. All children were aged between 1 to 3 years. There were five staff directly caring for these children. Additionally, there was one adult on a childcare work placement who was supervised when interacting with the children. At 11.00hrs, an additional staff member commenced working in the service. On the afternoon of the inspection, there were 18 pre-school children present. All children were aged between 1 to 3 years. There were five staff directly caring for these children. Additionally, there was one adult on a childcare work placement who was supervised when interacting with the children. From 16.00hrs to 18.00hrs, an additional staff member commenced in the service. On the day of inspection, the registered provider and the service supervisor dropped into the pre-school service to support the administrative aspect of the inspection.
- (8)(a) The registered provider ensured that there were two staff on the premises at all times while the pre-school was operating.

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.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

(5) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)&(i)

Twenty-one children's records were reviewed by the early year's inspector.

The twenty-one records reviewed showed that the entries were factual, consistent, and accurate.

The twenty-one children's records contained the following:-

- The name and date of birth of the child.
- The date in which the child first commenced in the service.
- The date on which the child stopped attending the service (where relevant).
- The name and address of the child's parent or guardian, and a telephone number where that parent or guardian (or a relative or friend of the parent or child) can be contacted during the hours of operation.
- Written authorisation / permissions for collecting the child.
- Details were recorded of any illness, allergy, or additional need(s) the child had, together with all the information relevant to the provision of specific care or attention.
- The name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner.
- A record of any immunisations the child has had or were applicable an immunisation disclaimer.
- Written parental or guardian consent was included to allow the child to have appropriate medical treatment if there was / is an emergency.

(4)&(5) The person in charge advised and documentary evidence from file review indicated, that all relevant children's records were kept for 2 years from the date a child stops attending 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

- The staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities to support children's health, wellbeing, and development within the service.
- Healthy eating was promoted within the service. Nutritious meals and snacks were served at regular times, but there is flexibility. Healthy meals and snacks were served no more than 3 hours apart. Meals and snacks were appetising and healthy for children. Drinking water was available to children, for them to self-service or for the infants a staff member was able to regularly give, when needed. Enough time was allowed for bottle-feeding and mealtimes. Each child was given enough time to eat and enjoy their bottle, snack, or meal without being rushed.
- The atmosphere during mealtimes was relaxed, with pleasant social interaction among the children and staff. The staff encouraged and supported the children in the Wobbler and Toddler room to feed themselves independently, according to their age and stage of development. The younger children in the Baby room were fed. The crockery, cutlery and drinking utensils used were suitable for the children's ages and stage of development. Bibs were available for all the children at mealtimes.
- Children who have not eaten, or who were hungry were offered food at times outside routine meal and snack times, - an alternative food option.
- Children were seated at the table or in a highchair during snack and mealtimes, when their food was ready. Children sat at a comfortable height in relation to the tabletop. The tables and chairs were suitable to their age and stage of development.
- The privacy and dignity of each child was respected at all times. The staff responded to children's individual personalities, sensitivities and needs in relation to nappy changing. All the children wore nappies. There were two designated nappy changing areas. Each area was equipped with disposal aprons, gloves for staff and an airtight sealable bin for the disposal of nappies. Nappy changing was a positive experience for children. Staff responded to children's cues quickly. Nappies were changed as necessary and in a timely manner. Staff used the correct language surrounding nappy changing.

The staff talked to children and explained in advance that their nappy would be changed. Children were given one to one attention and staff member responded to communication cues, verbal and non-verbal.

- Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence. Picture and word reminders and instructions were displayed and used with the children to support personal care.
- Children were encouraged and supported to develop self-help and personal hygiene skills, for example staff showed children how to wash hands properly, and supervised children's handwashing before and after snacks and meals, after nappy changing, after blowing their noses, after messy play and after outdoor play.
- Staff provided for each child's comfort and ensured that each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation was met. The service worked with parents and guardians in relation to children's sleep patterns and sleep needs. The staff allowed children to sleep or rest when they were tired, and not just at a designated time. Staff recognised children's individual cues of tiredness indicating their need for sleep and rest. On the day of inspection, seventeen of the children had the opportunity to sleep. From 12.30hrs, eleven children were observed sleeping on stackable beds with two staff in the room supervising these children. The children in the Baby and Wobbler rooms slept on demand following individual cues of tiredness, in one of the two designated sleep rooms.
- Children had opportunities to move about freely and explore their environment, both indoors and outdoors. The service had safe and comfortable spaces for infants, toddlers, or children not walking, to lie, roll, creep, crawl, pull themselves up, learn to walk, and to be protected from children who are more mobile. Children had plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance. If an infant or child was in a highchair or other piece of equipment that constrains their movement, they were not in it for longer than fifteen minutes, other than at meals or snack times.
- The service supported children in forming and sustaining positive relationships with adults. For example,
 - by assigning a key person to each child;
 - showing respect for each unique child and developing their trust;
 - being actively involved in children's play, where appropriate (initiating games, joining in when invited to by children);
 - behaving in a way that creates a positive atmosphere (having frequent social conversations, joint laughter and showing affection);

- listening to the voice of the child as they communicate their needs, thoughts and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children’s cues, gestures and body language;
- encouraging children to think critically, ask questions and respond to them in a way that promotes sustained shared thinking;
- nurturing and comforting children;
- using soft tones, the child’s individual name, and getting down to their level and making eye contact.
- The staff recognised parents and guardians as the primary carers and educators of their children;
 - by communicating with parents and guardians in a sensitive, supportive and confidential manner, while being open and honest;
 - working with parents and guardians by sharing knowledge and observations of the child’s interests, strengths, developmental and care needs, approaches to learning, changes in their life, and any other concerns;
 - providing parents and guardians with daily information, including significant events or activities involving their child (for example, their child’s sleep and rest patterns);
 - providing opportunities for parents and guardians to be involved with service activities, considering the family circumstances, the parents’ or guardians’ particular interests and their time commitments.
- The service used a childcare application which allowed the staff to interactively communicate with parents and guardians on their child’s care needs and learning experiences. The childcare application captured a child’s attendance record, daily care needs such as food, medication, nappy changing and sleep provision. Learning and picture stories were collated showing the individual child’s likes, interests, and preferences. There were also photographs of children engaging in activities and their art and craftwork. There was also evidence that the staff participated in weekly planning.
- Transition of children within the service were made as seamless and comfortable as possible. For examples, the children were made aware of routines and daily transitions so that they knew what to expect, and could prepare themselves for transitions like going outside, getting ready for dinner, or going for a sleep.
- There was evidence of the policy on managing behaviour being implemented. Relevant staff knew the requirements and had a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the policy on managing behaviour. There was documentary evidence that relevant staff had received training on the policy on managing behaviour. Children were supported to recognise, express and cope positively with

emotions. Staff were observed listening to children in a caring, gentle way when they express emotions, and reassuring them that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions at times. Staff responded to infants in a timely and appropriate way when they cry or became upset. Children who show signs of social and emotional difficulties were given the appropriate care and support within the service.

- The staff supported children to enter social groups, develop friendships with other children, and to learn to help and positively engage with other children and the adults. The staff encouraged and praised children for specific, positive, and appropriate behaviours. Children were given positive alternatives, rather than just being told 'no'. Children were supported in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict.
- The design, organisation and resourcing of the environment supported each child's wellbeing, learning and development, within the ethos and philosophy of the service. The environment was comfortable, inviting and laid out to accommodate the needs of all children and adults in the setting. The environment provided a range of challenging, diverse, creative, and enriching experiences for all children in line with their stage of development.
- The atmosphere in the learning environment was encouraging and unhurried. Staff encouraged children to interact and to engage with a range of materials, activities, equipment in the indoor and outdoor environment, based on the child's needs, choices, interests and age and stage of development.
- On the day of inspection, the children enjoyed running, chasing, climbing the bridge frame and tyres, on rockers, on motor bicycles, playing in the mud kitchen, at water painting, filling, and carrying buckets, playing football, counting the legs of a spider, at chalk play, at group games, and having fun. The children enjoyed action songs such as 'head, shoulders knees and toes', 'the wheels on the bus', and 'ready steady go'. In the playrooms the children played house, enjoyed throwing and catching balls, selecting colours and shapes, using lock and latch boards, at drawing, playing house, at puzzle making, connecting, linking and construction.
- Materials and equipment were arranged so they are visible and readily accessible to promote independent access by children. There were different interest areas provided, where equipment and materials of similar use were arranged or grouped together.
- Children had opportunities to be outside as often as possible, on the day of inspection. The equipment and materials in the outdoor play area supported children's play, movement, and exploration, and provides opportunities exclusive to the outdoors. Safe and comfortable outdoor spaces were provided for children who are not yet walking. The outdoor play environment provided activities and opportunities for fresh air; discovery; and spaces for the children to relax.

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

- There was a healthy eating policy. The person in charge advised that healthy eating was promoted within the service by visual aids, and adherence to best practice guidelines.
- The main meals were provided by the service and prepared and cooked on site by the designated chef in a partner pre-school and delivered directly.
- Between 9.30hrs to 10.00hrs, the children had crackers and fruit pieces.
- At 11.30hrs, the children had warm homemade vegetable soup.
- At 14.30hrs, the children had a hot dinner which consisted of beef stew with mashed potatoes.
- At 17:00hrs, the children were offered ham and cheese sandwiches.
- The staff advised the inspector that there was no child currently on formula feed.
- Cutlery and plates were offered for children's snack / mealtimes.
- Clean and safe drinking water was at a low-level and accessible to children in each of the playrooms.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service's insurance specifying the address of the service, catering for a full day care service for 22 children at any one time, with an expiry date of 27th of March 2025, was available.

The insurance covered

- public liability,
- personal accident,
- against fire and theft,
- outings,
- building.