

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY136		
Name of Service:	Little Blossoms Childcare Centre		
Address of Service:	Camp Street, Oughterard, Co. Galway		
Eircode:	H91 RX64		
Name of Registered Provider:	Jennifer Geoghegan Tierney		
Service type:	Full Day Care		
Date of Inspection:	09/11/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	25	PM n/a
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:	F. Nic Dhonnacha		
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).

Description of service

This private pre-school is registered as a full day care service. Currently no child attends full day care hours at present, only children attending sessional hours are currently offered sessional care programme / Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) pre-school care programme from 09.00hrs to 12.00hrs and 9.00 to 12.30hrs, from Monday to Friday. Additionally, the service offers a school age programme from 13.30hrs to 17.30hrs for school aged children. The pre-school service is in the village of Oughterard, Co Galway. There are 3 playrooms namely the Junior pre-school playroom on the ground floor and the Senior preschool playroom and Toddler playroom on the first floor. The designated sleep room has been converted to a school age children s playroom now, adjacent to the Junior pre-school playroom. The children have access to secure outdoor play areas to the rear of the premises for children’s play activities, exploration, and new challenges. The service offers a child centred, play based pedagogy focusing on the children’s emerging interests with an element of Montessori included.

Staffing

On the day of inspection there were 5 adults on the premises including the registered provider. The registered provider is on the premises on a daily basis. There is a named person in charge and a named designated deputy and a person who provides auxiliary relief when required.

A total of 4 adults work directly with the children and hold at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework. The adult staff have documentary evidence of on-going training and education.

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, 15, 23, 25, and 28; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 16, 19, 20, 26 and 29.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 Records of the Pre-School Child.

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

(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) There was a designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service.

(b) The person in charge was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider advised that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available, on the premises, at all times when the pre-school children were present.

(2)(a)(b) Ten written validated references, on file for the staff members were from a past employer or from a source other than the past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for the five staff members.

(d) Not applicable, as none of the staff had lived outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 months, while over the age of 18 years and thereby did not require police vetting.

- (4) Four staff held a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a minimum of a Level 5, in Early Childhood Care and Education. Copies of qualifications were on file for the four staff working directly with the children.

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) Adult child ratios were adhered to on the morning of the inspection, there were 25 pre-school children aged between 1 year 9 months to 5 years attending the service sessional care programme.
- There were 4 childcare staff working directly with the children that included the registered provider, who additionally assisted with the administration function of the inspection.
- At all times during the period of inspection, the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained.
- On the morning of the inspection at 09.45hrs there were 25 pre-school children
- 2 children aged 1-2years
 - 4 children aged 2-3years
 - 19 children aged 3-5 years.
- At 13.30 hrs the school age programme commenced and three staff members including the registered provider work directly with these children.

Non-Compliance Information

(8)(a) The registered provider informed the inspector that she did not consistently maintain daily rosters in each playroom in the pre-school service. The early years inspector was unable to assess whether there was a minimum of 2 staff on the premises at all times while the pre-school was operating.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

On the 7/12/2023 the registered provider advised of the following.

Corrective and Preventive Action

All staff sign a daily roster each day in each playroom in the preschool service. A daily staff roster will be maintained with the child attendance records.

Supporting documentation submitted

A photograph of the daily roster.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted were reviewed and address the non-compliance identified.

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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) A sample of nine of thirty-four enrolment forms for children that are currently attending were reviewed by the inspector. The details relating to (1) (a) to (j) were documented on each child record.

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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

Non-Compliance Information

- (h) Details of attendance for each child attending the service were not maintained on a daily basis, detailing their time of arrival and departure.
- Some records were maintained for children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education programme. But adequate records for children attending the Toddler room were not recorded.
- This posed a risk to the safety of both staff and children in the event of an emergency.
- (i) Details of the staff roster for each staff member was not maintained on a daily basis.
- The time of arrival, departure, staff breaks and relief cover were not recorded.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

On the 7/12/2023 the registered provider advised of the following.

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (h) Details of daily attendance of each pre-school child in all playrooms is recorded and records will be maintained going forward in the service.
- (i) A staff roster will be maintained on a daily basis in the pre-school service.

Supporting documentation submitted

A photograph of both the children's and staff daily attendance record.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted were reviewed and address the non-compliance identified.

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

Basic Needs

(1)(a) (b)

- The service had a healthy eating policy to view on request.
- In the morning the children attending on a sessional hour had their snacks provided by the parents and guardians which included cheese, yogurt, crackers, fruit, ham sandwiches, wraps, croissants with water to drink.
- Parents / guardians of children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and sessional care programme supply their children's own snacks.
- The children were given sufficient time to eat in an unhurried manner and the children sat at age-appropriate low-level chairs and tables while eating.
- Seven children from the Toddler and Junior Preschool playroom, wore nappies and had their nappies changed on a regular basis, in a timely manner, in the designated nappy changing area.
- The children had unrestricted access to the toilet and did not have to wait to use the toilet.
- The tables and chairs were suitable for the children's ages and stages of development. On the day of inspection, the children ate together for their snacks and main meals and had the freedom of movement within their respective playroom.
- All children have the opportunity to play outside for physical exercise and movement on a daily basis.
- The children from the Senior Preschool Playroom and the Junior Preschool Playroom were observed at circle time listening to stories and singing action songs. The children in the Toddler Playroom were observed playing with small animals, farmyards, colouring pictures of hedgehogs and with shape sorter toys.

- The children from the Toddler playroom were observed making and colouring pictures of hedgehogs, the theme of the week was, all about hibernating and winter.

Supporting Relationships

- Information was provided to parents and guardians at drop off and collection times and via the private app or by phone.
- The children's art and craft materials were collated and given to parents and guardians on a seasonal basis. Themes and observations were recorded in the playroom planner and various learning pictures, observations and activities were shared with parents and guardians.
- The outdoor play areas to the rear of the premises were sufficiently spacious to accommodate the numbers of children attending the service. Items included a large activity centre, wooden playhouse, planter boxes, mud kitchen, balls, slide, cars and transport toys.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic Needs

- In the Junior Preschool Playroom and Toddler Playroom drinking water was not available for children to self-serve in the playroom. The children did not have access to a water station, that allowed them the opportunity to take a drink if thirsty on a regular basis. The children's drinking cups were stored in their school bags resulting in the children only taking a drink at snack time.
- In conflict with the service's own policy, crockery and plates were not offered to the children during their snack time. Children ate from their lunch boxes, from tin foil covering and or directly from the tabletops. It is acknowledged that the registered provider advised the practice of using the services crockery and plates ceased during last term and showed the inspector the crockery and plates in the press.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Basic Needs

Corrective and Preventive Action

- The children's drinking cups and water bottles are accessible on a low shelf in the Junior Preschool and Toddler room. The children will remove their water bottles from their bags on arrival and place them on the low shelf/ table where it is easy to access throughout the session.
- The practice of using the services crockery and plates for the pre-school children's snack/ lunches has recommenced. The children will use the plates and cutlery on a daily basis now.

Supporting documentation submitted

A photograph of new water station and delph and cutlery .

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted were reviewed and address the non-compliances identified.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The play equipment and materials that were specific to the children attending were freely available and accessible to these children.

- Each playroom was laid out in an attractive way that was interesting for the children such as the montessori materials were laid out on shelving or the way the small toys were in labelled boxes clearly labelled.
- The child size tables and chairs provided for the children were maintained in good condition and were arranged by the adults to facilitate the children to sit together at their mealtimes and for tabletop activities.

- There were defined interest areas in each of the playrooms with a wide variety of toys and play materials which included a home corner, library, small animals, blocks, construction, puzzles, jigsaws, arts and crafts, dolls, buggies, Montessori materials, musical instruments, garages, cars, trucks, tracks, sand basins and a bears cave.
- Displayed on the walls of each of the playrooms were art and craft work, visual aids and posters including birthdays, my family, curriculum, flowers, our adventure begins, hedgehogs, colours, shapes, and Winter.

(3)(a) OUTDOOR AREA:

- The outdoor areas to the rear of the service were secured by means of a high blocked walls and wooden fencing and gates. The outdoor area was divided into 3 zones for the children in each playroom.
- There was a combination of surfaces including artificial grass, tarmacadam, and an impact absorbing surface.
- Items included: ride on toys, push toys, cones, and a large playhouse, a household area with a kitchen, pots, pans, and utensils, child sized tables, chairs, and seating areas, a climbing frame, balance beams, slide and see saws, a mud kitchen, pots, pans, and utensils, a planting area , mounted flower shaped blackboards,
- There was a large storage shed, which was secured for storage of play equipment and materials for indoor and outdoor use.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)

1. A sleep/rest facility was not provided for 1 child aged 20months who was observed displaying need for sleep/rest in the Toddler playroom. This child was observed rubbing her eyes and sucking her soother while being comforted by the staff member. Sleep facilities were not available for use as they were stored in a garage to the rear of the facility.
2. Facilities for rest were not clearly defined or adequately developed within each of the playrooms. There were limited materials available, where a child could rest/relax or opt out of an activity if they choose.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

On the 7/12/2023, 15/12/2023 and 19/12/2023 the registered provider advised of the following.

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. A mattress is available if any child shows signs of being tired, it is stored in the storeroom in the hall and only brought into the room when needed, the sheet is washed after every use.
2. In the Toddler room the corner has more cushions added if children wish to relax with a book. All cushions and blankets are washed weekly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs of a mattress and picture of cushions on rubber matting.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider to address the non-compliance documented in points 1 and 2 remain non-compliant as the registered provider's response did not provide adequate assurance that the non-compliance had been rectified.

Adequate sleep facilities have not been provided for children aged less than 2years.

Evidence that rest areas have been adequately developed in each playrooms has not been provided.

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 into the pre-school was secure to prevent unauthorised access by a person or the unsupervised exiting by a pre-school child.
- The external outdoor play areas were secured by boundary walls, fencing and gates so that unauthorised persons could not access or enter the area or children could not exit unsupervised.
- All cleaning agents and equipment were stored inaccessible and out of children's reach.
- All blinds' cords were secured and thereby inaccessible to a pre-school child.
- Fire doors throughout the building were unobstructed.

Infection Control:

- Hand washing facilities were provided with a supply of warm water, liquid hand soap and disposable paper hand towels.
- An airtight sealable bin was available for the disposal of used nappies in the nappy changing area.
- Staff involved in the serving of food and nappy changing used disposal aprons and gloves when nappy changing.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- Adults have a comfortable place to sit, hold, read with and comfort children in the Toddler Playroom.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The water for hand washing in the nappy changing area was not thermostatically controlled to a maximum of 43°C. The temperature was recorded at 48.2°C and 49.°C. This posed a risk burning/scalding to both staff and children.

Infection Control:

1. Childrens lunches which contained perishable items such as cheese, yogurts and yogurt pouches and ham were not stored in the fridge. They were observed stored in their school bags. This posed a risk to the children.
2. There was no system for safe storage of individual child soothers or the safe sterilising of soothers in the Toddler Playroom. Staff advised that soothers were rinsed under tap water and any spare soothers were kept loosely in the child's bag. This posed a risk of cross infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

On the 7/12/2023, 14/12/2023 and 19/12/2023 the registered provider advised of the following.

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The water regulator was re set and the temperature is controlled below 43°C. The water temperature is checked regularly and recorded.

Infection Control:

1. Perishable items from children's lunch boxes are labelled and placed in the fridge as soon as the children arrive to the pre-school. Each playroom has their own basket in the fridge.
2. Soothers are stored in a labelled container now with the child's name on it. There is a steriliser in the Toddler room now for the safe sterilisation of soothers if required.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs of actions taken.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted has been reviewed. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

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 service provided evidence that a person trained in first aid for children was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service. Two staff had current First Aid Responder training.
- (2)(a) There was a first aid box with content items within date, safely stored, easily accessible and stored in a conspicuous position in the kitchen.
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid box was fully equipped, in date and available to the children attending the pre-school 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 firefighting 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)(b) Records were available in relation to the number, type, and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment with the annual service dated 14/04/2023.
- The smoke and fire detection alarm system for the premises had the last annual service dated 4/08/2023.
- (4) Notices were displayed within the service of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire in the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(a) Records of fire drills carried out on a monthly basis were not available since the service re opened in September 2023. The last fire drill was dated 27/06/2023.
- This posed a risk to the safety of both staff and children in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

On the 7/12/2023 the registered provider advised of the following.

Corrective and Preventive Action

A fire drill took place after the inspection date. The registered provider has placed a reminder on her phone to carry out fire drills. A record will be recorded in each room.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of fire drill record sheet.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider address the non-compliance identified.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had adequate insurance with an expiry date 27.03.2024. The insurance was for a sessional and school age children's service for 34 children and included the following -

- public liability insurance;
- insurance against fire and theft;
- buildings insurance;
- insurance for outings undertaken as part of the service provision.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (b) safe and secure,*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*

Compliance Information

- (b)
- Appropriate security systems were in place to protect the premises from any unauthorised entry, and unsupervised exit of children from the service. The service had a bell entry system.
 - Exits were clearly always identified and visible during service hours.
 - The physical environment was safe, secure, and suitable for purpose.
This included the following:
 - Passageways were free of obstacles.
 - electrical sockets were safe
 - floor coverings were secured and non-slip
 - All areas, both indoors and outdoors, were free from glass, rubbish, sharp or hazardous items and visible debris.
 - Storage space for equipment was separate from the early years room floor space and was inaccessible to children.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d) No evidence was provided of cleaning records to demonstrate active cleaning and disinfecting of toys, equipment, materials, tabletops, furniture, floors, sanitary areas, and playrooms. The registered provider acknowledged the cleaning is carried out but not consistently recorded in the service.
1. There was mould and mildew visible on the window frames, in the Toddler Playroom and Senior Preschool Playroom.
 2. There was evidence of a build-up of dust on the mechanical ventilation system in the Junior Preschool sanitary area on the first floor.
 3. The hot water tap in the Junior Preschool Playroom toilet on the first floor was seized / broken and no water was coming out of the tap. This tap is in need of maintenance and repair.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

On the 7/12/2023 and 14/12/2023 the registered provider advised of the following.

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (d) Cleaning records are now maintained in each playroom, sanitary area, and nappy changing area.
1. The window frames in both the Toddler and Senior Preschool playroom have been cleaned and records are maintained.
 2. The mechanical ventilation system in the Junior Preschool sanitary area has been cleaned and records will be maintained going forward.
 3. The hot water tap has been maintained and repaired in the Junior Preschool Playroom sanitary area on the first floor. The children can use this sanitary area now if required.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs of works completed.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance identified under Regulation 29 (d) points 1-3 have been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.