

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY271
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Name of Service:	Tiny Tots Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Slieveroe, Athenry, Co. Galway.
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Eircode:	H65 E330
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Name of Registered Provider:	Anne Clarke
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	10/06/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	N/A
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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.
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Inspection undertaken by:	H. Heagney
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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

Tiny Tots Preschool operates from a detached premises on the grounds of the registered providers home, near the village of Athenry, Co. Galway. An Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) sessional care programme is offered from 9.30hrs to 12.30hrs, Monday to Friday. The pre-school caters for children aged between 2 years and 8 months to 6 years. The pre-school is registered for a maximum of twenty children. A child led play-based curriculum focusing on emerging interests with a focus on a Montessori pedagogy is provided. There is one playroom and sanitary areas. The pre-school children have access to a designated secure outdoor play area (which includes an all-weathered sheltered area) to the side of the premises, for play activities and exploration.

Staffing

There are two staff, including the registered provider, who hold a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a Level 6, in Early Childhood Care and Education. The registered provider and staff member have documentary evidence of ongoing 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, and safety. 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, staff member 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 deputize in the service.
- (b) The registered provider was on the premises when the early years inspector 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 two files were reviewed.
- (2)(a)&(b) Four of the four validated written references on file in respect of the registered provider and staff member were from a past employer, or a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the registered provider and staff member. 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 none of the staff had lived outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years, and thereby did not require police vetting.
- (4) The registered provider and the staff member working directly with the children had evidence of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at Level 6, 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)-*
- (c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to*

provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

- (1) At all times during the period of the inspection, the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.
- (2) Documentary evidence in the form of attendance records and staff rosters indicated that adult child ratios were adhered to. On the morning of the inspection, there were 18 pre-school children present. All children were aged between 2 years and 8 months to 5 years. There were two staff directly caring for these children.
- (8)(c) 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)

Twelve children's records were presented and reviewed by the early years inspector.

The sample twelve records reviewed showed that the entries were factual, consistent, and accurate.

The 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 where applicable a 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

- Each child was given enough time to eat and enjoy their snacks without being rushed. The atmosphere during snack time was relaxed, with pleasant social interaction among the children and staff.
- The crockery, cutlery and drinking utensils used were suitable for the children's ages and stage of development.
- The staff responded to children's individual personalities, sensitivities and needs in relation to toileting. The children had unrestricted access to the toilet and did not have to wait to use the toilet. Children were allowed to take their time during toileting. Staff encouraged and supported children to become more independent in toileting practices.
- Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence, and to develop self-help and personal hygiene skills.
- Children had plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance.
- The service supported the children in forming and sustaining positive relationships with staff.

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 atmosphere in the learning environment was encouraging and unhurried.
- The outdoor environment provided children with activities and opportunities for
 - fresh air, discovery, relaxing (e.g., activity centre with slide, steps and two swings, there was a house with a fireplace and seating and there was a fairy garden),
 - releasing energy (e.g., playing chase, enjoying the swings),

- physical exercise and play (e.g., jumping, running, chasing),
- exploring, engaging, and experimenting with nature (e.g., bugs, insects, planted tyres, an apple tree, sand, and gravel areas),
- feelings associated with taking risks, learning about risk, and learning from risk, and challenging their own capabilities within safe limits (e.g., rockers, push cars and a slide).
- The staff ensured children had access to a variety of clothing for example, waterproof coats and trousers, and appropriate wellingtons and footwear for outdoor play.
- The children were supported to be confident about their identity and to have a strong sense of belonging each day while in the service.
- Staff encouraged children to interact and to engage with a range of materials, activities, equipment in the outdoor environment, based on the child’s needs, choices, interests and age and stage of development.
- There were different interest areas provided where equipment, and materials of similar use were arranged or grouped together for example literacy library, house / kitchen, dress up and sensory areas.
- Children engaged in playing house / kitchen / shop, at dress up and playing with puppets, connecting, at construction, stacking, and building. The children enjoyed puzzle making, insets, stamping, drawing, sorting shapes and colours. The children opened and closed clasps on latch boards and dressing frames, stamping, at water play, washing and feeding dolls, playing with animals and machinery on the farm, throwing balls and shapes, and at mix and match. There was also circle and story time.
- In the outdoor area, the children were observed on the swings, chasing, climbing the activity centre, going through the tunnels, playing with hula hoops, playing house, cooking at the mud kitchen, and playing on the rocker. The children enjoyed running, jumping, and chasing. The children had fun riding bicycles, and tractors, playing with transport vehicles, playing football, at sand play - filling buckets, diggers, and shapes.
- Staff guided and supported children who needed more help. Staff used positive strategies to support children’s inclusion for example using personal greetings, news of the day, looking at family photographs, and giving appropriate encouragement. Parents and guardians were encouraged to visit the service, prior to the child starting. On the day of inspection, two children attended the ‘settling in programme’ and the parents were invited to stay with their child and take whatever time was needed to adjust to the new environment.
- Visual aids (picture and word reminders) and instructions were displayed and used with the children to support their learning. Displayed on the walls were themes including we are family, hello, we all fit

together, my body, sea animals, look at me, Summer, we are learning to count, the solar system, the five seasons, and visual aids such as 'I cover my cough', 'I listen quietly' etc.

- The theme of the week was summer fun and graduation preparation. The theme of the month was the zoo.
- The staff communicated 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 at drop off and collection times, via an instant messaging application, by phone and by text.
- Each child had a profile scrapbook showing their learning journey. The themes to date included everything about me, hello Nemo, circle caterpillar, seasons, festivals, shapes, numbers, sheep, harry the hedgehog, marking skills, and what lives in the pond. Staff collated artwork for each child in their individual folder and this was collated and sent home on a seasonal basis. The staff completed a pre-school progress report for each child.
- There were established networks within the community with photographic evidence of visits to the pre-school from the Galway hurling team members, the doctor, garda, farmer and ambulance paramedics.
- The staff listened to children in a caring, gentle way when they expressed emotions, and reassured them that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions at times. The staff acknowledged and accepted children's feelings (positive and negative) and the relationships between children's actions and other's responses. The staff supported children to enter social groups, and to learn to help and positively engage with other children. The staff encouraged and praised children for specific, positive, and appropriate behaviours. The children were given choice on what to do next.
- The programme of care was flexible and guided by the children's choices. Children were supported by the staff during periods of individual and group-based activities, the staff sensitively supervised and intervened when necessary.
- The staff were observed helping children to find solutions, supporting them, and talking to the children in a variety of ways, discussing, questioning, modelling, and commentating, extending a child's activities and initiating games and activities. The staff provided significant opportunities for the child to decide their play activities and experiences.
- Staff used positive strategies to support children's inclusion. For example, the inspector noted that the staff acknowledged a child's engagement in an activity 'that is great' 'well done' and used open ended

questions such as ‘what should we do next?’, ‘is there any other way to do this?’, to allow children to critically think and explore.

- Throughout the inspection, the voice of the child, their choices, interests and their age and stage of development were considered. The children were given positive alternatives, rather than just being told ‘no’. The children were supported in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. Children could identify, name, and explore their feelings both positive and negative.

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 entry to the premises and the staff only areas – the hall, storage areas, and adult sanitary area were secure and thereby inaccessible to a pre-school child.
- The external outdoor play area was secure so that children could not leave the area unsupervised and unauthorised persons could not enter the area.
- Fire doors were unobstructed.
- All cleaning agents were stored inaccessible to the children.
- Leads, cables, and flexes were secured and or inaccessible to prevent any trips or strangulation hazard.
- The playroom temperatures were thermostatically controlled, and maintained between 18°C to 22°C.
- Thermostatically controlled warm water not exceeding 43°C to facilitate hand washing was available to facilitate hygienic hand washing.
- Heavy equipment and furnishings were anchored appropriately.
- Playroom openable windows were high and thereby inaccessible to the children. Blind cords had fasteners.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- There were no pits or ponds in the outdoor area to cause any risk of injury to the pre-school child. The service had evidence that equipment was suitable for the children’s age and stage of development.

- There was a documented risk assessment system for the indoor and outdoor play areas, for checking that toys and equipment were not broken, in a clean condition and maintained in a good state of repair.
- The staff clearly identified to the early year's inspector, the drop off and collection procedures for children.
- A system was in place to ensure that daily records of attendance were kept for all the children, attending the pre-school.

Infection Control:

- Hand washing facilities were provided with a supply of warm water, liquid hand soap and disposal paper towels. There were two designated children's wash hand basins in the sanitary area.
- Children were observed washing their hands after toileting, after messy play, outdoor play and prior to their snacks.
- Tabletops and work surfaces were cleaned with disposal paper towels and disinfectant spray.
- The playroom was kept adequately ventilated with the doors left open whilst maintaining the room temperatures at the required levels.
- Adequate supplies of disposable tissues were readily available in the playroom.
- The service had a cleaning templates and schedules.

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 two staff working in the pre-school service had evidence of first aid responder qualification.
- (2)(a) A suitably equipped first aid box were available and in an easily accessible conspicuous position.
- (b) The first aid box was readily available, with content items within date.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had insurance with an expiry date 27th of March 2025, which was for a sessional service for 22 children which included the following:

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