

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

111111TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KE003
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Name of Service:	Wigwam Playschool
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Address of Service:	Ballysax, Curragh, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	R56 PW71
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Name of Registered Provider:	Geraldine Delahunt
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	21/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	28	PM	n/a
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child and Family Agency, Suite 7, Vista Primary Care, Ballymore Eustace Road, Naas, Co. Kildare, W91 X38W
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Mulhern and S. Quigley
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

Wigwam Playschool is a privately operated early years service located in a rural area close to Ballysax village in Kildare. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme, offering a sessional service to children aged 2-6 years between 9am and 12pm, 38 weeks per year. Learning is facilitated through a play-based curriculum. Children have access to a large outdoor area and two pre-school rooms, each containing sanitary facilities situated in stand-alone prefabricated units. A separate sanitary facility is provided in a third stand-alone prefabricated unit for use when children are outdoors. An office is provided in a log cabin and a parking area is available to the front of the premises.

Staffing

There are nine staff members employed in the service. Eight staff members are employed to work directly with the pre-school children including the registered provider.

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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations:

- Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b)(c), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4) - Management and recruitment.
- Regulation 11(1),(3) – Staffing Levels.
- Regulation 19 (1)(a) – Health, welfare and development of child.
- Regulations 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child
- Regulation 25 (1), (2)(a)(b) – First aid.
- Regulation 26 (1), (4) - Fire safety measures
- Regulation 27 – Supervision

However, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29(d) - Premises. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part 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
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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 had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise in their absence.
 - (b) There was a designated person in charge and a named person who could deputise on the premises throughout the inspection.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in place including roles and responsibilities of staff. The staff member and person in charge were aware of the lines of authority and accountability.
- (2)
- (a) (b) References had been sourced from past employers and from another source where staff members had only one or no previous employers. The references had a record of verification checks carried out.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for nine staff members, eight of which were dated within the last three years. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years in relation to one staff member. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Not applicable as none of the adults had lived outside of the state.

(4) Seven staff members employed to work directly with pre-school children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education between Level 5 and 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(4) One staff member did not hold at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent by the Minister.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The staff member has eight modules completed at Level 5. This situation has been recognised. The service has had this issue for years and this is why the staff member's position was not to be caring in the room. The staff member's position is administration and cleaning. The third team member in that room was on unplanned leave and another staff member was on site to act as relief instead. The registered provider spoke to staff and it has been agreed that if this happens again there is adequate staff to cover without calling in administration or cleaning staff. Staff roles and responsibilities have been communicated to everyone.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted have been deemed to address the non-compliance.

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.*
- (3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

Compliance Information

- (1) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children throughout the inspection. There were 6 staff members working directly with 28 children.
- (3) The minimum adult to child ratio requirement was maintained in accordance with the ages and type of service delivered.

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*

Compliance Information

Basic Needs

Children's basic needs were effectively met. They moved freely, playing outdoors for most of the session. They were dressed appropriate for the weather in rain gear and boots. The children had access to their drinks which they brought from home in beakers. There was a break midway through the session to eat. The children sat together in small groups when eating. They brought nutritious food from home in accordance with the services healthy eating policy. They used the toilet independently when they needed, with staff nearby to assist if required. Children wearing nappies, had these changed as needed with staff engaging gently and kindly during the

interactions. Clear routines were established for handwashing before meals, after outdoor play and after using the bathroom or nappy changing.

Supporting Relationships around Children

The service fostered positive relationships by offering support through attentive listening, responsive interactions and gentle guidance. The children sought support when needed such as dressing for outdoor play. The children were cared for by the same adults each day to support the formation of secure relationships and attachments.

The adults encouraged children to work together during activities and resolve conflicts with kindness and respect. Group activities, such as shared mealtimes and collaborative play, were designed to promote social bonding, allowing children to build friendships and develop essential communication skills. The staff provided ways for families to connect with the service through newsletters, a messaging system and communicating with parents/guardians at drop off and collection. They reported that meetings are offered to parents if needed to support the child's experience within the service.

Physical and Material Environment

The children spent most of the session outdoors in a large natural space with small hills and poly tunnels. The area was sectioned into separate spaces and was designed to encourage exploration, independence, risk-taking, creativity and a range of play experiences. Each area had covered spaces for play and activities during harsh weather. The areas included a large sand room, mud kitchens, planting areas and a large sensorial garden. Rest areas with soft cushions and books were available, offering children a space to relax or take a break from more active play. Equipment included swings, slides, seesaws, ride-on toys, climbing frames and a variety of dens and wooden playhouses. Staff reported that the children spend most of the session in the outdoor area all year round.

Children had access to one of two cabins which they used for their meal, changed into and out of their outdoor clothing, used the toilet, washed their hands and engaged in a painting activity. These rooms were laid out with open shelves which displayed a variety of materials, including fine motor materials such as arts and craft materials, building blocks and puzzles. These were within easy reach of the children, promoting child-led choice and decision-making. Interest areas included home, construction, mark-making and rest areas with a small library.

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:

Measures had been taken to safeguard the children. The entrances and exits were secured to prevent unauthorised access or children leaving unsupervised. Cleaning products and medicines were kept out children's reach. Emergency exits were kept clear to allow for timely evacuation in the event of a fire and staff members demonstrated an awareness of fire evacuation procedures.

Infection Control:

Measures were implemented to minimise the risk of infection spreading. Children were supported to wash their hands after using the toilet, after nappy changing, after outdoor play, and before eating. Staff displayed a clear understanding of the exclusion criteria for children showing signs of contagious illness, in line with the service's infection control policy.

Administration of Medication:

Staff demonstrated an understanding of procedures to administer medication if needed. This included obtaining parental or guardian consent. A sample of records of medications given previously were reviewed and contained the required information including the name of the person who gave the medicine and the person who witnessed. The records were signed by parents/guardians to verify the information had been shared.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for all staff members. However, one staff member's vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

2. Three tall, heavy lockers used for staff storage in the Rainbow room were not secured to the wall, posing a risk of tipping and injury to a child.
3. A rodent snap trap was situated next to the toilet in the cabin used by the children when they were playing outdoors, posing a risk of injury if they were to handle it.

Infection Control:

4. A pedal operated bin was not available to allow for hands – free disposal of nappies in the sanitary facility used for nappy-changing when the children were playing outdoors. The inspector observed staff pushing a nappy into the bin by hand, increasing the risk of cross-contamination.
5. The sanitary facility used by the children for nappy-changing when the children were playing outdoors was also used to store play equipment and soft furnishings posing a risk of cross contamination.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Updated vetting has been received. The registered provider will ensure all Garda vetting is renewed and will check these before the service commences yearly.
2. The lockers have been removed and will only be reinstalled when they can be secured to the wall.
3. The trap was placed in this area by error and is not required as part of pest control. It was removed on the day of inspection. This has been added to the risk control checklist.

Infection Control:

4. The bin has been replaced with a non-contact pedal operated bin. This will be monitored for use.
5. All items have been removed, washed, sanitised and stored in an alternative room. Daily risk assessments will be undertaken to ensure only required items are in the sanitary area.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Documents and photographs in keeping with the actions stated.

Infection Control:

Documents and photographs in keeping with the actions stated.

Summary Comment

The regulatory requirement has been met.

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 for children was always available.

(2)

(a) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were stored in conspicuous positions easily accessible to staff.

(b) The first aid boxes were always available for use.

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) Records were available of fire drills carried out in the service. The most recent drill recorded was dated 12 September 2024.
 - (b) Records were available detailing the maintenance of the smoke alarm system and fire fighting equipment dated 16 October 2024 and 23 September 2024 respectively.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire were displayed in conspicuous positions.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The adults provided appropriate supervision of the children, primarily by keeping them in sight. Staff ensured proper supervision while the children transitioned between the indoor and outdoor areas.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required

Non-Compliance Information

1. The cabin used by the children for toileting and nappy changing when outdoors was not adequately cleaned, maintained or repaired as outlined below:
 - (a) The wooden door to the cabin was extensively worn and warped and could not be easily closed.
 - (b) The wallpaper was peeling in areas and there were visible patches of black spots indicative of damp.
 - (c) There was a build-up of dust, debris, cobwebs and dead insects on the floor and windowsill.
2. The sanitary area used by children in the Little Clouds room had not been adequately cleaned. Inspectors observed a build-up of dust and debris on the floor of the toilet area on the morning of the inspection.
3. There was no warm water available for adequate handwashing in the Little Clouds sanitary facility or the cabin used by children for toileting and nappy changing when outdoors.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1.
 - (a) The door has been repaired and now operates easily.
 - (b) The wallpaper has been replenished. The roof has been repaired.
 - (c) The room was cleaned and sanitised immediately after the inspection.
2. The room was cleaned and sanitised immediately after the inspection. The cleaning schedule has been revised and has been agreed with staff.
3. The hot water was not turned on the morning of the inspection. This has been added to the checklist for morning duties.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documents and photographs in keeping with the actions stated.

Summary Comment

The regulatory requirement has been met.