

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KE172				
Name of Service:	Minnows Childcare				
Address of Service:	13 Straffan Wood, Straffan Green, Maynooth, Co. Kildare				
Eircode:	W23 F2Y9				
Name of Registered Provider:	Joyce Grant				
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	03/07/2023				
Date of Regulatory Compliance Meeting:	06/09/2023				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>7</td> <td>PM</td> <td>7</td> </tr> </table>	AM	7	PM	7
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Suite 7, Vista Primary Care Centre, Ballymore Eustace Road Naas, Co. Kildare W91 X38W
Inspection undertaken by:	T. Duignan
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

Minnows Childcare provides full day-care, part-time care and sessional care to pre-school children aged 2 - 6 years of age. The service operates from 7:30am – 18:30 hours Monday to Friday. The service is based in a purpose-built building located in a housing development on the outskirts of Maynooth. There are three care rooms, a kitchen, and an office. The outdoor area is located at the rear of the property.

Staffing

There were six adults present on the day of inspection, one of whom was the person in charge; two adults were working directly with the preschool children and two adults were working with the school age children. The registered provider was not present for the inspection. The area manager arrived in the service after the inspection commenced and remained for the duration of the inspection including feedback meeting.

The person in charge provided additional support to care rooms as required.

One of the three adults working directly with the preschool children all held a recognised qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education on the national framework of qualifications.

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 and premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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

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

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

Additional Information

1. A regulatory compliance meeting was conducted by the Inspection and Registration Manager and the Early Years Inspector with representatives of the registered provider on 6 September 2023.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, area manager, 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 a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) The named person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.
- The records for nine adults were requested for review.
- (2)
- (a) Two written and verified past employer references were available in respect of three staff members and one written and verified past reference was available in respect of three staff members.
- (b) Two written and verified reference from a reputable source other than a past employer was available in respect of one adult and one written and verified reference from a reputable source other than a past employer was available in respect of two adults.
- (c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for eight adults.
- (d) Police vetting was available for five adults who had resided outside the state for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.
- (4) Four adults employed and working directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications and one adult was in possession of a letter of eligibility to practice issued by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).

Non-Compliance Information

- (2) (a),(b) Two written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source other than a past employer, were not available in respect of two adults employed and one written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source other than a past employer, was not available in respect of one adult.

(c) Garda Vetting was not available for one adult.

(d) Police vetting was not available for one adult who had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) Two adults working directly with children did not have the relevant documentation on file determining the qualification held was a major award at Level 5 or equivalent in Early Childhood Care and Education.

This was a noncompliance on a previous inspection on 9 November 2022.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The person authorised on behalf of the registered provider stated in the third written response submitted that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

2.

(a), (b) All staff now have two written references from reputable sources.

(c) Garda vetting was recovered from the spam folder and forwarded later on the day of inspection.

(d) Police vetting application has been received and is now in the staff file. The staff member has an appointment arranged on 19 September 2023 at the relevant Embassy to apply for police vetting.

(4) The staff member who is awaiting QQI level 5 provisional qualification is now working with afterschool until we receive this qualification. The other staff member has a letter in her file from her college stating she has completed her QQI level 6 in Early childhood care and education August 2023 and it has been sent to QQI for validation.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2)

(a)(b) References x 2

(d) Police vetting document for one country.

(4) No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The written response and documentary evidence submitted has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate. The minimum requirement for Regulatory compliance is not met for regulation 9 as police vetting from one jurisdiction remains outstanding.

The documentary evidence submitted as qualification for the two adults is not evidence of qualification.

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) There were seven children attending the service being supervised directly by two adults.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day.

(8)(a) There were at least two adults on the premises at all times for the duration of the Inspection. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for 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, and

Compliance Information

Basic needs of children:

The service promoted a healthy eating policy. Food and snacks were provided at regular intervals during the day. Young children had the opportunity to feed themselves and their drinks were within their reach throughout the day should they feel thirsty. Additional portions were given to children who asked for more food at snack served at 10:30am and lunch served at 11:45am. Milk was offered as a drink to the children at snack and lunch.

Nappy changing was completed regularly and promptly when required. It was handled in a sensitive and positive manner. Independence was encouraged with children who were toilet trained however the staff members maintained supervision in case any assistance was needed.

The individual sleep needs of the children were met. All children requiring sleep, slept at a designated time during the day and were provided with as much time as they needed to sleep.

The adults working with the children were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours. Children were spoken to in a kind and respectful manner. Their first names were used, appropriate eye contact and gentle vocal tones were observed being used during all interactions.

Supporting relationships around children:

Staff members were observed being respectful, gentle and kind towards the children in their care.

They sat with the children at mealtimes and engaging them in conversation which ensured that the experience was relaxed and sociable.

Information was shared with parents and guardians at the drop off and collection times. Other information was shared with parents via a closed electronic communication system.

Face to face meetings can be arranged for parents/guardians as necessary and email and telephone contact are used as an alternative method of contact.

The person in charge has commenced a schedule of regular team meetings.

Physical and material environment:

Low level chairs and tables were available to the children for meals and tabletop activities.

The outdoor area was located at the rear of the premises; it was a spacious area and had a covered area which enabled its use during inclement weather.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic needs of children:

1. The rest area in Curious Caterpillar was not a cosy restful space. It consisted of a mat and five scatter cushions and a large wipeable mat which did not reflect an inviting and comfortable quiet space for the children to take a break from activities if they choose.

This was a noncompliance on a previous inspection on 9 November 2022. The corrective and preventative actions submitted failed to prevent recurrence of this non-compliance.

Physical and material environment:

2. The physical and material environment in Curious Caterpillars room was not constructively planned, considered or presented from a child's perspective. The indoor environment did not have interesting play and learning spaces which provided developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences that facilitated child led play. The defined areas of interest were inadequately presented and resourced as evidenced by the following observations:

- The home corner was poorly presented and minimally resourced. It consisted of a wooden play kitchen unit, a table with two chairs, a doll on the table, a small buggy and a wooden cash register on top of the wooden play kitchen unit. There was some associative equipment which was stacked together in a resource unit in another part of the room. There was one piece of dress up clothing which was mixed up in a container with other toys. It was not presented attractively to invite the children to engage in child led play and limited imaginative play.
- The construction area consisted of a basket with three plastic hard hats, two plastic hammers, a plastic screwdriver and a plastic wrench. There were three orange cones all placed randomly in a storage unit.
- The reading/ rest area consisted of cushions and a mat on the floor. The books were placed on a bookshelf which was a little distance away from the mat. The children were not observed to use the reading/ rest area for rest or to read a book.
- While it is acknowledged that the children had opportunity to play with water and sand in the outdoor area and playdough was provided by the staff members for an activity on the morning of the inspection, sand and water play were not provided in the care room for child led play. This limited access minimised the children's awareness to experience sensorial play and restricted their choice, natural curiosity and imagination.
- A wooden dolls house was placed against the wall while all the small internal play toys were stored in a plastic tub on a nearby shelf.
- A plastic container contained train tracks and wooden trains stored under a shelf in the corner of the room beside the fire escape.
- There were seven wooden peg board puzzles stacked on top of each other on a shelf in a storage unit, one jigsaw puzzle, baskets were stored in baskets and other resources were stacked on top of each other thereby limiting the children's choice. The materials were easily accessible and laid out to accommodate the needs of all the children.

- There were four baskets with colouring pencils and crayons on a shelf out of reach of the children. Aprons were hung up on hooks nearby but no painting, paper or art activity available to the children.
- There was no natural, real life, loose parts or open-ended materials available.
- There was limited equipment available to the children in the outdoor area. There was a medium sized climbing frame, a balance beam, one ride on toys and two push along scooters, two small water and sand trays, two plastic toy kitchens and three tyres. There were no associative resources available to enable the children to play with the plastic toy kitchens. The tyres and the two kitchens were not used.
- The surface of the outdoor area which was covered in artificial green carpet material became waterlogged in areas following a shower of rain due to poor drainage.

This was a noncompliance on a previous inspection on 9 November 2022. The corrective and preventative actions submitted failed to prevent recurrence of this non-compliance.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The person authorised on behalf of the registered provider stated in the third written response submitted that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

Basic needs of children:

1. A couch has been ordered for the book area and big soft cushions have been purchased to make the area more comfortable and appealing. The staff have been made aware of the extra books stored on the third floor and are now changing the books regularly and displaying them clearly.

Physical and material environment:

2. A lot of work has been done in a short space of time to improve the environment for the children and facilitate a more child led approach. There are two new larger shelves to help divide up the areas and create more defined areas for the children to enjoy. The home corner now has recycled products to make a more realistic experience and lots of dress up clothes are now displayed on hooks on the wall in this area. The playhouse is also in this area with small world toys for imaginative play. There is a small table and chairs in the home corner. There are dolls, dolls clothes and two prams.
The construction area is also more defined with the larger shelf and here there are lots of hard hats, hi vis jackets and tools for the children to enjoy. There are plenty of wooden blocks and plastic blocks etc for building. Pictures of buildings from the local town are on display in this area now "Our Maynooth".
There is now mark making/art area that the children have access to all day. There is playdough, paint, crayons, pencils, glue, scissors paper, glitter, coloured paper for gluing etc.
There is now a water and sand table in the room for use all day.

With the extra shelving there is now more space for the staff to display the jigsaws connecting toys for tabletop activities so the children can see what is there and where to put toys back. More baskets have been purchased to make display the toys and activities in a more appealing way.

A handy man was sourced to move shelves in the room and to add hooks to display the dress up and the construction items. He also removed the garden bench.

The outdoor area has been organised better with an outdoor classroom area for the children to do arts and crafts as an extension of the classroom. A wooden sandbox, teepee and mud kitchen has been purchased and a new ride on car.

To develop our loose parts open-ended materials, we will be using an art and educational supply enterprise.

The surface in the garden will be replaced with a safety surface and proper drainage – time frame 3 months.

A painter has been sourced to paint the garden walls on 18 September 2023.

- (1) The staff have been made aware of how important the cosy/book area is. That it must be maintained and be inviting to the children.
- (2) Staff have been informed of the need to declutter the shelves and display materials in an inviting easily accessible way for the children. The books and jigsaws will be rotated on a regular basis.
- (3) All staff have been enrolled on with an external provider who will provide training on the Child Directed Curriculum. To refresh the staff who are familiar with this approach and to introduce some new staff to this concept.
- (4) A membership for an art and educational supply enterprise will be purchased in August.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs, Documentation including invoices for materials purchased

Summary Comment

The written response, documentary and photographic evidence submitted has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate. The minimum requirement for regulatory compliance is met for regulation 19. This area of practice will be assessed at the next inspection.

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 to the service was controlled by staff to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school rooms. The manager documented the inspectors visit to the service in the visitor's book on arrival. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. The children were safely supervised and escorted on the stairs by two adults. There was evidence that a system for daily written environmental room risk assessments were in place.

Infection Control:

There was an infection control policy in place. Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper towels in paper dispensers were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying. Foot pedal operated bins were in place for the hygienic disposal of used paper towels. A foot pedal operated nappy disposal bin was observed in the nappy change area.

Nappy change facilities were available for any child who was not fully toilet trained. Written cleaning schedules were displayed and maintained for the room environments, which were observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection, written parental consent was available should medication be required to be administered to a child. Medication was stored safely out of the reach of children. The staff members were aware of the administration of medication policy and the safe practices to follow when administering medication.

Safe Sleep:

It was observed that 10-minute sleep check observations were completed on all sleeping children and the staff documented the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children in their care. The staff members were familiar with current best practice guidelines in relation to reducing the risk of sudden infant death syndrome.

Low level sleep beds were available for all children aged over 2 years requiring sleep.

Fire Safety:

staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service. Fire exits were not obstructed.

Outing:

The service does not conduct outings.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The edges and corners of the cement step from the indoors to the outdoor area was not protected and created a potential risk of injury if a child fell against its edges.

Safe Sleep:

2. The environmental temperature of the Curious Caterpillars room which when transitioned for sleep purposes was not maintained between 16^o-20^o Celsius. It was 20.7 Celsius at 12:07hours and 21.2 at 13:05 hours. It is acknowledged that corrective measures were in place to lower the temperature by opening the windows in the service and an adult remained with the children while they were asleep.

Fire Safety:

3. The service did not complete monthly fire evacuation drills consistent with the Fire Safety policy for the service which stated that "All fire drills carried out monthly at a different time." Fire evacuation drills were completed on 17 December 2022, 23 January 2023 and 2 May 2023.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The person authorised on behalf of the registered provider stated in the third written response submitted that:

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The step in the back garden has been covered with a protective cover 11 September 2023.

Safe Sleep:

2. The staff continue to monitor the room temperature. On hot days before the children go down to sleep, during outside time the door is left open to help cool the room.

Fire Safety:

3. There is a fire drill monthly schedule and one staff member who oversees organising this monthly.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Two photographs

Safe Sleep:

No evidence submitted

Fire Safety:

No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The written response and documentary evidence submitted has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate. The minimum requirement for regulatory compliance is met for regulation 23. This regulation will be inspected at the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(2) Where there are more than 15 children attending a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service. This was confirmed by the written attendance records maintained in each care room.

(2) Not applicable.

(3) (a), (b) The registered provider ensured that any person entering the service was approved and a record in writing was maintained.

(4) The registered provider confirmed that the records were retained in storage for the required period.

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) There were persons trained in first aid for children immediately available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b) There was an absence of first aid signage in Curious Caterpillars room to ensure that the first aid box was stored in a conspicuous and easily accessible position.

There was a total of two plasters in the three first aid boxes inspected in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The person authorised on behalf of the registered provider stated in the third written response submitted that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b) There is now a first aid sign on the wall above where the first aid box is stored which is conspicuous and easily accessible.

Multiple boxes of plasters were purchased for all first aid boxes around the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The minimum requirement the written response and photographic evidence submitted has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 25. This area of practice will be assessed at the next inspection.

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)
- (a) A written record was available of fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was 2 May 2023.
 - (b) A maintenance record was kept of the firefighting and smoke alarm system in the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced in November 2022 smoke alarm system was serviced 5 April 2023.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the service.

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

There were seven children attending the service who were supervised by two adults at the time of inspection. They were observed being supervised at all times throughout the inspection including, indoors and outdoors, during snack time and as necessary for hand washing and toilet use.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover valid until 27 March 2024. The insurance provided cover for 44 children.

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, and

Compliance Information

- (d)
1. The premises were observed to be kept in a clean condition. A closed electronic communication system was used by the staff in the care rooms to communicate maintenance issues to the manager.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d)
1. In the outdoor area, the areas of the base of a long wooden bench on the righthand side were observed to be rotting, and the paintwork. It required repair and repainting.
 2. There was an area on the wall above the long wooden bench which had areas of peeling paint. It required repainting.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The person authorised on behalf of the registered provider stated in the third written response submitted that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (d)
- 1., 2., The long wooden bench on the righthand side of the garden has been repaired and a painter has been sourced to paint the garden walls on 18 September 2023.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The written response and documentary evidence submitted has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate. The minimum requirement for regulatory compliance is not met for regulation 29 points 1, 2 as no evidence has been submitted that the outstanding non compliances have been addressed.

This will be assessed at the next inspection.