

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KK069
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Name of Service:	Skough Hill Playgroup
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Address of Service:	Skough Hill, Owing, Piltown, Co. Kilkenny
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Eircode:	E32 TF43
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Name of Registered Provider:	Joan O’Gorman
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	18/12/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	12	PM	8
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Community Care Centre, HSE Buildings, Cork Road, Waterford City.
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Ryan
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

Skough Hill Playgroup is a home-based playgroup established in 1990. The service operates from a purpose-built extension to the registered provider's home, and presently offers two sessions from 09:00hrs to 12:00hrs and 12:30hrs to 15:30hrs. Monday to Friday. Skough Hill Playgroup participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme and provides sessional care to children from 2 years 10 months to 5 years of age. The service provides childcare for rural villages and the extended hinterland of South County Kilkenny. The dwelling is built on one acre and has a secured outdoor play area adjacent to the pre-school.

Staffing

The registered provider is the owner/manager and is part of the staff compliment. The service employs a further three childcare staff.

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

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

Regulation 25 - First aid

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

Regulation 28 – Insurance.

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 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

(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

There were three staff working directly with the children present on the day of inspection and one of these staff was the registered provider.

- (1)
- (a) The registered provider was the designated person in charge. The service also had a named person who was able to deputise as required.
 - (b) At all times during the inspection the registered provider was on the premises.

(2)

On review of the staff files, it was evident that one new staff member was employed to work with the children since the last inspection on the 9 October 2020.

The following was observed on the new staff member's file:

- (a) There were two written validated references from past employers.
- (b) Not applicable as all written references were from past employers.
- (c) There was evidence of a completed Garda vetting disclosure from An Garda Síochána.
- (d) Not applicable as the staff member had not resided or worked outside of this jurisdiction.
- (4)

There was evidence that all staff employed to work directly with the children held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 6 and 7 on the National Qualifications Framework. There was evidence of continuous professional development and qualification certificates on file.

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)
In the morning session there were 12 children aged 2 years 10 months to 5 years of age being cared for by 4 staff. In the afternoon session on the day of the inspection there were 8 children aged 2 years 10 months to 5 years of age being cared for by 3 staff.

(3)
The staff: child ratios exceeded the requirements for sessional care needed under the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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-

(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

(1)

(b) Regulation 19 was assessed through direct observation, review of records and discussion with staff. The following was observed and explained in relation to the provision of the programme of care and activities for the children attending the service.

The service had two sessions morning and afternoon in a rural setting that had scenic valley and hill views. The registered provider explained that the playgroup had operated a play-based approach to learning as play was the most natural and effective learning mechanism for young children. The services curriculum stated that “children want to play, and they use play as both a means for figuring out how the world works and how to be effective and masterful within it”.

On arrival at the service the inspector was warmly greeted and there was an air of excitement and anticipation in the service due to the Christmas season. Shows of the children’s Christmas artwork was displayed on the walls that added to the festive atmosphere in the room. Children were engaged in circle time and staff were observed encouraging the children to talk about what they had enjoyed about Santa’s visit to the service the previous day.

On the day one staff member was gathering and collating children’s Christmas crafts for parents and guardians as the service was to close the next day for Christmas holidays.

The weekly program for the 11th to the 19th of December was exhibited at the entry gate to the service on a chalk board for parents and guardians’ information. This included an Irish word, the colours red, silver and gold, seasonal action songs and stories. The crafts for the week were Christmas tree decorations and Santa’s glasses. The registered provider spoke about the importance of flexibility in the daily routine and for children to make their own choices and allowing for spontaneity with activities. At the end of the first session children were again

observed outdoors jumping and singing to the Christmas songs such as jingle bells and Santa Clause is coming to town.

The children in the afternoon session were younger and attending for the first year of the scheme. These children were observed eating their lunch with the staff sitting at the tables enjoying conversations about what Santa Clause was going to bring them.

The service kept folders of the children's work and photographs. Written observations were carried out three times a year Christmas/Easter/ and Summer incorporating observations by the staff.

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 was documentation available to verify that one staff member with first aid responder training FAR was available at all times in the childcare setting during the operational hours of the service.

(2)

- (a) There was a suitably equipped wall mounted first aid cabinet in the service.
- (b) The first aid cabinet was suitably accessible and available.

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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
 - (b) an employee, and
 - (c) an authorised person.
- (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 record in writing of fire drills indicated that the last fire drill took place on the premises on the 6 December 2023.
 - (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were maintained. It was recorded that fire equipment and smoke alarms were last checked on 1 September 2023.
- (4)
- The fire evacuation procedure with details of the measures to be taken in the event of a fire were displayed on the notice board in the corridor.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

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The service was adequately insured for the provision of a sessional service and for up to 22 children at any given time. An insurance certificate was available and displayed with the expiry date of 27 April 2024.