

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KY003				
Name of Service:	Alphabet Academy				
Address of Service:	Ballydonogue, Lisselton, Listowel, Co. Kerry				
Eircode:	V31 PN27				
Name of Registered Provider:	Dolores Stack				
Service type:	Sessional				
Date(s) of Inspection:	31/03/2025				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>08</td> <td>PM</td> <td>None</td> </tr> </table>	AM	08	PM	None
AM	08	PM	None		
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Áras an Phobail, Deans Lane, Tralee, Co. Kerry.				
Inspection undertaken by:	N. Reidy				
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	N/A
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Description of service

Alphabet Academy is a private early years service that provides education and care to children aged from 2 years to 6 years offering sessional care. The service operates 1 session between the 9:30am to 12:30 pm. At the time of the inspection the children attending were aged between 3 years and 5 years.

Staffing

The registered provider works single-handedly in the service each day. There are 2 named persons to attend the service in the event of an emergency.

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 inspections 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 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) The registered provider is the designated person in charge, she works single-handedly each day in the service.
- (b) At all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the registered provider is on the premises. The registered provider was present when the inspector arrived on the premises and remained for the duration of the inspection.
- (2)
- The registered provider confirmed to the inspector that she works single handedly each day in the service and there are 2 named persons to attend the service in the event of an emergency.
- The recruitment records in respect of 3 adults attached to the service were the subject of the inspection.
- (a)
- Of the 6 references required, 2 were from previous employers with records of validation.
- (b)
- There were 4 written references with records of validation file from a source other than a past employer.
- (c)
- Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for each of the 3 adults. 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. Please refer to the information outlined under Regulation 23 of this report.
- (d)
- Not applicable as no adult had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months as an adult.
- (4) The registered provider working directly with the children had attained Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in childcare training at Level 6 and above.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

For the purposes of the inspection the policy on Healthy Eating was inspected. The policy was displayed on the parents notice boards and a copy is issued to the parents.

The policy specified the way the service ensured that the food and drink provided to the children attending the service is nutritious and complies with the dietary requirements of the child.

The policy met with the requirement of Regulation 10.

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.

(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)

Throughout the period of inspection, the registered provider did ensure that there was an adequate number of adults caring for the children attending the service.

(3)

There was 1 adult caring for 8 children aged between 3 years to 5 years attending the service.

The adult child ratio was correct and maintained.

(8)(c)

The inspector was furnished with 2 named persons who were available to attend the service to assist the registered provider in the event of an emergency.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(j) A template record was on file to record any medication administered to a child attending the service. As no child was in receipt of medication there were no completed records to inspect.

(k) A template record was on file to record any accident involving a child attending the service. There was no completed record on file.

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:

- The service promoted healthy eating and the food provided by the parents for the morning snack was observed to be healthy and nutritious.
- The registered provider was observed speaking to the children during snack time as she sat with them, assisting and encouraging the children to eat their food, enhancing social interaction with the children with conversations for example about the plans some children had of going to the playground to play after pre-school.
- The snack time was relaxed and unhurried, each child having ample time to eat. The children who had finished eating before others put away their lunch bags and played with puzzles.
- The registered provider was observed to demonstrate kindness, patience and understanding in her interactions with each of the children, the children were encouraged and praised for their efforts with play activities whilst reminding children to take turns.
- The children were observed to enjoy the ample free floor space indoors and in the outdoor play area.
- The children were observed to independently access the toilet that was located adjacent to the playroom.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The playroom was spacious, bright and colourfully decorated with a selection of Spring themed artwork the children had completed and a variety of themed posters.
- The playroom was equipped and furnished with age-appropriate play materials. The play materials were accessible to the children on low level open shelving, on the floor and in open boxes that promoted independent access and freedom of choice by the children.
- There was a variety of play materials for example dress-up costumes, a shop, toy kitchen, a variety of puzzles and a range of montessori materials.
- There was an adequate number of child sized tables and chairs in the room.

- There was a rest/relaxation area provided in the playroom that consisted of soft seating. The area was located beside the low-level book and children’s individual storage unit.
- The enclosed outdoor play area was used during the course of the inspection. The children were observed to be enthusiastic and happy to prepare to go to play outside.
- The outdoor play area consisted of a concrete surface underfoot, with a variety of multi-sensory play experiences for the children, for example sand play, ride-on toys, a kitchen, a planting box, chalks and a playhouse. Child sized seating was also provided.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The children attending the service brought food for the morning snack provided by the parents/guardians.
- On the day of the inspection the food observed included crackers, scones, cheese portions, yogurts and a selection. The children had water to drink.
- Potable drinking water was available in the building to re-fill the children’s drinks bottles as was needed.
- The children had access to their drink’s bottles from their bags on the low-level shelving during the session and the inspector observed this on inspection.
- The children had ample time to eat their food with the registered provider supervising and assisting them as needed.

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 external door was secured to prevent children from leaving the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised access.
- The outdoor area was secured with fencing, gates and walls to prevent children gaining unsupervised access to the roadway and to prevent unauthorised access into the area.
- The medication observed in the service was clearly labelled with the child's name, it was in the original packaging and it was stored out of the reach of the children.

Infection Control:

- Hand washing took place prior to the snack time, after using the toilet and on return from playing in the outdoor area.
- There was a supply of warm water, liquid hand soap, disposable paper hand towels and a pedal operated lidded bin in place at each of the wash hand basin in the children's sanitary accommodation to facilitate effective hand washing to prevent the spread of infection.
- The tables were cleaned down prior to and after the morning snack.

Fire Safety:

- Fire drills took place on a regular basis with some carried out every 2 weeks since January 2025. The last recorded drill took place on 17/02/'25.
- A notice for the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Grapes served for the morning snack were not halved, posing a risk of choking to children.
2. There was an unsecured cable attached to a floor cleaner accessible to the children posing a risk of injury to the children.
3. Garda vetting disclosures were available for 3 adults. However, 1 Garda vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'

Infection Control:

- The perishable food items observed on inspection were not stored in the fridge provided posing a risk of food spoilage.

Fire Safety:

- The fire alarm system was not serviced on an annual basis, the last service recorded took place 12/5/'23.
- The fire extinguisher was not serviced on an annual basis, the last service recorded took place on 06/2023.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- All fruit and vegetables served for lunch will be halved or quartered before the children eat them. The knife used will be stored at high level out the reach of the children. Every morning all fruit and vegetables will be halved or quartered to prevent a risk of choking.
- A wireless spray mop is now in use and it will be continued to be used. It replaces the floor cleaner with the cable.
- The person has been re-vetted. The staff files will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the necessary documents as required are held on file and updated as needed.

Infection Control:

- On arrival of the children to the service any perishable food items will be placed in the fridge.

Fire Safety:

- & 6. The fire alarm and the fire extinguisher were serviced on 04.04.'25. The Fire safety policy will be reviewed annually to ensure the fire alarm and the fire extinguisher is serviced annually.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- The statement, a template to record daily the fruit and vegetables to be halved or quartered and a photograph of fruit that was halved.
- A photograph of the new cable free mop.
- The Garda vetting disclosure required dated 02.05.'25.

Infection Control:

- The statement, a template to record daily the perishable items placed in the fridge and a photograph of perishable items in the fridge.

Fire Safety:

5. & 6. The records in respect of the service for the fire alarm and the fire extinguisher.

Summary Comment

The requirement for this regulation 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) The registered provider was in First Aid Responder (FAR), the certification available on file demonstrated that the training was up to date.
- (2)
- (a) The first aid box was stored up high, out of reach of children and was clearly identifiable in the playroom.
 - (b) The first aid box was suitably stocked for the number of children attending the service and was available for the adult to attend to the children if required.