

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KY003
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Name of Service:	Alphabet Academy
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Address of Service:	Ballydonogue, Lisselton, Listowel, Co. Kerry
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Eircode:	V31 PN27
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Name of Registered Provider:	Dolores Stack
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	17/04/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	No.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Áras an Phobail, Deans Lane, Tralee, Co. Kerry.
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Inspection undertaken by:	N. Reidy
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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

Alphabet Academy is a private early years service that is registered to provide care for children aged between the age of 2 years and 6 years. Currently the service provide care for children aged between 3 years and 5 years. The service is registered as operating between the hours of 09:30 am and 12:30 pm Monday to Friday inclusive. The premises is a single-story building located on the site of the registered providers private residence.

Staffing

There are 2 adults employed in the service, of whom 1 is the registered provider, both work daily directly with the children each day.

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/ premises and facilities.

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

(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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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

(2) The registered provider confirmed that 1 adult had begun working at the service since the previous inspection undertaken on 13/11/2020, therefore recruitment records in relation to this adult were reviewed.

(a) 2 written validated references were on file from a past employer.

(b) Not applicable, the references on file were from a past employer.

(c) A Garda Vetting Disclosure was on file in respect of the 1 adult.

(d) Not applicable as any of the adult in question did not reside outside the jurisdiction for a period of 6 consecutive months.

(4) The 2 adults working directly with the children had attained Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in childcare training at Level 5 and above.

Non-Compliance Information

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2)(c), Garda Vetting in respect of the 1 adult whose file was the subject of inspection were not carried out prior to them being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with children attending the pre-school service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that no staff will be allowed to commence work until the Garda Vetting has been approved. The staff files and the staff recruitment policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the necessary documents as required are on file and updated as needed.

Supporting documentation submitted

The statement is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The requirement for this regulation has been met.

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) (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 ensured that there was an adequate number of adults responsible for caring for the children present.
- (3) There were 2 adults working with 10 children aged between 3 years and 4 years attending on a sessional basis. The adult child ratio was correct.
- (8)(c) Not applicable as 2 adults work each day in the service.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) Of the 11 records inspected, 9 records had all the required detail as per(a),(d),(e),(h) and (i) inclusive.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The following details were not maintained in writing for 11 records inspected: -

(b) the date on which the child first attended the service.

(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 telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that: -

(b) The children's date of first attendance was added to their records.

(c) She verified with parents, details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child and any other relevant information needed for the individual care and education of the child.

(d) The telephone number of the child's GP was written into the records.

Each child's record will be checked before the attends the service to ensure all necessary information is provided as is necessary.

Supporting documentation submitted

The statements are accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The requirement for this regulation has been met.

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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

Compliance Information

The following records were kept: -

- (h) details of attendance by a pre-school child on a daily basis.
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis.

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

- The registered provider informed the inspector that healthy eating is promoted in the service in line with the Healthy Policy of the service.
- The parents of the children attending provide the food for the children's morning mealtime.
- Drinking water is available within the playroom, children were observed accessing their drinks bottles during the session.
- Each of the children took their lunch bags to the tables and were assisted by the adults with opening packaging and the water bottles as needed.
- The children were seated on the low-level chairs at their tables at the mealtime.
- The inspector observed the mealtime to be relaxed and unhurried with the adults sitting with and supervising the children.

- The inspector observed children's individual needs were met, for example children that took longer to eat than others, the children who had finished wanted to do tabletop activities on the tables that were promptly cleaned.
- The food observed consisted of for example rice cakes, yogurts, cheese, sandwiches, cheese, grapes and crackers.
- Children had unrestricted access to the toilet located within the playroom. The inspector observed the adults encouraging the children to wash their hands after using the toilet.
- The inspector was informed of children's individual toileting needs and observed individual needs were supported and facilitated during the inspection.
- The children enjoyed free movement within the playroom and in the designated enclosed outdoor setting.
- The children played in the outdoor area during the inspection. The children were encouraged to put on their coats and hats and were helped as needed. It was evident they were happy to go outside to play as they went in a line as a "choo choo train" with gentle reminders by the adults "to mind our friends".
- A designated rest area was provided in the playroom that consisted of soft vinyl low level seating and cushions located near the book area.
- The inspector observed the children utilised the rest area at various times throughout the session where some took a break from playing, some sat and looked at the selection of story books and some sat with the adults whilst the adult read a story.

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 appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised access.
- The cleaning agents were stored on high level shelving out of the reach of the children.
- The outdoor play area was secured.

Infection Control:

- There was warm water, liquid hand soap and disposable paper hand towels provided at the wash hand basin to facilitate effective handwashing by the children and by the adults.
- Handwashing by the children was observed prior to the mealtime, after using the toilet and after playing outdoors.

Fire Safety:

- The records held demonstrated that monthly fire drills took place.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The following items in the first aid box had expired and were not suitable to use: -
 - eye pads
 - adhesive dressings of various sizes
 - Antiseptic wipes
2. The cable attached to the de-humidifier located on the floor in the playroom was accessible to the children posing a risk of strangulation.

Fire Safety:

3. The maintenance record for the fire alarm system demonstrated it was not serviced since 11/11/2020.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The registered provider stated that the unsuitable items were removed from the first aid box. The first aid box will be checked on a monthly basis to ensure all items are suitable and in date.
2. The de-humidifier cable was secured to the wall with clips. The cable clips will be checked on a monthly basis to ensure that they are secured to the wall.

Fire Safety:

3. The registered provider stated that the fire alarm system was serviced on 12.05.2023, it will be serviced annually.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. The statement is accepted as evidence.
2. A picture of the cable secured to the wall was received.

Fire Safety:

3. The registered provider stated that she is awaiting the certification for the fire alarm maintenance. completed. The statement is accepted as evidence.

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) 1 adult present had current First Aid Responder training and the certification was on file.

(2)

(a) A first aid box was in place, it was stored within the playroom on a high-level hook.

(b) The first aid box was accessible to the adults and was out of the reach of the children

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) The service had maintained in writing a record of the following: -
- (a) Each fire drill had taken place in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 27/03/2023.
 - (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance checks of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm. The records on file demonstrated the last check on the fire extinguishers was 02/06/2022 and the smoke alarm was 11/11/2020.

Non-Compliance Information

- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire was not displayed in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that the fire safety procedure is displayed next to the exit door, she will ensure that it is on display at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

A photograph of the fire safety procedure displayed in the service was received.

Summary Comment

The requirement for this regulation has been met.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A copy of the insurance certification for the service was on file.

The information provided on the insurance certificate included:

- the contact details for the insurance provider
- the name and address of the service insured.
- the category of insurance cover for the service
- the number of children covered by the insurance was for 22 children.

The expiry date of the current insurance cover was 27/03/'24.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The premises appeared sound and stable.
- (c) There was adequate lighting provided in the service via artificial lighting and natural lighting via the windows. The temperature of the playroom was recorded at 19 degrees Celsius.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d) 1. Some of the outdoor equipment were not maintained in a clean condition.
- 2. A section of the boundary timber panelling in the outdoor area was not secured. The registered provider informed the inspector she has planned to replace the boundary fencing over the summer months.
- 3. The device for opening the sliding door to the children's toilet had broken off the door.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that; -

- 1. The outdoor equipment was cleaned and will be maintained in a clean condition.
- 2. The section of the boundary panelling was secured, it will be checked monthly to ensure they are secure.
- 3. There were new handles fitted to the door. They will be checked monthly to ensure they are in proper working order.

Supporting documentation submitted

- 1. A photograph of the outdoor equipment that had been cleaned was received.
- 2. The statement from the registered provider is accepted as evidence.
- 3. A photograph of the door handles was received.

Summary Comment

The requirement for this regulation has been met.