

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KY073
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Name of Service:	Little Stars Childcare Centre
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Address of Service:	Greenfields, Firies, Killarney, Co. Kerry
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Eircode:	V93 H66K
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Name of Registered Provider:	Edwina Moynihan, Elaine O'Connor
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	31/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	22	PM	18
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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:	M Riordan
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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	N/A
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Description of service

Little Stars Childcare is a full day care early years service located in the village of Firies in County Kerry. The service offers full day, part-time and sessional care to children, aged between 0 and 6 years. The service is open Monday to Friday inclusive, between the hours of 8:00 am and 6.00pm. The service operates from a purposely designed 2 story building. The building includes the following rooms, Toddler room 1, Toddler room 2, Playschool room, a Junior Pre-school room, and a Senior Preschool room, a manager's office, a kitchen and a staff room. Sanitary accommodation, nappy changing areas and designated sleep rooms are also available. Outdoor play areas are located to the side and rear of the premises.

Staffing

There are 2 named registered provides, both of whom own and manage the service. There are an additional 13 staff members employed to work at the service. All staff members working directly with children have the required qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education. Staff participate in ongoing and continuous professional development training. One staff member is employed full time to work in the kitchen preparing cooking and serving meals for the children in the service.

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. 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.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes 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) One of the registered providers was the designated person in charge on the day of the inspection and there was a named person who could deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was present in the service for the duration of the inspection. Staff rosters indicated that there is at all times an assigned person in charge working at the service.

(c) There was a clear management structure in place indicating the person in charge, the deputy and the lead person in each area of the service.

(2) The registered provider ensured that the staff were vetted prior to starting in the service. All staff files were assessed.

(a) There were written validated references available in respect of each staff working at the service.

(b) All references were sourced from either previous employers or from reputable sources such as schools or colleges.

(c) Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána were available in respect of each staff working at the service. All were dated within the last three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for 1 staff member who had resided outside of Ireland for longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) All staff working in the service held appropriate qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education from level 5 to level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework

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.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered providers ensured that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times.

(2) There were 4 rooms in operation on the day of the inspection. The adult child ratio was correct overall in the premises.

Toddler room 1 There were 2 staff caring for 6 children aged between 1 and 2 years attending the service on a full day care basis.

Playschool room There were 2 staff caring for 8 children aged between 2 years and 3 years, all attending on a full day care basis.

Junior pre-school room There was 1 staff member caring for 7 children aged between 3 years and 4 years attending on a full day care basis.

Senior pre-school room There were 2 staff caring for 17 children aged between 4 years and 10 years, 1 child was a pre-school child. The remaining children were all of school age.

Relief staff were available to replace staff while taking meal breaks. A designated person was available to prepare, cook and serve food to all children attending 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

Each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the preschool service. This was achieved through the provision of appropriate activities, interactions and engagements in an environment designed around each child's individual age and stage of development.

There was a healthy eating policy in place in the service. The main meal of the day was provided by the service. Morning and afternoon snacks were provided by the parents. A nutritious breakfast was offered each morning if required from 8.00am. Between 10.45 am and 11.00 am, a mid-morning break was served. Healthy options were encouraged and ideas for healthy refreshments were shared with parents to help them prepare nutritious snacks. Food pyramids were displayed on the walls of the corridors for parents to view. Dinner was prepared by a cook in the kitchen and was served at approximately 12.30 pm for children attending each afternoon. On the day of the inspection potatoes, mixed vegetables, breaded chicken and gravy were served for the main course. A three-week rolling menu plan was available and was displayed on the notice board in the service. A copy of the plan was shared with the parents. An afternoon snack was served between 2.50 pm and 3.00 pm and for children who stayed at the service until closing time, a further snack was offered at 5.00 pm. All perishable foods provided by the parents were appropriately stored in each individual room in a refrigerator. Childrens drinks were stored in an easily accessible location in each individual room. Appropriate highchairs were used by the younger children at mealtimes. For those sitting independently low-level tables and chairs were used for dining at meal and snack times. Comfortable armchairs were available in both Toddler rooms to facilitate staff sitting and holding children when needed.

Nappy changing facilities were located next to both Toddler Room 1 and 2. A waist-high unit was accessible. Steps to the unit were provided to ensure safe access for the older children. Childrens toiletries were stored within easy reach of the staff when changing. The Nappy Changing policy was clearly displayed on the wall. The procedure observed by staff on the day was in line with the policy. Hot water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were available to ensure hygienic washing of hands.

Foot pedal operated bins were used for the safe disposal of soiled nappies. Toilet trained children had unrestricted access to toilets located next to each of the pre-school room. Here children could be supervised at all times by sight or by sound for short intervals when they were independently using the toilets.

A change of clothes was available for all children if needed. Protective clothing was available for outdoor play if required and for all messy play activities.

There were 2 designated sleep rooms located next to both Toddler rooms. There were 2 standard cots available in one room and 3 standard cots available in the second room. All cots were in good condition and all mattresses were covered with waterproof material. Blackout blinds were available on all windows to ensure lighting could be reduced in the sleep room during rest time. There was evidence that the safe sleep policy was implemented with staff observed carrying out regular 10-minute checks on all sleeping children. All checks were documented in writing. The room temperature in both sleep rooms was recorded at 19°C. This was within the recommended temperature range. For children over two years of age who required a sleep time, low level beds, pillows and sleep bags were provided in one of the preschool rooms. The children in this area of the service who did not require a sleep went outdoors while the others rested. A staff member stayed in the room with the children while they slept.

In all rooms at the service a relaxation area was accessible. Low-level couches, with soft furnishings provided a space for rest and relaxation for children away from busy play spaces. The library areas in each room provided the children with a space to rest when tired or sit comfortably when reading.

Children were facilitated with a change of environment at regular intervals throughout each day. Children spend long periods outside each day in a well-resourced outdoor play area to the rear and side of the premises.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

Each room at the service was designed to facilitate the specific age group accommodated in each space. In Toddler room 1 and room 2 lots of clear floor space provided children with opportunities for safe floor play. A soft ball pool area provided a space for children to climb and play. Lots of push toys assisted children in the early stages of walking and balancing. A designated outdoor area was accessible for the Toddlers. Here the children not yet walking could play safely away from the more active play spaces. Synthetic grass covered the area making it safe for the younger age group. In favourable weather much of the indoor toys and equipment were taken outdoors and the area became an extension of the indoor space.

The junior preschool room was a large spacious area with lots of low-level tables and chairs accessible for tabletop activities and for dining at mealtimes. A large water tray was open and accessible in the room with lots of toys for pouring and measuring available in the tray. Low level, open shelving provided a space for the storage of lots of age-appropriate play materials. Children's Halloween artwork was exhibited around the room. Items of interest were clearly displayed at children's eye level on all walls. A weekly plan was displayed on a whiteboard in the Playschool and the Preschool room. Here the theme for the week was listed. The activities, the circle time songs, and the tabletop activities to support the theme were outlined. Children's emerging interests were also clearly documented on the board. A parent information board was in place outside each room. Here all staff details were outlined. The daily routine of the service was listed. The theme for the week was displayed. Birthday celebrations with the name of children celebrating a birthday each month was also revealed. Outside each room of the service were individually labelled coat hooks with each child's photograph displayed over their individual hook. Storage shelves were also available to provide space for children's personal belongings.

A large well-resourced outdoor play area was located to the rear and side of the premises. This area was used throughout the day by the children from the Play school room and from the Junior and Senior preschool rooms. The surface area in the playground was covered with soft rubber all weather matting. This ensured the space was accessible in all weather conditions and it also helped reduce the risk of injuries to children while playing outdoors. Low level slides, climbing frames, trikes, bicycles, balance bikes and push and pull toys were accessible outdoors. Along the boundary walls of the outdoor space, there was lots of interactive wall mounted attachments along with blackboards and mirrors which made the space more entertaining and engaging for children. Tuff trays were taken outdoors from inside and were filled with sensorial material for messy play. Lots of storage spaces were created outside and seating accommodation was also available for children and for staff. An area outside was covered to provide a sheltered space. This ensured children got outdoors as often as possible regardless of the weather conditions.

Children were supervised at all times while playing outdoors. The indoor and the outdoor areas were continuously reviewed, changed, and enhanced to suit the children's ever-changing interests, capabilities and preferences.

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 at all times a staff member on duty who had up to date First Aid Responder training. Certificates displayed on the notice board of the service demonstrated that certificates for 5 staff members were in date.

(2) (a) There was a large first aid box available in the Managers office.

(b) The first aid equipment was accessible to the staff at all times if required.

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) The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of all fire drills that took place in the premises. Monthly fire drills were carried out. The most recent fire drill took place on the 23rd of October 2024.

(b) The number, the type and the maintenance record of all firefighting equipment was maintained. Firefighting equipment was last serviced on the 19th of September 2024. A record was available of the maintenance check of the smoke alarms in the service. The most recent check was carried out on the 10th of August 2024.

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 and the category of insurance cover for the service. The number of children covered by the insurance was 65. The commencement date of the insurance policy was the 28th of March 2024. The expiry date of the insurance policy was the 27th of March 2025.