

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KY074		
Name of Service:	Little Stars Pre-school		
Address of Service:	Beenreigh, Abbeydorney, Tralee, Co. Kerry		
Eircode:	V92 XH66		
Name of Registered Provider:	Breda Fitzmaurice		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date(s) of Inspection:	16/11/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	13 Market Square, Mallow, Co Cork. P51D D5Y		
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel		
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		

Description of service

Little Stars Pre-school is a private sessional service in operation since 2010. While registered for children aged 2 years to 6 years of age the service currently accommodates children aged from 2 years 6 months to 6 years, facilitating the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme between the hours of 9.00 am until 12 noon. It is opened Monday to Friday, 38 weeks of the year.

The service operates from a purpose-built extension at the side of the registered provider's home which has its own entrance. It consists of a care room with an interconnecting door to a small room, there are adult and child sanitary facilities and the nappy changing unit is located in the adult toilet. The secure outdoor play area is located at the back of the service and is accessible from the care room. A car parking area is located at the front of the service.

Staffing

There were three staff working directly with the children on the morning of the inspection including the registered provider and two AIM Support Workers.

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 the child and safety. 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, person in charge, 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-

- (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 was the designated person in charge and a named person was available to deputise.
 - (b) Both the designated person and the named person were available during the opening hours of the service.
 - (c) The management structure was detailed in the children’s cloakroom area of the entrance area with staff roles and responsibilities displayed.
- (2) Recruitment records in relation to the three adults were reviewed:
- (b) There were six validated references from sources other than past employers.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau were available for the three adults in the service.
 - (d) Recruitment records indicated that no international police vetting was required as none of the three adults had lived outside of Ireland for six consecutive month or longer as adults.
- (4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the three adults working directly with the children had attained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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) There were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children at all times.
- (3) On the morning of the inspection the adult/child ratio was met. There were ten children in attendance with three adults.

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.
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
- (c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1) The pre-school records of the eleven children registered to attend the sessional service were reviewed, all were found to contain the relevant particulars (a) to (i) above.
- (3)
- (c) The pre-school records were open to review by the inspector on the morning of the inspection.

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:

- Parents/guardians prepared the snacks brought in by the children which were observed to be healthy and nutritious. Examples included filled sandwiches, crackers, cheese and various fruits.
- Children had access to water from their individual water bottles.
- Age and stage appropriate tables and chairs were available with individual chairs provided to suit the individual needs of the children, ensuring all children could sit comfortably and actively participate while seated at the table.
- Children were given sufficient time to eat without being rushed and were invited to sit at the table on several occasions. Those children who did not want to sit down were accommodated with self-chosen activities which were supervised by a staff member.
- Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own individual personal care including toileting and dressing for outdoor play. Staff were nearby to provide assistance, if required.
- The children each had a hook where they could hang their personal belongings on arrival.
- Individual waterproofs were available for each child to use in the event of wet weather.
- Opportunities for children to sit quietly were provided in the rest area which was furnished with a colourful floor mat, soft cushions in the shape of butterflies and owls and individual vinyl circles to sit on. Shelves with age and stage appropriate books were located in the area providing children with the opportunity to read quietly while resting.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS:

- During snack time staff members sat at the table and engaged in social conversation. Gentle reminders were given to the children of table rules with the children being reminded not to talk with their mouths full and no toys at the table. The atmosphere was relaxed and calm.
- The inspector observed that children's individual personal needs were dealt with in a caring and sensitive manner. A staff member was heard talking to a child in a calm reassuring manner in the sanitary area, and singing the handwashing song along with the child.
- Staff were sensitive and caring in the interactions with the children. One staff member was observed providing comfort and support to a child who became distressed when asked to come in from the outdoor play area. The staff member asked questions, listened to the child, and agreed they child could go out later to play with the stones they wanted to play with, which was observed in practice just before collection time.
- Staff were heard encouraging the children in turn taking and the sharing of toys and equipment both in the indoor and outdoor play areas.
- Various methods of communicating with parents were in use including a software application which was used to send photographs and details of the children's daily activities and routines which the inspector observed in use on the morning of inspection. Staff were also observed warmly exchanging information with parents/guardians at drop off and collection.
- Staff stated that meetings with management are held every two months with topics including support for the children and training for staff. The inspector observed that all staff had recently attended training in communication milestones for children.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The care rooms were laid out in clearly defined areas which provided playful opportunities to enhance the learning needs of the children in all developmental areas.
- Play equipment and resources were age and stage appropriate. They were positioned in baskets on low-level shelving which provided choice of materials and promoted independence.
- The outdoor play area provided a range of developmentally appropriate equipment and a number of areas of interest and challenge including a concrete slope on which the children were using the incline of the slope to ride down while pedalling on tricycles.

A covered area was available providing shelter in all weathers where the children were observed accessing sand wheels, a rocker, hula hoops and a tool bench with tools. There was a large grass garden area with a new large wooden tractor with a slide, swings, tunnels and tyres where the children could practice their gross motor skills. A wooden hut was in operation as a home area with a pretend kitchen with resources, ironing board and iron, shopping trolleys and a shopping area with a till where the children were able to have playful opportunities which enhanced their imagination and role play skills.

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES:

- Observations, linked to Aistear the curriculum framework, were available which documented each child's individual interests and needs. Staff stated these are used to inform planning and are shared with parent's/guardians on a daily basis, examples were furnished to the inspector on the day.
- Children's language development was supported through one to one and group discussions throughout the morning with staff discussing children's individual emotions and rules around boundaries and expectations of behaviour. Staff were observed sitting with children with a box playing knock-knock in which the children each got a turn to take out an object beginning with the letter B, which were observed to include buttons, butterfly bells and brush.
- Children were facilitated to make their own choice in selecting play equipment and materials they wished to engage with.

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 internal care room door was secured with a keypad and the external door at the entrance was secured with a buzzer and lock preventing the children leaving the service unsupervised and unauthorised adults entering unannounced.
- There was a bolted gate area at the entrance door to prevent children accessing the carpark area unsupervised from the service.

- All windows were fitted with window restrictors preventing children from exiting from them.
- All indoor and outdoor toys appeared in good condition.
- Heavy equipment and toys, for example the doll's house, were anchored to the wall, preventing falling or tipping.
- Indoor waste was stored in pedal operated bins which were inaccessible to the children.
- Cleaning agents were locked, with a key, under the sink in the care room.
- The large outdoor play area, at the rear of the service, was secured with high wooden panelling preventing the children accessing dangerous areas such as the car park.
- The oil tank was made inaccessible by way of high wooden panelling preventing the children from being able to access the area.

Infection Control:

- Wash hand basins in use by both staff and children were noted to have thermostatically controlled hot water (32°), dispensing soap, paper towels for drying hands and pedal operated bins for the disposal of waste.
- Staff and children were observed washing their hands throughout the morning particularly before and after snack, toileting and outdoor play.
- Cleaning schedules were observed to be completed and up to date, ensuring high risk contact areas of the care room and sanitary rooms were disinfected on a daily basis.
- There was a wall mounted nappy changing unit available in one of the children's toilets. A sealed, pedal operated nappy bin was available for the disposal of waste and single disposable gloves and aprons were placed nearby for ease of use.
- Staff and children supervised by staff disinfected the tables before and after use.
- Children were observed using and disposing of tissues, in pedal operated bins, throughout the morning.

Safe Sleep:

- A rest/quiet area was available however no child was observed sleeping during the morning session.

Fire Safety:

- All emergency fire/exit doors were unobstructed.
- All emergency fire/exit doors were fitted with thumb twist cylinders allowing for the quick evacuation of the adults and children in the event of an emergency.
- Firefighting equipment was secured by brackets on the walls of the care room.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

- (1) The inspector observed that perishable food was not stored in the fridge during the morning session, posing a risk of spoiling from being stored in the children's bags left on a shelf in the care room.

Administration of Medication:

- (2) In conversation the registered provider stated that there was no anti-febrile medication available in the event that a child had a high temperature, posing a safety risk to the children in the event of an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

- (1) Parents have been sent a letter to put perishable food into zip lock bags which will then be stored in the fridge by the staff member when the children arrive in the service.

Administration of Medication:

- (2) Anti-febrile medication has been purchased and stored in a locked cupboard in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

- (1) A copy of the communication sent to parents regarding perishable food in zip lock bags was received in the office of the inspectorate.

Administration of Medication:

- (2) A photograph of the anti-febrile medication stored in the cupboard in the service was received in the office of the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The non-compliances under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

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) Certificates were available to evidence that all three adults had First Aid Responder (FAR) training completed. Expiry dates for all certificates were recorded as July 2025. Rosters indicated that the three adults were available while the pre-school children were present.

(2)

(a)(b) The well-equipped first aid box was easily accessible to the adults in the care room and was available at all times.

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-

(c) an authorised person.

(3) 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)
- (b) Written records were available detailing number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment in the service and the smoke alarms. The firefighting equipment certificate was dated 11 October 2023 and the smoke alarm certificate was dated 12 October 2023.
- (2)
- (c) Both the firefighting equipment certificate and the smoke alarm certificates were open to review on the morning of inspection.
- (4) The notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were located on the wall of the care room.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) There was no recent record of the latest fire drill, the last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 27 September 2023. Monthly fire drills are required to ensure the safe evacuation of adults and children in the event of an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)
- (a) A fire drill was conducted on 27 November and a rota system is now in place to ensure the fire drills are carried out monthly and recorded.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1)
- (a) A copy of a fire drill recorded on the 27 November 2023 was received in the office and the statement from the registered provider that a rota has been put in place to ensure the monthly fire drills are carried out and recorded has been accepted.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance under Regulation 26 (1) (a) has been addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was available to evidence that the registered provider had insurance for the service. The details included the number of children insured, which was twenty-two, and the type of service covered, which was a sessional service.