

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KY123
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Name of Service:	Tír na nÓg Preschool
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Address of Service:	O'Brennan's National School, Kilduff, Tralee, Co. Kerry
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Eircode:	V92 AE73
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Name of Registered Provider:	Noelia Dura Cabrera
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	30/11/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	13 Market Square, Mallow, Cork. P51 DD55Y
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Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel
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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

Tír na nÓg Preschool currently operates as a private early years service which provides sessional care from 8.45 am until 11.45 pm, Monday to Friday, facilitating the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE), 38 weeks of the year. While registered to accommodate children aged from 2 years to 6 years of age children currently attending are aged from 2 years 6 months to 6 years of age.

The service operates from within O'Brennan's National School, which is located in Kilduff, near the urban town of Tralee, County Kerry. The registered provider has submitted a proposal to move the service from its previous location on the ground floor of the national school to its current location on the first floor, in the room previously referred to as the library/resource room. This room has a folding partition, which is opened fully at all times, two children's toilets are available within a sanitary area located off the main classroom and an adult toilet area is situated outside the classroom along the main corridor. There is a fully enclosed, secure, outdoor play area at the side of the school for use by the early years children. A carpark is located within the grounds of the school.

Staffing

There are two adults and one AIM Support Worker working directly with the children and the registered provider was available to facilitate the inspection process.

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 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-

- (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

- (1)
- (a) The registered provider was the designated person in charge and a named person was available to deputise, both were available throughout the inspection.
 - (b) The staff roster indicated that the designated person in charge and the deputy were available while the pre-school children were present in the service.
 - (c) A clear management structure was available on the notice board in the service, detailing staff roles and responsibilities.
- (2) Recruitment records in regard to the three staff and the registered provider were reviewed.
- (a) There were eight validated references from past employers
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau were on file for the three staff members and the registered provider.
 - (d) Three International police vetting disclosures were available for three adults who had lived outside the State for a period of six consecutive months or longer, as adults.
- (3) The garda vetting, references and validations were carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the service.

(4) There was evidence that 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 and the fourth adult had a Letter of Eligibility to Practice from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

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) The registered provider ensured that there were, at all times, an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in the service.
- (3) The minimum ratio of adults to children was met. There were eighteen children in attendance with three adults.

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:

- Children were observed sitting at three tables for snack at 10.25 am. Each child was observed collecting their snack from a staff member, who had brought the perishable food from the fridge.
- Snack was provided by the parents/guardians and was noted to be healthy and nutritious with children observed eating filled wraps and sandwiches, bite sized fruit pieces, yogurt and cheese.
- Individual water bottles were observed stored on a unit inside the service door where the children could easily access them throughout the morning.
- Sufficient time was given to children to eat without being rushed, with one child sitting after the others had left.
- Children could easily access the toilet area off the main classroom independently, and staff were observed supporting children with handwashing.
- Aprons were observed on children protecting their clothing while painting pine cones, which staff stated had been brought in by a parent.
- The day of inspection was very cold, and the children were observed dressed appropriately in warm coats, hats and scarves.
- All staff were available to ensure that the children were able to negotiate going up and down the main staircase when the children were exiting the building.
- There was room for the children to move and explore their environment both indoors and outdoors.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS:

- Staff stated they operate a key person approach, this includes supporting and writing observations on their key children in which they record the children's interests and needs, examples were furnished to the inspector on the day of inspection. They stated they are also the key contact person for building relationships with the children's parents/guardians.

- Self-help skills were encouraged by staff with children observed collecting scissors at the snack table to open a package and putting on their coats and hats to go outdoors. Staff were nearby if the children required help.
- Children were given transitional cues such as a verbal and visual countdown between activities and the “clean up song” when it was time to tidy-up minimising confusion and surprise.
- During snack and table top activities staff sat at tables and engaged the children in social conversation, promoting a relaxed and happy atmosphere. Childrens conversations were extended with staff using strategies such as open questions, explanations and engaging in shared thinking to extend the children’s learning and thinking.
- Children were encouraged by staff to engage positively with each other in turn taking and sharing during activities.
- Various methods of communicating with parents was stated as being in use including verbally at drop off and collection and by email. A copy of a recent newsletter was presented to the inspector and included items such as pyjama day, nursery rhymes and the Christmas show.
- Staff stated there are monthly meetings with the registered provider with details of minutes of meetings for the months of October and November available for the inspector to view.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The classroom was clearly laid out to encourage playful opportunities to enhance the learning needs of all children across all developmental areas. Examples observed included children working in partnership making a floor puzzle which provided opportunities for cognitive development, while other children were using paint and glitter enhancing their creative skills and a group of children were enjoying a fishing game with rods and magnetic fish practising hand and eye coordination.
- The equipment, which was age and stage appropriate, was stored on open shelving in baskets which were easily accessible and placed at the child’s level.
- The walls were decorated with seasonal artwork evidencing objectives of the curriculum planning in the service. Photographs of children were in use for the children to put up their pictures indicating they were in the service each day.
- Each child had a personalised coat hanger where they could hang their belongings. These were individually identifiable with a symbol and each child’s photograph and name, helping to create a sense of belonging in the service.

- The children were observed playing in the secure outdoor play area which provided opportunities for enhancing gross motor skills including digging, running, sliding and climbing with a range of equipment including a climbing frame, slide and tunnel, tricycles and ride-ons. Sensory experiences were available in the covered sand trough and in the stone box area. The area is partially covered enabling the children to play outdoors in all weathers.

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES:

- Developmental records and learning portfolios linked to Aistear, the curriculum framework, were available which detailed the children’s emergent interests which were used to inform planning.
- Language development was supported through one to one, groups discussions and songs including “When Santa got stuck up the chimney” and an elf rhyming song. The children were also involved in counting the number of circle mats for use for sitting on and a staff member was heard reading “Muddy Paws New Friend” to a group of children in the rest/quiet area.
- Children were encouraged to take the lead, examples included: one child being the weather caller, another child helping to give out snack and a third child holding the line up sign.

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:

- All internal and external doors were fitted with keypads preventing unauthorised adults from entering the building and proposed classroom and unsupervised children from leaving the service.
- The service fire doors were operated with a thumb twist cylinder and an electronic switch.
- All fire exit doors were unobstructed, facilitating the quick evacuation of children and adults in the event of a fire/emergency.
- The four large windows in the proposed classroom were fitted with window restrictors and the blind cords for each window were secured with hooks, out of reach of the children.
- A second handrail had been fitted to the main staircase to enable the early years children to go up and down the stairs safely.

- The staircase was well lit and the linoleum floor covering appeared in good condition.
- All toys, both indoors and outdoors, appeared in good condition.
- Heavy equipment, including shelving, was anchored to the walls of the classroom.
- All flexes including the Christmas tree flex were inaccessible to the children.
- Indoor waste was stored in pedal operated bins in the classroom and in the sanitary areas.
- The outdoor play area was secured with high metal fencing and metal gates with bolts which were inaccessible by the children.

Infection Control:

- Children and adults had access to thermostatically controlled hot water: with the water in the taps of the two children's wash hand basins recorded at 37°C and the water in the tap of the adult sink recorded at 38°C., dispensing soap from a dispenser, paper towels and two pedal operated bins for the disposal of waste.
- Suitable storage, off the floor, for the children's personal belongings including hats, coats and bags.
- Single use disposable gloves and aprons for use in the children's sanitary area, if required. There are currently no children attending the service who required nappy changing.
- Perishable food was stored in large fridge, preventing spoilage.
- Cleaning schedules were available for the sanitary and classrooms areas and were noted to be completed and up to date.

Administration of Medication:

- Anti-febrile medication, stored in its original container, was stored out of reach of the children.
- No children were observed receiving medication on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- A rest/quiet area was available with soft furnishings including two foldable mats and a bean bag. Children were observed in the area throughout the morning engaged with a staff member investigating a medical kit. They also had access to age and stage appropriate books from a rack in the area.

Fire Safety:

- The fire doors were fitted with a thumb twist cylinder aiding the quick evacuation of children and adults in the event of a fire/emergency.
- The fire assembly point was visible with a sign and located at the exit gates of the school.
- Fire extinguishers were hung on secured brackets on the walls.