

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LD026
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Name of Service:	Catkins Early Years Service
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Address of Service:	Longford Women's Link, Willow House, Ardnacassa Avenue, Longford Town, Co. Longford
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Eircode:	N39 H6R7
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Name of Registered Provider:	Tara Farrell
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	22/11/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	44	PM	37
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, Government Buildings, Convent Road, Roscommon, Co. Roscommon
Inspection undertaken by:	A Kennedy and M Farrell
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

Catkins Early Years' Service operates from the grounds of the Longford Women's Link. The service offers a sessional, part- time and full day care service. The service is registered for pre-school children aged 0 to 6 years of age. The service operates from 8:00hrs to 17:30hrs, from Monday to Friday. A child centred play-based pre-school curriculum focusing on emerging interests is provided.

The early years' service is in a purpose-built single storey premises in Longford town. There are five playrooms including the Baby room, Junior Pre-school, and Buttercups which are in the main building. The Daisies and Poppies playrooms are in prefabrication units at the rear of the service. There is a designated dining room and a bespoke sensory room in one of the prefabricated units. The premises has a kitchen where children's meals and snacks are prepared and stored on site.

There is a designated sleep rooms with 7 cots adjacent to the baby room. Stackable beds are available for older pre-school children's sleep provision. Direct access is provided from each of the playrooms to the outdoor play areas, for children's play.

Staffing

The registered provider does not work directly with the children. There is a person in charge and a deputy person in charge. There were twenty-eight adults working in the service on the day of the inspection. Nineteen staff hold at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at a Level 5 on the National Qualification Framework work in the service or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

The staff have documentary evidence of ongoing training and education. Additionally, there are six adults over 18 years of age, on a Community Employment work placement, who are supervised when interacting with the children. There is a designated chef, who prepares, cooks, and serves the service meals. There is an administrator, a gardener and a service cleaner.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, deputy person in charge and 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) There was a named designated person in charge and a named person to deputise in their absence.
 - (b) Both the designated person in charge and deputy were present in the service at all times during the inspection.
 - (c) The staff were showed awareness of the management structure and their roles and responsibilities in the service during discussions with the inspectors.
- (2) There were 28 staff in the service at the time of the inspection including staff employed through Community Employment Schemes. The following vetting information was available for the 28 staff:

- (a) 13 staff members had 2 written, validated references from past employers particularly their most recent employer. 11 staff members had 1 written validated reference from a past employer.
 - (b) 4 staff had 2 written validated references from sources other than past employers and 11 staff had 1 written validated reference from other sources.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 28 staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) The international police vetting documentation required for 11 of the staff working in the service.
- (4) 19 staff had evidence of at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or equivalent qualification or letter of eligibility available on file.

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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1) There were 15 adults working directly with 43 children during the morning of the inspection when the inspectors' arrived unannounced. One further child arrived later bringing the total of children in the service to 44. Adequate staff were available during the inspection to work directly with the children and provide relief cover for breaks ensuring that adequate numbers of staff were always available.

(2)

During the inspection the following adult child ratios were observed to be in place in the playrooms:

- Buttercup playroom: 19 children aged from 3-5 years were cared for by 5 staff members in the morning. 15 children were cared for by 4 staff in the afternoon with an additional staff member employed through a Community Employment (CE) scheme was present.
- Junior Preschool playroom: 7 children aged from 1 to 2 years were cared for by 2 staff members during the day. An additional staff member employed through a Community Employment (CE) scheme was present in the early part of the day.
- Roses (Baby) playroom: 1 child aged under 1 year and 6 children aged 1 year were cared for by 2 staff in the morning and by 3 staff during the afternoon.
- Daisies playroom: 10 children aged from 3-5 years old were cared for by 3 staff during the morning of the inspection. In the afternoon 1 staff member cared for 7 children aged from 3-5 years old. An additional staff member employed through a CE scheme was present in the playroom in the afternoon.
- Poppies playroom: 1 child attending sessional services aged between 3 and 5 years of aged was cared for by 2 staff during the morning.
An additional floating staff member was also present and provided direct care to children during staff breaks.

(8)

- (a) There were at least two staff members always present during the inspection. Records reviewed found that at least two staff were present at all times during operational hours in the service.

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 staff advised the inspectors that the service was currently reviewing their menu plans, and a two-week rotating menu was being trialled over a four-week period. The trial menu was on display in the service and contained a wide variety of suitable and nutritious food. The service had a polytunnel where children helped to sow and grow vegetables and fruits which the staff advised the inspectors were used in the meals prepared in the service. The staff worked with the children’s parents and catered for individual dietary requirements.

The staff in the Baby playroom informed the inspectors that a breakfast of wholemeal toast and baked beans had been provided by the service for the children. A mid-morning snack of chopped bananas and a glass of milk was observed to be provided for the children in the playroom.

At dinner time in the middle of the day, the children in the Junior preschool room and the Buttercups playroom were observed to eat the main meal provided by the service. The meal consisted of mashed potatoes, spaghetti hoops in tomato sauce and fish fingers. Children were encouraged to self-serve for example using a metal tong to select fishfingers from a serving plate and put them on their plates. Extra portions of food were available for children who wanted to eat more. Jugs of water were available at the tables and children were supported to pour out drinks of water for themselves supervised by the staff. The afternoon snack provided by the service on the day was pitta bread, chicken, humus, carrot and cucumber.

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 entrance doors to the service were secured to allow staff to control entry to and exit from the areas. Outdoor areas were enclosed and had secured gates to allow staff to control access to the outdoor areas and prevent children from leaving unnoticed. The children did not have access to the kitchen. Cleaning products were stored out of reach of children during the inspection and cupboard door restrictors were in place where needed. Pairs of scissors were stored on high shelving restricting access by children. Blind cord restrictors were in place on window blinds. The toys and play equipment in use in the playrooms were clean, age appropriate and suitable for the developmental stage of the children using them on the day of the inspection. Leads, cables, and flexes were wall mounted and secured to prevent any trip or strangulation hazard. The heating system was thermostatically controlled, to ensure the temperatures were maintained between 18°C to 22°C.

Infection Control:

The staff were observed to prompt and help children to wash their hands thoroughly using liquid soap and warm water and to dry them with paper towels at key times including before eating, after using the toilet and playing outdoors. Separate storage was provided for children’s personal items in sanitary areas. Boxes of tissues were accessible at low levels in playrooms for children to use to clean their noses and dispose of in foot pedal bins when needed. The staff were observed to clean areas during the inspection for example tables after eating and recorded cleaning activities on up-to-date cleaning checklists.

The playrooms were observed to be kept adequately ventilated with the windows left open whilst maintaining the room temperatures at the required levels.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not observed to be administered to any child during the inspection. The staff were aware of safe procedures for storing and administering medication.

Safe Sleep:

There was a designated sleep room with six cots respectively, available for younger children’s sleep provision. On the day of inspection, children were observed sleeping on demand Stackable beds were available for older children requiring sleep if required. The sleep policy detailed the correct temperature, lighting, ventilation, space

between cots and child safety requirements. The early years inspectors observed, and documentary evidence indicated that the staff physically checked sleeping children every 10 minutes. The service kept documented sleep records. Records for sleeping children included the room temperature, the position, colour and breathing of the child. A stackable bed was set up in the Buttercups playroom for one child who needed to sleep, and staff were observed to check the sleeping child at 10-minute intervals and make records of observations including their breathing, colour and position. Six children from the junior preschool room were observed sleeping on the stackable beds and a staff member was observed reading a story to a child to encourage it to sleep.

Fire Safety:

The emergency exit routes were observed to be free from obstruction during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A number of items of outdoor play equipment in the outdoor play areas used by the children attending the prefabricated units were damaged and posed potential risks of injury to children. these included:
 - A broken mirror with jagged edges at the base,
 - A chalkboard with damage at the base with exposed splinters,
 - A lath of wood on one edge of a wooden table was loose.
2. Powdered infant formula was not prepared in accordance with National guidance in the Baby room. The staff advised that they made up bottles in the playroom.
3. The lower section of the wooden handwashing unit in the junior preschool playroom was worn and a section from the flooring to the wall had heavy duty tape fitted which was uneven. This area could prove difficult to effectively. The person in charge advised that action was been taken to assess the source of a leak in this area of the preschool room.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The service advised in writing that:

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The mirror, chalkboard and the lath of wood have been repaired with photographic evidence submitted to the Inspectorate of the repairs on the 26 November 2024.
Staff are asked to report issues at the time of carrying out the garden risk assessment.

Infection Control:

2. Infant bottles will no longer be made up by the staff in the baby room/ setting. The service will advise parents to provide made up bottles and store them in the fridge in baby room until required to be used. The service will advise parents to provide bottles already made up and store them in accordance with National guidelines until ready for use.
3. The plumber has found the leak under the adult sink that has affected the flooring and the child height sink area. A new unit to include the adult sink/worktop and the step down to the child height sink has been ordered and will be installed by mid-February. The area around the child height sink has been tidied and photographic evidence will be sent to the office of the early year's inspectorate of the new unit when installed.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence of the repaired mirror, chalkboard and lath of wood on the wooden table.

Infection Control:

A copy of the relevant amended service policy.

Photographic evidence of the child height sink area in the junior preschool playroom.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the service has satisfactorily addressed the non-compliances found on inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee.

Compliance Information

(1) Designated members of staff checked each child in and out of the service during the inspection and recorded the details on an electronic application system.

(3) (a) The registered provider ensured that a member of staff authorised the entry of visitors to the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had insurance in place for the provision of childcare services with an expiry date of the 31 December 2024.