

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH007
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Name of Service:	Ballapousta Early Learning School
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Address of Service:	Ballapousta, Smarmore, Ardee, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A92 C437
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Name of Registered Provider:	Rose Taaffe
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	24/01/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	26	PM	No.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Family Resource Centre, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath
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Inspection undertaken by:	C Tunney
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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

Ballapousta Early Learning School is an established childcare facility in operation since 2012 and provides a sessional education and care to pre-school children aged 3 years to 6 years. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme and operates from 08:45hrs to 11:45 hrs Monday to Friday and caters for a maximum of 40 children. A school aged service is also provided.

The service is located in a purpose-built premises in the village with parking facilities available to the front of the building. A fully enclosed outdoor area is available to the rear of the building.

Staffing

There are five staff employed in the service including the registered provider and one designated person in charge.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulations 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 15 Records of pre-school Child, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and

Welfare of Child, Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance, Regulation 25 First Aid, Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures, Regulation 27 Supervision and Regulation 28 Insurance.

The two-pre-school room in operation were inspected. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation(s) within this report.

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 wish 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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;
- (b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and
- (c) these Regulations

Compliance Information

- (1) (a) The registered provider was the person-in-charge when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service. The registered provider has two named persons who can deputise when required.
- (b) Staff rosters and staff sign in records were available for inspection and indicated that the person-in-charge and/or the named persons who can deputise are on the premises during the hours of operation of the service.

(c) Staff members were aware of the management structure in the service, the lines of authority and accountability and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(2) Five staff files were reviewed.

(a) Seven written past employer references were available and validated.

(b) In the absence of past employer references, three references from a source other than an employer was available

(c) All staff files reviewed had the required garda vetting documents available for inspection.

(d) Two staff members had the required international police vetting available for inspection.

(4) Five staff members providing direct care to pre-school children had documentation to show that they held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

(7) The registered provider ensured that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information such as policies and procedures of the service. The registered provider reported that staff meetings are held every 2-4 weeks and minutes of meetings were available for inspection. A regular parent's newsletter is sent to all parents to keep them informed of planned activities which was displayed in the service.

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) On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) The adult to child ratios were correct when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed:

- **In Pre-school Room (Orange)** there were 15 pre-school children aged between 3 years to 5 years attending for a sessional service, being cared for by 2 adults.
- **In Pre-school Room (Green)** there were 11 pre-school children aged 3 years to 6 years attending for sessional service, being cared for by 2 adults.

The registered provider provided support/relief as required.

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) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (b) an authorised person,*

Compliance Information

(1) Records were available for all children attending the pre-school. Eighteen children's enrolment records were inspected and contained particulars as specified by Regulation 15 (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)(i).

(3)(b) The children's enrolments records were available for inspection by an authorised person.

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
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS

- On the day of inspection each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated through the care and organisational practices observed by the inspector. Thematically curriculum plans were noted, which included short and long term curriculum planning which were displayed.
- The service promoted healthy eating, food and snacks were provided by the parents which mostly consisted of small sandwiches, cheese sticks and fruit. Children's drinks were available within their reach throughout the session, should they feel thirsty at any stage.
- The children were encouraged to be independent in relation to their personal care needs, suitable to their age and stage of development. Assistance was given as required.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

- The staff working with the children were sensitive and kind to the children. Each child had a journal with a chronicle of activities which were completed by the children to date, which chronicled their experiences. The children were active in their learning and children's interests were prioritised such as the "dragon" colouring activity which one child completed, and which was incorporated into the daily plan as most of the other children were also interested in dragons. The staff facilitated the children to engage in their own play choice, therefore children were observed playing in designated resourced interest areas and/ or engaged in individual play. The children also enjoyed the storytelling and singing activity with staff members.
- The setting is located within a close-knit community. Staff spoke about how they work in partnership with parents within the service. The service used a newsletter to provide information to parents in relation to updates. Staff were observed to chat at the door with parents at collection time. In each room there was a

family and birthday wall on display promoting a sense of identity and belonging for the children attending the service.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- There was adequate furniture and play equipment available for the children to promote their learning.
- Both pre-school rooms were bright, colourful and contained play material such as construction toys, play kitchen with support material, activity /manipulation toys / montessori equipment and dress up clothes. Play materials were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving which nurtured independence, facilitated choice, and encouraged curiosity, spontaneous play and movement.
- Children’s artwork was displayed on the walls, in addition to seasons charts, colour and shape charts which added a nice ambiance to each room.
- A range of books were available in the cozy reading areas which supported children’s language and development.
- The outdoor play area provided an alternative change of environment for the children. Gross motor and sensory development was also supported with ride on toys, climbing equipment, two cabins with one cabin containing construction toys and the other cabin held a variety of play material. There was opportunity for chasing games and running around in the grass/all-weather surfaced outdoor area, all which support children’s gross motor skills and social skills.

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 door leading into the premises were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The external outdoor play area was secured.
- Fire doors throughout the building were unobstructed.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support effective hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation in the service.
- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, and after nappy changing.
- The standard of cleaning throughout the pre-school was very good, cleaning lists were displayed and up to date.

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, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) A system was in place to record the arrival and departure times for each child attending the service on a daily basis.

(3) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children's parents / guardians, employees or authorised visitors can enter the pre-school. A visitor's book was maintained, there was evidence that visitors were requested to record their attendance which was noted when the inspector were requested to enter her time of arrival and departure.

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) The registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff members were trained in First Aid Responder (FAR). Two staff members held a certificate in FAR training.

(2) (a) The first aid box in each room was safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on a high shelf.

(b) First aid boxes were available to the children attending the pre-school service 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 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) A written record was available of the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 24/01/2024.

(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment which was last serviced on the 02/10/23 and the smoke alarms on the 09/10/2023.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed on the premises in all the care rooms and main hallway.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

On the day of inspection, the children were adequately supervised at all times.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the pre-school service is adequately insured for 38 children, expiry date on the insurance certificate was dated 27/03/2024.