

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH013		
Name of Service:	Castletown Girls Preschool		
Address of Service:	Castletown Girls National School, Castletown Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth		
Eircode:	A91 P957		
Name of Registered Provider:	Donna Kirk		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	18/11/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM -
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84		
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Mc Kenna		
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	Not Applicable		

Description of service

Castletown Girls Preschool is a private owned service, which operates within a classroom at Castletown Girls Primary School located in Dundalk, Co. Louth. The service caters for a maximum of 22 children at any one time. The Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme operates for two separate sessions per day; 9am to 12 midday and 12.30pm to 3.30pm. The service has access to the outdoor area within the grounds of the primary school. Car parking is available outside the school premises.

Staffing

The service employs six staff, to include the registered provider. Four adults including the register provider were present on the day of inspection.

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 9,11,19,23,25 and 29, however, on inspection an additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 16. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations 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 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

(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) The service had a designated person in charge, (who is the registered provider) 2 days per week, and a named person in charge in their absence for 3 days per week. An additional person in charge was named and available on the day of inspection until the registered provider arrived on site.
- (b) Following discussion with the registered provider, it was confirmed that at all times when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.
- (2) The staff files for 6 adults were reviewed.
- (a) (b) A total of 7 written and validated references and a total of 5 written references from past employers and, or reputable sources in the absence of past employments were on file.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 6 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all employed staff.

(d) A review of the 5 available employment records, demonstrated that none of the adults had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, therefore police vetting was not required.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 6 adults employed to work with children, held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) (b) The registered provider had not completed the reference validation process in relation to five staff references.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

References have been signed and are now on file. In future the registered provider will ensure that when verifying a reference, it will be documented immediately.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of validated references.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 9 (2) (a) (b).

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 was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced, as follows.

Morning Session: Three adults cared for 17 children aged 3 years to 4 years 7 months.

In addition to the above, the registered provider arrived shortly after the inspectors arrival and remained on site for the remainder of the inspection. The registered provider assisted the staff with the daily routine and the care needs of the children.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;

Non-Compliance Information

(1) (a) An employment record for one adult was unavailable.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Employment record was printed and is now on file. The registered provider will regularly check all records are completed.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of employment record.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 16 (1) (a).

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

The following examples demonstrates how the registered provider ensured that the children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic Needs:

The children were observed to be encouraged to be independent at snack times, with support and help given to children where needed. The adults were observed to stay with the children at snack time, using this as an opportunity to engage in child led conversations. The children's snacks included a variety of yogurts, bread rolls, sandwiches, chopped fruits, cheese and smoothies. Discussions about what tasty snacks the children had, and talking on the "Banana" telephone were observed to promote laughter and joy between the children and adults. The children's sanitary area was located off the hallway outside the care room, the children were observed to request use of the toilets as they required. The adults went with the children and supervised their time in this area. Care was given to the appearance of the children, with faces cleaned after snack time, and noses cleaned when needed.

A soft child sized sofa was provided in the care room, to allow a child to rest during their preschool session. The indoor play environments were presented in a clean and comfortable manner for the children to play. The care room is organised and spacious, allowing for freedom of movement from one activity of choice to another. Space for physical play such as balance beams and a tunnel were set up in a spacious area of the care room. Outdoor play areas which surround the premises of the school are available for the preschool children's use at designated times. A large indoor hall provides indoor play space in inclement weather conditions.

Supporting Relationships:

The atmosphere in the care room was warm and welcoming, the children appeared familiar with the routine and recognised the timer as the start of the tidy up time prior to snack. The routine was a mixture of child led and planned activities. When children chose not to take part in circle time, they could choose another area to play in, this was observed on the day, where children were included by building jigsaws with an adult. The children

appeared content in their play environment and were observed to play in various areas within the care room individually and in small groups. Two children are “helpers” each day which included handing out the children’s lunch bags at snack time.

The children were observed to engage positively with their peers. The adults promoted positive interactions and used encouraging words such as “well done” and “super work” while communicating with the children. The children were given individual time at morning circle time where they could talk about “their news”. Discussions about the children’s interest and likes, such as a local festival with Santas arrival was observed between the adults and children. The children and adults were observed to engage in songs and story time together throughout the preschool session.

The adults were observed to work well together, with changes in routine and activities observed to be smooth. Communication with parents takes place in person at arrival and collection times, through the use of a digital messaging service and phone calls.

Physical and Material Environment:

The care room was laid out to include various interest areas such as a soft sofa and book area, soft floor mat with floor toys, small world toys, dolls and prams, light up and sensory materials, dress up and doll houses. Creative materials were available in a drawer unit accessible to the children, with additional materials available on a shelf. A table top unit with toys, and role play materials to include hairdressing and doctor sets were placed on low level shelving for children’s use. Playdough with cutting and rolling materials, many jigsaws, a play kitchen area and the balance beam and tunnel proved to be popular choices of play among the children on the day of inspection.

Many creative displays were on the care room walls to include autumn trees and hedgehogs, humpty dumpty, an “incy wincy” activity, and an “all about me” display.

The tables and chairs provided were suitable for the number, age and stage of development of the children in attendance.

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 following safety measures were observed on the day of inspection:

The main entrance door to the preschool room was secured upon the inspectors arrival. The door remained locked during the inspection when not in use, ensuring no unauthorised person could enter the care room or no child could leave the room unsupervised. Ground surfacing both in the indoor and outdoor areas were maintained in a good state of repair. Play equipment and resources were observed to be maintained in good condition. The children were adequately supervised throughout the inspection process. The outdoor areas are secured with gates, high walls and fencing. The fire exits remained unobstructed during the inspection.

Infection Control:

The inspector observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

Handwashing was observed to take place after the children used the toilet, and prior to snack time. Warm water, hand soap, bins, and paper towels were available at each wash hand basin. The tables were cleaned prior to snack times. The children's snacks were stored in the fridge. The care room was ventilated through openable windows. The service was maintained in a clean and hygienic manner. Cleanings schedules were in place, up to date and completed by staff.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A high-level window within the care room had a cracked pane of glass. This poses a risk of injury to a child.
2. Three window blinds were unsecured, posing a risk of injury to a child.
3. An under-sink cupboard with cleaning materials remained unsecured at periods throughout the inspection. This poses a risk of harm to a child.
4. A bottle of cough medicine was stored in a low-level fridge, posing a risk of harm to a child. It is acknowledged that when the inspector brought this to the attention of staff, the medication was moved out of reach of children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The school has ordered a new pane of glass, as they are particularly old windows and it is a special order, it won't be replaced until the end of January. The registered provider will carry out monthly checks on everything in the class.
2. The blinds that were loose on the wall have since been re-secured to the walls. The registered provider will carry out monthly checks on everything in the class.
3. The registered provider has placed a sign on the press to remind staff to always keep it locked. The registered provider will carry out monthly checks on everything in the class.
4. The registered provider has spoken to the staff about the importance of keeping medicines out of reach and placed a sign on the fridge. The team leader will check the fridge daily.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence of window pane replacement.
2. Photographic evidence of secure blind.
3. Photographic evidence of sign in place.
4. Photographic evidence of sign in place.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 23.

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) Following review of the staff files, it was evident that the registered provider ensured that there was a member of staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR) on the premises at all times. This was evidenced by four staff with FAR certificates in date, two of whom were present on the day of inspection.

(2) (a) &(b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available in the care room, stored in an accessible and conspicuous location out of the reach of children.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (d) The preschool care room and designated sanitary area, was maintained in a clean manner and presented in a good state of repair.
- (e) Two assigned toilets were available for the use of the preschool children. One additional toilet located off the hallway was available for staff use.