

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015LH029

Name of Service: Footprints Pre-School

Address of Service: Blackrock Community Centre, Sandylane, Dundalk, Co. Louth

Eircode: A91 EDOF

Name of Registered Provider: Sinéad Auld

Service type: Sessional

Date(s) of Inspection: 22/11/2024

No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	10

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre Castleblayney Co. Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	M.Flood
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

Footprints Pre-school is a privately owned service that has been in operation since 2013. It operates as a sessional service and is registered to cater for a maximum of 22 children aged from 3-5 years of age. The service operates 2 sessions, from 8.45am to 11.45am and 12.15pm to 15.15pm each weekday.

The service operates from a prefabricated building on the grounds of Blackrock Community Centre in Blackrock Co. Louth. The premises consists of 1 playroom, a kitchenette, sanitary accommodation, school aged room, storage area and access to an outdoor play area on the premises.

Staffing

The Registered Provider and three childcare staff are employed to work directly with the preschool children.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16.

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 would like 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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) & (b) The service had a designated person in charge and a named deputy person to deputise as required. The deputy person was on the premises when the inspector arrived and was present throughout the inspection. The registered provider arrived on the premises at approximately 11.20am and was present for the remainder of the inspection.

(c) When questioned staff were familiar with the management structure within the service and the roles and responsibilities of the various staff members.

(2) Five staff files were reviewed including files for the registered provider, three childcare staff and the contracted music teacher. The following vetting documents were available:

(a) & (b) There were 2 written and validated references available for each of the 5 staff members.

(c) A processed Garda Vetting Disclosure was available for all 5 members of staff. However, the registered provider did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Documentary evidence was available of the required international police vetting for 2 staff members who have resided outside the Irish jurisdiction for a period of 6 months or more as an adult

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that four members of staff, including the registered provider who work directly with the preschool children held at least the minimum required level 5 childcare qualification on the National Framework of Childcare Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent

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 staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at 11.00am and remained so throughout the inspection. The following was observed.

- There were 3 staff present with 18 preschool children when the inspector arrived in the premises. The registered provider arrived on the premises at approximately 11.20am and was present for the remainder of the inspection.
- In the afternoon session which commenced at 12.00pm, there were 3 staff including the registered provider present with 10 preschool 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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1) The following records were present for inspection and reviewed:

- (h) A written record was available of the arrival and departure times for the children attending the service on a daily basis.
- (i) Documentary evidence was available of a weekly staff roster which was reflective of the staff present in the service.
- (j) No medication was administered during the inspection. The registered provider confirmed that currently there is no child attending the service who requires regular medication. Parental consent was available for temperature reducing medication should it be required in an emergency.
- (k) A sample of 8 accident and incident records for the current school year were reviewed. All records were complete. The records included a parental signature to indicate that they had been informed about the incident and signatures of the staff and manager indicating that they had reviewed the information.

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,

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that children's learning, development, and well-being was facilitated in the service.

Basic Needs

- The children's care needs were attended to on a regular basis for example, hands were washed before mealtimes and after toileting, noses were wiped frequently.
- Independence with toileting was promoted for the children who were toilet trained and discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required.
- Some of the children were observed to access the soft area to read a book, or to take a break from activities.
- Snack time was observed to be a social, interactive occasion with all staff and children observed seated on the floor having a 'picnic'. During this time the children and staff were observed to chat about the activities they had enjoyed all week and "what we are going to do next week". Children who required additional time to relax and eat their lunch were facilitated and were supported by one of the staff members.
- Staff demonstrated familiarity and good relationships with the children by talking about the children's personality, likes and dislikes with the inspectors. One child who was upset on arrival to the afternoon session was supported and appropriately comforted by the staff. The staff were obviously familiar with the child's favourite toy and activity and the child quickly settled and engaged with their peers at a tabletop activity.

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

Snacks and lunches were provided by the parents. A variety of foods such as sandwiches, cheese, crackers and fresh fruit were provided. All perishable items were stored appropriately in the fridge. Drinks were accessible in the children’s own individual cups/drinks bottles and were available for the children to access as required.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

The Inspectorate is not assured that adequate steps have been taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service based on the following observations made during the inspection:

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for 5 staff members including the registered provider, 3 childcare staff and 1 contracted music teacher. However, 1 of these vetting disclosures was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice ‘EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting’.
2. The records available for the firefighting equipment on the premises detailed 09/2023 as the purchase date for the fire extinguishers. However no further maintenance records were available. This is outside the best practice guidelines which recommends that all firefighting equipment must be maintained at intervals not exceeding 12 months. This is a recurring noncompliance from the last inspection and is at variance with the corrective and preventative actions that were previously submitted in response to previous non-compliance that stated “. The fire company have booked service in for their yearly service on the first Monday in August every year.”

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Actions

1. Garda vetting has been applied for the contracted music teacher with Early Childhood Ireland. The service provider has added Music Teacher to Staff files to be checked annually and set calendar reminders for June 2025 to ensure Garda Vetting compliance up to date.
2. Service carried out by fire safety company on 7th December 2024 on fire equipment. The service provider has pre-booked service for Fire Equipment to be performed annually in August. Reminder set in Calendars for June 2025 to contact fire safety company to ensure service is booked in.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of Invoice - Service for Fire Extinguisher completed on 7th December 2024.
A copy of the updated Garda vetting disclosure.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances. Based on this information the non-compliances under Regulation 23 have been addressed.

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 record was maintained of the monthly fire drills which had been completed in the service, the last recorded 22nd October 2024.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises dated the 09/2023 and 15/08/2024 respectively.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report Pre School