

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH050
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Name of Service:	Little Buds Playschool
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Address of Service:	54 Avondale Pk, Dundalk, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A91 Y201
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Name of Registered Provider:	Paula Keenan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	18/01/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	
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Address of the 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
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Description of service

Little Buds Playschool was established in September 2000 and operates as a privately-owned sessional pre-school service. The service caters for a maximum of 16 pre-school children and operates from 9:30 to 12:30 Monday - Friday.

The service operates from a purposely developed care room attached to a domestic dwelling in a residential area in Dundalk in Co. Louth. The care room consists of 2 play areas which are interconnected with adjoining sanitary accommodation. The pre-school children have access to outdoor play area to the front of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider and two staff members 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/ 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 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 named deputy person to deputise as required. The person in charge who is also the registered provider and deputy person were on the premises when the inspector arrived on the premises and were present throughout the inspection.

(2) There were 3 staff files presented for inspection and the following were reviewed:

(a) & (b) There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for each of the 3 members of staff.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for each member of staff employed in the service.

(d) Following a review of the staff files presented, evidence of international police vetting was not required at this time.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that each member of staff, who works directly with the pre-school children held at least the minimum required level 5 on the National Framework of Childcare Qualifications.

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

(3) On the day of the inspection when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service there were 2 care areas in operation which included:

- **Room 1:** There was 1 adult working directly with the 8 pre-school children present, aged between 3 to 4 years.
- **Room 2:** There was 1 adult was working directly with the 7 pre-school children present, aged between 3 to 4 years.

The registered provider was also present in the service and provided assistance in both rooms as required.

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

(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 snack times, after messy play and noses were cleaned during the inspection.
- Children were encouraged to use the toilet independently with discreet supervision provided by the staff members, and assistance was also given when required. Gentle reminders were also given for handwashing.

- Minor behavioural issues were addressed and not allowed to escalate with staff positively engaging with the children. Timers were used to encourage taking turns and sharing toys and equipment.
- All children attending the service brought their own lunches from home and these were appropriately stored in the fridge. The adults encouraged the children to tidy up when lunch time was finished. Children who required additional time to eat their lunch were afforded the opportunity and were also provided with assistance as required.

Supporting Relationships

- The adults were observed to interact with the children in a warm and supportive manner e.g. “*good job...you have it done already..*” Positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children and staff e.g. “*would you like to clean up...good job..*”
- The staff were observed sitting with the children and getting down to the children’s level when engaging in activities with them during tabletop activities, i.e. a paper cutting activity and role play.
- Verbal feedback with parents was observed to occur at pick-up times. It was also reported that phone calls are also used in the communication with parents.
- When questioned, the staff reported that they meet regularly and have daily conversations to plan the curriculum and to facilitate child led activities.

Physical and material environment

- Child sized furniture and equipment was in use throughout the service. A rest area was available, which included a play tent with soft cushions and blankets, so the children could take a break from an activity or sit and read a book if they choose to.
- In each of the care rooms there was a variety of play materials and equipment. The equipment was suited to the ages and stages of development of the children present and also promoted many areas of child development. The equipment was arranged and displayed on low level open shelving which facilitated the children to select and replace their chosen toys of interest.

Programme of activities and its implementation

- The children attending the service were divided into 2 groups and were observed to rotate between the 2 care rooms. In Room 1 the children were observed to have their snack time and engage in tabletop and art activities and after snack time they rotated with the group in room 2 where they were engaged in role play, ball games, racing track and car games and exercises.
- A daily routine was on display in the rooms which included a photographic and written routine. The staff reported that curriculum was based on the children’s continuous emerging interests.
- There was evidence of the children’s artwork on display in each of the care rooms e.g. “ I love you through and through” love hearts, “all about me” flower pictures, hand print memory books. Learning records were also available for each child that contained a variety of the children’s art activities throughout the year. These books are reportedly sent home on a regular basis for the parent to see.

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 a person trained in first aid for children, was at all times available to the children attending the service. Documentary evidence was available of an up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) qualification for one adult in the service.

(2)(a) and (b)The first aid boxes available in each of the care rooms and were stored in a conspicuous location where they were easily accessible in the event of an emergency.

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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
 - (b) an employee, and
 - (c) an authorised person.
- (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 maintained of the monthly fire drills which had been completed in the service, the last recorded being 8th January 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 08/2023 and 14/11/2023 respectively.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Documentary evidence of adequate insurance cover was available for inspection.