

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015LH055 |
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| Name of Service: | Little Nippers Playschool |
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| Address of Service: | New Road, Bellurgan, Dundalk, Co. Louth |
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| Eircode: | A91 R998 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Geraldine O'Reilly |
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| Service type: | Sessional |
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| Date(s) of Inspection: | 02/09/2025 |
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| No of pre-school children: | AM | 12 | PM | No. |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|-----|

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| 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).

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| Conditions if applicable | Not Applicable. |
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Description of service

Little Nippers Playschool was established in 2001 and operates as a privately-owned sessional pre-school service. The service caters for a maximum of 18 preschool children with an age range of 2 ½ to 6 years and operates from 9.15am to 12.15pm Monday – Friday.

The premises comprises of a purposely renovated building which is located in a coastal setting in Bellurgen, Co. Louth. It consists of a large playroom which is divided into 2 areas, namely pod 1 and 2, adjoining sanitary accommodation for children and staff, storage rooms and an enclosed outdoor play area. There is also parking onsite for drop off and collection.

Staffing

The registered provider and one additional 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.

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 person in charge who is also the registered provider and deputy person were on the premises when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service at 10.25am.

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

(2) Two staff files were reviewed including files for the registered provider and one staff member. The following vetting documents were available:

(a) & (b) There were 2 written references available for the 2 staff members. All references were validated as required.

(c) A processed Garda Vetting Disclosure was available for the 2 staff members. The registered provider adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

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

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the registered provider and 1 staff member 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 10.25am and remained so throughout the inspection. There were 12 preschool children aged 2 years 8 months to 4 years being cared for by 2 staff members one of whom is the registered provider.

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;*
 - (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
 - (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
 - (d) the type of care or programme provided in 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:

(a) Documentary evidence was on display in the service containing the names, qualifications and experience of all staff present. In addition, curriculum vitae were available in the staff files presented for inspection.

(b) The registration certificate for the service was on display.

(c) Details of the adult: child ratio in the service were on display.

(d) The “ About our curriculum” notice was on display on the notice board.

(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 previous 6 months 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 registered provider, 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 within the service:

- The children's care needs were attended to on a regular basis for example, noses were wiped, and hands were washed frequently.
- Independence with toileting was promoted for the children and discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required and to provide gentle reminders about handwashing.
- Snack time was observed to be a social, interactive occasion with the staff and children observed seated at the table. During this time the children and staff were observed to chat about their lunches and what they all liked. Some of the children were given 'helper roles' at lunch time which fosters independence and communication skills.
- Some of the children in pod 1 were observed to access the soft cushions after snack time and to sit and read a book. The staff member present encouraged the children to look at and discuss the pictures.
- The staff members in the service were observed to interact with the children in a warm and supportive manner. Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children and staff member for example, "Good ...we are going to wash our hands.. well done" "walking feet...lets go in our line to get our hands washed."..... well done". "do you need some help ...?". The children were also observed to seek out the staff for assistance.
- Communication between the parents and staff was informal at drop off and pick-up. The staff confirmed that a small messaging service and social media are also used to keep parents informed about the children's care needs and activities happening in the service. Individual meetings are occasionally arranged with parents to plan supportive strategies if required by a child attending the service. The staff report daily verbal discussions to plan and implement the curriculum. A communication book is also used

and the information reviewed detailed supportive strategies and review observations for children who require additional supports in the service.

- All children had a change of environment to the outdoor area. The children were observed to engage in a variety of play opportunities e.g. sensory play with sand and digging stones, imaginary play, rocking and ride on equipment.

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

It was observed that the registered provider has taken the following measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service including:

General Safety:

- The external doors were appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- All emergency exits were clear and unobstructed.
- The outdoor area was enclosed and secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised.
- Cleaning equipment was stored out of reach of the children.
- Mouthed toys were appropriately removed after use and a labelled container was available to collect the used equipment. The staff were familiar with cleaning procedures in accordance with best practice guidelines.

Infection Control:

- There was a constant supply of thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and single use paper hand towels available to support effective hand washing in the service.
- Effective hand washing practices were observed during the inspection, after toileting, tabletop activities and outdoor play and prior to snack time.
- Pedal operated, lined bins were observed in operation.
- Perishable lunch items were appropriately stored in the refrigerators available.

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.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises dated the 16/10/24.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.