

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015LH060 |
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| Name of Service: | Little Treasures Preschool |
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| Address of Service: | Mount Hawthorn House, Blackbush Lane, Dublin Road, Drogheda, Co. Louth |
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| Eircode: | A92 XR64 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Mark Gibbons |
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| Service type: | Part Time, Sessional |
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| Date of Inspection: | 15/11/2023 |
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|-----------------------------------|----|---|----|---|
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 7 | PM | 3 |
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| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6. |
| Inspection undertaken by: | S. Taaffe |
| 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 Treasures Preschool was established in 1993 and underwent a change in ownership in 2020 when the service was acquired by the registered provider. The service is conducted from two purpose built interconnecting care rooms, sanitary facilities and a kitchenette which are attached to the registered provider's residential property, located on a cul de sac on the outskirts of Drogheda. The service is registered to accommodate a maximum of 25 pre-school children on a sessional and part-time basis. Eligible children are facilitated to participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.00am to 12.00midday each weekday for 38 weeks each year. Children are currently facilitated to attend the service on a part-time basis until 2.00pm from Monday to Wednesday each week. School aged children are not accommodated in the service.

The registered provider jointly owns four other early years services in Co. Louth and in Dublin with a business partner, whilst a further full day care service is under construction in Drogheda.

Staffing

The registered provider does not work directly with children in the service. Two core staff members, one employed as a manager, work directly with the children in the service on a daily basis. A further adult is employed in a relief capacity when necessary to cover staff absences.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28; however, on inspection an additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29 - Premises. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation 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, staff members 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 manager is the designated person in charge and the second core staff member is the named person appointed to deputise in the absence of the service manager when required.

(b) The core staff member was present and in charge of the service, deputising in the absence of the service manager who was ill, when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service at 9.20am on the day of inspection.

The staff files for the registered provider, the two core staff members and the relief staff member who was present on the day of inspection were reviewed.

(2)(a)(b) There were 2 written references available for the registered provider and for the two core staff members.

There were 2 written, validated references available for the relief staff member.

(a) Three of the 8 written references available were from past employers.

(b) Five of the 8 written references available were from sources other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider, for the two core staff members and for the relief staff member. Additionally, a Garda vetting disclosure was available for an adult family member who lives in the adjoining property who is not involved in the operation of the early years service.

(d) Not applicable as following a review of the staff files there was no evidence that international police vetting was required for the registered provider or any staff member employed in the service.

(4) The two core staff members and the relief staff who was present in the service on the day of inspection held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 – 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b) None of the 4 written references available for the two core staff members were validated.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective actions and preventive actions have been carried out:

Corrective Action:

(2)(a)(b) On the day of inspection the validated references were not on premises.

Preventive Action:

(2)(a)(b) The validated references that were in the office on file are now stored on the premises.

Supporting documentation submitted:

- Written confirmation showing that the 4 written references available for the two core staff members were validated.

Summary Comment

The registered provider demonstrated that the non-compliance identified under Regulation 9(2)(a)(b) has been adequately addressed.

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.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 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) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

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

(2) One of the two core staff members was working directly with 7 pre-school children (of whom one child was aged 2 years 11 months, and 6 children who were aged 3 to 4½ years) on the morning of the inspection. Three of the 7 children remained in the service at the end of the ECCE session on a part-time basis on the day of inspection. The rostered second staff member was not present in the service, due to illness, when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service at 9.20am. In her absence the registered provider was present in the premises until a relief staff member arrived to the service at 11.00am, to work with the core staff member until 2.00pm when the children attending on a part-time basis departed.

(8)(a) Following a review of the children's attendance records and staff sign in records it was verified that the registered provider ensured that there were at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.

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-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,*
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(1) The records maintained for the total number of 12 pre-school children attending the service were inspected and all were found to be appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

(3)(a)(b)(c) The children's records were open to inspection as requested by the inspector as 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

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic needs:

- The atmosphere in the service was welcoming and child centred as evidenced by staff members greeting children and parents by name on arrival in the morning and again on departure at the end of the session and on the positive interactions that took place between the staff members and children during the inspection.
- The service promoted healthy eating and children brought their own healthy packed lunches and drinks to the service. The staff member chatted with the children during snack time, encouraging conversation and extending interactions.
- All children attending the service on the day of inspection were toilet-trained and were observed to use the toilet independently under supervision, with assistance provided by the staff members when necessary. The service's policy requires children to be toilet trained prior to commencement at the service.
- All children engaged in outdoor play on the day of inspection, dressed appropriately in coats, hats and gloves.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The inspector observed both staff members interacting with the children in a kind and respectful manner. This supported the development of secure relationships between children and staff members. The children were observed to engage comfortably with the staff members present and sought out staff for assistance and support when necessary. In addition to the core staff member, the relief staff member also seemed familiar with the children, having worked in the service on previous occasions.

- The staff members gently encouraged and praised the children in relation to kind actions, sharing, taking turns, playing collaboratively and saying please and thank you. The staff members were observed to build the children’s confidence by their support and encouragement especially when the children were developing new skills. For example, the core staff member stood beside the A-frame climbing wall leading to the standing platform and slides on the wooden climbing frame when the children were using it and offered her hand and verbal encouragement to those who needed this to feel secure when climbing. One child was initially hesitant to climb the wall without assistance and close support from the staff member but grew in confidence and when the child then climbed the wall unaided the staff member rejoiced in the child’s achievement and said ‘you did it!’ to the child’s obvious delight and eagerness to repeat the experience.
- The staff members demonstrated an awareness of the individual needs of the children and described positive and appropriate strategies to meet the children’s needs based on their preferences and interests, should additional supports be required.

Physical and material environment:

- The two interconnecting care rooms were laid out to be appealing to children with well-defined interest areas established including a home corner, library area, arts and crafts area and construction area, all equipped with a suitable range of accessible supportive play materials, organised to be visible and easily accessible to the children on open shelving at their height which facilitated child-led play experiences.
- Wooden play materials were particularly evident in the service.
- A range of specialist Montessori equipment was provided on open shelving in the bigger care room.
- Wall space was used to display samples of the children’s curricular-themed art work, including caterpillars, flags and autumn scenes.
- Floor matting and soft cushions were provided beside the book stand in the smaller care room for children to rest and opt out of activities when required.
- The fully enclosed outdoor area was well maintained, predominantly laid to grass, and offered the children opportunities for physical activity and energetic play. These included when scaling the A-frame climbing wall leading to the standing platform and slides on the wooden climbing frame, climbing on the smaller arched bar climbing frame and using the ride-on toys provided.

Other play materials included a large outdoor wood kitchen with relevant play resources, a plastic kitchen, a wooden shop unit with open serving hatches, a sensory board and wall mounted guttering, a lidded sand table and a small free-standing plastic slide.

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 play materials and equipment provided in the service were observed to be safe and suitable for the developmental age of the pre-school children in attendance and, indoors, these were stored on stable-based low level shelving which reduced the risk of the furniture from toppling over and causing injury to a child.
- The water temperature in the sanitary accommodation in the service did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the children in attendance. The inspector was informed that the warm water supply was thermostatically controlled.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- The kitchenette was inaccessible to the children during the inspection.
- The enclosed outdoor play area was designated for use by the children attending the early years service only and was found to be suitable, safe and secure.

Infection Control:

- There was running warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels provided for hand hygiene at the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation of the service. The children were encouraged to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, and after outdoor and messy play, with assistance provided when necessary.
- Children's lunches provided by parents were refrigerated on arrival to the service. This reduced the risk of bacteria multiplying in perishable food items including meat and dairy products to levels which could result in food contamination.
- Documented up to date cleaning records were maintained on the premises.

- The outdoor sand pit was fitted with a secure lid to prevent contamination by animals and birds.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No child was observed receiving medication during the inspection.

Outings:

- The inspector was informed that the service does not partake in outings.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) Accurate details of all children in attendance were maintained during the inspection. The children were entered as present in a roll book, noting each child's arrival and departure time.

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 two core staff members and the adult employed in a relief capacity held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training, ensuring that a person trained in FAR was immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a) and (b) The first aid boxes were suitably equipped and safely stored in a readily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises and were available for the children in the early years 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 record was maintained of 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 in the premises. Fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 04/09/2023.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the care rooms in the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(a) Based on the records maintained and as reported by a staff member, fire drills were not being practiced on a monthly basis to familiarise both adults and children of the correct procedures to follow in the event of a fire. The last recorded fire drill took place on 16/06/2023.
- (b) There were no maintenance records available for the smoke alarms on the premises.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective actions and preventive actions have been carried out:

Corrective Actions:

- (1)(a) The registered provider communicated with the manager of the pre-school the importance of carrying out fire drills on a monthly basis and that records be maintained.
- (b) Arrangements have been made for a fire safety company to service smoke alarms in the service.

Preventive Actions:

- (1)(a) Although these drills were carried out on a regular basis, fire drills will be carried out monthly going forward and records of these drills maintained.

(b) Smoke alarms are tested on a regular basis and staff members will also test smoke alarms in line with the fire drills and records will be maintained.

Supporting documentation submitted

- A maintenance certificate dated 01/02/2024 for the fire extinguishers and smoke alarms in the service.

Summary Comment

The registered provider demonstrated that the non-compliances identified under Regulation 26(1)(a) and (1)(b) have been adequately addressed.

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 there was insurance in place to cover up to 22 pre-school children attending the service on a part-time basis. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28/03/2023 to 27/03/2024. Although registered to accommodate a maximum of 25 pre-school children, the attendance records indicated and the registered provider stated that no more than 12 children attend the service at any one time, thereby ensuring that there was adequate insurance cover in place for the maximum number of children currently attending.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*

Compliance Information

- (a) The premises and outdoor area appeared to be in good condition and well-maintained.
- (b) The premises was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service. A doorbell was provided to allow parents or visitors notify staff members of their arrival to the service's entrance door, to the rear of the premises. Glass panels in the doorway facilitated staff members to see visitors before facilitating their entry to the premises. The outdoor play area was fully enclosed by the service walls and high level fencing.

Non-Compliance Information

- (c) Openable windows or mechanical extract ventilation was not provided in the internal sanitary accommodation adjoining the smaller of the two pre-school room.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective actions and preventive actions have been carried out:

Corrective Action:

An extractor fan has been purchased for this bathroom.

Preventive Action:

This extractor fan was installed on 21/12/2023.

Supporting documentation submitted:

- Photographs of an extractor fan in packaging labelled for bathrooms and toilets.
- An invoice for an extractor fan.

Summary Comment

The registered provider supplied assurance that the remedial work has been completed in respect of Regulation 29(c). This will be reviewed at the next inspection.