

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LH061		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	The Grove Early Years Education Centre, Lifestyle Development Group CLG		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	Grove Early Years Centre, Ballsgrove, Drogheda, Co. Louth		
<b>Eircode:</b>	A92 NX96		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Aileen Maher		
<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day		
<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	18/07/2024		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	41	PM 25
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, 180-189 Lakeshore Drive Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	S. Cully		
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector		
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>			
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).			
<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable		

### Description of service

The Grove Early Years Education Centre Lifestyle Development Group CLG is a community-based organisation providing childcare services, adult education and other support projects in Drogheda. This not-for-profit service was established in 1991, moving to its current location in 2008 and provides sessional, part-time and full day childcare to preschool children from 1 year to 6 years of age. The service operates from 8.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.15am to 12.15pm daily. The service is located in a renovated 3-storey former stables which was modernised and extended in 2008 in order to become a full day care service. There are four care rooms in operation, namely the Oak room and the Foresters room which are located on or adjoining the first-floor entry level, and the Seedlings room and the Acorn Room, both of which are located at lower ground floor level. On the day of inspection, the Oak room was closed for the summer period.

### Staffing

The Grove Early Education Centre consists of a team of 13 core staff members including an interim service manager, 8 early years practitioners, 1 cook who is also qualified to work directly with children when needed, 1 maintenance person and 2 staff members who are currently on statutory leave. The managing director and finance manager of the community organisation are based in the centre on a daily basis. There are currently 12 members of staff employed under the Community Employment scheme, 6 participating in childcare training, 1 who holds a childcare qualification, 4 undertaking administrative duties and 1 undertaking catering duties.

### 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, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28. However, on inspection additional non-compliance was identified under Regulation 8. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Seedlings Room and the Acorn Room.

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 person in charge, the organisations managing director, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

## Part II - Registration and Register

### Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

*(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.*

### Non-Compliance Information

(1) On the day of the inspection it was found that the registered provider had not notified the Inspectorate of the change in circumstances in relation to the current designated person in charge.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### **Corrective Action**

A Change in Circumstances form was submitted to Tusla as soon as this was addressed with us. Form was emailed on the 23/07/24.

#### **Preventive Action:**

Any changes in registration details will be noted and cited by management and required action taken.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Evidence of email with CIC submission.

### Summary Comment

The registered provider has submitted a Change in Circumstances (CIC) form to the Early Years Inspectorate, and there is evidence that this application has been received. This CIC is in the process of being completed. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 8 (1) has been adequately addressed.

### 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 and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The interim service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at 10.00am on the day of inspection and remained present on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

A total of 25 files were reviewed in relation to the staff members of the early years service. These files included the interim service manager, the organisation's managing director and finance manager, 8 core staff who work directly with the children on a daily basis, 1 staff member who typically carries out catering duties but on the day of inspection was working with the children, 1 staff member who carries out maintenance work in the centre and 12 staff members employed under the Community Employment (C.E.) scheme in a variety of roles including working with the children/training, reception or kitchen duties.

(2)(a)&(b) There were 2 written and validated references available for the 25 adults whose files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff members. However, in the case of one staff member, the service 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) International police vetting was available as required for 4 adults who had lived outside the State as adults for more than 6 consecutive months.

(4) The interim service manager, 9 core staff members and 1 staff member employed under the C.E scheme and who worked directly with the pre-school children in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. Six staff members employed under C.E. schemes and working in a supernumerary capacity did not require a childcare qualification.

### 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 at all times.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced on the day of inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed on the morning of the inspection:

- The Seedling room: There were 16 children aged 2 years and 6 months - 3 years and 1 month present being cared for by 4 adults. A fifth adult was present in a supernumerary capacity employed under the C.E. scheme.
- The Foresters room: There were 12 children aged 3 years and 8 months - 5 years and 2 months present being cared for by 3 adults.
- The Acorn room: There were 13 children aged 3 years and 3 months - 4 years and 7 months present being cared for by 2 adults. A third adult was present in a supernumerary capacity employed under the C.E. scheme.
- The Oak room: This room is used for ECCE and was closed for the summer period.

(8)(a) Two adults were present on the premises at all times, as evidenced in staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained in the service.

### 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) On the day of the inspection, the inspector sampled the Seedling and Acorn room for inspection. The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service.

#### Basic needs:

- Throughout the care rooms in the service the staff were observed warmly engaging with the children, providing nurturing care, encouraging them with positive feedback and facilitating their play activities. Appropriate tones of voice and use of language was observed at all times. The staff provided comfort and reassurance to children when needed and responded to children's requests for activities or comfort.
- Staff were attentive to the children's personal care needs. Nappies were changed regularly, and children used the toilets independently with discreet supervision. In the Seedlings room staff provided children with bibs at mealtimes, cleaned children's faces and noses when needed and ensured children had appropriate clothing for outdoor play.
- Mealtimes were observed to be a social and relaxed occasion with the staff sitting with the children whilst they ate providing them with assistance when needed and chatting together. Drinking water was freely available and accessible to the children in all care rooms.
- On the day of the inspection only 2 children in The Seedling room needed sleep after lunch time. In discussion with staff it was explained that younger children will join the room in September, and so the staff will facilitate more children at sleep time. The staff aim to facilitate a scheduled sleep time but did express that they prioritise children's individual needs and routines as necessary.
- All children in the service were observed to have spent time outdoors on the day of inspection. The service had waterproof overalls available so that the children could spend time outside even in wet weather.

### Supporting relationships around children:

- There was a friendly and welcoming atmosphere in the service which was supported by the service manager and staff of the service. The staff team were observed to communicate well together and support each other to ensure consistency of care to the children. While doing this the adults are also modelling positive interactions and relationships to the children.
- There were photographs of staff and children engaged in activities or at previous events and photographs of children's families on display in the care rooms and in corridors. This reflects the ethos that the service holds on creating an inclusive environment where relationships with staff, children and families are valued.

### Physical and material environment

- The Seedling room was spacious with ample floor space available for young children to play and explore indoors. The room also had the facilities to create areas for smaller group work, with low wooden barriers with gates dividing the room into 3 areas when needed.
- The Seedling room was well resourced and organised by identifiable interest areas such as the home corner, construction area, puzzles and tabletop activities, small world play, sensory play materials, reading area with beanbags and story time bags, a teepee and a cosy area.
- The Acorn room was also well resourced and organised by identifiable interest areas such as a cosy reading area, arts and crafts area, sensory play area including sensory bins and water play, dress up area with supporting props, construction area and home corner.
- There was a variety of sensory based activities freely available to the children throughout the morning such as playdough, water play, sensory bins, natural materials and mixed media materials.
- Outdoor play was facilitated in the spacious outdoor located to the rear of the premises which is accessed from both care rooms on the lower ground floor. The outdoor play area was divided by wooden fencing into 4 separate areas specifically designated for 4 individual care rooms. The surfaces were predominantly covered in artificial grass and safety matting with some concrete pathways in place along the perimeters. Each space was well-resourced with a wide range of equipment to support physical and imaginative play. These included ride-on and push-along toys, lidded sand tables, wooden balance beams, a wooden suspension bridge, fixed step-on logs, a rope hammock swing and a fixed-spring rocking toy. A full-sized wooden tractor with real tractor tyres and a wide metal slide attached provided opportunities for gross motor activity and role play; a seat and steering wheel was positioned on the standing platform, accessed

by wooden steps. The area beneath the standing platform was accessible to the children for play opportunities. A life-sized pony carved from wood was fixed into the safety surface near the tractor climbing frame, in keeping with the converted stables structure of the premises. A range of outdoor wooden seating was provided for children and adults and a locked shed was available for the safe storage of additional play materials.

### 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

Nutritionally balanced snacks and meals were detailed on the service's 3-week menu. Staff explained that most children have breakfast at home, but breakfast is available for children who need or request breakfast. The morning snack served on the morning of inspection consisted of a selection of fresh fruit. A hot meal of savoury mince, mashed potatoes, peas and gravy was provided for dinner with a vegetarian option available also. For the afternoon, the children would be served crackerbread, yogurts and fruit. The children had access to drinking water throughout the day. Dietary requirements specified by the parents were accommodated, as stated on the menu and observed in practice during the inspection.

### 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 entrance door and internal doors of the service were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to children on the day of inspection.
- A system of daily indoor and outdoor risk assessments was in place to identify and remove hazards or damaged equipment.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely on and out of reach of children.

### Infection Control:

- Weekly and daily cleaning and disinfection schedules were on display and up to date throughout the service. The premises, furniture and equipment were in clean and hygiene conditions.
- Thermostatically controlled running warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were provided at the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation of the service.
- The adults and children were observed to wash their hands at appropriate times such as before meals, following outdoor play or following toileting and nappy changing.
- Suitable disposable gloves and aprons were available and observed being used and disposed of by staff members after each individual nappy change. Pedal operated lidded nappy bins were provided for the disposal of nappies. This practice reduces the risk of cross-contamination.
- Soothers were individually labelled and stored in individual labelled containers when not in use.
- A system was in place in the Seedlings room for the appropriate cleaning and sterilising of mouthed toys.

### Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.
- Medication that was specific to a child's medical needs were stored in individual, lidded containers. The medication was stored alongside individual medical care plans that clearly outlined why the medication was required, when the medication would need to be administered and other relevant information need for the appropriate care of the child's medical needs.

### Safe Sleep:

- A designated sleep area was available in the lower end of the Seedling room. Eight standard cots were available for children who required sleep. Raised floor beds were available for children over the age of 24 months who required sleep during the day.
- The cot mattresses were in good condition and covered in a waterproof mattress protector.
- Staff were observed to carry out 10-minute physical sleep checks of sleeping children. Records of these sleep checks were maintained noting the child's position, colour and breathing pattern.

### Fire Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clearly identifiable and unobstructed.

### Non-Compliance Information

## General Safety:

In respect of the Garda vetting disclosure available for one staff member, the vetting disclosure provided for inspection was dated 03/06/2021 therefore not obtained within the previous three years as required to adhere with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective Action

#### General Safety:

The Garda Vetting application was made immediately and has since been received and is now on file.

#### Preventive Action:

Regular checks of certs, clearance etc to ensure all is in date, a list with renewal dates has been made and has been cited by two managers.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

Evidence of receipt of renewed Garda vetting disclosure

## Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

## 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.*
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) no person other than-*
    - (i) pre-school child attending the service,*
    - (ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,*
    - (iii) an employee, or*
    - (iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and*
  - (b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.*

## Compliance Information

(1) All children in the service were checked in and out of the service on a daily basis as evidenced in the attendance register books available in each care room.

(3)(a) & (b) The inspector's entry to the premises was approved on arrival by the service manager. The inspector was requested to record time of entry and exit from the premises in a visitor record book.

### 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 staff files and the staff roster, 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.

(2)(a)&(b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available on the premises and these were stored in accessible and conspicuous locations out of the reach of children.

## 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. Based on the records maintained and as reported by staff members, fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill for the whole service took place on 27/06/2024.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The firefighting equipment was certified as having been last serviced July 2023. The smoke detection system was certified as having been serviced on 27/02/2024.
- (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

An insurance certificate was available to demonstrate the service was adequately insured. The service is currently insured to accommodate a maximum of 65 children attending on a full day care basis, with an expiry date 28/02/2025.