

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH084		
Name of Service:	Scoil Beag		
Address of Service:	Balriggeran, Kilcurry, Dundalk, Co. Louth		
Eircode:	A91 YV04		
Name of Registered Provider:	Aileen McBride		
Service type:	Full Day		
Date(s) of Inspection:	30/05/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	72	PM 39
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre, Castleblayney Co. Monaghan		
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Flood & S. Skinnader		
Title:	Early Years Inspectors		
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

Scoil Beag is a community-based service that is managed by a voluntary committee and has been in operation since January 2007. The service provides full day care; part-time and sessional care to pre-school children from 6 months - 6 years of age. The maximum number of children that be accommodated is 93 and the service operates from 8.00am – 6.00pm daily.

The service operates from 2 separate buildings in the rural village of Kilcurry, Co. Louth. The main building is purpose-built and has 5 care rooms in operation namely: The Baby Room, The Waddler Room, The Junior Preschool Room, The Junior Sessional Pre-school Room, and The Senior Preschool Room. The second building is a community centre and the Senior Sessional Pre-school Room (Dinny Casey Room) operates from within this building. There is off street parking available for parental drop off and collection.

There are a number of outdoor play areas on the premises and the children also access the activities hall in the community building. Ancillary accommodation in the service consists of a separate sleep room, storage areas, utility room, office, kitchen, and sanitary accommodation.

Staffing

There were thirty-five staff working in the service which included the following:

- Twenty-seven staff were employed to work directly with the preschool children which also included the service manager and the assistant manager.
- Six staff were employed for; administrative, catering and maintenance duties.
- One staff member was engaged on a childcare community employment scheme and one additional adult worked with the school aged service.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 20, 23, 25 and 26. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the regulations. As a result, the scope of the inspection included The Baby Room, The Waddler Room and The Junior and Senior Preschool Rooms.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the service manager, assistant manager, 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

(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, in so far 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 person in charge and a named deputy person to deputise as required. The service manager and the assistant manager were on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service.

(2) Thirty-five staff files were reviewed which included 27 childcare staff, 6 ancillary staff engaged in administration, cleaning, catering and maintenance duties. One staff who worked with the school aged service and one additional staff member who was engaged on community employment scheme.

(a)& (b) There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or alternative source available for the 35 staff working in the service.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for each member of staff working in the service. The service was also in adherence to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available for the 4 members of staff who had resided outside the Irish jurisdiction for a period of 6 months or more as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that all staff 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.

(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 period of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) On the day of the inspection when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service at 10.30am, the following adult: child ratios were observed.

- Two members of staff were present in the Baby Room with 6 children aged 10 months to 1 year 6 months.
- Four members of staff were present in the Waddler Room with 10 children aged 1 to 2 years.

- Three members of staff were present in the Junior Preschool Room with 14 children aged 3 to 4 years.
- Three members of staff were present in the Senior Preschool Room with 19 children aged 3 to 6 years.
- Two members of staff were present in the Junior sessional Preschool Room with 9 children aged 3 to 4 years.
- Three members of staff were present in the “Dinny Casey” Room with 14 children aged 4 to 5 years.

Four additional staff were also on the premises, including the service manager and assistant manager who were engaged in administrative duties and assisted in the care rooms as required. One staff member was employed in an administrative role, and another was engaged in catering duties.

(8)(a) Following a review of the available documentation e.g., staff rotas and children’s attendance records this information demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that there were at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.

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

There were 6 rooms in operation on the day of the inspection: namely the Baby Room, Waddler Room, Junior Preschool Room, Senior Preschool Room, Junior Sessional Preschool Room and The ‘Dinny Casey’ Room. A sampling process was used and as such the Baby Room, Waddler Room, Junior and Senior Preschool Rooms are the subject of this inspection.

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

Supporting relationship around children

- Throughout the care rooms, children were observed to be provided with sensitive care and nurturing interactions by all staff. In the Baby Room staff were observed to sit and hold babies during and after

bottle feeding. When communicating with the children, staff were often seen down at the child's level when listening and responding, they used gentle tones of voice and provided support to children when small challenges arose. Children were spoken to with positivity and staff demonstrated an understanding of their needs for example, " That's a great boy....thats right it's a tractor....brmm brmm good boy...whats on the next page..." " good girl..... brilliant words..."

- Staff were observed to appropriately comfort a child who was upset and one to one care was provided to a child who required additional supports.
- A key person system was in place in the service. In all the rooms, it was observed that each staff member had a small group of children assigned to them. The key person took the lead in supporting that group, recording their daily activities, maintaining relationships with their families, and documenting their learning and development.
- Staff used an electronic application (an 'App') to provide information to parents on their child's care and daily routine in the service on a daily basis. Information shared included details of each child's personal care routines such as what they ate, when they slept, nappy changes, if supplies are needed such as nappies and wipes and play activities. The staff also reported that communication with parents is conducted verbally at collection and drop off.
- A staff communication book was in use in the rooms where staff recorded incidents and information to be communicated between each other and messages/ information that is shared from home. Staff meetings are held on a quarterly basis and this information with dates and times was displayed in the care rooms.
- Transitions observed in the Junior Preschool Room were smooth and swift and the children did not have to wait for any prolonged period of time to await their dinners, to go outside or to commence new activities. Appropriate supervision was given to children to come back in from outside to use the toilets and a child who had a toileting accident was brought in straight away and changed.
- In the Senior Preschool Room relaxation and breathing exercises were used to transition the children from morning activities to tidy-up time.

Programme Of Activities

- A variety of the children's artwork was on display and included; free art pictures and "our little sweethearts". "All about me" pictures were also on display and detailed the child's name, a photograph and "what I like to play".

- Evidence of long-, medium- and short-term planning were on display outside the rooms and many of the activities were reflective of the planned curriculum. Individual scrapbooks were available for each child and the staff reported that these are sent home so that parents can see some of the activities that the children engage in during their day at preschool.
- Transitions between activities and care practices were smooth. A variety of strategies were used to support the children e.g. singing songs, reading a story. The children's choices were facilitated, and this was evidenced by the children's emerging interests and emergent responses which were on display in the service.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises, or

(b) Where no such space is provided, the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis to a suitable outdoor space.

Compliance Information

(1)(b)

- A suitable comfortable rest area was available in each of the care rooms, with soft mats, child sized sofas and cushions.
- A number of individual day beds suitable for children aged over 2 years were available and set up in the Waddler room at the allocated sleep time.
- A separate sleep room off the Baby and Waddler Room was available and contained 6 standard cots and 1 space saving cot. All cots contained aerated blankets and the room temperature was maintained at the recommended sleep room temperature of 16-20 °C.

(3)(a) A large spacious outdoor area was available on the premises and is subdivided into a variety of areas of interest:

Area 1: was located to the front and side of the building and was accessed by the children attending the Baby Room. This area was gated and fenced and had a safety mat and artificial grass surfaces. A variety of equipment included an age-appropriate slide, ride on equipment, push and pull walking toys, rockers and the staff were also observed to take the children for a walk in the buggies available.

Area 2 was located to the rear of the building off the preschool rooms. The area had a safety mat surface and was enclosed and secured by gates. There was a plastic playhouse, 2 plastic climbing frames, a large wooden climbing frame with slides, rockers and ride on equipment such as trikes and bikes.

Area 3 was located behind area 2 and was identified as “the sensory garden”. This area was spacious and had a grass surface. It was secured with fencing and gates. A variety of play experiences were available for the children including wooden balance beams, climbing frames, a wooden tepee, a wooden climbing bridge, a climbing wall and tunnel. Interest areas were developed and had appropriate supporting equipment including a mud kitchen, planting boxes, a large digging area, and a “buddy hut” where the children could sit and chat with their friends or with the staff.

Area 4 was a small partially covered area with a concrete surface. This area was reported to be used by the children attending the Junior sessional preschool room. A variety of toys and equipment was available including a large play tray, toy kitchen with supporting toys,

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 staff were observed to accompany the children to the front door at collection time.

- Documentary evidence of daily risk assessments was evident in the service.
- Cleaning equipment was stored out of reach of the children.
- The kitchen area was inaccessible to the preschool children.
- All blind cords in the service were restricted or inaccessible to the children.
- The staff were familiar with the required room temperatures during sleep time. A protocol to be followed was on display in the Waddler room to maintain the desired room temperatures. All staff when questioned were familiar with the protocol. Sleep room temperatures were maintained within the recommended safe sleep guidelines of 16-20 °C.

Infection Control:

- There was a constant supply of thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and single use paper towels in the service to support hand washing. Effective hand washing practices were observed during the inspection e.g. after toileting and nappy changing, after outdoor play and prior to mealtimes.
- Good environmental cleaning practices were observed during the inspection, with tables being wiped down prior to lunch, snack times and after activities.
- Pedal operated waste bins were observed in use and were appropriately maintained on the day of the inspection.
- The service has a procedure in place for the appropriate storage of soothers. Staff were familiar with the process and detailed that all soothers are stored in individual, labelled containers.
- Mouthed toy boxes were available in the care rooms and were observed in use for the removal of toys used by the children.

Safe Sleep:

- The staff were observed to carry out safe sleep practices in accordance with the services safe sleep policy. Documentary evidence was available of the observations made during each 10-minute physical sleep check and documented appropriately.

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 (First Aid Responder) was always available to the pre-school children. This was evidenced by the availability of up to date first aid responder (FAR) certification.

(2)(a) and (b) The first aid boxes were adequately equipped and stored safely out of the reach of the children and 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.

(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 fire drill took place on 30/05/2024.

(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Firefighting equipment was last serviced on 08/2023 and the smoke alarms on 24/04/2024.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency was displayed in the service.