

TUSLA REGULATORY INSPECTION REPORT



TUSLA Identifier: TU2015LH097

Name of Service: The Playroom Project

Address of Service: Mullaharlin Park
Dublin Road
Dundalk
Co. Louth
A91 X28F

Email Address: donna@womensaidlk.net

Name of Registered Service Provider: Mr. John Moloney

Type of Service Registered: Full Day Care

Date of Inspection: 2 1 0 6 2 0 2 2

No of Pre-School Children present during Inspection: AM 43 PM 13

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 and M. Flood
Title: Early Years Inspectors

Areas which were the subject of this Inspection

Governance	Health Welfare and Development of Child	Safety
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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	<p>The Playroom Project has been operating as a not-for-profit early years' service in this setting since 2015, run under the auspices of Women's Aid Dundalk. The service caters for pre-school children on a sessional, part-time and full day care basis from the age of 1 year until they commence attendance at primary school. The service currently operates from 9.00am to 6.00pm from Monday to Friday with the state funded early childhood care and education (ECCE) scheme provided for children of eligible age and delivered from 9.00am – 12.00midday daily.</p>
Premises	<p>The Playroom Project is conducted from is a purposely renovated 2-storey building with four care rooms in operation, all of which are located on the ground floor, namely the Waddler room, the Toddler room, the Junior Preschool room and the Senior Preschool room. Ancillary accommodation includes an entrance lobby and reception area, a kitchen, sanitary facilities, a laundry room and storage which are provided on the ground floor and an office and staff room located on the first floor. Outdoor play areas are provided to the rear and side of the building.</p>
Staffing	<p>The service employs 16 core staff members consisting of the service manager, 12 staff members who work directly with the children, an administrator, a chef and a staff member who engages in cleaning and maintenance duties.</p> <p>Eight additional staff members are working in the service as part of a Community Employment (CE) scheme. Seven of these CE participants work under supervision in the care rooms in a supernumerary capacity and one CE participant is assigned to work at the reception desk.</p>
Methodology	<p>Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate (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.</p> <p>The findings on inspection are based on;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information obtained through examination of documentation • Direct observation • Discussion with relevant staff <p>This inspection was unannounced and focused on areas of Governance, Health, Welfare and Development of Child and Safety. Inspections may also focus on other areas as required.</p> <p>The inspection process has been amended to minimise the amount of time that inspectors spend in the service. A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19 health welfare and development of child and regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child.</p>

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	<p>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.</p>
Acknowledgements	<p>The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the Person in Charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.</p>

GOVERNANCE

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 was the designated person in charge and a named person was appointed to deputise in her absence as required.
- (b) The service manager and deputy person in charge were present in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the day of the inspection.

Following a service file review and a discussion with the service manager, it was confirmed to the inspectors that there were six new members of staff employed in the service since the last inspection, which included 2 core childcare staff and 4 staff who are working in the service as part of a Community Employment (CE) scheme. The staff files maintained in relation to the registered provider and the other members of staff were previously found to meet the regulatory requirement and therefore are not included in this inspection report.

The staff files in relation to six new staff members were viewed on the day of inspection:

- (2)(a) & (b) There were 2 written and validated references available for each of the new members of staff in the service.

Nine written references available were from a past employer and three written references were from a source other than a past employer.

- (c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for each of the six new members of staff.

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(d) Documentary evidence of international police vetting was available for 3 staff members who have resided outside the of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that two new staff members, observed working directly with the pre-school children during the inspection, held at least the minimum required Level 5 on the National Framework of Childcare Qualifications.

Part III - Management and Staff

Regulation 11 -Staffing Levels

(1) *Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.*

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

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service and throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed:

- In the Waddlers room there were 7 children (of whom 5 children were aged between 1year 8 months & 1year 11 months plus 2 children aged between 2years & 2years 3 months) being cared for by 2 staff members. An adult who was participating in a CE scheme was also present in this room working with the pre-school children in a supernumerary capacity, under the supervision of the core staff members.
- In the Toddlers room there were 10 children aged 2 -3 years being cared for by 3 staff members. An adult who was participating in a CE scheme was also present in this room working with the pre-school children in a supernumerary capacity.
- In the Junior Pre-school room there were 8 children aged 3 - 4 years being cared for by 2 staff members. An adult who was participating in a CE scheme

Part III - Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing Levels

was also present in this room working with the pre-school children in a supernumerary capacity, under the supervision of the core staff members.

- In the Senior Pre-school room there were 18 children aged 4 - 5 years being cared for by 3 staff members. An adult who was participating in a CE scheme was also present in this room working with the pre-school children in a supernumerary capacity.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained at the service.

HEALTH WELFARE & DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD

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 observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

- Warm and positive interactions were observed taking place between the staff members and the children during the inspection. The staff members spoke positively to and about the children during the inspection and seemed very familiar with the children's individual needs, likes and preferences. The children were observed to engage comfortably with the staff members in both conversation and play, and the staff members were observed interacting with and responding to the children in an interested and affirmative manner.
- When dealing with behavioural issues or minor conflicts that arose between the children regarding sharing, taking turns or playing cooperatively, the staff members were observed responding in a calm and supportive manner and used a problem-solving approach to good effect, showing respect for the children involved. The staff members were observed supporting children to self-regulate their behaviour and emotions by talking to them about their feelings, and by encouraging and affirming positive interactions with other children.
- The menu demonstrated a well-balanced and varied diet with meals timetabled to be provided at regular intervals during the day. Mixed fruit and yogurt were served for morning snack at 10.30am. Dinner was cooked

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Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child

by the service's chef on site on a daily basis with pasta carbonara containing chicken and ham with garlic bread served on the side provided for dinner at 12.30pm on the day of inspection. Tea options included beans on toast and scrambled egg on toast, to be served around 3.15pm. The children were offered water to drink with their meals and drinking water was freely available to the children throughout the day. The staff members in the Waddler room and the Toddler room were observed sitting with the children at their level, feeding the children if required or supporting the children to feed themselves, whilst engaging the children in conversation which promoted a social and relaxed atmosphere.

- Children in the Waddler room and some of the children in the Toddler room wore bibs over their clothes to protect them at mealtimes and during messy play activities including when gluing and painting.
- Nappy changing was observed taking place regularly and in a timely manner, and the staff members were observed chatting and singing to the children during this time and using it as an opportunity for warm one to one interaction. The staff members were also observed to be responsive to the children's cues, should they need to use the toilet with discreet supervision provided and assistance if required.
- The younger children were facilitated to sleep when their needs dictated on the day of inspection with child-led sleep practices implemented for this age group. Three standard cots were provided in the sleep room, and stackable beds were available for children aged 2 years and older should they wish to avail of a nap after dinner. Floor matting and soft cushions were provided in the care rooms for children to rest and opt out of activities if required during the day. No children attending the Toddler Room required sleep during the inspection.
- All children engaged in outdoor play on the day of inspection.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The physical and material environment, both indoors and outdoors, supported children's learning and development. The care rooms contained a suitable range of play materials and equipment which were appropriate for the age and developmental stage of the children and laid out to accommodate the needs and interests of the children in the rooms. These were stored on open low-level shelves and were freely and readily accessible to the children.
- The four pre-school rooms had clearly defined interest areas and the environments supported the pre-school children in initiating and sustaining play activities with real-life, wooden, recycled and open-ended materials provided in each care room including the Waddler room and the Toddler room where the youngest children attending the service were accommodated. Well-resourced home corners with supportive equipment,

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construction areas, activity tables containing rice and lentils, small world toys, arts and crafts materials and toys to develop manipulation skills including bricks, blocks, jigsaws, shape sorters, textured balls and threading equipment were amongst the interest areas and play equipment provided in the four care rooms.

- A broad range of age-appropriate books were provided in each care room to provide choice and support the children's interest and language development.
- Numerous samples of the children's artwork were displayed on the walls in the service.
- The service provides 4 separate outdoor play areas accessed directly from the care rooms. Each of the outdoor play areas were fully enclosed and covered in safety surfacing. Push-along toys, an outdoor wooden kitchen and a low-level climbing A-frame structure were provided in the outdoor area used by the children attending the Waddler room. A lidded sand table with a plentiful supply of sand and relevant play resources, a wooden outdoor kitchen, ride-on toys, space hoppers and footballs were provided in the outdoor area used by the children attending the Junior Pre-school room. The children attending the Toddler and Senior pre-school rooms were provided with a variety of play materials and equipment including an age-appropriate slide and steps, a mud kitchen, a gadget and musical wall, rockers and a variety of ride-on trikes. A partially covered area was also available in the senior preschool area for use in all types of weather. This area contained a variety of toy boxes with balls and large blocks.

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:

The following are examples of measures undertaken in the service to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the children:

GENERAL SAFETY:

- The external and internal doors were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the Early Years' service.
- The warm water temperature in the sanitary accommodation and at the sinks in the care rooms did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. The inspectors were informed that the water supply

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was thermostatically controlled; this reduced the risk of scalding for the children.

- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children on high shelving and in locked cupboards.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to children, with a push-button numerical lock in place on the door to restrict entry.
- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.
- The outdoor play areas were gated and secured with fencing to prevent a child gaining unsupervised access to a roadway or other source of danger. Foam padding had also been placed on the timber posts to protect the children from impact hazards.

INFECTION CONTROL:

- Warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation and at the sinks in the care rooms in the service. Appropriate hand hygiene procedures were observed to be carried out with children facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet and having their nappies changed, and following outdoor play and messy play. Hand sanitiser gel, stored out of the reach of children, was provided in the hallway and care rooms to facilitate additional hand hygiene procedures to be undertaken.
- Appropriate personal protective equipment including disposable aprons and suitable disposable gloves were available and used for nappy changing, in keeping with the service's documented nappy changing procedure.
- The service was visibly clean. Up to date documented cleaning schedules were maintained on mobile tablet devices in each care room. Staff members described appropriate cleaning and hygiene practices including those in relation to the management of soothers and mouthed toys. Staff members reported and the mouthed toy procedure on display demonstrated clarity in relation to the preparation and use of the sterilising solution provided in the service, including the correct dilution when preparing the solution.
- Soothers were individually labelled and stored in personalised containers when not in use.
- The outdoor sand pit was covered when not in use 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.

SAFE SLEEP:

- On the day of inspection all children under 2 years of age had access to one of the 3 standard cots provided in the service's sleep room which was

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accessed directly from the Waddler room. No child was observed sleeping during the inspection.

- Staff members were able to describe safe sleep practices including the safe sleep air temperature range of 16-20°C and also the requirement to carry out and document safe sleep checks at least every 10 minutes, noting the child's position, colour and breathing pattern. Sleep checks were maintained on a mobile tablet device application in the service.

Non-Compliance Information:

The following risks were identified that could impact on the health, safety and welfare of a child attending the service:

GENERAL SAFETY:

1. A blind cord in the sleep room had become detached from its restrictor and posed a hazard to the children in attendance.
2. The ambient temperatures in the sleep room were above the optimum sleep room temperature of 16-20°C and the ambient temperatures in the care rooms were above the optimum care room temperature of 18-22°C during the inspection, as detailed in table 1.1 below. These temperatures did not conform to national best practice safe sleep guidelines regarding the prevention of sudden infant death and also posed a risk in relation to the safety and comfort of the children in attendance in the care rooms. The inspectors were informed by the designated person in charge that higher than optimal room temperatures occurred frequently in the premises despite the recent installation of an up-dated electrical heating and cooling system throughout the premises. It is acknowledged that, when asked by the inspectors, staff members and the designated person in charge accurately described the safe air temperature ranges and outlined their efforts to achieve this on a daily basis through opening the room windows early each morning to ventilate the rooms and the operation of the electrical cooling system provided in the sleep room and care rooms. However, these control measures did not prevent the room temperatures from remaining excessively high.

See table 1.1 below for sample air temperatures recorded on the day of inspection.

Location	Air Temperature	Time recorded
Sleep room	21.2°C	12.20pm
	22.7°C	13.44pm
Waddler room	22.2°C	12.10pm
	24.7°C	2.00pm
Toddler room	25.1°C.	12.40pm
	24.1°C.	1.50pm

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Junior Pre-school room	24.6°C	1.25pm
	25.7°C	1.50pm
Senior Pre-school room	27.2°C.	12.50pm
	24.1°C.	1.40pm

Table 1.1 Air temperatures 21/06/2022.

INFECTION CONTROL:

3. In the Toddler room one staff member was observed changing a child's nappy and returning the child to the care room after the procedure without washing their own hands first. This resulted in the staff member touching multiple surfaces/ door handles and other items before they washed their hands, posing a risk of cross-contamination.
4. Unlabelled water bottles were observed being used in the Waddler room. Staff members stated that they were familiar with and recognised each bottle by sight, but this was inadequate for reducing the risk of cross-infection for the children in attendance.
5. The veneer edging had peeled away from the side of the worktop in the Waddler room. The exposed inner timber surface did not permit for effective cleaning.

SAFE SLEEP:

6. Two different versions of the service's safe sleep policy were on display in the sleep room. One of these documents included the statement that "*all children are checked in their cots/beds every 15 minutes or less*". This is at variance with national best practice safe sleep guidelines which requires sleep checks to be carried out at least every 10 minutes. It is acknowledged that the second service-specific safe sleep checklist on display included appropriate guidance in relation to checking "*sleeping babies/children every 10 minutes*" and staff members informed the inspectors of the requirement to carry out and document safe sleep checks at least every 10 minutes.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated that the following corrective and preventative actions were carried out:

Corrective Action:

1. The blind cord has been cut and secured to restrictor.
2. Signs have been erected to open the windows in the sleep room, early each morning. Fans in the building have been serviced and the existing fan system has a function which allows it to circulate the air in the building. The plumber who installed the system has shown all staff how to use the system correctly.

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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Staff member stated that she was nervous and forgot to remove her gloves. Consequentially, all staff have been sent a video on how gloves can cause cross contamination. 4. Children's water bottles/drinking cups are labelled each day after they have been washed and dried. 5. Veneer edge has been replaced in the Waddler room. 6. Management have removed the sleep sign with 15 minutes written on it. Left the original safe sleep policy on wall which states 'child will be checked every ten minutes'. <p>Preventive Action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff will check blind cords each morning and regularly throughout the day. 2. Staff will ensure windows are open each morning and fans are on to circulate cool air. 3. Additional signs have been posted in the nappy changing room, reminding the staff to remove gloves and wash hands. 4. Permanent waterproof marker is used to write child's name underneath cup as a back-up if name label is peeled off by the children. 5. The registered provider has received delivery of additional veneer edges and they will be added to each room in the service. 6. Displayed the updated safe sleep policy in each room, all staff are aware of the safe sleep policy.
Summary Comment:	The inspectors reviewed the corrective actions, preventive actions and photographic evidence submitted by the service following the inspection. The registered provider has demonstrated that the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been addressed.

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:	(2)(a) and (b) The first aid boxes available in the service were stored in conspicuous locations on the premises and were available for the children at all times.
Non-Compliance Information:	(1) Based on a review of staff first aid qualifications and on the staff, roster maintained, it was evident that a person who had undertaken First Aid Response (FAR) training was not available at all times to the children attending the Early

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Regulation 25 - First Aid

	<p>Years' service. For example, between 5.00pm and 6.00pm on 22/06/2022 none of the rostered staff members held FAR training.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that, in addition to the two staff members who held FAR training, a number of staff members held in-date paediatric-specific first aid training, but this was insufficient to meet the regulatory requirement.</p>
<p>Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider</p>	<p>The Registered Provider stated that the following corrective and preventative actions were carried out.</p> <p>Corrective Action:</p> <p>(1) Additional staff have completed the FAR training, their certificates had not been received prior to the inspection. The registered provider contacted the CE scheme co-ordinator and four certificates have now been sent to the service.</p> <p>Preventive Action:</p> <p>(1) Three additional staff have been sent on FAR training courses during the month of August. These staff work both morning and afternoon hours ensuring that there will be always three FAR trained staff on the premises.</p>
<p>Summary Comment:</p>	<p>The inspectors reviewed the corrective action, preventive action and photographic evidence submitted by the service following the inspection. Based on the submitted documentation it was evident that 4 additional staff members held FAR training with expiry date on 09/03/2024 and a further 3 staff members were undertaking three-day FAR training during August 2022.</p> <p>The registered provider has demonstrated that the non-compliance identified under Regulation 25(1) has been addressed.</p>

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Regulation 26 - Fire Safety Measures

<p>(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of—</p> <p>(a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and</p> <p>(b) the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises</p> <p>(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises</p>	
<p>Compliance Information:</p>	<p>(1)(a) A record was maintained of all fire drills which had been completed in the service. The records indicated that fire drills were carried out monthly with the most recent fire drill conducted on 19/05/2022.</p> <p>(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 19/11/2021 and the fire detection system was certified as having last been serviced on 21/01/2022.</p>

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Regulation 26 - Fire Safety Measures

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.