

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH104		
Name of Service:	Tír na nÓg Naíonra Childcare Service		
Address of Service:	St. Mochta's National School, Louth Village, Dundalk, Co. Louth		
Eircode:	A91 X622		
Name of Registered Provider:	Áine Finnegan		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date(s) of Inspection:	07/11/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	21	PM No.
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre, Castleblayney Co. Monaghan.		
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Flood		
Title:	Early Years Inspector		
Authority to Inspect			
The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).			
Conditions if applicable	Not Applicable		

Description of service

Tir na nÓg Naionra Childcare Service is a privately owned service that has been in operation since 2000. It provides sessional care and education to pre-school children aged 2-6 years. The service operates from 09:00 - 12:00 Monday – Friday. The registered afternoon session is currently not in operation.

The premises consists of a large playroom with adjoining sanitary facilities within a prefabricated building. This is located on the grounds of St. Mochta’s Primary School in Louth Village, Co. Louth. The service also has access to an enclosed outdoor play area on the grounds of the primary school building.

Staffing

The registered provider and 2 staff are employed to work directly with the preschool children. Two additional staff attend the service on a regular basis, one who is a contracted music teacher and the 2nd person works with children attending 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/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings.

Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re-occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector would like to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)&(b) The service had a designated person in charge and named deputy person to deputise as required. The person in charge who is also the registered provider was on the premises when the inspector arrived on the premises and was present throughout the inspection.

(2) There were 5 staff files presented for inspection and the following were reviewed:

(a) & (b) There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for 4 members of staff including the registered provider and the contracted activities teacher. One staff member employed to work with the school aged children had 1 written and validated reference available.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for each member of staff employed in the service and the contracted music teacher. The registered provider adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Following a review of the staff files presented, evidence of international police vetting was available for the contracted music teacher who lived outside the Irish jurisdiction for a period of greater than 6 months.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that 2 out of 3 members of staff, who work directly with the pre-school children held at least the minimum required level 5 on the National Framework of Childcare Qualifications

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider did not ensure that appropriate vetting procedures had been completed for all staff:

(2)(a)(b)

One staff member who works with children attending the school aged service did not have a 2nd written and validated reference available for inspection.

(4) One staff member who was observed working directly with the children on the day of inspection did not have documentary evidence available to confirm that they held at least the minimum required level 5 childcare qualification on the National Framework of Childcare Qualifications, or a qualification deemed equivalent.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The staff member has obtained a second reference which has been verified and is now on file.

A copy of the certificates has been requested. The staff member has been told there is a waiting list for these to be issued

To prevent situations like this arising again the registered provider will ensure staff members have all relevant paperwork in place before employment commences.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence of written and validated reference.

Email correspondence requesting a copy of childcare qualification certificate from the national qualification agency.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances. Based on this information the non-compliance under Regulation 9 (2)(a&b) has been addressed.

However as documentary evidence of the minimum required childcare qualification for 1 staff member has not been received to date Regulation 9 (4) remains non-compliant. It is acknowledged that the registered provider has submitted evidence of email communication with the national qualification agency.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

- (1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.*
- (3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

Compliance Information

- (1) During the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.
- (3) On the day of the inspection when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service at 10:40, there were 2 staff members (including the registered provider) working directly with the 21 pre-school children present, aged between 3 - 4 years.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
 - (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
 - (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

- (1) Documentary evidence of the following records was presented for inspection and reviewed:
- (h) All the arrival and departure times for all children present in the service were documented on the written attendance record or the electronic application which was in operation in the service.
- (i) A staff roster was available in the service and was reflective of the staff present in the service.

(k) It was observed that, an accident and incident record form was completed for a minor accident that occurred with a child in the service prior to the inspector's arrival on the premises. The required information was completed, and the parents were informed about the accident.

Two additional accident and incident forms for the service were reviewed and these were found to be complete with the required information and in accordance with the services policy on Accidents and Incidents.

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

All children bring in their own snacks from home, with the perishable items stored appropriately in the fridge. Drinks were accessible in the children's own individual cups/drinks bottles and were available for the children to access as required. The children were given enough time to sit and have their snack with extra time given for the children who required it.

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 premises was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises, with the entrance doors leading into the premises secured by a chain lock.

- When questioned all staff were familiar with the process of carrying out a daily risk assessment of the environment. Documentary evidence was available of completed risk assessments carried out in the service.
- All heaters were guarded, and wall mounted therefore, inaccessible to the preschool children.
- The designated emergency exits were clear and unobstructed.

Infection Control:

- There was a supply of thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and single use paper towels in the service to support hand washing.
- Good environmental cleaning practices were observed during the inspection, with tables being wiped down prior to snack times and after activities. The fridge in the service was in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Pedal operated waste bins were observed in use and were appropriately maintained on the day of the inspection.
- Up to date daily and weekly cleaning sheets were on display and staff were familiar with cleaning procedures in accordance with best practice guidelines.

Non-Compliance Information

The Inspectorate is not assured that adequate steps have been taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service based on the following observations made during the inspection:

General Safety:

1. The maintenance records available for the smoke alarm on the premises detailed 18/07/2021 as the last maintenance check. This is outside the best practice guidelines which recommends that all smoke alarms must be maintained at a minimum of intervals not exceeding 12 months.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Actions

The fire alarm company has completed a check on all fire alarm equipment on the service since the inspection. The registered provider will ensure the alarm is serviced at least annually as per recommendations and the service has been put on a list for next year as a reminder.

Supporting documentation submitted

Fire alarm maintenance certificate

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliance. Based on this information the non-compliance under Regulation 23 has been addressed. Implementation and sustainment of the corrective and preventive actions will be assessed at the next inspection.

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 for children was at all times available to the children attending the service. Documentary evidence was available of an up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) qualification for two adults in the service.

(2)(a) and (b) The first aid box available was adequately stocked and stored in a conspicuous location where it was 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 firefighting 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 on 16/10/24.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises dated the 12/2023 and 18/07/2021 respectively.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.