

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH105
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Name of Service:	Toddlers' Hill Creche & Montessori
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Address of Service:	54 Moorehall Rise, Ardee, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A92 Y958
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Name of Registered Provider:	Jeanne Thorne
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date(s) of Inspection:	24/04/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	48	PM	28
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Family Resource Centre, Common's Road, Navan, Co Meath
Inspection undertaken by:	C Tunney and AM Cunningham
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
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Description of service

Toddlers Hill Creche and Montessori is a privately operated Early Years' Service, located in Ardee Co. Louth, in operation since 2008. The childcare service provides full day care, part-time day care and a sessional service to children aged from 0 to 6 years and operates from 07.30hrs to 18.00hrs Monday to Friday. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service is facilitated from a two-storey adapted dwelling. There are five care rooms in operation, Kinders Room, Cruiser Room, Toddler Room, Pre-School Room and Montessori Room. Additional facilities include a kitchen, sanitary facilities (nappy changing areas), sleep room and outdoor play areas.

Staffing

There are thirteen staff employed in the service including the registered provider, a manager, 9 childcare staff members, an administration staff member, and a cook. Two staff members are employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). The staff members hold a major award in Early Childhood Education on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

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 inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child and safety under regulation 9, 11, 15, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report. The scope of the inspection included the Kinders Room, Cruiser Room, Toddler Room and Baby Room, Toddler Room and Pre-school. The Montessori room was not included in this inspection.

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 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
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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 registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service and a named person was appointed to deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was present when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee. The management structure was displayed on the wall in the entrance lobby.

(2) Following a review of the previous inspection records and in discussion with the registered provider, the inspector was informed six staff members had commenced working in the service since the last inspection on the 03/05/2022. These files were reviewed.

(2) (a) Nine written and verified references were from a past employer were available.

(b) Three references from a source other than a past employer were available.

(c) Garda Vetting Disclosures were available for the six staff members.

(d) International police vetting was not applicable available as a staff member who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for longer than 6 months as an adult.

(4) Of the six staff members, four were employed to work directly with children and hold at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework.

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) There was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service on the day of inspection except as outlined below.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service except as outlined below:

Kinders Room

- One adult cared for 6 children (aged between 2 years 7 months to 3 years), attending for full day care. A second staff member provided relief. The adult/child ratio was correct.

Toddler Room

- One adult cared for 5 children (aged between 2 years to 3 years), attending for full day care. A second staff member provided relief. The adult/child ratio was correct.

Cruiser Room

- One adult cared for 5 children (aged between 1 year 1 month to 1 year 6 months), attending for full day care. The adult/child ratio was correct.

Pre-school Room

- Two adults cared for 11 children (aged between 3 years to 6 years), of which 8 children were attending for a sessional service and 3 children attended for full day care. The adult/child ratio was correct.

Montessori Room

- Two adults cared for 21 children (aged between 3 years to 6 years), of which 12 children were attending for full day care). The adult/child ratio was correct.

(8) The registered provider stated there were at least two adults always present on the premises, confirmed by staff roster.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*

(h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;

(i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) Twenty-five children's registration forms were reviewed and found to be appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

(3) (c) The records referred to above were open to inspection by an authorised person.

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:

(a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;

(b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;

(c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;

(d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;

(e) the facilities available;

(f) the opening hours and fees;

(g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of the information as outlined above in Regulation 16 (a) to (k).
- (3) The records were open to inspection by an authorised person.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

- (1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-
- (a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that children's learning, development, and well-being was facilitated in the service;

Basic Needs:

- Children's lunches were observed to be nutritious and healthy. Children could access their drinks as they wished. The staff members sat with the children during snack time and was attentive to their needs; conversations and interactions between the children and the adults were observed to be informative and playful.
- A catering staff member is employed to prepare food on the premises daily for children availing of full day care. A menu plan was available for parents to view. Children attending for full day care were provided a snack by the service of crackers and cheese. Dinner was provided by the service and consisted of potatoes, sweetcorn, fish fingers and gravy and served in an age-appropriate consistency.
- The children's personal care was attended to. Hand hygiene was carried out at recommended times, prior to mealtimes and following personal care and outdoor play. The children were supported to be self-caring, suitable to the age and stage of development, including hand washing, toileting and caring for their belongings.

- Nappy changing was carried out at a timely manner.
- Positive engagement between the staff members and children were noted. The staff members used age-appropriate soft tones, used the child's individual name, and were actively involved in the children's play where appropriate. Transitions are clearly announced and signaled by staff. Children were given time to complete activities at their own pace before joining the next activity.
- The children availed of outdoor play which provided a change in their environment and promoted their gross motor development.

Physical and Material Environment:

The Pre-school Rooms were comfortable and colourful. Designated play materials included a small animal section, play kitchens, art and craft material, wooden blocks, and construction material. Evidence of the children's artwork was displayed including family photos and birthday dates were displayed in a way that respects the children's work.

- The Cruiser room included a mixture of toys in a variety of textures, such as, rattles, building blocks, soft toys, stacking cups, small animals, stationary activity centre, books beside the soft areas where children could rest. An adult chair facilitated staff to provide nurturing care during bottle feeding or assist a child if unsettled.
- The Kinders Room contained play materials such as play kitchen with support equipment, puzzles, dress up material, blocks, arts and crafts.
- The Toddler room was laid out in designated areas to facilitate the children's play, materials were freely available and included, play kitchen with support equipment, puzzles, train sets, construction tools, dress up clothes, blocks, arts and crafts.
- The Pre-school Room and the Montessori room were well laid out with defined interest areas such as construction, art, home corner, dress up, reading and cosy areas. The children's artwork and family photographs were displayed.
- There were three outdoor areas located to the front and rear of the pre-school and pre-school rooms and contained slides, a playhouse and sit on toys appropriate to the age and stage of the development of the child. A mud kitchen area was also available. An outdoor area to the front of the pre-school contained a sand area and a wooden bus.

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 registered provider ensured all reasonable measures were put in place following reopening of the service to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending such as;

General Safety

- The premises were appropriately secured to prevent pre-school children from exiting unsupervised and restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of children.
- Children's attendance was recorded correctly, a staff roster was available, and staff recorded their attendance on a daily basis.

Infection Control:

- The premises, its play equipment and materials were maintained in a satisfactory state.
- Hand washing was carried out as recommended, children were encouraged to be independent, and assistance was given as required. The younger children were assisted to wash their hands following nappy changing.
- Prior to the children's meals, tables were cleaned.
- The nappy changing procedures was carried out appropriately, disposable gloves, aprons were worn, the changing mat was cleaned between nappy changes. Children's creams were labelled by name and stored in individual baskets.
- Warm running water was available in the children's sanitary areas, along with a supply of liquid soap, paper towels and foot operated bins.
- Windows were opened to allow fresh air to flow through.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication records reviewed were recorded according to the service medication policy.

Safe Sleep

- The six cots available were in satisfactory condition and maintained in a proper state of repair. A system was in place in relation to the management and cleaning of bed linen.
- Children placed in the sleep room were appropriately monitored while sleeping. Ten-minute sleep observations were recorded which included, position, colour and breathing patterns. A staff member remained in the room while children were sleeping.

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) A record was kept of each child's time of arrival and departure on a daily basis by the staff members.

(3) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children's parents / guardians, employees or authorised visitors can enter the pre-school. A visitor's book was maintained, there was evidence that visitors were requested to record their attendance, the inspectors were requested to record their arrival and departure times.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1) (a) A record was maintained of all fire drills which had been completed in the service. Fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill took place on 19th March 2023.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire extinguishers and smoke alarms in the premises, which were last serviced on 25th February 2023 and 19th January 2023 respectively.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

On the day of inspection pre-school children attending the service were supervised at all times.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Non-Compliance Information

- (e)
- There was a strong unpleasant odour in the nappy changing room that lingered for a long period of time, there was evidence that the extraction fan was not working (the non-compliance was noted on the last inspection on 3/5/22).
 - A tap in both the Montessori sanitary and Kinder sanitary facilities were not in working order to ensure warm water is readily available to support good hand washing techniques.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Corrective Action

1. A Full Service of the ventilation system was booked in, and all vents were checked. All the filters were changed, and the vents were cleaned. All the extraction fans were working with no issues identified with the fans. (See attached report from the company who carried out the service). Staff were all shown how to clean the vents of dust and to document it. There were also shown how to boost the ventilation system and instructed to do it after every nappy run. The importance of monitoring the environment in the nappy room was emphasised with all staff and they were instructed to raise any concerns or issues with management immediately.
2. New sign off sheets for the emptying of the bin were introduced and staff were instructed to record when the bins were emptied.
3. Two posters were put up in the nappy changing room to remind staff to empty the bins and to boost the ventilation system.
See attached photo evidence of all actions listed.

Preventive Action

The Sanitary Risk assessment will be checked by management daily to ensure it reflects real time practices. Support and supervision of infection control practices will continue.

Corrective Action

1. The plumber was immediately called following the inspection and two new mixing valves were installed on these sinks as the ones that were there had not been working properly. (See attached invoice from plumber).

Preventive Action

Water temperature records were completed 4 times a day for the weeks following the installation of the new valves to ensure that the water was always with in the correct range for the children to wash their hands properly. We are going to continue this practise going forward with the water temperature being check 2-3 times a day. Staff have been instructed to notify management immediately if the water temperature falls below the correct range.

See attached photo evidence of all actions listed.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has been accepted. Appropriate action was taken to improve the ventilation system in the nappy changing area. Additionally the registered provider arranged for a review of the water system to ensure warm water is available for staff and children to facilitate good hand hygiene measures. Regulation 29 has been addressed.