

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK015			
Name of Service:	Star Kids Athlacca			
Address of Service:	Rathcannon, Athlacca, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick			
Eircode:	V35 VY06			
Name of Registered Provider:	Karen Hopkins			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	30/04/2024			
No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	6
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla, Early Years Inspectorate Offices, 2 nd Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick			
Inspection undertaken by:	M Riordan			
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

Star Kids Pre-School is a community sessional, part time and full day care pre-school service, located in the rural community of Athlacca, in Co. Limerick. It is located next door to the local Primary school in the village. The service offers a morning sessional service from 9.15am to 12.15pm. Full day care is offered from 7.30am to 2.45pm and a school aged service is offered each afternoon.

The premises is a purpose-built, single-story building. It contains 2 spacious pre-school rooms with bathroom facilities, a kitchen, a storage room and a disability toilet accessible. It has a well-resourced enclosed outdoor play area to the side and rear of the premises. A modular building located at the rear of the outdoor play area is used as a sensory room. This space accommodates school aged children each evening.

Staffing

The registered provider of the service is the chairperson of the Dromin Athlacca Community Childcare Committee. A designated person in charge is appointed to oversee the daily running of the pre-school. There are 6 additional staff employed to work at the service. All staff hold an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

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

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

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, 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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The designated person in charge of operating the service was in charge on the day of the inspection. There was a named person available who was able to deputise in their absence.

(b) During the period of the inspection, a designated person in charge was present and the staff roster indicated a person in charge was always available on the premises.

(2)(a) Two written and validated references from past employers were available for all staff at the facility.

(b) All references were from past employers and references from other reputable sources were not required.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for each staff member and all certificates were dated within the last 3 years.

(d) Police vetting was available for 1 staff member at the service.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The following written policies were available in the service.

Complaints policy

Policy on the Administration of Medication

Policy on Infection Control

Policy on Behaviour Management

Policy on Safe Sleep

Fire Safety Policy

Inclusion Policy

Policy on Outings

Policy on Accidents and Incidents

Policy on Authorisation to Collect Children

Policy on Healthy Eating

Policy on Outdoor Play

Policy on Staff Absences

Staff Training Policy

Supervision Policy

All policies were reviewed and updated each year with the most recent review date in December 2023. All staff were given copies of the policies after each review.

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) The service operates a morning session from 9.15am to 12.15pm. On the day of the inspection there were 16 pre-school children present with 4 staff members. In the afternoon there were 6 children present with 2 staff members. The adult child ratio was compliant with the requirements of Regulation 11.

(3) At all times the managers at the service ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to in the service.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS:

There was a Healthy Eating policy in place in the service. For the children who arrived early, a breakfast of toast, cereals, fresh fruit and yogurts were offered. A mid-morning snack provided by the parents was served at 10.30 am. Parents were advised on a range of suitable, healthy snack options to consider when preparing children's lunch boxes. All perishable foods were stored in a fridge. For children who remained on for the afternoon, a hot meal of soup, noodles, pasta or rice dish was offered. The staff sat and socialised with the children at break time and helped promote mealtimes as a social occasion. Children were encouraged to take regular drinks throughout the day and an easily accessible water fountain was available for all children to help themselves to a drink when thirsty.

Children had unrestricted access to the toilets located next to the Pre-school room 2. Low level sinks, hot water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were accessible to promote hygienic washing of hands. A disability access bathroom was available in the facility and a nappy changing amenity was available if required.

Children spend long periods of time outdoors each day. A sheltered space outside facilitated children playing outside regardless of weather. A change of clothes was accessible for all children if needed. Protective clothing was also available if needed for messy play activities.

A rest area with a large soft couch was available if children needed a rest area away from more active play spaces. Low level beds were used by the children who stayed for full day care each afternoon. The cabin located at the rear of the playground provided a relaxed sensory space for children to use if time was needed away from busy play areas. Low level lighting, soft music, sensory lamps and large soft couches helped create a calm quiet environment in this space.

The outdoor area was well resourced and contained numerous play spaces to facilitate more active play opportunities. An area for climbing, running, playing ball games, gardening, digging, cycling and using ride on toys was provided outside. A large canopy extended out from the building provided a sheltered space for the children if needed. The outside area provided opportunities for adventure, exploring, engaging and experimenting with nature.

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:

On arrival to the service, the door to the building was secured and access to the building was controlled by a staff member from inside. This prevented any unauthorised entry and any unsupervised exit of children from the service. The outdoor play areas were safely secured and were surrounded by high-level steel fencing. Children were supervised at all times while outside.

A risk assessment of all areas was carried out by the manager of the service on a regular basis. All cleaning materials were stored in a designated cleaning storage room where they were inaccessible to the children. All medicines were stored safely in a locked press, well out of reach of all children.

Infection Control:

A high standard of operational hygiene was noted in all areas of the service. A written cleaning record was available showing that all areas internally and externally were cleaned on a regular basis.

All toys, play materials and equipment available to the children was cleaned on a regular basis. No broken toys or equipment were noted on the premises. Where children were sick with an infectious illness, parents were informed of the necessary exclusion periods required to reduce the risk of the transmission of infections in the facility.

Administration of Medication:

Staff had a clear knowledge of the procedures to follow in relation to the services policy on administration of medication. Consent in writing was received from parents and all medicines were checked by 2 staff prior to being administered.

Safe Sleep:

A Safe Sleep policy was in place and staff were aware of their responsibility to monitor children who slept in the afternoon at the service.