

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015LK036 |
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| Name of Service: | Care Bears Creche and Montessori |
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| Address of Service: | The Loughmore Centre, Loughmore Avenue, Raheen Business Park, Raheen, Co. Limerick |
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| Eircode: | V94 RD30 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Mariana Kok |
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| Service type: | Full Day, Part Time, Sessional |
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| Date of Inspection: | 17/01/2025 |
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| No of pre-school children: | AM | 43 | PM | 43 |
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| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Office, 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).

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| Conditions if applicable | Not applicable |
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Description of service

Care Bears Creche and Montessori is a full day childcare service located in the Loughmore Centre in Raheen Business Park, close to the outskirts of Limerick City. It caters for children aged 0 to 6 years. It is open Monday to Friday, 7.30am to 5.30pm. The service operates from a ground floor purpose-built facility. It has 4 well designed preschool rooms. A large outdoor play area is located to the rear of the building.

Staffing

The registered provider is the owner and the manager of the service. There are 16 staff employed to work at the service. Staff are also employed to prepare, cook and serve food each day at the facility

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.

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 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) The registered provider was off duty on the day of the inspection. A person to deputise in her absence was available on the premises.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the person deputising for the registered provider was present, and the staff roster indicated that the registered provider or their deputy were at all times rostered for duty during the hours of operation.

(2)(a) Two written and validated references were available for 16 of the 17 staff members working at the facility.

(b) References were from either past employers or from other reputable sources such as schools and colleges as required.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for all staff at the facility. However, for 1 staff member, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Police vetting was available for 9 staff members who had lived outside the Irish jurisdiction for a period of time longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) With the exception of one staff member all other staff working at the facility held a major award in Early childhood Care and Education.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) There was one staff member working at the service who did not have the required 2 validated references available.

(4) There was 1 staff member working at the service who did not have a major award in Early childhood Care and Education.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a) A written reference was added to the relevant staff file. The staff member subsequently left employment at the service.

(4) Proof of qualifications were submitted from the relevant college for the staff member who required certification following completion of the course.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documented evidence of the required papers were forwarded to the Office of the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified have been adequately addressed.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of the inspection there were 43 pre-school children under the direct supervision of 10 childcare staff on the premises. The adult child ratio was correct overall in the premises.

(2) There were 6 preschool children and 2 staff in the Baby room.

There were 14 preschool children and 3 staff in the Toddler room.

There were 12 preschool children and 2 staff in the Preschool room.

There were 11 preschool children and 1 staff in the Montessori room.

There were 2 relief persons available to replace staff while taking meal breaks. Designated staff were available to prepare, cook and serve food for all children at 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

The service promotes healthy eating by providing fresh, nutritious meals and snacks throughout the day. Children were encouraged to serve themselves as they grow. Younger children were fed in highchairs. Meals were accompanied by drinks, and the older children were involved in preparing and laying the tables for mealtimes and cleaning up after each meal. A dish of rice, mixed vegetables and fish fingers were served for the main meal on the day of the inspection.

Sanitation facilities were conveniently located near rooms, with nappy changing areas for younger children and accessible toilets for older ones, located close to each room. Hygiene was supported with easy access to tissues, wipes, and handwashing stations.

Children's sleep areas were well-equipped, with separate rooms for those under two, standard timber cots, and regular sleep checks documented. In the Toddler and the Preschool rooms, the older children had access to low beds and a calm environment with dimmed lighting and soft music. Rest areas were available in all rooms with age-appropriate seating and comfort items, and quiet periods were encouraged.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT

The physical environment in each room was carefully planned and well-suited to the children's needs, with ample play space, varied materials for exploration, and organised activity areas in all rooms. The setting fosters creativity and independence through accessible imaginative play equipment. Lots of clear floor space for movement was available in the Baby room and the Toddler room to help improve children's gross motor development. Low level tables and chairs were used for dining at mealtimes and for tabletop activities. Items of interest were visible on all

walls at children’s eye level. In the Preschool and Montessori rooms low level open shelving units in the rooms were well stocked with age-appropriate play materials and equipment.

These were all labelled, were easily visible and easily accessible. The materials included fine motor development tools like peg boards and threading, cognitive development resources such as puzzles and construction materials, and language development activities like storytelling and social conversation were included in the activities.

Children used age-appropriate low-level tables and chairs during snack time and tabletop activities.

Non-Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS

1.The outdoor area was closed as the playground was damaged following a recent storm. Additionally, there was no appropriate outdoor space for children who were not yet walking. This was highlighted in a previous inspection in March 2024. It is acknowledged that on the day following the inspection, photographic evidence was forwarded to the Office of the Early Years Inspectorate, showing evidence that the outside area was cleaned, all broken furniture was removed, and children had resumed using this area of the service

2. The dignity and privacy of children were not ensured during nappy changing. Three children from the Toddler room were taken to the changing room together, where they had to stand and wait for their turn while each child was changed, one at a time. This procedure did not meet the required standard of changing only one child at a time.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- 1.All repair works were completed in the outdoor area and the facility was reopened for the children. Plans to establish a separate safe area for the younger children were in progress.
2. The nappy changing policy at the service was reviewed. Children no longer must wait their turn in this area of the service. A copy of the new procedure was displayed in the changing area to remind staff of the updated policy.

Supporting documentation submitted

- 1.Photographic evidence of the required changes were forwarded to the Office of the Early Years Inspectorate.
- 2.Revised policies were forwarded to the Office of the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified have been adequately addressed.

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 front door of the facility was secured with a magnetic lock. A staff member had to permit access to all visitors to the service.

All emergency fire exits from the premises were clear and unobstructed.

There were no blind cords hanging freely within a child's reach that could pose a risk to children.

All toys, furniture and play equipment were in good condition and free from sharp edges or corners.

No flexes or cables were located within reach of children.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for all staff members. However, for 1 staff member the vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

2. Due to the closure of the outdoor play area since December 9th, 2024, children were taken on short walks around the business park. However, these areas were unsafe due to high traffic in the surrounding car parks, presenting a potential danger to the children.

3 During the inspection, the laundry room door was propped open with a clothes horse, preventing it from closing. The door was not properly secured to prevent children from entering the room. Additionally, the washing machine and dryer lacked childproof locks, creating an unsafe environment as children could potentially access this area.

Infection Control:

4. In one of the Toddler nappy changing areas, the hot water tap was broken, leaving only cold water available at the sink next to the changing unit. Thermostatically controlled hot water was not available to ensure hygienic hand washing, and to reduce the risk of cross infection.

5. The service did not adhere to its own Nappy Changing policy, which included:

- Wearing fresh gloves for each change.
- Washing hands before and after each change.
- Cleaning and drying the changing mat after each use.

During the observation, the changing mat was only cleaned at the start and not again after subsequent changes. The staff member used the same gloves and apron for all three changes, and neither the staff member nor the children washed their hands before returning to the room, which increased the risk of cross-contamination.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. In adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting', the required renewal application of Garda vetting for 1 staff member was completed.
2. Children's outings are now once a month, and these walks are not through busy areas within the Business Park.
3. The laundry room is now locked, and the area is inaccessible to the children attending the service.

Infection Control:

4. Repair works were completed on the broken tap.
5. The staff were retrained on the Nappy Changing Policy.

Supporting documentation submitted

Details of the changes were outlined in the Corrective action plan.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified have been adequately 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

(1) There was 1 staff member on duty who had up to date first aid responder training. This ensured emergencies were dealt with safely and effectively.

(2)(a) A number of first aid boxes were safely stored in the premises, were easily accessible and were always stored in a conspicuous position on the premises.

(b) The first aid box was available to the children attending the preschool service at all 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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of all fire drills that took place in the premises. The most recent fire drill took place on the 17th of December 2024.

(b) the number, type and maintenance record of all firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises were available for inspection. Firefighting equipment had been last serviced in August 2024. Smoke alarms had been last serviced on the 15th of January 2025.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was available for the facility. The certificate stated the service was covered to accommodate 65 preschool children on a full day care basis. The commencement date of the insurance policy was the 28th of March 2024. The expiry date of insurance policy was the 27th of March 2025.