

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK061
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Name of Service:	Desmond Community Creche
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Address of Service:	Gortboy, Newcastlewest, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V42 HX32
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Name of Registered Provider:	Alex Lafferty
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	04/04/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	34	PM	34
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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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

Desmond Community Creche operates from a single story, purpose built premises in the town of Newcastlewest in Co. Limerick. It is a community-based service, directed by a board of management. It caters for children from 1 to 6 years of age. It is opened from 7.45am to 5.30 pm, Monday to Friday. There were 70 children on the register at the time of the inspection.

The premises has 4 well planned pre-school rooms, a Wobbler room, a Toddler room, and 2 Preschool rooms. There is a dedicated sleep room next to the Wobbler room and next to the Toddler room. There are 2 well-resourced outdoor play areas to the side and rear of the facility. A new sheltered space outside has recently been added to the service.

Staffing

The registered provider is the chairperson of the Desmond Community Complex crèche committee. There is a designated person in charge appointed to manage the service. There are 13 additional staff employed to work at the facility. All staff have the required qualifications 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 areas 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.*

(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) On the day of the inspection the service manager was the designated person in charge and there was a named person available who was able to deputise if required.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the designated person in charge was present on the premises. The staff roster indicated that the designated person in charge or their deputy were always available on site.

(2)(a) Two written and validated references were available for all staff working at the service.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, there were references from reputable sources such as previous schools and colleges.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. However, in the case of 8 staff members 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 not required for any staff member working at the service.

(4) All staff working directly with children held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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 34 pre-school children and 11 adults on the premises. The adult/child ratios in all areas of the service were correct.

(2) The written staff roster showed that the manager ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to in the service with above the required ratio available on the day of the inspection.

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:

Children's basic needs were met in the service each day with a clear focus on the importance of learning through play, healthy eating, combined with adequate exercise outdoors and sleep and rest when needed. The service provided fresh hot meals and snacks throughout the day. A cereal was served each morning for breakfast when children arrived. A mid-morning snack was offered at 9.30am. Freshly cooked dinners were delivered to all rooms at 11.30am. On the day of the inspection chicken stew was offered. An alternative choice was available for children if needed. An afternoon snack of crackers, cheese and yogurts were offered at 3.00pm. Children drinks were stored out of their bags, in an easily accessible location in all rooms.

Sanitary accommodation and nappy changing facilities were located next to each room. The nappy changing policy was clearly displayed next to each changing unit. Hot water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to ensure the hygienic washing of hands. Foot pedal operated, lidded bins were available for the safe disposal of all used nappies, wipes, paper hand towels and tissues.

Sleep facilities were available next to the Wobbler and Toddler rooms, with 12 standard cots accessible for all children under 2 years of age who required a sleep. For children over 2 years, low level beds were used for rest time. Staff closely followed their safe sleep policy with children observed positioned on their back when placed in their cot at sleep time. All children were checked every 10 minutes, and all physical checks were documented.

Rest areas with soft couches, cushions and blankets were accessible in the 2 Preschool rooms where the older children were accommodated.

The children had regular change of environment. Two well-resourced outdoor play areas were easily accessible to the side and rear of the building. A large steel garden shed with a roller door was opened and accessible as a sheltered area outside if needed in poor weather conditions.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The opportunity for different types of play and learning were available and accessible in all rooms at the service. The atmosphere in each room was unhurried and encouraging and children in each room and outdoors were content and all were actively engaged in numerous play activities.

The Wobbler room had lots of soft floor coverings to facilitate children spending time at floor play. A large soft couch facilitated the adults to sit and hold children comfortably when needed. Lots of imaginative play materials were accessible such as dolls, prams, low level mirrors, toy kitchens and cookers. Highchairs were available to use at mealtimes and low-level tables and chairs were used for tabletop activities and dining at mealtimes for the older children. A well-developed outdoor area was accessible directly off this room and children had opportunities to be outside as much as possible weather permitting. A large buggy was available to take children not yet walking outside for fresh air and a change of environment.

The Toddler room had clearly defined interest areas, offering ample space for different types of play activities and routines, e.g., rest corner/ book areas, home corner and imaginative kitchen areas. Low level tables and chairs in the centre of the room facilitated dining at snack and mealtimes and tabletop activities.

The Preschool rooms were large, spacious and bright areas with lots of low-level open shelving available to display play equipment. Defined interest areas include library areas with a wide range of age appropriate reading material, construction areas, imaginative play areas with props for home corner and dress up play. Lots of art and craft materials were also available. Images of facial expressions to portray various emotions were displayed on the walls, along with the dates of each child's birthdays and children's art and craft works.

A sensory room was also available where children could take time away from busy, active spaces. This area provided a calm quiet space for children to help them self-regulate when needed.

The large outdoor area at the rear of the facility had lots of equipment and materials which supported children's play, movement, learning and exploration exclusive to outdoors. Children could explore and experiment with nature in this area with lots of areas for digging and planting. Picnic benches were used to snack outside if weather was favourable. Bikes, trikes, cars, scooters, swings and slides were available outside. A sheltered area allowed children spend more time outside in all weather conditions.

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 service ensured that the safety of the children was paramount, and the facility was regularly checked to ensure proper safety standards were maintained both internally and externally.

On arrival to the service, the door to the main pre-school corridor was secured and access to the building was controlled by a keypad. This prevented any unauthorised entry and any unsupervised exit of children from the service. Both 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 were cleaned at the end of each day. No broken toys or equipment were noted on the premises.

Where children were sick with an infectious illness, parents were informed of the exclusion periods required to reduce the risk of the transmission of infection 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.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for all 14 staff members, however for 8 of the staff their vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Garda vetting applications have been submitted for the 8 staff members whose vetting certificates had expired.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

A copy of the updated certificates will be forwarded to the Office of the Early Years inspectorate.

Summary Comment

While it is acknowledged that the service has applied for the updated garda vetting, this remains noncompliant until vetting has been obtained.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The building appeared to be of sound and stable structure both internally and externally and no obvious defects were noted on inspection.
- (b) The premises indoors and outdoors appeared safe and secured with a high steel fence and high walls surrounding all outdoor play areas.
- (c) All areas were well lit by natural light and by artificial light when needed. There was no evidence of mould, mildew, stuffiness or condensation on the premises. There were openable windows in all rooms, and these were opened throughout the day to ensure the circulation of fresh air in all areas.
- (d) The areas outside were all well maintained and routine cleaning schedules were in place for all internal and external areas.
- (e) There were an adequate number of toilets, nappy changing areas and wash hand basins in the service for the number of children and adults in attendance.