

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK106				
Name of Service:	Limerick Social Service Council Early Years Service				
Address of Service:	Limerick Social Service Centre, Henry Street, Limerick, Co Limerick				
Eircode:	V94 2W14				
Name of Registered Provider:	Brian Ryan				
Service type:	Full Day and sessional care				
Date of Inspection:	24 th March 2025				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>53</td> <td>PM</td> <td>45</td> </tr> </table>	AM	53	PM	45
AM	53	PM	45		
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Estuary House, Henry St, Limerick				
Inspection undertaken by:	E Browne				
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

This full day care service is in the city of Limerick, and it provides care and education to children aged from six months to six years of age. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 08:30hrs and 17:30hrs for 48 weeks of the year. The service operates from the social service building however parents, children and staff have their own entrance area to the rear of the building. There are four playrooms in operation, one dedicated sleep room, sanitary facilities for the children and adults and a staff room. Outdoor play areas are located to the side and rear of the premises.

Staffing

There are 22 adults working in the service, and 15 of these adults are working with the children. The additional adults are employed through the community employment scheme.

On the day of the inspection, there were 15 adults including the designated person in charge working across four playrooms in the service. All these adults have the appropriate childcare qualifications.

The registered provider does not work in the 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, and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 10, 11, 19, 21 and 23. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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*
- (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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;
(b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and
(c) these Regulations.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) A designated person in charge of operating the service was present on the day of the inspection. 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 and the staff roster indicated that this person or their deputy was always available on the premises.
- (c) There was a clear management structure that identified the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each member of the management team.
- (2) The files of two new staff members and the Garda vetting only for all the members of staff and community workers were viewed.
- (a) Two written and validated references were on file for the staff members the community employment workers.
- (b) References were submitted by staff from either their past employers or from other reputable sources.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of Garda Síochána were available for all staff members present and working at the service and for the community employment workers too. Garda vetting for 17 of the 22 adults working in the service was dated within the last three years as per the regulatory notice, EYI-RN12.3 renewal of garda vetting, published by the Inspectorate in September 2023 and effective from 1st of January 2024. These findings were outlined in Regulation 23.
- (d) Police vetting and supporting documentation for the persons who had lived in another country for longer than six months were all on file.
- (3) All of the above documentation was furnished to the registered provider prior to each new staff member taking up employment at the facility.
- (4) All the staff members working directly with children held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or an equivalent such qualification.
- (7) All new staff had induction training and were supervised on:
- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service.
- (b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and

(c) Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services Regulations 2016).

Since the previous inspection there has been regular team meetings in the service and one to one supervision meetings with management and staff, and written records of these meeting were on file.

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 policies, and procedures for the service were updated and were available in a folder in the service, accessible to all the staff to view and refer to as required.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(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

(2) On the day of the inspection there were 14 childcare staff working across four care rooms with 53 pre-school children present. During the period of inspection, the minimum ratio of staff to children was maintained, and an adequate number of childcare staff were working directly with the children in each care room.

1. Baby Room – There were 4 babies (1 to 1.5yrs) and 2 staff.
2. Toddlers Room – There were 19 toddlers (1.5 -2.5yrs) and 5 staff.
3. Preschool Room 1– There were 11 children (2.5-5yrs) and 3 staff
4. Preschool room 2 - There were 19 children(3-4yrs) and 4 staff.

The person in charge was available to relieve staff to take their meal breaks if required, and office management.

Additional staff employed through the community employment scheme were involved in various courses covering areas such as preparing and cooking food and meals in the kitchen, cleaning, clerical duties and childcare.

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 promoted healthy eating by providing fresh, nutritious meals and snacks throughout the day. Children were encouraged to serve themselves as they get older. 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. The staff responded promptly to the children's individuals' needs in relation to nappy changing, toileting and toilet training.

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 playroom, 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.

The children had regular change of environment. They spent long periods of time outdoors and each age group had access to their own play area.

The service supported children in forming and sustaining positive relationships with the childcare staff. The key person was in operation in each of the care rooms. The staff were heard using soft tones of voice, the child's individual name and getting down to their level and making contact and listening to the child.

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 fostered creativity and independence through accessible imaginative play equipment. The room environments were flexible and responsive to the emerging changing needs, preferences and interests of the children.

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 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. Language development activities like storytelling and social conversation were included in the activities.

On the day of the inspection children from each of the playrooms were observed in the various outdoor areas with each age group having access to their own play area. Children had the opportunities to be outside as often as possible. The equipment and materials in the outdoor play areas supported children's play, movement and exploration and provided opportunities exclusive to the outdoors.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

A wide variety of age and developmentally appropriate play equipment and materials were available

in each of the playrooms and in the outdoor areas. Sand boxes were visible in each room together with additional open ended natural play materials such as rice, homemade play dough and water.

A climbing frame with matting had been purchased for the outdoor area to be used by the children from the two preschool playrooms. The service was awaiting the installation of this play equipment.

There were two new couches in place in Preschool room 2 to replace the old and worn couches.

Toys, equipment, materials and furniture were clean and in good condition.

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 main gates of the facility were 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 22 adults working in the service. However, the garda vetting disclosures for 5 adults was not dated within the last three years as per the regulatory notice, EYI-RN12.3 renewal of garda vetting, published by the Inspectorate in September 2023 and effective from 1st of January 2024.

Safe Sleep:

2. There were two children under 2 years of age in the Toddler room sleeping on the low level blue stackable beds. Blue stackable beds are not allowed for children aged from 12 to 24 months. This may impact on the quality of the children sleep and wellbeing.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action: The person in charge has stated in the CAPA 2 response that:

General Safety:

1. The Garda vetting for the five adults were submitted to the Early year's inspectorate.

Safe Sleep:

2. A permission slip was obtained from the parent that stated that the preschool child under two years of age could sleep in the low-level bed.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of the Garda vetting for the 5 adults.

A permission slip from one parent.

Summary Comment

General Safety:

Point 1. The evidence submitted for General Safety on the Garda vetting for the 5 adults was deemed sufficient to meet the regulation requirement under General Safety Regulation 23.

Safe Sleep:

Point 2. The evidence submitted for Safe Sleep was deemed insufficient to meet the regulatory requirements for Safe sleep Regulation 23 for children under 2 years of age.

The register provider has failed to provide evidence that the children are now sleeping on appropriate floor beds for children under 2 years of age. The consent form submitted was deemed insufficient as it had no additional information as per the Guidelines for the Early Learning and Care sector on Sleep provision for children under 2 years that was published in June 2024.