

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK162
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Name of Service:	Starting Small Standing Tall
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Address of Service:	Ballysimon Road, Crossagalla Industrial Estate, Ballysimon, Limerick, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 R1W0
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mella Byrne, Pamela Walsh
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	25/06/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	94	PM	94
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, Estuary House, Henry St, Limerick
Inspection undertaken by:	E Browne J Ryan
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

This privately owned full day care service opened in 2005. It caters for children from six months to six years of age. It has a maximum capacity for approximately 173 children.

The opening hours are from 07:45 – 17:45 hours, Monday – Friday for 51 weeks of the year.

The premises are a 2-storey purpose built childcare facilities located in an industrial estate on the outskirts of Limerick city. The service has 9 playrooms in operation, and this includes an outdoor sessional service.

The service has two dedicated sleep rooms, a kitchen, sanitary facilities for children and adults. A number of outdoor play areas to the rear and side of the premises facilitate the children to spend lots of time outdoors.

A school age service is also provided onsite.

Staffing

There are 2 registered providers who jointly own and manage the service. There is a deputy manager and a supervisor available each day.

There are 40 staff working in the service. The staff working directly with the children have 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, and 19 however, on inspection an additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation in 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.

Additional Information

25/06/24

An Immediate Action Notice was issued to the registered provider as Garda vetting was not available for one staff member who was working directly with the preschool children. Please refer to Regulation 9 in the body of the report.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The registered provider in charge of operating the service and the named deputy person were present on the day of the inspection.
 - (b) During the period of the inspection, the registered provider and the named deputy person were present and the staff roster indicated that this person and their deputy were 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 13 new staff members were reviewed and the Garda vetting for all the other staff working in the service were reviewed.
- (b) References were submitted by staff from either their past employers or from other reputable sources.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 39 of the 40 staff working in the service, including the 2 registered providers. However, in the case of 22 staff 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 for 5 staff members who had lived in another country for longer than 6 months were on file.
- (4) All the staff members working directly with children held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or an equivalent such qualification.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)(a)
- There were 5 staff who did not have the required 2 written and verified references on file.
 - Four staff who had only 1 reference instead of the required 2 written and verified references. The references for these four staff were not verified.
 - Two staff had 2 written references, but these references had not been verified by management.
- (c) Garda vetting was not available for 1 staff member who had commenced employment in June 2024. An immediate action notice was issued to the person in charge on the 26/06/2024 for this staff member.
- (d) Police vetting was not available for 1 staff member who has lived outside the jurisdiction for a period longer than 6 months.
- (3) All vetting procedures were not carried out for the 13 staff members prior to these persons being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) (a)

Two written references and validated references in respect of previous employer, including a most recent employer are on file for the 5 staff members.

For the 4 staff members who had 1 reference on file there are now 2 written and verified references on file. References were validated by the deputy manager in respect of the 2 staff member.

(2) (c)

A Garda vetting disclosure has been received in respect of the one staff member identified on inspection who did not have a disclosure, and this vetting has now been placed on their file. A copy has been sent to the EYI office

(2) (d)

International police vetting has been secured in respect of the staff member who lived abroad for a period longer than 6 months and submitted to the EYI office.

(3)

All staff files have been checked to ensure that there are 2 validated references, Garda vetting and police vetting where applicable on file in respect of all adults working in the service.

Preventive Action

Schedule regular audits of staff files to ensure ongoing compliance with references, vetting and all necessary documents are on file as required. The service will maintain audit logs and will address any identified discrepancies immediately.

Supporting documentation submitted

The supporting evidence was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate office.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted was assessed and deemed to meet the regulatory requirements for Regulation 9 (2)(a),(b), (d), and point (3).

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 there were 18 staff members working directly with 94 pre-school children. The registered provider and the deputy manager were also available to cover if required.

(2) The written staff roster showed that the registered providers ensured that the minimum ratio of staff to children was adhered to in the service. Additional staff were available to cover kitchen and offices duties, school collections and to care for the school aged children.

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:

Healthy eating was promoted throughout the service. Nutritious hot meals and snacks were prepared fresh each day and were served at regular intervals. Food trolleys delivered meals and snacks to each room at the service. Jugs of water and cups were accessible to all children in each of the rooms. Chicken curry, rice ,peas ,peppers, mushrooms and broccoli was served at dinner time and children were all offered extra helpings of dinner if they were hungry. Staff in each room had supplies of snacks if children required more food between mealtimes. Sanitary accommodation was located next to each room in the service. Nappy changing facilities were provided next to the Baby, Wobblers and Toddler rooms. All toiletries for the children were safely stored and clearly labelled and were located within easy reach of the staff.

Each room had a supply of tissues and wipes within easy reach of the staff while changing. Pedal operated; lidded bins were easily accessible for the safe disposal of waste.

Clearly labelled individual spaces and coat hooks for each child's belongings were available to support organised access and independence for the children.

The sleep rooms were located next to the Baby and Wobblers playrooms. There were a sufficient number of standard cots accessible to facilitate children to rest when needed. Children were closely observed during all sleep periods and all sleep checks were documented in writing. The children over 2 years who required a sleep had access to low level beds with sheets and blankets provided in their playrooms.

Rest areas with soft seating, soft floor coverings, cushions and blankets were accessible in each of the rooms at the service. Staff throughout the service encouraged quiet periods during the day to facilitate each child's need for comfort, rest and relaxation. Staff responded to the children in a timely and appropriate way when they cried or became upset. Children were picked up and cuddled when they were tired or cried. The atmosphere in each room was calm and unhurried. The staff used soft tones of voice, the child's individual name and got down to their level and made eye contact when talking to a child.

The children had regular change of environment in the ball room and the outdoor play areas. They spent long periods of time outdoors and each age group had access to the different play areas. Sheltered areas were provided outside for children to use on warm days or in wet weather.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT

Throughout the building room layouts and designs were arranged to ensure the opportunity for different types of play and learning were available and accessible to all age groups attending the service. Much of the learning and play that went on indoors was continued in the outdoor areas. The atmosphere in all areas was unhurried and encouraging and children in each room appeared content and all were actively engaged in numerous activities.

There were clearly defined, well developed, interest areas in all rooms with age-appropriate resources available to children depending on their stage of development. The rooms accommodating the younger children were laid out with lots of uncluttered, clear floor spaces for the children to play safely and lots of soft floor matting facilitated many floor-based activities. Adult seating in the room facilitated staff to sit and hold the children throughout the day. Open low level shelving units displayed many play materials and toys available were rotated depending on themes for learning and curriculum plans.

The rooms accommodating the older children had clearly defined interest areas, offering ample space for different types of play activities and routines, e.g. adult armchairs, book areas/libraries, home corner and kitchen areas, small

world play, and construction play areas. Messy play activities for sensorial development such as painting, colouring with crayons and chinks, sand and water play were accessible to all children. Dress up clothes, hair dressing salons and beauty treatment salons were created with lots of natural props used to enhance the play experiences. Photographs displayed showed the children busy creating lots of hair styles, and makeovers for each other. The outdoor areas provided spaces where the children could freely move and play. Children had the opportunities to be outside as often as possible.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for 39 staff member working in the service. However, vetting disclosure for 22 staff members was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. Loose wires were noted to be exposed from the ceiling in the bathroom facility off the Toddlers playroom where a tile had been removed and not replaced.

Infection Control:

3. The children's hands were not washed following nappy changing and before their dinner time. This practice increased the risk of cross infection. The nappy changing policy does not state that a child's hand must be washed after each nappy change.
4. Hand operated bins and open bins were in use instead of the sealed, pedal operated bins in the bathroom facility off the Toddlers and Wobblers playrooms. This posed a cross-infection risk to the staff and children.
5. Only one of the two nappy changing units was used to cater for 13 children from the Wobbler playroom and 12 children from the Toddler playroom who required nappy changing. This practice increased the risk of cross infection. The second nappy changing unit positioned in the bathroom facility off the Toddlers playroom was not used as it offered no privacy to a child who required nappy changing.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety

1. Updated Vetting was received for the 22 members of staff that was not dated within the previous three years. These updated disclosures have now been placed on file and a copy sent to the EYI office.
2. The ceiling tiles in the toddler bathroom, which had been displaced due to maintenance work, have been restored to their proper position.

Infection Control:

3. The service revised the nappy changing policy to include a requirement for washing children's hands after each nappy change.
A new handwashing before dinner policy has been implemented.
4. New bins were ordered to replace the bins in the bathroom of the Toddler and Wobbler playrooms.
5. The service have addressed the issue by making necessary modifications to ensure adequate privacy for the second nappy changing unit. This unit is now fully operational and in use, significantly reducing the risk of cross-infection by providing an additional, private changing space for the children.

Preventive Action

Develop and implement a tracking system to monitor the renewal dates of Garda vetting disclosures and ensure timely renewals.

Create and enforce a maintenance protocol for regularly inspecting and addressing maintenance issues such as exposed wiring and damaged tiles.

Conduct training sessions for staff on the updated nappy changing policy and handwashing before dinner policy to highlight the importance of hand hygiene to prevent cross-infection.

Implement regular checks to ensure all equipment, including bins and nappy changing units, is functioning correctly and complies with health and safety standards.

Periodically assess the privacy and functionality of all nappy changing areas to ensure they meet the needs of children and staff.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence submitted included the revised nappy changing policy, copies of the updated Garda vetting and the relevant photos.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report Pre School

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted was assessed and deemed to meet the regulatory requirements of Regulation 23, points Safety and Infection control.