

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK182			
Name of Service:	Tiny Friends Creche			
Address of Service:	Old School House, Mungret, Limerick, Co. Limerick			
Eircode:	V94 A270			
Name of Registered Provider:	Michael Healy			
Service type:	Full Day			
Date of Inspection:	05/12/2024			
No of pre-school children:	AM	42	PM	30
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Estuary House, Henry Street, 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			

Description of service

This privately owned pre-school was opened in 2013. The service offers full day care and part time care provision from 07.30hrs to 18:15hrs. It also offers an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) pre-school programme and a sessional care programme from 09.00hrs to 12.00hrs. The service is aimed at children in the 0 to 6 years age group. The pre-school caters for a maximum number of 64 pre-school children at any one time.

The service also provides for school aged children from 13.30hrs to 18.15hrs Monday to Friday and during primary school holidays.

The premises are on its own grounds located in a residential area, a short distance from Limerick city.

The premises have 5 care rooms, 2 dedicated sleep rooms, nappy changing and sanitary facilities for children and designated sanitary facilities for adults.

The children have access to outdoor play areas located to the back and rear of the premises.

Staffing

A total of 13 staff are working in the service and this included the manager and the supervisor. On the day of the inspection there were 11 childcare staff (including the 2-management staff) working with the children and an additional staff was present for kitchen duties.

The registered provider does not work with the preschool children 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, safety and premises and facilities.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 24, 25, 26 and 28 however, on inspection additional non-compliances which posed a risk were identified under Regulations 23 and 29 . 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 inspectors 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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) There were two named persons appointed by the registered provider, the manager and the supervisor available in the service. The registered does not work with the preschool children in the service and was not present on the day.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the two deputies were present, and the staff roster indicated that these persons 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 14 adults were viewed on the day of the inspection.
- (a) Two written and validated references were available for the staff members employed to work at the service.
- (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 An Garda Síochána were available for the staff members employed to work at the service. All vetting disclosures were dated within the last 3 years.
- (d) Police vetting was available for 3 staff members who had resided outside of Ireland for longer than 6 consecutive months.
- (3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) were carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.
- (4) The staff working directly with the children attending the service held awards in early childhood care and education between levels 5 and 8 on the national qualifications framework.

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 11 staff (including the 2 deputy managers and the relief staff) working across 5 care rooms with 42 preschool children present in the morning and 30 children present in the afternoon. During the period of inspection, the minimum ratio of staff to children was maintained and an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children in each care room.

- Baby room – There were 3 children (0-15months) and 1 staff.
- Toddler room – There were 5 children (1-2yrs) and 1 staff
- Preschool Room – There were 7 children(2-3yrs) and 2 staff
- Sessional Montessori Room - There were 12 children(3-4yrs) and 2 staff
- Montessori Room - There were 16 children(3-5yrs) and 2 staff

The relief staff was available to facilitate staff to take their meal breaks and to assist with busy periods in the care rooms.

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

(1)(a) BASIC NEEDS

The healthy eating policy of the service was available which supported children and parents to choose healthy foods. Dinner consisted of fishfingers, mashed potatoes and beans. Drinking water was available throughout the day if a child was thirsty and needed a drink. The children sat together around the lunch tables with the adults and were given as much time as they needed to eat their food without being rushed.

The children toileted independently with assistance given to those who needed it. Children were encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times during the day such as after toileting and before eating.

The younger children had access to a designated cot room with traditional style cots. The service works with the parents in relation to the children's sleep pattern and sleep needs. The sleep times of each child was supported to each child's individual needs and the hours that they were in the service.

The children could rest and relax as desired in the designated library/quiet areas in each room.

The children enjoyed freedom of movement within each room and play activities were for the most part child lead. Outdoor play was supported and encouraged in each room and suitable clothing was available for children to play outdoors in poor weather conditions.

Children were encouraged to behave appropriately for their age and stage of development through having simple rules to follow. The adults modelled positive behaviour for the children and the children were praised for their good behaviour.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

Each care room in the service was organised with distinct interest areas to support children's learning and development. These areas included clear floor spaces for the younger children in the Baby and the Toddler rooms. Sensorial play materials and sound making toys were stored in accessible baskets on low-level shelving, allowing children to easily reach and interact with resources. Push and pull along toys helped children develop their sense of balance and develop their early walking skills.

In the Toddler and the Playschool room fine motor development tools like peg boards and threading, cognitive development resources such as puzzles and construction materials were all provided for the children. Language development activities like storytelling and social conversation were included in the activities planned for each day. Children used age-appropriate tables and chairs during snack time and activities.

Open shelving units where children could access play equipment and materials independently were in place. Seating was available in all rooms where children could rest/ relax in and have some quiet time if they choose to opt out of an activity. Good supplies of books were available which helped support language development and numeracy. In the Montessori playrooms there was a plentiful supply of play props available to support imaginative and creative play in the defined interest areas in the kitchen/home corner, construction area, dress up area, rest area, art/craft area and jigsaw section, and Montessori equipment.

Photographic evidence of activities undertaken, and art portfolios were available to share with parents and helped support a sense of working in partnership with parents.

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

Infection Control:

1. There was no hot water in the service on the day of the inspection for the effective washing of hand. This may increase the risk of infection for the children and staff. It is acknowledged that service was aware of the situation.

Safe Sleep:

2. Two cot mattresses in the baby sleep room require replacement as they were not firm and were well worn and pose a risk to the safety of sleeping children.

Fire Safety:

3. The fire exit door leading from the hallway near the baby room was partially blocked by shelving, leads, flexes and Santa Claus. This posed a risk to the safety of both staff and children should the building need to be evacuated in the event of an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action: The registered provider stated in the response that:

1. Work on the heating system is under way but the completion date is not known for now, work is currently ongoing.

Regular servicing of the heating system, boiler and water temperature will take place in the service.

2. The two-cot mattresses were replaced in the cot room. The mattresses are firm and breathable. The service will ensure that the mattresses and cots are checked regularly when deep cleaning the sleep room and when inspecting the cots.

3. The fire exit door was cleared of all the equipment and materials to ensure the area is clear in the event of an emergency.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted included a detailed report on the heating system and a list of the works that must be completed to ensure a more efficient heating system for the service.

Photographs of the two new mattresses and the cleared fire exit door.

Summary Comment

Points 2 Safe Sleep and point 3 Fire Safety were addressed and meet the regulatory requirements of Regulation 23.

However point 1 Infection control remains outstanding as works have not been completed. This will be assessed at the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) Attendance records were maintained for each child who attended the service with details of their time of arrival and their time of departure.

(3)(a) A visitors' book was maintained which detailed the daily record of persons who visited the service other than the following:

(i) Pre-school child attending the service.

(ii) A person dropping or collecting such a child.

(iii) An employee.

(iv) An unpaid worker.

(b) A daily record was kept of all adults who entered the service.

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) The registered provider had ensured that a staff held current certification in First Aid Response (FAR) for children with one staff having completed FAR training.
- (2)(a) There were suitably equipped first aid boxes safely stored and easily accessible in the service.
- (b) The first aid boxes were available to the children while attending the service.

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.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

- 1)(a) The fire drills were practiced on a monthly basis. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 25th of November 2024.
- (b)The firefighting equipment was serviced on an annual basis, most recently in January 2024, and a record was maintained of the number, type, and maintenance of the firefighting equipment. The fire and smoke alarm system were tested and serviced in September 2024.
- (4)A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the hallway of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Adequate insurance was available to cover the number of children who attended and had an expiry date of 27/03/2025.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and

Non-Compliance Information

(d) The paintwork was chipped and poorly maintained on the skirting boards in the Montessori room upstairs and on the stairway leading up to the Montessori room. This was highlighted in a previous inspection dated the 16th of March 2023.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(d) Painting commenced over the Christmas break and will be ongoing over a period of Saturdays when the service will be closed. The Montessori room upstairs and the stairway leading to the Montessori room will be the main priority.

To ensure that the standard of maintenance is maintained there will be monthly inspections of each room and other areas within the service.

Supporting documentation submitted:

Photographic evidence submitted of paintwork completed.

Summary Comment

Point (d) The evidence submitted was assessed and deemed to meet the regulatory requirements of Regulation 29 Premises.