

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LS034			
Name of Service:	The Children's House			
Address of Service:	44 The Fairway, Ballyroan Road, Abbeyleix, Co. Laois			
Eircode:	R32 N267			
Name of Registered Provider:	Margaret Palmer-Bergin, Michael Bergin			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date(s) of Inspection:	04/01/2024			
No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	16
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, Primary Care Centre, Church Avenue, Tullamore Co. Offaly			
Inspection undertaken by:	D. Molloy			
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

The Childrens House is located in a residential area in the town of Abbeyleix, County Laois. The service is privately owned. The service has been operating since 2004.

The service operates as a full day care service catering for preschool children aged 1-6 years. The full day care service operates from 8.00am to 6.00pm. The sessional service operates each morning from 9.00am to 12.00md.

The service is operated from a purpose-built premises in a housing estate. The premises is used for the sole purpose of operating an early years' service.

Three pre-school rooms, an office, a storage room, a kitchen, a staff room, two designated sleeping rooms, three toilets and three wash hand basins for children's use, one toilet and wash hand basin for staff use and a nappy changing facility are provided.

An outdoor play area divided into separate areas is located to the back of the premises.

A parking and set down area are provided in front of the premises.

Staffing

Five staff members in addition to the person in charge, who was not working directly with the preschool children were in the service on the day of inspection .

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 the child, safety, premises, and facilities. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under, Regulation 19 - Health, welfare, and development of child and Regulation 23- Safeguarding health, safety, and welfare of child.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the big playroom, sanitary accommodations, and the outdoor play area.

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 II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Compliance Information

The registered provider notified the Agency in writing of the proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2).

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, as far 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.

(6) Paragraph (4) shall not apply before 1 September 2021 to a person who-

(a) has signed a declaration on or before 30 June 2016 to the effect that he or she intends to retire from employment in a pre-school service before 1 September 2021, and

(b) is in possession of a letter from the Minister confirming that paragraph (4) shall not apply to him or her before that date.

(6A) is inserted by S.I. No.632 of 2016 CHILD CARE ACT 1991 (EARLY YEARS SERVICES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2016 which states; Regulation 9 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations (S.I. No. 221 of 2016) is amended - in paragraph (4), by the substitution of “paragraphs (5), (6) and (6A)” for “paragraphs (5) and (6)”, and (b) by the insertion of the following paragraph after paragraph (6): “

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme.”

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required.
- (b) The registered provider was not present during the inspection and the designated person in charge facilitated the inspection. The roster showed that at all times the person in charge was present during the opening hours of the service.

- (2)
All staff files were reviewed on site on the day of inspection.
- (a) (b) Validated references from staff members' past employers, in particular the most recent employer was available for review.
- (b) Validated references from reputable sources were available for review.
- (c) A vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána dated within the past three years in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of all-staff members was available for review.
- (d) Police vetting from other police authorities was available as was required for all staff members as was required
- (3)
Required vetting had been carried out prior to staff member being appointed, assigned, or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.
- (4)
All employees held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5-8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.
- (6)(a)
Not applicable.
- (6A)
No staff member was working with children under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) on the day of inspection.

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.*

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1)

The registered providers ensured that there were sufficient adults working directly with the children throughout the opening hours of the service. There were seventeen pre-school children being cared for by five adults not including the person in charge who facilitated the inspection.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained and records showed that the adult child ratio was maintained in the service.

(8)

(a) The registered provider ensured that there were at least two adults on the premises at all times, this was reflected in the staff rosters.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 18 – Copy of Act etc.

A registered provider shall ensure that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations is kept on the premises and the said copies shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,*
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker, or contractor, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

The registered providers had ensured that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations was available on the premises and could be viewed by

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker, or contractor, and
- (c) an authorised person.

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

Healthy eating was promoted, in line with the healthy eating policy and a healthy nutritious diet was provided. A three-week menu was in place and food was freshly prepared on site by the designated cook. The service offered breakfast, morning snack, dinner, mid-afternoon snack, and tea. The main meal of the day was chicken, potatoes, carrots and peas with fresh fruit and milk and water. Tea was a selection of sandwiches and yogurts .

Nappies were changed as required and nappy changing was observed to be interactive and a pleasant experience for the infants.

Children were offered sleep as their needs required and adults remained in the rooms with sleeping children.

In the afternoon a calm, relaxed atmosphere was observing as children rested and took afternoon naps.

Children were supported to become independent and self-caring and were encouraged to take care of their own belongings including hanging up their coats and opening bags and lunch boxes and tidying up their toys when finished playing.

Children were offered choice of activities, and it was noted that they moved freely indoors, and some children chose to relax in the rest areas.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS:

Staff remained constant and children could expect the same adult to care for them each day which supports formation of sustained relationships.

It was observed that the children appeared comfortable in the company of staff and a warm relaxed atmosphere was noted.

A system of communication was in operation where by staff documented each child's activities and information in relation to their day in the service and shared with parents. Meetings with staff were also available for parents to discuss issues in relation to their own children.

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:

Access to the kitchen and storage areas was restricted.

Refuse bins were stored away from play area and were inaccessible to children.

A pest control system was in place and was monitored to safeguard against pests.

Cleaning, sanitising products and equipment were stored in a designated locked cupboard out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

Staff were familiar with the infection control policy and parents had been issued with an up-to-date copy. The service was clean and well maintained. Children were observed washing their hands regularly and adults were observed offering assistance if necessary.

Nappy changing was observed to be carried out correctly with care to preserve infection control.

The service was well ventilated with openable windows and an air purification system was in place.

Administration of Medication:

A site-specific medication management policy was available in the service. Specific individual plan was in place for a child with a food allergy to different types of nuts.

Staff were familiar with policy and practice in relation to safe administration of medication.

No medication was administered on the day of inspection

Safe Sleep:

The two designated sleeping rooms were within easy access of the playrooms and were both used on the day of inspection. Temperatures were monitored in the rooms, and both were well ventilated.

Sleeping children were monitored and a record of sleep checks were maintained. It was observed that an adult was present in the sleeping room while children were sleeping .

Rest areas were available in the play rooms.

Fire Safety:

The fire exits were unobstructed.

A notice of the fire assembly point was on display to show fire assembly point in the play area at the back of the service.

Outing:

The person in charge stated that no outings were conducted from 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) Staff had up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) certification and were available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)

(a) The first aid box was safely stored in an easily accessible location on the premises.

(b) The first aid box was readily available in the 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 firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
 - (b) an employee, and
 - (c) an authorised person.
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation
- (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)

A written record was available of the fire drills carried out in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as being carried out on 04 December 2023.

(b) The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises was available. The fire alarms were serviced 19 September 2023, and fire equipment was also checked on 03 October 2023 .

(2)

The record was available open to parents, guardians, employees, and the authorised person.

(3)

The person in charge stated that records were retained for a period of 5 years after creation.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed on the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A copy of up-to-date insurance cover for the number of children attending the service was available in the service.
 The insurance certificate was valid until March 2024.

Part IX - Inspection and Enforcement

Regulation 33 – Furnishing of information to agency

A registered provider shall furnish the Agency with such information as the Agency may require for the purpose of enforcing and executing these Regulations and the information shall be in such form, if any, as may be specified by the Agency.

Compliance Information

The person in charge facilitated the inspection and provided access to information as was required for completion of the inspection.