

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH037
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Name of Service:	Cuddles Creche
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Address of Service:	26 The Crescent, Deepforde, Drogheda, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	A92 TAA0
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Name of Registered Provider:	Pamela Kelly
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	31/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	27	PM	23
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Taaffe
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

Cuddles Creche is one of two privately owned early years services operated by the registered provider, with this service conducted from a 2-storey premises located on a corner site in a residential housing development in Drogheda, and the second service located in the mid-Louth area. This service currently operates from 7.30am to 5.45pm from Monday to Friday for 51 weeks each year, catering for a maximum of 52 children at any one time. Cuddles Creche accommodates pre-school children from 1 to 6 years of age and school aged children up to 10 years of age. The service participates in the state funded early childhood care and education (ECCE) scheme for eligible pre-school children from 9.00am to 12.00 midday and from 9.15am to 12.15pm daily for 38 weeks each year. Two of the four care rooms in the service, namely the Toddler Room and the Playschool Room, are located on the ground floor of the premises, with a further care room provided on the first floor, namely the Montessori Room/School Aged Care Room. The fourth care room known as the Treehouse is operated from a separate single-storey wooden structure located to the rear of the premises. On the ground floor the service's cot room contains 5 standard cots, and a further room on the ground floor which was previously operated as the Baby Room has been re-purposed as a sleep room equipped with 7 stackable beds. A fully enclosed outdoor play area is provided to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider manages the service on a daily basis, supported by a team of 12 staff members. One of the 12 staff members is employed as an assistant manager and one staff member is employed as a chef. The registered provider and all staff members apart from the chef work directly with pre-school 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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 24, 25 and 26. 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 registered provider, 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) The registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service and the deputy manager was the named person appointed to deputise when required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at 9.30am and for the duration of the inspection.

All 13 staff files were reviewed, maintained in respect of the registered provider and the 12 staff members employed in the service.

(2)(a)(b) There were 2 written, validated references available for the registered provider and the 12 staff members.

(a) Seventeen written references were from past employers.

(b) Nine written references were from sources other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider and all 12 staff members. Each of these records demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available as required for 1 staff member who had resided outside the Irish jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 months as an adult.

(4) The registered provider and all 11 staff members who work directly with pre-school children in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced on the premises and remained so throughout the inspection. All children were attending the service on a part-time or full day care basis on the day of inspection which took place over the Halloween mid-term break.

The following adult to child ratios were observed when the highest numbers of children were present during the inspection:

- In the Toddler Room there were 5 children aged 1 year 1 month to 1 year 7 months being cared for by 1 staff member.

- In the Playschool Room there were 9 children (of whom 2 children were aged 1 year 8 months and 1 year 10 months and 7 children were aged 2 years 2 months to 2 years 9 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Treehouse there were 13 children aged 3 years to 4 years 5 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- One staff member was caring for 12 school aged children in the Montessori Room/School Aged Care Room.

The registered provider, assistant manager and a further staff member were available to provide relief and support to the care rooms during the inspection including at mealtimes, for nappy changing and for break cover when required.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, as evidenced in staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained in the service.

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) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic needs:

- The atmosphere in the service was warm and child centred. The registered provider and staff members spoke positively and kindly to and about the children during the inspection.
- A 3-week menu was on display which detailed a range of nutritious meals and snacks served to children at regular intervals throughout the day, prepared on site by the service chef. Chopped fruit and brown bread ham sandwiches were served for morning snack on the day of inspection with the older children supported to make their own sandwiches. Fish cakes, mashed potato and mixed vegetables were served

for dinner while crackers, cheese and fruit were served for tea on the day of inspection. The children's water bottles were available to the children throughout the day, stored on low level shelving and these were placed on the children's tables to drink with their meals and snacks. Staff members sat with the children at mealtimes, chatting and providing assistance as required which created a relaxed atmosphere.

- The children had their nappies changed regularly and in a timely manner with the staff members heard chatting and singing to the children during these procedures.
- Individual child-led sleep routines were facilitated in the children attending the Toddler Room during the inspection. Two children were observed being settled to sleep when they showed signs of tiredness before dinner and being offered their meal when they were fully awake afterwards. One child who can struggle to fall asleep was held and comforted in a staff member's arms until the child fell asleep before being transferred into a cot. The children in the Playschool Room were facilitated to sleep at the service's designated sleep time after lunch.
- All children engaged in outdoor play on the day of inspection, dressed appropriately in advance of going outside and having their outdoor clothing removed promptly on their return inside.

Supporting relationships:

- The registered provider and staff members communicated positively with the children in their care during the inspection as evidenced by their warm interactions that took place with the children using their names, speaking to the children at their level using soft tones of voice, and listening and responding to what the children were asking or telling them.
- The registered provider and staff members were familiar with the individual needs and preferences of the children in the service and, in turn, the children seemed relaxed with each other and with the staff members. The registered provider and staff members were observed acting as play partners with the children, providing space and opportunity for children to lead and direct play while readily supporting children who chose to change activities and when they experienced challenges. Age-appropriate approaches including distraction, re-direction and problem-solving were used by the adults to good effect, which prevented any minor issues that occurred between the children from escalating.
- Good sibling interaction was observed. There were planned opportunities for siblings to move from the separate care rooms to join, interact and spend time together during the day.
- The children were prepared for transitions by verbal signposting, tidy-up themed songs and the adults describing what was happening next.

- Parents and guardians were provided with the opportunity to exchange information with the staff members about their children at drop-off and collection. A written record of the pre-school children's meals, activities, general wellbeing and, if relevant, nappy changes and sleep was maintained by staff members on a daily basis and this information was verbally shared with the parents when the children were being collected from the service. In addition to verbal communication, the service used other means including a mobile messaging application, a closed social media page, notices posted in the entrance hallway and a newsletter sent each term to communicate with parents.

Physical and material environment:

- The play resources available to the children in the care rooms were accessible and stored on low level shelving which allowed the children to select and replace items and materials of interest.
- The care rooms were laid out in a variety of interest areas including home corners, construction areas, arts and crafts stations and library areas, each of which was equipped with a suitable range of supportive play resources and books to invite children's interest and support play experiences.
- Sensorial play was facilitated in the service. For example, the children in the Playschool Room enthusiastically participated in a pumpkin-carving activity during the inspection with the staff members heard inviting the children who wished to touch and smell the skin and scoop out the inner pulp and seeds. Playdough and painting activities were also facilitated in each care room during the inspection. Age-appropriate wooden play equipment was provided in all care rooms. Wall-mounted wooden activity centres were provided in the Toddler Room and the Playschool Room.
- The outdoor play area located to the rear of the premises was surfaced in impact-absorbent material. A range of play equipment was provided to support active play which included ride-on toys, a lidded water table, a wooden climbing frame with climbing wall and slide attached designated for use for children aged 3 years and older, 2 low-level plastic climbing frames for the younger children in attendance, 3 plastic playhouses, rocking toys and plastic child-sized shopping trolleys. Rigid plastic sheeting covered the area provided between the gable end of the premises and the adjoining boundary wall, facilitating play under cover.

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

The following are examples of measures undertaken by the registered provider to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service:

General Safety:

- The premises was appropriately secured to prevent the pre-school children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises, with the entrance doors leading into the premises and the gate leading into the outdoor play area fitted with latches and locks positioned out of the reach of pre-school children.
- The outdoor play area was enclosed by boundary walls and a latched gate to prevent unauthorised persons from gaining entry or a pre-school child from gaining unsupervised access to a roadway or other source of danger.
- The warm water temperature in the sanitary accommodation did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C and the inspector was informed that the warm water supply in the service was thermostatically controlled. This reduced the risk of injury from scalding for the children in attendance.
- Cleaning agents were safely stored on high shelving out of the reach of children.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children during the inspection.

Infection Control:

- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet and nappy changing, and following messy play and outdoor play. There was running warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels available for hand hygiene at the wash hand basins in the service.
- Suitable disposable gloves and aprons were available and used for nappy changing. The service's nappy changing policy was adhered to during nappy changes observed on the day of inspection.
- Soothers were stored in personalised containers when not in use. A steam steriliser for use in a microwave was provided to sterilise soothers in the service.

- Tissues were available for wiping noses and appropriate hand hygiene practices were observed being undertaken when staff members assisted children to clean their noses.
- The service was visibly clean and up to date documented cleaning schedules were on display.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No child was observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.
- Care plans were in place for children in attendance who had specific health conditions. The registered provider demonstrated comprehensive knowledge of the relevant safety issues and record-keeping requirements associated with administration of medication to children in the service.

Safe Sleep:

- Based on an examination of the children's attendance records maintained in the service, all children under 2 years of age have access to a standard cot on a daily basis, including on the day of inspection.
- Sleep checks were carried out and documented at 10 minutes intervals during the inspection and this was done on a daily basis as evidenced in previously completed sleep check records maintained in the service.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits in the service were clear and unobstructed.
- The records indicated and staff members reported that fire drills were practiced on a monthly basis to familiarise both adults and children of the correct procedures to follow in the event of a fire.

Outings:

- The inspector was informed that the pre-school children partake in occasional outings such as nature walks in the vicinity of the service, with a risk assessment and parental consent obtained prior to any outing being undertaken.

Non-Compliance Information

Safe Sleep:

1. The sleep log did not include details of each individual child's colour at the time of each 10 minute sleep check. It is acknowledged that the checks included a record of each child's breathing pattern and position.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective action has been undertaken:

Corrective Action

1. The service has drafted up a new sleep chart which includes the colour of the child while asleep.

Preventive Action

1. A staff meeting has been held since the inspection and the registered provider has shown all staff the new template for safe sleep and explained how to use it.

Supporting documentation submitted

- A copy of the service's revised sleep chart was submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective action and evidence submitted by the registered provider has been reviewed and accepted. The non-compliance observed under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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

(3)(a)(b) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children and their parents or guardians, employees, approved students or authorised visitors could enter the service. A visitor's book was maintained and on arrival the inspector was requested to record her attendance on the premises and the purpose of her visit.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) One child who was present in the Treehouse on the day of inspection was not documented as being present in the attendance register on their arrival to the service at 9.00am, as required. Instead, a staff member entered this

child's attendance into the register at 12.15pm when the inspector was confirming the number of children present in the care room.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective action has been undertaken:

Corrective Action

- (1) The registered provider has done extra checks on roll books throughout the day and continued to remind all staff to check them as well.

Preventive Action

- (1) During the recent staff meeting, the registered provider spoke with all the staff about the importance of the roll books and being more aware of signing the children in and out as they arrive and leave the premises.

Summary Comment

The corrective action submitted by the registered provider has been reviewed and accepted. The non-compliance observed under Regulation 24 has been adequately addressed.

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 and 8 staff members held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training. This readily ensured that a person with FAR training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a)(b) The first aid boxes available in the service were suitably equipped and stored in conspicuous locations in the premises and these were available for the children in attendance, in the event of an emergency.

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) A record was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. Based on the records maintained and as reported by staff members, fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill took place on 30/09/2024.

(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced in March 2024 and the smoke detection system on 02/11/2023.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.