

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH045
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Name of Service:	Dolphins Early Education & Childcare Centre
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Address of Service:	2 The Walk, Inse Bay, Laytown, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	A92 HY59
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Name of Registered Provider:	Caroline Healy
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	19/08/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	31	PM	30
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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:	AM Coyle & S Cully
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

Dolphins Early Education & Childcare Centre provides full day care, part-time and sessional care & education to children from 1 to 6 years. The service operates from 07:30hrs to 6pm Monday to Friday and eligible children participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme from 09:15am to 12:15pm. A school aged service is also provided. The service is conducted from the ground floor of 2 interconnecting buildings which are located in the coastal town of Laytown, Co Meath. There are 5 care rooms in the service namely the Wobbler room 1, Wobbler room 2, Toddler room, the Full day care room and the Afterschool room where school aged children only were accommodated on the day of inspection. An enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the service. The Wobbler room 2 was closed on the day of inspection.

Staffing

The service employs 16 staff members, 15 of whom work directly with the children. Eleven staff members were present on the day of inspection. The registered provider employs a service manager and deputy manager who jointly coordinate the day-to-day operations of the service. A chef was engaged in cooking and catering duties. The registered provider does not work directly with the 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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

An Immediate Action Notice was issued to the registered provider on the day of inspection for excessively hot water at two wash hand basins in the sanitary area adjacent to the Full day care room in the service. The registered provider provided the inspectorate with written assurances of appropriate preventive actions being implemented in the service to reduce the likelihood of the hot water temperature exceeding 43°C within 24 hours of the notice being issued.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish 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

(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 service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The designated person in charge was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection.

(2) A total of 16 staff files were reviewed on the day of inspection.

(a)&(b) There were 2 written and validated references available for the 16 adults whose files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff members. The service 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 6 adults who had lived outside the State as adults for more than 6 consecutive months.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that 15 staff members who worked directly with the children in the early years' service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(3) Following a review of the staff files it was apparent that 1 staff member who works directly with the children had commenced working in the service in advance of Garda vetting procedures being completed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(3) The registered provider stated that a review of the services recruitment and selection policy has taken place and garda vetting section has been updated. Staff use a buddy system throughout their first month of employment at Dolphins and are never working alone with the children. This time is used to familiarize themselves with the policies, procedures and expectations of the service as part of their induction.

Preventive Action

(3) Garda vetting will continue to take place prior to commencement of employment, where Garda vetting is delayed, commencement of employment will also be postponed. New staff use a buddy system for their first month of employment as part of their induction at Dolphins and are never alone with children regardless during their induction process. This time is used to focus on familiarising themselves with daily routines, policies, procedures and expectations of the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

Staff recruitment policy.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has submitted the staff recruitment policy which has been reviewed. The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 9 – Management and recruitment has been reviewed and accepted.

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) During the period of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) On the day of inspection, the following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at capacity:

- In the Wobbler room 1 there were 6 children aged 1 year 2 months and 1 year 6 months being cared for by 2 adults.
- The Wobbler room 2 was closed on the day of inspection.
- In the Toddler room there were 9 children aged 2 years 1 months to 2 years 8 months being cared for by 2 adults.
- In the Full Day care room, there were 16 children aged 3 years 3 months to 5 years 3 months being cared for by 2 adults.
- In the Afterschool room there were 12 school aged children being cared for by 2 adults.

(8) (a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present in the service at all times. This was confirmed by the staff roster and staff sign in records.

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 are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated during the inspection:

Basic needs:

- During the inspection the early years practitioners were observed to be caring and kind in their interactions with the children and demonstrated sensitivity and responsiveness to each child's individual needs, likes and preferences. The children were observed to be familiar and comfortable with the staff, the daily routine and within their environment. Older children called staff by name, and younger children sought out staff when they needed support.
- Mealtimes in the service were observed to be a social and pleasant experience for the children. Practitioners sat at the table whilst the children ate engaging them in conversation and provided assistance to the children with eating as they required it. The practitioners in the Wobbler room 1 which accommodated the younger children sat with the children who required assistance with eating warmly engaging with the children at their eye level.
- The children in the Wobbler room 1 were facilitated to sleep in one of the two sleep room adjacent to the care room in line with their home routine and were placed to sleep when they exhibited signs of tiredness with individual children observed to have 1 to 2 naps as needed on the day of inspection. The children attending the Toddler room were provided with the opportunity to sleep on sleep mats set up in the care room after lunch. Rest areas including soft mats, cushions and appropriately sized chairs & couches were provided in the care rooms should the children choose to rest at any time throughout the day.
- Children's nappies were changed at scheduled times and more frequently as needed. During nappy changes, staff were observed to engage children in conversation and song. The children who were toilet

trained were encouraged to use the toilet independently and gently reminded to wash their hands afterwards.

- Throughout the care rooms the early years practitioners approached children's behaviour in a supportive manner, calmly distracting or re-directing the children and using problem-solving techniques to good effect before any minor issues escalated.

Supporting relationships around children:

- There was a friendly and welcoming atmosphere in the service, parents and children were observed being greeted warmly on arrival to the service and practitioners took the opportunity to provide feedback to parents and guardians on the children's day in the service when children were collected. The service uses a software application to record the children's feeding, nappy changes, activities, general wellbeing and sleep which the parents can access in real time as they chose.
- The practitioners in all care rooms were observed to interact with children in a sensitive and warm manner. Staff demonstrated their familiarity with the children by talking with the inspectors about their observations of the children, interests, personalities and developmental stages. Furthermore, staff members expressed awareness and understanding about children who needed additional help and support to participate in their preschool experience in a meaningful way. These practices and attitudes support children to feel safe, secure and respected.
- The practitioners in the care rooms were observed to work well together and supported each other in the care of the children. Practitioners updated each other on the children's care throughout the day which ensured the children's care needs were met in a timely manner.

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

- All of the care rooms were well resourced with play equipment and materials which supported the children in meaningful play experiences. The service embraces an emerging play curriculum and the layout of the care rooms, and the availability of play materials and resources supported this.
- The learning environments within each of the 3 care rooms in the service that facilitated the care of the pre-school children on the day of inspection were appropriate to the age and stage of the children attending the individual rooms. The care rooms were bright and welcoming with a variety of well-resourced interest areas which were spacious enough for the children to play in pairs and small groups with children observed to play together throughout the inspection. Interest areas in the care room included home areas with a wide variety of play resources including cooking utensils, crockery, dolls house, dolls with baby care materials all of which facilitated the children to extend their play. Additionally, construction resources, transport toys, tabletop materials and arts and crafts materials were provided for the children to play with.
- The Wobbler room was spacious and provided space for the children to crawl, explore and move around with stable props available to support children with walking. A well-resourced home area was available to support the children’s imaginary play including accessories to support play in the kitchen along with dolls, dolls clothing and dress up materials to support the children’s imaginary play. Arts and crafts materials including paints, crayons and paint brushes were freely available to the children along with construction toys and small world play materials. A comfortable armchair was available to support the practitioners in nurturing the children.
- Sensory play experiences were supported in the care rooms through the provision of coloured rice, pasta and a variety of lentils and beans.
- A wide range of books were available in the library areas of the care rooms which provided choice and supported children’s language development. The children were observed being read to and enjoying books throughout the day.

- A spacious outdoor play area surfaced in a variety of artificial grass and concrete was located to the rear of the service. A covered area directly outside the service which contained a home area enabled the children to access the outdoors regardless of the weather. A selection of tyres provided the children with the opportunity to practice their balance. The area enabled the children to enjoy running and free movement.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service provides all snacks and meals to the children attending on a full day care basis, prepared on site by the chef. A 3-week menu demonstrating that a varied and nutritional choice of food is available was on display in the service. Dietary requirements specified by the parents were accommodated, as observed in practice during the inspection.

A selection of breakfast cereals and toast with butter was available for the children to have for breakfast on arrival to the service. The morning snack served by the service from 09:40 am on the morning of inspection consisted of a selection of fresh fruit including sliced bananas and chopped grapes. Lunch of cream crackers with jam and raisins was served at 11:30am, vegetable pasta bake was served for dinner at 1:30pm with banana bread provided for tea. A choice of milk or water was available to drink with meals.

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 entrance doors leading into the premises were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children during the inspection.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Staff members and children were observed regularly washing hands at appropriate times, such as, following nappy changes, before handling food and after messy activities such as painting. Children who used the toilet independently in the Pre-Montessori room were heard being gently reminded by staff to wash their hands afterwards.
- The service implemented effective soother management procedures. Soothers in the Wobbler room were stored individually in labelled and lidded tubs and sterilised daily in line with the services infection control policy.
- The care rooms, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygiene condition.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. Medication was administered on the day of inspection in keeping with the services administration of medication policy.

Safe Sleep:

- Staff members described safe sleep practices to the inspectors. Based on a review of previous sleep logs maintained in the service and on the practice observed during the inspection, sleep checks were carried out at least every 10 minutes, noting each child's position, colour and breathing pattern.
- The temperature in the sleep room was monitored and maintained within the safe sleep temperature range of 16 - 20°C.
- All children aged less than 2 years slept in a standard cot on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- The records reviewed on inspection demonstrated that fire drills were practiced on a regular basis to familiarise both adults and children of the correct procedures to follow in the event of a fire.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The hot water supply provided at the two wash hand basins in the sanitary area of the Pre- Montessori room exceeded the maximum safe water temperature of 43°C as detailed in table 1.1 below. When identified, the inspector informed the practitioners of this scalding risk and the children were subsequently supervised when hand washing, using the cold-water tap for the remainder of the inspection. An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider in relation to the water temperatures.

Location	Water temperature	Time recorded
Sinks in the sanitary area of the Full day care room.	57.0°C (both taps)	11am
	60.0°C (both taps)	1 pm
	57.5°C (both taps)	2 pm

Table 1.1 Water temperature readings recorded on the day of inspection.

Infection Control:

- The infection control procedures in relation to nappy changing were not implemented correctly in the Toddler room as a staff member was observed to change the children’s nappies without changing disposable gloves or aprons between each nappy change. This was observed during the morning nappy changing round and the mid-day nappy changing round.
- Handwashing practices were not always followed in the Toddler room therefor increasing the risk of cross contamination, the following are examples. Following nappy changes children were not facilitated to wash their hands. The staff member did not wash their hands after each nappy change. A child cleaned their nose and was not asked or supported to wash their hands. A staff member cleaned the nose of a child and did not wash their hands afterwards.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

General Safety:

1. Maintenance man was called immediately to the premises following the inspection to lower the water temperature on the boiler supplying the cabin. It was discovered that the cabin boiler required replacement.

Infection Control:

2. A staff meeting was held following the inspection on Wednesday 4th September to discuss the inspection and findings in detail. The service's nappy changing policy was reviewed with the whole staff team at the meeting and a nappy changing demonstration took place using a doll to help staff visually see what the procedures and policy entails. Staff were all given another copy of the nappy changing policy to reread.
3. Review of infection control policy has taken place following the inspection.

Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Boiler was replaced by their maintenance man and a limiter placed to ensure water temperature remains under 43 degrees. The boiler was replaced on 4th September 2024 following inspection.

Infection Control:

2. Continue to demonstrate nappy changing policies and procedures to all new staff and include this demonstration in our induction process.
3. The infection control policy was discussed in detail at their September staff meeting also. A copy of the policy was given to each staff member to review following the meeting. Importance of handwashing and personal hygiene practices were reiterated.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Receipt for replacement boiler.

Infection Control:

2. Photo of staff meeting & demonstration taking place. Staff meeting agenda.
3. Infection control policy. Photo of slideshow from staff meeting. Staff meeting agenda.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been reviewed and accepted.

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) The children attending the Wobbler Room 1, the Toddler Room and the Full Day Care Room, were entered as present on an application uploaded on mobile tablet devices in each care room, noting the children's arrival and departure times.

(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 the inspectors recorded their attendance on the premises and the purpose of their visit.

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) A person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the service. This was evidenced in the FAR training records maintained for 3 staff members and their scheduled attendance in the service's staff roster.
- (2)(a)(b) The first aid boxes available in the service were suitably equipped and stored in conspicuous locations on 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 firefighting 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 for the whole service took place on 14/08/2024.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 01/08/2024 and the smoke detection system was certified as being serviced on the 29/01/2024.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.