

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH113		
Name of Service:	Little Joey's Creche		
Address of Service:	Dublin Road, Julianstown, Co. Meath		
Eircode:	A92 YX20		
Name of Registered Provider:	Theresa Swan		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date(s) of Inspection:	20/06/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	41	PM 30
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. Cully and S. Taaffe		
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

Little Joey's Creche is a privately owned early years service located in the village of Julianstown in Co Meath. The service is registered to accommodate pre-school children on a full time, part time and sessional basis, catering for babies and children from 6 months to 6 years of age, in addition to school aged children up to 12 years of age. The service currently operates from 7.30am to 6.00pm from Monday to Friday. There are five care rooms in operation in the service, with the Baby room and the Toddler room located on the ground floor and the Junior Pre-school room, the Pre-school sessional/ School aged care room and the Montessori room located on the first floor. A smaller room adjoins the Toddler room on the ground floor which is used for small group activities and as a sleep room for the children attending the Toddler room. A smaller room adjoins the Junior Pre-school room on the first floor which is used for small group activities and to facilitate additional sensorial experiences for the pre-school children. A separate sleep room with 8 standard cots adjoins the Baby Room. A spacious enclosed outdoor play area is provided to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider employs 15 staff members, one of whom is employed as the service manager. The registered provider does not work directly with the pre-school children but is generally present and involved in administrative duties in the service on a daily basis and was present on the day of the inspection. The service manager and deputy manager support the adult to child ratios in the care rooms when required. Ten staff members work directly with the children attending the early year service, while one staff member works directly with school age children only. One staff member is employed to carry out housekeeping duties.

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 may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28 however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child.

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 wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and

(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 service manager was deputising as the designated person in charge of the service until the registered provider arrived onsite. The registered provider was then the designated person in charge, with a person designated to deputise when required.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 9.35am on the day of inspection. The registered provider arrived soon after, and the registered provider and the service manager was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

Following a review of previous inspection records and in discussion with the service manager it was confirmed that there were 3 new staff members working in the service since the last inspection. The complete files maintained for these 3 staff members were viewed by the inspectors, in addition to the file maintained for the

registered provider and for 2 staff members who had been on statutory leave during the previous inspection. The Garda Vetting disclosures for all staff was reviewed.

(2)(a)(b) Two written and validated references were available for the registered provider and for the 6 staff members whose files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. However, in the case of one staff member, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) On review of the files for 6 staff members, international police vetting was available as required for 3 staff members who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) Four of the 6 staff members whose files were reviewed worked directly with the children on a daily basis. Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that these 4 staff members held appropriate childcare qualifications at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the day of inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed on the morning of the inspection:

- In the Baby room there were 7 children aged 1 years 4 months to 2 years 10 months being cared for by 2 adults.
- In the Toddler room there were 8 children aged 2 years to 3 years 1 month being cared for by 2 adults.
- In the Junior Pre-school room there were 8 children aged 3 years 6 months to 4 years being cared for by 2 staff members, one of whom was employed to reduce the adult to child ratio, and to work directly with a child with additional needs when necessary, in a post funded by the Minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme. All children in this room were attending the service on a part-time or full day care basis.
- In the Pre-school room there were 8 children aged 3 years 6 months to 5 years 2 months being cared for by 2 staff members, one of whom was employed to reduce the adult to child ratio, and to work directly with children with additional needs, when necessary, in a post partly funded by the Minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme. All children in this room were attending the service on a sessional basis.

- In the Montessori room there were 10 children aged 3 years 9 months to 5 years 4 months being cared for by 1 staff member. Seven of the 10 children in this room were attending the service on a part-time or full day care basis.

(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 IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and
- (c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) A sampling process was used in relation to the children's records. All 11 sampled registration forms were appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

(3) The children's records were available and open for review by the inspectors as authorised persons.

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 on how each child's learning, development and well-being were facilitated during the inspection:

Basic needs:

- This service provides a range of snacks and meals to the children attending the service on a full time basis. On the day of the inspection the children in the Baby and Toddler room had a brioche bun, raisins and banana for morning snack and breaded chicken, mashed potato, and vegetables for dinner. Upstairs, the healthy packed lunches provided by the parents from home included sandwiches, rolls, rice cakes, crackers, cheese, a variety of fruit and yogurt and water to drink. The children's water bottles/cups were accessible to the children and offered to them often. The staff created a relaxed atmosphere at mealtimes, chatting to the children during their meals and giving them plenty of time to finish their food.
- The staff members of the Baby room explained to the inspector that the children had naturally adjusted to following a group routine due to their age. They ate meals at the same time and went down for sleep following their dinner around midday. The staff were observed to handle sleep time with care and attention, bringing children to the cot one at a time and knowing which children preferred to settle in the cosy area before moving to the cot. They explained that when they have a younger cohort of children in their room, they follow children's individual routines as much as is possible.
- The children's personal care needs were met with sensitivity. Young children had their nappies changed regularly and in a timely manner with the staff members observed warmly engaging with the children throughout the process. The children were provided with bibs before eating and their faces were cleaned after meals. Toilet trained children were supervised discreetly when using the toilets and support was given when needed. Younger children in the Junior Pre-school, Pre-school and Montessori rooms were reminded by the adults to use the toilet, and they provided support for them to do so.
- All children attending the service enjoyed time in the outdoor area on the day of inspection.

Supporting relationships around children:

- Throughout the service the staff were observed providing nurturing care and interactions to the children, encouraging them with positive feedback and facilitating their play activities. Appropriate tones of voice and use of language was observed at all times. In the Baby room, the staff spent time down on the floor at the children's level when talking with them, feeding or playing. It was evident through observation and discussions that the staff in each care room knew the children well, had knowledge about their likes and dislikes and enjoyed being with them.
- The staff were observed to warmly welcome parents on arrival and chat to them about their child's day. Staff members could also communicate with parents electronically through a software application providing the parents with details of each individual child's meals, nappy changes, sleep and activities. The service also issued regular newsletters by email to keep families updated about recent or upcoming events and news.
- When required the staff used appropriate strategies to support children during times of upset, challenge or minor disputes such as re-direction, reminders of good choices or problem-solving techniques. Staff members were observed displaying anticipation and appropriate responsiveness in a gentle and caring manner when children experienced challenges within the environment and when children chose to change or opt out of activities or seek movement to an alternative environment.

Physical and material environment:

- Age-appropriate furniture was available in each room such as appropriate sized chairs and tables for each age group to support them to participate in their daily routine with comfort and ease.
- An armchair was provided in the Baby room to facilitate the staff members to sit with, cuddle and comfort the children throughout the day.
- Each care room was organised with identifiable areas of interest and with a variety of materials and resources that offered age-appropriate play experiences.
- The children had opportunities for sensorial play activities with sand and water tables and relevant supportive play equipment provided in the Junior Pre-school room, the Pre-school room and the Montessori room.
- Resources and equipment were stored on open low-level shelving facilitated the children to navigate spaces with ease selecting play materials and resources of choice.

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 external doors and garden gates were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- The sinks with running warm water in the sanitary accommodation and care rooms did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C which reduced the risk of scalding for the children.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to children on the day of inspection.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely on high shelving out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Soothers were individually labelled and stored in individual labelled containers when not in use. A portable microwave steriliser was available in the Baby room. Staff members were able to describe the procedures involved in maintaining the mouthed toys and soothers on a daily basis including the requirement to wash these items in warm soapy water in advance of sterilisation.
- Suitable disposable gloves and aprons were available and observed being used and disposed of by staff members after each individual nappy change.
- Staff and children were observed to wash hands at the appropriate times such as before handling food, after nappy changing or toileting and following messy play or outdoor activities.
- Apart from the water temperature at the sink identified in the non-compliance below, thermostatically controlled running warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were provided in the sanitary accommodation of the service.
- The premises and play materials were in a clean and hygienic condition with up-to-date cleaning schedules on display in the service.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- All children under the age of 24 months slept in a standard cot on the day of inspection.
- The cots situated in the sleep room adjacent to the Baby room were positioned at the recommended distance of minimum 50cm apart to reduce the risk of cross infection and allow staff to access children in the event of an emergency.
- The service had 3 appropriate floor beds and mattresses available for use by children under the age of 24 months, if required and with a sleep plan in place. On the day of the inspection there were no children under the age of 24 months using a floor bed. Children over the age of 24 months had access to raised floor beds for sleeping if required.

Fire Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. In respect of the Garda vetting which was available for one staff member, the vetting disclosure provided for inspection was dated 01/04/2021 therefore not obtained within the previous three years as required to adhere with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'. At the closing meeting the service manager stated that they were awaiting the return of this staff members garda vetting. The renewed garda vetting disclosure, processed on 13/06/2024, was emailed to the inspector on the following day. This Garda Vetting disclosure had not been renewed before the previous disclosure expired.
2. There was a trailing electrical lead hanging down from a radio on a shelf above one of the cots in the Baby room's sleep room. This lead was accessible to a child placed in this cot and posed as a health and safety risk.

Infection Control:

3. Thermostatically controlled warm water was not available for hand washing at one of the two the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation adjoining the Junior Pre-school room. The water in the hot taps and the cold taps on this wash hand basin felt cold to touch. Cold water does not support pre-school children to effectively wash their hands.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The staff's Garda vetting was received and promptly forwarded to the inspectors the following day.
2. The radio was promptly removed from the sleeping area's shelf.

Preventive Action:

1. Each staff member's Garda vetting will be renewed within the 3-year timeframe to comply with the regulatory notice from the Early Years Inspectorate.
2. A radio should never be placed on a shelf without the electrical cord being covered to mitigate potential health and safety hazards, particularly for children sleeping in cribs.

Infection Control:

3. The thermostat has been adjusted to warm the water in the junior preschool, ensuring optimal temperature for effective hand washing.

Preventive Action:

3. The service provider will routinely monitor the temperature of hand basins to ensure they are maintained at a safe and comfortable level for all users.

Supporting documentation submitted

Processed Garda vetting was received by email the day following the inspection
Photographic evidence of radio removed from shelf

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider. The non-compliance identified 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

(1) With the exception of the incident recorded in the care room below, the service maintained accurate records of children's daily attendance signing them in and out of the service.

(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 to the service the inspectors were requested to record their attendance on the premises and the purpose of their visit.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) When the inspector reviewed the daily attendance of the children in the Baby room at 10.10am 2 children had not been signed in. The staff member asked the second staff member in the room what time both children arrived, and that staff member suggested the children had arrived around 9.00am.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All staff have been directed to promptly sign children into the service on arrival.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of communication with staff.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 24 (1) 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) Following review of staff files and the staff roster, it was evident that the registered provider ensured that there was a member of staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR) on the premises at all times.

(2)(a)(b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available on the premises and these were stored in accessible and conspicuous locations out of the reach of children.

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.

(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.

(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 03/06/2024.

(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The firefighting equipment was certified as having been last serviced August 2023. The smoke detection system was certified as having been serviced on 20/05/2024.

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Documentation was available to demonstrate the preschool service was adequately insured. The service is currently insured to accommodate a maximum of 90 preschool children in full day care, with an expiry date 31/12/2024.

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*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Non-Compliance Information

(d) The plastic rim of the porthole window on the large outdoor activity centre was cracked and broken with small pieces missing. This posed a risk of children's fingers becoming trapped in the gaps or an injury being caused by the sharp edges.

(e) In advance of the inspection, the sole wash hand basin had been removed from the sanitary accommodation adjoining the ECCE room, preventing children from washing their hands in this area before returning to the care room. The registered provider and staff members informed the inspectors that the wall-mounted wash hand basin had recently become loose and unstable and had been removed as a safety measure following a risk assessment. It is acknowledged that the children were supported to wash their hands at the low-level sink in the ECCE room on their return to the care room but the adjoining sanitary area was not equipped with suitable and sufficient hand washing facilities.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(d) The edges of the porthole have been safeguarded with artificial grass to protect children from the sharp edges.

Preventative Action:

The service provider will conduct routine inspections in the garden area to identify any potential risks that may endanger children.

(e) The hand basin in the ECCE restroom room was removed the day before the inspection after a risk assessment was done. The use of the sink within the ECCE room for handwashing was a temporary solution until the original sink in the restroom was replaced on the evening of the inspection on 20/06/2024.

Preventative Action:

In the interest of future safety measures, the service provider will close the ECCE preschool room until the sanitary facilities are repaired or replaced.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of porthole with adjustments

Photographic evidence of newly installed wash hand basin

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 29 (d) and (e) has been adequately addressed.