

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 of Inspection:	05/07/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	35	PM 35
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 and 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		

Description of service

Little Joey's Creche is conducted from a 2-storey purpose-built premises 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 Wobbler/Toddler Room both located on the ground floor of the premises and the Junior Pre-school room, the Montessori Room and the ECCE sessional/School aged care room located on the first floor. A smaller room adjoins the Wobbler/Toddler Room on the ground floor which is used for small group activities and which is set up as a sleep room after dinner for the children attending the Wobbler/Toddler Room. A smaller room adjoins the Montessori Room on the first floor which is used for small group activities for the pre-school children or alternatively, a space where school aged children are accommodated, depending on the numbers and ages of children in attendance. A separate sleep room with 7 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 and one of whom is currently on statutory leave. 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, although not the day of inspection. The service manager and 9 staff members were present in the service on the day of inspection all of whom, with the exception of one staff member, were working directly with the pre-school children.

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 inspections 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.

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,

(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 the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person available to deputise as required.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 9.05am on the morning of the inspection.

(2)(a)(b) Two written, validated references (2) were available for the registered provider and for the 15 staff members employed in the service.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider and for the 15 staff members employed in the service.

(d) International police vetting was available as required for 4 staff members who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) Twelve of the 14 staff members who provide direct care to the pre-school children in the service 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

Non-Compliance Information

(4) Two staff members who works directly with the pre-school children did not have certification available to confirm that they held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) at a minimum of Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or that their qualifications had been deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective action and preventive action have been carried out:

Corrective Action

(4) One staff member who was working directly with the pre-school children has successfully completed stage 3 of BA (Hons) in Early Childhood Studies and has since received a letter of qualification recognition document from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) which allows the staff member to resume working with the pre-school children.

The second staff member is awaiting to receive their final statement of the result of their last remaining module in Early Childhood and Care. This staff member no longer works directly with pre-school children until the correct documents are obtained.

Preventive Action

(4) No staff will be permitted to work directly with pre-school children until all the correct documentation and full qualification certificates are received by the service provider and filed.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted a copy of a letter of eligibility to practice provided by the DCEDIY in respect of one relevant staff member and, for the second relevant staff member, written confirmation that they had achieved a distinction in an eighth module at Level 5.

The registered provider demonstrated that the non-compliances identified under Regulation 9(4) have been adequately addressed.

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.

pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(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

(2) In respect of pre-school children attending the following care rooms, the adult to child ratios were correct when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 9.05am and for the duration of the inspection:

- In the Baby Room there were 7 children, of whom 1 child was aged 10 months and 6 children who were aged between 1 year and 1 year 6 months, being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Wobbler/Toddler room there were 7 children (of whom 2 children were aged 1 year 8 months and 1 year 9 months and the remaining 5 children were aged between 2 years and 2 years 7 months) being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the ECCE Sessional Room there were 5 pre-school children aged 4 years 9 months to 5 years 4 months being cared for by 1 staff member. In addition, there were 3 school aged children being cared for in this care room.
- In the smaller room adjoining the Montessori Room there were 10 school aged children in attendance.

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

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The adult to child ratios were not maintained in line with the regulatory requirements, taking into consideration the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service.

(2) There were an inadequate number of adults working directly with the pre-school children on the day of the inspection in the following 2 care rooms:

- In the Junior Pre-school Room there were 8 children (3 children aged 2 years 9 months and 2 years 10 months and 5 children aged from 3 years to 4 years 1 month, all attending on a part-time or full day care basis) being cared for by 1 staff member. Two staff members were required to maintain the minimum adult to child ratio.
- In the Montessori room there were 8 children (3 children aged from 2 years 8 months to 2 years 10 months and 5 children aged from 3 years to 5 years 2 months, all attending on a part-time or full day care basis) being cared for by 1 staff member. Two staff members were required to maintain the minimum adult to child ratio.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective actions and preventive actions have been carried out:

Corrective Action

(1) & (2) The staff roster for the service has been reviewed to always ensure the correct staffing levels within all preschool rooms. Additional staff members have been added to pre-school rooms where the child to adult ratio requires 2 staff.

Preventive Action

(1) & (2) The roster will be checked daily to ensure the correct child-staff ratio within the service.

Summary Comment

The inspector reviewed the corrective action and preventive action submitted by the registered provider after the inspection. Assurances given by the registered provider have been accepted and this will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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:

- Staff members sat with the children at mealtimes, chatting and providing assistance as required which created a relaxed atmosphere. Height-adjustable chairs with leg dividers, harnesses and detachable tabletops were provided in the Baby Room. These were set at a low height with the children's feet at floor level and were positioned around a low-level wooden table at mealtimes, promoting social interactions between the children as they sat and faced each other when eating. Drinking water was available and accessible to the children in the individual care rooms.
- The children had their nappies changed regularly and in a timely manner with the staff members observed warmly engaging with the children throughout the procedures and taking the opportunity to chat with and sing songs to the children. Toilet trained children were supervised discreetly when using the toilets and support was given when needed. Younger children in the Junior Preschool and Montessori rooms were reminded by the adults to use the toilet, and they provided support for them to do so.
- Staff informed the inspector that the sleep needs of the children attending the Baby Room were met in line with their home routine and this was evidenced on the day by children sleeping at various intervals. The children attending the Wobbler/Toddler Room were placed to sleep for a scheduled period of rest in the afternoon, after dinner. Each room has a cosy space for children to rest or relax outside of scheduled sleep times and these were equipped with soft matting, cushions and overhanging canopies. In the Junior Preschool, Montessori and ECCE sessional room there was also furniture and furnishings available for children to rest and relax. Children were observed spontaneously accessing these areas for short periods of rest during the day.
- Outdoor play was facilitated for the children in all the care rooms on the day of the inspection.

Supporting relationships around children:

- On arrival, staff members greeted children and parents warmly, spending time conversing and sharing information in a friendly way. Staff members communicated with parents during the day electronically on an application downloaded on mobile tablet devices in each room, providing the parents with details of each individual child's meals, nappy changes, sleep and activities. Parents could remotely access this information online throughout the day, in relation to their own particular child.
- Interactions were responsive, warm, and affectionate between the staff members and the children in each room. Staff members were heard using soft tones of voice and appeared interested and enthusiastic when engaging with the children, frequently making reference to the children's siblings, parents and pets by name which nurtured links with family and home.
- Children's behaviour was managed in an age-appropriate and positive manner with distraction and problem-solving techniques used to good effect to prevent any minor problems from escalating.

Physical and material environment:

- Family photographs were on display in the service which supported the children to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness in the service and enabled the children to maintain links with family and home.
- An armchair was provided in the Baby Room to facilitate the staff members to sit with, cuddle and comfort the children throughout the day.
- Visual schedules with pictures were available in each care room to signpost children through the daily routine, offering choice and supporting independence.
- Each care room was organised with identifiable areas of interest and with a variety of materials and resources that offered age-appropriate play experiences.

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

- The service has engaged with an early years specialist quality development service, with a positive outcome noted on this inspection reflected in the enhanced range of toys, play equipment and real-life, recycled and open-ended materials provided in each care room within the defined interest areas. The established interest areas included art and crafts areas, construction zones, well-resourced home corners (including in the Baby Room) with a broad range of household and baby care items, dress up costumes, bags, hats and other accessories to support imaginary play, shop areas and reading and relaxation areas. Art displays included fireplace scenes on the walls in the relaxation areas and curtained window scenes in the home corners to create home-like atmospheres.
- The play materials and equipment were positioned on open shelving at an accessible level for the children which facilitated choice and supported independence.
- A suitable range of books were available to support language development and provide choice for the children in each care room.
- Play equipment to support the development of the children’s fine motor skills were provided in the care rooms. These included jigsaws, wooden and plastic bricks, magnets, interlocking plastic toys, threading equipment and peg boards.
- The children had opportunities for sensorial play activities throughout the service with light-up tray-top activity tables containing materials including dried rice, pasta and sand. A selection of textured items were provided in the Baby Room to support exploration through touch including balls, sponges, brushes, a selection of spoons, pieces of fabric, tin foil, hair rollers and shells. Natural, wooden and ceramic materials were particularly evident throughout the service.
- In the Baby Room, vinyl covered foam wedges, steps and ramps in addition to push-along toys were provided to support gross motor development.

- The fully enclosed outdoor play area located to the rear of the premises contained a broad range of equipment and play resources to facilitate play experiences and activity. The area was covered with an artificial grass surface and contained a large climbing frame fitted with slides, bridges and tunnels in addition to seating areas, a fairy garden, activities centres on the walls, sensory trays, balance boards and playhouse. There was another spacious section, covered with transparent rigid plastic corrugated sheeting, was set up as a well-resourced home area with kitchen units, real-life kettles, toaster, microwave, coffee machine, crockery, cutlery, pots and pans and a range of chairs and tables.

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

A range of nutritionally balanced snacks and meals were detailed on the 2-week menu on display in the service. During the inspection dietary requirements specified by the parents were accommodated. A selection of cereals were available for the children to have for breakfast in the service from 7.30 – 8.30am daily. The service provided a variety of food for the morning snacks, served at approximately 10.15am, with toast with cheese or jam, crackers, yogurts and fruit amongst the foods listed on the menu. Some older children in the Junior Preschool and Montessori rooms brought their own snacks to the service, and these were stored in fridges until consumed. On the day of inspection buttered toast, banana slices and raisins were served in the Baby Room for morning snack and all children were offered chicken curry and rice for dinner at 12.00 midday. Tea options detailed on the menu, served at 3.00pm, included potato waffles and spaghetti, sandwiches and yogurts, sausage rolls and beans, and fish cakes and fruit. A further evening snack was provided at 5.00pm. Milk was available and provided to the children in the Baby Room in bottles or lidded cups in line with their home routine. The children's water bottles were available for the children to take from low-level shelves, should they feel thirsty at any stage during the day.

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 warm water temperature 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 designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely on high shelving out of reach of children.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to children on the day of inspection.

Infection Control:

- The premises and play materials were clean and up to date cleaning schedules were on display in the service.
- Suitable disposable gloves and aprons were available and observed being used and disposed of by staff members after each individual nappy change. Staff members washed their own hands and supported the children to wash their hands after each nappy change. Additionally, the children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, and after outdoor and messy play.
- Thermostatically controlled running warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were provided in the sanitary accommodation of the service.
- Soothers were individually labelled and stored in personalised containers when not in use. A portable microwave steriliser was available in the Baby Room. In discussion, staff members clearly communicated 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.

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 aged less than 2 years slept in a standard cot on the day of inspection. Based on an examination of the children's attendance records maintained in the service, all children under 2 years of age had access to a standard cot on a daily basis.
- The safety mattresses provided on all cots were observed to be firm, clean and the correct size.
- Cots in the sleep room and cots and stackable beds which were set up for the children attending the Wobbler/Toddler Room were positioned at the recommended distance of a minimum of 50cm apart which reduced the risk of cross infection and enabled staff to access children in the event of an emergency.

Fire Safety:

- In discussion, 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, clearly describing exit routes and identifying the assembly point.

Non-Compliance Information

Safe Sleep:

1. A written, contemporaneous sleep log was not always maintained when children were sleeping, denoting each child's colour, position and breathing pattern at 10 minute intervals. It is acknowledged that 10 minute sleep check observations were performed by staff members; however, these were not routinely documented. An application on a mobile tablet device was available for this purpose but not used for record-keeping at the time of each physical check. Examples of this practice on the day of inspection included documented sleep checks for one child at 9.46am, 10.31am and 10.50am and for another child at 12.44pm and 2.15pm, with evident gaps in excess of 10 minute intervals when the children were sleeping in between these documented times. This is at variance with the national best practice safe sleep guidelines.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective actions and preventive actions have been carried out:

Corrective Action

Safe Sleep:

1. All staff have been retrained on documenting sleep checks for each child. Further training by the software application company has been arranged for staff in August 2023.

Preventive Action

Safe Sleep:

1. Sleep check documentation will be checked daily by senior staff to ensure best practices for safe sleep.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted documentary evidence confirming that the software application company had provided additional training to staff members on 23/08/2023 on using the application effectively including the maintenance of sleep checks digitally on the devices.

The corrective action and preventive action implemented by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 on the day of inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

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

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

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

(iii) an employee, or

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

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

Compliance Information

(1) The service maintained accurate details of all children in attendance during the inspection. The children were entered as present on the mobile tablet devices provided for this purpose in each room, noting each child's arrival and departure times as this occurred throughout the day.

(3)(a)(b) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children's parents / guardians, employees or authorised visitors could enter the service. A visitor's book was maintained and on arrival the inspectors were requested to record 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) Based on a review of the staff members' first aid response (FAR) training records and on the staff roster, it was evident that the registered provider ensured that a person with in-date FAR training was at all times immediately available to the children when the service was in operation.
- (2)(a)(b) The first aid boxes available in the service were suitably equipped and stored in conspicuous locations on both the ground floor and the first floor of the premises. These were available for the children in attendance, for use by the staff members in the event of an emergency.