

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MN025
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Name of Service:	Fingers & Toes Community Childcare & Education Centre
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Address of Service:	C/O Latton Resource Centre, Latton PO, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan
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Eircode:	A75 E771
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Name of Registered Provider:	Lynda Lennon
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	27/03/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	50	PM	48
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	No.18 The Grange Plantation Walk Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Skinnader and M. Flood
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

Fingers and Toes Community Childcare and Education Centre have been operating as a community run childcare service since 1998. Full day care, part-time and sessional education and care is provided to pre-school children aged from 0 - 6 years of age. The service is open from 07:30 to 18:00 each weekday and caters for a maximum of 120 children. The service operates from rooms in the local community resource centre in the rural area of Latton Co Monaghan. The service currently has 5 care rooms namely: Baby Room, Toddler Room, Preschool 1/ Family Room, First Steps Room and Preschool Room 2. There was also a room for school age children in operation. There is 1 sleep room off the Baby Room and 1 off the Toddler Room. A 3rd sleep room is situated off the corridor opposite the Toddler Room. There are nappy changing and sanitary accommodations, 2 kitchen areas and a staff room and an office upstairs. The service has several outdoor areas around the service.

Staffing

There are 38 adults employed in the service. Two staff are employed on community employment schemes, 2 in HR and 4 staff employed in kitchen and cleaning duties. Three staff employed in maintenance duties and 2 staff members work directly with the school age children. Twenty-five staff including the person in charge work directly with the 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/ 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, 16, 19, 20, 22, and 28 however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23 and 29. 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 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.

(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) & (b) The service had a designated person in charge and named deputy person to deputise as required. On the day of the inspection the person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived on the premises and was present throughout the inspection.

(2)(a) & (b) Three new staff files reviewed.

There were:

- Two written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for all 3 staff members.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda Vetting Disclosure was available for all 3 staff members in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Not applicable as following a review of the staff files presented for inspection documentary evidence of international police vetting was not required at this time.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the 1 staff member working directly with the preschool children had a childcare qualification which met the minimum qualification required to enable them to work directly with the preschool children. The other 2 staff member worked directly with school aged children and the minimum level 5 qualification was not required.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is always 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 were an adequate number of adults present with the preschool children attending the service when the inspectors arrived at the service and for the duration of the inspection.

(2) The following adult: child ratios were observed in the care rooms when the inspectors arrived at the premises:

Preschool 1/ Family Room:

There were 16 preschool children (aged 3 - 5 years) attending this room with 3 staff members.

Baby Room:

There were 10 preschool children (aged 6 months - 1 years and 6 months) attending this room with 5 members of staff.

Toddler Room:

There were 9 preschool children (aged 1 -2 years) being cared for by 3 members of staff.

First Steps:

There were 15 children (aged 2 - 3 years) attending this room with 3 members of staff.

The adult: child ratios were correct.

The person in charge assisted in the rooms to provide cover where required.

(8)(a) Following a review of the available documentation e.g., staff rotas and children's attendance records this information demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that there were at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(k) Accident /incident record forms were available for inspection and had been completed in the Baby Room and were signed by the required individuals.

Non-Compliance Information

(k) Ten accident and Incident forms reviewed in the Toddler and Family Rooms were incomplete.

For example;

- 10 forms did not contain a manager’s signature to confirm that they had reviewed the incidents,
- 3 out of the 10 forms reviewed did not have a parent signature indicating that the parents had been informed about the incident.
- 3 out of the 10 forms did not include a signature of the staff member who was present at the time of the incident.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All staff have been made are aware that the room leaders must sign the manager signature on these forms. If the parent does not collect the child, a picture of form will be sent home through the service electronic application (app). All staff are reminded of their duty to ensure they sign the forms which are completed.

Additional staff training on doing accident reports on the electronic application is being provided as these forms will go straight to parents and they sign will them. It is automatically saved onto the app.

Summary Comment

The registered providers response is accepted, and the non-compliance has been addressed. This will be for review 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,

Compliance Information

There were 4 rooms in operation on the day of the inspection: namely the Baby Room, Toddler Room, Preschool 1/ Family Room and First Steps Room. Preschool Room 2 was not in operation.

(1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that children's learning, development, and well-being was facilitated in the service:

BASIC NEEDS:

- Nappies were changed regularly and in a timely manner with pleasant interactions observed between children and staff. The children who were toilet trained were encouraged to be independent with toileting. Discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children after toileting.
- The children's drinks cups/ bottles and jugs of water were stored in the care rooms, and they were accessible as required. Assistance was given to the younger children who required feeding. Bibs were put on the younger children before meals and hands and faces cleaned appropriately after the meals. Staff were observed to sit with the older children at mealtimes and this time was used to encourage conversations between the children.
- In the Baby and Toddler Rooms, individual child-led sleep needs were facilitated in the service as the staff followed the children's routines. In the First Steps Room children who required a sleep had their individual sleep needs met.
- The children were observed to move freely in the care rooms and the children in the Family Room, Toddler Room and First Steps had a change of environment into the outdoor areas throughout the day. First Steps also partook in an exercise class at the local GAA complex during the morning. All children were dressed appropriately to go outside.
- The staff were supportive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours and supported the children to find positive solutions when they experienced challenge in sharing toys and equipment e.g. use of timers, redirection or additional equipment to support play.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

Compliance Information

(1)(b) There were soft comfortable areas in the rooms which consisted of mats, small sofas and cushions where a child could sit and relax on or take a break from an activity. There were 3 adult chairs in the Baby Room and a large sofa in the Toddler Room where an adult could sit and nurse a baby or small child.

There was a sleep room off the Baby Room where there were 5 standard cots available for the children aged under 2 years of age to sleep on. One further cot was available in the soft play area off the Baby Room. Cot mattresses in the Baby Room were in a clean condition and fitted appropriately.

Additionally, there were 2 cots in a sleep room off the Toddler Room and 2 further cots in a 2nd sleep room opposite the Toddler Room. Day beds were also available for those children aged over 2 to rest on.

The staff in the Toddler Room also converted an area beside the sofa into a sleep area with 2 daybeds for children to rest on.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b) There were instances where sleep facilities were found to be inadequate as demonstrated by the following:

1. The room temperature in the sleep room off the Baby Room was recorded at 21.6°C at 10:50 and up to 22.7 °C at 11.20. This exceeds the safe sleep room temperature of 16 – 20 °C and is a health and safety risk. It is acknowledged that this was identified by staff and doors were opened to try and bring the temperature down.
2. One of the cots in the sleep room off the Baby Room had a broken latt in the base which was lying on the floor and therefore unsuitable or safe for use. Children were observed to be put to sleep in this cot. In addition, on the sleep room risk assessment the cots were ticked as being in good condition.
3. In both sleep rooms off the Toddler Room, two of the cot mattresses were ill-fitting, and a foothold was observed, which is a potential safety hazard. In addition, there were cobwebs on two of the cot frames. These observations were not identified or detailed on the sleep room daily check list which had been completed by staff.

- Cot sheets and blankets were not changed between use in the Baby Room and Toddler Room with other children placed down to sleep on these used sheets. In addition, used blankets and sheets were observed to be stored on top of clean linen in the Baby Room, when removed and were then re-used instead of being replaced by clean cot linen. Sheets were observed to be soiled with black marks on 1 sheet and wet patches of dribble on some of the others.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- Staff will open doors and windows to keep the room temperature down on the warmer days.
- The cot has been fixed. The room leader will do a risk check on cots every morning.
- New mattresses have been purchased for the cots.
- Cleanliness and correct practice for sleep time has been discussed in depth with the baby room staff. Staff will ensure that sheets are changed between children's sleeps as our policy states and that all linen will be sent to laundry room.

Preventive Action

- The service have applied to the committee for the funding for the air conditioning which they have in place.
 - 3 and 4. Staff have been spoken to about their responsibilities to ensure thorough cleaning has been done and cleaning/risk assessment form for the cots and cot room are completed correctly ensuring the action is completed before signing.
- Management/deputy will do spot checks on the cleaning and changing of the linen.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of fixed cot latt and individual boxes for each child's bed linen.

Summary Comment

The actions stated by the registered provider has been accepted. This regulation will be assessed at the next inspection.

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

Healthy eating was promoted in the service as was evident by the dinner and snacks provided by the catering staff in the service. Breakfast, the morning and afternoon snacks consisted of breakfast cereals, toast, croissants, cheese and a selection of fresh fruit, custard, and yogurt. Homemade gingerbread was also available as an additional snack. Dinner provided on the day of inspection was observed to consist of chicken goujons or beef stew, mash potatoes, carrots, broccoli, and gravy. Additional portions were provided if the children requested. Meal consistency and texture were appropriate to the age and stage of development of the children in the various rooms. Potable drinking water was available for the children to access as required in all rooms. Staff assisted children as necessary with their dinner in the Baby and Toddler Rooms and independence with feeding was promoted where appropriate in the other care rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

Staff reported that some of the bottles of powdered infant formula were stored in the children's bags rather than being put into the fridge on arrival. This is at variance of best practice guidelines.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All bottles are transferred from the child's bag to the fridge on arrival at the service. The Bottle-feeding policy has been updated, all staff have been updated and signed the policy.

Management will do mock inspections to make sure the policies are adhered to.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence and copy of updated policy.

Summary Comment

The registered provider's response is accepted, and the non-compliance has been adequately addressed.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider did not ensure that all reasonable measures were taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a preschool child in relation to the following:

General Safety:

1. In the Baby Room, one child was observed to be placed in an automated swing and given their bottle to self-feed. This is a health and safety risk.

Infection Control:

The following cross contamination and infection control risks were observed:

2. The children's hands were not always washed after nappy changing in the Baby Room.
3. The lid of the nappy changing bin in the Baby Room was broken and staff were observed having to lift the lid. Additionally, the nappy disposal bin observed in use in the Toddler Room was overflowing with a used apron sticking out. Staff were also observed to use their hands to push waste items into the bin.
4. The staff in the Toddler Room reported that soothers are placed together on a tray and placed in the dishwasher for sterilising. This is not a suitable method of cleaning or sterilising soothers. This is also at variance with the service soother policy.

Safe Sleep:

5. Sleep Room temperatures were not being recorded at every 10 minutes sleep check instead were being checked 3 times a day.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Staff have been reminded of the safe sleep policy and staff will not give a baby their bottle to feed themselves in the swing again. Sign placed where the swing is so all staff are aware and adhere to his policy.

Infection Control:

2. Staff are aware and they must and will wash all the baby's hands after nappy changing.

3. Bins have been replaced and staff will empty the bins regularly throughout the day. The caretaker will empty the bins each evening.
4. All soothers will be washed in hot soapy water and steeped in water and disinfectant in the evenings for 30mins and then placed in individual containers throughout the day. New soother policy has been updated.
5. Staff have now been made aware to check and record sleep room temperature on the app every 10 mins when doing the sleep checks on the babies.

A staff meeting was held and all the issues above were discussed with the staff. If these policies and practices are not adhered to, action will be taken by management.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence, copy of soother and bottle polices.

Summary Comment

The Inspectorate has reviewed the registered provider's response, and it has been accepted. The non-compliances have been addressed and will be for review at the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate detailing adequate cover for the number of children attending the service at any one time was on display in the service and detailed 27/03/2024 as the date of expiry.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Non-Compliance Information

(e) Although not observed on the day of inspection the service had insufficient nappy changing facilities to accommodate the number of children in nappies attending the Baby Room as 1 nappy changing mat was available for use. The requirement is that 1 nappy changing mat and 1 wash hand basin is available for every 11 children. The records demonstrated that on some dates 13 children were in attendance. This was also confirmed by the staff. Additionally, one staff member was observed asking if they could take a child first who was soiled to get their nappy changed ahead of another child who was being lifted to go and have their nappy changed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(e) Funding to install a 2nd nappy changing unit for the baby room has been secured and work is to be completed by the end of August 2024.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has given assurances that an additional nappy changing unit will be installed by the end of the summer. This assurance has been accepted and nappy changing facilities will be reviewed at the next inspection.