

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MN032
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Name of Service:	Knockatallon Community Childcare
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Address of Service:	Knockatallon, Monaghan, Co. Monaghan
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Eircode:	H18 VY49
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Name of Registered Provider:	Aisling Mullen
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time
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Date of Inspection:	23/09/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	26	PM	22
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	No.18 The Grange Plantation Road Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Skinnader and S. McKenna
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

Knockatallon Community Childcare has been operating as a community-based childcare service since May 1999. The service provides a full daycare, part time and sessional service to pre-school children aged 2 – 6 years. The service operates from 07:45 -17:30hrs each weekday and caters for a maximum of 36 pre-school children. The service is conducted from 2 single-storey buildings located in a rural setting of Knockatallon in Co Monaghan. The service currently has 2 care rooms, sanitary facilities and a separate kitchen are also provided in the service. An office is situated in a wooden structure onsite. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the front of the premises.

Staffing

There were 13 staff employed in the service, 10 employed to work directly with the children and 1 who worked with school aged children only and 1 employed in cleaning and maintenance duties. One additional adult was working in a supernumerary capacity as a student.

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.

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 a system in place to designate a named deputy person to deputise as required. The person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service.

There were 13 staff files presented for inspection.

(2)(a) & (b) There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for all 13 members of staff.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 13 staff members however 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 as specified in Regulation 23 below.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that all 10 members of staff who worked directly with the pre-school children held at least the minimum required level 5 Childcare Qualification.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d) Following a review of the staff files presented and available on the day of inspection, international police vetting was not available for the 1 staff member who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of greater than 6 months as an adult.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(d)

International Police Vetting was applied for and has been granted for the relevant staff member.

The manager and the board of directors have updated their knowledge on police vetting by revising the Early Years Inspectorate guide on 'Vetting Guidance for Early Years Services'. This guide will be used during the recruitment process to enable the registered provider to ensure that any new employees who have lived outside of Ireland for more than 6 consecutive months are police vetted before they commence employment. The recruitment policy has been updated in order to highlight this issue and prevent it from happening in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of Recruitment Policy and international police vetting.

Summary Comment

The Inspectorate have reviewed the registered provider's response and evidence submitted and are satisfied that the non-compliance has 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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly at all times with the children attending the early years' service.

(2) When the inspectors arrived for an unannounced inspection, the adult to child ratios were correct.

The following adult to child ratios were observed on the day of inspection:

- In the Preschool Room there were 19 children aged between 3 – 5 years being cared for by 3 staff members. One additional adult was also present in a supernumerary capacity.
- In the Pre-Preschool Room, there were 7 preschool children aged 2 years to 2 years 7 months being cared for by 2 staff members.

(8) The registered provider ensured that 2 staff members were on the premises at all times.

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

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

(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:

- The children had free movement in the care rooms and had a change of environment to the outside area on the day of inspection.
- Lunches were brought in by the children and stored appropriately in the fridge which consisted of fruit, yoghurts, pancakes, cheese and the children had access to their drinks. Assistance was given to children to open food stuffs. The children were afforded plenty of time to finish their food. A homemade dinner was provided by the service and consisted of spaghetti, potatoes, broccoli and bolognaise.
- All 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 given to the children after toileting and supervision provided. Children who required nappies to be changed had them changed in a timely manner.
- The children in the Pre Preschool Room wore aprons at messy play time, with spare clothing available if required.

Supporting relationship around children

- In the Preschool Room staff were observed to interact with the children in a warm and supportive manner. Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children and staff members and the children were observed to actively seek out staff members. In the Pre-Preschool Room the staff were observed to play down at the children’s level, providing and encouraging age-appropriate activities and conversations. Encouraging words and conversations about tractors were observed during nappy changing time.
- In the Preschool Room transitions between activities were smooth and minor behavioural issues were dealt with swiftly and did not escalate with staff intervening with “*nice and gently*” and “*we don’t hurt our wee friends*”. When disagreements over play equipment occurred in the Pre-Preschool room staff were observed to react in a timely manner and provide solutions with the children.
- A family wall and birthday chart were on display in the Pre-Preschool Room. A child was observed to want to look at his photo before his rest/sleep time which was facilitated by the staff.

- Communication between the parents and staff was informal at drop off and pick-up and through the use of an electronic application.

Physical and Material Environment

- A variety of age-appropriate toys and equipment were available in both the Pre-Preschool and the Preschool Room on low level shelving which promoted independence and facilitated choice for the children.
- There were defined interest areas in both care rooms which included a home corner, messy area with sand, book area, water trays and art supplies and a writing area. There was also equipment and toys to enhance fine motor development, push along toys, small world toys, dress-up clothing and construction blocks and cars.

Programme Of Activities.

- In the Preschool Room evidence of planning was available and documented observations which had commenced were acknowledged on the “observation noticeboard”. Planning documents were available in the Pre-Preschool room which detailed a main sensory activity on a daily basis. The children in this room were observed to take part in a sensory painting activity of pasta pieces on the day of inspection.
- Free painting, handprint artwork and paper plate art was on display in the Preschool Room. A recent finger-painting activity was on display in the Pre-Preschool room.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

In the Pre-Preschool Room from approximately 11.58 to 12.17 the transition period from handwashing to serving of the dinner became chaotic and more difficult to manage as 1 staff member was engaged in plating and serving the dinners and the 2nd staff member was seated at the table with the 7 preschool children waiting on their dinner. During this time the children were observed to become restless and behavioural issues escalated, for example one child was observed to stand on chairs and tables, then to push the tables, throw a chair and throw a toy. Some of the other children began to imitate this behaviour pushing the tables and throwing a chair, during which another child was observed to fall off their chair and displayed signs of being hurt, was upset and crying. It is acknowledged at approximately 12.14 that the staff member did try to distract the children by singing a song at the table.

During the transition period from handwashing to serving of the dinner in the Pre-Preschool Room a staff member was observed to use inappropriate responses such as “*stop that*”, “*that’s enough*”, “*stop stop*” while trying to encourage the children back to their seats. This negative language was not considered suitable for the children aged 2 years attending this room.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(a)

The registered provider has purchased an indoor climbing frame with a slide, large foam construction blocks and floor climbing plots so that these can help with transitions and decrease the challenging behaviour within the room. This equipment allows the children to participate in safe risky play within the care room that is supervised by the staff team, that will hopefully help to reduce the amount of climbing on furniture in the room, as they now have safe opportunities to climb. The routine in the Pre Pre room has been altered so to help children transition and that they are not seated for long periods.

All members of the staff team have been given a copy of the managing behaviour policy, and this policy was thoroughly discussed at the inspection feedback meeting on the 08/10/2024 where all the team were in attendance. Positive reinforcement, appropriate language to be used with children and that all interactions with children should be of a calm, friendly, positive and respectful manner were discussed. Also discussed was how children should be distracted from unwanted behaviour before it escalates and causes behavioural issues within the room. There is currently a third member of staff rostered at 11.30 each day for the pre pre room so that they can assist during lunch time. This extra member of staff in the room will also help for a less chaotic dinner time as transitions are straightforward. All members of the team of staff have been given literary information guide on supporting transitions.

Supporting documentation submitted

Policies submitted, photographic evidence of new equipment and evidence of team meeting agenda.

Summary Comment

The response and supporting evidence submitted has been reviewed by the Inspectorate and is accepted. The non-compliances identified in Regulation 19 have been adequately addressed and will be for review on the next inspection.

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.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises,

Compliance Information

(1)(b) A number of stackable beds suitable for children aged over 2 years were available and set up in the Pre-Preschool Room at the allocated sleep time. Each child had their own bedding laundered on a weekly basis or more often if required. These were accessed by the children who required a sleep. The room temperature during sleep time was maintained at the recommended sleep room temperature of 16-20 °C.

(b) In the Preschool Room there was a large plastic mat and some plastic covered cushions for where a child could sit, lie and relax on or take a break from an activity.

(3)(a) There was an outdoor area to the front of the premises which is to the front of the buildings. This area was secured, fenced and gated. It consisted of a concrete area where there were ride on bikes, a large sand pit with toys, a musical wall, a sensory board, balls and hula hoops.

There was also a grass area with balance beams, mirrors, caterpillar blackboard, a small wooden climbing frame with slide. It also contained wooden seats, a wooden shed with play kitchen, and adjoining covered area, planting boxes and outdoor mud kitchen. Hazard areas were fenced off.

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 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:

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was reviewed for all staff members and one disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. In the Preschool Room there were unprotected sharp corners on the brown and white shelving units and the white shelving unit outside, these are an injury hazard.
3. The wooden microwave in the kitchen area in the Preschool Room was unsecured and a potential impact hazard.
4. In the Pre-Preschool Room, on two occasions children were observed to use the toilets which were located outside the care room in the corridor while both staff remained in the care room. The door between the hallway and the care room closed and had a magnetic coded lock which children could not use. One child required the assistance of the inspector to return to the care room.

In addition, this corridor contained the external door to the outdoor area which was observed to be unlocked on both these occasions and a child had potential access to the outdoor area unsupervised and unknown to the staff in the care room. These are safety risks.

Infection Control:

5. In the Pre-Preschool Room, a staff member was observed to assist a child to wash their hands after getting their nappy changed while wearing the same gloves and apron they used to change the nappy. The staff member also helped a child who was using a soap dispenser while washing their hands after toileting still wearing the same gloves and apron. This is a cross contamination and infection control risk and is also at variance with the service Nappy Changing Policy.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting has been applied before and obtained.
The manger has ensured that Garda vetting has been completed within the 3 years renewal time frame for all members of the staff team.
The manager and the board of directors will work together to effectively manage staff files to ensure that Garda vetting is completed and processed in time before the yearly renewal date. All staff files have been checked and the renewal dates for Garda vetting has been recorded to prevent this happening in the future, this is also in line with the updated recruitment policy.
2. The corners on the brown units have been fitted with corner cushions. The white unit in the preschool room has been removed. The white unit outside has been removed.
The registered provider has updated the risk assessment policy in order to help eliminate health and safety hazards within the setting.
3. The wooden microwave has been removed from the preschool room.
The registered provider has updated the risk assessment policy in order to help eliminate health and safety hazards within the setting.
4. A magnetic lock has been fitted to the external door. The magnetic lock has been disabled on the internal door so that the children can now push open and pull open the door with assistance of a staff member. A member of staff will stand between the fire door and toilet door and discreetly observe the children in order to ensure that they are supervised at all times.
At the inspection feedback staff meeting on the 08/10/2024 there was a discussion on staff Supervision. Areas of concern were discussed such as staff roles and responsibilities when it comes to effective supervision of the children in their care, other items discussed included decisions that affect the care and safety of children such as regular, uninterrupted supervision. The registered provider and the staff also discussed this matter at a team meeting in the Pre Pre room so to ensure that this change in practice has taken place. The current toileting policy has been updated to address this issue of guaranteeing the supervision and safety of the children in the care of the service. A risk assessment on the fire door in the Pre Pre room was completed after the magnetic lock was disabled.
5. The current nappy changing policy has been updated to highlight that staff must remove their gloves and apron before washing the children's hands.

The updated nappy changing policy was discussed at the at the inspection feedback staff meeting on the 08/10/2024. All staff are now aware of the proper procedure that should take place when changing nappies in relation to the discarding of gloves and aprons immediately after the child's nappy has been changed before they assist with the child's hand washing.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Copy of Garda vetting, photographic evidence, copy of relevant policies and risk assessment submitted.

Infection Control:

Copies of policies.

Summary Comment

The registered provider's response and supporting information which was submitted were reviewed by the Inspectorate. The responses have adequately addressed the non-compliances and will be for review on the next inspection.

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) On review of the documentation and First Aid Responder (FAR) certificates, there were 3 FAR certificates available and a person trained with FAR was available at all times.

(2)(a) and (b) There was a first aid box available in the service which was accessible to the children at all times.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was adequate insurance cover in place to cover up to a maximum of 38 children which expires on the 27/3/25.

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,

Non-Compliance Information

1. In the sanitary area of the Preschool Room the paint at the bottom of the wall meeting the floor was bubbling, in disrepair and required repainting.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. In the sanitary area, new PVC skirting board was fitted, the walls were cleaned and painted.
The registered provider has updated the risk assessment policy in order to help eliminate health and safety hazards within the setting.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has adequately addressed the non-compliance identified in Regulation 29.