

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

,TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MN059
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Name of Service:	Tru Beginnings Community Playgroup Ltd
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Address of Service:	Knockconan, Emyvale, Co. Monaghan
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Eircode:	H18 DY07
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Name of Registered Provider:	Patricia Markey
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	17/02/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	58	PM	32
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	No. 18 The Grange Plantation Road Monaghan
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Inspection undertaken by:	S. Skinnader and M. Flood
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Title:	Early Years Inspectors
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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

Tru Beginnings Community Playgroup Ltd have been operating as a community run childcare service since 1997. They provide full day care, part-time and sessional education and care to pre-school children aged from 0 - 6 years of age. The service is open from 07:45 to 17:30 each weekday and caters for a maximum of 90 children. The service operates from rooms in a community/school building located in a rural area outside the village of Emyvale Co. Monaghan. The service has 5 care rooms in operation namely: Preschool Rooms 1 and 2, the Toddler Room, the Pre-Preschool Room all located in the main building and the Baby Room in a separate building to the side of the service. There is a separate sleep room off the Baby Room and 2 others off the Toddler Room. There are nappy changing and sanitary accommodations, a kitchen and an office. The service has large outdoor area to the side of the service and access to the general-purpose hall in the main building. There is off road parking for drop offs and collection.

Staffing

There were 23 adults employed in the service. Eighteen staff work directly with the children including the service manager, there were 2 staff members employed in administrative duties, 1 of whom also worked with the school aged children. One staff member was employed as a cook, 2 further staff worked with school aged child and 1 of these also worked as a cleaner in the morning.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance and as a result, the scope of the inspection included the Baby Room, Toddler Room, Pre-Preschool Room and Preschool room 1.

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 deputy and 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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) & (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 deputy person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service. The person in charge arrived at the service at approximately 12:00 and was present in the service for approximately 3 hours.

All 23 staff files were reviewed:

(2)(a) & (b)

- There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for all members of staff.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for all staff members. Garda vetting disclosures were found to be within the re-vetting timeframes therefore the service was adhering to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Following a review of the staff files presented on the day of inspection and additional information supplied by the person in charge, international police vetting was available for the 4 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of greater than 6 months as an adult. A second international police vetting was also available for 1 of these staff members who had also lived in a second country as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that the 18 members of staff, who worked directly with the pre-school children held at least the minimum required level 5 Childcare Qualification.

Non-Compliance Information

(9)(3) From the documentary evidence available for inspection 3 staff members had commenced working in the service prior to Garda Vetting being obtained.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(9)(3) The services manager has taken responsibility to ensure all garda vetting are on file before a member of staff commences training and/or work.

The registered provider has highlighted the requirements within the recruitment policy for commencing work.

Summary Comment

The registered provider's response has been reviewed and accepted. The non-compliance has been 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) During the period of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

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

Preschool Room 1:

There were 18 preschool children (aged 3 years) attending this room with 3 staff members.

The child adult ratios were correct.

Preschool Room 2:

There were 17 preschool children (aged 4 years to 5 years) attending this room with 2 staff.

One additional staff member was present in the room as cleaner.

The child adult ratios were correct.

The Pre-Preschool Room:

There were 9 preschool children (aged 2 years 2 months to 3 years) attending this room with 2 staff.

The child adult ratios were correct.

The Toddler Room:

There were 9 preschool children (aged 1 to 2 years) attending this room with 2 childcare staff.

The child adult ratios were correct.

The Baby Room:

There were 5 preschool children aged (10 months to 1 year and 4 months) attending this room with 2 adults.

The child adult ratios were correct.

(8) The registered provider ensured that there were 2 staff 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:

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

Compliance Information

(1)(h) A record was kept of the attendance of each child attending the service which included the arrival and departure times of the child.

(i) A weekly staff rota was available for each care room detailing the hours of work for each staff member allocated to the room.

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

There were 5 rooms in operation on the day of inspection namely the Baby Room, Toddler Room, Pre-Preschool Room and Preschool Rooms 1 and 2. For the purpose of this inspection Preschool Room 2 is not included.

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

Basic needs:

- Throughout the service the children were observed to move freely in the care rooms and the smaller children were supported on the floor with cushions or assisted with changes in position by the staff members.
- Child-led sleep needs were facilitated in the service as the staff followed the children's routines and also were alert to signs of tiredness displayed by the children. Children were observed sleeping when the inspectors arrived at the service and throughout the day.
- The toilet trained children were encouraged to be independent with toileting and discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children in the various rooms after toileting.
- Nappies were changed regularly and in a timely manner in the Baby and Toddler Rooms with pleasant interactions observed between children and staff.
- Attention was given to personal care such as nose blowing, the use of bibs for feeding and cleaning faces of the smaller children after their dinners.

- Dinners were homemade on the day and served at 12:00 midday in the Baby Room and approximately 12:45-13:00 for the other rooms. Dinner consisted of mince, potatoes and vegetables and gravy. In the Baby and Toddler rooms the consistency of the dinners was age appropriate. Dinners were saved for children who were sleeping and served once they woke up. Morning and afternoon snacks were also provided by the service and consisted of pureed fruit and yoghurts for the younger children and a variety of sandwiches and fresh fruits for the older children. Some children who did not eat the service food brought in their own lunches and snacks and staff stated that they have dinner at home.
- Drink cups and bottles were available to the children and were stored on low level shelves so that they were accessible at all times.
- All children had a change of environment to the outdoor area including the babies who were brought out for a walk in the buggy. All children were dressed appropriately for going outside.

Supporting Relationships

- Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children in all the rooms. The staff were observed to use positive supportive language with the children to encourage them to complete a task e.g. *“now will we get ready to go outside do the boys and girls remember how to put on our coats... good job... well done that is really good!”*
- Staff completed a daily communication sheet on each child detailing sleep, nappy changing and meals in the Baby and Toddler Rooms. The staff also reported that communication with parents is conducted verbally at collection and drop off.
- A key worker system was in place in the rooms with staff members allocated a group of children. This supported the development of positive relationships with the children and their families. The key worker was responsible for documenting activities and progress of the children’s learning and development.

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 was 1 cot room off the Baby Room with 5 cots for the children under 2 years of age who required a sleep. Two additional cot rooms were located off the Toddler Room with 2 cots in Bedroom 1 and also 4 cots, 2 of which were space saving cots in Bedroom 2.

The Pre-Preschool Room was converted to a sleep room after dinner, where staffed placed stackable daybeds down for those children over 2 years of age who required a sleep. This option was also available for older children from the Preschool Rooms if any required a sleep.

There were cushions, sofas and mats in the rooms where a child could go and relax and read a book.

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

The Inspectorate is assured that in general with the exception of the non-compliances below adequate steps have been taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service, for example the following observations were made during the inspection:

General Safety:

- The external outdoor play area was secured and gated.
- The entrance doors leading into the premises were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- Highchairs were in good condition and fitted with safety harnesses.
- Cleaning agents were stored up high safely out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- There was a constant supply of thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- Staff were observed to wear appropriate disposable gloves and aprons when changing nappies and to dispose of appropriately after each nappy change.
- During nappy changing the staff member was observed to wash both the child's and their own hands after each nappy change.
- Lunches were observed to be appropriately stored in the fridge.

- Individual lidded containers were available for the storage of each child’s soother.
- Any bottles of formula were brought in made-up by the parents and stored appropriately in the fridge.

Safe Sleep:

Safe sleep practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- Temperature of the cot rooms was maintained between 16 to 20° C while children were sleeping.
- Children on daybeds were supervised at all times by a staff member.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. In the Baby Room there were unprotected sharp corners on the table and brown shelving unit; and on the tables in the gazebo in the outdoor area. In addition, the risk assessment sheet in relation to this issue in the Baby Room had not been completed since the 27th of January. Similarly, in the Toddler Room the stainless-steel drawer unit located in the soft area had sharp corners exposed at a low level and the risk assessment document had not been completed since 04th February. These are recurring non-compliances from the previous inspection on 19/06/2024 and are also at variance to the registered provider’s previous action plan response which stated “Sharp corners have been secured with furniture corner guards in the toddler room and preschool room 2. The room leaders have taken responsibility to ensure all sharp edges are covered and will inform the deputy manager if any edges become a hazard concern.”
2. The wall mounted mirror in the Toddler Room was cracked and a potential injury hazard.

Safe Sleep:

3. In the Toddler Room sleep checks were not being carried out at the recommended 10-minute intervals. This is at variance with best practice and safe sleep guidelines where the requirement is to carry out 10 minutes physical sleep checks on sleeping children. This is a health and safety risk.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Corners on the tables in the Baby Room have been secured with new furniture corner guards and new tables and unit with rounded corners have been ordered. The tables in the gazebo have been returned to the national school. The stainless-steel drawer unit in the toddler room has been removed and a new unit with rounded corners has been ordered,

The room leaders have taken responsibility to ensure the risk assessment documents are completed daily and to record risks and to report them immediately to the Deputy manager and to follow up on these recorded risks to ensure they are being sorted promptly.

Going forward the registered provider will order all units and tables with rounded ends.

- The wall mounted mirror has been removed from the wall.

Safe Sleep:

- The room leader has taken responsibility to ensure the safe sleep checks are always carried out at 10-minute intervals.

The manager is to check weekly sleep records are being recorded every 10 minutes in compliance with best practise and safe sleep guidelines.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence of new rounded tables.

Summary Comment

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

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Non-Compliance Information

(c) Some of the room temperatures in the service were not adequately maintained within the recommended temperature range. For example; the Toddler Room felt cold and the room temperature was recorded at 15⁰ C at 13:10; and in the Pre Preschool Room the room temperature was recorded as 16.3⁰ C at 11:50 and 13.2⁰ C at 12:30. These temperatures were not within the required room temperatures of 18 – 22 ° C. This also went unnoticed by staff present.

(d)The sanitary area of Preschool Room 1 was in a state of disrepair as evidenced by the following observations;

- Large brown stains were evident on the ceiling of the sanitary area.

2. Black stains and dirt were evident on the wall beside the wash hand basin. A 2nd sink had previously been present in this area but had been removed.

(e) The sanitary facilities in Preschool Room 1 were inadequate and unsuitable for the following reasons;

1. There was 1 wash hand basin in the sanitary area when 2 were required.
2. The 2 toilets available while partitioned did not have any doors. This does not provide a sealed off cubicle so as to protect the dignity and privacy of the preschool children using the sanitary facilities at the same time. It is acknowledged that the person in charge stated that plans are in place to refurbish this area.

These non-compliances in (d) and (e) are recurrent non-compliances which were outstanding at the last inspection and remain outstanding. It is acknowledged that the person and deputy person in charge have stated the difficulty they have had in sourcing a plumber to commence the renovation works.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(c) One radiator had been turned off in the Pre - Preschool Room and the room leaders have taken responsibility to check all radiators are turned on each evening and that the room temperature falls no lower than 18°C. The manager has changed the heating setting to come on a Sunday which has increased the temperature to 18°C degrees, in the Toddler and Pre- Preschool rooms on Mondays. Deputy manager will regularly check that the room temperatures are above 18 degrees.

(d) A painter has been booked to paint the roof, PVC the walls and fit new flooring, once the plumber has completed his work.

(e) The plumbing work has commenced. The registered provider has organised another classroom and toilets for the children to use while work is being carried out.

Summary Comment

The registered provider's response was reviewed.

(c) The registered provider's response is accepted and the non-compliance addressed.

(d) and (e) A follow-up call to the person in charge confirmed that plumbing works were commenced and almost complete. Wall panelling and painting are to commence shortly and all works to be completed by the end of June 2025. The Inspectorate are satisfied with the assurances given by the registered provider that the works will be completed and the non-compliances addressed. This will be reviewed at the next inspection.