

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MO001
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Name of Service:	Abbey Tots
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Address of Service:	Mayo Abbey Community Childcare Services, Mayo Abbey, Claremorris, Co. Mayo
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Eircode:	F12 PD89
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Name of Registered Provider:	Denise Duggan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	26/09/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	38	PM	26
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ., Castlebar, Co. Mayo.
Inspection undertaken by:	M Farrell and A Kennedy
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

Abbey Tots is registered to provide full day, part time and sessional services to children aged from 0 to 6 years of age. The service opens from 8:00 to 18:00 hours with sessional services provided from 9:20 until 12:20 hours. The service is registered to provide school aged services. There are five care-rooms, a kitchen and a dining room, office, staff room and sanitary facilities in the premises that was purpose built for the provision of childcare services. The children have access to a number of enclosed outdoor play areas with play equipment and planting areas to the rear and side of the premises.

Staffing

There are twenty five staff working in the service including the manager, childcare workers, administrative staff, cooks and staff employed through community employment schemes

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 inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23 and 28. 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.

Additional Information

(9)(2)(d) International police vetting had remained outstanding since the last inspection for two staff members. The designated person in charge informed the inspectors that one of these staff members was no longer employed in the service. Information was on file demonstrating steps taken to obtain international police vetting for the second adult.

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

(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) There was a designated person in charge in the service and a named adult to deputise in her absence.
 - (b) The designated person in charge and deputy were available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.
- (2)
- The inspector was informed by staff that four new staff had started working in the service since the last focused inspection of the 28 September 2022. The vetting information for the other twenty-one staff had been reviewed on previous inspections. The following vetting documentation and qualifications were available on file for the four new staff members:
- (a) Two written validated references from past employers in particular the most recent employers for three staff and one written validated reference from a past employer for one staff.
 - (c) Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána for four staff.
 - (d) Vetting documents showed that international police vetting was not required for three staff.
- (4)
- Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available on file for the four staff new to the service since the last inspection who worked directly with the children.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (a) A second written validated reference from a past employer was required for one staff member.
 - (d) There was a gap in employment history details for one staff member and it was unable to be confirmed if international police vetting was required for this time frame.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The service advised in a written response that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)

- (a) A second written reference and validation was obtained and submitted.
- (b) The gaps in curriculum vitae have been filled, and the curriculum vitae updated.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of the validated reference and updated curriculum vitae were submitted by the service to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The Early Years Inspectorate has reviewed the actions taken and evidence submitted by the service and found them to have addressed the regulatory non-compliance found on inspection.

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 inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service there were 9 adults working directly with 38 children in the service. The designated person in charge and deputy also provided direct care to children. A review of a sample of attendance records showed that an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children during service hours of operation.
- (2) The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the morning of the unannounced inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as outlined below:
- Baby room: 1 staff cared for 1 child aged between 1 year of age.
- Waddler room: 2 staff cared for 6 children aged between 1 years and 2 years of age. Two of the children were transitioning into the Toddler care-room and spent time in this room during the inspection.
- Toddler room: 2 staff cared for 5 children aged between 2 years and 3 years of age.
- Preschool room: 2 staff cared for 10 children between 3-5 years of age.
- Playschool room: 2 staff cared for 17 children between 2 years 10 months and 4 years of age.
- (8)
- The registered provider ensured that there were always at least 2 adults on the premises when children were present in the service as evidence in sample attendance records reviewed.

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)

- There were five care-rooms in the service catering for children of different ages and stages of development. The Baby, Waddler and Toddler care-rooms catering for the younger children were located on the right wing of the building and the Preschool and Playschool care-rooms were in the left wing of the building. Suitable age-appropriate play materials and equipment were provided in each care-room. The play equipment was displayed at low levels for example in plastic tubs and canvas bags on the floor in the Baby care-room allowing children to access toys and choose which ones that they would like to play with. Wipeable mats were provided on the floor in the Baby care-room providing space for infants to crawl and roll on with a mirror positioned at a low level on the wall so children could look at themselves. There were rest areas with soft seating and deep pile rugs in the care-rooms. Play equipment was varied to support areas of children's development such as tabletop games and puzzles to promote fine motor development and hand eye co-ordination. Imaginative play was supported for example outdoors with playhouses and mud kitchens and indoors with dressing up outfits and small world toys. Each care-room had supplies of art and craft material appropriate to the age range of children in the care-room and an art easel was set up in the Toddler care-room with paper and brushes ready for use. In the Preschool care-room, the children played in the home area with dolls, buggies and play accessories. They also played at construction play, building blocks, connecting links, and stacking. The children listened to the adult read them a story on the horse chestnut tree. They were then chatting about the colours of the rainbow and their holidays.
- The children in the Playschool room were observed preparing to play outdoors upon arrival of one of the inspectors to the room. They were encouraged to put on their own coats and assisted by the adults if required.

- Equipment was provided for messy play activities such as the large, covered sandbox and mud kitchen equipment in the outdoor area. The children’s language development was supported through singing songs and chatting with staff, listening to the music playing in the care-rooms and the range of books in the care-rooms.
- There was a large selection of outdoor equipment to facilitate gross motor development and physical activity including ride on toys, balls and climbing equipment. The children had access to a number of different enclosed outdoor play areas including an area with a fixed climbing system equipment on wood bark ground cover and a recently renovated courtyard area with artificial grass including an outer perimeter black roadway track where children played on ride on toys.
- The interactions between the staff and children were observed to be positive and warm with staff using children’s names and comforting them when upset. Staff communicated well with each other on the day linking in to arrange activities and break cover. The children were prepared in advance by staff for transitions between activities. The staff informed the inspectors that an electronic application system providing information on the children’s day in the service to parents was in the process of being introduced. The staff completed daily information sheets for parents providing them with details such as what their children had eaten, how they had slept and nappy changes.
- Activities in the service were arranged to suit children’s needs. Mealtimes were appropriately spaced out over the day. A snack of chopped fruit, brown bread and chicken slices was provided in the Baby-care room at 10.30am. Highchairs with five-point harnesses were used for children to sit in to eat the meal supervised closely by staff. Bibs were provided and used to protect children’s clothing when eating where needed. The children in the Toddler care-room were observed to eat a meal of sweet and sour chicken with visible vegetables and rice at 1pm sitting at a table in a group with a staff member. The mealtime was sociable with the children and staff chatting to each other. One of the children was observed to be starting to get tired, rubbing their eyes and beginning to cry. The staff member responded to the child’s cues by setting up the stackable beds for rest and allowing the child to lie down and sleep. Older children were prompted to wash their hands supervised by staff who helped the younger children to wash their hands at appropriate times such as before lunch and after nappy changes.
- Physical activity was encouraged and supported by the staff as seen with some of the children from the Toddler and Playschool care-rooms playing running games and hopscotch with a staff member in the courtyard area before dinner.

- The children's behaviour was managed in a consistent way by the staff who were observed to use positive language to redirect children where needed. Children were shown how to take turns for example one staff member sat on a mat with the children in the Waddler care-room showing them how to blow bubbles with each child taking a turn.

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 main door was secured on the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service with a buzzer system in place to gain entry. The inspectors were admitted by staff following production of identification documents. The external doors to the premises were secured throughout the inspection. Safety gates were in place in the Baby and Waddler care-rooms to control access to the sanitary areas. The outdoor areas were secured to prevent children from leaving and people from entering the space without authorisation by staff members. Blind cords on windows were appropriately secured with restricting devices. The toys and play equipment in use were suitable for the age and developmental stage of the children using it on the day. Cleaning products were stored out of reach of the children. The kitchen area was inaccessible to the children.

Infection Control:

Warm water controlled below 43°C, paper towel and liquid soap was provided for hand washing and drying. The staff were observed to prompt to and supervise the children washing their hands at key times including before eating, after playing outdoors and using the toilet. Daily cleaning checklist were completed by staff and available for viewing in the playrooms. Windows were opened by staff at times to ventilate the playrooms. Boxes of tissues were available at low levels in the Toddler care-room and children were observed to be prompted by staff to use them to clean their noses when needed. Aprons and gloves were used appropriately by staff when changing children's nappies with changing mats cleaned down after use. Appropriate bins were used for the disposal of nappies.

Administration of Medication:

The staff informed the inspector that there were no children in attendance in the service on the day that required medication to be administered to them.

Safe Sleep:

The service catered for children aged between 0-6 years of age with separate sleep rooms provided off the Baby and Waddler care-rooms. The children aged under two years were slept in standard cots with wipeable safety mattresses. After dinner on the day, children aged over 2 years rested/slept on stackable beds in the Toddler care-room supervised at all times by a staff member. Staff kept written records of observations of the children's colour, position, breathing and if they were awake or asleep at ten-minute intervals. The air temperature of the sleep rooms was recorded by staff and maintained between the required 16-20°C. Individual bed linen was provided by the service and laundered regularly.

Fire Safety:

The emergency exits were observed to be free from obstruction during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. There was no restrictor fitted on the window in the sanitary accommodation off the Preschool room which could pose a safety risk.
2. The doors into the storerooms off the Preschool and Playschool rooms had no system of security posing a potential access/safety risk.

Outdoor area

3. A wooden section of the planting area in the outdoor area adjoining the Preschool and Playschool care-rooms was worn and had a metal nail exposed which could pose risk of injury to a child.
4. One wooden fence panel was broken and required replacement in the outdoor area adjoining the Preschool and Playschool care-rooms.
5. There were two storage containers which were broken and had sharp edges exposed in a wooden shelter in the outdoor area off the Preschool and Playschool care-rooms which could pose risk of injury to a preschool child.

Infection Control:

6. A metal bar that was part of the anchoring system for the mat on the nappy change unit used by the children from the Baby care-room was very rusty posing difficulties cleaning and an infection control risk.
7. The surface covering on the wooden partitions in the sheltered play space in the outdoor area adjoining the Preschool and Playschool care-rooms was lifted in places and could prove difficult to effectively clean.

8. There was no pedal to operate a foot pedal bin in the Toddler sanitary unit and two flip top bins were provided under the sink in the Playschool care-room where foot pedal operated bins were required for the disposal of waste.
9. The surface paint on the wall in one of the cubicles in the sanitary accommodation off the Preschool care-room was chipped in places and could prove difficult to effectively clean.
10. There was evidence of dust and a build-up of debris on the ceiling ventilation in the sanitary accommodation off the Preschool care-room.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The service advised in a written response that:

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. A child safe window securing mechanism has been placed on the Preschool sanitary accommodation window. Window securing mechanisms are to be kept on windows and checked daily.
2. Securing mechanism have been fitted to the storeroom doors on the Preschool and Playschool storage rooms. Storage rooms are to be kept secured unless being accessed by an educator.
3. The wooden section that was worn and had the nail exposed has been replaced and is now safe and secure.
4. The broken fence panel has been replaced. Fence panels are to be checked daily and reported to management if damaged.
5. All broken containers have been removed and disposed of from the outside storage areas and the outside covered areas have been cleared out. All containers are to be checked on a weekly basis, removed if damaged and replaced.

Infection Control:

6. The metal bar securing the baby nappy changing unit has been replaced with a new one. This has also been added to our daily cleaning/hazard sheets for indoors and outdoors with staff to notify management immediately.
7. All wooden partition boards have been replaced with new ones in the large undercover area and painted. Panels have been replaced with more durable wood and painted to protect them from the weather.
8. New foot pedal bins have been purchased for the Toddler's sanitary area and the Playschool room. Extra bins were purchased and stored in the service as replacements if required.
9. The Preschool sanitary area has been sanded and repainted.

Any areas of paint chipping or damage are to be reported to management to be repaired.

10. The Preschool ceiling ventilation has been cleaned and is free of dust and build-up. The cleaning processes have been amended to include daily cleaning.

Supporting documentation submitted

The service submitted photographs, receipts and copies of cleaning and risk checklists to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the service has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate and deemed to have addressed the regulatory non-compliance found on inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A certificate of insurance for up to 77 children attending full day care services at any one time with an expiry date of the 27 March 2024 was on display in the service's hallway.