

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MO023		
Name of Service:	Bilberries Community Playgroup		
Address of Service:	Cloggernagh, Islandeady, Castlebar, Co. Mayo		
Eircode:	F23 HX85		
Name of Registered Provider:	Stephen Chambers		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	22/03/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	21	PM -
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		
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

Bilberries Community Playgroup is a community-based service located in a rural area in County Mayo. The service is registered to provide sessional services for children aged from two to six years of age from 8:30-12:00 hours. A school aged service is also provided in the premises. The building is a purpose-built extension to a primary school building and there is one large playroom, a small kitchen/storage area and sanitary accommodation. The service has a well-developed outdoor area to the side and rear of the premises directly accessible from the playroom.

Staffing

There are five adults in the preschool service including relief staff. One of the staff is employed through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). The registered provider does not work directly in the service.

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/ safety. 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 inspector wishes 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) There was a named designated person in charge and a named deputy in the service.
- (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises during the inspection. A review of a sample of staff attendance records found that the designated person in charge or deputy were in the service during service opening hours.

(2)

The designated person in charge confirmed during review of documentation with two new staff had started working in the service since the last focused inspection of the 12 October 2021. The vetting information for the remaining three staff members had been reviewed on previous inspections. The following vetting documentation and qualifications were available on file for the new staff member:

- (a) There were two written validated references from past employers particularly their most recent employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all five staff including the two new staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting for staff members every three years.
- (d) The required International police vetting was available for a staff member who had lived outside of the State for periods of time longer than six months as an adult.

(4)

Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available on file for the two staff new to the service since the last inspection who worked directly with the children. The qualifications for the remaining staff who worked directly with children in the service had been reviewed on previous inspection and deemed to be compliant.

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.*
- (3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

Compliance Information

- (1) An adequate number of adults worked directly with the children attending the service. There were 3 adults working directly with 21 children on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service on the morning of the inspection.
- (3) The minimum ratio for a sessional service of one adult to each eleven children was adhered to with 3 adults working directly with 21 children during the inspection.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

- (1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:*
- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
 - (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
 - (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
 - (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
 - (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
 - (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
 - (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
 - (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*

- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(1) (a) to (i)

A sample of ten children’s records were randomly selected for review by the inspector from the children currently enrolled in the service. The records were found to be compliant during the inspection and contained the required details as laid out under the regulation.

(3) (c)

The required information was made readily available for inspection to the inspector in the service by the person in charge on request.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

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

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) Records in writing were kept by the staff of the following information in the service:

(a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the staff members was recorded on file.

The following information was available in the folder containing the service's statement of purpose and function and policies:

(b) Information on the service types and ages of children that the service is registered to provide services to.

(c) Details of the adult to child ratios in the service.

(d) Information on the type of care or programme provided in the service.

(e) Details of the facilities available in the service.

(f) Information regarding the service's hours of opening and fees.

(g) The service's policies, procedures and statements as required under Regulation 10 that were kept in a service policy folder with review of policies dated for the 31 August 2023.

(h) The staff kept records of details of the attendance of each pre-school child recorded daily in attendance books in the playroom.

(i) Details of the staff roster was displayed in the entrance hallway.

(j) There was a medication administration record book available for staff to keep details if medication was needed to be given to a child in the service.

(k) The service had an accident and incident record book for the recording of details of accidents and incidents that had occurred in the service. A sample reviewed found that the forms had been signed by parents.

(3)

The required information was made readily available for inspection to the inspector by the designated person in charge on request.

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 entrance door to the service was secured on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service. there was a buzzer system and keypad access in place to gain access to the service. A safety gate was in place in the hallway to control access by the children. The door to the adult sanitary unit located in the primary school and a push button release mechanism at a high level out of reach of the children. The kitchen area had a half door with securing mechanism to stop children from accessing the space unnoticed. The outdoor space was securely enclosed during the inspection to prevent children from leaving the area.

Infection Control:

The staff were observed to prompt and supervise the children wash their hands with liquid soap, warm water and dry them with paper towels after playing outdoors, using the toilet and before eating. The children's food provided from home including perishable items such as cheese and yoghurt was stored in a refrigerator in the playroom. A box of tissues was positioned at a low level for children to access if they needed to clean their noses with them, foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal of waste in the service. The staff cleaned down surfaces regularly for example tables before and after eating and records of cleaning were kept in the service.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medicine was kept in the original container and stored out of reach of children and in line with manufacturers instructions. Staff were aware of safe procedures for the administration of medicine to children should it be needed.

Fire Safety:

The emergency exits were kept free from obstruction during the inspection.

Outing:

The staff informed the inspector that outings are not undertaken by the service at present.

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) There were First Aid Response (FAR) training certificates with expiry dates ranging from the 16 August 2025 to the 13 February 2026 available for four staff working in the service.
- (2) (a) A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in an easily identifiable location out of reach of the children.
(b) The first aid equipment was readily available if a child required first aid treatment in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-

(a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and

(b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1) (a) Written records of the fire drills undertaken in the service were kept by staff with the last fire drill recorded as having been undertaken on the 19 March 2024.
(b) A certificate of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment dated for the 11 October 2023 was available for inspection. The smoke alarms had been certified as having been last maintained on the 7 March 2024.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the hallway.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had insurance in place valid until the 27 March 2024 for a maximum of 22 children in the service.