

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MO027			
Name of Service:	Buttercups Playschool and Afterschool Castlebar			
Address of Service:	15 Lower Chapel Street, Castlebar, Co. Mayo			
Eircode:	F23 KO63			
Name of Registered Provider:	Amanda Hoban			
Service type:	Sessional			
Date(s) of Inspection:	16/12/2024			
No of pre-school children:	AM	6	PM	N/A

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	<p>Early Year's Inspectorate TUSLA, Child and Family Agency 2nd Floor, St Mary's HQ Castlebar Co Mayo</p>
Inspection undertaken by:	B Lavin
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

Description of service

Buttercups playschool and afterschool is a privately operated sessional service, located in Castlebar town in County Mayo. The service is registered to cater for 19 children aged from two to six years of age between the hours of 09:30 – 12:30 Monday to Friday. On the day of inspection, the registered provider informed the inspector they are operating the service single handedly and catering for a maximum of 11 children. A school aged service is also provided. The premises situated in a single storey building has one playroom, kitchen area, office and sanitary facilities. An enclosed outdoor area dedicated for use by the children is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The staffing consists of the registered provider as they are operating the service single handedly for a maximum of 11 children. A second person is available in the event of an emergency.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11 15, 19, 21, 25, 26,27 and 28 however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider 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) The registered provider is the designated person in charge in the service and a named person is available to deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(2) (a) Validated past employer references were available for the registered provider who is working single handedly in the service.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, a validated reference from a source other than a previous employer was provided.

(c) A garda vetting disclosure was available for the adult in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was not required for the adult working in the service.

(3) These procedures were completed prior to the adult having access to a preschool child.

(4) One adult who worked directly with the children in the service had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 6 on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to meet the regulatory requirement.

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.

(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.

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

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to

provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

- (1) One adult was present supervising six pre-school children on the day of the inspection.
- (3) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of a single-handed operated service of one adult to a maximum of 11 sessional children was adhered to in the service on the day of inspection.
- (8)(c) A second person familiar with the service and who at all times was within close proximity of the service was available to provide assistance in the event of an emergency.

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.*

(2) A registered provider of a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or of 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 particulars specified in subparagraphs (a), (d), (e) and (f) of paragraph (1).

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,*
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

Compliance Information

1) (a-i)

The records for all the children attending the service were reviewed. The required information including the authorisation to collect the child, details of illness or special needs of the child, the emergency contact person for the child and record of immunisations were fully completed for each child.

(3) (c)

The records in writing were available for inspection by the early years inspectors.

(4)

The registered provider confirmed that the records are retained for the required period of 2 years.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child.

Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS:

- The healthy eating policy was available for parents and guardians to view. Adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink was observed available to each child attending the pre-school service. Lunches were stored in a fridge in the kitchen.
- The children used the toilet available with assistance given to those who needed it. Hand washing was facilitated in the basin in the sanitary accommodation adjacent to the pre school room. There was a supply of warm and cold water, liquid hand soap and hand towels.
- Drinking water on low tables were available for children to self-serve in the playroom.
- In the playroom, the children had the opportunity to rest or relax in child sized arm chairs in the designated cosy area.
- The adult was observed to be interested in the children, spoke in low tones, listened to them and responded to their requests. The adult interacted in a positive way with the children by sitting at their level, maintaining good eye contact, showing empathy and a good understanding of each child. The adult was observed to be caring and supportive in their interactions with the children.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The environment supported each child's learning, development, and wellbeing as -

- The playroom was equipped with open shelving units where children could access play equipment and materials independently. There was a variety of play equipment and materials appropriate to the children's age and stage of development.
- The playroom had various interest areas, farm, house, art, train, shop, reading, sensory, Montessori, building blocks and dress up. The various interest areas supported learning across all areas of development, fine motor skills, language development, cognitive development, sensory and imaginative development.
- There was plenty of clear floor space to enable the children to move around unhindered and appropriate furnishings of low-level tables and chairs were available to facilitate mealtimes and table-top activities.
- The walls of the playroom were decorated with posters, family photos and the children's art work.
- There was an enclosed outdoor play area which the children used on the day of inspection. The outdoor area had all weather surface. Outdoor play equipment included a mud kitchen for imaginative and sensory play, footballs for gross motor play and large wooden building blocks for creative play and imaginative play.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service had a wide range of age and developmentally appropriate equipment both in the indoor playroom and outdoors. There was sufficient quantity of safe well-maintained materials such as art materials, building and Montessori materials, small world equipment which supported various forms of play. The furniture was well maintained and comfortable for the children and suited their age and development stage. There was low level shelving which contained well organised toys and play materials grouped together to allow for creative independent play.

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) One adult present in the service had updated training in First Aid Responder and the certificate was valid.

(2)(a) There was a suitably equipped first aid box available and it was stored safely in the adjacent office on the premises.

(b)The first aid box was available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

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

(b) Records were available in relation to the number, type, and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment with the last annual service 18th September 2024

Records of the annual servicing by a competent person, in relation to the premises smoke and fire detection system were dated 18th September 2024.

(4)

There was evidence of the fire evacuation procedures setting out the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire in each of the playrooms and in the entrance lobby.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a) A written record was not available to demonstrate monthly fire drills completed in the service since September 2024.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Fire drills will take place monthly and a written record of the fire drills will be kept on file within the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence of the monthly fire drill records submitted to the Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions submitted by the registered provider have adequately addressed the non-compliance found on inspection

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

Children attending the service are being supervised by a qualified staff member at all times. During indoor activities, supervision is primarily by sight. The staff member was observed to be seated alongside children offering support, prompting and encouraging children as they play. In the outdoors the staff member was strategic in where they positioned themselves ensuring all children could be seen as they play. Mealtimes were supervised as the staff member sat alongside children, offering support, assisting with opening yoghurts, cutting or mashing food as required. Children who were able to use the toilet were supported to do so independently. The staff member remained within hearing range of the children and encouraged good hand washing hygiene.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service's insurance with an expiry date of 03/10/2025, was for a sessional service, catering for 22 children.

The insurance covered the following,

- public liability,
- personal accident,
- insurance against fire and theft,
- buildings,
- outings undertaken as part of the service provision.

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

General Safety:

On the day of inspection, the kitchen was not securely closed to prevent children accessing this area. This posed a safety risk to the children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

A latch has been installed on the kitchen door and the registered provider will check daily to ensure the kitchen secured to prevent access by the children attending the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions submitted by the registered provider have adequately addressed the non-compliance found on inspection