

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MO028		
Name of Service:	Care & Education Academy		
Address of Service:	Grattan Park, Balla Road, Claremorris, Co. Mayo		
Eircode:	F12 HR25		
Name of Registered Provider:	John McGowan		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	05/11/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	55	PM 45
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84		
Inspection undertaken by:	L Costello and B Lavin.		
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

This privately operated full day care service is located in an urban setting in Claremorris, Co. Mayo. A preschool service is provided to children aged between 0 and 6 years of age. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 07:45-18:00 hours and offers sessional, part time and full day care to children aged 0-6 years. A school age service is also provided. The premises is a detached, purpose-built single storey building with five care-rooms, two sleep rooms and a kitchen and dining room. There is a large well resourced outdoor area to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

There were seventeen adults employed in the service, thirteen were present on the day of inspection and of these eleven were working directly with the children. The person in charge worked out of the office and covered for breaks if required. One adult worked in the Kitchen.

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 24, 25, 26, 28 and 32; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 22 and 23. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19. As a result, the scope of the inspection included rooms wobbler, Montessori 1, Montessori 2 and the Toddler room.

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
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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)

There was a person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(c)

A clear management structure was evident in the service with room leaders and assistants identified.

(2) (a) (b)

The records of all seventeen adults employed in the service were reviewed. Thirty validated references from a past employer and four validated references from another source were available in respect of all seventeen adults employed in the service.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures were available for all seventeen adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Tusla Regulatory Notice requiring all employers to renew garda vetting every three years.

(d)

International police vetting was available for the four adults who had lived outside the state for a consecutive period of six months or more.

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

(4) Thirteen adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above 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.

Non-Compliance Information

(4) One adult working directly with the preschool children had not completed a major award in early childhood care and education.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The staff member has been removed from working in the wobbler room (working in afterschool only) until the award of her certification as she has completed successfully her level 5. The staff member has submitted all relevant course work and is waiting for results which she will have on the 13th of January. The registered provider will ensure all staff hired have a minimum level 5 qualification in Child Care.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of correspondence with education training centre received.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 9 adequately addressed the 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) During the period of inspection there were adequate numbers of adults working with the pre-school children attending the service. There were ten adults working directly with 55 children. Two additional adults and the person in charge was available for break cover.

(1) 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:

Wobbler playroom: 2 adults cared for 8 children aged from 1 to 2 years of age.

Montesori 1 playroom: 2 adults cared for 8 children aged from 2 to 3 years of age.

Montesori 2 playroom: 3 adults cared for 9 children aged 3 to 4 years and 12 children aged 4-5 years of age.

Toddler playroom: 2 adults cared for 10 children aged from 23 months to 2 years of age.

Sessional playroom: 1 adult cared for 8 children aged 3 years to 4 years of age.

In the afternoon the following ratios were observed:

Wobbler playroom: 2 adults cared for 6 children aged from 1 to 2 years of age.

Montesori 1 playroom: 2 adults cared for 10 children aged from 2 to 3 years of age.

Montesori 2 playroom: 3 adults cared for 9 children aged 3 to 4 years and 10 children aged 4-5 years of age.

Toddler playroom: 2 adults cared for 10 children aged from 23 months to 2 years of age.

Sessional playroom: This room was closed.

(8)

The registered provider ensured that there were always at least two adults on the premises when children were present in the service as evidenced in a sample of 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

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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1) (a)

A sampling process was used with the Wobbler room, Montessori room two and Montessori room one been selected. The wobbler room is laid out to stimulate the interest of the younger child. Soft padding flooring allows for the young children to crawl and explore and learn to take their first steps. Climbing frames and bars allow the young children to pull themselves to a standing position and become stable on their feet developing gross motor skills. Building blocks and ball ponds allow for fine motor skill development. A rest area with library stocked with musical and age-appropriate books allow for language development as the staff members were observed singing to the children as stories were read and the young children followed the cues from the adults. Musical toys, dolls and a home corner created opportunities for imaginative play. The children were observed to move around the area freely directing their own sense of play. The staff members in the wobbler room were observed to be kind and warm in their interactions with the young children offering hugs and affection as required.

Montessori two was decorated with the children's artwork, where evidence of their learning journey was displayed across all the walls of the room, creating a colourful environment. All resources in this room were stored on low level accessible shelving where the children were free to choose what to play with. This room was equipped with home and construction corners to develop role and imaginative play. Specialist Montessori equipment was available for mathematical development and practical life skills such as opening locks, zips and buttons. An array of tabletop activities and puzzles facilitated fine motor skill development while arts and crafts facilitated creativity. The children in Montessori 2 had individual journals where their learning journey was captured using photographs. Parents were kept informed of each child's development with regular reviews of journals.

The layout of the toddler room allowed for the children to use their imagination in choosing and doing activities. There were areas of interest which included a dress up area, dolls, buggies and pushchairs, a construction area and transportation area, a kitchen area, sensory play and a farm area. The children moved freely around the room and child led play was encouraged. The toddler room was decorated with family photos and children's artwork which showed evidence of exploring and creating by the children in the room. The children in the toddler room were able to seek the support of adults who were caring for them and were aware of the routines of snack and mealtimes and when getting ready for going outdoors.

In the Montessori room 1 the children engaged in a variety of activities that encouraged both gross motor development and fine motor skill development. Children were observed to spend time outdoors providing them the opportunity to run, climb, ride bikes and play imaginative games with the playhouse. Indoors the playroom had the toy resources on low shelving to allow the children choice in their activities and well-developed areas of interest such as home section, dress up, construction, Montessori and sensory toys and arts and crafts. A cosy reading corner with well an established library and children's sized couches was used by the children to relax and read. The children used this corner to sing songs and read stories and for quiet time. The children in Montessori room had learning journals which documented with photos the monthly learning goals and achievements of each individual child. Monthly themes for learning such as emotions, life skills like hand washing and numeracy were displayed on the playroom walls with evidence of achievement of these skills recorded in the children's learning journals.

(1) (b)

The service provided the main meal of the day which was 'Beef tacos and Rice', this meal was served in the room or in the dining room depending on the age of the child. In the wobbler room the children had all meals in their room, while the older children in Montessori had their meals in the dining room. All snacks were provided from home and included yoghurts, a variety of fruit, sandwiches and cheese and crackers. Perishable items were stored in the fridges provided in each care room. The service followed a three-week rolling menu. Independence was promoted in all care rooms. Mealtimes were an opportunity for the children to self-feed and learn new skills. Staff members sat beside children supervising and supporting if required. The older children were observed to call on staff if required and appeared to enjoy their independence.

Nappy changing was completed in line with the service policy. Staff members took this time as an opportunity for one-to-one engagement with the children, engaging in conversation and song.

Independence was promoted for the older children where those who were toilet trained completed the task independently as staff members supervised from a distance.

All staff members observed on the day were observed to be kind and respectful in their interactions with the preschool child. Praise and encouragement was regularly given with phrases of 'good job guys' 'well done' 'super work'. The service took efforts to ensure that transitioning to the service went as smooth as possible. One child who had just begun in the service was following a well-planned program which involved time specific durations of stay in the service to ensure this placement was appropriate and that the child settled well into the service.

Sleep in the service was structured with scheduled sleep times, however individual needs were also met outside of these scheduled times as observed on the day. Transition to sleep was observed to be a smooth process with soft music playing, a story prior to rest and then into the cot or floor bed.

Supervision during sleep was completed with staff remaining in the rooms completing ten minute sleep checks.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that each child was checked into and out of the service and this was recorded on an electronic app.

(3) (b) A record in writing was kept of the entries to the premises.

(4) The record in writing was in place for over one year from the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

(3) (a)

The registered provider did not demonstrate that any unpaid worker visiting the service in 2024 was approved for entry into the service by an employee or the person in charge.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A new visitors book has been purchased for visitors to use. The registered provider will ensure the correct book is available to visitors and staff have been informed of change.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of the new visitor book.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 24 adequately addressed the non-compliance found on 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 the day of inspection three staff members on duty were trained in first aider response (FAR) training and were available to children attending the preschool service.

(2) (a) (b).

Fully stocked first aid boxes are available in each of the care rooms and are available to children at all times. Extra equipment is stored in the main office if required.

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.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,

(b) an employee, and

(c) an authorised person.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation

(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) (b)

The registered provider demonstrated that fire evacuation drills are completed monthly within the service the most recent drill of 22/10/2024. Annual maintenance testing is completed on all firefighting equipment with the most recent maintenance testing completed on the 10/07/2024

(2) (c)

These records were made available to the inspector on the day.

(3) The registered provider is aware of the requirement to retain all relevant information for the period of five years as set out in regulation.

(4) Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed on the walls in all care rooms.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider demonstrated that adequate insurance cover valid until the 31st of August 2025 was in place. The insurance provided cover for 85 Children in full day care service.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-

- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
- (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
- (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and*
- (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.*

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider had a complaints policy that was available for the inspectors to view.
- (a) The complaints policy specified the procedure to be followed by the person making a complaint.
 - (b) The manner in which the complaint would be dealt.
 - (c) The procedure for keeping the complainant informed about how the complaint would be dealt with
- (2) (a) (b)
- The person in charge informed the inspectors on the day that no complaint had been received in the past two years.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Non-Compliance Information

Food provision in the service consisted of one hot meal provided by the service and snacks provided from home. This provision is insufficient to meet the needs of the preschool children as outlined with the recommended guidance of the provision of two meals and two snacks for preschool children in a full day care service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The service provides breakfast and dinner. Parents are required to provide a meal for morning and a healthy snack for the afternoon as per the parent's handbook. The service feels they have a good relationship with all parents. Staff will speak with parents if they feel an individual child would benefit from something extra for snack or if the snack is not meeting the specifications outlined.

Supporting documentation submitted

Parent's handbook submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 22 adequately addressed the non-compliance found on inspection. This will be reviewed on next inspection.

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

Infection Control:

- (1) The bin for disposing of nappies did not have the required foot pedal for operation, resulting in the user having to handle the bin a number of times during the disposal process which is a risk of infection control.
- (2) Soft matting in the wobbler room was ripped with exposing foam resulting in a risk of infection control.
- (3) Two mattresses in the wobbler sleep room did not have the required waterproof protective cover resulting in a risk of infection control

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

- (1) New bins have been purchased and placed in required rooms.
- (2) Soft matting in the wobbler room has been replaced.
- (3) Two mattress protectors have been purchased.

Checks will be carried out more regularly and staff will advise if any equipment/materials are broke, ripped and in need of replacing.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

Photographic evidence of the new bins, soft matting and mattress protectors.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 23 adequately addressed the non compliances found on inspection.