

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015MO081

Name of Service: Mini Mi's Pre-school

Address of Service: The Resource Centre, The Square, Balla, Co. Mayo

Eircode: F23 A303

Name of Registered Provider: Patricia Morley

Service type: Full Day

Date of Inspection: 25/06/2024

No of pre-school children:	AM	28	PM	14
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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
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

Mini Mi's Pre-school is a privately owned and operated service registered to provide full day care services for children aged from two to six years of age from 08:00-18:00 hours. The service operates sessional services in the morning from 9am-12midday for 38 weeks of the year. The service is registered to provide school age services. The premises are in a section of the ground floor of a community resource centre. The preschool service has two playrooms, a kitchenette, an office area, sanitary accommodation and an enclosed outdoor play area with play equipment located to the rear and side of the premises.

Staffing

There are nine staff working in the service including the registered provider who works directly with the children. One of the staff members is employed under the Access and Inclusion Model Scheme.

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 sections of regulations 9, 11, 15, 19, 23 and 27. 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, 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

(2)

It was confirmed through discussion with the registered provider and review of documentation that there were five new adults in the service since the last focused inspection on the 27 May 2021. The vetting information for the remaining four adults had been reviewed on previous inspections. The following vetting documentation and qualifications were available on file for the five new adults:

- (a) Two written validated references from past employers particularly the most recent employer for three staff members.
- (b) There were two written validated references for one staff member from sources other than past employers.
- (c) Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána for the nine adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4)

Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available on file for all nine staff members who worked directly with the children.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)

(a) There were no written references available on file for one staff member.

(d) There were gaps in information in the curriculum vitae/experience for one staff member and it was unable to be confirmed if international police vetting was required for these time frames.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider advised in a written response that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (a) The two references required were obtained and submitted. The registered provider is to ensure that all written references are sought before employee starts employment
- (d) The staff member has filled in the gaps on their curriculum vitae. The registered provider will ensure all employees have no gaps in information on their curriculum vitae.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of written references and a complete curriculum vitae/employment history were submitted.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance in relation to 9(2)(a) has been addressed by the actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered provider. In relation to 9(2)(d), the curriculum vitae/employment history submitted by the registered provider to the early Years Inspectorate detailed that the staff member lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months and therefore international police vetting is required to be obtained in relation to this time frame. The required international police vetting has not been submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate and therefore the non-compliance remains outstanding.

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) There were 4 adults working directly with 28 preschool children on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service. The registered provider arrived later in the morning to the service and worked directly with children across both playrooms.

(2) The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the day 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:

Preschool 1 playroom: 2 staff cared for 14 children in the morning of the inspection and 2 staff cared for 1 preschool child after 12 midday.

Preschool 2 playroom: 2 staff cared for 14 children in the morning of the inspection and 13 preschool children after 12 midday when some of the children from the Preschool 1 playroom joined the children in this room.

The registered provider provided direct care and support between the two playrooms.

(8) (a) There were at least two adults always present during the unannounced inspection and a sample of attendance records found that that two staff were always present in the service.

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)

10 children’s records were randomly selected from across both playrooms for review by the inspector. The children’s records contained the information detailed under the regulation.

(3) (c)

The required records were made readily available to the inspector by the registered provider on request.

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) Activities in the service were arranged to suit children's needs depending on their age and developmental stage. Mealtimes were observed to be appropriately spaced out over the day. Snacks provided from home were observed to be eaten mid-morning by the children attending the Preschool 1 playroom. The staff sat at the low-level tables with groups of children to supervise meals, chatting with them and encouraging conversations. The main meal was sourced from an outside catering company and on the day was a warm meal of mashed potatoes, carrots, chicken and gravy. The children from both playrooms ate this meal together in the Preschool 2 playroom. Additional portions were provided for some children who wanted extra portions. Each child had an individual drink container and drinking water was available to them throughout the inspection. The staff assisted children who needed help eating depending on their needs while encouraging children to be as independent as possible.
- Children were encouraged and supported to use the toilet by themselves if able to with supports given by staff when needed. Children who wore nappies in the service had their nappies changed in response to their individual needs. Storage was available for their personal items in plastic lidded storage boxes. Aprons were available to protect their clothes during messy play activities such as painting.
- Stackable beds with clean linen were set up in Preschool 1 playroom in the afternoon and available in the to the children with additional sleep mats provided if children wanted to rest. However, no child was observed to choose to use the sleep equipment provided on the day. There was a well-developed rest area/sensory space in the Preschool 2 playroom for children to use depending on their individual needs for rest.
- The staff managed children's behaviour in a positive manner during the inspection. The staff praised children appropriately for their efforts and prepared them for upcoming transitions between activities. Coloured sand timers were used to visually represent the passage of time for children and used to assist with turn taking and sharing toys when disagreement arose between children. There was a keyworker

system in place in the service where staff had identified children in their key worker groups. This information was recorded in the individual learning journals that the staff used to carry out regular observations of the children recording their progress. The staff told the inspector that these books were shared with parents throughout the year with the parents invited to make comments in them. Opportunities were taken to support children independence such as a rota system in the Preschool 1 playroom for children to help the childcare assistants at lunch time giving out the children's lunches. The play materials and equipment were arranged so that children had numerous opportunities for play in the service both indoors and outdoors. The children were observed to spend most of the time playing outside during the inspection using the wide range of outdoor play equipment. Both playrooms had separate outdoor areas directly accessible from their playrooms. The children from the Preschool 2 playroom were observed to play for example with on a wooden balance system, with a golf set and footballs and in a crawling tunnel that supported physical activity and movement. They also enjoyed digging for "treasure" in a large sand area. Children from the Preschool 1 playroom were observed to climb on a small climbing wall, play in the sandbox and use chalks on a chalkboard. The staff played a game with them blowing bubbles that the small children tried to catch.

The children also spent time playing indoors for example on the inspector's arrival to the service some children in Preschool 2 playroom were in a group painting on cardboard on the floor with a staff member. Other children in Preschool 1 playroom enjoyed messy play activities with playdough and sand during the inspection. Both playrooms were laid out in defined interest areas with a range of construction, transport, small world and role play toys stored at low levels in open shelving for children to choose their preferred play activities. Age-appropriate reading materials and tabletop activities were provided including a selection of Montessori equipment in the Preschool 2 playroom for the children to use. Birthday walls and photographs of the children engaging in activities were on display in the playrooms promoting a sense of belonging in the service for the children. Both playrooms had photographic displays on the walls of landmarks in their local communities helping link the service to their community. The staff informed the inspector that the service welcomed visitors to the service for example a gardener who had helped the children with planting sunflowers that were growing in individual plant pots outside in the sheltered area off the Preschool 1 playroom. There had also been a recent visit to the service by the local Order of Malta Unit.

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 was secured on the inspector's arrival to the service and the inspector was admitted by staff following production of identification documentation. The glass sliding doors from the playrooms to the connecting hallway were secured throughout the inspection to prevent children from leaving unnoticed and allowing staff to control entry to the playrooms.

Infection Control:

Aprons and gloves were provided for staff to wear when changing children's nappies. Warm water under 43 °C, liquid soap and paper towels were available in the sanitary units for people to wash and dry their hands with. The staff cleaned down surfaces after use for example tables after mealtimes. Records were kept by staff of cleaning procedures carried out in the service. The sand areas outdoors had covers in place when not in use.

Administration of Medication:

The staff showed awareness of the correct procedures for administering and storing medicines during discussion with the inspector. A medication administration book was available and shown to the inspector. A sample of records viewed showed that two staff members had checked and completed the relevant medication administration forms that had been signed by parents. Medicines were stored in accordance with manufacturer's instructions safely out of reach of children.

Safe Sleep:

The children attending the service were all aged over three years of age at the time of the inspection. Stackable beds were set up with clean linen and available in the Preschool 1 playroom with additional sleep mats available if children wanted to rest. No child used the sleep equipment provided during the inspection.

Fire Safety:

Emergency exit routes were observed to be free from obstruction during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The depth between a section of one of the outdoor sand areas and the top of the outdoor area boundary wall was only 90cm and posed a potential security risk of a child leaving this area.
2. One of the hinges on the main entrance gate to the outdoor area was not appropriately secured and posed a safety risk.
3. A recycled microwave stored at a height in the Preschool 1 playroom outdoor area was not adequately secured and posed a potential risk of causing an injury to children.

Infection Control:

4. The children's snacks foods containing some perishable food items in the Preschool 1 playroom were not stored under the required 5 °C, in the refrigerator provided, on the morning of the inspection.
5. The nappy bins were not the required foot pedal operated bins and posed a potential infection control risk.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider advised that:

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. All staff have been spoken too in relation to level of sand at the boundary wall. All staff will ensure that there is a clearance of one metre between the sand and top of the wall.
2. The caretaker has fixed the hinge on the main entrance gate to the outdoor area. the registered provider will ensure to carry out regular checks on front gate.
3. The microwave has been removed from the outdoor area. The registered provider will ensure that any new appliances will be child friendly /child size.

Infection Control:

4. The issue has been discussed with all staff. In future all staff will ensure that lunch boxes are stored in the fridge. The registered provider will ensure that all lunches are placed in a fridge once the children arrive at the setting.
5. The registered provider has ordered new pedal operated nappy bins.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence was submitted regarding actions 1., 2 and 3.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance found on inspection under this regulation.

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

The children spent long periods of time playing outdoors during the day and the staff positioned themselves so that a staff member could observe the children in all areas of the outdoor space. Supervision of the children by the adults was mainly by sight. Some children were out of sight but remained within earshot of the adults when using the toilet independently. Staff linked in with each other when children were going indoors to use the toilet and named the children who were under their care. Frequent checks of the numbers of children were undertaken by the staff. The required adult: child ratios were adhered to during the inspection. At mealtimes staff sat with the children supervising them closely and providing help as needed.