

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MO099
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Name of Service:	Outdoor Explorers Pre-school
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Address of Service:	Derryharrif, Castlebar, Co. Mayo
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Eircode:	F23 T186
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Name of Registered Provider:	Avril Grufferty
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Service type:	Sessional
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Dates of Inspection:	25/09/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	29	PM	23
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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 L Costello
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

Outdoor Explorers Pre-school is a privately owned and operated outdoor service in a rural area near Castlebar, Co Mayo. The service is registered to provide care for children aged between two and six years of age. There are overlapping sessions in the morning between 08:30-11:30 hours and 08:45 - 11:45 hours and in the afternoon between 12:15-15:15 and 12:30 - 15:30 hours.

The premises consists of a large, well-developed enclosed area of land with buildings and shelters including a renovated cottage, gazebo, wooden cabin, wooden structures and a polytunnel.

Staffing

There are six staff members including the registered provider who work directly with children 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under sections of regulations 9, 11, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27 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.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish 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 six staff working in the service. The following vetting documentation and qualifications were available on file for the six staff members:
- (a) Two written validated references from past employers particularly the most recent employer for the staff members.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all six staff including two staff members new to the service since the last inspection of the 13 December 2021. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting for staff members every three years.
 - (d) International police vetting had been obtained previously for staff where required.
- (4)
- All six staff members held the required qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent qualification.

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 4 staff working directly with 29 children on the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service on the morning of the inspection. A further staff member arrived later at 10:15am bringing the total number of staff caring for the 29 children to 5 staff during the morning sessions. In the afternoon there were 5 staff caring directly for 23 children.
- (3) The minimum ratio for a sessional service of one adult to each eleven children was adhered to. 4 to 5 staff working directly with 29 children during the morning sessions and 4 staff members worked directly with 23 children during the afternoon sessions.

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 sampled from across the morning and afternoon sessions for review by the inspectors. The children's records were found to contain the information required to be held under the regulation.

(3) (c)

The required records were made readily available to the inspectors by the designated 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;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis.*

(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) The registered provider ensured that the following was available in writing in the service:

- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and employees.
 - (h) Accurate daily attendance records containing the time of the children’s arrival to and departure from the service were observed in a sample of records reviewed.
- (3) The designated person in charge made the written records available to the inspectors on request in the service.

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 large outdoor area was securely enclosed by fencing and hedging. The gates leading into the area were secured when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service preventing people from entering without permission and children from leaving the service unnoticed. Following the production of identification, the inspectors were admitted to the service by staff. The door at the rear of the main building was found to be secured during the inspection.

The staff carried out daily risk assessments in the service to identify any potential risks to children and put appropriate controls in place as needed. Risk assessments were available, for example in relation to campfires in the service, and contained information on the hazard identified, benefits, risks, control measures and reference to supervision of the children during the activity. The toys and play equipment were well maintained and suitable for the age and developmental stages of the children using them. Cleaning products were stored out of reach of children in the main building and there was also separate secure storage in a shed to the rear of the main building.

Infection Control:

There were facilities for handwashing in the service with warm water and liquid soap provided. Paper handtowels were provided in one of the sanitary facilities in the main building. Small individual cloth hand towels were provided for children to dry their hands after handwashing and were placed in lidded bins to be laundered by the service after use. The service had a refrigerator in the main building to store perishable food items as required. Foot pedal operated bins were available for waste disposal.

Administration of Medication:

The staff informed the inspectors that none of the children attending the service required medication to be administered to them while in the service.

Fire Safety:

When the inspectors arrived at the service a campfire was in progress in the lower section of the outdoor area. The staff told the inspectors it was the first campfire of the preschool year and they had spoken with the children to prepare them and explained in age-appropriate language about the dangers of fire. There was a learning story on display in the main building regarding the preparations for the first campfire. The learning story contained simple rules for the children such as “no running around the campfire” and the reasons for these rules. The children were supervised closely by the staff during the campfire where the staff cooked potatoes that had been grown in the service by the children and staff. When the potatoes were cooked, the fire was safely quenched by the staff with measures taken to ensure that the embers were cooled down and any risks eliminated. The emergency exit routes in the service were observed by the inspectors to be unobstructed during the 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) Five staff members held up to date First Aid Response (FAR) training certificates.
- (2) (a) A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in clearly labelled location in the main building.
(b) The first aid equipment was readily available if a child required first aid treatment in the service.

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 service was an outdoor service on a large, enclosed area of land with a main building and numerous shelters and structures. The staff supervised the children by sight apart from when using the toilet where the children were able to do so independently. The staff linked in with each other frequently carrying out regular headcounts of the children in their care and followed the children when moving between the outdoor space and shelters. Early in the session the staff and children had a campfire where the children sat on logs in a large circle surrounding the campfire area closely supervised by the staff. A staff member was positioned beside the children when they played on the slides on a large hillock in the grassed area. The service operated a rolling lunch/snack system where children ate when they were hungry. The staff were observed to keep children in view when eating.

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 for a maximum of 33 children at any one time attending sessional services. The insurance certificate had an expiry date of the 27 March 2025.