

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MO116
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Foxford Childcare Group Ltd - The Growing Tree
-------------------------	--

Address of Service:	Admiral Brown Road, Foxford, Co. Mayo
----------------------------	---------------------------------------

Eircode:	F26 A381
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Jean Murray
-------------------------------------	-------------

Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
----------------------	----------------------

Date of Inspection:	06/02/2025
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	45	PM	21
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

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
---------------------------------	----------------

Description of service

Foxford Childcare Group Ltd - The Growing Tree is a community service in Foxford, Co Mayo. The service is registered to provide parttime and sessional services to children aged between 2 and 6 years of age from 09:00-14:00 hours. Sessional services are operated between 9:00 – 12:00 hours. The premise is a detached, purpose-built building with three playrooms, sanitary accommodation, a kitchen and offices. Enclosed outdoor play areas with outdoor play equipment are located to the rear and sides of the building. The service is registered to provide school aged services.

Staffing

There are fourteen staff in the service including two joint persons in charge, childcare workers, a financial manager and auxiliary staff. One student was on placement in the service at the time of the inspection. 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/ 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, 19, 23, 25 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of one of the persons 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

(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 were two joint designated persons in charge in the service and an additional named member of staff to deputise in their absence.

- (b) One of the designated persons in charge was always available throughout the unannounced inspection. Discussion with staff found that there was always an identified designated person in charge in the service during hours of operation.

(2) It was confirmed by review of documentation and discussion with one of the designated persons in charge that two new adults had started in the service since the last focused inspection of the 11 January 2024. The vetting

information for the remaining staff had been reviewed on previous inspections. The following vetting documentation and qualifications were available on file for the two new adults:

- (a) There was one written reference from their most recent employer for one adult.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all fifteen adults including the two new adults. 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 adults as they had not lived outside of the State for periods of time longer than six months as adults.
- (4)
Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available on file for the staff who worked directly with the children.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2) (a) There was no evidence of the validation of two references for one adult. Two adults' employment histories showed that both adults required a second reference from a past employer instead of the references that had been obtained from other sources.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

(2)(a)

The service advised in writing that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

The references and validations required were obtained for both staff members. Any future employee, student or scheme personnel, will have a checklist at the beginning of their staff folder. Each document that is required must be checked, verified to be correct and be signed and dated before commencement of position.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of references, validations and checklist.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance found under Regulation 9 (2)(a) on inspection has been addressed by the actions taken by the service.

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) An adequate number of adults worked directly with the children attending the pre-school service. There were 7 adults working directly with 45 children on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service on the morning of the inspection. A designated person in charge was also available to provide care as needed. 3 adults provided direct care to 21 children during the afternoon of the inspection.
- (2) Part-time services were provided from 12:00 to 14:00 hours following the morning session. The minimum required adult to child ratios of 1:6 for children aged between two to three years of age and 1:8 for children aged between three and six years of age were maintained during this time. The children from the ECCE 1 and ECCE 2 playrooms were amalgamated and cared for in the ECCE 1 playroom with 3 staff providing care for 15 children. Two adults cared for six children in the Junior Preschool 1 playroom.
- (8) (a) Discussion with staff and a review of records found that there was at least two staff members available in the service when the children were present.

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

There was a wide range of play equipment in all three playrooms to support the children's learning and development including messy play, art and craft materials and tabletop activities. Children were observed to play in groups with a range of messy play materials in the playrooms. Some of these activities including play with playdough, at water tables and with dry coloured rice and pasta shapes at messy play tables. Aprons were available and worn by some of the children to protect their clothing. Structured group work was observed in the ECCE 2 playroom. Three groups of children and staff engaged in activities at tables. These included hammering metal tacks into wood with small hammers, another activity involved coloured pasta shapes while the third group had a number recognition activity with a staff member. The children across the service were observed to select various toys to play with from the open low-level shelving to play with. Children played with a range of imaginative play items including food and kitchen equipment in home corners and construction toys and work benches. Each playroom had artwork that the children had made on the walls such as pictures of melting snowmen in the ECCE 1 playroom. A range of age-appropriate books were provided in the playrooms and staff were observed to read stories and show the children the pictures creating discussions during the inspection. A large enclosed outdoor area was accessible from the playrooms. The area was used later in the day by some of the children following a risk assessment as the ground had been very icy/frosty due to cold weather early in the day. Canopies extended from the building providing sheltered areas where wellington racks stored the children wellington boots. There were several different types of ground cover including grass, impact absorbent ground covering and cement/concrete areas. Play equipment to encourage physical activity and gross motor development was provided including climbing systems and an artificial grass football pitch with goals. Covered sand areas with equipment were available in the space and there was a large wooden playhouse with seating. Various festivals and feast days were celebrated in the service for example children in the ECCE 2 playroom had made pictures of St Brigid's cloak. Valentine's Day cards made by the children for their family members were also on display in the room. The children brought food from home to eat at the morning break. There was a healthy eating policy which was observed to be enforced by the staff. The children in the ECCE 1 playroom were observed to sit in groups at tables

and eat sandwiches, rolls, crackers, yoghurts and fruit. The staff sat with the children to supervise them and helped them open packaging if needed. The children drank water poured from a jug into plastic cups. The afternoon meal for children attending parttime services was provided by service at 13:00 hours and was warm pancakes, toast, fruit and yoghurt.

The staff informed the inspector that some of the children in the Junior Preschool 1 playroom were in the process of being toilet trained. The staff were working in partnership with parents to achieve this goal.

Sleep mats with linen laundered by the service were available for children if they wanted to sleep during the parttime service. The sleep mats were not observed to be used during the inspection. Rest area with soft seating were provided for the children next to reading areas in the playrooms and were used by children when sitting looking at books.

The staff placed an emphasis on promoting children’s independence. Children in the Junior Preschool 1 playroom were supported by staff to put on their own wellington boots and outdoor rain gear as much as possible when going outside. The children were allowed plenty time to do this without being hurried or rushed by staff.

The children were supported to use the toilet by themselves where able but the staff were close by if any help was needed. Staff told the inspector that some of the younger children were in the process of toilet training and staff were working in partnership with parents to achieve this goal. The staff prompted the children to wash their hands after using the toilet and messy play activities and before eating.

The staff showed the inspector how they used electronic applications to support communication with parents. For example, the staff shared observations they had made of the children with photographs of them engaging in different activities. There had been a recent severe storm and there was a sign on the main entrance door with information for parents about supports available to help if needed. The staff in the ECCE 1 playroom had developed a family wall with little booklets of photos of children with their families that were visible to the children and one child pointed out their booklet to the inspector.

The children’s behaviour was positively managed in a consistent manner by the staff. The children were encouraged to take turns with toys, and coloured sand timers were used effectively where needed to support the process. Signs with simple playroom rules such as “take turns”, “share toys”, “walk inside” where displayed in playrooms. The staff redirected children to them at times for example when one of the children was running in the playroom. The staff let the children know when transitions between activities were approaching to prepare them and help make transitions smooth. Picture displays of the daily routines were displayed in the playroom and followed on the day providing the children a sense of consistency and stability. The staff linked in with each other frequently when co-coordinating activities and worked well as teams in the playrooms.

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 staff carried out daily risk assessments of the outdoor area to identify any potential hazards and take actions. The main entrance door was secured using an electronic device allowing staff to control access to and from the service. The inspector was admitted to the service by the designated person in charge following production of identification documents. The Junior Preschool 1 and ECCE 1 playrooms had mechanical securing systems in place at high levels to prevent children from leaving the areas unnoticed. There was a safety gate in place in the hallway leading to the ECCE 2 playroom allowing staff control access to some areas. Blind cords on playroom windows were observed to be secured using securing devices. The low windows in the hallway had restrictor devices in place. Internal doors were appropriately secured including the kitchen/dining room doorway leading from the Junior Preschool 1 playroom. The door to the polytunnel containing garden hoses was secured to restrict children from entering the space.

Infection Control:

The service was found to be clean with written records of cleaning/disinfecting procedures kept by the staff. Children's snacks from home containing perishable food items such as cheese, yoghurt and processed meats were stored in the service's refrigerators on arrival to the service. The staff were observed to prompt and supervise the children to wash their hands thoroughly using liquid soap and warm water with paper towels provided to dry them. Foot pedal operated bins were provided for waste disposal in the playrooms and sanitary areas and used correctly by the children with prompts observed to be given by staff. Aprons and gloves were available for staff to use in the nappy changing units when changing children's nappies.

Administration of Medication:

Care plans were in place for children who may require medication to be administered to them in the service in accordance with the service's policy on medication administration. Record templates were available to record any medication that was administered to a child by staff members. Medicines were stored out of reach of children but readily accessible by staff and in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Safe Sleep:

None of the children slept in the service during the inspection. The staff were aware of the process to monitor sleeping children.

Fire Safety:

The inspector observed that the emergency exit routes were free from obstruction 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) Six members of staff had undertaken First Aid Response (FAR) training with certificates available for inspection.
- (2) (a) There were suitably equipped first aid boxes stored in the playrooms 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 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A certificate of insurance for parttime service provision for a maximum of 55 children with an expiry date of the 27 Marc 2025 was available for inspection in the service.