

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015RN049		
Name of Service:	Strokestown Community Playschool Ltd		
Address of Service:	Lisroyne, Strokestown, Co. Roscommon		
Eircode:	F42 X335		
Name of Registered Provider:	Nicola Shiel		
Service type:	Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	23/02/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM n/a
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, Government Buildings, Convent Road, Roscommon, Co. Roscommon.		
Inspection undertaken by:	A. Kennedy		
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

This preschool service offers the options of a part time care provision from 9.00hrs to 14.00hrs and an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) pre-school care programme and sessional programme from 9.00hrs to 12.00hrs, from Monday to Friday. The preschool caters for children aged between 2 years to 6 years of age. Additionally, a school age programme from 8.00hrs to 9.10hrs and from 13.50hrs to 18.00hrs is offered. A child centred play based preschool curriculum focusing on emerging interests is provided. On the day of inspection, there were 17 preschool children attending the sessional service.

The preschool service is in a detached purpose-built premises on its own grounds, in the town of Strokestown, Co. Roscommon.

There are two playrooms, namely Preschool room 1 and Preschool room 2, on the ground floor. Additionally, there are two school aged rooms and a sensory room on the first floor.

On the day of inspection only Preschool room 1, was in use for the preschool children. The premises has its own kitchen, where children's meals are stored on site.

Quiet rest areas are available in the form of child size soft seating where children could rest or relax if they so choose. The pre-school children have direct access to secure outdoor play areas at the rear of the premises for children's play activities, fresh air, and exploration.

Staffing

The registered provider is supernumerary and not on the premises daily. There are a total of four staff (not including the registered provider) currently working directly with the children. There is a named person in charge and there is a named designated deputy. The four staff hold at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 to level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework. The staff have documentary evidence of on-going training and education.

Additionally, there is a service chef and a maintenance person working in the service.

On the day of inspection, there were two staff working directly with the preschool children. The person in charge acted as childcare relief and assisted with the administration parts of the inspection.

The chef was in attendance.

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 areas of governance, health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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 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

(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 childcare manager was the designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service.

(b) The childcare manager was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection.

Documentary evidence indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available on the premises when the pre-school children were present.

The staff files for all staff were reviewed.

(2) (a)&(b)

10 of the 10 validated references on file in respect of the 5 staff members were from a past employers or a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available in respect of the five staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Two of the staff had worked outside the jurisdiction, for six months or more, while over the age of 18 years of age and had the required police vetting.

(4) The four staff members working directly with the children and had evidence of a childcare qualification to at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 to level 7 on the National Qualifications Framework.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

- (a) a sessional pre-school service, and*
- (b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).*

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection at 11:00hrs there were 17 preschool children present with 3 staff including the person in charge, working directly with, caring, and supervising these children.

The 17 children were aged between 3 and 5 years and attending the service's Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) pre-school care programme and sessional programme from 9.00hrs to 12.00hrs.

(2) It was advised by the person in charge that presently there is no child attending on a part-time basis.

(4)(a)(b) Documentary evidence indicated that at least 2 staff were on the premises at all times when the pre-school was operating.

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

- Hand washing was carried out regularly in the setting by the children with gentle reminders from the adults after toileting, prior to consuming snack, after messy play and outdoor play.
- The children sat at low tables for their morning snack accompanied by the adults in the preschool room.
- Adequate tables and chairs were provided for the children, and they were encouraged to self-feed and assisted by the staff if necessary.
- A healthy eating policy was in place in the service. It was observed that the children consumed their snack at 11.10am. There was evidence of healthy eating with the children consuming a selection of fresh fruit, crackers, rolls, wraps, sandwiches and yoghurts and yoghurt drinks.
- Juice and water were available as drinks.
- The snack time was unhurried, and the children were encouraged to be independent.
- There was a cosy area in the preschool room which could be adapted as a rest area for the children to rest or opt out of activities if they so wished.
- Children were encouraged by the adults to do things for themselves and be self-caring around their toileting needs.
- The children enjoyed freedom of movement within the playroom and the outdoor play area throughout the session.
- Children had plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance.
- Play activities and experiences were developmentally appropriate and suitably challenging. The children could move about freely and explore their environments. The children were observed at free play, doing art and craft activities, dancing to action songs, playing in the home area, playing in a newly adapted shop to a community centre ,construction area and dress up area.

- The staff read stories and children questioned the characters and gave their views. The staff used visual aids and probed with questions such as ‘who is this?’ ‘how many are there?’, and ‘where is that?’. The staff acknowledged a child’s achievements, and the children were observed having fun.
- In the outdoor area, the children played on the climbing frame, did actions songs and played on the push along trikes/ bicycles/tractors/scooters. They were observed walking, running, and jumping.
- The staff supported children in forming and sustaining positive relationships by –
 - having a key person system for each child,
 - showing respect for each unique child and developing their trust
 - listening to the voice of the child as they communicate their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children’s cues, gestures, and body language,
 - using soft tones, the child’s individual name, and getting down to their level and making eye contact,
 - providing opportunities for individual and small group activities and play, leading to increased social awareness, co-operation, collaboration, teamwork, and a sense of belonging,
 - providing opportunities for children to learn from each other and with each other, to work together, join in and contribute to projects and tasks.
 - working with parents and guardians by sharing knowledge and observations of the child’s interests, strengths, developmental and care needs, approaches to learning, changes in their life, and any other concerns.
- On the day of the inspection the staff showed kindness. They were thoughtful, supportive, and reassuring whilst caring for the children. They cared for children by being supportive while the children engaged in free play, role play, and creative play. A climate was fostered where the children knew their boundaries. The staff supported children to enter social groups, and to learn to help and positively engage with other children. They encouraged and praised children for specific, positive, and appropriate behaviours. Children were given positive alternatives, rather than just being told ‘no’.
- Children were supported in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. The children could identify, name, and explore their feelings both positive and negative.

Physical And Material Environment

- The pre-school room was spacious, bright, and colourful. The room was laid out with clearly defined areas of play to include a storage unit with an abundance of arts and crafts supplies to include paint, glue, brushes foam shapes, scissors, glitter, sponges, stampers, paper and card.

- Large and small-scale construction (plastic and wooden blocks) and manipulative materials; picture books, problem solving toys (e.g., jigsaws), role and pretend play (e.g. a play kitchen, dolls and accessories) a castle with play accessories, a dolls house with play accessories and small world toys (e.g. play animals, transport toys, play figures).
- A soft matted area with child sized couches, cushions and blankets was provided as a reading area should a child wish to relax or opt out of activities.
- Low level tables and chairs were in place and low-level shelving with equipment and materials were accessible to the children.
- The outdoor play area was located to the rear of the pre-school premises with direct access from the preschool room.

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:

Children were observed to be actively supervised by the adults at all times when playing in the indoor and the enclosed outdoor play areas during the inspection.

The entrance doors into the pre-school were secure to prevent unauthorised access by a person or the unsupervised exiting by a pre-school child.

The external outdoor play area was secured thus preventing potential unauthorised persons access and or entry into the premises.

Toys and play equipment were developmentally appropriate, kept in good repair and did not pose an injury risk to children.

The heating system was thermostatically controlled, to ensure the temperature was maintained between 18°C to 22°C.

The water was thermostatically controlled with a temperature reading of 31.7°C on the day of inspection.

Cleaning agents and equipment were stored inaccessible and out of children's reach.

Infection control

The inspector observed that the children washed their hands regularly throughout the inspection to include, prior to consuming snack, after outdoor play and after toileting.

Suitable hand washing facilities were provided with supplies of liquid soap.

The playroom and sanitary accommodations had foot operated lidded bins.

The pre-school room and sanitary areas were well ventilated with the windows open throughout the inspection.

Tabletops were cleaned immediately prior to children's snack break.

Administration of Medication:

There were no medications administered to the children on the day of the inspection.

The staff demonstrated knowledge of safe practices with regards to the safe storage and administration of medication should it be required.

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills were carried out on the premises to ensure the children were familiar with the procedure in event of an emergency.

All exit routes from the service were free from obstruction during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The doors into the staff toilet and sluice/cleaning room had no system of security and remained open on the day of inspection, and thereby these areas could potentially be accessed by a pre-school child.
2. The lid of the water table in the outdoor area was cracked and could be a potential safety concern.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety

The childcare manager submitted a written response on 21/03/2024 to advise

1. A new lock on staff toilet and Sluice cleaning room as I as Manager will ensure that the staff will ensure these areas are secured at all times so that the children cannot access these areas.
2. New lid has been purchased for the water table We will ensure that the lid is maintained in a safe condition. This has been included on our outdoor risk Assessment form see attached and photograph of new lid.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was submitted to the office of the early year's inspectorate of

1. The securing mechanisms fitted on the door of the staff toilet, the staff room, and the sluice cleaning room.
2. The new lid on the water table in the outdoor area and a copy of the outdoor risk assessment with the lid of the water table included.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

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) The service provided evidence that a person trained in first aid for children was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service. Three staff members had current training in first aid for children.

(2)(a) A first aid cabinet was available in the hallway inaccessible to the preschool child.

It contained an adequate quantity of first aid items for the numbers of children attending the service at any one time. and was readily available in the event a child required first aid treatment.

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

(1)(a)

A written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was on 19/02/2024.

(b)The fire equipment was last serviced on 27/03/2023 and the smoke and fire detection alarm system for the premises had the last annual service dated 14/09/2023.

(4) Notices were displayed within the hallway and the preschool room and on the first floor of the service of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire in the premises.

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 27th of March 2024 was for 22 children per session and included the following -

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