

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO014
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Name of Service:	Footprints
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Address of Service:	Sligo Family Resource Centre, 49 The Mall, Sligo, Co. Sligo
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Eircode:	F91 HR58
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Name of Registered Provider:	John Burrows
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	27/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	6	PM	n/a
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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
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 Full Day service is located in Sligo town. It is located on the 2nd floor of a three storey building that is the Sligo Family Resource Centre. A full day care service is provided to children aged between 0 and 6 years. The service is registered to cater for a maximum of 6 children and operates Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm. The playroom is one large room with an area to one side sectioned off to accommodate a cot for children under two years of age if required. Children's sanitary accommodation with nappy changing facilities are located across the hallway from the playroom. There is an enclosed outdoor area to the rear of the premises for the exclusive use of the children.

Staffing

There are six adults working in the service that provide direct care to the preschool children. The Registered Provider does not provide direct care to the preschool children.

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 and facilities*. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 23, 25, 27 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation 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 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 designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(2) (a) (b).

The records of all six adults employed in the service were reviewed.

Eleven written and verified past employer references and one reference from another source in the absence of a past employer were available in respect of all six adults employed in the service.

(c)

A garda vetting disclosure was available for all six adults in the service. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d)

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

(3)

The service demonstrated that these vetting procedures were completed prior to the adult having contact with preschool children.

(4)

Six 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 suitable by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

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.

(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 three adults working directly with six children on the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service. A review of a sample review of roster showed that an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children during service hours of operation.

(2)
The minimum ratio of adults to children ratio were provided on the day of the inspection in accordance with the required ratio considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service.

(8) (a)
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 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-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,*
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

Compliance Information

(1) (a-i)

The records of all the children present on the day of the inspection who attending the service were reviewed. The required information as outlined in (a) to (i) were completed for each child.

(3) (c)

The records in writing were available for inspection by the early years inspector.

(4)

The person in charge is aware of the regulatory requirement to retain these records for a period of two years from which the child ceases to attend the service.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each children to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and*
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.*

Compliance Information

(1) (a)

The service demonstrated that there was adequate and suitable facilities for the children to play both indoors and outdoors throughout the day. The indoor care room is an open plan room equipped with a variety of resources. Low level shelving is stocked with building blocks, resources for the home area and small world animals. Higher shelving is equipped with resources that are rotated into the room including balance boards, jigsaws, puzzles, games and books.

Interest areas include home corners with a kitchen and resources and dress up areas for imaginary play. A sensory table equipped with sand and resources encourage sensorial play. A library area allows for language development. A large cabinet equipped with various arts and crafts including paint, crayons and materials allow for opportunities of creativity.

The outdoor area is structured to promote gross motor skills with climbing frames, balance beams and tyres. A horticulture area that the children were observed planting flowers allows for learning opportunities of nature.

(1) (b)

Rest areas were observed on the day to include child size sofa and seating area beside the library, where children were observed relaxing sitting with a book throughout the session. Sleep facilities were provided with a standard cot for children under two years of age and stackable floor beds for children over two years of age if required. These were not observed to be required on the day.

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 service is located upstairs in a family resource building. Access is granted through a bell entry system and all visitors are signed into the building.
- The door directly leading to the preschool is secure ensuring no unsupervised egress from the service.
- All cleaning products are stored out of reach from the preschool children.
- Radiators were equipped with wooden radiator covers reducing the risk of burns to the preschool child.
- Windows were fitted with restrictors.
- A stair gate secured entry into the playroom.
- All waste was disposed of in foot pedal operated bins.
- Nettles and briars in the outdoor area were removed on the day of the inspection when brought to the attention of the person in charge.

Infection Control:

- Children were observed to wash their hands after playing outdoors and after using the bathroom.
- Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were available for safe hand hygiene practices.
- Personal protective equipment including aprons and gloves were available for nappy changing.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned after messy play and prior to snack times.

Safe Sleep:

- One standard cot with an appropriate waterproof mattress was available for children under two years of age if required.
- Stackable floor beds were available for children over two years of age who required sleep while in the service.

Fire Safety:

- Fire emergency evacuation plans were clearly displayed throughout the service.
- A record of the monthly fire evacuation drills was displayed on the information notice board.
- All exits remained free from obstruction on the day.

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) (a) (b)

The service demonstrated that a person trained in first aid for children was available to the children at all times while in the service.

(2) (a) (b)

A fully stocked first aid box was stored in a conspicuous location in the service and available to the children as required.

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 demonstrated adequate supervision at all times on the day of inspection. Supervision is primarily by sight with the two staff members positioning themselves in the care room to ensure that all children are always in view.

Transitioning to outdoor play involves walking down the stairs and past occupied rooms in the centre. The children were supervised transitioning with the assistance of an extra staff member available to the service for this task, ensuring that ratios of 2:1 were in place ensuring safety of all children. Once out in the garden, children had the opportunity for free play. The outdoor area was designed to ensure that children were in sight at all times with no blind spots available.

At mealtimes the staff members sat alongside the children engaging in conversation and ensuring children were supervised while eating. The staff members took this time as an opportunity to engage with the children and talk about home life, likes and dislikes etc.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service demonstrated adequate insurance with a certificate up until the 13th of March 2026.