

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015SO030 | | |
| Name of Service: | Little Buddies | | |
| Address of Service: | Community Childcare Centre, Chapel Gardens, Riverstown, Sligo, Co. Sligo | | |
| Eircode: | F52 YC42 | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Alison McGovern | | |
| Service type: | Full Day, Sessional | | |
| Date(s) of Inspection: | 01/12/2023 | | |
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 27 | PM 9 |
| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F95 XK94 | | |
| Inspection undertaken by: | N McEndoo | | |
| 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 Childcare Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013). | | | |
| Conditions if applicable | Not applicable | | |

Description of service

Little Buddies is a community childcare facility which has been in operation since 2008. It is located in Riverstown, a rural village in County Sligo. Full day and sessional care for children from one to six years of age is offered. The maximum number of preschool children the service can cater for at any one time is 52 as per the national register. School aged children are catered for during term time. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 07:30 and 18:00 hours. The purpose-built facility has two floors. Three playrooms are available on the ground floor, two with their own sleep rooms. One such room is not in operation at the moment. Upstairs is a large activity room where the service operates a preschool morning session in and an afternoon school age session during term time. There is an adequate number of accessible sanitary and nappy changing facilities provided for the children and staff present. Two ample outdoor spaces are provided to the back of the premises which can be accessed directly from the downstairs playrooms. Each activity room has a door connection to the outside that facilitates drop off and collection of children, managed by each room. Hot food and snacks are prepared in the service.

Staffing

There is a total of 12 adults employed in the service., there were 9 adults present on the day. There were 6 staff working directly with the children, one adult available for kitchen duties, one student on a work placement and the Manager. On the day of inspection, the manager was present but did not provide direct care to the children.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Childcare 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 and safety.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following: Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment, Regulation 11 - Staffing levels, Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play, Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials, Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child, Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures, and Regulation 28 – Insurance, however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed significant risk was identified under Regulation 16 - Record in relation to pre-school service. 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.*

(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 was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
 - (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.
 - (c) There was 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.
2. On the day of inspection, six adults' files were reviewed. Five of these adults were employed to work directly with the children, and one adult was a student on placement.

The following information was available for the six adults:

 - (a) Ten written validated references from past employers for six of the adults.
 - (b) Two written validated references from reputable sources for two of the adults.
 - (c) Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána for five adults.

(4) Five of the adult files reviewed, evidenced they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)

(c) The vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána on file for one staff member was from a previous employment in the service and had not been updated on the employee's return to the service as required. It is acknowledged that up to date Garda Vetting has since been submitted.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

An updated Garda vetting disclosure has been received regarding one staff member who returned to employment in Little Buddies. This disclosure is now placed on staff members' file and a copy has been sent to the EYI office on 12.12.2023. As per regulation and Policy, new and updated vetting disclosures will be available on file regardless of any break in employment. Staff files will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the necessary documents as required are on file.

Supporting documentation submitted

International police vetting submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider to address the non-compliance found on inspection in relation to regulation 9 has been reviewed and accepted by the inspectorate. This regulation is now compliant.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service. When the inspector arrived unannounced, there were 6 staff members working directly with 27 children.

(2) The registered provider ensured that on the day of inspection, the adult to child ratio was always maintained at the minimum specified ratios.

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:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) (k)

On the day of inspection, at 12:15hrs, a child from the sunflower room was observed to slip and fall while running. The child banged their cheek off the floor. The child was visibly upset, and a red mark appeared on the child's cheek. At 13:12 the child's cheek was still visibly red. On discussion with the room leader, they were unaware the incident had occurred. On review of the incident book no entry regarding this accident had been documented. It is noted that at the time of the fall, socks were removed from the child to prevent further slipping.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The parent of the child involved in the accident observed during the inspection on 01.12.2023, was verbally notified of the occurrence of the accident on the next day of the child's attendance 08.12.2023. An accident report was completed and signed by the Lead Educator, Parent, and Manager. Copy of accident report submitted to the EYI with CAPA form on 21.02.2024. One-to-one Individual meetings took place with the educators working within the Sunflower room. The incident observed by the EYI was discussed with the staff members. These staff

members were retrained on the updated accident and incident policy. The accident and Incident Policy was updated to include the roles and responsibilities in addressing and preventing accidents and incidents.

The manager will maintain Continuous monitoring of practices and operations through liaison with the lead educators, one-to-one supervision meetings, and staff team meetings. Identification and completion of Continuous professional development to be completed if any gaps in practices and operations are identified through these preventative actions. During this process of retraining the lead educator in the practices and procedures preceding the Inspection, it was identified that training in effective room leadership would be beneficial and supportive to the Lead educator's role within the Sunflower Room. Effective Room leadership training certificate submitted with CAPA to EYI office on 21.02.204

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Documentary evidence of meetings submitted.
2. Certification of Effective leadership submitted.
3. Updated policy on Accident and Incident submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider have been reviewed and accepted by the inspectorate. The non compliances found on inspection in relation to regulation 16 have now been addressed and this regulation is now complaint.

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 child 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.

(2) A registered provider-

(a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016, shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The registered provider ensured that there were adequate and suitable facilities available for children to play with indoors and outdoors. Each care room had well defined areas of interest, with appropriate materials for the age and stage of development of the children within the rooms. A large outdoor area to the rear of the property contained, climbing equipment, bikes and trikes, tunnels, swings, and a sandpit. There was ample space for children to run freely, while also having the opportunity to play closely alongside each other.
- (b) The registered provider ensured that there were adequate and suitable facilities for rest during the day within the service. Each of the care rooms had an area within them containing soft furnishings, cushions, and soft floor coverings for children to rest and relax in if they wished. Standard cots were available for children aged under 2 years. Standard floor beds were available for children aged over 2 years.
- (2)
- (a) The registered provider ensured ensure that a suitable, safe, and secure outdoor space was available to the preschool children attending the service. The outdoor area was secured with a purpose-built fence, and gates. The area contained various equipment such as swings, tunnel, ride-ons, sand pit, and climbing frames. There were natural resources also, barked area with trees and natural vegetation and a large, grassed area to the rear of the grounds. The children have access to the outdoor space daily, accessed via the care rooms.

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 front entrance door to the premises was found to be locked and secured upon arrival to the service, preventing unauthorised exit or entry. The rear entrance door to the premises was also locked and secured.
- Internal door handles were positioned up high to prevent children from opening them.
- The outside garden areas were fenced and gated. The gates were secured whilst children were outside.
- Cleaning products were stored out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Tables were observed to be cleaned regularly by staff.
- Foot pedal bins were observed throughout the premises.
- Nappy changing mats were observed to be cleaned between use.
- Childrens soothers were observed to be stored in individual containers.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff confirmed If children are unwell, medication is given only if required with permission from parents. Febrile reducing medication is kept onsite.

Safe Sleep:

- The air temperature in the sleep rooms was maintained between the required temperature of 16°C to 20°C.
- Standard cots were provided for children under two years of age and floor beds were provided for those children over two years of age.
- Rest areas were provided in all care rooms in the service to ensure children had an area to relax or opt out of an activity if they choose.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The following was observed on the day of inspection and could lead to a risk of injury to a child.

1. The hot water provided at the children's wash hand basins was not controlled to a safe temperature below 43°C for hand washing. The water was recorded at 44.4°C and 46.3°C in the children's bathrooms outside the Blossom room.
2. A 4 wheeled ride on was observed to have a cracked wheel, posing a risk pinch to a child.
3. A plastic climbing frame had come loose on one side, posing a risk of injury to a child.
4. Wooden equipment, such as play kitchens were observed to need repainting. These items could not be cleaned effectively.

5. A lid with rope handles from a sand pit was observed lying on the ground in the outdoor area posing a risk of tripping to a child.
6. A child was observed to be standing freely on the nappy changing unit after changing had been completed, while the staff member tidied the area, posing a risk of injury to the child.

Infection Control:

The following was observed on the day of inspection and could lead to a risk of cross infection.

7. Childrens hands were not observed to be washed after nappy changing. Staff were observed not to remove gloves or apron after disposing of unclean nappy, and prior to moving onto the next care activity of placing on a clean nappy and redressing children.
8. Childrens hands in the Sunflower room were not observed to be washed prior to food being served at 11.55am.
9. Radiator covers were observed to need painting. These covers could not be effectively cleaned leading to a risk of cross infection.
10. The sand pit in the outdoor area was left uncovered when not in use, posing as a risk of infection should vermin access it.

Safe Sleep:

The following was observed on the day of inspection and could pose as a risk to a child.

11. The sheets in the sleep room were observed to have visible debris present. It is acknowledged that bedding is changed and laundered each Thursday.

Fire Safety:

The following was observed on the day of inspection and could lead to delays in the event of a fire.

12. One fire door to the rear of the building was partially obstructed by a clothes horse on the day of inspection. This could cause delay or injury if there was a need for evacuation.
13. The fire extinguisher was not easily accessible or visible due the clothes horse being placed in front of it. This could result in delay in the event of an emergency.
14. The stairwell to the rear of the building contained various materials, equipment, and furniture posing as a risk in the event of a fire.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The plumber reduced the water temperature thermostat in the main hot water tank to >43 °C on 07.12.2023. Water Temperature readings have been below >43°C and recorded accordingly on the Risk assessment record for the Blossom room. A copy of the Risk assessment record submitted to EYI 21.02.2023. All staff members are to record the temperature in their risk assessment booklet after measuring the water temperature. This was reasserted verbally after inspection and again during the staff meeting on 29.01.24.
2. The four-wheeled ride-on was removed on 06.12.2023 from the Sunflower play area due to a cracked wheel. Sunflower room outdoor risk assessment record submitted to EYI office 21.02.2024. Management to sign off on all risk assessments weekly for the previous week. Staff members to advise management immediately if there is any risk to children's safety within the service.
3. The Plastic Climbing frame was removed from the sunflower room play area due to the structure being loose on 06.12.2023. Sunflower room outdoor risk assessment submitted to EYI office 21.02.2024. Staff team meeting was used to reassert the expectations, roles, and responsibilities with regards to risk assessments being an actively utilized tool to inform alleviating any potential risks to the general safety of the children attending the service.
4. Play kitchens were removed and replaced with new wooden play kitchens as the Play kitchens in place at the time of inspection inhibited effective cleaning. Purchased 04.12.2023 and placed in 3 care rooms. 14.12.2023. Invoice and Photos submitted to EYI with CAPA 21.02.202.
5. Hazard removed. The manager discussed the importance of preventative actions to ensure hazards are prevented and the observation by the EYI of the sand pit lid being on the ground posing a tripping hazard for the children should not occur. A safe place for the lid of the sand pit during use was agreed to be behind the gated fence; propped one side of the shed where the children have no access to it during play times. The outdoor Risk assessment record for the week of 04.12.2023 was submitted to EYI with the CAPA form 21.02.2022.

Infection Control:

6. To ensure quality practices are adhered to and maintained during nappy-changing times, the Nappy changing policy and procedures were expanded to include expected practices and procedures in maintaining infection control. Retraining of the nappy changing policy and infection control policy was provided to the staff working in the sunflower room. To ensure a whole service approach and best practice adherence to these policies retraining of these policies was provided at the scheduled staff team meeting on these policies and procedures on 29.01.2024.

7. Due to an observation of the children's hands not being washed in the Sunflower room before mealtime at 12.55, the infection control practices were reaffirmed to the 3 staff members working within the Sunflower room during retraining of policies and procedures during individual meetings held on the 06.12.2023, 08.12.2023, 12.12.2023.
8. Radiator covers were replaced with new radiator covers which have a prefinished coating to eliminate any risk of cross-contamination. Photographs supporting evidence were submitted to EYI on 21/02/2024.
9. Owing to the outdoor sandpit not being covered after use the sand was changed and staff was reminded to ensure the cover is placed on the sandpit after each use and that this is documented in the outdoor risk assessment record. Outdoor risk assessment record submitted to EYI.

Safe Sleep:

10. Owing to debris present on sheets in the Sunflower sleep room the following day, the sleep room is to be inspected each morning to ensure the sheets are clean and free from any debris. This action is to be reflected within the sleep room risk assessments and cohesively recorded in the cleaning record. Both risk assessment records and cleaning records for the sleep room were submitted to EYI.

Fire Safety:

11. The clotheshorse was removed from the vicinity of the rear fire door. Photograph submitted to EYI.
12. The clotheshorse was removed and relocated to another area not in use and with no fire extinguishers in this location. Photographs submitted to EYI.
13. The stairwell to the rear of the building was cleared from any materials, equipment, and furniture observed to be posing a risk in the event of a fire. Photograph submitted to EYI.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Risk assessment submitted.
2. Risk assessment submitted.
3. Risk assessment submitted.
4. Photograph and invoice submitted.
5. Risk assessment submitted.

Infection Control:

6. Nappy changing policy submitted.
7. Documentary evidence submitted.
8. Photographic evidence submitted.
9. Risk assessment submitted.

Safe Sleep:

10. Cleaning record submitted.

Fire Safety:

11. Photographic evidence submitted.
12. Photographic evidence submitted.
13. Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted to address the non-compliances found upon inspection have been reviewed by the inspectorate. This regulation is now compliant.

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 firefighting 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) The service had documentary evidence of 3 recent fire drills carried out in November 2023.
- (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of fire-fighting equipment and smoke detection was available. The maintenance check was carried out on the fire-fighting equipment in May 2023. The maintenance check for the smoke detection system was dated 29/09/2023.
- (4) The procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed in a conspicuous position in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service had a certificate of insurance valid until the 27th of March 2024 showing that adequate insurance cover was in place for the service's maximum number of 50 children.