

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015SO031

Name of Service: Little Bunnies

Address of Service: Ballinalack Community Park, Bunninadden, Co. Sligo

Eircode: F56 PO36

Name of Registered Provider: Edel Flannery

Service type: Sessional

Date of Inspection: 13/09/2024

No of pre-school children:	AM	12	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 and K Folan
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

Description of service

This community based sessional service is located in a rural area in County Sligo. The service caters for children aged from two years and six months to six years of age between 09:00-12:00 hours. The premises is located in a section of the first floor of a local sports club centre. One large room used as the care room. The service has a dedicated office space and store area for their sole use and sanitary accommodation. Access to an outdoor area off the premises is available on a daily basis. This outdoor area is a community sports facility with a playground and sports field.

Staffing

On the day of inspection, the service had three adults employed. Two adults were providing 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 and safety*. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11,19, 23, 25, 28 and 32. 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

(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 three adults employed in the service were reviewed.

Five written and verified past employer references and one written references from another source in the absence of a past employer, were available in respect of the three adults employed in the service.

(c).

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all three staff members. 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 as all the three adults employed in the service that had not lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(3)

The vetting procedures had been completed prior to any adult having access to the preschool children attending the service

(4)

Three 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 by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) 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.

Compliance Information

(1)
There were an adequate number of adults working directly with children attending the preschool service. There were two adults working directly with twelve children in the morning of the unannounced inspection

(3)
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.

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*
- (1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-*
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

Compliance Information

(1) (a)

The care room in Little Bunnies is laid out with various interest areas to stimulate the imagination of the preschool child. A tent rest area with cushions and soft matting is located beside the library which allows the preschool children to grab a book and relax throughout the session. Open level shelving with arts and crafts, jig saws and puzzles facilitate fine motor skill development. Home areas, construction areas and farm animals allow for imaginative play. The service place particular emphasis on outdoor play and much of the session observed was based in the outdoors. Children were appropriately dressed with wet suits and wellies and the staff spent time promoting independence in dressing and preparing for outdoor activities. Once outside the children had a variety of activities to choose from, some children were content in rolling down hills while others spent time chalk writing and playing 'hopscotch.' The service ensured that the preschool children had access to a variety of resources and to limit disputes over toys, the service had provided numerous footballs, chinks etc. As well as the natural elements of play provided outdoors the service had access to a community play ground with swings, climbing frames and slides. These areas were risk assessed each morning to ensure the safety for all children. Transitions to and from the outdoor areas were observed to be well supervised with clear instruction from the staff members. The indoor room was decorated with children's artwork, birthday walls and a praise and recognition wall. The service emphasised the promotion of independence for the preschool child, and this was observed on the day in a variety of activities including: changing into wet gear, hanging up jacket, storage of lunches and changing shoes. The staff were observed to be calm in their approach, speaking in a low calm voice constantly encouraging and praising the preschool children as they tackled various tasks. The preschool children appeared happy and content in the company of their peers and the adults supporting them.

(1) (b)

The children brought in their snack from home and these lunch boxes were stored in the service fridge on arrival to the service. There was a healthy eating policy in place and parents supported this policy by providing lunches of fruit, yoghurts and sandwiches with a variety of fillings. Drinks provided by the service included water and milk and were freely available throughout the day.

The children in the preschool were all toilet trained and independence was promoted with prompts and support from staff members as required. Hand hygiene was observed to be taken place regularly pre and post outdoor play, prior to snack time and after using the toilet.

Communication with parents was completed using a private interactive social media platform, only open to the parents of the current preschool year with consent. On this platform staff uploaded activities from the day to keep parents informed of all events.

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 preschool was locked and secure on the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service. This prevented unauthorised access to the service and prevented unsupervised egress of the preschool child.
- All windows had been appropriately risk assessed and restrictors were in place.
- Handrails were provided on the staircase to ensure the safety of those using them.
- The staircase was adequately lit with a suitable non slip floor covering on the stairs.
- Toys and equipment were well maintained and in good condition.
- All flexes and cords were secured and out of children's reach.
- Risk assessments were in place for management of the shared outdoor facility to ensure the safety of the preschool child.

Infection Control:

- Hand gel was provided throughout the service and carried with staff in outdoor activities.
- Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were provided for adequate hand hygiene practices.
- Foot operated pedal bins were available throughout the service for the safe disposal of waste.

Administration of Medication:

- There was no medication administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency doors remained free of obstruction throughout 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)
There was two staff members trained in first aid responder training and was available to the preschool children at all times.

(2) (a) (b).

A suitably stocked first aid box was available to the children at all times. On outdoor activities this first aid bag was brought with the children and adults to ensure it was always accessible.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had ensured that adequate insurance was in place for 22 preschool children in a sessional service up until the 27th of March 2025.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
 - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.

Compliance Information

(1) (a) (b) (c)

The registered provider has a comments and complaints policy in place in the service that clearly outlines the procedures on how to make a complaint, the manner in which that complaint will be dealt with and how the complaint will be kept informed throughout.

(2) (a) (b)

The service has not received any complaint in the previous two years, therefore there was no records available to review. It is acknowledged that a feedback box is located at the entrance to the service to include both positive and negative feedback.