

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015SO065

Name of Service: Toddlers Den Creche & Scholars Den Afterschool Club

Address of Service: 25/26 Stella Maris, Ballisodare, Co. Sligo

Eircode: F91 PF30

Name of Registered Provider: Fiona Mullen Brown

Service type: Full Day, Part Time, Sessional

Date(s) of Inspection: 12/06/2024

No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	17
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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

Description of service

Toddlers Den Crèche is a privately run full day care early years' service. It is located in a housing estate in Ballisodare town 7km south of Sligo town. The service operating hours are 07:30 to 17:30, weekdays, for children aged 1-6years. This includes a morning sessional service from 09.30-12.30pm. A registered school age service is also provided. The building is comprised of two semi-detached bungalows that have been amalgamated which consists of four indoor playrooms.

Staffing

There were nine adults employed in the service at the time of inspection. This included five adults working directly with children in the playrooms and the registered provider in a supernumerary capacity as manager and staff support.

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/ premises and facilities. 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, 26 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 the registered provider, 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)(b)

There was a person in charge and a person available to deputise as required.

(c)

There is a clear management structure in the service which identifies room leaders and childcare workers. On interview staff members were aware of their roles and responsibilities and lines of accountability.

(2) (a)

There were two new adults employed since the last inspection on the 11th of May 2022. This was confirmed by the registered provider when cross checked with records from last inspection.

Of the two new adults employed four verified past employer references were available.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures were available for all nine adults in the service. 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 two adults recently employed as they had not lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months.

(4) The two new adults employed 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.

(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)

There were six adults working directly with 19 children on the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service. A review of a sample of attendance records showed that an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children during service hours of operation.

(2)

The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the morning of the unannounced inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as outlined below:

Playschool playroom: 3 adults cared for 12 children aged 3 to 4 years.

Toddler/wobbler playroom: 2 adults cared for 2 children aged between 1 year and 2 years, 3 children aged between 2 to 3 years and 3 children aged between 3 to 4 years.

In the afternoon the ratios were as follows:

Playschool playroom: 3 adults cared for 10 children aged 3 to 4 years.

Toddler/wobbler playroom: 2 adults cared for 1 child aged between 1 year and 2 years, 2 children aged between 2 to 3 years and 3 children aged between 3 to 4 years.

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 preschool operates out of four rooms, on the day the groups had merged together with the wobbler and toddler group in one room together and the preschool rooms together. The wobbler/toddler area was resourced with toys and materials that were age and stage appropriate. One side of the room was laid out to allow for free play for the child, this area was equipped with a dolls house and resources, play kitchen, dolls and buggies all appropriate to the younger children in the room. Open low-level shelving was resourced with musical based toys, puzzles, and tabletop activities. The opposite side of the room was equipped with size appropriate table and chairs to allow for art and crafts, tabletop activities and mealtimes. On the day two adults worked directly with the children in the wobbler and toddler area. Interactions observed on the day were kind and affectionate. One child who became upset was quickly responded to with hugs and affection given until they had settled. The adults were on the ground at the child's level playing with the children. All of the children appeared happy and content with lots of laughter and smiles evident. A routine and plan for the day was evident in the care room and children got the opportunity to play both indoors and outdoors daily. The outdoor area is separated into different areas for the groups of children. Wobbler and toddlers in one area and pre-school children in an adjacent area. The outdoor area for the younger children was secure by high level metal fencing and a wooden high-rise fence. The surface was of grass allowing for a soft underfoot for the young children playing outdoors. Resources in this area included size appropriate swings and slides, tunnels and a see saw. Extra resources stored in a shed were taken out as required these included bikes and trikes, footballs, and various outdoor games including balance games and hula hoops.

The preschool rooms provided various areas of interest, home corners and construction areas allowed for imaginative play. Building blocks, jigsaws and puzzles supported fine motor skill development. Arts and crafts

gave the preschool children opportunities to be creative and self-expressive. All resources were stored on low level open shelving which allowed children to direct their own sense of play throughout the session. The preschool room had seven children preparing for graduation and they would be transitioning to national school. A review of their individual journals evidenced individual observations on tasks achieved and skills accomplished for example, learning the balance bike to cycling, number formation and alphabet formation.

The preschool children appeared to love the outdoors, and, on the day, they were observed participating in group outdoor games such as football and ‘what time is it Mr Wolf’. These games encourage turn taking and inclusivity. One child who choose not to play was supported by one adult to look for spiders. The adult quickly turned this activity into a learning opportunity by encouraging other children to participate and talk about the life cycle of the spider, where they live, how they create webs etc. The children appeared to enjoy this learning opportunity that was presented as a fun activity. The outdoor area for the preschool children is equipped with resources suitable to the older preschool child. Swings and slides, football goals and equipment, connect four, bikes and trikes.

(1) (b)

Care needs were supported in the service in an individual manner, while there was a structured time for sleep for the older children, sleep needs were met on an individual basis for the younger children. A dedicated sleep room with four standard cots that was temperature controlled was available for sleep times throughout the day. On the day of inspection children were observed being put to bed at various times throughout the day as the adults in the service responded to the needs of the children. A structured sleep time after lunch supported the older children in their sleep routine. Nappy changes were completed at scheduled times and in response to the child’s needs.

Older children were encouraged to use the toilet independently and staff supervised from a distance.

Meals provided on the day included lunch sent in from home for the preschool children which consisted of a variety of fruit, sandwiches, cheese, and yoghurts. Morning snack for all children was provided from the service which consisted of a fruit platter and toast. Dinner on the day provided by the service was fish fingers mixed vegetables and potato mash. Younger children were seated in highchairs while older children were seated at the table with size appropriate tables and chairs. independence was promoted for children to self-feed and the staff members were in close proximity to support as required.

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 main door was locked on the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service, resulting in no unauthorised entry or unsupervised exit from the service.
- The outdoor area was secure with high level green metal fencing and wooden fencing.
- Materials and resources were maintained in a good state of repair.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the preschool children.
- There were three highchairs with harness safety straps fitted in good condition.

Infection Control:

- There were adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean, with cleaning schedules displayed and up to date in each care room.

Administration of Medication:

- The service had a medication administration policy in place and when interviewed staff were aware of their responsibilities for the safe administration of medication.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had a designated sleep room with a total of four standard cots.
- The sleep room temperature measured 18.0°C on the day of inspection which is line with the required safe sleep temperatures.

Fire Safety:

- Fire assembly point was clearly identified in the car park of the service.
- Fire doors and evacuation routes were clear and free from hazards on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. The nappy changing bin in the wobbler/toddler sanitary area was not the required foot operated bin.
2. The floor mats for seating in the wobbler/toddler area had several rips exposing foam which is not conducive to effective cleaning posing an infection control risk.
3. The required personal protective equipment i.e aprons were not worn in an observed nappy change resulting in an infection control risk.
4. The four shared cots in the wobbler sleep room did not have the required waterproof mattress protector.
5. Snacks of fruit were observed to be served directly on to the table in the preschool room potentially causing an infection control risk. Plates should be provided.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The registered provider in a written responses stated:

Infection Control:

1. We have replaced the nappy changing bin to a foot operated bin. This bin will be regularly checked to make sure it is working properly.
2. The ripped floor mats have been disposed of and are being replaced. All future mats purchased will be washable and checked for damage regularly.
3. Aprons are provided in an easily accessible place for staff to use. Aprons will be available and accessible at all nappy changing times for staff to use.
4. Four waterproof mattress protectors have been purchased. We have fitted same and will be checked regularly.
5. Plates are being provided to serve food for all snack times.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

1. Photographic evidence submitted.
2. Documentary evidence submitted.
3. Photographic evidence submitted.
4. Photographic evidence submitted.
5. Documentary evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted by the registered provider to address the non-compliance found on inspection in relation to regulation 23 have been reviewed and accepted by the inspectorate. This regulation is now compliant.

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) On the day there was one adult trained in first aid responder available to the preschool children attending the service.

(2) (a) (b)

A fully stocked first aid box that was easily accessible in the case of emergency was available in all care rooms.

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.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,

(b) an employee, and

(c) an authorised person.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation

(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 registered provider had ensured that fire evacuation drills take place on a monthly basis within the preschool service. The most recent fire evacuation drill took place on 10th of June 2024.

(b)

A record of all firefighting equipment was available with the most recent maintenance date of 29th of August 2023.

(2) (c)

These records were made available to the authorised person on the day of inspection.

(3)

The registered provider is aware of the regulatory requirement to keep these records for a period of 5 years as evidenced on the day.

(4)

Fire evacuation procedure was clearly displayed in each care room, showing safe exit from the service in the case of emergency.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The preschool service provided evidence of valid and adequate insurance to the 27th of March 2025 for a total of 65 children.