

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY011
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Name of Service:	Bright Sparks Pre-School
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Address of Service:	St. Joseph's National School, Toomevara, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
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Eircode:	E45 VH70
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Name of Registered Provider:	Therese Martin
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	16/04/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM	0
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
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Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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 sessional service was established in 2008 to provide care and education to children aged 2 – 6 years old. The service operated Monday – Friday, 9am – 12pm for 38 weeks of the year. This is a sister service to Bright Sparks Preschool, Castlequarter which is located across the road. Some children who attend the service in the morning transfer to the sister service in the afternoon for part-time and full day care provision.

Places are funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children.

The service is operated from a room in St Joseph’s national school in the village of Toomevara in North Tipperary to which the service has exclusive use. The school premises is a detached, single storey building surrounded by grounds. The children’s sanitary accommodation area is located across the corridor from their room and is only used by the children attending the service. The children have access to the school grounds for outdoor play, including their own enclosed area and access to the schools ball courts.

Staffing

The registered provider does not work in the service but is available in the service across the road to call on when required. There are four staff employed in the service to work directly with the children including staff employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM). Some of the staff work in the sister service in the afternoons with the children who move across for part time and full day care.

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(2)(4), 11(1)(3)(8), 20(1)(3), 21, 22, 24(1)(3), 25, 26(1)(4) and 28.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 9 Management and Recruitment.

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

(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

The staff files of two members of staff who had commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 16 June 2022 and one other member of staff were reviewed as part of the inspection process. The staff file of the other staff member had been inspected previously and was found to be compliant.

(2)(a) Written, validated references from past employers were available in respect of all three staff.

(b) A written, validated reference from a source other than a past employer was available in respect of one member of staff.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of each member of staff and relevant records were maintained on file. The service re-vetted each member of staff on a three-yearly basis in line with best practice.

(d) Not applicable as none of the staff had lived outside the state for a period of six months or longer.

(4) Staff held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at level 5 or 6 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.

(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)-

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1) There were 4 staff working directly with 20 children aged between 3 and 5 years old present in the service on the day of inspection.

(3) The adult to child ratio was maintained at 1 to 5 which was greater than the minimum requirements of 1 to 11.

(8)(c) Not applicable to this service as there were at least 2 staff present in the service at all times while it was in operation.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The service had established a link with another early years service in the area to foster relationships within the wider community and to teach the children about communication systems such as the postal service. Children sent cards and messages to each other by post on a regular basis through the facilitation of staff from both services. This was one of many activities the service engaged in to support the children to know about and be involved in their community which included walks in the village to visit the shop, post office and sports pitch. Community based activities were linked to the children's emerging interests where possible, for example, the children were planning to visit the farm of one of their friends on the day after the inspection to see the recently born lambs which tied in with their current interest in spring animals. The special interest area under the loft was recently developed as a doctors surgery after the children became interested in this theme following their walk to the local health centre. The staff and children had built a miniature version of the village which included photos of buildings and facilities the children encountered on their walks.

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.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The children had access to both indoor and outdoor environments on a daily basis. The children had exclusive use of their activity room which was bright and well laid out in a number of well-defined interest areas. There was a loft area created in the corner of the room which provided a quiet play or rest area away from the general play space upstairs and a special interest cubby type area downstairs. The children had access to the school hall for indoor physical activity and to the school grounds for outdoor play.

(b) The children attended this service for a maximum of three hours each day and all of the children were aged over three years old, so it was rare that the children required a sleep while attending the service. Children could rest, relax and play quietly or read in the loft area. A sleep mat and blankets were available if required. At the end of the morning session children who attended for longer hours moved to the sister service across the road where there were sleep facilities for those who required a sleep.

(3)(a) The children had access to several outdoor play areas in the grounds of the school. The main area used by the children was the ball court which was enclosed with green mesh fencing and a gate. The ground surface had been replaced since the last inspection on 16 June 2022 with a soft fall surface. There was a storage shed beside the ball court for the storage of outdoor equipment.

The children also had access to the all-weather surface playing pitch and to a sensory playground which had been developed exclusively for use by the service. The playground was not in use at the time of the inspection as it needed to be tidied up after the winter.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service was well equipped with a wide range and quantity of toys and materials that supported their self-directed play and exploration. The room was furnished with child and adult seating and adjustable height tables. There were three main tables which were used for dining and tabletop activities as well as smaller tables in special interest areas such as the home corner and doctors surgery.

Open shelving units and other furniture were used to display toys and to divide the room into interest areas.

The room was well laid out with ample room to move within and between the interest areas. The loft area was used as the library and quiet play/rest area. Other interest areas included: Art area, sensory area, discovery area and construction area.

Outdoor equipment included scooters, taxi, tractors, tricycles, tandem ride-on vehicles, push toys, balls, rackets and materials to make obstacle courses.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service had a healthy eating policy. Children brought packed lunches which they ate together at tables in the room at snack time. Each child brought a drink bottle of water or squash which they could access at any time they wanted a drink. There was drinking water available from the tap in the room from which staff could refill the children's drink bottles when required.

Foods eaten on the day of the inspection included: Bananas, crackers, bread sticks, cheeses, strawberries, mandarins, oranges, jelly, fromage frais, waffles, grapes, brown bread, apples, sandwiches, raisins, homemade dates and coconut bars, oat bars, rice cakes, smoothies and yoghurt.

Birthdays were celebrated with a cake, supplied by the service to ensure that each child got the same.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The staff were responsible for recording the arrival and departure times of the children. The service used an electronic application designed for this purpose.

(3)(a) The person in charge met any visitors to the service at the side door of the premises, the entrance to the school used by service, before admitting them to the service.

(b) There was a written record maintained of any visitors to the service.

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 were two staff present on the day of inspection who held current certification in first aid response (FAR).

(2)(a) There was a suitable equipped first aid box on a hook on the wall in the service where it could be easily accessed when required.

(b) The first aid box was available if required by a child attending the service.

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) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service, most recently on 11 March 2024.
- (b) There was a written record of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. The firefighting equipment was serviced on 27 August 2023 and the smoke alarms on 25 October 2023.
- (4) There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire displayed on a wall 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 held current insurance for a sessional service for up to 22 children valid until 27 March 2025.