

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY031
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Name of Service:	Ladybird's Pre-School and Childcare Centre
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Address of Service:	Carrig Rua, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
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Eircode:	E45 VH75
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Name of Registered Provider:	Stephanie Kennedy
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Dates of Inspection:	03/01/2024
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Date 2 of Inspection:	22/01/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	0	PM	0
Day 2	AM	59	PM	50

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 early years service was established to provide care and education to children aged 1 – 6 years old. The service also provides a registered school aged service to children aged 5 – 12 years old.

The service operates between 7.30am and 5.30pm, Monday – Friday for 50 weeks of the year. This includes a three-hour sessional service operated under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) from 9am to 12pm, Monday – Friday for 38 weeks of the year for eligible children.

The service is operated from purpose-built, detached, dormer premises in a residential area in the town of Nenagh in north Tipperary. The service consists of 6 activity rooms, 3 upstairs and 3 downstairs, a sensory room, sleep room, sanitary accommodation areas upstairs and downstairs, kitchen, office and outdoor play areas.

This service is one of three early years services operated by the registered provider, the others being Ladybird’s Preschool Newtown and Ladybird’s CBS Preschool and Afterschool Service.

Staffing

The registered provider works in the service on a daily basis in a management role, supported by 22 members of staff, including staff who work directly with the children, administration staff, catering staff and managers. This includes 3 staff employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM) to support inclusion for children in the ECCE scheme.

Additional relief staff may be called in from one of the other services if required.

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/. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(2)(3)(4)(7), 10, 11(1)(2)(3)(8), 19(1)(b)(3) and 23.

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 registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the days 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.

(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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

(a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;

(b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and

(c) these Regulations.

Compliance Information

The staff files of two members of staff who had commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 20 October 2022 were reviewed as part of the inspection process. The staff files of two members of staff whose staff files had not been viewed previously were also reviewed as part of the inspection process. Staff files for all other staff had been assessed on previous inspections and were found to be compliant.

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

(b) Three written, validated references from a source other than a past employer were available in respect of two members of staff.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of all four members of staff. Relevant records were held on file.

(3) Garda vetting procedures were completed on all staff prior to them being appointed, assigned or allowed access to a child in the service.

(4) Staff who worked directly with children held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6, 7 or 8 on the national qualifications framework. The four staff members whose files were reviewed for this inspection held qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5 or 6 on the national qualifications framework. There were two childcare students present in the service on 22 January 2024 who were on work placement as part of their studies towards a recognised qualification in early childhood care and education. Students were supervised at all times while working with the children.

(7) The service had a robust system of induction and supervision for staff which included making all new staff aware of the policies, procedures and statements of the service. A staff induction training checklist was completed to ensure all aspects of induction had been covered. Appraisal meetings were held between each member of staff and the two staff managers on a regular basis to provide support to staff and identify areas for further training or other needs. Staff aimed to hold these meetings once a month. The staff managers were available to the staff on a daily basis if they wanted to discuss any issue with them.

The updated staff handbook was emailed to staff in January 2024.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b) Written references from a past employer or other source were not available in respect of two members of staff employed in the service. One member of staff was in their induction period and the other had recently commenced working in the service. It was the practice of the service to request references after the induction period. This was discussed with staff responsible for recruitment at the time of the inspection as the requirement is that references be acquired and validated before staff begin working in the service.

(d) Police vetting had not been applied for or acquired in respect of the member of staff who had lived outside the state for a period exceeding six consecutive months.

(3) References had not been acquired and validated in relation to two members of staff prior to them being appointed, assigned or allowed access to a child in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a) One of the employees is no longer a member of staff in our service and references have been acquired in respect of the second member of staff. All vetting procedures, including acquiring and validating references will be carried out prior to staff being employed in the service.

(d) The employee is no longer a member of staff in our service. In future, all police checks will be carried out before staff begin working in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2)(a) Two written, validated references from past employers were received by the offices of the early years inspector on 14 March 2024.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The following policies, procedures and statements were requested, made available and reviewed as part of the inspection process:

Accident and Incident policy

Complaints policy

Risk Assessment policy

Staff Supervision policy

Staff Training policy

Staff Disciplinary Rules and Procedures

Behaviour Management policy

The above documents were reviewed by the inspector and found to be clear and comprehensive. Policies and procedures were reviewed and updated on an annual basis, or more frequently if required.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(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 no children present in the service on the first day of the inspection, 3 January 2024. On the second day of inspection, 22 January 2024, there were 59 children aged 10 months – 5 years old being supervised by 14 staff in the morning and 50 children being supervised by 11 staff in the afternoon.

The children and staff were divided between 6 rooms in the morning and 5 rooms in the afternoon when one of the upstairs ECCE rooms closed.

In Happy Hedgehogs there were 12 children aged 2 years and 11 months to 5 years old with 2 staff in the morning. This room closed in the afternoon and the children who attended on a full day care basis moved to Cuddly Koalas or Funky Frogs rooms after 12pm.

In Cuddly Koalas there were 13 children aged 3 – 4 years old with 2 staff in the morning. A childcare student was also present but not counted in the adult to child ratios.

In Funky Frogs there were 11 children aged 3 to 5 years old with 2 staff. There were also 2 school aged children present.

There was one member of staff employed under AIM in each of the three ECCE rooms above for the morning session.

In Doodle Bugs there were 12 children aged 2 – 3 years old with 3 staff. A childcare student was also present but was not counted in the adult to child ratios.

In Brown Bears there were 7 children aged 16 months to 2 years old with 3 staff.

In Busy Bees there were 4 children aged 10 to 16 months old with 2 staff.

There were 2 staff managers who were available to relieve in the rooms when required.

The person in charge, administration staff and kitchen staff were present but did not work directly with the children on the day of inspection.

(2)(4) The adult to child ratios were maintained within the recommended ratios throughout the day.

(8)(a) There were at least 2 staff present at all times while the service 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-

(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.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(b) The staff were observed to be caring towards the children and appropriate in their care practices. On the second day of inspection it was observed that many of the younger children had runny noses. The staff were vigilant in trying to keep the children's noses and faces clean. They used wet or dry tissues and kept a supply of these on hand both indoors and outdoors.

The children washed their hands at appropriate times during the day, in particular, after outdoor play, after using the toilet or a tissue and before eating. Staff supervised the children and gave assistance to the younger children.

The staff were observed to take their cues from the children regarding their need for sleep, toileting/nappy changing, change of environment, affection and comforting. The staff were appropriate in their responses to the children's needs, for example, children were supported to sleep according to their individual needs and routines. There was a sensory room available between the Baby Bears room and the sleep room which could be used throughout the day by any child who needed a change of environment to a quiet area. There were sufficient staff available to enable one to one or small group activities in the sensory room.

In Doodle Bugs room the staff said that they spent a lot of time outside as the children enjoyed the freedom of movement and the opportunities to explore that this provided, and they were happier when their day involved regular periods of play outdoors.

(3) The service had a clear and comprehensive Behaviour Management policy which outlined the numerous ways in which the service and staff supported the children to express themselves, especially their emotions in positive ways. The procedures and practices outlined in the policy were aimed at supporting each child to develop self-regulation and pro-social behaviours through learning simple rules such as turn taking and sharing, by setting boundaries, teaching problem solving and supporting positive interaction with other children and staff. The policy explicitly stated that corporal punishment was never used in the service, nor any practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitative, intimidating, isolating, emotionally or physically harmful to the child or neglectful of the child.

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:

Policies and procedures were available which supported the health, safety and welfare of the children and staff in the service including a Child Safeguarding policy and procedure, Risk Management policy, Staff Supervision policy and an Accident and Incident policy. These were reviewed as part of the inspection process and found to be clear, instructive and easy to comprehend.