

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY047
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Name of Service:	Little Stars Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Drom National School, Drom, Templemore, Co. Tipperary
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Eircode:	E41 PC86
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Name of Registered Provider:	Anne Cunningham
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	14/12/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	5	PM	-
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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 to provide care and education to children aged 2 – 6 years. The service operates Tuesday – Friday, 9.15am – 12.45pm for 38 weeks of the year from a room in Drom National School in the village of Drom, near Templemore in North Tipperary. The children have exclusive use of their room as well as their own sanitary accommodation area and shared use of the school grounds for outdoor play. Places are funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children.

Staffing

The registered provider worked alone with the children each day. There was a second person available in the school who could be called on to provide assistance in the event of an emergency. The service closed if the registered provider was unavailable.

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), 25, 26(1)(4) and 28.

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 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

(2)(a)(b)(c)(d) Not assessed on the day of inspection as there were no new staff and previous assessment of staff files had been compliant.

(4) The registered provider held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 and 8 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) The registered provider was working directly with 5 children aged between 3 and 5 years on the day of inspection.

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

(8)(c) There was a named person in the national school who could be called on to provide assistance in the early years service in the event of an emergency.

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, or

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The children had daily access to both indoor and outdoor spaces. The indoor space was a large, rectangular room with high ceilings and large windows along one wall. The room was bright and airy and provided the children with lots of opportunities for play, exploration and movement. The interest areas were well defined and well-resourced, and each area had enough space in and around it for several children to play together in each area at any one time.

The children went outside to play each day after lunchtime.

(b) A corner of the room was set up for restful activities and quiet play. There were two tents, one black out tent and one circus style tent that were equipped with cushions and blankets where the children could relax during the day. The library was located beside the tents and there was a supply of vinyl covered circular cushions for the children to sit on. The children attended on a sessional basis, and all were aged over three years so it was rare that they required a sleep during the morning though sleep could be facilitated if required.

(3)(a) The children had daily access to the area in front of the school building for outdoor play. This area was bounded by walls and gates, which were closed before the children went out to play. The space had a large grass area in the centre surrounded by concrete paths and an area of tarmacadam. There were mature Leyland trees along one side which created a wooded area for the children to explore.

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 and furnished with a large quantity and variety of furniture, toys and materials. There was a desk and chair for the registered provider at one end of the room, in front of a semicircle of wooden tables and chairs where the children engaged in tabletop activities such as art and crafts, puzzles and mark making. There was another set of tables and chairs at the opposite end of the room, near the kitchenette, for use at snack time. Activity tray tables were used in the small world area to create special interest areas such as a dinosaur land.

Open shelving units ran along the two long walls, these were used to store toys and equipment in a manner that made them easily accessible to the children and easy for them to see what they wanted to play with. Equipment stored on the shelving units included puzzles, vehicles, manipulative play materials, construction toys and small world materials such as castles, dolls houses and garages.

Other equipment and furniture were used to create interest areas such as the kitchen and dolls accessories in the home corner, the theatre/café/shop, beauty salon, relaxation areas and reading area.

Outdoor equipment included fixed structures such as the mud kitchen in the wooded area and wall mounted blackboards along the front wall. On the day of inspection, the children brought out scooters to ride on outside. There were enough scooters available for each child to have their own. The children chose which materials they wanted to bring outside with them including balls, rackets, push toys, obstacle course materials, animals and dolls.

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 to eat at snack time. Perishable foods were stored in the fridge in the room.

The children and registered provider sat together to eat in relaxed family dining style around the lunch tables at one end of the room. Plates were provided for the children to put their lunches on. Foods eaten on the day of inspection included: rice cakes, sandwiches, rolls, fromage frais and lots of fruit (grapes, bananas, mandarins and raspberries) with drinks of water or squash. Children brought their own drink bottles which they could access throughout the morning when they wanted a drink. These were refilled with water when required.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider maintained the daily attendance register, recording the arrival and departure times of each child in a paper-based register.

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) The registered provider held current certification in first aid response (FAR) valid until June 2025.

(2)(a) There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored on a shelf in the room where it could be easily accessed when required.

(b) The first aid box was available for use 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 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) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service, most recently on 15 November 2023. The children explained the process of the fire drill to the inspector.

(b) There was a written record of the number type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms. Firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were serviced annually, most recently in September 2023.

(4) There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire displayed on the wall in the room.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had insurance for up to 11 children attending on a sessional basis, valid until 27 March 2024.