

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY063
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Name of Service:	Scallywags Pre School
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Address of Service:	Two Mile Borris, Thurles, Co. Tipperary
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Eircode:	E41 XY52
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Name of Registered Provider:	Tracey Darmody
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	29/05/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	22	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 to provide care and education to children aged 2 – 6 years old. The service operates Monday – Friday, 9.20am – 12.20pm for 38 weeks of the year. Places are funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children.

The service is operated from purpose-built premises on the grounds of the registered providers residence in the village of Two Mile Borris, near Thurles in north Tipperary. The children have access to two activity rooms and sanitary accommodation areas in the premises and to an outdoor activity room and outdoor play facilities on the grounds.

Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children in the service each day supported by up to three members of staff, including staff employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM). All staff hold recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 or 8 on the national qualifications framework.

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), 15(1), 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, 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

(2)(a) There were written, validated references from past employers available in respect of each member of staff.

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

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of each member of staff. Re-vetting was carried out on a three-yearly basis in line with best practice. Relevant documents were kept on file.

(d) Police vetting had been carried out in respect of the member of staff who had lived outside the state and relevant documents were kept on file.

(4) All staff held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 or 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) On the day of inspection there were 3 staff working directly with 22 children aged between 3 and 6 years old.

(3) The adult to child ratio was maintained at 1 adult to 8 children which was greater than the minimum requirement of 1 to 11.

(8)(c) There were at least two staff present while the service was in operation.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

(1) There was a completed registration form available in respect of each of the 25 children enrolled in the service. The registration forms contained the required details as specified under parts (a) – (j) of this regulation.

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 spaces on a daily basis. There were two activity rooms in the premises: a large and a small room. Each space was bright, comfortable and well laid out to support the children’s learning through play and exploration.

There was an outdoor classroom off the outdoor play area where the children could enjoy messy play and a change of environment each day. The three activity rooms enabled the children to engage in small as well as large group play.

(b) There was a cosy area in the main activity room where the children could rest and relax during the day. This space was furnished with a child sized sofa, cushions and fleece blankets. There were also vinyl covered foam seats in the outdoor classroom. The registered provider said that the children liked to bring these out to the cubby under the tractor unit to create a cosy rest area where they enjoyed story time. The floor of the cubby was covered with artificial grass which helped make the space clean and comfortable.

(3)(a) The children had access to a large outdoor play area at the front of the premises. This space was divided into two areas by the use of wooden fences and gates. The area directly in front of the premises had a concrete surface and was used by the children for riding the balance bikes, scooters and other ride-on toys.

There was a secure fence between this area and the driveway to prevent children from exiting the premises unsupervised or gaining access to the roadway in front of the service.

The second area was developed into a playground with an artificial grass surface over most of the ground, particularly under climbing and sliding equipment. There was an area with a concrete surface where the play houses were located. The outdoor classroom at the end of the playground allowed the children to access outdoor play on a daily basis in all weathers.

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 both indoors and outdoors.

The three activity rooms were set up for different types of play and experiences. The main activity room was furnished with child sized tables and chairs for dining and table top activities. There were larger chairs to allow the staff to sit with the children. Open shelving units around the room enabled the children to easily access the toys and equipment they wanted to engage with. Wall mounted notice boards were used to display the children’s art work and family photos.

The small activity room was set up for small group work with manipulative materials such as peg boards and board games. This room also contained a large water play table.

The outdoor room was equipped with tables and chairs; construction toys, play kitchen and mud kitchen, small world toys and sand play table.

The outdoor area was equipped with child and adult sized tables and chairs, swings, slides, merry-go-round and large tractor shaped climbing and sliding unit with cubby underneath. There were also three play houses, ride-on toys, sensory dome shapes and outdoor equipment such as a parachute, balls and traffic cones.

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. Parents were given suggestions of appropriate healthy snacks to send in with their children in the Parents Handbook which also stated what should not be sent as part of the snack such as sweet treats and crisps.

The children ate their morning snack at tables in the main activity room supervised by the staff who sat with them. Foods eaten on the day of the inspection included: sandwiches, wraps, rice cakes, crackers, scones, brown bread, cheese, strawberries, apples, grapes, bananas, raisins and nectarines. Children brought drink bottles of water or squash which they could access throughout the morning when they needed a drink.

The service provided each child with a sweet treat after lunch on Fridays.

Birthdays were celebrated with a cake supplied by the child's parents.

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 staff were responsible for recording the arrival and departure times of the children in the attendance register designed for that purpose.

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 6 June 2025. Other staff held current certification in Paediatric first aid.

(2)(a) A suitably equipped first aid box was available in a cupboard in the hallway where it was easily accessible 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 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 10 May 2024.

(b) There was a written record of the number type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. The annual servicing of the firefighting equipment was carried out on 17 May 2024. The smoke alarms were last serviced in May 2024.

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was current insurance cover for the service to accommodate up to 24 children on a sessional basis valid until 27 March 2025.