

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY081
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Name of Service:	Upperchurch Childcare Centre
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Address of Service:	Gortatooda, Upperchurch, Thurles, Co. Tipperary
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Eircode:	E41 E034
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Name of Registered Provider:	Michael Greene
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	05/07/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	25	PM	24
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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 community service was established to provide care and education to children aged 0 – 6 years. A registered school aged care service is also provided. The service operates 8.15am – 6pm, Monday – Friday for 50 weeks of the year.

The service is operated from a purpose built, single storey, detached premises in the village of Upperchurch in north Tipperary. The service comprises of six activity rooms, office, kitchen, utility room, sleep rooms and sanitary accommodation areas. There are outdoor play areas at the front and back of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider is the chairman of the board of management and does not work in the service. The service manager was the person in charge on the day of inspection. There were seven staff working directly with the children on the day of inspection, which included early years and school aged children. Additional staff were available for food preparation, cooking and serving meals.

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 inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28 and 29.

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 files of six staff who had commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 21 April 2021 were reviewed as part of the inspection process:

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

(b) Written validated references from a source other than a past employer were available in respect of one member of staff.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of all six members of staff and relevant documents kept on file.

(d) Police vetting had been carried out in respect of the member of staff who had lived outside the state.

Relevant documents were kept on file.

(4) Staff employed to work directly with the children 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.

(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.

(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 six staff working directly with 25 children aged between 11 months and 5 years old on the morning of the inspection. The service manager was available to provide relief in the rooms for staff breaks when required. There was another member of staff working directly with 8 school aged children who were present in the service on the day of inspection. There was also a member of staff responsible for catering onsite during the inspection but not counted in the adult/child ratios.

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

(8)(a) There were at least 2 staff present in the service while it was in operation.

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

(b) Where no such space is provided, the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis to a suitable outdoor space.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) On the day of inspection four of the six activity rooms were in use. The children had access to their dedicated room as well as outdoor play facilities. Each room was spacious, with room for the children to move freely to areas of interest to them. There were quiet corners, tabletop areas and special interest areas such as the home corner, creative area and reading area.

(b) There were cosy seating and relaxation areas in each room where the children could rest away from the general play areas. There were two sleep rooms equipped with standard cots for the children aged under two years to sleep in during the day according to their individual sleep needs. The toddler room became a sleep room after dinner, with camp beds laid out for the older children who required a sleep in the afternoon.

(3) There was a small area of grass with concrete paths directly accessible for the baby and wobbler rooms which had been developed as a dedicated outdoor play space for the younger children to use when the main outdoor area was being used by the older children. This space was enclosed and equipped with suitable toys and materials for the younger children. The manager said that they planned to develop this area further, including providing a sheltered space.

The main outdoor play area was at the back of the premises and accessible to the children each day. Part of the area, near the premises, was sheltered by a deep overhang which enabled the children to play outdoors in all weathers. The rest of the space was open and had a combination of ground surfaces including grass, tarmacadam, soft fall area and concrete paths. There was a storage shed for outdoor toys and ride-on vehicles such as tricycles, taxis, tandems and tractors.

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

Each room was equipped with a range of tables and chairs suitable to the age and stage of development of the children that used the rooms as well as seating for staff. Child seating included high and low feeding chairs in the baby and toddler rooms, child sized sofas or soft seating was available in all rooms as well as rigid chairs for tabletop activities and dining.

Toys and equipment were stored on low level, open shelving units which made it easy for the children to see what was available and to access it independently. The rooms were uncluttered with lots of space for movement and floor-based activities.

The children had access to materials that supported all areas of development including art and mark making materials, construction toys, small world toys, imaginative lay materials, music and sound making toys and book. The outdoor area was well equipped with climbing frames, slides, swings, playhouses, ride-on toys, sand, water, tyres, seating areas and balancing equipment.

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 provided children with meals and snacks throughout the day, in line with their three-week rolling menu plan. The menu was under review and being updated at the time of the inspection.

Children had the option to bring their own food for morning and afternoon snacks if they wished. The children who were preparing to go to primary school often brought a packed lunch for the morning snack time.

Dinner on the day of inspection was boiled bacon with cabbage and mashed potato. The staff said that this was one of the favourite meals for dinner. The portion size was plentiful and well presented. The children could have more if they wanted it.

Drinks of water were available in each room throughout the day.

There were fridges in the baby and wobbler rooms for the storage of bottles for the children who used them for drinking infant formula or milk.

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 service was located in a village with a low volume of traffic passing directly by the service. The service had a large car park at the side of the premises which could accommodate both staff cars and parents vehicles so that children who arrived in cars could access the front door without going onto a roadway.

Outdoor equipment with a fall height greater than 60cm was positioned on a soft fall surface.

The children did not have access to the kitchen or utility areas of the service.

Infection Control:

The service had an infection control policy. Hand washing was encouraged and supported at appropriate times during the day such as before eating, after outdoor play and after nappy changing or using the toilet.

There were sink units in each room as well as direct access to sanitary facilities and hand washing sinks which supported the children to develop good hand washing habits.

The service was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

The service had a policy on the administration of medication. There were no children in receipt of medication on the day of inspection. Written parental consent was sought prior to any medication being administered in the service.

Safe Sleep:

The service had a safe sleep policy. The sleep rooms were located beside the baby and wobbler rooms which aided supervision of the children while they slept. Sleep checks were carried out at ten-minute intervals and a record was made of the checks.

Fire Safety:

Fire escape routes were kept free of obstruction.

Outings:

The service had an outings policy. There was a bog walk across the road from the service where the children were sometimes taken on outings.

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 attendance of each child was recorded by staff using an electronic application designed for use in early years services.

(3)(a) Unauthorised entry to the service was not permitted. The service manager supervised the admission of visitors to the service.

(b) A visitors sign-in book was maintained in the entrance foyer and signed by any visitors to the service, such as the early year inspector.

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 staff with current qualifications in first aid response (FAR) available in the service throughout the inspection.

(2)(a) First aid boxes were available in each activity room and in the office.

(b) The first aid boxes were 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 16 June 2023.

(b) There was a written record of the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms. The annual servicing of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms was carried out on 12 September 2022 and 24 November 2022 respectively.

(4) There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire displayed on the wall in each 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 up to 65 children valid until 27 March 2024.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(a) The premises appeared to be of sound and stable structure.

(b) The premises were safe and secure. Entry was through the front door of the premises. The doors were kept open to allow staff, children, parents and visitors to access the entrance foyer. The doors between the entrance foyer and the rest of the service were kept secured to prevent any unauthorised access to or exit from the premises. The doors had glass panels to allow staff to see who was seeking access before opening the door to them. The gates into the outdoor play areas were kept secured to prevent a child exiting the service unsupervised or gaining access to the roadway in front of the service.

(c) The activity rooms were lit naturally through windows, supplemented by artificial light when required. Internal rooms, such as the sanitary accommodation areas, were lit with artificial light. The rooms were ventilated through openable windows, with mechanical ventilation available in internal rooms such as the nappy changing area. The service was heated by wall mounted radiators as part of an oil-fired central heating system. The heating was not on during the inspection as it was the summer and was not required.

(d) The premises appeared to be clean and well maintained. There was a cleaning schedule which detailed the method and frequency of cleaning of all toys, materials, surfaces and fixtures.

(e) There were sanitary facilities directly accessible from each of the activity rooms which included a large nappy changing area between the wobbler and baby rooms and two toilets with wash hand basins off the Toddler, Junior and Senior Pre-school rooms. There were also two staff toilets with wash hand basins.