

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WD071
Name of Service:	Sesame Preschool
Address of Service:	White Strand, Abbesside, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford
Eircode:	X35 WF38
Name of Registered Provider:	Eleanor McGrath
Service type:	Sessional
Dates of Inspection:	25/02/2025
Date 2 of Inspection:	12/03/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	13	PM	5
Day 2	AM	14	PM	N/A

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Community Care Centre, HSE Buildings, Cork Road, Waterford City
Inspection undertaken by:	A. Bradshaw
Title:	Early Years Inspector

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 is a purposely designed building on the outskirts of Dungarvan town, where there are two early years services, an early intervention specialist early years service for children with additional needs called Sesame Preschool and a sessional Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme which is called Kiddies Cove. Sesame Preschool is based in two main care rooms, the Big Bird Room and the Cookie Monster Room, with additional specialised therapy rooms and a large free activity room. Kiddies Cove has a large bright care room at the opposite end of the building.

There are three enclosed outdoor areas at the side and rear of the building. These services are registered to operate from 09:00 to 12:00 Monday to Friday and from 13:00 to 16:00 on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. The service is registered to care for up to 32 children aged 2 to 6 years of age.

Staffing

The service employs 14 staff members, including a general manager, a co-ordinator, a disability nurse, an administrator and seven staff adults who work directly with the children. The registered provider does not work directly with the children.

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:

Regulation 9(1)(2)(4) – Management and Recruitment;

Regulation 11(1)(2)(4) – Staffing Levels;

Regulation 16(1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)(i)– Record in Relation to Pre-School Service;

Regulation 20 – Facilities for Rest and Play;

Regulation 25 – First Aid;

Regulation 26 – Fire Safety Measures;

Regulation 28 – Insurance;

Regulation 29 - Premises

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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 day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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

(1)(a)(b)(c)

On both days of the inspection, the registered provider was available to the inspector if required, and the person in charge remained on the premises. The line management structure was verbally explained to the inspector, including the various therapeutic roles staff members carry out with the children. The staff roster demonstrated that a person in charge is available during the hours of operation.

(2) The files of 14 staff were reviewed.

(a)(b) Validated references were available for all staff.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all 14 staff. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years.

(d) Police vetting was available for one staff member who had resided outside the jurisdiction for six months or longer. Documents reviewed by the inspector demonstrated that the registered provider had made a reasonable effort to obtain police vetting for a second staff member but was unable to do so.

(4)
All the staff members who worked directly with the children had a qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or which had been deemed equivalent by the minister.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)
Over the two days, there were an adequate number of staff working directly with the children.
On day 1, there were 10 staff working directly with 13 children attending the pre-school service.
On day 2, there were 10 staff working directly with 14 children attending the preschool service.
The person in charge was available to provide support if required.

(3)
On review of the staff roster, the staff attendance sheet and the children's attendance register, the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained.

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.

(4) Where outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access is provided on the premises of a sessional pre-school service other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, a temporary pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that such outdoor space is suitable, safe and secure.

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the indoor and outdoor environment supported the development of the children being cared for.

(1) The overall service was well maintained and decorated with colourful framed prints.

Each care room had an area which was comfortable with couches and cushions, and away from the main play area if children wanted a rest or time away from group activities.

The service optimised every opportunity to illustrate two-way communication through pictures and cards. Each door had a photograph of the interior of the room displayed on entry. The areas of interest had an illustration of the activity, and the names of the interest areas. The children's photographs were on each coat hook to support their independence when arriving and leaving the service. Choice boards were available to encourage children to make decisions regarding the play choices and to communicate this to the staff.

The Sesame Preschool had a large, bright playroom, which the staff member explained was where the children began their morning with free choice for their play opportunities. This room was well equipped with definite areas of interest for the children, which offered them opportunities for large motor movement play in the ball pool, a climbing frame with a slide. There was also the option of imaginative play in the home corner, construction area, garage and cars or the small world space with dolls and smaller figurines. Water play was available at the low sink. There were low tables and chairs placed beside the shelving with jigsaws and puzzles.

The various therapeutic rooms were designed and furnished to enhance the children's experiences. The Speech and Language Therapy room had comfortable seating with diffused lighting to allow the children and staff members to focus on their objectives. The Sensory room was darkened, with an illuminated water feature, soft padding on the wall and cushioning on the floor. A large water bed was in the centre with a large ball pool to the side and fibre optic lighting.

The children's care rooms, the Cookie Monster room and the Big Bird room had an activity table with planned activities ready for the children, for example, sensory play with playdough with lavender oil for the children to experience the sense of smell.

The Kiddies Cove room was a bright, airy room with definite areas of interest laid out that were suitable for the age and stage of development of the children attending the service. The areas were well-resourced with accessories to enhance the children's learning through play. For example, the home area had a toy kitchen with pots and pans beside the play market with play food and vegetables, this layout allowed the children's play to extend between the areas.

There were step-by-step visuals to remind children of the basic rules, for example, a picture of aprons, a paint pot, and then the easel. There were visuals to support children with transitions with a display of the daily routine at the child's eye level.

There were ideas and supports for staff displayed, with reminders of activities and songs for St. Patrick's Day, which could be introduced to other children.

Examples of children's activities were displayed on the walls. The theme of the week was vegetables, with photographs of the children reading the Enormous Turnip book, and photographs of the children at the activity table with various vegetables. Notes on observations of the children's interests were displayed by the children's names and their learning journals included the children's work and photographs of their time in the service.

- (4) There were three secure outdoor areas. The large playroom led directly to two of these. The areas had a mixture of surfaces: grass, artificial soft pour and cobble lock. There was a raised planting area which the children could access. The area had climbing frames, an adapted swing set with specially designed seats, slides and wheeled toys to support the children's gross motor development. The area had a covered veranda for shade in the summer and to allow outdoor play during inclement weather. The children attending Kiddies Cove used the outdoor area at the back of the building. This area had recently been upgraded to 'Shauna's Garden'. This space included a sensory garden planted with herbs and grasses.

There were colourful poles to hang wind chimes and windmills. These were included to stimulate the children's sense of smell, sight and sound. The surface included various textures and gradients to increase the children's experiences.

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 has ensured that a person trained in first aid was available to the children at all times. Five staff members were trained to the first aid responder standard.

(2) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in the lobby and each care room. The service also had an automated external defibrillator (AED) in the main hallway of 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) A record of monthly fire drills was available for review by the inspector. The most recent fire drill had been completed on the 20th of February 2025.
- (b) There was a written record of the fire-fighting equipment which had been serviced on the 27th of May 2024 and the smoke alarm system had been serviced on the 15th of March 2024 with a planned service due on the 19th of March 2025.
- (4)
- The evacuation procedures were displayed prominently in each care room. Records reviewed demonstrated that staff had completed fire safety training which included the use of firefighting equipment and emergency evacuations.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Records demonstrated that the service had childcare insurance for no more than 47 children and adults in attendance at any one time. The insurance expiry date was the 19th of September 2025.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

- (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

- b) The main entrance and internal doors were secured by a keypad locking system, which assisted in restricting unauthorised entry or exit from the building. The outdoor areas were surrounded by a secure wall and trellising.
- c) There were large windows in each room, which created a bright space for the children. In addition, each window had blinds to prevent direct sunlight if necessary. The artificial light system complimented the

natural light, and the staff described how they can use the lighting to create different ambiances depending on the children's activities. The building was heated to a comfortable level and had openable windows to allow the circulation of fresh air.

- d) Each room had completed up-to-date cleaning records for each area.
- e) The sanitary area was suitable for nappy changing and included steps with a handrail to the changing platform. In addition, there was a motorised changing unit for children who required it. There were hand washing facilities available in this area. There were four toilet cubicles with four low hand washing sinks, liquid soap and disposable hand towels. A staff member also described the various steps and toilet seats they had available to support children using the toilets.