

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WD074
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Name of Service:	St. Brigid's Children's Centre
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Address of Service:	Powersfield, Hennessy's Road, Waterford City, Co. Waterford
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Eircode:	X91 FC42
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Name of Registered Provider:	Gerardine Lanigan
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	08/05/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	43	PM	11
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Community Care Centre, HSE Buildings, Cork Road, Waterford City.
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Ryan
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

St. Brigid's Children's Centre is a community childcare service and is an integral part of St. Brigid's Family and Resource Centre, located in the inner-city Waterford area. St. Brigid's Children's Centre is purpose built as a community childcare centre, operating from a single-story building accommodating five childcare rooms. The grounds of the premises included a large, landscaped child centred outdoor play area at the rear of the building. The centre caters for children aged from 1 to 6 years of age on a part-time basis, with school aged childcare in the afternoons. The opening hours are 09:00hrs to 17:30hrs. St. Brigid's Children's Centre participates in the following schemes: Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE), the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme, the National Childcare Scheme and the Training Employment Childcare Programmes.

Staffing

The service employs a manager, and 17 childcare staff. The service has, two part-time administrators and two part time kitchen staff.

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.

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

- Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school
- Regulation 17 – Information for parents
- Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child
- Regulation 27 – Supervision
- Regulation 29 – Premises

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) The manager was the designated person in charge. The service also had an assistant manager who was able to deputise as required.

(b) At all times during the inspection the manager was on the premises.

(c) St. Brigid's Children's Centre was governed and managed by the management committee of St. Brigid's Family and Resource Centre. There were clear details available indicating management structure and the lines of authority. The service was observed to be well managed, and this was reflected by the clarity of all staff in their roles, responsibilities of the committee and managers extensive working knowledge of all aspects of the service.

(2)

All 17 staff files were reviewed and since the last inspection on the 28 June 2021, there were 3 new staff members employed to work with the children.

The following was observed on the new staff members files:

(a) There were six written validated references from past employers.

(b) Not applicable as all written references were from past employers.

(c) There was evidence of completed Garda vetting disclosure certificates from An Garda Síochána on file for all new staff working directly with the children in the service and all other staff had been re-vetted in the last three years.

(d) Three staff members had lived outside the jurisdiction for more than six consecutive months, police vetting had been completed from these jurisdictions.

(4)
There was evidence that all staff employed to work directly with the children held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5, 6 or 8 on the National Qualifications Framework. There was evidence of continuous professional development and qualification certificates on file.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)
On the day of inspection, there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service, which met the requirement for the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

(2)
On the morning of the inspection the staff: child ratios were maintained as follows:
In the Flower room there were 14 children aged 3 to 4 years of age being cared for by 3 staff on a part time basis.
In the Seaside room there were 12 children aged 2 to 3 years of age being cared for by 3 staff on a part time daycare basis.

In Jungle room there were 10 children aged 4 to 5 years of age being cared for by 3 staff on a sessional basis.

In the Busy Bees room there were 7 children aged 1 to 2 years of age being cared for by 2 staff on a part time basis.

On the afternoon of the inspection 11 pre-school children aged 3 to 4 years remained on the premises for full day care and came together in the Seaside room with 2 staff.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult: child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

There was evidence on the day of the inspection that records required under Regulation 16(1) (a) (b)(c) (f) (g) (h) (i) (j) (k) were kept on the service and available for inspection on the following formats:

On each door to each care room there were photographs and details of the name, positions and qualifications for each staff member working in that room.

The following details on the service were available in a printed format and clearly presented on single sheets for inclusion in a parent handbook as well as being available by email.

1. The type of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;
2. Details of the adult: child ratios in the service;
3. Information on of the type of care or programme and the facilities available within the service;
4. The opening hours and fees;

Weekly staff rosters were displayed in the office. The policies, procedures and statements of the service were available via email in hard copy a designated folder at the reception desk for parents to browse.

Attendance books, books for the administration of medication and books to record any accidents or injuries involving a pre-school child attending the service were available in each childcare room. All records were observed to be completed and up to date.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

The manager advised that there were daily opportunities to communicate and impart information to parents at drop off times, collection times, by telephone and by media messaging application.

All information required to be made available under the regulation 16(1) (a-g) was accessible to parents in the form of displays or in written or digital format.

All information required under the Regulation 16(1) (a to g): for parents or guardians of children proposing to attend the service were available for Parents in the handbook or on the main entrance notice board, such as photographs and staff details. The registered provider informed the inspector, that all parents or guardians were provided with this information on their child’s enrolment. They also informed that all parents signed a parental agreement at the beginning of the year to confirm that they agreed to the procedures of the service.

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-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

(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

The manager informed the inspector that the programme was play based/nature focused with aspects of the High Scope and Montessori teaching methods incorporated into the curriculum. It was documented in the service's curriculum planning that each child's varying needs were taken into consideration and this is evaluated regularly with a balance of indoor/outdoor activities, quiet/active activities fine /gross motor skills, small and large group activities with crafts/ messy play.

On the day of the inspection there were four rooms being used for childcare. The rooms were furnished with age-appropriate tables, chairs, and low-level shelves for toys and materials to be freely available and accessible to children. All rooms had artistic birthday and family tree wall display. Nature tables were features in all rooms. An incubator was on display at the reception desk with eggs that were ready to hatch, both children and adults were intrigued, and this was centre and fore to conversations between staff /parents and children.

All rooms opened directly onto an Astroturf area that were sectioned off into what the service called pods that were enclosed with picket fencing to enable the children to move seamless between the indoor and outdoor play environments. Each enclosure had shelter extending from the rooms that had messy play activities which on the day was observed to provide shelter from the direct sunlight. And ensured that the children could be outdoors as much as possible. On the day of the inspection, it was observed how children had the freedom of the larger outdoor extended area that had grass mounds and tunnels for hiding and gross motor play this also had a well-stocked mud kitchen area proved very popular with the children who were making a birthday cake together. There was a very large, raised sand pit and an ample supply of ride on equipment bicycles and tricycles.

One large room was given over entirely to sensory equipment and activities such as fiber optic lighting, cylinder bubble tubes, bags of shredded paper, a large water trough, soft foam plastic platforms and sensory mats. This room was observed to be used for small groups of children at scheduled times. The staff informed the inspector that the room was successful and worked well to calm and soothe children when overactive or upset.

(3) The service had documented in the mission statement that the service seeks to promote an anti-bias approach the service's staff code of conduct reiterated that no practices that were disrespectful, degrading, exploitative, isolating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful to a child were used in the service. A written positive behaviour policy was available that included strategies to encourage positive behaviour. Only positive interactions between the staff and children were observed on the day of the inspection.

Documented evidence was available which demonstrated that all the staff working directly with the children had completed mandatory training on Children's First and Child Safety Awareness. This training was based on Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017).

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The service ensured that all children were appropriately supervised at all times throughout the inspection.

All staff were suitably qualified and had extensive experience as some staff had over 30 years experience working directly with children. The child staff ratios exceeded the requirements for care needed under the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. And these ratios were not compromised as the service held a relief staff panel of childcare workers willing to work if there were unexpected staff absences.

Each room opened on to an enclosed outdoor area enclosed off for use of that room only, the doors remained open for children to move freely between the indoor and outdoor space, constant supervision was observed as in each room a staff member was allocated to stay outdoors while another staff member stayed in the room.

Children and staff were observed roaming the larger outdoor play area while children played freely in the extensive play space. Staff were observed sitting at the tables with the children throughout the mealtimes especially the younger children encouraging them to eat and drink their food.

Physical 10-minute checks were observed being carried out on sleeping children, sound monitors were used to increase the supervision Children were encouraged to use the toilet facilities independently and staff stood within hearing range on the corridor while children used the toilets.

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 external play area was secured from the surrounding dwellings with hedging, trellising and stone walls. A gate at the entrance prevented children gaining unsupervised access to the adjacent road. The main front door was secured by a keypad locking system that was out of children's reach which restricted children from exiting the building unsupervised.

(c)
On the day of the inspection the rooms were well ventilated as the double doors from each room opened to the pergola area throughout the duration of the inspection.

(d)
Detailed daily and weekly cleaning records were documented electronically on a handheld device. These were completed and up to date. Table-tops and work surfaces were observed being cleaned with disposable paper towels and disinfectant spray.

Non-Compliance Information

(b)
The soft matting in the pod areas leading from the rooms was worn and, in some parts, had holes. The inspector observed one child who had fallen on the worn area sustained knee grazes. The present surface that is coarse and uneven in the worn areas could pose a risk of cuts and wounds from minor trips or falls.

(e)
A newly installed nappy changing area developed off the busy bees was a large space and was also used as storage space for toys equipment and paper documentation. This practice would have implications for infection control as the nappy changing area is considered a sanitary facility. It is acknowledged that the service had the intention to divide this room.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(b)
The registered provider stated in the response on the 14 June 2024, that the condition of the soft matting in the outdoor pods and the replacing of this was brought and discussed at a board of management meeting. Two quotes for the replacement of the matting have been sourced and contact made with Waterford County Childcare Committee regarding funding or grants that may be coming for improvements. The registered provider stated that the Board of Management was committed to setting up a plan in relation to funding this work.

(e)
The registered provider stated in the response on the 14 June 2024, that a local trades person was found to install a partition wall in the nappy changing room. This job will be completed in the next week or two. Once the partition wall is installed the nappy room and storage room will be permanently divided. The inspector spoke to the manager of St. Brigid's Children's Centre by telephone on 28 June 2024 who confirmed that work was due to commence on the first week in July. Email from the manager on the 3 July confirming completion of the partition wall installed in the nappy room and storage room.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (b)
Quotes were submitted from two companies regarding replacing the soft matting surface.
- (e)
The registered provider submitted quotes on 14 June 2024 from a professional trades person to install the partition and permanently divide the nappy changing room from the storage room.
Photographs of the complete partition wall submitted on 3 July 2024.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted on 14 June 2024 and on 3 July 2024 was appropriate to address the non-compliances Regulation 29- Premises (b) and (e) and the implementation of these actions will be reviewed on the next inspection.