

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WD083
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Name of Service:	Learn Thru' Play Ltd
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Address of Service:	Butler Community Hall, St. John's Park, Waterford City, Co. Waterford
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Eircode:	X91 FEP4
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Name of Registered Provider:	Rena Walsh
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	20/03/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	34	PM	16
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Primary Care Centre, Castle Park, Arklow, Co. Wicklow Y14 AE10
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Inspection undertaken by:	Lorraine O' Connor
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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

Learn thru' play is located on the outskirts of Waterford City. The service provides a full-day care, part-time and sessional service for children aged 2 to 6 years of age. It is registered to operate from 9am to 2.30pm Monday to Friday. On the day of inspection, the service was operating from 9am to 1pm daily. The service is located within a multi-use premises and there are two care rooms available for the children; the Junior room and Senior room. There is a sanitary and nappy changing area adjoining each of the care rooms. The children have access to an outdoor area which is located beside the service.

The service also runs a school age care service which is registered separately.

Staffing

There are eight adults employed to work within the service, including the registered provider. Two adults are employed under the Access and Inclusion (AIM) model and there is one student currently on work placement. The adults working directly with the children held an award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Qualifications Framework.

On the day of inspection, there were six adults including the registered provider working directly with the children. A student who was on work placement was present within the service.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 16 Record in relation to pre-school service.

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,

(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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 registered provider was the person in charge of the service and a named staff member was appointed to deputise when required.
 - (b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at the service and was present for the duration of the inspection.
- (2) A total of nine files were reviewed and the following was noted:
- (a)(b) Written validated references were available for the nine adults from a previous employer and/or a source other than a previous employer.

(c) The required Garda Vetting disclosures were in place for the nine adults. The service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Through a review of documentation, it was determined that police vetting was required for two adults, and it was available for review.

(3) Recruitment and vetting procedures were carried out in advance of appointment for all staff.

(4) The adults working directly with the children held 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.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

Compliance Information

(1)(2)(4)

There was an adequate number of adults working with the children for the duration of the inspection. At 9:30am, there were six adults, including the registered provider, working directly with 34 pre-school children.

There was an adequate number of adults working directly with, and available to the children at all times. At 9.30am, there was 3 adults working with 18 children aged 3 to 5 years in the Senior room and 3 adults with 16

children aged 2 to 4 years within the Junior room. A student was also present within the Senior room. The person in charge outlined that when the sessional service finishes at 12pm, the children attending on a part-time basis from the Junior and Senior room are combined as one group. At 12.30pm, there were 16 children aged 2 to 5 years with 3 adults in the outdoor area.

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:

- (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

- (h) The attendance record was maintained by each of the care rooms and it was reflective of the children present within the service throughout the inspection.
- (i) A staff roster was available and it was accurate to the adults present and/or absent on the day of inspection.
- (j) In discussion with the registered provider, it was outlined that the service does not routinely administer medication. While administration of medication records were not available for review, a template was available in the case where medication was administered. This practice was in line with the service's administration of medication policy.
- (k) A sample of accident and incident records were reviewed by the inspector. The records demonstrated the required details relating to the accident and/or incident, actions taken and evidence of communication with the parent.

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

Compliance Information

Children were encouraged to develop their skills relating to personal care. This included blowing their nose and toilet training. The staff member outlined that some of the children were toilet training. They outlined that the two toilets in the Junior classroom were at different heights. And that the toilet which was child's height supported the children's independence while toilet training as it was easily accessible. The staff member outlined that for many of the children it was a sense of achievement to use the higher toilet as it's the same one which they would have at home. This practice was reflective of the service's inclusion policy, and it allows for children to experience a sense of achievement.

The interactions between the staff members and children were respectful, responsive and unhurried. The service's curriculum policy outlined that interactions between the children and staff members provide an opportunity for the development of key skills. During the inspection, the staff members provided children with support and guidance to develop their skills such as problem solving, negotiation and communication.

The following was observed:

- At 11.05am, the children were in the outdoor area. A child aged 3 years old went down slide and momentarily sat on the edge of it. The child looked towards the staff member and back up the slide. The staff member responded to the child's gaze and asked the child if they were okay. The staff member knelt down to the child's eye level and ask the child 'was it too quick?'. This provided the child with reassurance that the adult recognised the child's uncertainty of their experience on the slide.
- At 10am, the children in the senior room engaged in circle time. The chairs within the Senior room had a photograph of each child on the back of it. The staff members were responsive to the children who could not find their chair and provided support by walking around the table with the children asking questions such as 'which chair is empty?' 'I wonder if that could be your chair?' , 'how would we know

if that is your chair, is your picture on it?’ This practice supported children to problem solve and develop a sense of independence.

- While in the outdoor area, one child was lying in the spinner, and another child began to push it. The staff member recognised that the child was pushing it slowly and how the other child seemed to enjoy being spun. The staff member remained close-by providing the children with prompts and guidance. This included verbal prompts such as ‘should you ask if [the child] wants to be spun around?’ ‘Would [the child] like to get out now? they might be feeling dizzy’ , ‘you could take turns, would you like to be spun?’ This supported the children’s skills in communicating with their peers on their individual preferences and boundaries.

The childrens’ needs, interests and preferences were familiar to the staff members. Throughout the inspection, the staff members outlined what individual children enjoyed regarding their play, food preferences and peer groups. The staff members positively acknowledged the children’s preferences through conversation or responsive actions. This practice was reflective of the service’s curriculum policy which stated that the curriculum uses a flexible approach to support the different interests and abilities of the children. The following was observed;

- At snack time, a staff member recognised when one child had eaten their lunch and they provided the child with a car garage at the table. The staff member explained to the inspector the routine of the child at lunch and the child’s enjoyment of playing with the cars and the car garage.
- When washing their hands before snack time in the Senior room, a staff member was overheard to acknowledge one child’s enjoyment of handwashing and the bubbles. The staff member recognised how they particularly enjoy that part of the day.

The children were provided with freedom and choice in their play. This was supported through a flexible routine, child led activities and accessible environment. On arrival to the service, the children within both of the care rooms were immersed in free play, playing in small groups and on their own. The staff members observed the children from a reasonable distance and were close-by to provide support if required. They outlined that while there was a routine in place, it was guided by the children. This flexibility with the routine was observed in the Junior room at 10am, whereby some children continued their free play while other children chose to take part in a table top activity which included painting, playdough and cars with garages.

The staff members outlined that the smaller groups allowed the children to go at their own pace. For example, when handwashing after painting the children can take their time and learn how to wash their hands. These practices were detailed within the service’s curriculum policy which outlined that the service provided a child-led approach where children explore and discover in ways that interest them.

The children brought their lunches from home. The staff members within both of the care rooms outlined that the children are provided their snack at approx. 11.20am. On the day of inspection, the children were observed to eat sandwiches, yogurts, fruit and crackers. The snack time was unhurried, and the children were provided with time to eat their lunches and engage with their peers.

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 19 to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(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) (3)

The children engaged in outdoor play on the day of inspection in the morning and afternoon. The registered provider outlined the value of outdoor play for the children and how it was part of the children’s daily routine. This practice was outlined within the service’s outdoor play policy which stated that the children have daily access to the outdoors. On the day of inspection, the children played within the playground which a part of the community centre. This space provided the children with opportunities to climb, run, jump and balance. The equipment available included swings, slide, climbing rope, see-saw, spinners and a music wall. The registered provider outlined that the children have access to varying outdoor spaces which are located within the premises including an astro-turf pitch and garden area with planting facilities and a space for bikes and trikes. The staff members outlined the children’s enjoyment of being outdoors and how the flexible routine facilitates this. It was outlined that the previous week, the children were emersed in their play and the staff members decided to bring the children’s lunches outside for the children to have a picnic.

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) A person trained in first aid including first aid responder (FAR) training was immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service as evidenced in the staff roster and the in-date FAR certification available.

- (2) A suitably equipped first aid box was available for the children within the service. The first aid boxes were located in an accessible position for both of the care rooms.