

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WD085
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	The Childrens Playroom
-------------------------	------------------------

Address of Service:	The Enterprise Centre, Nora Herlihy House, West Street, Tallow, Co. Waterford
----------------------------	---

Eircode:	P51 RK3V
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Louise O'Connor
-------------------------------------	-----------------

Service type:	Sessional
----------------------	-----------

Date(s) of Inspection:	21/03/2024
-------------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	10
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Waterford Community Services Cork Road Waterford
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
---------------------------------	----------------

Description of service

The Children’s Playroom is a community playgroup in the Nora Herlihy House Enterprise Centre located in the centre of Tallow village Co Waterford. The premises is a community building and is used by other community groups. The service operates from the ground floor that is renovated for the purpose of running a sessional childcare service. The facilities include the main playroom, children’s toilets, a storage room, and an outdoor playground adjacent to the playroom. The service presently offers two sessions of the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE), and the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme. The opening hours are from 09:00hrs to 12:00hrs and 13:00hrs to 16:00hrs Monday to Friday for children aged 2 years 8 months to 5 years of age.

Staffing

The service employs a playschool leader who is part of the staff compliment as well as three childcare workers.

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 The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment.

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels.

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 25 - First aid

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures.

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 co-operation 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

(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

There were three staff working directly with the children present on the day of inspection and one of these staff was the registered provider.

- (1)
- (a) The playschool leader was the designated person in charge. The service also had a named person who was able to deputise as required.
 - (b) At all times during the inspection the play school leader was on the premises.
 - (c) The service was governed by a voluntary management committee solely for the purpose of running the children's playroom. The centre has a separate management committee that takes responsibility for the management and upkeep of the premises. There were clear details available indicating the arrangements for the roles and responsibilities of the committee and the staff working in the service.

(2)

On review of the staff files, it was evident that one new staff member was employed to work with the children since the last inspection on the 9 June 2021. The following was observed on the new staff member's file:

- (a) There were two written validated references from past employers.
- (b) Not applicable as employee references from a reputable source were not required.
- (c) There was evidence of completed Garda vetting disclosure certificates from An Garda Síochána available on file for all staff and these were completed in the last three years.
- (d) Not applicable as the staff member had not resided or worked outside of this jurisdiction.

(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 and 6 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.*
- (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)(2)

In the morning session there were 17 children aged 3 to 5 years of age being cared for by 3 staff. In the afternoon session on the day of the inspection there were 10 children aged 2 years 10 months to 4 years of age being cared for by 3 staff.

(3)

The staff: child ratios exceeded the requirements for sessional care needed under the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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

(1)(b) Regulation 19 was assessed through direct observation, review of records and discussion with staff. The following was observed and explained in relation to the provision of the programme of care and activities for the children attending the service.

The Children's Playroom operated from the Nora Herlihy Enterprise Centre, a community building with the ground floor given over for the running of a sessional pre-school service. The pre-school offered two sessions for the ECCE scheme to a large rural hinterland in west county Waterford. The playroom was rectangle in shape and well organised with defined areas of interest that made the best use of the space available. A reading and rest area was set up in an alcove away from the main play area with a supply of soft furnishings and books. On arrival at the service the inspector was warmly greeted by children and staff who were sitting at the low tables enjoying the morning snack break. All children were observed to have well stocked lunch boxes with foods such as sweet and savory sandwiches and a variety of fresh fruit and vegetables.

The atmosphere in the service was lively with the buzz of the forthcoming Easter holiday break, and the egg hunt planned in the pre-school for the following day. Simple rules such as "indoor voices" were requested of the children at various stages as the excitement levels increased.

The children were observed at free play in small groups of their choice. A large box and selection of 'superheroes' were the most popular floor play activity on a large, matted area. There was a painting area with a wall-mounted

easel. Primary colour paints were made freely available for children to use as they so choose. Another small group were deeply engaged in the large well-resourced home corner with pretend play cookers which had an ample supply of kitchen play materials.

After free time children were organised around the tables for work time to complete their Easter crafts so as to have them finished to bring them home for Easter holidays. The morning session was finished with Easter action songs and a story read to them by the playgroup leader.

At times children's attention was waning and some children were observed advising others of the 'school manners' displayed at children's eye level on the wall in cartoon like graphics. The play group leader informed the inspector that the 'school manners' were devised by the children themselves having reached a general consensus on the pictures for display. These picture/ cartoons had captions such as 'nice kind hands' 'no shouting' 'help your friend' and 'walk your feet'.

The children in the afternoon session were younger and attending for the first year of the scheme, these children were observed to be quieter but comfortable in their surroundings. This group were also cutting and pasting Easter paper craft activities such as making egg baskets for the egg hunt the next day.

At free play time, some children were around the table with freshly made playdough while others played with numerous boxes filled with themed small world play items such as a fire engine box, farm machinery box, boxes with wild animals /dinosaurs and timber dolls. The staff at all times sat at the tables helping and reassuring the children with their play. Others enjoyed floor play where the staff were observed down on the floor directing and encouraging this play.

In this afternoon session transition times were facilitated with the use of a timer; this was observed to work well as the children took the que with ease such as engaging with hand washing and eating their lunch.

Outdoor area

The weather on the day was particularly wet so the outdoor area which was at split-level and adjacent to the pre-school room was not used.

The surface was cement and the area was enclosed by other buildings at the rear of the premises. There was a construction and digging area, a pretend play area with a large playhouse. There was more than an adequate supply of ride on bikes, trikes and tractors for all the children.

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:

During the government-initiated lock downs, a second entrance was developed for the service complete with an extensive wheelchair ramp which was accessible from the rear of the building. This replaced the need to come through the community building from the street access. The new access was attained from the car park.

The external play area was secured at the rear of the centre surrounded by high stone walls so children could not leave the area unsupervised and unauthorised persons could not enter the area. Water and heater temperatures were thermostatically controlled within the required ranges. Electrical sockets were fitted with safety covers throughout both rooms.

Attendance records were completed daily for the staff and for the children attending. The attendance book corresponded with the number of children present on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The new entrance developed for the service had an extensive low gradient wheelchair ramp that extended into the carpark for the community building. The practice at hand over time at the end of the session was for parents and guardians to wait in the carpark. Parents waited at different points in the carpark and children were released according to the visibility of the parent/guardian in the carpark. Children ran down the ramp to be greeted by their parents/guardian on arrival into the carpark. The hand over of the child was not directly to the parent and could pose as a safety risk as cars were observed coming and going and reversing during this period.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The manager stated in the response that a letter was issued to all parents/guardians the day after the inspection regarding safety re drop/collection of their children. The manager stated in the response that the implementation of the new protocol for parents come to the door for handover was proving successful.

Supporting documentation submitted

A Copy of the letter issued to parents on the 21 March 2024 was submitted to the inspectorate. The letter explained the protocol requesting that parents and guardians come directly to the door of the service at collection times for the handover of the children.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted met the requirements for regulation 23 (Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child) of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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 was documentation available to verify that all staff members had current first aid responder training FAR.

(2)

(a) There was a suitably equipped wall mounted first aid cabinet in the service.

(b) The first aid cabinet was suitably accessible and available.

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 in writing of fire drills indicated that the last fire drill took place on the premises on the 14 February 2024.

(b) There were contracts in place for the regular servicing and maintenance of the fire equipment and smoke alarms.

(4)

The fire evacuation procedure with details of the measures to be taken in the event of a fire were displayed on the notice board in the corridor.