

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH050			
Name of Service:	Chatterboxes Childcare Ltd			
Address of Service:	Dept of Education Campus, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath			
Eircode:	N37 E183			
Name of Registered Provider:	Bill McMickan			
Service type:	Full Day			
Date of Inspection:	07/12/2023			
No of pre-school children:	AM	36	PM	34
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, Primary Care Unit, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.			
Inspection undertaken by:	C. O'Connor Hughes & K. Murphy			
Title:	Early Years Inspectors			

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 service is registered as providing a full day care service. The age range of children that can attend the service is 0 months to 6 years of age. The service operates between the hours of 08:00 – 18:00 on a Monday to Friday basis.

The Early Years' Service is located in a single storey purpose-built premises. Four pre-school rooms namely the baby room, the toddler room, the junior pre-school room, the senior pre-school room, a sleep room, a kitchen and an office/ staff room are provided. An outdoor play area is attached to the rear of the service. On-site parking and set down facilities are available. The service is located on the outskirts of the town of Athlone, County Westmeath.

Staffing

There were seven adults present and working directly with the children on 7 December 2023 including the designated person in charge of the service. One student was present on work placement. One adult was employed to provide cover for staff breaks between the hours of 10:30 and 18:00. A cook provided meals for the children attending the service. The registered provider was not present during the inspection.

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.

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 inspectors wish 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.*

(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 person in charge and a named person to deputise were available in the service.

(b)

The person in charge and the named person to deputise were present for the duration of the inspection.

Thirteen files including one student were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

Two written validated references were available from past employers or a source other than a past employer in respect of ten staff members and student.

One written validated reference was available from a source other than a past employer in respect of one staff member.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the staff members and student.

(d)

Police vetting was available in respect of three staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(3)

The procedures in respect (2)(a)(b)(c)(d) were carried out by the registered provider prior to the employment of staff in the service.

(4)

Nine staff members held a major award at level 5 to level 8 in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

- Two written validated references were not available from past employers or a source other than a past employer in respect of one staff member.
- One written validated reference was not available from past employers or a source other than a past employer in respect of one staff member.

(4)

1. Evidence was not available to indicate that one staff member present and working directly with children held a major award at least level 5 in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications.
2. An unqualified staff member was observed to work directly with children during the provision of lunch cover in the baby room.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b)

For one of the employees, there were two validated references on file when the registered provider checked. For the other employee, she has been asked on numerous occasions for this paperwork. The documents were received today.

Management will make sure that we receive important documents in a timely manner from employees when they are requested.

(4)

The service is happy that this employee does have the relevant qualifications, but they were destroyed by mistake. The employee has eventually been able to contact the original course co-ordinator to request a copy of the cert (or a letter verifying the results). Management have also sent the employee a link from QQI requesting these documents. Timeframe 2 weeks.

The service has managed to recruit another member of staff to help us when covering for lunch etc. The service has really tried our best in not letting an unqualified person cover in a room and rather than leave the room out of ratio we took this course of action. The service also had a staff member that week that was called away urgently for a family crisis. The staff member is also back at work.

Management will make sure the service receives the certificates and verifications as soon as possible.

Supporting documentation submitted

References submitted.

Summary Comment

(2)(a)(b)

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement.

(4)

The non compliance has not been addressed. The registered provider shall provide the evidence to the Early Years Inspector upon receipt.

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)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(2)

There were thirty-six children attending the service being supervised directly by seven adults at the time of inspection.

(8)(a)

The roster showed that two adults were always present on the premises during the hours of operation.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
In a review of twelve child enrolment records information relating to (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g) and (i) was available in respect of the children attending the service.
- (h)
Nine child records held information in respect of immunisations.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(h)
There was no record of immunisations documented in respect of three children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Immunisation records have been requested from the parents in question.
Keep reminding parents if they forget or delay in sending in those documents to the service and impress upon them that the service must have the immunisations on file. Timeframe 2 weeks.

Supporting documentation submitted

None.

Summary Comment

The non compliance has not been addressed. The registered provider shall provide the evidence to the Early Years Inspector upon receipt.

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;*
- (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

(1)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)(i)(j) and (k).

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

Information relating to regulation 16 (1)(a) to (g) was available in the parent handbook.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 18 – Copy of Act etc.

A registered provider shall ensure that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations is kept on the premises and the said copies shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,*
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker or contractor, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

The person in charge ensured a copy of the of Part V11A (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No.40 of 2013) of the Act and Regulations was available for inspection by (a)(b)(c).

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)(a)

Children were engaged in the various play opportunities available to them in the pre-school rooms supported by staff. Children were observed at free play, tabletop activities, story time and outdoor play.

Individual needs lead sleep was in operation in the baby room. Children were physically checked by staff members every ten minutes while sleeping. Younger children were observed to crawl and explore their environment in the baby room. Children enjoyed relaxing in the cosy rest areas while reading books in the toddler room. Children in the toddler room were placed to sleep on low level beds after eating their dinner.

Children washed their hands before snacks and meals supported by staff members. Bibs were applied to protect children's clothes. Children were gently encouraged to eat and assisted as needed. Children enjoyed conversations and interactions during snack and mealtimes. Nappy changing was carried out on a regular basis and as needed. Older children went to toilet independently supervised by staff.

Staff were familiar with each child and their personality. Staff were positive towards children using individual names, maintaining eye contact and giving positive praise on the completion of activities. Younger children settling into the baby room were given hugs and cuddles as needed.

Partnership with parents was in place with the following methods, a verbal handover given on collection, communication to parents via newsletters with children's activities and information updates. Children's individual art folders are given to parents on a regular basis.

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

(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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Suitable and adequate play and work equipment were provided indoors and outdoors which included toys and equipment for construction, tabletop activities, arts and crafts and home corners.

(b)

A separate sleep room adjacent to the baby room was equipped with six cots. Low level beds were available in the service for any child over the age of two years who required rest or sleep.

(3) (a)

An outdoor play area was available to the rear of the service. Paving stone and all-weather absorbent surface areas were in place. A metal fence and gates secured the perimeter of the outdoor area. The area was equipped with a variety of bikes, trikes and a climb/slide unit as well as a crawl tunnel, a “shop” and a “post office “were in place to support physical and imaginative play.

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 the meals and snacks for the children depending on the length of stay in the service. The mid-morning snack consisting of a variety of fresh fruit. The main meal was served at approximately 12:00 and consisted of a fishfingers, baked beans, mashed potato and gravy. Milk and water were served to drink. Potable water was available to the children in the pre-school rooms to self-serve.

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 main entrance to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents. The inspectors completed the visitor log on arrival.

Infection Control:

Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Warm running water, liquid soap and hand towel dispensers were available in the sanitary accommodation. Foot operated pedal bins were available in the pre-school rooms and in the associated sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste. Openable windows or mechanical ventilation was provided in the sanitary accommodation.

Administration of Medication:

No medication was administered during the inspection. Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature.

Safe Sleep:

A record of the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children was noted in a sleep log. Sleeping children were physically checked every ten minutes by a staff member.

Fire Safety:

Emergency exits were unobstructed from the pre-school rooms. Fire assembly points were noted to the front and rear of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

- The nappy changing procedure observed was inadequate for infection control purposes due to the following;
 - The staff member did not wash their hands before and after nappy changing.
 - The child's hands were not washed after nappy changing.
- The mechanical ventilation system was not working in the sanitary accommodation adjacent to the senior pre-school room.
- There was no hand towel dispenser in the toddler room for the hygienic dispensing of paper hand towels for staff and children.

Safe Sleep:

At 12.25 the sleep room temperature was recorded at 25.2 degrees Celsius which was at variance with the safe sleep policy for the service which stated "the room temperature will be kept between 16 and 20 degrees Celsius and a thermometer kept in the infant room".

The thermometer in the sleep room was not working as the temperature recorded in the baby sleep room by staff was 18 degrees Celsius.

Upon the inspectors request a corrective action was taken. The air conditioning was switched on by the staff member. At 12.55 the sleep room temperature was recorded at 20 degrees Celsius.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

- The staff member in question has been spoken to. She was asked to explain why she had not followed the proper procedure. She said she was nervous during the inspection, and she forgot. She said she normally does follow proper procedure.

Make sure that staff are fully aware of the procedures involved in all aspects of hygiene and not to be put off or worried if they are being inspected.

2. The ventilation system in the senior preschool room is only a vent and that was always the case. There are no switches to turn it on or off.
3. A wall mounted dispenser has been installed beside the sink. See evidence submitted.

Safe Sleep:

This issue was resolved on the day however, management have spoken to the baby room staff members and reminded them to monitor the temperatures and keep them within the recommended guidelines.

Management will have to keep a closer eye on temperature control with baby room staff going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control

Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement.

The practice stated will be assessed on the next TUSLA inspection.

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)

Six staff members were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and rostered to be available on the premises.

(2)(a)

First aid boxes were available in accessible and conspicuous locations in the pre-school rooms.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to children in the pre-school 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 written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 30 November 2023.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced in October 2023 and the smoke alarms were serviced in November 2023.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

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

Children were supervised in the pre-school rooms, in the outdoor play area, when sleeping and using the sanitary accommodation.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service and the expiry date noted as 27 March 2024.