

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WW129		
Name of Service:	The Schoolhouse Preschool		
Address of Service:	Rock Springs, Liscolman, Coolkenno, Co. Wicklow		
Eircode:	R93 AD60		
Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Donoghue		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	22/06/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Child and Family Agency, First Floor Trinity Building, IDA Business Park, Southern Cross Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow		
Inspection undertaken by:	H. Bourke		
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 Schoolhouse Pre-school is a privately owned service which first opened in 2001. The service is registered to provide care and education for children aged between 2 1/2 years and 6 years of age. The service operates between the hours of 9.00am and 12.30pm Monday to Friday. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme for 38 weeks of the year. The service is located in the rural towns land of Liscolman in Co. Wicklow. The pre-school operates out of a large single converted room within a private house. There is a large secure garden area behind the house, which the children in the pre-school have access to daily.

Staffing

There are two full-time members of staff and three relief staff members. The registered provider and a second staff member were present on the day of 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 inspections 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, second staff member 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*

(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 registered provider was the person in charge of the service and there was a named staff member who was able to deputise as required.

(b)

The registered provider was on the premises at the time of arrival of the inspector and remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(2)(a)

Written references were available from past employers with respect of two staff members and three relief staff.

(b)

Not applicable as all references were from past employers.

- (c)
The required Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of five staff members.
- (d)
Police vetting was not required as none of the adults had not lived outside the State for a period of longer than six consecutive months since turning 18 years of age.
- (4)
All staff members held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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.*
- (8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*
(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

- (1)
Throughout the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.
- (3)
The correct adult/child ratio was maintained at all times. There were two adults employed and present with 19 children on the day of inspection.

(8)(c)

There were two adults on the premises at all times. The registered provider does not operate the service single-handedly.

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-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(b)

The registered provider ensured that appropriate and suitable care practices were in place. Children were asked what activity they wished to pursue, and children's participation was encouraged in all activities throughout the morning. The transition between one activity and the next was smooth and unhurried, aided by the language used by the adults to the children. One to one attention was given to a child if it was required.

The classroom layout reflected specific areas of interests for the children. The cosy area in the pre-school room was well laid out and inviting should the children require a rest during their day.

The service operates a rolling snack time, and this was observed on the day of inspection. Children were encouraged to collect their snack whenever they wished too and a staff member supervised hand washing before they started eating. There was fresh drinking water available to the children throughout the morning. The snack time was relaxed and observed to be a positive social experience for children as adults engaged with them helping when required. On the day of inspection, the children eat their food outdoors as a picnic. Children were addressed by their name and were given plenty of time to eat their food. The registered provider sat with the children during snack time. All food was provided by the parents of the children attending the service.

Childrens parents are spoken to on an individual basis at collection time.

Children were supported to be independent with looking after their belonging, in the tidy up process and with using the toilet. All with adequate supervision.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that there was suitable and age-appropriate toys and furniture both in the pre-school room and the outdoor area for the children attending the service to use.

Examples of these were, suitable sizes table and chairs, balance toys, construction toys, a nature area, age-appropriate arts and crafts, a kitchen area, water play, sand pits, slides and climbing equipment.

The outdoor area consisted of a tarmacked area in addition to a large, grassed area, with a wide variety of toys and structures to challenge children and support various forms of play.

All toys and equipment were easily accessible and were available to the children continually during the inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1)

On the day of inspection, all nineteen children attending the service were signed into the service child register.

(3)(a)(i-iv)

The registered provider ensured that no person other than the approved list of persons could enter the pre-school without being approved of in advance.

(b)

A record was available in writing of all such persons.

(4)

The registered provider was able to demonstrate that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) was kept for the requisite time period.

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 staff member trained in FAR first aid was present and immediately available to the children.

(2)(a)

The first aid box for children was stored in an accessible and conspicuous position in the pre-school room.

(b)

At all times the first aid box was available to the children attending the pre-school

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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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)

There was evidence that regular fire drills haven taken place within the service. The most recent fire drill took place on the 14th of June 2023.

(b)

There was a maintenance record of firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms in the pre-school dated the 16th of December 2022 and the 20th of September 2023 respectively.

(2)(c)

The records referred to in paragraph (1) were available to inspection by an authorised person.

(4)

There was a notice of the procedures to be followed, in the event of a fire, displayed on the wall in the pre-school room.

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,*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (b)
 The entrance to the pre-school room was secured to prevent children from exiting and unauthorised persons gaining access to the service. There were no safety hazards observed inside or outside the service. The outdoor area was suitable, safe and secure.
- (d)
 The premises appeared well maintained and clean. There was a cleaning schedule present within the pre-school room that was signed and up to date.
- (e)
 There was a suitable sanitary area consisting of two toilets and two sinks and was adequate for the service's needs. There was an additional outdoor sanitary area which the children could avail of if required. A separate staff toilet was also available on the premises.