

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WX074
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Name of Service:	Little Ducklings Playschool
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Address of Service:	Ballycanew Parish Hall, Ballycanew, Gorey, Co. Wexford
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Eircode:	Y25 X278
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Name of Registered Provider:	Andrea McCauley
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	04/10/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Primary Care Centre, Castle Park , Arklow, Co. Wicklow
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Inspection undertaken by:	L 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

Little Ducklings Playschool is located within the parish hall in Ballycanew, Gorey. The service provides care and education to children aged 2-6 years and delivers the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. The children can attend the service from 9.15am-12.15pm Monday to Friday. The children are provided with access to one combined space which consists of a care room in the parish centre and the adjoining hall. Within the premises, there was children's sanitary area, staff sanitary area and kitchen. The outdoor area is located within the grounds of the parish hall and is a short walk from the service.

Staffing

The service employs four adults, including the registered provider and a relief staff member. On the day of inspection, there were three adults working directly with the children, including the registered provider. A student on work placement was also present.

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. 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 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),(b),(c)

During the inspection, the registered provider and the deputy person in charge were on premises at all times. This was further evidenced through the staff sign in / out records and the roster on display. Through discussion, staff were aware of their specific roles including key worker systems with the children, fire safety and first aid. The clarity and awareness of roles was further supported through evidence of engagement in continuous professional development and displays throughout the service.

(2)

In discussion with the registered provider and a review of documentation, there were four adults working directly with the children, and a student is currently attending the service for work placement two days a week.

Five files were reviewed, and the following was available:

(a),(b) There were ten references available for the five adults. Of these, three were from a previous employer, and seven were from a reputable source. The references were validated as required.

(c) Garda Vetting was available for review for the five adults.

(d) Police Vetting was required for one adult, and it was available for review.

(4) The four adults working directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework.

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) 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),(3)

On the day of inspection, there were an adequate number of adults, and the adult to child ratio was maintained throughout. At 9.30am, there were fourteen children present who were attending on a sessional basis with three staff members present for the duration of the inspection.

(8)(c)

There were two adults on premises during the inspection and at all times while the service operates. This was evidenced through a review of the staff roster and staff sign in / sign out records for September and October 2023.

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

- (1)
- (h) The attendance records reviewed were reflective of the children present and were maintained throughout the inspection.
 - (i) A staff roster was on display, and it was reflective of the staff present on the day of inspection.
 - (j) In discussion with the registered provider, the service to date has not administered medication to a child. The registered provider outlined the services procedure which was reflective of the services administration of medication policy in the event a child should require medication.
 - (k) Records were reviewed on accident and incident(s), and provided the relevant details on the accident, and actions taken by 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
- (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

(a) There were fourteen children present aged between 2-5 years and the following was observed:

Basic needs;

Children ate their lunches at 11am, and the practices observed were reflective of the service's healthy eating policy. Children brought their own lunches to the service, and ate fruit, crackers, sandwiches and yogurts. The staff members sat at the tables and ate their lunch with the children. The lunch was observed to be unhurried and at the children's pace. Children could freely access their water bottles for the duration of the morning, at lunchtime and while engaging in outdoor play.

Staff were observed to support children in their own personal care. Tissues were available in the care room on a low-level shelving unit, while staff encouraged some children, others were observed to get tissues to clean their noses.

Physical and Material Environment;

The environment was child centred and supported independence for the children through the layout and accessibility of equipment. Materials were available on low level shelving units and presented in an accessible manner. The room layouts supported children's play through providing a range of experiences and opportunities. The care room within the main building provided children with access to a book corner with bean bags, and low-level seating and cushions. Within the adjoining hall, the environment provided children with a range of areas including a kitchen area and shop with supporting materials including dolls, buggies, dress up and play food.

Children's thinking skills were supported through an array of materials including jigsaws, building blocks, and a play table with straws and connectors. Easels, paint, paper, crayons and other equipment which supported children's creative thinking was at a low level and children independently engaged with these materials throughout the inspection. The service provided children with sensory opportunities by means of a sand tray, water tray with changing lights, and a bubble light with fish. The staff discussed how the children enjoy the materials, and the inspector observed all of the children engaged with the equipment and materials throughout the morning.

Children went to the outdoor area during the inspection. The area was a natural space with a bark surface and wood-based equipment.

The environment provided the children with opportunities for risk and challenge through opportunities of climbing the wooden tractor, walking on the balance beam, stepping across wooden steps which were at varied heights and running down the hills within the area. Children also had access to a mud kitchen, slide, sand tray, playhouse, and a blackboard. Staff playfully engaged with the children and took part in games of chase and imaginary play.

(b) The following practices were observed between the children and adults on the day of inspection:

Children were supported to settle into the service through relationships between the service and the child's parent(s) and/or guardian(s). Staff explained a number of children had recently begun in the service and highlighted examples which were individual to the needs of each child, and how the service was working with the parents to support the child to settle in week by week. This partnership with parents was observed during drop off time when a child who had recently began attending the service arrived. The registered provider was overheard to acknowledge the child's achievements in settling in and provided assurances to the parents. This is reflective of the services policy which states 'we will make the settling in process a positive experience for children and will work closely with parents/guardians to ensure this is achieved'.

Staff were responsive to the individual needs of children and provided support when needed. On the day, staff provided children with comfort, assurance and guidance. The following was observed:

- Two children were washing dolls using soapy water and sponges in the hall. One child tried to take the sponge from the other child, the child said 'no, mine'. The adult calmly kneeled down, smiled and pointed to both the children's hands saying 'you have one sponge, and you have one sponge – will we keep giving the doll their bath?'. The pace and explanation was appropriate for the age and stage of the children, and the two children continued to wash the doll.
- During free play, seven children were engaged with playdough at the table. One child said, 'I don't have much'. The staff member repeated this to the child, and said 'I wonder what we can do, should you ask someone for some of theirs?' The child nodded and agreed. The child looked around the table, and to the child next to them, asked 'can I have some?'

The child did not hear the request, and the staff member said '[child name] would like to ask you something' and warmly encouraged the child to ask again. The child asked again and was provided with playdough from their peer.

These practices provide support for individual children to develop and grow their own negotiation skills.

- Individual preferences of children were recognised and supported by the adults present. During the inspection, staff were overheard to acknowledge and extend the children's interests and likes. For example, one child who was engaging with an art and craft activity at the table was putting the glue onto the palms of their hands and rubbing their hands together. The staff member acknowledged 'you love to put paint and the glue onto your hands, don't you?' the child was observed to smile at the staff member while continuing to rub the glue in between their hands. During free play, a child indicated to the adult to read a story, the adult sat in the book area and asked the child 'will we read your favourite one?' the child excitedly ran to retrieve the book and sat beside the adult listening to the story.
- Children were provided choice in their play. During the morning, children were observed to engage in free play between the room in the main building and adjoining area in the hall. A staff member invited the children to take part in an arts and crafts activity. Three children chose to continue their play while others engaged with the activity. This practice supports children's independence and decision-making skills.

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 Responder was at all times immediately available to the children attending the pre-school.

(2) (a), (b) A first aid box was stored within the kitchen area which was in close proximity to the staff and children, and while outside, the staff brought the first aid box to the area. The first aid box was suitably equipped.