

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WX115		
Name of Service:	Tara's Firefly Montessori and Daycare		
Address of Service:	Knockskemolin, Oulart, Gorey, Co. Wexford		
Eircode:	Y25 H324		
Name of Registered Provider:	Tara Finn		
Service type:	Full Day		
Date of Inspection:	04/12/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	37	PM 18
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Ely Hospital, Ferrybank, Wexford		
Inspection undertaken by:	C. Ryan L. McGarry		
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		

Description of service

Tara's Firefly Montessori and Daycare is a full day care preschool service. The service offers a play-based curriculum to children aged from 6 months to 6 years and can accommodate 42 children at any one time. The service operates from three rooms. The baby and toddler room are located to the side of the providers home, with the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) room operating from a converted building at the rear of the house. There is sanitary accommodation, a kitchenette, and a designated sleep room. The children have access to a garden and outdoor play areas located at the rear of the premises.

Staffing

There were nine staff working directly with the children in the service on the day of inspection. There are 12 staff in total in the service. There was a designated person in charge present on the premises. The staff working directly with children in the service held the minimum Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at level 5, 6 and 8 qualifications in Childcare and Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Qualifications Framework.

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. The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulations:

Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d) 4 and 6 Management and Recruitment

Regulation 11 Staffing levels

Regulation 19 Health, Welfare, and Development of the Child

Regulation 22 Food and Drink

Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety, and Welfare of the Child

Regulation 25 First aid

Regulation 26 Fire Safety

Regulation 28 Insurance

Regulation 29 Premises and

Regulation 30 Space Requirements.

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.

Additional Information

An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider on the day of inspection. There was one staff member who was working directly with the children who did not have Garda vetting in place. The registered provider submitted the garda vetting disclosure to the office of the early years inspector on the 18 January 2024.

A referral was made to the EHO on 6 December to review safe food practices in the service.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish 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

(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.

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme."

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

On the day of the inspection there was a designated person in charge of the service. The registered provider arrived at the service at 11am and remained on premises for the remainder of the inspection.

(b)

There was a person in charge for the duration of the inspection.

The staff files for 12 staff working directly with children were reviewed on the day.

(2)(a)(b)

Validated references for 10 employees were kept in each staff members file.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures were available for 11 staff working in the service.

(d)

Police vetting disclosures were not required as none of staff had lived outside the state for more than six consecutive months.

(4)

Certificates of qualifications for 11 staff members working directly with the preschool children were available on file.

(6)

The service was in receipt of funding under the scheme known as the Access and Inclusion model.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)

The registered provider did not demonstrate that they had taken measures to ensure that employees were suitable and competent during the recruitment process for three staff members.

(a)(b)

Written and validated references were not on file for two staff members.

(c)

Garda vetting was not available on file for one staff member working with the children.

(4)

Qualifications were not available on file for one staff member.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted a response to address the non-compliances:

Corrective Action:

(2)(a)(b)

Written references for the two staff are on file.

(c)

Garda vetting is now available on file.

(4)

Certificate of qualification is now on file.

Preventive Action:

All staff files have been checked to ensure validated references, Garda vetting and police vetting where applicable are held on file in respect of all adults working in the service. Staff files will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the necessary documents as required are held on file.

Evidence submitted:

Validated references, certificate of qualification, Garda vetting.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted a response that was satisfactory to meet the requirements of the regulation.

This regulation will be reviewed on next inspection.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)

Throughout the period of the inspection there were adequate numbers of staff working directly with the children attending the service.

(2)

In the morning:

- **Baby room.:** There were 5 babies in the care of 2 staff. (3 aged between 0 and 1 years and 2 aged between 1 and 2 years).

- **Toddler room:** There were 10 children in the care of 2 staff. (9 aged between 2 and 3 years and 1 aged between 3 to 4 years).
- **Ecce room:** There were 22 children in the care of 4 staff. (All aged between 3 and 5 years).

In the afternoon:

- **Baby room.:** There were 4 babies in the care of 2 staff. (2 aged between 0 and 1 years and 2 aged between 1 and 2 years).
- **Toddler room:** There were 5 children in the care of 1 staff. (all aged between 1 and 2 years).
- **Ecce room:** There were 9 children in the care of 3 staff. (all aged between 3 and 6 years).

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)

The following observations and discussions with staff reflected the children's experience within the service focusing on the areas of basic needs, supporting relationships and the physical and material environment of the service on the day of inspection:

Children in the baby room had access to a bright spacious room. There were soft mats for crawling, sitting and rolling, an activity centre and low-level shelves with toys. The daily routine was led by the child's needs with children settled to sleep when they showed signs of tiredness. Nappies were changed as part of the daily routine and also as required during the day. The staff maintained a daily communication sheet which detailed sleeps, nappy changes and feeding that was given to parents at collection time. Young children were held for bottle feeding. The staff planned activities for the afternoon which included painting in the activity tray on the day of the inspection.

The atmosphere was relaxed in the toddler room. In the toddler room the staff were seen to cuddle and comfort a child who was upset. After their mid-morning snack, the children enjoyed doing artwork for Christmas. The activity included opportunities to use glue and paint. There was plenty of chatting and interacting all morning. The staff were kind and gentle in their interactions with lots of praise heard. "Well done. Very good." The children were familiar with their daily routine. For example, the transitions between activities were calm with the children seen to get a book and sit in the rest area or get a jigsaw at a table between activities. Parents dropped and collected their children directly from the playrooms and were able to talk with the staff who directly cared for the children.

In the ECCE room children were engaged in a variety of appropriate activities during the inspection including eating together, playing in the outdoor area and practicing for their Christmas play. Staff were observed playing with the children in the outdoor area. Staff who spoke to the inspector said the service prioritised outdoor play. Staff also said many of the children arrived at the service dressed in their outdoor clothes. The outdoor area had a shed with a small couch for children to sit on, another large shed with a plexiglass roof and a selection of diggers and plastic bricks, children were observed having fun digging in puddles, pushing toy wheelbarrows and playing on the ride on toys. There was a range of equipment and materials available in the outdoor area which was purposefully structured to develop children's curiosity and desire for sensorial play. There was a mixture of ground covering to facilitate all the ages and stages of the children attending the service.

The materials and equipment available in the ECCE room included a range of developmentally appropriate Montessori equipment, arts and crafts materials and other open-ended materials which were well organised and easily accessible to children. There were two large cardboard boxes for children to play in and develop their imaginations. There was a home corner which was well resourced with utensils for children to play with. There was a miniature post office for children to post their letters. Original artwork by the children was on display. Staff had helped the children to make snow globes from small glass yogurt pots which they had planned to give to their parents for Christmas.

(b)

There was a comfortable rest area in the ECCE room. The area consisted of a large comfortable leather couch which children could relax on. There were also cushions and warm blankets available for children to get comfortable.

Non-Compliance Information

Physical and material environment:

2. There was no low-level table or children's chairs available for babies to eat at or engage in activities off the floor. Highchairs were available as the option for feeding young children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted a response to address the non-compliances:

Corrective Action:

Low level tables and child size chairs are made available for babies to eat at or engage in activities off the floor.

Preventive Action:

The baby room will be kept in mind when purchasing new furniture or equipment for the children to eat or engage in activities such as floor level, low level etc.

Supporting documentation submitted:

Receipt for new table and chair for baby room and floor activities.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted a response that was satisfactory to meet the requirements of the regulation.

This regulation will be reviewed on next inspection.

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 had a healthy eating policy. The service had cereal, bread and crackers available in the rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

1.

The food and nutrition provided for the children attending on a full day care basis was not in line with the healthy eating policy and best practice in a preschool setting. Distribution of the food provided by the parents was observed to be disorganised and haphazard in the ECCE room. The food preparation area was cluttered.

At 12.55pm mealtime was observed in the ECCE room. There were 19 children present in the room at this time with 3 staff. Four children who were attending the full day care service were not provided with a hot meal. Best

practice in a preschool service requires all children to be provided with a hot meal which contains food from at least three food groups while attending a full day care service.

Other meals which had been provided by parents and reheated in the microwave were found to be inadequate to meet the nutritional needs of the children. For example, one child had a small sausage and a small quantity of dry pasta. Another child attending the full day care service had a chocolate waffle and a yogurt for their main meal of the day.

Staff who spoke to the inspector said many of the children who attend on a full day care basis “run out” of food before the end of their day. In that instance staff who spoke to the inspector said they are given toast and sometimes jam, which was not adequate. There was no other choice made available.

In the baby room, there was a variety of foods provided by parents. However, one child’s food consisted only of snacks, one of which was pureed carrot as a main meal.

2.

Many of the snacks given to the children attending the part-time service were observed to be inadequate and not in line with the service’s healthy eating policy. For example, one child attending had a chocolate waffle for their snack at 12.55pm.

3.

Many children were observed drinking large quantities of juice drinks supplied from home. This is not best practice in the promotion of healthy eating in a preschool service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted a response to address the non-compliances:

Corrective Action:

1.

For full day and part time children in the ECCE room, the food preparation area has been cleared and will be clear going forward to ensure safe and healthy distribution of food. Parents have been reminded to provide appropriate hot meals to be reheated and a healthy snack for the ECCE children attending for 3 hours. They have also been notified not to send in snack foods. Snacks are provided by the service for part time and full-time children. The service’s Healthy Food Policy has been distributed to all parents in the service.

2.

Regarding the baby room, parents have been encouraged to provide hot meals which can be reheated when the child wants the food. The services Healthy Food Policy has been distributed to all parents in the service.

3.

The service's Healthy Food Policy has been distributed to all parents in the service and they have been notified that the only drinks to be sent in are water or milk as per healthy eating policy.

Preventive Action:

All staff have had refresher training on the Healthy Eating Policy and implementation of same will be monitored by the registered provider.

For the whole service, the team are in the process of organising the provision of a hot meal/dinner, either made on site or brought in and distributed to all rooms. The team will also look at providing drinks, so no need for parents to send in drinks from home. The healthy eating policy will be updated as needed.

Supporting documentation submitted:

The healthy eating policy.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted a response that was adequate to meet the requirements of the regulation. This regulation will be reviewed on next inspection.

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 entrance to the premises was secured. Cleaning products are stored out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

There was warm water, liquid soap and hand towels available for hygienic handwashing. Nappy changing observed in the baby room and toddler room was in line with the service policy and good hygiene practices were observed. Bottles of formula came prepared to the service and were stored in the fridges.

Administration of Medication:

Records of administration of medication reviewed on the day showed that the practice was consistent and in line with safe administration of medication.

Safe Sleep:

There was one sleep room located between the toddler and baby room. There were six standard cots available in the room. Sleep mats were available for older children. The sleep mats were set up in the individual playrooms after lunch, with sheets and blankets. The sleep room temperature recorded at 18.6°C was in line with best practice. The sleeping children's colour, breathing and position were observed and recorded every 10 minutes on the day of inspection. Staff were observed to physically check children while sleeping in the sleep room.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The corridor between the toddler and baby room was cluttered, with three buggies stored there. This posed as a risk in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Infection Control:

2. Mattresses on all cots did not have waterproof covers on them which posed as a risk of cross contamination.
3. Staff did not wash their hands in the ECCE room prior to serving snacks and reheating meals provided by parents.
4. Meals provided by parents for the children to be heated in the service were not checked with a temperature probe prior to being served. This posed a risk under safe food guidelines and also risk of children receiving food that could burn them.
5. Handwashing before the 12.55pm snack in the ECCE room was inconsistent. Some children washed their hands when encouraged by staff members, but many children did not.
6. Handwashing in the baby room was inconsistent during the day. Handwashing of hands after nappy changing and before eating didn't happen consistently by staff until prompted by the inspector.
7. Nappy changing in the ECCE room was carried out on a mat on the floor of a toilet attached to the preschool room which was not appropriate for staff and children and posed as an infection control risk.

Safe Sleep:

8. At 3.15pm a baby under one years of age was observed sleeping in a buggy in the baby room. Three buggies were observed set up with blankets on them on arrival to the service. The cots were not made up. This practice is contrary to best practice in relation to ensuring safe sleep in a preschool setting.

Fire Safety:

9. In the toddler and baby room the fire drill was recorded as already being carried out on the 7 December. The record was dated, timed and signed by a staff member.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted a response to address the non-compliances:

Corrective Action:

1.
The corridor between the toddler and baby room has been de-cluttered and buggies will be stored elsewhere.
2.
Waterproof covers have been purchased and placed on the mattress cots. Staff have been reminded to put them on.
3.
Handwashing signs have been placed at all sinks encouraging handwashing for both staff and children. Handwashing policy and 'personal hygiene requirements for people preparing or serving food' guide has been given to all staff to refresh.
4.
A temperature probe has been purchased for each room.
5.
Handwashing signs have been placed at all sinks encouraging handwashing for both staff and children. Staff supervise children during handwashing in each room.
6. Handwashing signs have been placed at all sinks encouraging handwashing for both staff and children.
7.
In the process of acquiring a changing table with steps for the ECCE room to carry out nappy changing. This will be completed as soon as possible.
8. In the process of removing buggies from the service, all children will be assisted to go asleep in the cots rather than be rocked in buggy and transferred. Parents have been informed of this also.
9.
A person has been designated to complete the fire drill records for both baby and toddler room. For this non-compliance, it was a genuine mistake, and it was on two rooms as one staff member was showing the other how to fill it in and they just copied the date. The fire drill had been completed the week before.

Preventive Action:

The registered provider and designated person will ensure that the corridor between the baby room and the toddler room is to remain de-cluttered at all times.

All staff have had refresher training on the handwashing policy and implementation of same will be monitored by the registered provider.

Fire drill records will be maintained by the designated person and checked monthly by the registered provider or deputy person in charge.

Supporting documentation submitted:

The handwashing policy, photograph of waterproof covers, handwashing signs and receipts.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted a response that was adequate to meet the requirements of the regulation. This regulation will be reviewed on next 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)

There were staff trained in first aid for children available to the children attending the preschool service.

(2)(a)(b)

There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position and was available for use.

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)

The last recorded fire drill carried out in the ECCE room was the 4 December 2023. However, the service did not provide evidence of fire drills for the toddler and baby room. See regulation 23.

(1)(b)

A record was maintained of when the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were serviced. The last maintenance carried out in the service was recorded as having taken place in June and August 2023.

(4)

There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire displayed in a conspicuous position in the hallway of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was available to demonstrate that insurance was in place.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated

(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and

Compliance Information

(d)

The service had cleaning schedules maintained daily by staff in each of the rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

(c)

1.The ECCE room was found to be cold on the day of inspection. The room temperature in a preschool service is required to be maintained between 18°C and 20°C at all times for the comfort of children and staff. The toddler room and baby rooms were warm and comfortable. The temperature of the ECCE room was checked on a number of occasions during the day. There was a wall mounted heater in the room which was turned on and working.

Time	Temperature recorded	Room	Temperature required
10.45 am	14.2°C	ECCE	18°C to 20°C
11.00 am	14.2°C	Toilet 1	18°C to 20°C
11.05 am	14.2°C	Toilet 2 (with Changing unit)	18°C to 20°C
11.40 am	13.2°C	ECCE	18°C to 20°C
12.30 pm	12.2°C	ECCE	18°C to 20°C
12.35 pm	14.4°C	Toilet 1	18°C to 20°C
3.25 pm	14.2°C	ECCE	18°C to 20°C
3.30 pm	14.2°C	Toilet 2 (with Changing unit)	18°C to 20°C
3.35pm	14.1°C	Toilet 1	18°C to 20°C

The inspector noted that the children kept their outdoor coats and trousers, and some kept their hats on during the time in the ECCE room as the room was so cold. The inspector also noted that the staff wore their outdoor coats and some also wore their warm hats in the ECCE room to keep warm.

- (d)
2. The wall mounted heater in toilet 2 in the ECCE room, which included the nappy changing area was not working on the day of inspection
 3. The toddler room required maintenance. General wear and tear were observed within the room. There was chipped paint on the walls and dirty skirting boards.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action:

1.
In the process of purchasing an additional heater for the ECCE room. All heaters are on timers to come on early in the morning.
2.
The wall mounted heater in toilet 2 in the ECCE room has been fixed.
3.
Maintenance for the toddler room has been scheduled for July for painting. Skirting boards were cleaned and will be painted during the summer.

Preventative Action:

The registered provider will maintain heaters and will provide additional heaters if needed to maintain an 18-20C in the ECCE room. Maintenance for each room is scheduled for once a year.

Evidence Submitted:

Photograph of heater and cleaned skirting boards. Receipt for a timer.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted a response that was satisfactory to meet the requirements of the regulation. This regulation will be reviewed on next inspection.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) to (6), a registered provider shall ensure that adequate clear floor space is available in the premises for the work, play and movement of children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(2)

A review of the room measurements was done on inspection. All the rooms had sufficient space to meet the needs of the children and staff attending the service. The following table demonstrates the room measurements:

Room	Size	Children's Age Profile
Baby Room	30 m ²	0-2 years
Toddler Room	45 m ²	1-3 years
ECCE Room	40 m ²	3-5 years