

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016CC018
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Name of Service:	Súgradh Pre-School
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Address of Service:	The Old Schoolhouse, Ballygiblin, Mitchelstown, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P67 PW89
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Name of Registered Provider:	Michael O'Sullivan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	27/09/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	134 Bank Place, Mallow, Cork. P51 EC59.
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Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel
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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

Súgradh Pre-school is a private sessional early years service in operation since 2016, providing care and education for children aged from 2 years to 6 years of age. Current opening hours are from 9.00 until 12.00 noon and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is facilitated during these hours, Monday to Friday, 38 weeks of the year. School age care is also in operation.

Súgradh Pre-school is a single storey building, previously the old schoolhouse, which is located adjacent to Ballygiblin National School, 3 km outside Mitchelstown in North Cork. The service has both a staff and main entrance, which are both keypad operated and each entrance has a small lobby area. The service consists of a large classroom off which there are two children's toilets, one adult toilet and an office/kitchen. There are two secure outdoor play areas located at both gable ends of the service.

Staffing

There are six staff employed by the service including one staff member who is on maternity leave. The registered provider does not work in the service.

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 manager, deputy, 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.*
- (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 manager was the designated person in charge and a named person was available to deputise, both were available throughout the inspection.
- (b) The staff roster indicated that the designated person in charge and the deputy were available while the pre-school children were present in the service.
- (c) A clear management structure was available in photographic format on a door in the service, detailing staff roles and responsibilities.
- (2) Recruitment records in regards to the six staff members and the registered provider were reviewed.
- (a) (b) There were ten validated references from past employers and four validated references from sources other than past employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau were on file for the six staff members and the registered provider.
- (d) International police vetting was not required as none of the staff or the registered provider had lived outside the State for a period of six consecutive months or longer, as an adult.
- (3) All vetting had been carried out prior to each employee being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child.
- (4) There was evidence that six adults, three of whom were present on the day of inspection, who work directly with the children, had attained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above 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.

Compliance Information

- (1) There were, at all times, an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in the service.
- (3) The minimum ratio of adults to children was met. There were eighteen sessional children, aged from two years six months to four years six months of age, in attendance with two staff members and one Access and Inclusion Support Worker.

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

BASIC NEEDS:

- The service promoted healthy eating. Children's snacks provided by the parents/guardians, served at 11.10 am, were observed to consist of ham sandwiches, yogurt, bite sizes pieces of fruit and cheese.
- Children were observed managing their own personal care independently, appropriate to their age and stage of development. Examples included children accessing the toilets and children wiping their noses and disposing of the tissues in the pedal operated bin. Staff were nearby to provide assistance if required.
- A wipe board was used to record information ensuring each staff member was informed of all messages regarding the children.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS:

- A keyperson approach was stated as being in place with two staff members allocated specific children. These groups meet up a snack time and the inspector was furnished with the names of each child in each group. Staff stated that they are responsible for building relationships with the children and their parents which included discussing issues, sharing general information, observations and learning journals.
- Staff members sat with the children during snack time, the atmosphere was noted to be relaxed with the adults and children engaged in social conversation.
- Children requiring a longer time to eat their food were accommodated without being rushed, as per the service's healthy eating policy.
- Staff were actively engaged with groups of children throughout the morning. One staff member was assisting children at the playdough table to cut and roll shapes, while a second staff member was facilitating a passing the ball game in the home corner and the third staff member was demonstrating the rules of a matching card game. The staff interactions were warm and enthusiastic.
- Smooth transitions between activities and snack were observed with staff using a shaker to let the children know that the previous activity was finishing and a new one was beginning. An example of this was at snack time when staff member used the shaker while also playing the clean-up song to encourage the children to get ready for snack time.
- Children were encouraged to engage positively with each other in play activities which required turn taking and sharing such as when participating in the passing of the stringy monster in the home corner or playing in the sand trough with the equipment.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The indoor area was laid out to facilitate sensory experiences through playdough, sand and arts and crafts. Fine motor skills were supported with the use of jigsaws, scissors, crayons and pencils. Opportunities for practising gross motor skills were available in the two outdoor areas with access to swings and a slide in area one.
- Children were observed to be happily engaged in a variety of materials which were easily accessible from low-level shelving which encouraged both choice and independence.
- The walls were decorated with a family tree with pictures of each child's family along with birthday cakes with each child's picture visible. A visual photographic display of each child was available where the children attached their photographs to indicate they were in the service.

- A range of books were available in the bookcase in the rest/quiet area which supported children's language and stirred their imagination.
- There were two outdoor play areas available, one of which had a covered area offering the children the opportunity of playing outdoors in all weathers. A range of developmentally appropriate equipment was provided in the fully enclosed areas. Due to an orange wind warning the children were not outdoors on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS:

- (1) While water was available in a jug, it was placed above the children's height at the opposite end of the room from the cups. In conversation, staff members stated that the water is poured for the children into the cups at snack time. Water not available outside snack time was also noted as a non-compliance on the last report, 10 November 2021.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1) A water table, which is easily accessible to the children, has been set up to facilitate children leaving their individual water bottles. A jug of water and cups are left out in the event a child forgets their bottle.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1) A photograph of the children's individual bottles, a jug of water and cups on the new water table were received in the office of the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The requirement for Regulation 19 has been met.

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:

- There were two entry doors, one for parents/guardians and one for staff, both doors were operated with a keypad ensuring that no unauthorised adults could gain entry.
- One of the internal doors was secured with a hook and eye catch and the other had a thumb twist cylinder preventing children from leaving the service unsupervised.
- The eight windows in the classroom were inaccessible to the children preventing them from exiting or falling.
- A handrail was available on the ramp in the outdoor play area to ensure that children could safely navigate their way down from the service to the play area.
- All indoor and outdoor toys appeared in good condition.
- The radio flex was stored out of reach of the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children in a cupboard in the children's bathroom area and also on a high shelf in the home corner.
- The outdoor areas were secured with concrete walls, high metal fencing and keycode operated pads.

Infection Control:

- A tissue station with a box of tissues, easily accessible by the children, with a picture routine of the sequence of good nasal hygiene, was available and was in use by the children. A pedal operated bin was located at the station.
- Perishable food was observed to be stored in the fridge preventing spoilage.
- Children and adults had access to thermostatically controlled hot water, dispensing soap, paper towels and pedal operated bins to dispose of waste in the service.
- Windows in the sanitary areas and in the rooms could be opened to circulate fresh air.
- All cleaning schedules for the classroom and sanitary areas were complete and up to date.

Administration of Medication:

- Anti-febrile medication, stored in its original container, was kept in the locked filing cabinet in the office.

Safe Sleep:

- A rest quiet area was available in the service where children could sit quietly.

Fire Safety:

- All emergency exit/fire doors were unobstructed in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- (1) A large dolls house, at the same height as the children, was not anchored posing a tipping or falling hazard.
- (2) Staff stated the water butt, in the outdoor area, was being used by the children in the mud kitchen posing a safety risk should the children come into contact with harmful substances from the water running into the water butt from the guttering.
- (3) The two storage bins in outdoor play area were accessible to the children, posing a safety risk should a child try to climb on them.

Infection Control:

- (4) There was no paper roll dispenser for the paper roll being used in the children's sanitary area, posing a risk of cross infection from the number of children observed handling it on the morning of the inspection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following statements were received from the registered provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- (1) The doll's house was anchored immediately to prevent tipping or falling.
- (2) Water from the water butt will not be used in children's play, only for watering plants. Children will be supervised when using the water to water the plants and handwashing will take place afterwards.
- (3) A timber gate has been erected to prevent children having access to the bins.

Infection Control:

- (5) Paper towels were added to the dispenser for individual use and will be refilled each evening.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- (1) A photograph of the anchored doll's house was received in the office of the inspectorate.
- (2) The statement from the registered provider that the water from the butt will not be used in children's play, that the children will be supervised while watering plants with the water and that handwashing will take place afterwards has been accepted.
- (3) A photograph of the new timber gate enclosing the bins was received in the office of the inspectorate.

Infection Control:

- (4) A photograph of the filled paper towel dispenser was received in the office of the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The requirements for Regulation 23 have been met.

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) Certificates were on file to verify that the manager had valid First Aid Responder training completed and that a second staff member had a valid first aid certificate. Both staff members were available at all times during the morning of inspection.
- (2)
 - (a) (b) The service had two well equipped first aid boxes, easily accessible, stored on a high shelf above the home corner of the classroom, these were available at all times while the pre-school children were present.

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) A written record was available of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 25 September 2023.
 - (b) A written record was available detailing the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment in the service. The firefighting equipment certificate was dated October 2022.
- (2)
- (c) The above records were open to inspection by the inspector on the day.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was located on a wall of one of the windows in the classroom.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (b) There was no written record available for the maintenance of the smoke alarms in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)
- (b) The certificate for the smoke alarm was located and is now displayed in the classroom.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1)

(b) A copy of the smoke alarm certificate, dated 19 May 2023, was received in the office of the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The requirement for this regulation has been met.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the pre-school was insured. A written record was available with the expiry date recorded as 27 March 2024. The service was insured for 22 sessional children and 20 school age children. Information included details such as including public liability, outings, fire brigade and employer's liability.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The service appeared to be of sound and stable structure.
- (b) All doors, in the indoors and outdoors, were safety secured and the outdoor perimeter was made safe with high metal fencing, concrete walls and keycode operated pads.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d)
- (1) The toilet flush button, in one of the children's toilets, was broken preventing children from using the button effectively.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (d)
- (1) The button has been replaced. A maintenance and repair book has now been put in place to communicate the repairs required with the maintenance person each weekend.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (d)
- (1) Photographs of the replaced push button and the maintenance repair book were submitted to the office of the Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The requirement for Regulation 29 has been met.