

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016CC029
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Name of Service:	First Friends Rathpeacon Preschool
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Address of Service:	Sweeney's Hill, Old Mallow Road, Rathpeacon, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	T23 Y472
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Name of Registered Provider:	Trasa McCarthy
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	04/10/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurrabraher Cork
Inspection undertaken by:	D Prendergast
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	N/A
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Description of service

First Friends Rathpeacon Preschool first notified in 2016. A new registered provider has recently been assigned to the setting, which is a privately owned sessional service, that is registered to cater for children aged two to six years. This includes children who attend the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, currently accommodated over 38 weeks of the year. Two daily sessions are facilitated; the first from 8.40am to 11.40am and the second from 12.00pm to 3.00pm.

The service is located on the outskirts of Cork city and operates from a room within a two-storey community centre. Child and staff sanitary facilities are available adjacent to the care room. A large hall is accessible for indoor active play and there is a designated outdoor play area at the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The service currently employs three adults, all of whom are involved in the direct care of the children. All three of the staff members hold a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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 the 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) A named person in charge and a deputy person in charge had been assigned to the early years service. Written information to this effect was displayed on a notice board in the care room.
 - (b) When the unannounced inspection commenced, the registered provider and the deputy were present at the service and both remained on site for the duration of the inspection process.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of the three adults, who were employed at the setting, were reviewed and the following was noted:
- (a) There were five written past employer references available, with records of validation for two of the references.
 - (b) One written and validated reference was in place from a source other than a previous employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting documentation was held in respect of the three staff members.
 - (d) Police vetting was not deemed to be required for any of the adults.
- (4) Evidence of attainment of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications, was available for each of the adults who worked directly with children.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (a) Records of validation were unavailable for four of the six references, which had been provided by past employers.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider responded to advise that the reference validations have been obtained.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of the reference validations were submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective action implemented by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under regulation 9.

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) During the onsite inspection, it was observed that a sufficient number of adults were involved in the direct care of the children.
- (3) The required adult to child ratio was exceeded. In the morning, 3 adults were working with 19 children, who were aged 3 to 5 years.

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:

- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (c) Written information in relation to the ratio of adults to children, was clearly visible in the service.
 - (h) Attendance roll books were available; one for the morning sessional service and a second for the afternoon sessional service.
 - (i) Daily staff rosters were recorded within the roll books.

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)

Basic needs:

- The mid-morning meal was noted to take place at 10.40am. A relaxed environment was evident, as the adults carefully assisted the children to open food packaging and containers. Sufficient time was also afforded for children to enjoy their snacks.
- The children's drinks were easily accessible in their bags, which were stored on a low-level shelf in the main care room.
- As the children's sanitary facilities were located separately to the care room, staff members were observed to accompany the children to this adjacent area. The adults offered verbal prompts and reminders to the children, which supported the development of self-care and independence.
- Children were spoken to in a kind and patient manner and well-established care routines were evident. For example, the children readily lined up in front of the door before going to the sanitary area to wash their hands, prior to snack time and the children were also noted to put away their lunch boxes and bags, once they had finished eating.
- Within the care room, the children were observed to freely explore the various materials and activities on offer. A period of active play was also accommodated in the large hall area.

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 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.

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) Taking into consideration the number of children accommodated at the setting, their age range and the duration of their daily attendance, the facilities provided were deemed adequate.

- Low-level tables and child sized chairs were accessible to the children, to facilitate table top activities and mealtime routines.
- All of the available play resources were positioned at the children’s eye level, which allowed them to freely select interest items. The range of age and stage appropriate materials included a large, furnished doll’s house, actions figures, plastic bricks, a play kitchen, hand held vehicles and car garages, a castle, dolls and jigsaws.
- The outdoor play environment was equipped with a slide, tyres, a mud kitchen, additional play kitchens and a play house.

(b) The children had access to a designated rest area within the care room, to use as needed. This space was noted to consist of a wooden bench, with vinyl cushioning and incorporated book storage.

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 high-level door handles in place on the care room door and on the door to the hall area, minimised the risk of a child exiting the service, while unsupervised.
- The outdoor play space was secured through high-level walls and a secured gate, which reduced the risk of unauthorised access and the unsupervised exit of a child, during outdoor play.
- Firefighting equipment was safely wall mounted.
- The first aid box was stored out of the children's reach.
- Radiator covers reduced the likelihood of a child sustaining a scald injury.

Infection Control:

- Wash hand basins were equipped with a supply of warm running water and liquid soap, with paper towels available for the children to dry their hands. Both paper towels and an electric hand dryer were in place in the adults' sanitary facility.
- Handwashing was carried out after the children used the toilet facilities and before beginning the mid-morning snack.
- A refrigerator was in use to maintain the children's perishable snacks between 0°C and 5°C.
- Tables were sanitised after snack time and the care room was hoovered.
- The children's coats were stored on suitable wall hooks and shelf storage was provided for their bags.
- The windows in the care room remained open throughout the morning, which ensured adequate ventilation.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not observed to be administered during the period of inspection. The registered provider also stated that none of the children were in receipt of medication.

Safe Sleep:

- None of the children were noted to sleep while in attendance.

Outings:

- The inspector was informed that outings were not conducted.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The risk of unauthorised persons gaining access to the early years service was not appropriately managed. Upon the inspector's arrival, the main entrance door to the premises was found to be unsecured, along with an inner door, which provided access to the large hall and two subsequent doors, which led to the children's sanitary area and care room. As a result, the inspector was able to enter the care room unannounced.

Infection Control:

2. A malodour was evident in one of the children's sanitary facilities and the mechanical vent in the same area did not appear to be functioning correctly, as there was no audible sound from the vent. This may lead to the spread of infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Going forward, a member of staff will remain in the hall until all children have arrived. The member of staff will then lock the main entrance door and access will only be available through the buzzer entry system.

Infection Control:

2. The vent has been repaired.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. The statement from the registered provider is accepted as evidence.

Infection Control:

2. Video evidence to demonstrate that the mechanical vent is now functioning.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider was assessed and deemed to meet regulatory compliance with regulation 23.

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) Two of the adults who worked at the service had undertaken First Aid Responder (FAR) training, which was valid until 17 August 2025.
- (2)
- (a) First aid supplies were stored on a high-level shelf and were readily accessible by the adults.
 - (b) The first aid box was available at all times when the service was in operation.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (a) The use-by date had expired on all of the available, various-sized, sterile wound dressings and the five available sterile eye pad dressings were also out of date.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The first aid items have been replaced and are now all in date.

Supporting documentation submitted

A photograph of the recently purchased sterile wound dressings and sterile eye pads.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted by the registered provider are accepted in meeting the regulatory requirement.

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 monthly fire drills which had been conducted in the service were recorded and displayed. The last fire drill undertaken was dated 8 September 2023.
 - (b) A document which detailed the number and type of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms was provided. According to the maintenance records, the firefighting equipment was last serviced on 12 September 2023.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedure was displayed in the main care room.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (b) Annual servicing of the wired smoke alarm was not ensured, as required. The most recent record of servicing was dated 22 October 2021.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The smoke alarms were inspected and the certificate has been issued.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the fire alarm test certificate was forwarded.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance identified under this regulation has been adequately addressed.