

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016CC034				
Name of Service:	Mary Geary's Childcare				
Address of Service:	IDA Business Park, Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork				
Eircode:	T45 VY29				
Name of Registered Provider:	Oliver Sheehan				
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	20/09/2023				
Date 2 of Inspection:	21/09/2023				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>136</td> <td>PM</td> <td>66</td> </tr> </table>	AM	136	PM	66
AM	136	PM	66		
Day 2	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>137</td> <td>PM</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> </table>	AM	137	PM	N/A
AM	137	PM	N/A		

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurranabraher Cork
Inspection undertaken by:	D Prendergast & V McCarthy
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	N/A
---------------------------------	-----

Description of service

Mary Geary's Childcare is a play based, full day care service, that also provides part time and sessional care. It is registered to accommodate children aged 0 to 6 years, along with school age childcare. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated from 8.45am to 11.45am and from 9.00am to 12.00pm, each Monday to Friday, over 38 weeks annually. Daily opening hours are from 7.45am to 6.00pm and the service is open throughout the year, with the exception of public holidays.

The childcare facility is situated in an industrial estate in Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork and operates from a purpose built, two-storey premises. Within the main building, all 11 operational care rooms are located on the ground floor. Each care room has either adjoining or adjacent sanitary facilities for the children's use and an individual outdoor play area, which is directly accessible from the care room. A wider outdoor play environment is also available to the children, which consists of several varied interest areas. Two designated rooms and a large hall are provided for sleep. The ground floor also includes a reception area, a commercial kitchen, a sluice room, a laundry room and adult sanitary facilities. An office, a staff room, a meeting room and a training room are located on the first floor. An additional care room operates from an adjacent modular structure, with adjoining sanitary facilities. There is an onsite car park at the front of the premises, to facilitate the safe drop off and collection of children and staff parking.

Staffing

At present, there are 72 adults employed by Mary Geary's Childcare, including the registered provider, who does not work directly with children. There are 48 adults who are involved in the direct care of the early years children, 7 of whom also work with school age children and 6 adults, who work with school age children only. The staff complement also includes seven administrative staff, two maintenance staff, three chefs and five cleaners. Four students were undertaking work placements at the time of inspection.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of the child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulations 19 Health, welfare and development of child and 23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the following rooms: Caterpillars, Little Acorns, First Friends, Daisy Chains and Tory Tops and did not include the Butterflies, Ladybirds, Honey Pots, Busy Bees, Buttercups, Mighty Oaks or Bluebells rooms.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, managers, staff and children who were present on the days of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had records available of the named person in charge and three designated adults, who could deputise as required. The registered provider ensured that one or more of these named persons were always on duty, as demonstrated by the service's staff rosters.
- (b) The registered provider, person in charge and two of the named deputies were on duty when the inspectors arrived at the premises on 20 September 2023. The registered provider and two deputies remained on duty for the duration of the first day of inspection. The registered provider, person in charge and the same two deputies were again on duty when the inspectors arrived at the premises on 21 September 2023 and remained on duty for the duration of the inspection that day.
- (2) It was established that 25 adults and 4 students had commenced working at the service since the previous inspection on 20 April 2022. Therefore, the recruitment records in respect of these 29 people were reviewed in full, along with those of 8 of others, whose files had not been previously assessed. A staff file was not required in respect of one adult, who attended to maintenance duties on the premises outside of operational hours. From the total of 71 staff and 4 student files in place, the following information was obtained:
- (a) There were 111 references and required validations available on file from past employers.
- (b) There were 39 references and required validations available from sources other than past employers.
- (c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available on file in respect of 72 of the 75 people. The remainder three people were secondary school students who were aged under 18 years and therefore did not require Garda vetting disclosures.
- (d) Police vetting was available in respect of 22 of the 23 adults that had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months. It was noted that a separate record of the police vetting translated into English was also maintained on file, where relevant and attached to the original documents.
- (4) A copy of a childcare qualification, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications or letters from the Minister, were available on file in respect of 51 of the 52 adults that worked directly with the early years children. It was also noted that one adult attached to a training college was in the process of completing a qualification in childcare and that six adults attached to the service worked only with school age children and therefore, childcare qualifications for these adults were not required.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (d) Police vetting was not available for review in respect of one adult that had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than six consecutive months.
- (4) A copy of a completed childcare qualification as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a letter from the Minister, was not available on file in respect of one adult, who was observed to work directly with the early years children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)
- (d) The manager of the service has responded to state that police vetting has been applied for in respect of the adult, who lived outside the jurisdiction for more than a six-month period. Until the police vetting is received, this adult will undertake administration work, with no access to children.
- (4) The adult is currently working in administration and will move to a school age childcare room, once their police vetting is obtained, as they have not yet obtained a relevant childcare qualification. No staff member will commence employment with Mary Geary's Childcare until all relevant documentation has been received in full, from a prospective employee i.e. Garda and/or police vetting and relevant qualifications must be on file.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (2)
- (d) A copy of the required police vetting.
- (4) The statement from the manager is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The corrective actions implemented have addressed the non-compliances identified under regulation 9.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The service's Outings policy was reviewed and was deemed to meet the necessary requirements.

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.

(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) There was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children, throughout the inspection period.

(2) On both days of inspection, adequate adult to child ratios were observed in all 12 care rooms, which were in operation as follows:

20 September 2023:

Room Name and Age Range of Early Years Children	Time of Day	Number of Children Present	Number of Adults Available
Caterpillars (11 months – 1 ½ years)	Morning	6	2
	Afternoon	6	2
Butterflies (11 months – 1 ½ years)	Morning	7	2
	Afternoon	7	2
Ladybirds (3 – 4 years)	Morning	17	1 + 1 AIM support
	Afternoon	N/A	N/A
Honey Pots (2 to 3 ½ years)	Morning	10	1 + 1 AIM support
	Afternoon	10	2
Busy Bees (2 – 3 ½ years)	Morning	18	2 + 1 AIM support
	Afternoon	17	3
Buttercups (2 – 3 ½ years)	Morning	9	1
	Afternoon	N/A	N/A
Little Acorns (3 ½ - 4 ½ years)	Morning	6	1
	Afternoon	6	1
Mighty Oaks (3 – 4 ½ years)	Morning	16	1 + 1 AIM
	Afternoon	N/A	N/A
First Friends (3 ½ - 5 years)	Morning	17	1 + 1 AIM
	Afternoon	N/A	N/A
Bluebells (2 - 3 years)	Morning	11	2
	Afternoon	10	2
Daisy Chains (1 year and 10 months – 2 ½ years)	Morning	10	2
	Afternoon	10	2
Tory Tops (2 – 3 ½ years)	Morning	9	1 + 1 AIM support
	Afternoon	N/A	N/A

Four students and one staff member, who did not hold a relevant award in Early Childhood Care and Education, were not included in the adult child ratios.

21 September 2023 (morning):

Room Name and Age Range of Early Years Children	Number of Children Present	Number of Adults Available
Caterpillars (11 months – 1 ½ years)	6	2
Butterflies (11 months – 1 ½ years)	6	2
Ladybirds (3 – 4 years)	19	2 + 1 AIM
Honey Pots (2 to 3 years)	10	2
Busy Bees (2 – 3 ½ years)	18	1 + 1 AIM
Buttercups (2 – 3 ½ years)	8	1
Little Acorns (3 ½ - 4 ½ years)	8	1
Mighty Oaks (3 – 4 ½ years)	15	2
First Friends (3 ½ - 5 years)	18	1 + 1 AIM
Bluebells (2 - 3 years)	9	2
Daisy Chains (1 year and 10 months – 2 ½ years)	11	2
Tory Tops (2 – 3 ½ years)	9	1 + 1 AIM

- (8)
- (a) At least two adults were present at all times during the inspection process. This practice was also evidenced through the staff roster.

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:

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

Compliance Information

(j) The inspectors were informed that some of the early years children may require specific medication while in attendance. Previously completed administration of medication records were available on file. A sample of 15 records were reviewed and noted to have been correctly completed. Written parental consent for staff to administer medication was obtained.

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:

- Healthy eating was promoted at the service and this was evidenced through the children's snacks and meals, which included a selection of fruit, yogurt, rice cakes and a hot meal of chicken casserole. Observed meal breaks were conducted at a relaxed pace, which afforded the children plenty of time to eat and drink.
- Bibs were worn by the younger children during mealtimes. Developmentally appropriate cutlery and crockery were provided and either high chairs or low-level tables and chairs were available for the children's use.

- Opportunities for children to self-feed, assistance with feeding or a combination of both, were accommodated, depending on each child's needs and preferences. For example, some of the younger children were asked if they would like to try feeding themselves.
- Drinking water was accessible to the children both during and outside of the designated mealtimes. In some of the care rooms, the children's own reusable water bottles and sippy cups were stored on low level tables, while in other rooms, a water dispenser and cups were within the children's reach. In the Caterpillars room, which catered for infants and toddlers, sippy cups were visible on cubby shelving and staff advised that these were offered to the children during the day.
- Nappy changing was observed to be attended to at frequent intervals and was sensitively managed by the adults, who chatted warmly to the children. Older children were supported to utilise the sanitary facilities in an independent manner, with supervision and verbal reminders offered, as needed.
- Adequate space was provided within the indoor environments for the children to freely explore their chosen activities and interest items. During free play, the children could easily move between the care rooms and the designated outdoor play spaces adjoining said rooms. The children also had opportunities to play in the wider outdoor area.

Programme of activities:

- The service offered a play based, emergent curriculum, with individual curriculum statements in place across the various care rooms. A staff member had also been appointed to the role of curriculum lead.
- Language acquisition and development was encouraged during free play activities, care routines and mealtimes, through informal conversation and through the incorporation of songs, music and storytelling.
- Each child's participation was facilitated as they progressed through the service and settled into new care rooms. For example, the curriculum lead advised that a written transition plan was completed for each child, as they prepared to move to a new care room. The relevant information was then used to inform the subsequent medium term curriculum plan in the child's new care room. In addition, parents were invited to undertake observations of their children, which also contributed to activity planning. In this way, staff ensured that the children's interests and developmental needs were reflected and supported within the programme of activities.
- Clear and detailed information regarding the programme of activities was displayed in the care rooms. For example, in the First Friends room, short and medium term plans referred to art and craft activities, relevant books, songs, rhymes, experiments, the promotion of physical development and *understanding the world*.

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-

(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)

(b) Each of the sampled care rooms was furnished with a clearly defined cosy area, which met the children’s need for rest and relaxation. These spaces included soft floor mats, sofas and cushions and were located next to book areas. The two sleep rooms adjacent to the Caterpillars room and the Butterflies room were both equipped with 11 cots and safety mattresses. A combination of floor mattresses and stackable beds, with suitable linen, were used to facilitate sleep in the hall area of the service. In total, there were 29 mattresses and 26 stackable beds available.

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:

- Unauthorised entry to the main building was prevented through the use of a magnetic lock. A door release button positioned at adult height on the interior, reduced the likelihood of a child exiting the premises, while unsupervised. Access to and exit from the separately located Tory Tops room was via a key pad operated gate.
- Fence enclosures were in place in the individual outdoor play areas that were accessible from each care room. The broader outdoor play environment was enclosed by fencing and secured gates.
- Low lying electrical sockets in the care rooms were fitted with safely plugs.
- Kitchenette areas within the older care rooms were partitioned, so as to minimise the risk of children accessing potentially hazardous items.
- The available firefighting equipment was securely wall mounted.
- Visibility markings were in place on glass panel doors, which reduced the risk of injury to a child.

Infection Control:

- Dispensable liquid soap and paper towels, along with thermostatically controlled warm water were provided at the wash hand basins. This facilitated the practice of hygienic hand washing and drying, which was observed to be carried out by children after outdoor play and after using the sanitary facilities.
- Incorporated storage areas were available within the care rooms for the children's coats, bags and wellies.
- The playrooms and sanitary facilities appeared clean and well-maintained. The service had designated cleaners and staff members also undertook some cleaning tasks within their respective care rooms. For example, in the Caterpillars room, high chair trays were observed to be sanitised after use.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not observed to be administered on the day of inspection.
- Children's medication was appropriately stored out of their reach, had been labelled with the children's names and was in-date.

Safe Sleep:

- Air conditioning units were provided in the sleep rooms and in the hall area, to ensure that air temperatures could be maintained within the recommended range for safe sleep practice. Respective air temperature readings of 19.9°C and 19.2°C were recorded in the Caterpillars sleep room and in the large hall, while both areas were in use to accommodate sleeping children.
- Staff members carried out and documented frequent physical checks of sleeping children. A review of the corresponding sleep records, which were maintained electronically, demonstrated that the children's breathing, colour and position were assessed. The temperature of the sleep room was also recorded.

Fire Safety:

- There were no fire safety concerns noted.

Outings:

- The manager advised that outings were occasionally accommodated and a suitable Outings policy was in place.

Non-Compliance Information

Safe Sleep:

Suitable sleep equipment was not provided for two of the children, who were both aged under two years. During a designated rest period, floor mattresses were used by the children, which were not sufficiently conducive to sleep for children under 24 months. A floor level bed, with a solid base and rigid or semi rigid sides and fitted with a firm, flat, waterproof mattress, was required for the children.

In addition, sleep plans, with incorporated risk assessments and written parental agreement were unavailable for both children. It was acknowledged that a template for same had been devised, however, this had not been completed in respect of the two children, who had moved from sleeping in cots.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Sleep plans are now in place in respect of the two children in the Daisy Chains room. The two identified children have been moved to cots for sleep time, until the purchase of the recommended floor beds has been completed and the beds are received.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of the children's sleep plans and a copy of the order invoice for two floor beds, were forwarded.

Summary Comment

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service's insurance certificate was available on file and demonstrated that the service was adequately insured. The information provided on the insurance certificate included details of the maximum number of children covered to attend the premises, which was 344, of which 238 were early years children and 106 were school age children. The start date stated on the insurance certificate was 1 March 2023 and the end date was 29 February 2024. The records detailed the category of service covered which was full day care, the name and address of the premises and details regarding public liability cover, fire, theft, buildings, and outings cover.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(e) Adequate and suitable child and adult sanitary facilities were in place. There was a total of 17 children's indoor toilets available, with a sufficient supply of adjacent wash hand basins or handwashing troughs. Two additional outdoor toilets and wash hand basins were also accessible for children's use. There were seven nappy changing facilities provided, with an adequate number of adjacent wash hand basins or handwashing troughs. The staff sanitary facilities comprised eight indoor toilets and seven wash hand basins and one outdoor toilet and wash hand basin.