

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2016CC034
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Mary Geary's Childcare
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	IDA Business Park, Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork
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<b>Eircode:</b>	T45 VY29
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Oliver Sheehan
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	27/11/2023
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	136	PM	N/A
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurrabraher Cork
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	J Russell and D Prendergast
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	N/A
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### Description of service

Mary Geary's Childcare is a privately owned childcare facility, that offers full day, part time and sessional care to children aged 0 to 6 years. School age care is also accommodated. Two daily sessional service times are facilitated under the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme; 8.45am to 11.45am and 9.00am to 12.00pm. The service is open from 7.45am to 6.00pm, each Monday to Friday, throughout the year, with the exception of public holidays.

Located within an industrial estate in Carrigtwohill in Co. Cork, Mary Geary's Childcare is provided from a purpose built, two storey premises. The ground floor of the main building includes 11 care rooms, child and adult sanitary facilities, two designated sleep rooms, a large hall area, a reception, a commercial kitchen, a sluice room and a laundry room. On the first floor, there is an office, a staff room, a meeting room and a training room. Individual outdoor play spaces are directly accessible from each of the care rooms and there is an extensive outdoor play environment onsite. A twelfth care room operates from an adjacent modular structure. A car park is also available for families and staff.

### Staffing

The service employs 72 adults. This includes the registered provider who is not involved in the direct care of the children. Forty-four of the adults work directly with the early years children, including 16 adults who work with both school age and early years children. There are 12 staff members who work only with school age children. In addition, there are six administrative staff, two maintenance staff, three chefs and five cleaners. At the time of inspection, there was one student at the setting on a work placement.

### 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.

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

### Additional Information

This inspection was triggered by information received by the Early Years Inspectorate.

### Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, 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

(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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;

#### Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had a designated person in charge, along with three named deputy persons in charge.
  - (b) When the unannounced inspection began, the person in charge was on duty at the early years service, along with the registered provider and one of the deputies. All were available throughout the inspection process.

- (2) The previous inspection was carried out on 20 and 21 September 2023 and it was established that four adults, including one student, had commenced working at the setting in the period since. Therefore, the recruitment records in relation to these four adults were assessed, along with the qualification of an additional staff member, who previously worked with school age children and had commenced working with early years children.
- (a) Seven written past employer references were available, with suitable records of validation for each.
- (b) One written and validated reference was in place from a source other than a previous employer.
- (c) Evidence of Garda vetting from the National Vetting Bureau was available for each of the four adults.
- (d) Police vetting from another jurisdiction was on file in respect of one adult.
- (3) All references, reference validations, Garda vetting and police vetting were noted to be in place prior to the adults commencing their roles at the childcare facility.
- (4) There was documentary evidence on file to demonstrate that three of the staff members held a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education, at level 5 or above, on the National Framework of Qualifications. A qualification was not required in respect of one adult, who worked only with school age children, or in respect of the student.
- (7)
- (a) The registered provider was able to detail the process and practices for inducting new employees into the service. New employees are given a six-month supported probation period, where they receive staff mentoring and ample protected time to read all required policies and become familiar with these. Staff are appropriately supervised and encouraged to ask questions regarding policies and procedures, to ensure clarity. Evidence was available on file of staff signatures on amended or updated policies, showing that these were shared and understood. Staff training videos had been developed in house, and these supported staff in their induction period.

## 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) A sufficient number of adults were observed to work with the children who attended the service.

(2) The adult child ratios were maintained across the care rooms as follows:

Room Name and Age Range of Early Years Children	Number of Children Present	Number of Adults Available
Caterpillars (12 - 22 months)	5	2
Butterflies (10 - 23 months)	8	3
Ladybirds (3 - 4 years)	16	2
Honey Pots (3 - 4 years)	10	2
Busy Bees (2 ½ - 3 ½ years)	19	3
Buttercups (3 - 4 ½ years)	9	1
Little Acorns (4 - 4 ½ years)	9	1
Mighty Oaks (3 - 4 years)	16	2

First Friends (4 - 5 years)	16	3
Bluebells (2 - 3 years)	11	2
Daisy Chains (2 - 3 years)	11	2
Tory Tops (3 - 4 years)	6	2

A student was not included in the adult to child ratios.

### Part IV – Information and Records

#### Regulation 17 – Information for parents

*A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).*

#### Compliance Information

Parents are provided with a 12-page booklet when they join the service, which includes the required details. Policies available in the service are outlined in this booklet. The service has an ethos of ‘parents as partners’ and the service’s ‘open door policy’ is actively encouraged, as outlined in the information available for parents.

### 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*

*(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.*

### Compliance Information

(1)(a)

#### Supporting relationships around children:

- Staff members were observed to be sensitive, warm and encouraging towards the children at the setting. For example, adults spoke softly to the younger children, while acknowledging their interests and when an older child became upset, they were promptly comforted by an adult, who responded in a calm and caring manner.
- There was an emphasis on promoting turn taking among the children, which was supported through follow up discussion and check-ins from the adults, as was observed in relation to the use of ride on toys.
- The children enjoyed free flow between the care rooms and designated outdoor play spaces, as they participated in their chosen activities, such as using ride on toys, outdoor equipment and playing with dolls and buggies.
- Staff were confident in outlining the service's procedures for supporting children to settle into and progress through the setting, as was demonstrated through discussion. The inspector was informed that, when beginning the transition from the younger care rooms, the children visit their new room with a key worker from their current care room. This practice allows for continuity and support, as the children adjust to a new environment. Parents are also informed of and involved in their children's transition plans.
- Various communication pathways were implemented to ensure that important information and updates were shared among the team of staff. For example, it was reported that a staff member from each care room met with management each morning and relayed any relevant information to their co-workers. Communication books were used to document daily updates and parents' requests. The inspector was also advised that staff in each care room came together on a weekly basis to plan activities, based on the children's emerging interests. A record to this effect was noted to be displayed in one of the care rooms.
- An online application was utilised to share a variety of information with parents, such as photographs, text messages and updates regarding their children's daily activities and care routines.
- On the day of inspection, children from a local primary school visited the service to perform Christmas carols for the pre-school children.

(3) Disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful practices towards children were not observed at any stage during the inspection process.

### Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

#### Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
  - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
  - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
  - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and
  - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.
- (4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the complaint has been dealt with.
- (5) The requirement in paragraph (4) is without prejudice to any requirement to retain the record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) under any other enactment or rule of law.

#### Compliance Information

(1)(2)(3)(4)(5)

Ample evidence was provided to demonstrate compliance in the management of complaints in the service. The complaints policy was detailed and met the regulatory requirements. Documentation was held on file to show that complaints were managed in line with the procedures outlined in the service's complaints policy. Records were stored in line with requirements. The registered provider and managers had a clear system for managing any complaint, so that the subject of the complaint could not be liable for investigating the issue. In discussion, the registered provider was able to detail the various pathways for parents, staff, or any other person who may wish, to make a complaint about the service. The service encouraged complaints to be made at the earliest stage possible, in order to best resolve the issue. Good communication with those making a complaint was evident in the records of the service.