

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2016CC501 |
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| Name of Service: | Magnet Community Group |
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| Address of Service: | The Glen Resource Centre, The Glen, Co. Cork |
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| Eircode: | T23 V3YK |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Roy Watson |
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| Service type: | Sessional |
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| Date of Inspection: | 15/01/2024 |
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| No of pre-school children: | AM | 10 | 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).

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| Conditions if applicable | N/A |
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Description of service

Magnet Community Group is a sessional, play based service, that first notified in 2016. It is registered to cater for children aged two to six years and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is accommodated from 9.00am to 12.00pm, each Monday to Friday, over 38 weeks of the year.

The prefabricated cabin from which the service operates is located on the grounds of the Glen Resource Centre, on the perimeter of Cork city. It consists of one operational care room, with adjacent sanitary facilities, an office and a kitchen. There is a designated outdoor play space provided beside the building and the children also have access to an all-weather surface pitch, located a short walk from the premises.

Staffing

At present, there are three adults attached to the setting, two of whom are involved in the direct care of the children. The registered provider is not service based. The adults employed to work directly with the children each hold a relevant award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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 person in charge, deputy 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) The registered provider had assigned a person in charge and a deputy person in charge to the early years setting.
 - (b) When the unannounced inspection commenced, the deputy was on duty at the service. The person in charge returned within ten minutes and was available thereafter to facilitate the inspection process.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of the three adults attached to the service were reviewed. The following information was obtained:
- (a) There were six written and validated references required in total and of these, three were from past employers.
 - (b) The remaining three references were from sources other than previous employers and had been validated.
 - (c) Up to date Garda vetting documentation was held for each of the three adults.
 - (d) None of the three adults had resided outside of the jurisdiction for a period greater than six consecutive months and therefore police vetting was not required.
- (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 the two adults, who worked directly with the children. The registered provider was not involved in the direct care of the children.

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) A sufficient number of adults were observed to work with the children who attended the service.
- (3) The adult child ratio met the regulatory requirements of a sessional category service; there were 2 adults responsible for the direct care of 10 children, who were aged 3 to 4 ½ 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)

Basic needs:

- The children were accommodated to have a small snack break shortly after 10.00am and a second mealtime was facilitated later in the morning, following outdoor play. This ensured that the children had ample opportunity to enjoy their snacks, during the sessional service.
- The adults were readily available to assist the children with opening food packaging and containers.
- The children were encouraged to use the toilet in an independent manner, with supervision, prompts and reminders ensured by the adults. Nappy changing was also attended to, as the need arose.

- A cosy area, furnished with soft seating and an adjacent bookshelf, was accessible to meet the children’s need for rest and relaxation. Two additional child-sized sofas were also provided.
- Within the care room, adequate space was available to accommodate a variety of play activities. The children also had opportunities to engage in active play in two different outdoor areas, during the morning.
- Protective aprons were worn by the children during a painting activity.
- The adults were observed to support the children with self-care activities, such as assisting them to put on their coats and hats and were also noted to acknowledge the children’s efforts when they completed such tasks by themselves.

Non-Compliance Information

Drinking water was not freely available to the children outside of the designated snack breaks, as required. The adults advised that, if a child became thirsty during the morning, they could retrieve their drinks from their bags. However, as the children’s bags were stored in the lobby area, this would have required a child to ask an adult to open the care room door, which led to the lobby.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The written response received stated that the children’s water bottles are now placed next to the fridge and are accessible to the children at all times. As a preventive measure, a staff member will ensure that the water bottles are brought into the room each morning.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was forwarded.

Summary Comment

The corrective action implemented has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 19.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The care room was furnished with low-level tables and chairs, which supported the children’s participation in table top activities and mealtime routines.
- A combination of low set shelving and pull-out drawer units ensured that the children could freely access all of the available play resources.
- The variety of interest items provided within the care room included:
 - Threading boards, connectable shapes, jigsaws and plastic bricks
 - Musical instruments
 - Dolls, accessories and prams
 - Dress up clothes
 - Wooden play kitchens, stocked with play food and utensils
 - Art and craft materials and a wall mounted blackboard
 - Train sets and animal figures
- In the designated outdoor play space, there was a combination of shock absorbing and bark chipping surfaces underfoot. Slides, sand trays, stepping logs and a fence mounted blackboard were available for the children’s use, along with a selection of ride on toys and hand-held vehicles.
- The other available outdoor play environment consisted of an all-weather surface pitch, with goal posts and the children were provided with footballs while using this area.

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 main entrance door was secured when not in use, including when the inspector arrived to carry out the inspection. This practice minimised the risk of unauthorised access.
- Both utilised outdoor play areas were fully enclosed by fencing and secured gates.
- The risk of children gaining unsupervised access to the lobby was reduced through the provision of a high-level door handle, on the care room door.
- Radiator covers were in place to reduce the risk of scalding to children.
- Sanitiser spray bottles were stored out of the children's reach.
- Firefighting equipment was securely wall mounted.
- A low-level cupboard was fitted with a restrictive opening device, to prevent children from accessing potentially harmful items.

Infection Control:

- Tables in the care room were sanitised after a painting activity and before snack time was facilitated.
- There was designated, wall hook storage for the children's coats and bags.
- To support effective handwashing, wash hand basins were equipped with warm running water, liquid soap, paper towel dispensers and foot pedal operated bins.
- The children were noted to wash their hands before the mid-morning snack and, following a nappy changing procedure, both the adult and the child were observed to ensure handwashing.

Administration of Medication:

- The administration of medication was not observed at the time of inspection. The inspector was advised that none of the children were in receipt of medication.

Safe Sleep:

- None of the children present were noted to sleep during the inspection period.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exit doors were maintained obstruction free.

Outings:

- Not applicable, as an outing was not conducted on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A long speaker cable, hanging loosely from a wall socket, was accessible to the children in the main care room. This posed a risk of injury to a child.

Infection Control:

2. A single use apron was not worn by one of the adults during a nappy changing procedure, which increased the risk of cross infection. During discussion, it was confirmed that disposable aprons were unavailable and that a written nappy changing procedure was also unavailable.
3. The children's perishable snacks were not refrigerated prior to snack time, as required. Such foods included yogurts and yogurt drinks.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The written reply from the service outlined that a shorter charging cable and a cable holder have been purchased. A staff member will ensure that when the cable is in use, it will be attached to the cable holder and when it is not in use, it will be stored out of the room and the socket plug will be inserted.

Infection Control:

2. Aprons have been purchased and as a preventive measure, a member of staff will routinely check that the aprons are well stocked.
3. The written response from the service stated that lunch bags have been purchased to store the perishables and that all perishable snacks are now refrigerated each morning. Going forward, a member of staff will ensure that each child's perishable snacks are placed in the fridge every morning.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was forwarded in relation to each of the above corrective actions.

Summary Comment

The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been addressed.

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 of completion of First Aid Responder (FAR) training were maintained for both of the adults, who worked at the service. The certificates were valid until 18 September 2025.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

The first aid kit was insufficiently equipped, as follows:

- The two available medium sized wound dressing were out of date
- Three additional large wound dressings were required
- There were no extra-large wound dressings available
- All three of the available eye pads were out of date
- The use-by date had also expired on the adhesive plasters.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The first aid box has been refilled by an external company and will be routinely checked by a staff member to ensure that it is fully equipped at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

A photograph of the restocked first aid box was forwarded as evidence.

Summary Comment

The corrective action implemented has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 25.

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 fire fighting 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) Written records were held in relation to the fire drills that had been conducted at the service. Said records demonstrated that the most recent fire drill was undertaken on 18 December 2023.
 - (b) A list of the number and type of firefighting equipment was made available. Documentation indicated that the firefighting equipment was last serviced on 16 September 2023 and that the wired smoke alarm was tested on 2 November 2023.
- (4) The steps to be followed in the event of a fire were detailed in writing and this notice was displayed in the care room.

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) The available sanitary facilities were suitable for the number of children and adults who attended the service. Two toilets and two wash hand basins were in place for the children's use. A third toilet facility, which consisted of one toilet and one wash hand basin, was accessible to the adults. A nappy changing unit was also provided in the staff sanitary facility.