

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016CN001
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Name of Service:	Clever Clogs
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Address of Service:	Unit 6 Annagh Business Park, Ballyconnell, Co. Cavan
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Eircode:	H14 HT61
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Name of Registered Provider:	Paula Donohoe
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	12/11/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	76	PM	32
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	No.18 The Grange Plantation Walk Monaghan
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Inspection undertaken by:	S. Skinnader and M. Flood
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Title:	Early Years Inspectors
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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

Clever Clogs is a privately run service in operation since 2016. The service provides full day-care, part-time care and sessional care to children aged 2 to 6 years of age and caters for a maximum of 88 children. The service operates Monday - Friday from 8am – 18:00. The service is located in a converted industrial unit on the outskirts of the town of Ballyconnell Co. Cavan. The service consists of 2 preschool care rooms upstairs Montessori Rooms 1 and 4 and two downstairs Montessori Rooms 2 and 3. A fifth preschool room - the Green Room opened downstairs at approximately 12.30 to accommodate the children from Montessori Rooms 1 and 4 who stayed on for full day care as these rooms catered for school aged children in the afternoon. There was a kitchen, sensory room, utility room and staff and child's sanitary accommodation. There was an enclosed outdoor area to the rear and of the building.

Staffing

There are 25 staff members employed in the service, 18 of whom including the owner who work directly with the preschool children. Four staff are employed to work with the school aged children and one staff member employed in an administrative role also assists with school age children. Two further members of staff are employed one as a cleaner and the second as cook and floater.

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.

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, 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) & (b) The service had a designated person in charge and named deputy person to deputise as required. On the day of the inspection the person in charge was on the premises when the inspector arrived at the premises and was present throughout the inspection.

Twenty-five staff files were reviewed on the day of inspection.

(2)(a) & (b)

- There were two written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for 24 staff members.
- One staff member had one written and validated reference and one written reference.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 25 staff members and the service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available for the 7 staff members who had resided outside the Irish jurisdiction for a period of 6 months or more as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the 19 staff members working directly with the preschool children had a childcare qualification which met the minimum qualification required to enable them to work directly with the preschool children.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) The following was not available in relation to staff references.

One written staff reference was not validated to ensure the suitability of the staff member for their roles.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)

The registered provider has conducted a validation check on the said reference.

A check system has been put in place by the registered provider with the administrator to double check all files are in order as required.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of reference validation sheet.

Summary Comment

The Inspectorate accepts the registered provider's response and the non-compliance has been addressed.

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) During the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service in Montessori Rooms 1, 2, 3, 4 and the Green Room which opened in the afternoon.

(2) When the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service there were 4 rooms in operation namely Montessori Rooms, 1, 2, 3, and 4.

The following adult: child ratios were observed:

- Three staff in Montessori 1 with 20 children aged 3 - 4 years.
- Three staff in Montessori 2 with 21 children aged 3 - 4 years.
- Three staff in Montessori 3 with 18 children aged 2 - 3 years.
- Three staff in Montessori 4 with 17 children aged 3 - 5 years.

In addition, the owner was present from 8am – 6pm, one staff member employed in administrative duties from 9 - 3pm and one staff member employed as cook from 12.30 – 5.30pm. An additional staff member arrived at the service at 12.50pm to Montessori 2.

(8)(a) Following a review of the available documentation e.g., staff rotas and children’s attendance records the information demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that there were at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.

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

There were 4 care rooms in operation in the morning namely Montessori Rooms 1, 2, 3, 4 and a 5th the Green Room opened at approximately 12.30pm.

(1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that children's learning, development, and well-being was facilitated in the service:

BASIC NEEDS:

- In the service lunches and snacks were brought in by the children and stored appropriately in the fridge. Lunches were observed to consist of sandwiches fruit, yoghurts, crackers and cheese. The staff plated all lunches for the children. The service provided a hot meal reheated from an outside caterer for those children staying on a part-time or full day care basis and a weekly menu was displayed. Dinners on the day of inspection were lasagne, creamy tomato sauce and pasta, or potatoes with sausages. Staff supervised and provided assistance at mealtimes and the children were all given time to finish their meals. Consistency of the dinners were observed to be age appropriate.
- The children always had access to their drinks and had free movement in the care rooms and their drinks were brought outside with them to the outdoor area.
- The children who were toilet trained were encouraged to be independent with toileting. Discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required. Gentle handwashing reminders were given to the children after toileting. Nappy changing was observed to be carried out promptly and good interactions were observed between the staff members and children during this time. Staff sang songs and engaged in conversation with the children.
- All children had a change of environment to the outdoor area.

Supporting relationships around children

- A key person system was in place in the service with staff members allocated a group of children. The key person took the lead in supporting that group's transitions, recording their daily activities, maintaining relationships with their families, and documenting their learning and development.
- Communication between the parents and staff was informal at drop off and pick-up and through the use of an electronic application, an "app".
- The staff members in the service were observed to interact with the children in a warm and supportive manner. Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children and staff members for example, "*how are we getting on*", "*oh thank you*" "*well done..... good job*" "*do you need some help ...?*". The children were observed to seek out the staff for assistance.
- The staff promoted the children's independence in the preschool room, for example in Montessori 1 there was an "Our Helpers" chart with a picture of a child who had been designated to help with a task. In Montessori 3 the children were observed to spontaneously tidy up after their dinner and place their plates and cutlery in the sink.

Physical and Material Environment

- The service had a good supply of Montessori equipment available in the rooms.
- A variety of age-appropriate toys and equipment were available in the care rooms on low level shelving which promoted independence and facilitated choice for the children. There were art supplies and painting easels, construction areas, small world items, kitchens, dolls and buggies and books.
- A variety of sensory play equipment and materials were also available in the rooms.

Programme Of Activities.

- "My Clever Clogs Learning Journal" had been commenced for the children and contained some of the children's artwork.
- Seasonal artwork was on display such as collage trees, raindrops, squirrels, paper plate hedgehogs, a "Firework Display", acorn handprints and fingerprint trees and space art. "
- Transitions between activities and care practices were smooth and timers were observed in use.
- Individual plans were available that detailed strategies for children who required additional supports in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

1. In the afternoon children from Montessori 2 were observed to walk through the Green Room and use the exit door from this room to access the outdoor area. Some children in the Green Room who were playing on the ground with their chosen toys had to gather up their toys and move out of the way to let the children from Montessori 2 outside. This was disruptive to the activities of the children in the Green Room.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The registered provider has put a plan in place with all afternoon staff as to how they can access the garden with traversing through the Green Room, while the children of the Green Room are at play. Management will oversee that all staff follow the plan.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of message sent to staff to use the fire escape stairs to access the outdoor area.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance.

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.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises

Compliance Information

(1)(b) Soft comfortable areas were available in each room which consisted of mats, small plastic covered sofas, small chairs, plastic square seats and cushions.

There were 3 daybeds set up in Montessori 3 for children over the age of 2 years who required a sleep.

(3)(a) There was an outdoor area to the rear of the premises which was divided in two. It was securely fenced and gated. There was an artificial grass surface throughout.

In the area to the left there was a large wooden climbing frame with swings and slide set and there was a second standalone slide. There were water shoots, a clear painting easel and “mini beasts”.

In the rest of the play area the children had access to equipment which included goals which were secured to the ground, a basketball hoop, fence mounted blackboards, wooden benches, a mud area and kitchen, wooden stumps and tyres.

Hazards such as the oil tank were fenced off and a rope was placed across the metal fire escape to help prevent children accessing it.

Non-Compliance Information

(3)(a)

There was no safety impact surface under the large wooden climbing frame with slide. This is a health and safety hazard.

It is acknowledged that a call was received from the registered provider the day following the inspection to state that a contractor had been sourced to install an appropriate safety surface under the play equipment.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(3)(a) The registered provider has contracted a company to supply and install a soft play area around the climbing frame. This work has now been completed. This addresses the non-compliance and will last long into the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted to the Inspectorate of the completed new safety surface.

Evidence of emails between contractor and registered provider and invoice.

Summary Comment

The Inspectorate have reviewed the registered provider's response and supporting documentation. The non-compliance has been addressed.

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

It was observed that the registered provider has taken the following measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service including:

General Safety:

- The external doors were appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- All emergency exits were clear and unobstructed.
- Cleaning agents were appropriately stored out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- 'Mouthed toy boxes' were available in the rooms.
- There was a constant supply of thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid soap and single use paper hand towels in all children's sanitary accommodation.
- In Montessori 1 and 4 the children were observed to wash their hands before and after lunches and after messy play.

- Tissues were available and accessible to the children in all rooms.
- Plastic covered furniture was in good condition and there were no tears or holes in the furniture coverings.

Administration of Medication:

- Care plans were available for children with additional medical needs.

Safe Sleep:

- Safe sleep observations were carried out and recorded in line with best practice guidelines.

Non-Compliance Information

The Inspectorate was not assured that adequate steps have been taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service in relation to the following observations made during the inspection:

General Safety:

1. In Montessori 4 there were some unprotected sharp corners on some of the low-level shelving and on one shelving unit in Montessori 1 at the door. These are an injury hazard.

Infection Control:

2. In the downstairs nappy changing area a child was observed to dry their hands with a used section of cloth towel from the towel dispenser. This is an infection control and cross contamination risk.
3. Hand washing was not carried out after the children in Montessori 3 returned to the care room from outdoor play. The children were observed to commence playing with toys and playdough without hand washing taking place. This practice was also confirmed by staff and is an infection control risk.

Administration of Medication:

4. Although a care plan was in place, there was no parental signature on the care plan to authorise the staff to administer a prescribed medication to their child.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The soft corners where missing have been replaced in both Montessori 4 and Montessori 1. The staff have been reminded that soft corners on furniture must be replaced immediately should they fall off. Management will carry our checks.

Infection Control:

2. A basket of paper towels has been placed in both the downstairs and upstairs nappy changing areas and all staff have been directed that the children are use the paper towels for the purpose of drying their hands and not the roller towels , which are for staff use only. This directive has been communicated to the staff both verbally and through the staff online messaging system.

Management will carry out checks to ensure that this procedure is being followed.

3. Handwashing is always carried out when coming in from outdoor play. The registered provider has spoken directly to the staff member involved and have also issued a general communication via our online group messaging system to all staff reiterating the need for handwashing when coming in from the outdoor play area.

Reminders will be issued and management will monitor to ensure good practice is upheld.

Administration of Medication:

4. The registered provider acknowledges that a parent signature was not on the care plan for a specific child. Subsequently the parent was contacted , who has since come into the service and signed as required. The registered provider also notes to date, no inhaler has been administered, as the circumstances have not required same.

Where a parent does not normally attend the service the administrator will take responsibility for contacting the parents to arrange for them to come into the service to sign any necessary paperwork.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence.

Infection Control:

Photographic evidence and copy of messages to staff.

Administration of Medication:

Copy of care plan with parental signature.

Summary Comment

The Inspectorate have reviewed the registered provider's responses and supporting information. The non-compliances 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) On review of the documentation and First Aid Responder (FAR) certificates available - there were 9 First Aid Responder (FAR) certificates and a person trained with FAR available at all times in the service.

(2)(a) and (b) There was a first aid box available in the service which was accessible to the children at all times.