

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016FL006		
Name of Service:	Little Gumboots Preschool		
Address of Service:	Sunshine House, Church Street, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin		
Eircode:	K32 PV04		
Name of Registered Provider:	Christopher Thomson		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date(s) of Inspection:	15/04/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	25	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.		
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Cully		
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	Not applicable.		

Description of service

Established in 2016, Little Gumboots Preschool operates as a privately owned sessional pre-school service located in Balbriggan County Dublin. The service operates from 09:15am to 12:15pm Monday to Friday and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme providing morning preschool sessions to children aged 2 years and 8 months to 6 years. The preschool service operates from a purpose-built premises on the grounds of a church and holiday accommodation centre for children provided by a charitable organisation during the school holidays. There are three learning spaces provided in the service, the Messy room, the Exploring and Thinking room and the Imaginary playroom. The service uses a free-flow approach so that the children have access to all rooms throughout the course of the day. There is also a large enclosed outdoor play space and learning environment to the rear of the service.

Staffing

There were 4 staff members working in the service on the day of inspection, all of whom work directly with the children attending the service. One staff members post is part funded through the Access and Inclusion Model scheme. The registered provider does not work with the children attending the service.

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 announced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child and safety. 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, 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) The service manager was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person appointed to deputise as required.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at 10.30am on the morning of the inspection and was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

On the day of inspection, a total of 4 staff files were reviewed. The file for the caretaker, who is employed by the charity organisation operating in the adjacent building but maintains the grounds that the preschool is located on, was also available and reviewed as work can be carried out when the children are on the premises.

(2)(a) & (b) There were 2 written and validated references available for the 4 staff members and the caretaker whose files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 5 adults whose files were reviewed. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available as required for 1 adult who had lived outside the State as adults for more than 6 consecutive months.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that all 4 staff members who worked directly with the children in the preschool service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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) There was an adequate number of staff working with the children on the day of the inspection.
- (3) The adult to child ratio was correct when the inspector arrived and were appropriately maintained in the service throughout the inspection. There were 4 adults caring for 25 children aged 4 years 4 months to 5 years 1 month.

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,*

Compliance Information

- (1) (a) The following observations are examples on how each child's learning, development and well-being was observed being facilitated during the inspection:

Basic needs:

- When the inspector arrived at the service, the children were actively engaged in play and exploration throughout the rooms. During the session the children were observed to move freely in their learning environments, both indoor and outdoor, choosing activities or materials for themselves and using the space available to them. The early years practitioners supported the children's choices, participated in their play when invited and offered guidance or suggestions to extend play.

- The early years practitioners were attentive to the children’s personal care needs. Children used toilets independently with discreet supervision and support given to those who required it. Reminders were given to children to wash their hands following toileting and before snack time. When preparing for outdoor play, staff ensured that all children had appropriate clothing to keep warm on a windy and wet morning.
- Snack time was observed to be a relaxed and sociable occasion. The children and practitioners talked together while eating, and children were given ample time to finish their fruit snacks and drinks which were provided by the parents. The service had fruit available for children who may have forgotten their snack or requested more.
- Children’s photographs and artwork were displayed throughout the service. Displaying children’s photographs and artwork supports them to feel safe a sense of identity and belonging in their learning environment.
- The practitioners were sensitive and responsive to promoting children’s positive behaviour and helping them to negotiate together to resolve issues.
- The children spent time outdoors on the day of inspection.

Supporting relationships around children:

- It was observed that the children and staff were comfortable and familiar with each other. The practitioners demonstrated that they respected children’s preferences and personalities through the provision of responsive care and interesting resources and activities. The children were confident in sharing their thoughts and ideas with the adults and looked to them for support, comfort, or guidance.
- Children were spoken about positively and were often given encouraging feedback and praise. The practitioners were observed to have nurturing interactions with the children and use appropriate tones of voice and language when speaking with them.
- The staff communicated well together throughout the morning to ensure the children’s needs were met and to facilitate a smooth flow of movement between rooms.
- The service demonstrated an active ethos of working in partnership with parents. A software application was used to share learning stories, photographs and upcoming events with the parents on a regular basis. In the Imaginary playroom there was notebook for ‘Boots the bear’ where families shared stories and photographs from Boots’ time in their home on the weekends. These practices support families to contribute to their children’s learning experiences at preschool.

Physical and material environment:

- There was a wide range of materials and resources accessible to the children in all 3 learning spaces. Each room had a themed learning objective and the equipment and resources encouraged children to engage in meaningful play and learning.
- The Messy room was bright and spacious and was supplied with a variety of art and craft materials to encourage children's creativity such as mark making materials, paints, chalks, stamps, scissors, and glue. Learning stations were set up to invite children to engage in guided activities such as 'can you build a bee?' or 'can you paint a picture?'. The children also had access to sensory materials such as modelling dough, slime, sand, and water. The Imaginary playroom was organised into identifiable interest areas such as a home corner, a living room, a bedroom, a workbench and a salon. Each area was supplied with a range of real-life props and supporting play materials. The room also had a soft play climbing frame to facilitate gross motor development, with interest areas developed under the frame such as small world play, a construction area and dolls house. The Exploring and Thinking room was well resourced with natural and open ended materials alongside books and posters that prompted curiosity and exploration of the materials. On the day, the children were interested in architecture with one child leading an activity to build the Great Wall of China. There was an inviting reading area with a wide range of books available to the children. The practitioners had also set up a scene from the book of the week with small figures and props for children to interact with. There was a range of sensory equipment including a light table and light box.
- A large and enclosed outdoor area is available to the children. The main area is paved and provides ample space for children to use the bikes, ride along toys, mud kitchens and to run and move freely. There is a balance beam set up with additional wood beams and tyres to encourage risky play. To the rear of the outdoor space is a sensory garden. In this space, children have access to water features, a quarry, a fairy garden and sand trays.

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

Reasonable measures were taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the children was maintained in the following ways.

General Safety:

- The gated entrance to the premises and the external and internal doors of the preschool service were appropriately secured to prevent an unauthorised person from gaining access to the children and prevent children from exiting the premises unsupervised.
- Daily risk assessment of the outdoor area was carried out and recorded. On the morning of the inspection an area had been identified as unsafe due to a fallen tree and was made inaccessible to the children until the risk was addressed by the caretaker. This was further evidence that risk assessments were daily practice and used to reduce risk outdoors.
- The water temperature in the hot taps did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the children in attendance.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support effective hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation in the service.
- Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks, after use of the toilet or following outdoor play.
- Play materials and equipment provided in the care rooms and the outdoor space were observed to be in good hygienic condition. Daily cleaning schedules were documented and up to date to demonstrate daily cleaning tasks were completed.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were clearly identifiable and kept clear to allow for a quick exit from the premises if required.

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) (1) A person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the service. This was evidenced in the FAR training records maintained for 2 staff members.
- (2)(a)&(b) (2)(a)(b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available and stored in accessible and conspicuous locations out of the reach of children

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) Records were available in the service to demonstrate that regular fire drills take place. The most recent fire drill was recorded to have been carried out 08/03/24.
- (b) There was a record available that detailed the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. Firefighting equipment was last checked and serviced by a registered professional on 14/11/23. The smoke alarm system was last checked and serviced by a registered professional on 05/03/24.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were on display in the care rooms and corridors of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was available to demonstrate the preschool service was adequately insured. The service is currently insured to accommodate 33 sessional preschool children, with an expiry date 27/03/2025.