

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016FL014
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Name of Service:	Helping Hands Preschool
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Address of Service:	8 Boraimhe Poplars, Swords, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K67 TY77
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Name of Registered Provider:	Frances Gerrard
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	24/03/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	12	PM	15
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Second Floor, Unit 4&5 Nexus Building, Block 6, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Dublin 15
Inspection undertaken by:	Á Dunne
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

This service is a privately operated service located in Swords Co Dublin. A sessional service is provided to children aged between 2 and 6 years for two sessions between 9.00am to 12.00pm and 12.30pm to 3.30pm each day. The premises is a large room in the registered provider's home. An enclosed outdoor area is available to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider works in the service and employs three staff members. On the day of inspection the registered provider, the person in charge and one staff member were present.

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 and premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 25, 26, and 28.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

The scope of the inspection was the one sessional classroom of the service in the morning and afternoon session.

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 registered provider, 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

(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

(2) The files of four adults were reviewed as part of the inspection.

(a) The registered provider had 2 written references and ensured that two written and validated references were available in relation to two adults from a past employer.

(b) Two written and validated reference were available in relation to one adult from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for four adults. The service also demonstrated compliance, with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for one adult who had lived outside the State for longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Documentation was available to show that the four adults who worked directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Minister.

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) On the day of inspection, there were adequate number of adults working directly with the children.

(3) Three adults working with 12 children aged 3 to 5 years in the morning session from 9.00am to 12.00pm and three adults working with 15 children aged 3 to 5 years in the afternoon session from 12.30pm to 3.30pm, ensuring ratios were maintained.

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 inspector observed that the children's learning, development, and well-being was supported by the staff and the environment.
- Lunchtime at 11.05am was observed as a relaxed and sociable event with children given time to sit at low tables appropriate to their ages. Children were observed to self-feed, but staff sat with children and were on hand to help as required, supporting independence and wellbeing. The children's water bottles were available in the main care room for the children to drink.

Supporting Relationships:

- Language development was supported by the adults through conversation, singing and reading books using story sacks with props.
- The inspectors observed the staff interacting warmly with the children, engaging positively, and supporting them with their care, work, and play.
- It was evident the service had ongoing engagement with the children's families to support children's identity and belonging through the presence of family displays.
- The registered provider informed the inspector that as well as speaking with parents/guardians at drop off/collection times, they communicate with a monthly newsletter, through an electronic messaging app and social media.

Physical Environment:

- The room was bright and laid out in an inviting manner to enable children to independently explore their environment.
- There were clearly defined learning areas in the care room including a home area; (with play kitchens and supporting equipment, dolls and doll accessories, cash register, beauty set with mirrors and hairdresser equipment,) building and construction areas; (wooden building blocks, small and large plastic bricks, magnetics, cubes, waffles), tabletop activities (wooden puzzles and jigsaws, arts and

crafts, magnetic sand), Small world play; (dinosaurs, animals, doctors set, dolls house with supporting equipment), Sensory play (magnetic sand , sand and modelling dough with supporting equipment) .

- A rest area with a soft rug and books, for rest and relaxation was available to the children.
- The children spent time in the outdoor area and had the opportunity to play with a range of toys and equipment to support full-body movement and activities such as ride on a climbing frame with slide, stepping stones, a mud kitchen with supporting equipment and ride on bikes.

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 entrance to the service was secure. This reduced the risk of unauthorised access or the unsupervised exit of a child. The outdoor area was fully enclosed and secure.
- The kitchen was not accessible to the preschool children during the service operating hours and emergency exits to the side and rear of the service were observed to be unobstructed throughout the inspection.
- Toys and equipment were maintained in good condition free from hazards preventing risks to the children.
- The temperature of the care room was recorded as 19.6°C at 11am, within the recommended ambient temperature of 18 - 22 °C.
- The arrival and departure times were recorded accurately in attendance record for children.

Infection Control:

- The service was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition throughout, with the premises and equipment observed to be visually clean.
- Handwashing facilities for hand hygiene included warm water, dispensed liquid soap, and paper towels and children's hands were observed to be washed frequently throughout the day, for example before and after lunch, after outdoor play and after toilet visits.

- Pedal operated lidded bins were available for waste disposal.
- Adequate ventilation was available in the care room by means of openable windows and doors.
- Food which is brought from home for lunch time was observed to be refrigerated to prevent spoiling of perishable items.

Fire Safety:

- Monthly fire drills were carried out in the service.

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

(2)(a) A first aid box was stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in the classroom

(b) in the event of an emergency a first aid box was available to the adults responsible for the children.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there was no person trained in First Aid Responder training available to the children when the inspector arrived at the service at 10.25am until the registered provider arrived at the service at 10.40am. It is acknowledged that the registered provider was qualified in First Aid Responder training for children and evidence was available to demonstrate that three adults had valid in date training in Paediatric first aid. However, a person trained in First Aid Responder training must be available to the children at all times to include cover of appointments, leave and breaks.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

An Additional staff member is booked onto the First Aid Response course on 8th, 9th and 10th April 2025.

Supporting documentation submitted

Email of confirmation of course booked

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 25 has been adequately addressed.

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) The last recorded fire drill that was carried out in the service was 20 March 2025.
 - (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises was available for review. The record showed that both the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms were last serviced in December 2024.
 - (4) Fire evacuation procedures were displayed throughout the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Evidence of insurance cover was available to demonstrate there was cover for a maximum of 22 children with an expiry date of 27 March 2026.