

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016GY007
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Name of Service:	Sticky Fingers
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Address of Service:	No.7 The Glade, Athenry, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H65 F773
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Name of Registered Provider:	Louise Hynes
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	22/01/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	13
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	TUSLA - Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	H. Heagney
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
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Description of service

This privately operated pre-school is in a housing development in the town of Athenry, Co. Galway. The service offers a full day care and part time care provision from 8.00hrs to 17.30hrs. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) pre-school care programmes and sessional care programmes are also offered. The service is registered for pre-school children aged 0 to 6 years of age. The service also caters for school age children with a breakfast club and afterschool/ school age programme. There are three childcare rooms namely the Baby room and Toddler room on the ground floor and the Pre-school room on the first floor. On the day of inspection, the Baby room was not in use. The premise has its own kitchen, where children's main meals are prepared, cooked, and stored on site. There is a designated sleep room with four cots and three stackable beds available for children's sleep provision. In each playroom, quiet rest areas with a child size seating and soft matting are available for children to rest or opt out of an activity if he/ she wishes to do so. There is a secure outdoor play area to the rear of the premises for children's play, exploration, and fresh air. A child centred play based preschool curriculum focusing on emerging interests is provided.

Staffing

The registered provider works in the premises daily. There is a designated person in charge and named person able to deputise. Four staff including the registered provider hold at least a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a Level 5 to 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education. The staff have documentary evidence of ongoing training and education. There are two staff designated to the care of the school aged children. Additionally, on the day of inspection, there was an adult over the age of 18 years, on a childcare work placement, who was supervised when interacting with the children. There is a designated chef who prepares, cooks, and serves the main meal.

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 inspector wishes 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*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(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) There was a designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service.
- (b) The person in charge was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived. Staff rosters indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available on the premises at all times when the pre-school children were present.
- Files for the seven staff and one adult over the age of 18 years on a childcare work placement were reviewed.
- (2)(a)&(b) Sixteen of the sixteen written validated references, on file for the seven staff and one adult over the age of 18 years on a childcare work placement, were from a past employer or from a source other than the past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosure was available in respect of seven staff and the one adult over the age of 18 years, on a childcare work placement. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) None of the staff had worked outside the jurisdiction, for six months or more, while over the age of 18 years of age, and therefore did not require police vetting.
- (4) Four staff who were working directly with children, held a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), at a Level 5 to 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education. Copies of qualifications were on file for the four staff.

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) At all times during the period of the inspection, the registered provider ensured that the adult child ratios were adhered to.

(2) Documentary evidence in the form of attendance records indicated that adult child ratios were adhered to.

On the morning of the inspection, there were 17 pre-school children aged between 2 to 5 years.

- 4 children were aged 2 to 3 years,
- 13 children were aged 3 to 5 years.

There were four staff including the registered provider directly caring for these children. The registered provider also assisted in the administration part of the inspection. Additionally, the adult on a childcare work placement was supervised when interacting with the children.

There was also a designated staff member preparing, cooking meals and snacks and performing kitchen duties.

In the afternoon, there were 13 pre-school children aged between 2 to 5 years.

- 4 children were aged 2 to 3 years,
- 9 children were aged 3 to 5 years.

There were three staff including the registered provider, caring for these children. Additionally, the adult on a childcare work placement was supervised when interacting with the children.

There was also a designated staff member directly caring for school aged children.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that there were two staff on the premises while the pre-school was operating.

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

- The staff encouraged and supported the children to be as independent, as possible.
- The children were given sufficient time to eat in an unhurried manner. The staff complied with the service's healthy eating policy.
- The tables and chairs were suitable for the children's ages and stages of development.
- On the day of inspection, four children in the Toddler room wore nappies and were changed on a regular basis. The privacy and dignity of a child having their nappy changed was maintained. The older children in the Pre-school room, had unrestricted access to the toilet and did not have to wait to use the toilet. The staff used the correct language surrounding toileting / nappy changing.
- Children have plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance. Play activities and experiences were developmentally appropriate and suitably challenging.
- The children were observed at free play, connecting, stacking, building, linking, and drawing. The children played with transport vehicles, planes, and space shuttles. The children engaged in cleaning windows and sorting out the kitchen 'like Mammy'. The children played with activity trays of beans, rice, tinfoil, and various shapes. At circle time, the staff read stories and older children gave their views. The staff used visual aids and probed with questions such as 'who is this?', 'how many are there?', and 'where is that?'. The younger children prompted by staff 'tell me what this is', identified what was on various flash cards. The children enjoyed action songs such as 'hop little bunnies' 'old MacDonald' and the 'freeze' dance. The children chatted to the inspector about the planets solar system and showed off how to 'count with all our might'.

The theme of the week in the Toddler room was fire safety and the children sang 'I am a little firefighter' and discussed what fire fighters do in the community. The theme of the week in the pre-school room was space and the comparison of the planets, their sizes.

- The staff supported children in forming and sustaining positive relationships by -
 - having a key person system for each child,
 - showing respect for each unique child and developing their trust,
 - listening to the voice of the child as they communicate their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children's cues, gestures, and body language,
 - using soft tones, the child's individual name, and getting down to their level and making eye contact,
 - providing opportunities for individual and small group activities and play, leading to increased social awareness, co-operation, collaboration, teamwork, and a sense of belonging,
 - providing opportunities for children to learn from each other and with each other, to work together, join in and contribute to projects and tasks,
 - working with parents and guardians by sharing knowledge and observations of the child's interests, strengths, developmental and care needs, approaches to learning, changes in their life, and any other concerns.
- Parents/guardians signed a parental agreement form and received a parent handbook with the service ethos, daily routines, strategies for supporting the children and the updated policies, procedures, response plans. The service offered a monthly newsletter. The January newsletter topics included Happy New Year, chicken pox, hip hop hooray, opening hours reminder, outdoor clothing, prompts regarding service policies and safety statements.
- On speaking with the staff, the inspector was informed that they verbally provided parents with daily information on their child's experiences in the preschool including the child's likes, interests and preferences and play activities engaged in. This information was provided at collection times, via text messages, by phone calls, by email and via social media application.
- The staff collated individual and classroom profile books showing the experiences that the children engaged in. Additionally, children's art and craft work was collated and given to parents and guardians on a regular basis.
- The staff were observed helping children to find solutions, supporting them, and talking to the children in a variety of ways, discussing, questioning, modelling, and commentating, extending a child's activities and initiating games and activities.

The staff provided significant opportunities for the child to decide their play activities and experiences. The inspector noted the staff acknowledged a child's achievements 'that is great' 'well done' and used questions such as 'what should we do next?', 'is there any other way to do this?', to allow children to critically think and explore.

- The staff ensured that the children had ongoing opportunities to interact informally with one another for example at free play, parallel play, eating together.
- The staff provided opportunities for children to learn from each other and with each other, to work together, join in and contribute to projects and tasks.
- The staff supported children to enter social groups, and to learn to help and positively engage with other children. They encouraged and praised children for specific, positive, and appropriate behaviours. Children were given positive alternatives, rather than just being told 'no'. Children were supported in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. Children could identify, name, and explore their feelings both positive and negative.

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-
- having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and
 - 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 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)(a) The design, organisation and resourcing of the environment supported each child's wellbeing, learning and development, within the ethos and philosophy of the service. The atmosphere in the learning environment was encouraging and unhurried. The play materials and environment supplied were changeable and flexible, to respond to the needs, preferences, and interests of the children.

The Playrooms

The play equipment and materials were age and stage appropriate, and designed to offer a child manipulative activity, to encourage hand eye co-ordination, to develop fine motor skills and logical thinking.

The Toddler room

- Materials and items of interest included role play areas such as a kitchen with utensils, dress up clothing, dolls, highchairs, and beds. There were transport vehicles, garages, and tracks. There was a farm with animals. There were musical instruments, and art and craft materials. There were construction and stacking materials such as blocks, bricks, connectors, shapes, links, insets, jigsaws and puzzles. There were books, balls, plants, little people, and dinosaurs.
- Displayed on the walls were posters, visual aids, photographs, artwork, and themes including walking in a winter wonderland, my family, the alphabet, colours, rainbow birthdays, cars, autumn tree, and sticky little snowman craftwork. There was a sensory wall, photographs of the children engaged in activities, children's paintings and artwork, footprints, curriculum posters, mirror mirror on the wall, and a mural wall with tree and butterflies.

The Pre-school room

- Materials and items of interest included activity trays with beans, shapes, stars, tinfoil, small world items, rice, containers, scoops, and magnet shapes. There were role play areas such as a kitchen with washing machine, and kitchen utensils and a playhouse with small world furniture. There were dinosaurs, ocean, jungle, and farm animals. There was a variety of dress up clothing on a rail. There was a 'take a look inside what can you find' box. There were links, connectors, inset, puzzles, blocks, bricks, potato heads, balls, threading materials. There was a construction table and toolbox with helmets, and tools. There were books, counters, plants, a shop, cuddly toys, and mats. There were blackboards, prams, shopping trolleys, transport vehicles, garages, farms, stables, dolls, dolls clothing and accessories. There was soft seating with a canopy.
- Displayed on the walls were posters, visual aids, photographs, artwork, and themes including emotions, the alphabet, teeth and eating, now and then, colours, today is, and tomorrow will be. Also on display was a weather board, classroom rules, colour mixing, a resolution is, our interest board, our community, winter, a ring board, classroom conversations and photographs of children engaged in activities.

- Additional posters, visual aids and displays were on the walls of the corridors and stairway. Displays included welcome, playroom rules, what colour eyes do you have, snowmen, Winter, we are independent, community, diversity, and our curriculum planning.
- At the main entrance door and on a shelving area the ground floor there were various fairy figures, houses, wings, and accessories.

(1)(b)

- There was a designated sleep room with four cots and three stackable beds, for children's sleep provision. Additionally, there was soft seating in the form of child sizes couches in each of the playrooms.

(3)(a)

Outdoor areas

There was an outdoor area to the rear of the premises. The outdoor area was covered with an impact absorbing surface. There was a dragon garden. There was a sensory wall with water pipes, wheels, colour changing boards, lids, and reflective mirrors. There were planters, mounted blackboards and mark making boards / easels. There was a story time chair and a picnic table. There was a goal post, push cars, bicycles, and rockers. There was an activity centre with a slide, vantage point, and tunnel. There was a mud kitchen and shop with utensils. There was a bark basin, and pebble area. There was a selection of dinosaurs, a boat, diggers, concrete mixer, train seating and tyres. There was decorative bunting and a butterfly house.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- There was a healthy eating policy. The registered provider advised that healthy eating was promoted within the service by visual aids, and adherence to best practice guidelines.
- Before 9.00hrs, the children had the opportunity for cereal, with milk.
- At 10.00hrs, the children had their snacks supplied by parents and guardians consisting of cracker, fruit pieces, cheese, pancakes, bread sticks, sandwiches, and yogurts.
- At 12.00hrs, the children had tuna pasta bake with cheese, supplied by the service, and cooked on site.
- At 15.00hrs, the children were offered garlic bread and fruit pieces.

- Cutlery and plates were offered for children’s snack / mealtimes.
- Clean and safe drinking water was at a low-level and accessible to children in each of the playrooms and in the outdoor area.
- There was a designated fridge, for the safe storage of perishable foodstuffs from children’s lunch boxes, for their snack times.

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 doors were secure to prevent unauthorised entry.
- The external play area to the rear of the premises was secure so that children could not leave the area unsupervised and unauthorised persons could not enter the area.
- Fire doors throughout the building were unobstructed.
- All cleaning agents were stored inaccessible to the children.
- Daily records of attendance were kept for all the children attending the two playrooms.
- Leads, cables, and flexes were wall mounted and secured to prevent any trip or strangulation hazard.
- The heating system was thermostatically controlled, to ensure the temperature was maintained between 18°C to 22°C.
- The registered provider had recently installed new thermostatically controlled mixing taps to ensure the water temperatures readings remain at a safe temperature.
- Blind cords were securely fastened thereby preventing any potential risk. Windows had restrictive access devices as a safety precaution.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- A documented risk assessment of the indoor and outdoor play areas was available for review.

Infection Control:

- Staff involved in the serving of food and nappy changing used disposable aprons and gloves when nappy changing.
- The children's belongings for nappy changing were individually labelled and in designated storage containers.
- The children's barrier creams were clearly individually labelled and stored within the nappy changing area.
- The nappy changing area had a leak-proof, sealable airtight container for the disposal of nappies.
- The nappy changing policy was displayed on the wall of the nappy changing area and staff completed nappy changing sheet records for each child requiring nappy change, with a section for staff comment / remedial action taken.
- Children's soothers were sterilized using a steam sterilizer.
- A cleaning and disinfection schedule was presented and available for inspection. There were cleaning schedules and records for the playrooms, communal areas, sanitary areas, and outdoor areas and on the cleaning and disinfection procedure undertaken in the service. The records reviewed showed that high contact areas were cleaned regularly during the day and the service was thoroughly cleaned each evening after it had closed.
- The outdoor play equipment was cleaned after each child's use, and prior to each child's use - with documented records maintained.
- Tabletops and work surfaces were cleaned with disposable paper towels and disinfectant spray, the inspector observed this practice on the day of inspection.
- The playrooms were observed to be kept adequately ventilated with the windows left open whilst maintaining the room temperatures at the required levels.
- Adequate supplies of disposable tissues were readily available in the playrooms.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was stored inaccessible to the pre-school children.
- Medicines examined were within date.
- Staff advised that the suncreams supplied by parents and guardians, and stored in the service, with dates of expiry checked on an annual basis.

Safe Sleep:

- There were four cots, and three stackable beds were available in the designated sleep room, for children requiring sleep provision. Four children were observed sleeping on demand following signs of tiredness, in cots, on the day of inspection, with a sleep room temperature of 18.4°C.
- Each child had designated linen stored in the sleep room, in an individual drawer unit.
- A staff member physically checked sleeping children's, colour, position and breathing and the room temperature and this was reflected in the sleep records.
- The sleep policy detailed the correct temperature, lighting, ventilation, and child safety requirements.
- There was an egg pod thermometer in the sleep room to ensure safe sleep room temperatures.

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) The service provided evidence that two staff who were trained in first aid for children were available to the children, attending the pre-school service.
- (2)(a) There were two first aid cabinets and one bag, with content items within date, safely stored, easily accessible and stored in conspicuous position in the playrooms and lobby.
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid cabinets and bag were fully equipped and available to the children attending the pre-school service

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 firefighting 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) A written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was dated 16th of January 2024.
- (b) Records were available in relation to the number, type, and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment with the annual service dated 12th of July 2023.
- The smoke and fire detection alarm system for the premises had the last annual service dated 12th of July 2023.
- (4) Notices were displayed within the pre-school of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire in the premises.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service's insurance specifying the address of the service, catering for a full day care service for 39 children at any one time, with an expiry date of 27th of March 2024, was available.

The insurance covered

- public liability,
- personal accident,
- against fire and theft,
- outings,
- building.