

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016GY014				
Name of Service:	Muddy Boots				
Address of Service:	Bungalow 4, Kilcornan Estate and Woodlands, Clarinbridge, Co. Galway.				
Eircode:	H91 HDT4				
Name of Registered Provider:	Helen Bolton				
Service type:	Part Time				
Date of Inspection:	03/05/2024				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>28</td> <td>PM</td> <td>12</td> </tr> </table>	AM	28	PM	12
AM	28	PM	12		
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 outdoor pre-school is in an estate, woodland in the village of Clarinbridge, Co. Galway. The pre-school offers an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) from 9.00hrs to 12.00hrs and a part time care programme from 9.00hrs to 14.00hrs. The service caters for a maximum number of 44 pre-school children at any one time. The service also offers an afterschool programme for school aged children. Whatever the weather, children can choose to play, explore, and learn in the outdoor environment. The service ethos is for children to learn in and enjoy the natural environment for their development, exercise, fresh air, and activity. A child centred play-based pre-school curriculum focusing on emerging interests is provided.

The pre-school is based in a designated bungalow opposite a national school, on the estate grounds. There are two indoor playrooms named the Owl room and the Hedgehog room, both with direct access to the outdoor play areas. Stackable beds are available for any child requesting sleep while attending the services part time programme. The premise has its own kitchen and an arrangement where the main meal is supplied by a food delivery company. There is a secure outdoor play areas located at the sides and rear of the building. The children also have access under supervision to a nearby forest woodlands and the green spaces, gardens, and playground on the estate.

Staffing

The registered provider is supernumerary and not on the premises daily. There is a designated person in charge and a deputy person in charge. The registered provider and eight staff hold a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a Level 5 to 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education. The staff have documentary evidence of on-going training 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 child. 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) 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 and remained on site for the duration of the inspection. 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 nine staff including the registered provider were reviewed.

(2)(a)&(b) Eighteen of the eighteen written validated references, on file for the nine staff were from a past employer or from a source other than the past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available in respect of nine staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Three of the staff had worked outside the jurisdiction, for six months or more, while over the age of 18 years of age and had the required police vetting. It is acknowledged that one of the three staff had four police vettings from outside the jurisdiction.

(4) Nine staff, 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 nine 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)-*
- (c) 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) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.*

Compliance Information

- (1) At all times during the period of the inspection, the person in charge 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 28 pre-school children aged between 2 years and 6 months to 5 years. There were seven staff directly caring for these children. In the afternoon, there were 12 pre-school children aged between 2 years and 6 months to 5 years attending the part time programme. There were five staff, caring for these children.
- (8)(c) The registered provider ensured that there were two staff on the premises while the pre-school was operating.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

(5) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)&(i)

Fifteen children's records were reviewed by the early year's inspector.

The fifteen records reviewed showed that the entries were factual, consistent, and accurate.

The children's records contained the following:-

- The name and date of birth of the child.
- The date in which the child first commenced in the service.
- The date on which the child stopped attending the service (where relevant).
- The name and address of the child's parent or guardian, and a telephone number where that parent or guardian (or a relative or friend of the parent or child) can be contacted during the hours of operation.
- Written authorisation / permissions for collecting the child.

- Details are recorded of any illness, allergy, or additional need(s) the child had, together with all the information relevant to the provision of specific care or attention.
 - The name and telephone number of the child’s registered medical practitioner.
 - A record of any immunisations the child has had or a disclaimer.
 - Written parental or guardian consent was included to allow the child to have appropriate medical treatment if there was / is an emergency.
- (4)&(5) The registered provider advised and documentary evidence from file review indicated, that all relevant children’s records were kept for 2 years from the date a child stops attending the service.

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

- 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, all children were toilet trained. The children had unrestricted access to the toilet and did not have to wait to use the toilet. The staff used the correct language surrounding toileting.
- Staff ensured good hygiene practices by reminding and were applicable assisting children to wash their hands before eating, after toileting and after outdoor and messy play.
- The children had the opportunity to rest and relax on the child size soft seating. After the dinner, the children attending the part time programme had structured relaxation time.
- 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, and linking. At circle time, a staff member taught Spanish words. The staff read stories and children gave their views. The staff used prompts, visual aids and probed with questions such as ‘who is this?’, ‘how many are there?’, ‘where is that?’ and ‘tell me what this is?’.
- The children spent significant time in the outdoor area to the rear and side the premises. The children engaged in digging, exploring for worms, spiders, insects, and bugs, running, and chasing. The children enjoyed water play (collecting water with basters and storing water with tube cylinder) and playing with transport vehicles in the sand area. The children enjoyed riding tractors and bicycles. The children enjoyed digging in the stones, sand, and mud areas. The children played with dinosaurs, climbing on tyres, sing the slide, on rockers, and playing ring a Rosie and playing house.
- 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.
- The outdoor environment provided children with activities and opportunities for
 - fresh air, discovery, relaxing (e.g., quiet areas, planting areas),
 - releasing energy (e.g., playing chase),
 - physical exercise and play (e.g., jumping, climbing),
 - exploring, engaging, and experimenting with nature (e.g., at water play, digging, at construction),
 - feelings associated with taking risks, learning about risk, and learning from risk, and challenging their own capabilities within safe limits.

- The children could freely access the outdoor areas with designated staff in the outdoor areas and in the playrooms, to support smooth transitions. The children were supported to dress/undress, put on/take off coats/boots suitable for outdoor play. The person in charge ensured children had access to a variety of clothing for example, waterproof coats and trousers, and appropriate wellingtons and footwear.
- On speaking with the staff, the inspector was informed that they verbally provided parents with daily information on their child's experiences in the pre-school 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 profile scrapbooks showing themes to date including 'all about me', happy to be me, my face, Autumn, leaves, Halloween, Winter, and various artwork. The staff also kept observations on a child's interests and achievements.
- 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 that 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 dinner 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 for example tidying up, getting ready for their snack and meal time.
- 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 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 staff advised that healthy eating was promoted within the service by visual aids, and adherence to best practice guidelines.
- Between 9.00hrs to 11.00hrs, the children had the opportunity for ‘a rolling snack’ which involves children choosing when they have snack and often serving themselves rather than all the children being seated at the same time with no choice. Staff advised that this practice builds independence, confidence, esteem, and self-awareness. The snacks provided by parents and guardians consisted of chopped fruits and vegetables, scones, broad bread, cheese, yogurts, crackers, and sandwiches.
- The main meal was supplied by a food delivery company. The service ensured that the meals were stored and cooked on site as per food safety management system based on the principles of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP). At 12.10hrs, the children attending the part time service were offered ‘Bella Italia’ a chicken with pasta in tomato and cheese sauce. Parents and guardians had the option of supplying the main meal if their child had any special dietary requirements or preferences.
- Perishables items were stored in the service fridge.
- 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 areas to allow children to ‘self-serve’.

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 were trained in first aid responder and one staff member was trained in first aid for children. These staff were available to the children, attending the pre-school service.
- (2)(a) There were two first aid boxes, with content items within date, safely stored, easily accessible and stored in conspicuous position in each playroom
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid boxes 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 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) A written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was dated 12th of April 2024.
- (b) Records were available in relation to the number, type, and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment with the annual service dated 21st of February 2024.
The smoke and fire detection alarm system for the premises had the last annual service dated 11th of April 2024.
- (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 38 children at any one time, with an expiry date of 27th of March 2025, was available.

The insurance covered

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