

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016KY001
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Name of Service:	The Willow Tree Children's Centre
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Address of Service:	Ground Floor Unit, 96 Carraigbeag, Clogher Faili, Tralee, Co. Kerry
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Eircode:	V92 Y510
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Name of Registered Provider:	Jessica Hastings
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	01/11/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	28	PM	28
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Áras an Phobail, Deans Lane, Tralee, Co. Kerry.
Inspection undertaken by:	N. Reidy
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	N/A
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Description of service

The Willow Tree Children’s Centre is a community operated early years service. It is registered to provide full day care, sessional and part-time care to children aged between 1 and 6 years.

There are 2 playrooms and a designated enclosed outdoor play areas with overhead sheltered areas allocated for the children that attend both rooms.

Staffing

There are 14 adults employed in the service. This includes 2 adults employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Support Scheme, the office administrator and the registered provider, who does not work in the service with the children.

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.

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, the 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 inspector was informed that 14 adults were employed in the service. The recruitment records in relation to these 14 adults were reviewed.

- (a) 14 written references and validations were on file from a past employer.
- (b) 14 written references and validations were on file from a source other than a past employer.
- (c) A Garda Vetting Disclosure was on file for each of the 14 adults.
- (d) Police Vetting was on file for 4 adults who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) The adults working directly with the children had attained Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in childcare training at Level 5 and above.

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) The registered provider did ensure that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times.

(2) The 2 playrooms were in operation on the day of the inspection.

Catkins room

There were 2 staff caring for 7 aged between 18 months and 3 years attending on a part-time and full day care basis.

Acorns room

There were 3 staff caring for 21 children, 10 pre-school children aged between 3 and 4 years and 11 school aged children attending on a part-time and full day care basis.

The adult child ratio was correct.

(8)(a) The registered provider did ensure that a minimum of 2 adults are on the premises at all times during the hours of operation as was evidenced in the staff roster.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1) A record of the following was kept:

(j) The details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent were available and completed with all the relevant details.

(k) The details of any accidents, injuries and incidents involving a pre-school child attending the service were recorded and were all signed by the parents and staff members.

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

BASIC NEEDS

- The adults caring for the children were kind, caring and comforting towards the children in their care.
- The children had freedom of movement within the playrooms where children accessed the toys and play materials supplied.
- Designated rest areas were in place, in the Catkins room there was various sizes and shapes of soft matting and cushioning and in the Acorns rooms there was soft matting on the floor, on a section of the lower wall enclosing the area and a large number of soft cushions and blankets.
- The inspector observed the children in the Acorns room playing in the soft area and the children in the Catkins room reading books that were accessible from the bookshelves adjacent to the area and children who were tired that were resting and comforted by a staff member placing blankets over them.
- The children attending the Catkins room were attending the Halloween themed play camp with activities listed for the children that included Halloween Yoga and making Halloween scented playdough.
- The entrance /reception area and the playrooms were beautifully decorated with colourful Halloween artwork carried out by the children.
- The children availed of outdoor play time; each room have a designated area outdoors. There is a variety of soft matting and paving underfoot and overhead sheltered areas.
- The inspector observed the time the children from the Catkins room that they were appropriately dressed in outdoor protective suits, coats and hats.
- The children's re-usable drinks bottles were stored on a low-level shelf in the Catkins room, children could access them during the session.
- The children's need for rest was observed in the Catkins room to be met, they slept in the standard cots adjacent to the sleep room.

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 fire exit door with the low-level push bar openable handle was alarmed and it was observed to be in working order.
- The outdoor play area was secured.
- The blind cords observed were secured.

Infection Control:

- Hand washing practices were observed by the children prior to mealtimes and after playing in the outdoor area.
- Warm water, liquid hand soap, disposable paper hand towels were provided at the sinks and in the nappy changing and toilets.
- The children's barrier creams and cleaning wipes were individual clearly labelled.
- The nappy changing table and mat and its surrounds were clean and dry.
- A supply of disposable aprons and gloves were available and observed in use for nappy changing.
- Lidded, sealed pedal operated lidded bins were in use for waste disposal.
- The linen used for the cots was stored in individual baskets, labelled for each child, the linen consisted of mattress protectors, sheets and cellular blankets.

Safe Sleep:

- The air temperature of the sleep room was recorded at 19 degrees Celsius.
- The children who slept were physically checked every 10 mins and a record of the colour, position and breathing was recorded.
- A combined air conditioning and heating unit was installed in the sleep room since the last inspection to regulate the air temperature to between 16 degrees and 20 degrees Celsius.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The playroom entrance doors with the high-level door handles were not secured to prevent unauthorised persons entering the rooms via the unsecured main entrance door to the building.
2. Cables attached to the wall mounted T.V and to a filtration unit in the Acorns room and to a filtration unit in the Catkins room were not secured, posing a risk of strangulation to children.
3. There was a bottle of sanitizer and 2 open packets of baby cleansing wipes accessible to the children in the Catkins rooms posing a risk of poisoning to children.
4. There were 7 feeding chairs stacked on top of each other and an unsecured foldable room divider that was not in use stored in the Catkins room posing a risk of injury to the children should they fall over on them.
5. The door of the adult sanitary accommodation sanitary located within the sanitary accommodation serving the Catkins room was not secured. There were personal hygiene items such as sprays and lotions accessible on a low-level shelf posing a risk of injury to children.
6. There were packets of baby cleansing wipes stored in the open low-level trays under the nappy changing unit accessible to the children posing a choking risk.
7. Within the sleep room the following posed a risk of injury to children.
 - play materials stored in the room, some of whom were stored under the cots in open plastic bags
 - a double socket 1 serving the heating/ventilation unit and 1 unsecured cable serving the music outlet system.
 - a shelf within reach of a child in the cot beneath where the individual cot bed linen was stored posing a risk of suffocation and strangulation to children.

Infection Control:

8. The seat of the vinyl adult chair was torn, and the corners of the soft orange floor mat children were using to play on was torn and posing a risk of cross infection as the items could not be adequately cleaned.
9. There was dust evident on the floor under the cots in the sleep room and in the Catkins room posing a risk of the spread of infection.
10. Soothers were observed uncovered and not labelled on open shelving in the Catkins room and in the sleep room posing a risk of the spread of infection.

11. On speaking to staff, when cots are shared the individual linen was changed, the cots were not cleaned down posing a risk of cross infection.
12. Some of the soft toys were not in a clean condition posing the risk of cross infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The designated person in charge stated that: -

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The staff continue to ensure that the doors from the lobby into both rooms are locked at all times. A fob entry and exit system will be installed week beginning December 4th 2023. A staff meeting was held highlighting the importance of locking the doors at all times until the installation of the fob system.
2. In the Acorns room the cables for the TV are no longer hanging down, they have been secured to the back of the TV and the filtration unit has been secured to the wall using a wall mounted conduit to prevent the children accessing the loose wires. The wires to the filtration system in the Catkins room have been secured behind a cabinet which has been placed in front of the plugs and cables so the children can no longer access them. All staff are reminded to ensure that all wires and plugs are out of reach of children at all times and to constantly check for health and safety risks around the room.
3. The bottle of sanitiser is now on a higher-level hook located near the cleaning room; the baby wipes are now kept up higher on top of the fridge.
4. The highchairs are now stored in the kitchen, they will only be in the catkins room if in use. The room divider is now stored in the office when it is not in use.
5. A high-level lock has been fitted to the outside of the adult toilet. This door is kept locked all of the times to prevent the children accessing the personal hygiene materials inside. All the staff are aware of this.
6. Two high level shelves have been installed in the changing room to store the wipes. Storing the wipes on the new high-level shelves in the changing room does ensures they are out of reach of the children's reach.
7. Play materials previously stored in the sleep room are now stored in vacuum bags in the kitchen. The double socket in the sleep room near the cot has a locked cover over the plugs. The unsecured cable of the music system has been secured with a wall mounted conduit. The cot close to the shelves has been lowered by 2 inches, the baskets on the shelves have been turned so as they are not flush with the edge of the shelf ensuring they are not within children's reach. Staff know the importance of not storing materials in the sleep room.

Infection Control:

8. A new armchair has been purchased, awaiting its delivery. A big part of the staff meeting was health and safety and the responsibility of the staff to assess the environment constantly and remove anything broken or torn. The floor mat was replaced with a new foam shape.
9. There are no longer materials being stored in the sleep room, it can now be easily cleaned. This has been addressed with the cleaner.
10. Labelled soothers are now kept in individually labelled boxes and the staff have been informed of this practice to prevent cross contamination.
11. Cots are now cleaned between use; a separate electronic cleaning record has been devised to document this. During the staff meeting the staff were shown the said cleaning sheets and this practice is now implemented.
12. The soft bodied baby toys are replaced with hard bodied babies.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- 1.. The statement is accepted as evidence and a photograph of signage on the doors to remind staff to remember to lock the door.
2. Photographs of the secured cables.
3. Photographs of the relocated bottles of sanitizer and the baby cleansing wipes.
4. Photographs of the feeding chairs and of the room divider removed from the catkins room.
5. A photograph of the high-level closure device in place on the door.
6. A photograph of the shelving units in place.
7. Photographs of the re-located items from the sleep room, the secured cables and socket cover.

Infection Control:

- 8.. A copy of the purchase order and a photograph of the new foam shape.
- 9.. The statement is accepted as evidence.
10. Photograph of labelled soothers in individually covered containers.
11. A copy of the cleaning schedule.
12. The statement is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The requirement for the regulation has been met.

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) A number of the staff members who worked directly with the children had completed First Aid Responder training (FAR) and some had Paediatric First Aid with the certifications on file.

(2) (a) The first aid box in the Catkins room was stored on a high-level shelf in the room.

(b) The first aid box was accessible to the adults and was out of the reach of the children.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) The first aid box in the Catkins room was not adequately stocked. The following items were not in stock in addition to the contents provided:

- 5 individually wrapped triangular bandages.
- Pocket face mask
- Water burns dressings (1 large)

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The designated person in charge stated that: -

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The first Aid boxes have been checked and the items missing have been added. The boxes will be checked regularly and stocked according to the recommended contents list.

Supporting documentation submitted

The statement has been accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The requirement has been met.

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) The service had maintained in writing a record of the following: -
- (a) A template to record each fire drill that had taken place in the service was filed electronically. The last recorded fire drill took place prior to the summer recess on 05/09/2023.
 - (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance checks of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm. The records on file demonstrated the last check for the smoke alarm was 31/05/2023 and the firefighting equipment was 19.01.2023.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire was displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A copy of the insurance certification for the service was on file.

The information provided on the insurance certificate included:

- the contact details for the insurance provider
- the name and address of the service insured.
- the category of insurance cover for the service
- the number of children covered by the insurance was for 60 children.
- The expiry date of the current insurance cover was 27/03/'24.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated.

Compliance Information

(c) The playrooms, sleep room, sanitary accommodation and nappy changing room were ventilated by means of openable windows and mechanical ventilation on inspection. The Acorns playroom air temperature was recorded at 19 degrees Celsius, the Catkins room was recorded at 19.4 degrees Celsius.