

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016TY014				
Name of Service:	Little Treasures Creche and Playschool				
Address of Service:	Gortnarush, Dundrum, Co. Tipperary				
Eircode:	E34 NX39				
Name of Registered Provider:	Anita O'Dwyer				
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	20/11/2023				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>31</td> <td>PM</td> <td>8</td> </tr> </table>	AM	31	PM	8
AM	31	PM	8		
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Child and Family Agency, Ferryhouse, Clonmel, Tipperary.				
Inspection undertaken by:	E Cullen				
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 provides sessional, part time and full day care programmes to children aged 18 months to 6 years of age, 50 weeks per year. Including a sessional Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) service, 9:30am to 12:30pm, 38 weeks per year. The service is registered to operate 7:00am to 6:00pm, however is currently operating 8:30am to 5:00pm. Located in a repurposed two storey building in the rural town of Dundrum, Co. Tipperary. The service has four early years rooms over two floors, the toddler and playschool rooms on the ground floor and the preschool room on the first floor were operating on the day of inspection. The fourth room on the first floor was used as an auxiliary space. The registered provider also operates a second early years service and a school aged service in the South Tipperary area.

Staffing

The service employs seven staff members, the registered provider does not work directly in the service however is available for cover if required. Staff members held qualifications in Early Childhood Education and Care at Level 5, and 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9 (2)(3)(4) – Management and Recruitment, 11 (1)(4) – Staffing levels, 16 (i)- Record in relation to pre-school service, 19 – Health, Welfare and Development of the Child, however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23- Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16 -Record in relation to pre-school service, 19 – Health, Welfare and Development of the Child, 23- Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the toddler, junior playschool and senior preschool rooms.

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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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

Documentation was reviewed for nine adults, which included: the registered provider, seven staff members employed by the service and a work experience student.

(2)(a)(b) Seventeen of the eighteen required references were available for each adult from either a past employer, or from a reputable source. Of the seventeen references available, fourteen were validated.

(c) Garda vetting was available on file for each adult.

(d) Police vetting available for one adult who had lived outside the state for a period over 6 months.

(4) Certificates of qualification were available on file demonstrating that the six staff members working directly with children held a qualification at the minimum level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b) Three references available on file for two staff members were not validated by the registered provider. A second validated reference was not available for one staff member from either a past employer, or from a reputable source. This non-compliance was previously identified on inspection 01 December 2021, preventative actions submitted did not prevent a recurrence.

(3) On inspection it could not be confirmed if appropriate measures to ensure that all employees were suitable to work in an early years service prior to their commencement. There were no start dates available on record for four staff members. The required verification of references had not been completed prior to allowing three staff to commence in the setting as detailed above.

The registered provider submitted a CAPA response on 18 December 2023, which stated the start dates for the four staff members. It was subsequently identified that three of the staff members had commenced employment prior to the completion of Garda vetting procedures. One staff member commenced employment on 01 March 2023, Garda vetting was dated 22 August 2023. A second staff member commenced employment on 29 August 2022, Garda vetting was dated 22 November 2022. The third staff member commenced employment 13 September 2021 and Garda vetting was dated 21 September 2023.

(4) There was no record available to confirm that one staff member held a minimum qualification in early years or equivalent as detailed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b) Reference and validations have now been provided. A system has been implemented which ensures that validations are completed once a new staff member's reference is received.

(3) One employee's initial garda vetting certificate was mislaid, so the service had to reapply once this was noticed. Management have enhanced the new employee's checklist going forward to ensure that all documents are received and validated prior to an employee starting on the premises and this checklist is signed off by the new secretary and owner.

(4) Following the inspection, it was established that the employee had not completed all of the required modules in their programme of study. They are no longer employed by the service. The service has enhanced the new

employee's checklist going forward to ensure that all documents are received and validated prior to an employee starting on the premises and this checklist is signed off by our new secretary and owner.

Supporting documentation submitted

Validated references and new staff roster.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider meet the requirements of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. Implementation will be accessed on the next inspection.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

Compliance Information

(2) During the afternoon of the inspection, the staff to child ratios were adequate. In the outdoor area there were 8 children aged 1 year 10 months to 5 years old being cared for by 2 staff members.

(4) On the morning of the inspection, the staff to child ratios were maintained as follows throughout the service:

- In the toddler room, there were 10 children aged 1 year 10 months to 2 years 9 months old being cared for by 2 staff.
- In the junior playschool room, there were 9 children aged 2 years 4 months to 3 years 6 months old being cared for by 1 staff.
- The senior preschool room, there were 12 children aged 4 to 5 years old being cared for by 3 staff.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(2) While it is acknowledged that there was an adequate number of staff on the premises, the minimum adult to child ratios were not maintained at all times. The following example was recorded during the lunch time period:

At 2:00pm there were ten children aged between two and four years of age in the care of two staff members in the outdoor area. At 2:05pm the registered provider went inside and left one staff member supervising the ten children until 2:24pm when another staff member returned from their lunch break. To meet the minimum adult to child ratio for the numbers and age ranges of children, two staff members were required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A staff meeting was held and we have re-affirmed all staff lunchtimes and extended one staff members hours which allows the other remaining staff adequate time for their lunches. We have noted this disturbance in relation to the daily children's routine and all staff members have been made aware of the importance of starting and finishing their lunch/break times so as to prevent this from occurring in the future and also ensuring that the safety of all children is of paramount importance.

Supporting documentation submitted

Staff roster with break times.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. Implementation will be assessed on next inspection.

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:

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

Compliance Information

(i) A staff roster was displayed on the office door.

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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Staff members were observed to treat the children with respect and a positive regard. They sat with children in small groups or individually, engaged in conversation with and listened attentively to the children as they spoke. An example of this was seen when an aeroplane was spotted by a child in the outdoor play area. A staff member fostered the children's sense of curiosity by asking questions and facilitating a discussion with a group of children about the aeroplane and where it was going.

The service had made links with the local community, children and staff discussed a forthcoming outing to a local nursing home to sing Christmas songs. This activity supports children to make connections with the wider community. A range of displays in the senior preschool room also documented how children's identity and belonging was fostered. These included: a family wall, all about me and a novel 'how tall am I?' and 'whose eyes?' displays.

Each of the large bright classrooms had age-appropriate equipment and resources to support play and learning. Two low-level shelving units in each classroom provided children with independent access to materials and resources. Sensory play opportunities were observed for children in the toddler and junior playschool room on the day of inspection.

(1)(b)

Drinks were freely accessible to the children in each classroom throughout the day, drinks stations were on low level shelves. Mealtimes observed were unhurried social experiences in all rooms, staff sat with children and engaged in conversation. The children were encouraged to feed themselves appropriate to their stage of development and were assisted as required.

Regular nappy changing took place throughout the day and staff were observed to engage attentively with children during the process. Children who were toilet trained were supported to use the toilet independently and handwashing was promoted after both nappy changing and toileting.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

While there were some areas of interest outlined in each of the classrooms, further development was required to support and extend the play and learning opportunities for children. For example:

1. In each room home corners consisted of a wooden kitchen and a box of resources stored at floor level. Some of the kitchens were missing doors and sinks which inhibited the opportunities for imaginative play.
2. Children in the toddler room did not have free access to books, to support concept and language development.
3. Rest/cosy areas in the junior playschool room and senior preschool room required development, current provision of a wipeable couch is not sufficient for children for children attending on a full day care or part-time basis. Additional soft furnishings would enhance these spaces and promote use. It is acknowledged that the senior preschool room had access to a sensory room with such equipment, however the inspector was advised that this room was not used often.
4. Additional resources were brought out of the storage room in the senior preschool room to support play and learning. The children in this room would benefit from the inclusion of extra materials and resources within the classroom space to promote independent choice making.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The kitchen has been replaced. Any broken toys are replaced immediately going forward.
2. Books have been lowered so children have free access. All staff informed that bookshelves are to be kept at child level going forward.
3. Cushions and teddies have been placed on the couch, encouraging children to read and take timeouts. All kids have access to the Sensory room at all times where there is a soft furnishing and a soft couch which also has bean bags, staff are encouraged and advised to bring children into this area throughout the day. Staff are aware that cushions and teddies are always kept on the couches going forward.
4. An art centre has been set up in front of the window overlooking the front gate which has a table and chairs along with an art press with art supplies for easy access to children at all times. Children are encouraged to sketch and colour and pictures are placed on the wall to encourage their participation and imagination and praise them for their work. The staff are working in the art area is working well under the window and is being used going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of alterations to the learning environment.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. Implementation will be assessed on next inspection.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Accident and incident record books maintained a record of any incidents in the service. Of the ten records reviewed three were not signed by parent to confirm they had been made aware of incidents.

Administration of Medication:

2. Staff members had not implemented the service policy on administration of medication effectively. Of six records reviewed, none were counter signed by a second staff member, the 'checked by' section on each record was left blank.

Fire Safety:

3. Children's attendance was not consistently recorded. This posed a potential risk in the event of an emergency evacuation; the following two examples were observed:
 - At 11:30am no child attending the senior preschool room had been signed in. Children were only signed in once it was brought to the attention of staff by the inspector.
 - At 2:30pm in the toddler room, the numbers of children signed in did not reflect the numbers in attendance. Children who had departed the service had not been signed out.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. All staff have been advised that all reports in the accident and incident book are to be signed by the parents on the date and a copy of the report is to be given to the parent. From now on the Manager will ensure these procedures are followed and checked.

Administration of Medication:

2. All staff have been advised to ensure that two staff members are present prior to administering medicine to any child. The administrator is to complete the form and the witness is to observe and sign the sheet on the spot. From now on the Manager will ensure these procedures are followed and checked weekly.

Fire Safety:

3. All staff have been advised that when a child arrives or leaves the premises their name and time is recorded immediately. All staff were made aware of the importance of recording children present and absent in/from their room so as to adhere to the health and safety guidelines. Since the inspection we have held a fire drill and all children and staff were accounted for correctly, as a result of this process all staff know the importance of keeping accurate and up to date records going forward. From now on the manager will ensure these procedures are followed and checked.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Signed record of accident.

Administration of Medication:

2. Signed record of administration of medication.

Fire Safety:

3. Child attendance records.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.