

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2017FL502		
Name of Service:	Little Valley Preschool		
Address of Service:	9 Valley View, Swords, Fingal, Co. Dublin		
Eircode:	K67 NX33		
Name of Registered Provider:	Eileen Kirwan		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date(s) of Inspection:	18/04/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6.		
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Cully		
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

Little Valley Preschool is a privately owned preschool service established in 2017 and is located in a suburban area of North County Dublin. The preschool service is operated from a purpose-built room adjacent to the registered providers residence. Although the service is currently registered to operate a morning and afternoon preschool session, the morning session from 9.15am – 12.15pm is the only session in operation for this academic year. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme offering preschool sessions Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year. An enclosed outdoor area is available on the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider is currently a sole operator and was working directly with the children on the day of the inspection.

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 and safety. 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 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) The registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person to deputise in their absence as required.

(b) The registered provider was on the premises when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

A total of 3 staff files were reviewed including the file for the registered provider and 2 emergency contacts, of which one is the named person available to deputise and qualified to work with the children in the event that the registered provider was not available to the children.

(2)(a)(b) Two written and validated references were available for the registered provider and both emergency contacts.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider who works directly with the preschool children and both emergency contacts. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Following a review of information available in the staff files, there was no requirement for international police vetting disclosures for the registered provider or emergency contacts.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the registered provider who works directly with the children and person named to deputise held appropriate childcare qualifications at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. A qualification was not required for the second emergency contact.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

- (1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.*
- (3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*
- (8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*
- (c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

- (1) At all times there was an adequate number of staff working with the children.
- (3) The adult to child ratio was correct when the inspector arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection. The registered provider was caring for 10 children between the ages of xx years and xx months.
- (8)(c) The registered provider has ensured that there is a person available within close distance of the service available to assist in the event of an emergency.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1) The records in relation to the 10 registered children were reviewed and were found to be appropriately completed with the required information as specified in Regulation 15 (1) (a) to (i).

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

- (1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-*
- (a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and*

Compliance Information

(1) (a) The following observations are examples on how each child's learning, development and well-being was observed being facilitated during the inspection:

Basic needs:

- When the inspector arrived unannounced at the preschool, the children were actively engaged in play and activity. Throughout the session the children's choice of activity and resources was supported. The children appeared to be familiar with their daily routine, verbally pre-empting what was happening next such as snack time or garden time.
- Snack time was a social and pleasant experience for the children. They were encouraged to take their snack from the fridge and chose where to sit. The children and the early years educator sat together to eat snack and chat together about plans for the remainder of the week.

- Children were encouraged to independently meet their personal care needs such as toileting, handwashing, wiping their nose or putting on their coats. They were discreetly supervised and provided with support when needed.
- Children’s photographs, drawings of family and artwork were displayed throughout the care room. Displaying children’s photographs and artwork supports them to feel safe a sense of belonging in their learning environment.
- The children spent time outdoors in the well-resourced outdoor area.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The registered provider was observed to have nurturing interactions with children throughout the session. Children’s questions and suggestions were responded to with interest and when children needed guidance they were offered it in a timely manner. The children were spoken about positively with knowledgeable insight to their interests, needs and personalities. Gentle reminders of classroom rules and expectations were given when needed. All children were given positive feedback and their efforts were acknowledged.
- The children demonstrated that they felt a sense of belonging and connectedness within the service. They spoke freely with their educator about their thoughts and feelings and ideas. They had recently expressed interest in a new outdoor kitchen, which the registered provider responded to by purchasing the kitchen and together they discussed when it would be assembled. The children were observed to positively interact together and support each other to carry out tasks or activities.
- The preschool service valued partnership with parents. The registered provider discussed how parent-teacher meetings were currently ongoing. These meeting were an opportunity to update parents on their child’s learning and development. Monthly songs and learning topics were shared with parents so that they could participate with the children’s learning at home. The service operates an open-door policy and posts updates about the service on social media.

Physical and material environment:

- A variety of materials and resources were available to the children in designated areas of interest. The care room provided a resourced reading area, tabletop and fine motor activities, a construction area, a well-resourced home corner area and art and craft materials.

- There was a range of sensory materials available to the children on the day both indoors and outdoors including modelling dough, wooden massage tools, a sensory bubble tube, sand and water.
- The outdoor space provided a range of natural materials, with natural grass and a partially paved and sheltered area. Under the shelter, the children had access to a kitchen, sand table, a water wall and ride along toys and scooters. In the grassed area there was a swing and slide set with a climbing wall, picnic benches and a playhouse.

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

The registered provider had taken reasonable measures to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the children was maintained in the following ways.

General Safety:

- External and internal doors of the preschool service were appropriately secured to prevent an unauthorised person from gaining access to the children and prevent children from exiting the premises unsupervised.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of the reach of children.
- Records available demonstrated that a risk assessment for the outdoor area was carried out daily.
- Radiators in the care room were fitted with radiator covers to protect children from touching the surface in the event the surface reached above 50oC.
- Play materials and equipment provided in the care room and garden were observed to be in good hygienic condition.
- The glass doors leading to the garden had visibility strips on the glass panels.

Infection Control:

- Children were observed to be knowledgeable about good handwashing practices, independently washing hands before snack time or following an activity such as sand play

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support effective hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation in the service.
- Childrens snacks from home were stored in a refrigerator located in the care room.
- The sand table provided in the outdoor play area had an appropriate lid and was covered when not in use, to prevent contamination by animals and birds.
- Weekly cleaning schedules for the care room and sanitary facility were on display and up to date demonstrating when areas or equipment had last been cleaned and disinfected.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was administered during the inspection. Anti-febrile medication was available on-site in the event that it was required with a suitable policy in place regarding administration and permission to administer recorded in each child's record.

Fire Safety:

- The fire exit was unobstructed.

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) Records were available in the service to demonstrate that regular monthly fire drills take place. The most recent fire drill was recorded to have been carried out 13/03/24.
- (b) There was a record available that detailed the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. Firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system was last checked and serviced by a registered professional 28/11/23.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were on display in the care room.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was available to demonstrate the preschool service was adequately insured. The service is currently insured to accommodate 11 sessional preschool children, with an expiry date 27/03/2025.