

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2017MH075
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Name of Service:	Karen's Little Stars Childcare Ltd
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Address of Service:	Unit 7, The Maudlins, Duleek Co. Meath
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Eircode:	A92K597
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Name of Registered Provider:	Karen Coyne
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Service type:	Full Day Care
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Date of Inspection:	05/12/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	65	PM	41
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Family Resource Centre Commons Road Navan, Co. Meath
Inspection undertaken by:	D. Murray & AM. Cunningham
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

Karen's Little Stars Childcare Ltd was established in 2017. The service provides full day, part time and sessional care and education to children from 6 months to 6 years. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE) and operates from 7.00am to 6.00pm.

The premises is located in a converted apartment building and consists of 4 care rooms, an office, kitchen and sanitary facilities.

The rooms were as follows:

Room 1 provides care and education for children from 2 years 8months to 6 years.

Room 2 provides care for children from 2 to 3 years.

Room 3 provides care for children from 6 months to 2 years.

Room 4 provides care and education for children from 2 years 8 months to 6 years.

A well-equipped outdoor space was located on the premises along with sheltered break out areas off the care rooms.

Staffing

The registered provider employs a manager, 13 childcare staff and a cook. Present on the day of the inspection were the registered provider, manager, 12 childcare staff and 3 students on work experience.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, manager, 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.

(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.

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme.

Compliance Information

(1) (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

(2) (a)&(b) Sixteen staff files were reviewed along with the 3 students on work experience. Thirty validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for the 19 staff members.

(d) Police vetting was available for 4 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdictions for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) All 14 childcare staff members had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

(6A) Three staff members were employed under the scheme known as the Access and Inclusion Model.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)&(b) The following was noted when the staff files were reviewed.

1. Seven references were not validated by the registered provider.
2. One staff member did not have a second validated reference.

(d) Police vetting was not available for 1 staff member who had resided outside the jurisdictions for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All references were confirmed on the day of inspection by the Spanish employment agency and forwarded to the inspector.

Supporting documentation submitted

One validated written reference from a past employer.

Summary Comment

The registered providers in the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan has not addressed the non-compliance for Regulation 9- (2)(a),(b)& (d) Management and recruitment.

(2)(a)&(b) The seven references were validated by a recruitment agency. As the registered provider is the employer all references must be validated by the registered provider.

(d) Police vetting remains outstanding for 1 staff member.

The response received has been reviewed and has not been accepted.

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 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) On the day of the inspection there was the registered provider, manager, 12 childcare staff and 3 students on work experience working directly with the 65 children attending the service.

(2) The correct adult/child ratio was maintained throughout the inspection.

The rooms were as follows:

- Room 1 had 3 adults, 2 of whom were providing AIM support with 16 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to 6 years.
- Room 2 had 3 adults with 16 children ranging in age from 2 to 3 years. Three students on work experience were also present.
- Room 3 had 3 adults with 8 children ranging in age from 6 months to 2 years.
- Room 4 had 5 adults with 25 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to 6 years.

(8) (a) According to the staff roster the registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times.

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 were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic needs:

- All children individual needs were met with additional care, attention and supervision given as required. Children in Room 1 were well supported by staff during activities and children who needed additional support had individual care plans to identify the children's abilities, needs, preferences and interests. All children had the opportunity to be the "helper" and hand out the lunches to their peers, which the children enjoyed. Children's preferences were facilitated and children had movement breaks within the service if required, which meant that if a child was unsettled in an area that a suitable alternative space was offered.
- Staff members were observed changing children's nappies regularly and in a timely manner with warm one-to-one interactions during direct care. Older children were encouraged to become independent and self-caring, suitable to their age and stage of development which included using the toilet, hand washing, caring for their belongings and tidying away after activities and play.
- The children in Rooms 2&3 who became upset or who awoke from sleep were nurtured and cuddled until they were ready to re-join their group. Children in Room3 who were settling in were given additional comforted and support with the service providing flexibility for the parents regarding the number of hours and time of the day for the child to attend.
- Children were observed enjoying meaningful, sustained play with tabletop activities, art and crafts and free playing with lots of conversation and laughter observed. Staff supported children's learning with activities that were observed to be fun and creative. In all the care rooms the theme of the month was "Winter" and "Christmas" with the children's art work displayed to reflect these themes.
- The staff members sat and chatted with the children at mealtimes, helping the children when required whilst encouraging conversation and extending interactions.

- The service embraces outdoor play and learning. Children were observed become involved in meaningful, sustained play experiences with both their peers and staff members.
- Transitions were handled smoothly with staff members giving the children ample time to complete one activity before starting the next.

Supporting relationships around children:

- A record was kept in Rooms 2 and Room 3 of nappy changes, sleep times, meals and issues pertaining to each child as occurred during the day and this information was passed on to parents or guardians by an electronic tablet device.
- The staff spoke to all children in a positive way and listened attentively to each child. They used welcoming facial expressions and gentle vocal tones.
- The service showed a positive regard towards the families of the children and family links were nurtured in the service with family photographs displayed on “The Family Wall” in the care rooms which gave a sense of identity and belonging. Overall, the children appeared comfortable, happy and relaxed in their environment.

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-
- (b) 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) 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)(b) Cosy areas consisting of mats and soft furnishings were available in each care room for children to take a break from activities if needed. Stackable beds were placed on the floor in Room 2 for children over 2 years to sleep on, 2 foldable cots were also available. A cot room off Room 3 had 8 standard cots for children under 2 years who required sleep.

(3)(a) The outdoor space was enclosed and had a secure gate. The surface area consisted of artificial grass along with a low impact surface. Sheltered areas permitted outdoor play in all types of weather. Additional sheltered break out areas were available off Room 1 with a long-enclosed corridor with play equipment leading to Rooms 3 and 4.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- Play materials and play equipment in all care rooms were visible and easily accessible to the children on open shelving at their height which supported children to have choices in selecting materials and equipment to play with. Tables and chairs in each room were appropriate to the age and stage of development of pre-school children attending the specific care rooms. The care rooms were well resourced and had areas of interest with supporting equipment which incorporated natural/sensorial materials, art and crafts and a range of suitable toys.
- Equipment in the outdoor space included planting area with wall art ornaments and mirrors, a water table served with harvest water, climbing frame with slide, swings, wigwam, ride on cars, art easel, building blocks, wooden tree blocks nicely decorated for seating, a mud kitchen and construction areas.

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

The service had a menu plan with a variety of meals ranging from meat, fish and poultry provided by a catering company. All snacks were prepared onsite. The children attending the service on an ECCE basis brought their own lunches. Children attending the service on a full day care basis availed of breakfast from 07:30am to 9am consisting of a choice of cereals and toast. A snack was served at 10am which consisted of pancakes and bananas for the older age group with the younger age group having yogurts and a roll. The main meal was served between 11:30am and 12:30pm which consisted of chicken curry and rice with beef lasagne for the younger age group. At 2pm a light snack of yogurts, fruit and bread sticks was served. A further hot snack was provided between 3:30 and 4pm which consisted of spaghetti hoops/beans on toast with a light snack served before leaving for home. Water was the drink of choice and is available in all the care rooms.

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 following safety measures were in place on the day of inspection:

- The main door to the service was secured with a buzzer system and the outdoor space was enclosed and had a secure gate. These security measures ensured that a child did not exit unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service and outdoor space.
- An indoor and outdoor risk assessment was conducted on a daily basis.
- All cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- The emergency exit doors were unobstructed.
- All furniture and display units had a stable base with no risk of toppling identified.

Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed:

- The hand washing policy and nappy changing policy were implemented in practice with appropriate hand washing for staff and children at all times. Warm running water was available in the children's sanitary area, along with a supply of liquid soap and hand paper towel for effective hand washing.
- The service was clean with cleaning schedules maintained on a daily basis.
- Individual boxes were available for the children's pacifiers.

Safe Sleep:

Safe sleep practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- Temperature of the cot room was maintained between 16 to 20⁰ C and between 18 to 22⁰ C in Room 2 while children were sleeping. Thermometers were available in the rooms to monitor the temperature.
- A sleep log recording the position, colour and breathing pattern was recorded at 10 minutes intervals on all sleeping children. Children over 2 years who were sleeping on mats had adults supervising in the room at all times.
- Block out blinds were available which created an atmosphere conducive to sleep.

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 a person had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and safely stored in the premises.

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 fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 30/11/2023.

(b) A record was maintained of the number, type and maintenance record of the fire fighting equipment and mains powered smoke alarms on the premises. The fighting equipment was last serviced on the 27/03/2023. The mains powered smoke alarms were last serviced on the 10/10/2023.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed 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 registered provider ensured that the service was adequately insured for 90 children at any one time attending for full day care. The policy showed that the service was insured from 23/03/2023 to the 27/3/2024.