

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2018LK505
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Seedling Nature Schools
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Limerick East ETNs, Dromdarrig, Mungret, Co. Limerick
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<b>Eircode:</b>	V94 27P3
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Mary Ellen O'Sullivan
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<b>Service type:</b>	Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	08/02/2024
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	26	PM	No.
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Tusla, Early Years Inspectorate, Estuary House, Henry St., Limerick
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	E Browne
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
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### Description of service

This private service was established in 2018. It's registered to provide parttime and sessional care from 09:00 to 14:00 hours, Monday – Friday, under the Early Childhood care and Education Scheme.

The service is a full time outdoors preschool where children play outdoors as well as access to a designated playroom in a specially designed yurt. A traditional style carriage and open shelter are also available on the grounds. It has suitable sanitary facilities for both adults and children.

The outdoors preschool operates from a large site on the grounds of the local national school.

A breakfast club and a school aged service is also available to the children.

### Staffing

The registered provider and 6 staff are working in the service each day. All staff working at the service have achieved an award in Early Childhood Care 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 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, 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
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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 present on the day of the inspection. There was a person available who was able to deputise if required.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the registered provider was present, and the staff roster indicated that a person in charge was always available at the service.

(c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identified the lines of authority and roles and responsibilities of each employee.

(2)(a) Two written and validated references were available for all staff employed at the service.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, there were references from reputable sources available.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for all staff members employed at the service.

(d) Police vetting was available for 2 staff who had lived outside the Irish jurisdiction.

(4) All adults working directly with children held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

### Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d) Police vetting was not available for 2 staff members who had lived outside the Irish jurisdiction.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action:**

The registered provider has stated that:

(d) Police vetting has been applied for the 2 staff members who have lived outside the Irish jurisdiction.

Going forward the service will ensure all vetting procedures are in place before staff / student start work in Seedling Nature school.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

No supporting documentation submitted.

### Summary Comment

Regulation 9 point (2)(d) remains non-compliant as evidence that Police vetting has been obtained for 2 staff members has not been submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate.

### Part III – Management and Staff

#### Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

*(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.*

#### Compliance Information

(2) On the day there were 7 staff working directly with 26 preschool children and 5 staff in the afternoon working with 7 preschool children availing of the part time service.

This was compliant with the recommended adult/child ratios.

### 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 Seedling Natures aim was to ensure that each child's learning, development and wellbeing was facilitated within the daily life of the service. The pre-school follows the principle that exposure and time spend outside in the natural environment with ordinary materials such as sand, water, wood, clay, vegetables, plants, flowers and exploratory play was fundamental for the early development of young children.

Healthy eating was promoted in the service. Parents provided the children with healthy snacks for break times and a rolling lunch was in operation. Staff said that this worked very well with the children choosing when to break away from their activity to eat. The staff ensured that all the children had their food before leaving the service usually before 12 midday. Perishable foods were stored in a refrigerator if needed.

Sanitary accommodation was located in the carriage style premises with nappy changing facility available if required. A change of clothing, outdoor clothing, coats and appropriate outdoor footwear was available for all children at the service.

Rest area with a good size couch, cushions and blankets were accessible in the yurt. Cot beds were available for the children who needed a sleep. Children who needed a quieter space, comfort, rest and relaxation away from the outdoor space were taken in small groups or individually to the yurt.

Children had regular change of environment and throughout all areas of the service had access to long periods exploring the outdoor environment, the garden and the sensory trails.

The outdoor areas provided opportunities for fresh air, discovery, movement, exploration and activities exclusive to the outdoors. The outdoor play areas were safe, secure and children were supervised by staff at all times while in the outdoor spaces.

### **Supporting Relationships around Children:**

The service supported children to form and sustain positive relationships with their adult carers with the same staff present with the children each day. All staff were observed being actively involved in children's play, where appropriate initiating games and joining in helping when invited by the children. Lots of social conversations between staff and children was evident in all areas of the service.

Parents were given time at drop off and at collection time to chat with staff about their child's day. Staff and parents shared knowledge and observations of the children's interests, strengths, developmental and care needs, approaches to learning, changes in their life and any other relevant information. Personal journals that captured much of the children's learning were created and these were regularly sent home with the children.

Staff regularly held meetings and planned together the themes for learning at the service.

### **Physical and material environment:**

The yurt playroom environment was a warm, inviting and comfortable space for the children to play and rest throughout the day. The service aim was to move away from plastic play materials as much as possible and to concentrate on open ended materials and recycled products for the children.

The room had areas of interest developed and all play equipment was stored at a low level, readily accessible to children. Children were observed in clay making, colouring and pasting activities.

Large expanses of space were available outdoors with trees and shrubs and enclosed by a willow fence. Sheltered huts were available with a range of play materials for children to choose from. The equipment and materials in the outdoor area supported children's play, movement and exploration and provided opportunities for fresh air, exercise and learning. There was lots of space for climbing and opportunities for challenging and safe risky play.

A large group of children and staff were in the outdoor space and observed to be having many moment of fun in the large muddy puddles, using the ride on toys and engaging in the sand and water play.

## 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:

Garda vetting was available for 1 staff member. However, the vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

#### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective & Preventive Action

##### General Safety:

The registered provider has stated that:

A copy of the renewed Garda vetting for the staff member dated the 6<sup>th</sup> of March of 2024 was emailed into the Inspectorate on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2024.

The staff vetting has been reviewed and going forward the service will ensure all are within the three year timeframe.

##### Supporting documentation submitted:

##### General Safety:

A copy of the Garda vetting for the staff member.

#### Summary Comment

The action as stated by the registered provider meet the regulatory requirements of Regulation 23 General Safety.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

*(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.*

*(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-*

*(a) no person other than-*

*(i) pre-school child attending the service,*

*(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,*

*(iii) an employee, or*

*(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and*

*(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.*

#### Compliance Information

(1) All adults dropping children to the service checked the child in with the lead staff in charge in the relevant room of the service. At home time children were checked out of the service in a similar manner. The staff documented the children's arrival time and their departure time each day.

(3)(a) The service ensured that only children attending, the person who drops and collects and the employees gain access to the premises.

(b) All visitors to the service must be signed in and signed out by a staff member

### 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) There were 2 staff members on duty who had up to date first aid response training.
- (2)(a) There were first aid boxes located in the service.
- (b) The first aid boxes were readily available and accessible to all staff if required. A staff member was assigned responsibility to regularly check the contents in each first aid box. All items were removed when expired and all boxes were regularly restocked.

### 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) Fire drills were carried out monthly in the service. The most recent drill took place in January 2024.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed clearly in preschool shelter and the fire assembly point was clearly visible in the outdoor space.

### Non-Compliance Information

- (b) A maintenance and servicing record of the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were not available on the premises.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action:**

The registered provider has stated that:

- (b)The firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system were serviced on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 2024.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

A copy of the maintenance record was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2024.

### Summary Comment

The action as stated by the registered provider meet the regulatory requirements of Regulation 26(b).

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

Adequate insurance was available for the preschool service and had an expiry date of 27/03/2024.