

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2018RN502
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Name of Service:	The Growing Tree
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Address of Service:	Abbeyfield EROC Centre, Sligo Road, Ballaghadereen, Co. Roscommon
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Eircode:	F45 WF60
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Name of Registered Provider:	Michael Frain
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	24/05/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	11	PM	n/a
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, Government buildings, Convent Road, Roscommon town.
Inspection undertaken by:	A. Kennedy
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
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Description of service

This service is in operation since April 2019. It is operated by a subcommittee of Roscommon Integrated Development Company and located within the emergency reception and orientation centre. It is located within close proximity of Ballaghaderreen town with a large room provided on the ground floor within a complex of apartments.

It provides a play-based curriculum for children of parents availing of classes on site. It provides a part time and sessional service from 09.30 to 14:30hrs Monday to Thursday and from 09:30hrs to 13:30hrs on Fridays each week catering for children from 1 to 6 years of age. The maximum number of children to attend this service is 23.

An outdoor play area is provided to the rear of the premises with direct access from the preschool room.

Staffing

The registered provider does not work in the service and has employed a manager to operate the service.

There are three staff employed in the service and the manager advised that an additional staff member is available to assist in event of staff absence.

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 centre 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, 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.*

(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

(1)(a) There was a designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputize in the service.

(b) The designated person in charge was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived on day of the inspection and remained on site for the duration of the inspection.

Documentary evidence indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available, on the premises, when the pre-school children were present.

(2)(a) &(b) Five staff files were reviewed.

Ten of the ten written validated references on file in respect of the five staff were from a past employer or a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the five staff. Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. The service did adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Documentary evidence indicated that two staff, had lived outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years, and had the required police vetting.

(4) The four staff working directly with the pre-school children had evidence of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Level 5 to Level 7 in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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.*
- (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.*
- (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

- (1) At all times during the period of the inspection, the manager ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.
- (2) Documentary evidence in the form of attendance records and staff rosters indicated that adult child ratios were adhered to.
- On the day of the inspection, there were 11 children present. All children were aged between 3 to 5 years. There were three staff directly caring for these children. Additionally, the manager assisted with the administrative part of the inspection.
- (4)(a) The manager ensured that there were two staff on the premises at all times while the pre-school was operating

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) Children had plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance.

The service supported the children in forming and sustaining positive relationships with staff.

For example:

- assigning a key person to each child;
- showing respect for each unique child and developing their trust;
- being actively involved in children's play, where appropriate (initiating games, joining when invited to by children);
- behaving in a way that creates a positive atmosphere (having frequent social conversations, joint laughter and showing affection);
- listening to the voice of the child as they communicate their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children's cues, gestures, and body language;
- encouraging children to think critically, ask questions and respond to them in a way that promotes sustained shared thinking; nurturing and comforting children;
- using soft tones, the child's individual name, and getting down to their level and making eye contact.

Visual aids (picture and word reminders) and instructions were displayed and used with the children to support their learning.

- Displayed on the walls and ceiling were posters and ceiling art with paper plates decorated by the children, posters on emotions, visual aids on the daily routine and dental hygiene, photographs, artwork, and themes including the children's art displays on spring and summer, "our families", days of the week, colours, emotions, Ramadan and the children's art displays on crabs, whales and octopus.

- The atmosphere in the learning environment was encouraging and unhurried.
- The children were supported to be confident about their identity and to have a strong sense of belonging, each day, while in the service.
- The service provided parents and guardians with daily information, including significant events or activities involving their child, for example, verbal communication at drop of and collection times.
- Staff adjusted the level of support provided to children depending on the child's abilities, level of understanding of the English language and allowing for children's partial participation and participation with support.
- The children were observed playing in the home areas with a selection of dolls and accessories, at the vanity unit with play accessories, playing a post box game, at tabletop activities including jigsaws, puzzles, magnetic play, sorting shapes, playing with accessories in the doll's house. The children were observed at construction, singing, dancing, and playing with musical instruments.
- The children were observed at play in the outdoor area which was equipped with a selection of play materials to include a sheltered space with sand and water play, an art area, a paint easel, a play kitchen with play accessories, planting and digging opportunities, two slides and a selection of bikes, trikes, and scooters.
- The staff listened to children in a caring, gentle way when they expressed emotions, and reassured them that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions at times. The staff acknowledged and accepted children's feelings (positive and negative) and the relationships between children's actions and other's responses. In each of the playrooms, the children were given choice on what to do next.
- The staff were observed helping children to find solutions, supporting them, and talking to the children in a variety of ways, discussing, questioning, modelling, and commentating, extending a child's activities and initiating games and activities. The staff provided significant opportunities for the child to decide their play activities and experiences.
- Children's behaviour was managed in a competent and positive manner by the staff. It was observed that minor problems were handled promptly and positively by the staff.
- Staff used positive strategies to support children's inclusion. For example, the inspector noted that the staff acknowledged a child's engagement in an activity 'that is great' 'well done' and used questions such as 'what should we do next?', 'is there any other way to do this?', to allow children to critically think and explore.

- The staff supported children to enter social groups, and to learn to help and positively engage with other children. They encouraged and praised children for specific, positive, and appropriate behaviours. Children were given positive alternatives, rather than just being told 'no'.
- Children were supported in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. Children could identify, name, and explore their feelings both positive and negative.

(b)

- The children were given sufficient time to eat in an unhurried manner in their room for the morning snack and in the dining room for their dinner. They sat at age-appropriate chairs and tables and highchairs were provided for the younger children as required.
- The staff encouraged and supported the pre-school children to feed themselves independently, according to their age and stage of development.
- The staff responded to children's individual personalities, sensitivities and needs in relation toileting and toilet training. It was advised on the day of the inspection that presently there are no children in nappies and all children are toilet trained.
- The children had unrestricted access to the toilets and did not have to wait to use the toilet. Children were allowed to take their time during toileting. The staff reminded the younger children on the use of the toilet and were available to assist if required.
- Staff encouraged and supported children to become more independent in toileting practices.
- Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence, and to develop self-help and personal hygiene skills.

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:

- There was a buzzer access system at the entrance of the premises.
- The staff only areas, staff sanitary area and storage areas were secure and thereby inaccessible to a pre-school child.
- The external outdoor play area was secure so that children could not leave the area unsupervised and unauthorised persons could not enter the area.
- Fire doors throughout the building were unobstructed.
- All cleaning agents were stored inaccessible to the children.
- A system was in place to ensure that daily records of attendance were kept for all of the children, attending the pre-school.
- Leads, cables, and flexes were secured and or inaccessible to prevent any trips or strangulation hazard.
- The playroom temperatures were thermostatically controlled, to ensure the temperatures were maintained between 18°C to 22°C.
- Thermostatically controlled warm water not exceeding 43°C to facilitate hygienic hand washing was available.
- Heavy equipment and furnishings were anchored appropriately.
- The highchairs in the dining room conformed to safety standards and had the 5-point safety harness system.
- There was a documented risk assessment system for the indoor and outdoor play areas, for checking that toys and equipment were not broken, in a clean condition and maintained in a good state of repair.
- The manager clearly identified to the early year's inspector, the drop off and collection procedures for children.

Administration of Medication:

- Through discussion with the inspectors, the staff demonstrated that they were aware of the correct procedures for the administration of medicines.
- There were no medications administered to the children on the day of the inspection.

- The staff demonstrated knowledge of safe practices with regards to the safe storage and administration of medication should it be required.

Safe Sleep:

- A cot is available for a younger child to rest if required and two stackable beds are available for children over two years of age if they require to rest or relaxation time.
- There was a safe sleep policy that detailed temperature, lighting, ventilation, and child safety requirements, as per the 'safe sleep for under 2's best practice guidelines for childcare services policy'.
- Sleep records are kept if a child slept and it records the time an adult physically checks a child, and their signature. Additionally, the records included a sleeping child's colour, position, breathing and the temperature of the sleep area with the opportunity to document any necessary remedial actions taken.
- All linen provided was clean, dry, and stored in labelled baskets.
- A Rest / quiet area was also provided in the playroom to facilitate a child to rest or opt out of an activity if he/she chose.

Fire Safety:

- Monthly fire drills were carried out on the premises to ensure the children were familiar with the procedure in event of an emergency.
- All exit routes in the service were free from obstruction during the inspection.

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) Two staff working in the pre-school service had evidence of a current first aid responder qualification, thereby ensuring a person trained was immediately available.

(2)(a) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and in an easily accessible conspicuous position.

(b) The first aid box was readily available, with content items within date.

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 firefighting 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) Arrangements were in place to record monthly fire drills. The last documented fire drill was dated 23/04/2024.

(b) A record of the number, type, and maintenance of firefighting equipment in the service was on file. Records indicated that the last annual maintenance for the firefighting equipment was dated October 2023. Records indicated that the last maintenance for the fire detection system was dated 30/04/2024.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed on the notice board in the preschool room.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service provided evidence of insurance to cover 23 children on a part-time basis at any one time with a commencement date of 18/02/2024 to expire on 17/02/2025.