

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2018TY507
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Name of Service:	Elm Tree Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Lough National School, Lough, Thurles, Co. Tipperary
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Name of Registered Provider:	Teresa Treacy, Teresa Shanahan
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	17/04/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
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Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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 sessional and part-time service was established in 2018 to provide care and education to children aged 2 – 6 years old. The service operates Monday – Friday, 9am – 2pm for 38 weeks of the year.

The service is operated from a room in Leugh national school, located in a rural area outside the town of Thurles in north Tipperary. The school premises is a detached, single-storey building surrounded by grounds which include car parking areas and outdoor play areas. The service have exclusive use of their room and to their own outdoor area that is directly accessible from the room and fenced off from the rest of the school grounds. The children also have access to the school hall for indoor physical activities and to sanitary accommodation facilities close to their room.

This is a sister service to Little Angels Preschool, Thurles.

Staffing

The service has two registered providers, one is the person in charge and works directly with the children in this service while the other is the person in charge in Little Angels Preschool.

There are three staff, including the person in charge, who work directly with the children in the service each day. One member of staff is employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM).

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(2)(4), 11(1)(2)(4)(8), 20(1)(2), 21, 22, 24(1)(3), 25, 26(1)(4) and 28.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 9 Management and Recruitment.

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

(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

The staff file of the member of staff who had commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 9 June 2021 was reviewed as part of the inspection process. Staff files of the other staff had been inspected previously and were found to be compliant.

(2)(a) Written, validated references from past employers were available in respect of the member of staff.

(b) Not applicable as the available references were from past employers.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of the member of staff and relevant records were retained on file. Garda vetting was repeated on a three yearly basis in line with best practice.

(d) Not applicable as staff had not lived outside the state.

(4) Staff held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 or 8 on the national qualifications framework.

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).

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) 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) There were 15 children, aged between 3 and 5 years old, attending on a sessional or part-time basis being supervised by 3 staff on the morning of the inspection.

(2) and (4) The adult to child ratio was maintained at greater than the minimum requirements for the duration of the inspection.

(8)(a) There were at least two staff present in the service at all times while it was in operation.

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-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(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.

(2) A registered provider-

(a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016 shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The children had exclusive access to their room within the school, which was a bright, comfortable space. The children had daily access to the school hall for games and physical activity and to the playground behind their room for outdoor play. They also had access to the schools garden room where they could engage in gardening activities.

(b) There was a loft area in one corner of the room with wooden stairs and handrail for the children to use to access it. This space provided a quiet area above the activities below and was set up as a cosy area and library. There was a carpet on the floor, soft toys and cushions. It was rare for the children to sleep while attending the service. A sleep mat, blankets and pillows were available to use in the cosy area by a child who required a sleep during the day.

(2)(a) There was an enclosed outdoor play area directly accessible from the room to which the children had access on a daily basis. This area was sectioned off from the rest of the school grounds and was used at different times during the day by the children in the service, those in the Junior and Senior Infants class and children attending the autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) unit. The area had concrete footpaths along one side with the rest of the ground area covered in bark mulch. The registered provider said that the bark mulch was replenished as required, on average every 1 – 2 years. There was a tree in the centre of the space which provided natural shade. There was green mesh fencing and gates around the area which allowed the children to see beyond the space and interact with older children when they were playing in the main part of the grounds.

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

The service was well equipped and furnished both indoors and outdoors. The room was laid out in a number of well-defined interest areas that were separated from other spaces by the use of low-level shelving units and play equipment such as the kitchen and shop. There were three sets of child sized tables and chairs spaced throughout the room that were used for dining as well as tabletop activities. Interest areas included the block area, sensory play and discovery area, art area, imaginative play area, home corner and puzzles area. The upper part of the loft was used as the cosy area and library while the area beneath it was used for small world play.

The outdoor area had wooden bench seats, ride-on toys, sand tables, tree house climbing unit with slide, swing set surrounded by a low barrier made of old tyres, painting easel and mud kitchen.

The children also had use of the schools resources such as sports materials that were stored in the room across from the school hall and used by the children when playing in the hall.

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 healthy eating policy. Children brought a packed lunch to eat during the morning. Children attending on a part-time basis brought additional food to eat in the afternoon. There was a small fridge in the room for the storage of perishable foods.

Food eaten on the day of inspection included: ham and cheese bagel, crackers, fromage frais, cheese, yoghurt, rice cakes, sandwiches, bread rolls, pancakes, sweet corn and broccoli, apples, mandarins and smoothies. Most of the children brought drink bottles of water to drink during the day, some of the children brought squash.

Additional drinks such as apple juice were included as part of some lunches.

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) The staff were responsible for recording the daily attendance of each child. There was a written record of the arrival and departure times of the children.

(3)(a) School staff met any visitors to the premises at the front door before allowing them to enter the building. The registered provider then met any visitors at the door of the service before permitting them to enter the service.

(b) A written record was maintained of any visitors to the service.

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 registered provider held current certification in first aid response (FAR).

(2)(a) There was an appropriately stocked first aid box available on a shelf near the sink unit in the room.

(b) The first aid box was available if required by a child attending the service.

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) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service, most recently on 5 March 2024.
- (b) There was a written record of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. The firefighting equipment was serviced annually, most recently in October 2023. The smoke alarm system was serviced in March 2024 when a new control panel was installed.
- (4) There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire on a wall in the service and throughout 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 held current insurance for the service valid until 27 March 2025.