

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019CC001
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Name of Service:	Sandy Walk
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Address of Service:	Broomfield, Midleton, Co Cork
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Eircode:	P25 T6H3
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Name of Registered Provider:	Zoe O'Brien
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	24/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, 13 Market Square, Mallow, Co Cork, P51 DD5Y
Inspection undertaken by:	N O'Donoghue
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	N/A
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Description of service

Sandy Walk first opened in 2019 and is a registered community based early years sessional service that caters for children from aged 2 to 6 years and attending the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE).

The service is registered to operate from 9.00am to 12.00pm each day Monday to Friday.

Sandy Walk operates from a detached single storey building located on the entrance of a private residential estate on the outskirts of Midleton town. The facility consists of one classroom with a kitchenette area, adequate children and adult toilet facilities and a storage room. The children have access to an outdoor play area located beside the facility. Sandy Walk is part of a multiple service.

Staffing

There were five adults attached to the service. This included the registered provider who is based in the other service, two early years educators and two relief early years educators.

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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 16(i), 19 (1)(a), 21, 23 and 25(1); however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 8. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

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.

Additional Information

The inspector referred the service to Services Operating Outside Registration Status (SOORS).

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

It was identified on inspection, that the service was operating outside of their registration status.

- The person in charge was working as the person in charge in a sister service. The person in charge can only be registered with one service at a time.
- The registered provider had changed to a different person.

The registered provider was required to notify the Early Years Inspectorate of any proposed change in details prior to the change occurring.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider submitted a change of circumstances form to the Early Years Inspectorate to update the person in charge and registered provider. The registered provider will notify the Inspectorate of any changes going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

The registered provider's statement was accepted by the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The change in circumstance was approved. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 8 has been adequately addressed.

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.*

(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) The service had a designated person in charge and deputy person in charge on the premises on the day of inspection.*
 - (b) From review of the roster a person in charge or named deputy person in charge were on the premises at all times during the operation of the service.*

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(c) There was a clearly identified management structure in the service. This included person in charge, early years educators and relief early years educators.

(2) There were five adults attached to the service; all five adult files were open to inspection.

(a) Of the 10 references required, 9 validated references were available from past employers.

(b) Of the 10 references required, 1 validated reference was available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures has been obtained for all five adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was deemed to be required for one of the five adults working in the service and copies of the relevant documents were maintained on file for the one adult.

(3) All procedures specified under paragraph (2) were carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) All five staff working directly with children held relevant qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education at least at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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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.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.

(3) On the day of inspection, the adult to child ratios were in adherence to the requirements of the regulation.

- In the Preschool room in the morning, there was 2 staff working with 15 children aged between 2 years and 11 months and 5 years and 4 months, all were attending sessional care.

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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) Fifteen children were registered to attend the service. A copy of all 15 enrolment records was available on day of inspection. A review of 10 records was conducted. All 10 records inspected had the detail required as listed from (a) to (i).

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Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

Compliance Information

(1)
(i) A review of the staff rosters available on day of inspection included start and finish times. As it was a sessional service break cover was not required.

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:

- Children had access to their water bottles throughout the session.
- Children were encouraged in developing their independence skills such as putting on their own coat and wet gear and zipping it up. Staff were available to support children if required.
- Parents/guardians provided a mid-morning snack which consisted of sandwiches, fruit and yoghurts.
- The children were observed independently accessing the sanitary areas. The staff were available to provide assistance, if required.
- Children had access to additional clothing in the event it was required.

Supporting relationships:

- Staff spoke with children at their level, in a calm and relaxed tone. Staff used positive reinforcement language with the children.
- Children engaged in parallel play and were observed to check in on their friends and include them in play.

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- Staff were observed meeting with parents at the end of the session, updating them on the activities of the day. The staff explained to the inspector that they communicate regularly with the parents, this occurs at collection and drop-off times.
- During mealtime staff sat at the table and engaged in social conversations with the children.

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 ensured there was adequate equipment available for the number of children attending the service. The service had additional toys and materials on the premises. It was observed on day of inspection that the service provided a number of sensory activities including water play, sand play and modelling dough.

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 internal and external doors of the service were secured and prevented children from exiting the premises and unauthorised persons accessing the service.
- Toys and equipment observed appeared in good condition and well maintained.
- All emergency exit doors were clear from obstruction.
- Blind cords were secured and out of reach of children.

Infection control:

- All perishable foods were stored in the refrigerator.
- Appropriate water temperatures were recorded in each room and sanitary facility. The water temperature ranged from 31.5°C to 36.4°C.
- Staff were observed cleaning tables and chairs between activities and prior to mealtimes.

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- Foot operated bins were available in the room and sanitary facilities.
- Regular handwashing was conducted throughout the day. This was observed when staff and children entered the premises, after outdoor play, after toileting and before snack.
- Windows were open for natural air ventilation.

Administration of medication:

- No administration of medication was observed on the day of inspection. Discussion with staff ensured staff were aware of the correct process for administering medication in the event it was required.
- All medication observed on the day was in date and out of reach of children.

Fire safety:

- Fire exits were clear of any obstruction and clearly identified in the room.
- Fire equipment was available in the room in the event they were needed.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that a member of staff with First Aid Response (FAR) training was available to the children at all times.