

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019MH001
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Name of Service:	Little Explorers Crèche Ltd
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Address of Service:	Summerseat Avenue, Clonee, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	D15 VFT9
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Name of Registered Provider:	Catherine Brady
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Dates of Inspection: Day 1	31/01/2024
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Date 2 of Inspection:	01/02/2024
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No of pre-school children: Day 1	AM	61	PM	42
Day 2	AM	58	PM	40

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Family Resource Centre, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath
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Inspection undertaken by:	D. Murray & AM. Cunningham
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Title:	Early Years Inspectors
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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

Little Explorers Crèche Ltd is a private childcare service located on the outskirts of Clonee village. The building is purpose built single storey facility and consists of 5 care rooms, office, kitchen and sanitary facilities. The service provides full day care, sessional and part-time care to children from 0 to 6 years and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE). A school aged service is also provided. The service operates from 07:30am to 6:30 pm Monday to Friday.

The rooms in the service were as follows:

The **Baby** room provided care for children from 10 months to 2 years.

The **Toddler** room catered for children from 2 to 3 years.

The **ECCE Room 1 & 2** facilitated the care of children from 3 to 6 years.

The **ECCE Room 3** provided care and education to children from 2.8 years to 4 years.

Outdoor spaces were located on the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider employs a deputy person in charge, 13 childcare staff and a 2 cook.

31/01/2024 Staff present on the day of inspection were the registered provider, deputy person in charge, 10 childcare staff and a cook.

01/02/2024 Staff present on the day of inspection were registered provider, deputy person in charge, 10 childcare staff and a cook.

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, deputy person in charge, 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.

(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

31/01/2024 and 01/02/2024

- (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.
- (c) A clear management structure was displayed in the entrance hallway in the service.

(2) (a)&(b) Thirty-four validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for 17 adults.

(d) Police vetting was available for 3 staff members had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Fourteen 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.

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

Non-Compliance Information

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

(4) One staff member qualification had no supporting documentation to state that it was equivalent to a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(d) The staff member is in the process of applying for police vetting, which will be placed on file when received. The registered provider will ensure that all staff members who require Police vetting will have the vetting on file before commencing employment in the service.

(4) This staff member will be working with the school aged children until supporting documentation is received to clarify her qualification.

Supporting documentation submitted

Proof of application for Police vetting.

Summary Comment

The registered providers in the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan has addressed the non-compliances for regulation 9(4), the response received has been reviewed and accepted.

In relation to the non-compliance for regulation 9 (2)(d), the registered provider in the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan has not addressed the non-compliance as police vetting has not been submitted to the Inspectorate.

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) 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 both days the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children attending the service.

31/01/2024

There were 10 adults working directly with the 61 children attending the service. The registered provider and deputy person in charge was available to provide assistance to the care rooms as needed.

01/02/2024

There were 10 adults working directly with the 58 children attending the service. The registered provider and deputy person in charge was available to provide assistance to the care rooms as needed.

(2) On both days the correct adult/child ratio was maintained in the service throughout the inspection.

31/01/2024

The rooms were as follows:

The **Baby** room had 3 adults providing care to 1 baby and 7 children ranging in age 10 months to 2 years all attending on a full day care basis.

The **Toddler** room had 2 adults with 10 children ranging in age from 2 to 3 years all attending on a full day care basis.

The **ECCE Room 1** had 2 adults with 16 children ranging in age from 3 to 6 years,8 attending on a full day care basis and 8 attending the sessional service.

The **ECCE Room 2** had 2 adults with 18 children ranging in age from 3 to 6 years,10 attending on a full day care basis and 8 attending the sessional service.

The **ECCE Room 3** had 1 adult with 9 children ranging in age from 2.8 to 4 years,6 attending on a full day care basis and 3 attending the sessional service.

01/02/2024

The rooms were as follows:

The **Baby** room had 3 adults providing care to 1 baby and 7 children ranging in age 10 months to 2 years all attending on a full day care basis.

The **Toddler** room had 2 adults with 11 children ranging in age from 2 to 3 years all attending on a full day care basis.

The **ECCE Room 1** had 3 adults with 21 children ranging in age from 3 to 6 years,10 attending on a full day care basis and 11 attending the sessional service.

The **ECCE Room 2** had 2 adults with 10 children ranging in age from 3 to 6 years,6 attending on a full day care basis,1 attending on a part-time basis and 3 attending the sessional service.

The **ECCE Room 3** had 1 adult with 8 children ranging in age from 2.8 to 4 years,5 attending on a full day care basis and 3 attending the sessional service.

(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:

- The adults spoke to all children in a positive way and listened attentively to each child. In the Baby/Wobbler and Toddler rooms any child who were settling in or who became upset were nurtured and cuddled until they settled. The children showed confidence around the staff members and sought out staff members for reassurance, comfort and support.
- Staff members were observed changing children's nappies regularly and in a timely manner with warm one-to-one interactions observed. The 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.
- 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 the care rooms the staff members stated that the themes of the week were "Transport" and "Valentines Days" with artwork displayed which supported the children's individual efforts. Transitions were handled smoothly with staff giving the children ample time to complete one activity before starting the next.
- The staff members sat and chatted with the children at mealtimes, helping the children when required whilst encouraging conversation and extending interactions.
- Some of the children in the Baby/Toddler room availed of an early morning nap while the older children were placed to sleep for a scheduled period of rest at the service's designated sleep time after dinner.
- The service embraces outdoor play and learning with all children observed enjoying outdoor play with their peers on the day of inspection.

Supporting relationships around children:

- 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 Tree" in the care rooms.

- Individual care plans were available for children who required additional support and were adapted to suit the individual child.
- Staff members meet the parents at pick-up time and any issues pertaining to the child was discussed. A monthly newsletter was sent home to parents displaying photographs of the children's activities.

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, cushions and soft furnishings were available in all care rooms should a child needed to take a break from activities and rest. Two cot rooms were available for the younger age group who required sleep. One cot room was off the Baby/Toddler room with a total of 9 cots. A second cot room was located on the corridor with a total of 11 cots. The older children requiring sleep were accommodated on stackable beds on the floor in the ECCE Room 2 care room.
- (3)(a) There were 6 outdoor spaces in total on the premises, however only 3 of these spaces were in use on the day of inspection. One outdoor space was sheltered off the Baby/Toddler room with an artificial grass surface. The large outdoor area was divided by wooden fencing into 2 areas with an artificial grass surface. All areas were enclosed by walls with secure gates.

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.
- Play equipment in the outdoor spaces included playhouses ,slides, mud kitchens, Childrens tables and chairs for outdoor dining, Caterpillar tunnel for climbing, blackboard mounted to the wall, tractors and ride on toys.

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 4-week menu plan with a variety of dishes ranging from meat, poultry and fish supplied by a catering company. The remainder of the meals and snacks were provided by the service except for the children attending on a sessional basis who brought their own lunch.

On the day of inspection, the registered provider stated that the children have a choice of cereal on arrival with a fruit snack served at 10am.

Dinner was served at 12:00 am which consisted of chicken curry with rice. An alternative hot dish was available if a child did not like what was on the menu.

Afternoon tea was served between 2:30 to 3:30pm which consisted of ham ,cheese and crackers. Additional light snacks of yogurts, fruit and rice cakes were available if a further snack was needed. Water and milk were the drinks of choice.

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 and the outdoor space was enclosed and had secure gates. 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.
- Pedal bins were available for general waste throughout the service.
- Childrens pacifiers were placed in individual boxes and labelled.

Safe Sleep:

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

- Temperature of the cot rooms were maintained between 16 to 20⁰C and between 18 to 22⁰C in the ECCE room while children were sleeping.
- A sleep log recording the position, colour and breathing pattern was recorded at 10 minutes intervals on all sleeping children.
- Block out blinds were available which created an atmosphere conducive to sleep.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. In the Toddler room the children's seating in the cosy corner was torn with foam exposed which was accessible to the children and posed a choking hazard if the foam was placed in a child's mouth.
2. In ECCE Room 1, Visibility strips or otherwise were not present on the glass door in the room leading to the garden to assist children identify the glass.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The couch in the Toddler room has been removed and a new corner seating area has been put in its place.
2. A sign has been placed on both glass doors in ECCE Room 1. At a staff meeting all staff were reminded to ensure these signs remain in place on a daily basis.

As part of the indoor daily risk assessment the registered provider will ensure that all areas are checked and any hazards identified either removed, repaired or replaced.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the following:

Individual seats in the cosy area.

Signs on both glass doors.

Summary Comment

The registered provider in the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan has addressed the non-compliances for regulation 23 General Safety, the response received has been reviewed and accepted.

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 29/01/2024.

(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 23/01/ 2024. The mains powered smoke alarms were last serviced on the 23/11/ 2023.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed on 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 81 children at any one time attending for full day care. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28/03/20213 to the 27/03/2024.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated.*

Non-Compliance Information

29 (c) The room temperature in ECCE Room 3 was not maintained between normal limits. The room temperature was recorded at 14.8°C at 10.40am and 12.20pm. The sanitary accommodation for children in this room was recorded at 15°C. The normal range of temperatures should be maintained between 18°C to 22°C.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

29 (c) Both radiators were turned off in the ECCE Room 3 and in the sanitary accommodation. The radiators are now turned on with the air temperature of the room and sanitary accommodation reading at 22°C. The registered provider as part of the indoor daily risk assessment will ensure that the radiators are thermostatically controlled with the air temperature of the room and sanitary accommodation reading between 18°C to 22°C.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of wall thermometers with a reading of 22°C.

Summary Comment

The registered provider in the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan has addressed the non-compliances for regulation 29(c) Premises, the response received has been reviewed and accepted.