

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019MH002		
Name of Service:	Cookies Early Learning Centre Ltd		
Address of Service:	Unit 8/9, Ivy Hall, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath		
Eircode:	A85 TR04		
Name of Registered Provider:	Megan Cooke		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	27/06/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM 8
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, Family Resource Centre, Commons Road, Navan Co. Meath		
Inspection undertaken by:	D. Murray		
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		

Description of service

Cookies Early Learning Centre is a private childcare facility established in 2019. This service provides full day care, part-time and sessional care to pre-school children from 2 to 6 years. A school aged service is also provided. The service operates from 07:30am-6:30pm and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE). The service is situated on the ground floor of an apartment block and consists of 2 care rooms, sanitary facilities, office and a kitchen.

The rooms in the service are as follows:

The **Sunflowers Room** provides care to children from 2 to 4 years however during the summer this room accommodates school aged children.

The Bluebells Room provides education and care to children from 4 to 6 years.

Two outdoor spaces are also available.

Staffing

The registered provider employs 9 childcare staff, a cook and 2 staff members for the school aged children. On the day of inspection there was the registered provider and 3 childcare staff providing education and care to the children in the Bluebell Room. There were also 2 staff members with the school aged children.

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 inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations 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.

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.

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provide 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

- (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.
- (2) All staff files were reviewed and the following was noted:
- (a) Fifteen validated written references were available from a past employer.
 - (b) Eleven validated written references were available from a source other than a past employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for all staff.
 - (d) Police vetting was available for 1 staff member who had resided outside the state for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.
- (4) Ten 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. Two staff members work with the school ages children and is exempt from having a childcare qualification and 1 staff member works in administrative duties and is also the cook.
- (6A) One staff member was employed under the scheme known as the Access and Inclusion Model.

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 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 3 adults working directly with the 10 pre-school children attending the service on the day of inspection. The registered provider was available to provide support to the Bluebell room as needed.

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

The Bluebell room had 3 staff members with 10 children ranging in age from 4 to 6 years. Eight children availed of the full day care with 2 children availing of the sessional/part-time 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:

- Children's individual needs were well supported by the staff members who engaged in play activities with the children. Children were observed enjoying meaningful, sustained play with tabletop activities, art and crafts, dancing to music and free playing with lots of fun and conversation observed.
- During activities children were offered choices and sought out the staff members for praise, encouragement, and reassurance. Children who became upset were nurtured and cuddled until they were ready to re-join the group.
- 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 outdoor play with their peers on the day of the inspection.

Supporting relationships around children:

- Positive engagement between the staff members and children were noted. The children showed confidence around the staff members and an eagerness to engage with them in conversations and play.
- Transitions were handled smoothly with staff giving the children ample time to complete one activity before starting the next. The children appeared comfortable, happy and relaxed in their environment.

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, or

Compliance Information

(1)(b) In the Bluebell Room there were soft furnishings, mats and cushions for children to take a break from activities and rest if needed. Stackable beds which were placed in a quiet area of the room were available for the children who required a sleep.

(3)(a) There were 2 suitable, safe and secure outdoor spaces on the premises. The spaces were enclosed with railings and walls and had secure gates. The surface areas consisted of artificial grass, cement, paving stones and real grass.

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 care rooms had areas of interest with supporting equipment which incorporated natural/sensorial materials, Montessori equipment, art and crafts and a range of suitable toys.

The outdoor space for the **Sunflower room** had an artificial grass surface. Equipment included a play house with a slide, sand table, planting boxes, mud kitchen, wooden bench and a hut, goal posts and ride on scooters and tricycles.

The outdoor space for the **Bluebell room** had paving slabs with steps up to a raised area consisting of grass. Equipment included a small wooden school bus, ride on car, push along scooters, wooden activity frame with a slide, climbing ramp and rope, sand table, 2 mud kitchen, goal posts, sand pit, water tray, fairy garden and a large free standing plastic donkey.

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 3-week menu plan for the children attending the full day care service with a variety of dishes ranging from meat, fish and poultry cooked on site. An alternative meal was also available for vegetarians and fussy eaters. All children brought their own lunch. On the day of inspection, the children had a choice of cereal for breakfast. Morning snack was served at 12:30pm which consisted of cheese bites, selection of cold meats and wraps. The main meal of the day was served at 15:30pm which consisted of potatoes, baked ham and vegetables. Additional snacks were available for the children staying until 6pm if required. Water was 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:

- All cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- The main door to the service was secured and the outdoor spaces were 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 spaces.
- All play materials were placed on stable based shelving units. Play materials and equipment were observed to be safe and suitable for the developmental age of the pre-school children present in the service.
- The emergency exit doors were unobstructed.
- An indoor and outdoor risk assessment was conducted on a daily basis.

Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed:

- The hand washing policy was implemented in practice with appropriate hand washing for staff and children at all times.
- The service was clean with cleaning schedules maintained on a daily basis.
- Fridges were available in the care rooms for the refrigeration of perishable items in children's lunch boxes.

Safe Sleep:

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

- A thermometer was available in the Bluebell room to ensure the temperature of the room was maintained between 16 to 20⁰C while children were sleeping.
- A sleep log on each child was recorded at 10 minutes intervals.

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 02/06/2023.
- (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 05/01/2023. The mains powered smoke alarms were last serviced on the 25/05/2023.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in 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 55 children at any one time attending for full day care. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28/03/2023 to 27/03/2024.