

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019TY001
Name of Service:	Ballycahill Pre-school
Address of Service:	Ballycahill Community Centre, Ballycahill, Thurles, Co. Tipperary
Eircode:	E25 KX94
Name of Registered Provider:	Rachael Wild
Service type:	Sessional
Date of Inspection:	26/11/2024
No of pre-school children:	AM 7 PM -
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	North Tipperary Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney
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 sessional service was established to provide care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years old. The service operates Monday to Friday, 9am to 12.30pm for 38 weeks of the year. A three-hour session, funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children operates from 9.20am to 12.20pm.

The service is operated from a room in the community hall in the village of Ballycahill in north Tipperary with access to the main hall for activities and the adjacent school grounds for outdoor play.

Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children in the service each day, supported by a second member of staff. There are two staff employed on a part-time basis: working two days and three days a week, respectively. All staff who work in the service hold recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education.

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)(3)(8), 16, 19(1)(b), 20, 21, 22 and 23.

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 files of the three members of staff were assessed as part of the inspection process:

(2)(a) Written references from past employers, with validations where required, were available in respect of the three members of staff.

(b) Written, validated references from a source other than a past employer were available in respect of one member of staff.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of each member of staff and relevant documents were held on file. There was a process in place to ensure that all staff were re-vetted on a three-yearly basis in line with best practice guidelines.

(d) Police vetting had been carried out in respect of the member of staff who had lived outside the state for a period exceeding six consecutive months. Relevant documents were held on file.

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

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.

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

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1) There were 2 staff working directly with 7 children aged between 3 and 5 years old on the day of the inspection.

(3) The adult to children ratio was maintained at 2 adults to 7 children on the day of inspection, which was greater than the minimum requirements of 1 adult to 11 children.

(8)(c) There were two staff present while the service was in operation.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) The records required under parts (a) to (k) of this regulation were available in a combination of paper and electronic format. An electronic application designed for use in early years services was used to record staff rosters, child attendance, administration of medication, policies and procedures and, accidents and incidents.

(3) The records were available in the service and open to inspection by an authorised person.

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-
(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

The following practices were observed on the day of inspection which supported the health, welfare and development of the children:

(1)(b) The children washed their hands after messy play and using the toilet and before eating. Staff supervised the children and provided guidance and assistance if required.

The children were supported and encouraged to develop self-care skills and independence, for example, they had been taught how to put on their coat by themselves using the 'over the head' method and they tidied away toys and activities after they had finished working with them. Each day, there were two helpers nominated who set the table for lunch.

The children and staff sat together at lunchtime which was a relaxed and enjoyable time when the children and staff chatted, and children were given as much time as they needed to eat their food.

There were two posters, at the children’s level, on the wall near the entrance to the pre-school room: one depicted a house and the other the service. There were individual photos of each child which they moved between both posters at arrival and departure times as a way of marking themselves in and out each day.

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 access to the pre-school room and the main hall of the premises for indoor activities and to the grounds of the adjacent primary school for outdoor play.

The pre-school room was a bright and cosy space, with natural light from windows in the front wall and heated by wall mounted radiators around the room. The room was square, with an annex on one side where a set of stairs lead up to the stage door. The steps and landing area were covered with carpet and had been developed into a cosy reading and relaxation space for the children.

(b) A sleep area was not required as all of the children were aged over 2 years old and attended for 3 hours a day. There were two cosy areas where the children could sit and relax during the day. The area at the top of the stairs allowed the children to rest away from the general play area. The second area was in the room and provided the children with a floor mat, cushions and soft seating where they could relax or read books. This area was used for story time on the day of inspection.

(2)(a) The children had access to the school yard of the primary school at times when it was not in use by the school children. This space had a tarmacadam surface and was directly accessible from the pre-school room through a secured gate in the space between the community hall and the school building. The outdoor play areas are located at the back of the buildings, away from the roadway at the front of the premises. The community hall provided the children with an indoor space for running and physical play activities on days when the weather made outdoor play difficult or unsafe, such as when there was ground frost.

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 with furniture, toys and materials. There were child sized tables and chairs as well as larger chairs for the staff and soft seating in the cosy areas. The open shelving units were child height and easily accessible to the children. The room was laid out in a number of defined interest areas, each of which was well resourced. Interest areas included imaginative play areas such as the home corner and post office, art and craft area, discovery/sensory area, cosy reading areas, construction area, puzzles and manipulative play area and tabletop activities area.

There was a large notice board on one wall which was used to display the children’s season themed artwork. On the day of inspection they were making snowflakes to start their winter themed display.

There was a wide range of toys and equipment specifically used in the hall for physical play and exploration including scooters, sensory balls, graded balance training stepping stones, rackets, large construction toys and a special interest play tray table with winter themed items.

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. The children brought a packed lunch each day that was eaten at the snack time at 10.30am. Food eaten on the day of inspection included: ham, cheese, sandwiches, crackers, pancakes, rice cakes, fromage frais, yoghurt, pasta salad, smoothies, yoghurt drink, strawberries, grapes and watermelon. .

None of the children attending the service had known food allergies.

The children’s birthdays were celebrated by having cake after snack time. The cake was supplied by the service.

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 service was entered by a side door of the community hall which gave direct access to the pre-school room. This door was kept secured once all of the children had arrived. One member of staff stood at the entrance door at the end of the session and called the children individually when their parent or person designated to collect them had arrived. During this time, the other member of staff supervised the children in the room.

A second internal door gave the children and staff access to the rest of the premises including the main hall, which they used for indoor physical activities. This door was kept secured when the children were in the pre-school room.

Hot water for hand washing was thermostatically controlled not to exceed 43°C.

The surface temperature of the radiators was thermostatically controlled not to exceed 50°C.

The staff were observed to carry out risk assessments as required and to make decisions based on same., For example, the day of inspection was frosty and the ground had not thawed by the time the children were due to go outside to play. As the frost made the outdoor play area slippery the staff decided to set up the main hall for physical play instead.

Foods that could be a choking hazard, such as grapes, were cut in half lengthwise in line with safety guidelines. Parents were asked to do this when preparing their children's lunches and it was observed that all fruit eaten by the children had been cut into bite sized pieces.

Infection Control:

The service had a policy on the prevention and control of infection. This included a hand washing policy and cleaning schedule for the service.

Administration of Medication:

The service had a policy on the administration of medication. None of the children were currently taking medication.

Fire Safety:

Fire escape routes were clearly marked and were kept clear of obstruction.

Outing:

The service had a policy regarding the safe conduct of outings. The children had undertaken a short outing on the day before the inspection, when they walked to the post box in the village to send their letters to Santa.