

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020CC002
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Name of Service:	ECO Preschool
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Address of Service:	Ballymaloe, Shanagarry, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P25 Y070
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Name of Registered Provider:	Elaine Seacy
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	30/04/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	39	PM	n/a
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurrabraher Cork T23X440
Inspection undertaken by:	V. McCarthy
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

Eco Preschool is a privately operated service that caters for children aged between 2.5 and 6 years. It is located on the grounds of Ballymaloe House in a rural setting. It provides sessional care and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. The service operates mainly as an outdoor service and uses a care room, a roof covered open air decking area, a wet room and a room for changing in and out of waterproof clothing that are all located in the single storey prefabricated building. Since the previous inspection, a large structure that is used for relaxing and restful activities by the children was installed at the premises. Also, the service has been given the use of a secured shed for some outdoor activities, when the weather is not fine, as some of the outdoor area attached to the premises had been damaged in the severe flooding that occurred during the latter part of 2023.

Staffing

There are 8 adults attached to the service including the registered provider and a student on a training placement. On the day of the inspection there were 5 adults with a child qualification and 1 student on the premises.

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 announced/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 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*

(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

- (1)
- (a) The service had a named person in charge and a named deputy that could deputise as required.
- (b) The registered provider who was the named person in charge was on duty when the inspector arrived at the premises and remained on duty for the duration of the inspection.
- (2)
- (a) There were 9 references and required validations available on file from past employers in respect of the 8 adults attached to the service.
- (b) There were 7 references and required validations from sources other than past employers.
- (c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available on file for review in respect of each of the adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years in respect of each adult.
- (d) Police vetting was available in respect of 1 adult that had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months.
- (4)
- A copy of a childcare qualification as listed on the National Qualifications Framework was available on file in respect of 7 of the adults. The remainder adult was attached to a training college and was on work placement at the time of the inspection.

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 always working directly with the children.
- (3) On the morning of the inspection there were 5 adults with qualifications working directly with 29 early years children. The ratio of staff to children exceeded the requirement of 1:11.

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) SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN

- There were 5 key adults attached to caring for the children that were observed to speak in a reassuring and positive manner to them.
- The children participated in activities of their choice such as dough play, magnet play, arts and crafts, cycling, balancing play and circle time activities. It was noted that the children played well together, and that each child engaged in activities and interacted positively with their peers and the adults caring for them.

- Each child's behaviour was managed in a competent and positive way by the adults who assisted and supported the children as they carried out their activities such as the arts and crafts activities where the children cut and coloured their handprints.
- General Information regarding the services' activities was provided daily to parents and guardians by means of notice boards displayed near the entrance door and to the front of the premises.
- Parents and guardians were spoken to informally daily at drop off and collection times and formal meetings were arranged as requested by parents/guardians regarding their respective child.
- The atmosphere at the break time was relaxed and the children socialised positively together and chatted and laughed easily between themselves.
- It was noted that the adults instilled confidence in the children by offering them praise and positive reassurance for tasks carried out such as helping each other remove their outdoor protective clothing prior to sitting down for their snack break and for the wonderful happy birthday singing that the children themselves initiated for a staff member whose birthday it was.

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

Infection Control:

- Detailed completed cleaning templates were available for review by the inspector.
- The premises, furniture, shelving, floors, toys, play materials, play equipment, books and dress up clothes were all maintained in clean and good condition. The registered provider informed the inspector that the adults practice a 'clean as you go policy' and a deeper clean is carried out at the end of each day.
- The children's personal bags were stored on storage racks. The outdoor protective clothing worn by the children, which they removed prior to eating, was stored on individual hangers that facilitated airing and drying. The children's wellies were stored on individual wooden hooks or in storage containers. There were also storage facilities provided for the children's coats and personal belongings to the front of the premises.
- A fridge had been installed since the previous inspection for the storage of the children's perishable food.

- Crockery was available for use by the children during their snack breaks.
- The tables in the decking area that the children sat at to eat their mid-morning food were each provided with a tablecloth that was wiped clean by the adults prior to the children's food break.
- It was noted that the children's hands were washed after toilet use, outdoor play and before eating.
- Pedal operated bins that were in good working order were provided throughout the premises.
- All wash hand basins were provided with thermostatically controlled warm water that was maintained less than 43°C, liquid soap and paper dispensers. The water temperature was recorded at 22.3°C during the inspection.

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 an adult had up to date training in first aid response (FAR) and that this adult was always on the premises during the hours of operation.

(2)

(a) There was a first aid cabinet available at the premises which was kept fully equipped. The first aid cabinet was wall mounted high out of children's reach.

(b) The equipped first aid cabinet was always available on 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 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 were records of monthly fire drills available on file up to January 2024.
 - (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance records of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were maintained. It was recorded that the fire equipment was last serviced 21 August 2023 and that the wired smoke alarm was serviced on 02 February 2024.
- (4)
- The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed near the entrance door and was available on file.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) Records of monthly fire drills carried out at the service during February, March and April were not available on file. A fire drill was last carried out by the service on 16 January 2024.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)
- (a) A fire drill was carried out at the service on 08 May 2024. The registered provider stated in her written response submitted on 04 June 2024 that in future a fire drill will be carried out monthly at the service and details will be maintained on the fire register record.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1)
(a) a photocopy of the fire register record with the details regarding the fire drill carried out on 08 May 2024 was submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The documentation submitted by the registered provider was reviewed and deemed to meet the regulatory requirements.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

The services insurance certificate was available on the premises and demonstrated that the service was adequately insured. The information provided on the insurance certificate included details of the number of early years children covered which was 22 per session and 2 additional sessions. The start date, which was 28 March 2024, the end date, which was 27 March 2025, the category of service covered which was sessional and the name and address of the premises. The insurance cover also referred to details regarding public liability and fire and theft cover.