

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2020DL002 | | | | |
| Name of Service: | Blossom Academy | | | | |
| Address of Service: | Durmaweir, Greencastle, Co. Donegal | | | | |
| Eircode: | F93 VXA9 | | | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Helen Gillen, Louise McCrudden | | | | |
| Service type: | Full Day, Part Time | | | | |
| Date(s) of Inspection: | 11/03/2025 | | | | |
| No of pre-school children: | <table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>32</td> <td>PM</td> <td>22</td> </tr> </table> | AM | 32 | PM | 22 |
| AM | 32 | PM | 22 | | |
| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F95 XK94 | | | | |
| Inspection undertaken by: | S. Killeen and N. McEndoo | | | | |
| Title: | Early Years Inspectors | | | | |

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).

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| Conditions if applicable | Not Applicable |
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Description of service

Blossom Academy is a privately owned and operated preschool service located within the townland of Drumaweir, Greencastle in County Donegal. The service is registered to provide full day care for children aged 2 to 6 year. It operates between 8.00am and 6.00pm each weekday. The service is also registered to provide school age care. The service currently operates from the ground floor of a two-storey community centre premises. The accommodation includes two playrooms named unit 1 and unit 2. There is an adjoining office, kitchenette, storeroom and sanitary facilities. Access to the unit 2 playroom is through interconnecting lobby area which also has a small kitchenette attached.

Staffing

There are twelve adults employed to work in the service. There are eight adults working directly with the children and two adults employed to work in the kitchen area. The two registered providers work in the service and provide relief as required.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11, 16 (K),23,26 and 27; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 24 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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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.

Compliance Information

(1) (a) (b)

There was a person in charge and a person to deputise as required. On the day of inspection, the person in charge was on site. The staff rosters indicated that either the resister provider or person in charge were always available on the premises when pre-school children were present.

(c) There was 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.

(2)

On the day of inspection, 10 adults were present, the registered provider, the person in charge, 8 adults who were employed to work directly with the children, and two adults who were employed as cooks.

The following vetting information was available for 10 adults:

(a) Six written validated references from past employers for five of the adults.

(b) Three written validated references from reputable sources for two of the adults.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(4)

Eight of the adult files reviewed, evidenced they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to meet the regulatory requirement.

Non-Compliance Information

The following vetting information was not available:

- (a) Five written validated references from past employers for four adults were not available. Four written validated references were available for three adults; however, it was not possible to ascertain if they had been validated.
- (d) It was not possible to ascertain if police vetting from the police authorities in another state was required for eight adults.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (a) References from past employers are now on file and have been validated. Checklist in place for management to complete with new staff members to prevent reoccurrence in the future.
- (b) CVs were updated to identify any gaps in employment to show that no police vetting is required for current staff members) Check CV's for any gaps in employment and question any gaps to identify any requirement for police vetting.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (a) Copy of validated references submitted.
- (b) Copy of updated CVs submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted have been reviewed. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 9 have been adequately addressed.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults were working directly with the preschool children attending the service.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained at all times throughout the inspection.

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:

(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.

(4) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises by a parent or guardian of a child but only in respect of information concerning that child.

Compliance Information

1)

(k) The registered provider had a record in writing of all accidents and incidents occurring in the service.

(3)

The registered provider ensured that these records of accidents and incidents were available for review by the authorised person.

(4)

A sample review of these records demonstrated that parents have been informed of accidents and incidents and any follow up action taken only in relation to their child.

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 main entrance to the service was secured by a locked door preventing any unauthorised entry or exit. There were keypads on the internal doors to ensure no unauthorised person could access the care rooms.
- The outside play area was secure. The perimeter was fenced, with gates for access by the adults.
- The Cleaning products in the service were securely stored and out of child reach.
- Toys and play equipment and materials were appropriate, kept in good repair and did not pose an injury risk to children.
- Blind cords were secure to prevent risk of injury.
- Waste disposal facilities were inaccessible to the preschool children.

Infection Control:

- The inspector observed that the children washed their hands regularly throughout the inspection to include, prior to consuming snack, after outdoor play and after toileting. Suitable hand washing facilities were provided with supplies of liquid soap.
- Cleaning schedules were available for inspection for both care rooms which defined areas that needed to be cleaned daily.

- The sanitary accommodations had foot operated lidded bins.
- The pre-school rooms were well ventilated. There were large openable windows accessible to the adults. Fire escape doors were available in the event of the need for extra ventilation.
- Tabletops were cleaned immediately prior to children's snack break. Children were seen being encouraged to clean up after snack.
- Children used plates and cups during snack and dinner time.
- Area was cleaned after the child's nappy was changed and the child washed their hands.
- The services had a designated nappy changing area that protected the privacy and dignity of the children using it, which was easy to clean and had mechanical ventilation.
- Supplies of gloves and aprons were available and worn during nappy changing. The staff member who was competing the nappy changing was able to tell the inspector that the two children who use nappy's keep their supplies stored separately in their bags.
- There was a system in place to thermostatically control the water in unit 1 in the nappy/Santry area with a temperature of 36.1°C.

Fire Safety:

Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed on the walls in both playrooms named unit one and two.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for staff members. However, these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. The Kitchen door in unit two was left open and posed a risk to the children as upon entry to the kitchen inspectors observed a kettle and drawers which children could open and gain access to these presses above and the kettle.
3. Wires in unit two behind the computer needed to be secured as the children could gain access to them.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

1. All vetting has been renewed. Reminders have been set up to notify management when vetting's are up for renewals.
2. Sign on door to remind staff to ensure door is kept closed at all times.
3. Wires have now been secured above table height. Staff are now aware to ensure wires are secured when moving the computer furniture in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Evidence of up-to-date Garda Vetting submitted for 1.
- Photographic evidence submitted for points 2 and 3.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted have been reviewed. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Non-Compliance Information

- (3)
- (b) The Registered provider did not ensure that a record in writing was in place for the recording of visitors to the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (b) Before leaving the registered provider asked the inspectors to sign out in the visitors' book. The visitor's log is now in the entrance hallway for visitors to sign on arrival.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted have been reviewed. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 24 have been adequately addressed.

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.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,*
 - (b) an employee, and*
 - (c) an authorised person.*
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation*
- (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) The registered provider demonstrated that fire evacuation drills take place monthly in the service with the most recent evacuation drill in February 2025.
- (b) A record of all firefighting equipment and the fire detection system was available. The most recent maintenance service was carried out in November 2024.
- (2) (c) These records were made available to the inspector for review on the day.
- (3) The register provider is aware of the responsibility to retain these records for a period of five years after its creation in line with regulation.

(4) Fire evacuation procedures in writing and visual plans were displayed on the walls of the care room to facilitate safe evacuation from the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

- The required ratio of qualified adults to children attending was maintained during the inspection ensuring that each child attending the service was always under the supervision of a qualified staff member. The children were appropriately supervised primarily by sight while attending the preschool service.
- In unit two at snack time, both staff members sat alongside the children promoting independence and supporting if required. Two children were picked daily to get all the young people to line up to get their snack.
- In unit one staff sat with the children while they consumed their hot meal offering supportive and attentive supervision
- Supervision was also noted when staff brought the children from unit one to the large hall for free play. And when the children transitioned from snack time to circle time,
- The outdoor area was designed to ensure that the children can be kept within sight and sound of the staff.