

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020DY003		
Name of Service:	Dolphins Early Education and Childcare Centre		
Address of Service:	Clare Village, Malahide Road, Dublin 17, Co. Dublin		
Eircode:	D17 TN93		
Name of Registered Provider:	Caroline Healy		
Service type:	Full Day		
Date of Inspection:	13/05/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	78	PM 42

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 2 nd Floor, Unit 4/5 The Nexus Building Blanchardstown Corporate Park Ballycoolin Dublin 15 D15 CF9K
Inspection undertaken by:	T. Nelson and E. Hosford
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).	
Conditions if applicable	Not applicable.

Description of service

Dolphins Early Education and Childcare Centre is a full day care service located in the grounds of a residential apartment complex in Dublin 17. Established in 2020, the service is one of three services owned by the registered provider. The service delivers early childhood care and education to a maximum of 103 children aged one to six years of age. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, which is delivered on a sessional basis from 9.15am to 12.15pm and offers a part-time service from 8.00am to 1.00pm. The service also provides for school age childcare in the afternoon.

This purpose-built premises is a two-story, detached building. The ground floor comprises of four care rooms: Room 1 (3-5 years old); Room 2 (2-4 years old) which provides part-time care; Room 3 (1 – 2 years old) and Room 4 (2-4 years old). There is sanitary accommodation located off each of the care rooms and there is a cot room located off Room 3. The service kitchen is located on this floor. The first floor has two care rooms, each catering for 3 to 5 year olds, Room 5 provides full day care and Room 6 provides part-time care. There is sanitary accommodation located off each of these rooms. There is an office and sanitary accommodation for staff on this floor.

The outdoor play area is situated to the front of the premises.

Staffing

Dolphins Early Education and Childcare Centre employs a total of 27 staff including two catering staff, the person in charge, deputy person in charge who work in the service in a supernumerary capacity managing the oversight of the service and providing cover where needed across the rooms, 23 staff work providing care to the preschool children. The registered provider does not work in the service.

There were 25 adults present on the day of the inspection, including the person in charge, two catering staff and a support worker from an external agency.

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:

- Regulation 9(1),(2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4) (7) Management and Recruitment
- Regulation 11(1),(4) Staffing Levels
- Regulation 16(1)(j)(k) Records in relation to the Preschool Service
- Regulation 19(1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of child
- Regulation 23 Safeguarding the Health, Safety and Welfare of the Child

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following:

- Regulation 9 (7) Management and Recruitment
- Regulation 16(1)(j)(k) – Record in relation to Preschool children
- Regulation 19(1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of child
- Regulation 23 Safeguarding the Health, Safety and Welfare of the Child

As a result, the scope of the inspection included Rooms 2, 4, 5 and 6 and did not include Rooms 1 and 3.

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 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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

(a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The service had a designated person in charge and named person to deputise as required.

(b) The person in charge was present during the inspection.

(c) There was a clear management structure in place which was detailed on a display in the hallway.

(2) The files of five new staff members recruited since the last inspection held on the 11 July 2023 were reviewed. Updated Garda vetting disclosures were also sought in relation to seven staff whose files were reviewed on the last inspection.

(a)(b) Nine validated written references were available from recent past employers or a source other than a past employer for the five full files reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 12 disclosures reviewed. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Documentary evidence showed that one staff member had lived outside of the state for six months or more as an adult and international police vetting from that state was available for inspection.

(4) Two staff who worked directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Affairs.

(7) There was evidence available that staff were appropriately supervised and provided with information and training. For example:

- Documentary evidence was available that new staff had received an induction where they were given information on the policies and procedures within the service.
- There was documentary evidence of timetabling of support and supervision, and staff reported they received support and supervision.

- There was evidence of monthly staff meetings, with face-to-face training on topics such as interactions, behaviour management and inclusion.

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider did not ensure the following:

(2)(a)(b) One staff member had only one validated written reference available.

(4) The registered provider did not ensure that two employees working directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Affairs.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(2)(a)(b)

The service contacted the previous employer immediately and received a second written reference which was validated. Management is to attend a HR masterclass course on contracts, employment and policies with an external support agency on June 6th and June 10th to ensure they are compliant.

(4)

Both staff members have had their qualifications recognised by the DCEDIY.

One of the staff had a letter from her college, however the service are aware of the new letter of temporary qualification recognition from DCEDIY. The other staff member had her qualifications on the QQI framework, the service has since sent off and received the letter of qualification recognition.

Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b)

The service has instructed all management to ensure 2 references are provided and checked before any new staff member commences employment. They reiterated the importance of following policies and procedures. Two references are required as per the staff recruitment policy.

(4) The service will ensure that all qualifications are recognised on the DCEDIY list before a new staff member commences employment. They will ensure all qualifications not on the DCEDIY list are recognised with a letter of qualification recognition. The service has updated their recruitment policy to include this action.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of validated reference.

Evidence of qualification recognition for two staff members.

Evidence of updated recruitment policy –including selection process

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 9 have been 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 were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service to meet their basic care needs. There were 22 staff available to the 78 children on the morning of the inspection, and 13 staff available to the 42 children on the afternoon of the inspection.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service at 9.32am and throughout the inspection. Nineteen staff were allocated to work directly with the 78 children who were present on the morning of the inspection, with a breakdown as follows:

- Room 1: 2 staff to 8 children aged between 3-5 years old.
- Room 2: 4 staff to 13 children aged between 2-4 years old.
- Room 3: 2 staff to 7 children aged between 18-24 months old.
- Room 4: 3 staff to 14 children aged between 2-4 years old.
- Room 5: 4 staff to 17 children aged between 22 months-5 years old.

- Room 6: 4 staff to 19 children aged between 3-5 years old.

Ten staff were allocated to work directly with the 42 children who were present on the afternoon of the inspection, with a breakdown as follows:

- Room 1: 1 staff to 7 children aged between 3-5 years old.
- Room 3: 2 staff to 6 children aged between 18-24 months old.
- Room 4: 3 staff to 14 children aged between 2-4 years old.
- Room 5: 4 staff to 15 children aged between 22 months-5 years old.

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:

- (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.

Compliance Information

(k) Following a review of a sample of 15 records, the registered provider ensured a full record in writing was maintained for accident and incidents.

Non-Compliance Information

(j) The registered provider did not ensure a full record in writing was consistently maintained for the administration of medication. The following was observed:

- The record keeping system available did not allow for the signature of the parent acknowledging the child had received the medication.
- There was no second staff witness recorded for multiple administrations of medication for a child who received ongoing medication.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

The service has updated their administration of medicine form to ensure that parents sign every day and Parents must review the need for the medicine each week should it be on a continuous basis.

They have also spoken to staff to ensure they understand the importance of following procedure and always ensuring that a second staff member will witness the administration of medicine.

Preventive Action

Service administration of medicine forms have been adapted to include daily parental signature lines and also a weekly review where parents sign to say that their child will continue to receive the medicine the following week. They also reiterated to staff at their staff meeting on the 13th of May, the importance of correct administration of medicine practices to ensure safety.

Supporting Documentation Submitted

Updated medication administration forms.
Memo to staff on administration of medication

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 16(j) has been adequately addressed.

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 were examples of how the child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service:

Basic Needs:

- Children were provided with meals on a regular basis, with alternative meals provided according to a child's dietary needs and preferences, with additional portions available. On the day of the inspection the children were served a snack of mixed fruit with raisins at 10.00am in Room 4 and a snack of brioche and ham with raisins and yogurt in Room 2. A hot meal of pasta with cheese sauce was served in the afternoon and the staff were observed to order the preferences for the children such as sauce on the side. Drinks of water were available in the care rooms throughout the day.

The mealtime experience was observed to be a calm sociable experience for the children. The transition to mealtime was signalled with the laying of tablecloths on the tables and staff were observed to sit with the children during mealtimes.

- There were care plans available for children who had additional care needs. These detailed children's strengths, challenges, and goals. There was documentary evidence available that these had been reviewed regularly. This allowed for the effective monitoring and evaluation of practices which can support the child within the service.
- The transition to sleep in Room 4 was observed to be a calm experience for the children. The children's outer clothing was removed for comfort and the environment was arranged to cater for those who slept and those who stayed awake and engaged in activities. This facilitated choice and child-led sleep in a calm restful environment.
- The staff were observed to use positive age-appropriate strategies to support children such as intervening immediately when there was a minor dispute using low tones, clear verbal instruction, with non-verbal gestures, distraction, repetition, and follow through. Other strategies such as praise and encouragement were observed. These strategies promote clear boundaries and facilitate positive behaviour in children.

Supporting Relationships:

- Staff were observed to engage with the children in a warm responsive manner. They were familiar with the children and their interests; and these observations were documented on the service online software application. Staff reported a key worker system was in place, where they are assigned a child in order to develop familiar, supportive relationships.
- Information such as diet, sleep and toileting was shared with parents on a daily basis via an online software application and through conversations at drop-off and collection. Staff reported they share observations and other developmental information on this application.

Physical and Material Environment:

- The furniture provided in the rooms was low level and appropriate for the children attending. The environment was warm and inviting with toys and play materials laid out in pleasing displays, stored in baskets which were easily accessible and visible to the children. Pictures, lighting and plants, and items from the home environment were displayed throughout the rooms. This environment provided a real-life, meaningful learning environment for children.

- Defined, inviting areas of interest were available across the rooms and the outdoor area. Equipment and play experiences available to the children indoors and outdoors included: well-resourced home corner with real life accessories including phones and laptops; art and crafts areas with a broad range of resources to extend the experience; libraries; small world play; stacking, sorting and jigsaws; construction area; transporting toys; and sensory trays providing materials from natural open-ended resources such as a farm with animals set in wheat biscuits for mud. These materials and equipment provided for a range of meaningful play experiences including creative play, games with rules, language play, sensory play, physical play and pretend play.
- Play equipment was set out in pleasing displays to invite the children to the play experience. For example, dinosaurs were set out in a corner of the outdoor area, with twigs and other loose parts; small world play items such as animals were set out beside books on animals. This provokes curiosity and suggests play ideas to children.
- The outdoor play area was covered to allow for outdoor play in inclement weather.

Programme of activities:

- The children were observed to have the freedom to move throughout the care room and engage in their choice of play activity. This promoted independent decision making.
- Adult led activities such as circle time and reading were timed to suit the interests and needs of the children.
- Large and small group activities were planned, with staff observed to be positioned throughout the rooms; and available where needed to support the children.
- Children were observed to be encouraged to participate in the daily life of the service. For example, they were asked their choice of ham or cheese for snack in Room 3; to assist in the tidy up for the transition to snack time in Room 4; and in clearing up after snack time in Room 6. This facilitated independence, inclusion and positive wellbeing for children.
- All of the children were observed to have access to outdoor play for an extended period of time despite the inclement weather on the day of the inspection. Appropriate outdoor clothing was available to provide for a comfortable play experience.

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

The following measures were observed to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the children:

General Safety:

- The service had an electronic door release system in place, which was managed and monitored by staff to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- The outdoor area was enclosed, and secured by gates with locks which were up high out of reach of children.
- All cleaning agents and sharp equipment were stored out of reach of the children in locked presses or on high shelves.
- Window restrictors were in place on windows accessible to children.
- Flex from lighting was observed to be secured.
- Staff were observed to complete head counts at regular intervals and were positioned to effectively monitor the children on the stairs to the outside play area.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and single use paper towels were available at all wash hand basins used by the children and the staff members.
- Staff were observed supporting children to hand wash before and after mealtime and after outdoor play.
- Children soothers were stored in individual lidded boxes.
- Appropriate waste disposal units were observed throughout the rooms and sanitary areas.
- Children had individual bed linen which was stored appropriately, and staff reported bed linen was laundered on a regular basis.

Safe Sleep:

- A log was maintained where the temperature of the room and the colour, breathing and position of sleeping children was checked every 10 minutes.
- The temperature of the cot room was maintained between 18-22°C whilst children were sleeping as per safe sleep guidance.
- Cots and sleep mats were positioned with adequate space to attend to the needs of sleeping children.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were observed to be unobstructed.
- Contemporaneous attendance records of the children were maintained on the day of the inspection to accurately record the number of children present on the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. There was no documented information available in a care room detailing important information on the supervision required regarding a child who had additional care needs to ensure that the child's safety and welfare was maintained. It is acknowledged that the staff were aware of safe care practice with regards to this child; however, this information was not readily available to new staff or students who may require access to this information when in the care room.

Administration of Medication:

2. The administration of medication was not sufficient to support effective safe practice. The following was observed:
 - There were no documented detailed care plans available for two children who required a specific type of medication.
 - A staff member was observed to administer medication without checking the name of the child and details of the medication with a second staff member.
 - Medication was observed to be stored in a bag with no label identifying who owned the medication.
 - A child's medication which was out of date was observed to be stored in a medication box.

This was not in line with the service policy on the administration of medication.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. **Corrective action:** The care rooms in the service have created 'all about me' walls which includes specific traits and care needs of all children to inform all staff working with the children to be vigilant and understand any specific care requirements of the children. By providing the information any staff member who may be required to cover the room will understand the children's needs.
Preventive action: The service will incorporate 'all about me' into every room when the children transition. They have updated their supporting Transitions policy to include all about me and explained the importance of ensuring all staff are aware of specific care requirements and encouraged all rooms to

follow the 'all about me' template immediately. They have explained the importance of ensuring all staff are aware of specific care requirements and encouraged all rooms to follow the all about me template immediately.

Administration of Medication:

2. **Corrective action:** Care plans were created immediately in collaboration with parents for all children availing of medicine regardless of diagnosis of illness which are on display in the care room of the children to ensure safe administration of medicine. The importance of correct procedures and administration of medicine was highlighted at a staff meeting. The service have adapted their administration of medicine form to ensure that the date, time, dosage amount, staff full name, checked by second staff member and parents signature are on every line to ensure procedures are adhered to at all times. Regular management checks will be carried out in the folder to ensure compliance.

All medicine will kept in a box with a lid, securely out of reach of children. Children's names are clearly written on the medicine and all expired medicine have been returned to the parents to dispose of. Staff members assure they are fully aware of and will follow medication administration procedures in the future. Regular checks by room leaders and management will ensure compliance.

Preventive action: Management will undertake regular checks to ensure compliance. All staff have been reminded of policy and procedures in safe administration and storage of medicines.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence.
Memo to staff
Supporting Transitions Policy

Administration of Medication:

2. Photographic evidence of storage of medication
Updated medication care plans.
Memo to staff

Summary Comment

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