

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020FL001
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Charlies Childcare
-------------------------	--------------------

Address of Service:	3 Feltrim Industrial Park, Drynam Road, Swords, Co Dublin
----------------------------	---

Eircode:	K67 R7P9
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Michelle Fitzgerald
-------------------------------------	---------------------

Service type:	Full day care
----------------------	---------------

Date of Inspection:	15/06/2023
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	62	PM	44
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.
Inspection undertaken by:	S Taaffe and AM Coyle
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

This Charlies Childcare service is one of three early years services being jointly operated by the registered provider and a business partner, all located in north Dublin. Additionally, the registered provider operates a fourth early years' service in the locality which caters specifically for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) whilst the business partner separately operates a number of other early years and school age services.

This full day care service is situated in a 2 storey commercial premises located in an industrial park on the outskirts of Swords in north Co Dublin. The service provides sessional, part-time, full day care and school-aged childcare to children from 10 months to 12 years of age. The service caters for a maximum of 82 pre-school children, operating from 7.30am to 6.00pm each weekday. Eligible children are facilitated to participate in the state-funded Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.00am to 12.00midday daily. There are 6 care rooms in operation in the service with Baby room 1, Baby room 2 and the Toddler room located on the ground floor and the Pre-pre-school room, the Pre-school room and the ECCE room situated on the first floor of the service. An enclosed outdoor area is located to the side of the service.

Staffing

There are 22 staff members employed in the service, consisting of the service manager and 19 staff members who provide direct care to the pre-school children, 1 staff member who specifically works with the school aged children and 1 staff member who engages in catering and cleaning duties. In addition, a general manager and an area manager are employed by the company, both of whom hold appropriate childcare qualifications and who are reported to be present in this service on a regular basis. The registered provider who is not present in this service on a daily basis also holds a major award 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. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 22, 23 and 24. The 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.

Additional Information

This unannounced inspection was carried out in response to a concern received by the Early Years Inspectorate.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, area manager, service manager, 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.

(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 manager was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person available to deputise as required.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 9.10am on the morning of the inspection.

(2)(a) and (b) Two written, validated references were available for 22 staff members employed in the service and for the company's general manager, the area manager, the registered provider and the company director.

- (a) Forty-five written references were from past employers.
- (b) Seven written references were from sources other than past employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 22 staff members employed in the service and for the company's general manager, the area manager, the registered provider and the company director.
- (d) International police vetting was available as required for 7 staff members who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.
- (4) The registered provider, the company director, the company's general manager, the area manager, the service manager and all of the 19 staff members who provide direct care to the pre-school children in the service held appropriate childcare qualifications at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.
- (7)(a) The registered provider ensured that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 were in place for the service and staff members had signed to confirm that they had read and understood the contents. There was evidence available in the service that since the last inspection on 04/10/2022 the registered provider had facilitated staff members to attend a number of training courses delivered by an external training company. The course topics included establishing learning environments, free play, emotional development and nappy changing.

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) 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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 9.10am and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In Baby room 1 there were 7 children aged 1 year 6 months to 1 year 11 months being cared for by 2 and, at times, 3 staff members.
- In Baby room 2 there were 5 children aged 1 year 2 months to 2 year 2 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Toddler room there were 9 children (of whom 1 child was aged 1 year 11 months and the remaining 8 children were aged between 2 years 1 months and 2 years 7 months) being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Pre-pre-school room, there were 9 children aged 2 years 8 months to 3 years 3 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Pre-school room there were 18 children aged 3 years 2 months to 4 years 6 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the ECCE room there were 14 children aged 3 years 5 months to 4 years 7 months being cared for by 2 staff members.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained at the service.

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

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

The following observations are examples on how each child's learning, development and well-being was observed being facilitated during the inspection:

(1)(a)

Basic needs:

- The staff members were observed to be respectful and appropriately responsive in their interactions and with meeting the care needs of the children in the service, using positive language and warm tones of voice.
- The children were given sufficient time to relax and enjoy their snacks and meals. Staff members sat with and chatted to the children at mealtimes.
- Nappies were changed regularly and in a timely manner and positive interactions were observed taking place between staff and children during these procedures. Prompting, supervision and assistance when using the toilet was provided as necessary to the children who were toilet trained.
- Children were placed to sleep when they showed signs of tiredness during the inspection and staff members stated that child-led sleep practices were implemented in the Baby rooms, ensuring that children slept when their needs dictated.
- Staff members were observed applying each child's own sunscreen before going outdoors and again when outdoors, removing heavy clothes and encouraging the children to wear sun hats on the warm, sunny day when the inspection took place. All children engaged in outdoor play during the inspection and staff members were cognisant of the need to limit the amount of time the children spent outdoors when the sun was at its hottest.

Supporting relationships around children:

- Staff members were observed promptly reassuring and comforting any child who became upset during the inspection.
- The staff members were observed displaying anticipation and appropriate responsiveness when children experienced challenges within the environment and when children chose to change or opt out of activities.
- Family photographs were on display in the care rooms which supported the children to maintain links with family and home.
- Staff members communicated with parents of babies and children on a daily basis, both informally during drop off and collection, and through update in real time on mobile tablet devices regarding each individual child's food, nappy changes, sleep and activities. Parents could remotely access this information online throughout the day, in relation to their own particular child.

Physical and material environment:

- There was evidence of quality improvement initiatives having been undertaken in the service since the time of the last inspection in October 2022. The service had sought and is continuing to obtain support from a specialist early years quality development service and one of the positive outcomes was reflected in the revised layout of each care room. Defined interest areas were established and, apart from the non-compliance detailed below, these were equipped with a suitable range of toys, play equipment, recycled and open-ended materials to support play and learning. The established interest areas included home corners, shop areas, art and crafts areas, construction zones, and reading and relaxation areas.
- Opportunities for sensory play were facilitated in the Toddler room, the Pre-pre-school room, the Pre-school room and the ECCE room through the provision of well-resourced sand tables and water trays.
- An outdoor play area was located to the side of the service. This space which was fully enclosed by fencing, some of which had mesh fencing screen attached, was accessed through an enclosed pathway running along the rear of the premise. The play area was subdivided by fencing into two separate sections which were equipped with play equipment tailored to suit the age and stage of development of the children using each area. The section designated for use by the children attending the two Baby rooms was partially surfaced with rubber matting with play equipment provided including a plastic playhouse, a low-level free-standing slide, plastic portable sit-on rocking toys, a wheelbarrow, two activity tables, self-propel cars, a stationary car constructed on a wooden pallet and oversized plastic blocks.

The larger area used by the children attending the Toddler room, the Pre-pre-school room, the Pre-school room and the ECCE room was surfaced in concrete with pieces of artificial grass in place at the crash zones at the bottom of the two slides. Play equipment in this section included a corner sandpit with construction vehicles and spades, a wooden sit-in boat with slide, a plastic stand-in farmhouse and attached pen, low-level plastic climbing frame with slide attached and a broad range of ride-on toys.

(3) In discussion with the inspectors the staff members demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of what behaviour management methods were acceptable and unacceptable; this was reflected in the practice seen during the inspection. No practices that were disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful were observed during the inspection. The staff members were observed promptly managing issues of minor conflict that arose between the children in a calm and supportive manner which diffused these situations and prevented escalation or upset on the children's part.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Physical and material environment:

1. The play kitchen in Baby room 1 lacked supportive equipment such as food and food packaging, saucepans, cutlery, or crockery to readily capture the children's interest and invite the children to become involved in meaningful imaginative and role play experiences.
2. There were no sand, water or other materials such as dried pasta or rice trays provided in either Baby room for the children to engage in hands on sensorial play and exploration.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective actions and preventive actions have been carried out:

Corrective Action

(1)(a)

1. The registered provider has bought new kitchen equipment and parents have donated real life kitchen materials such as cereal boxes, milk cartons and egg cartons. The service kitchen staff now keeps empty cereal boxes and food packaging from the breakfast club and drops them into the rooms every Friday. A checklist is maintained to keep track of supplies sent to rooms.
2. The registered provider has bought more sensory supplies, spacious tray top activity tables are now in every classroom and each room is provided with sand, rice, pasta, water, flour, soil. This provides for fun activities such as rainbow rice, farm animal imaginary play and much more.

Preventive Action

Manager will ensure that these items are included in the monthly shopping list and another named staff member is now keeping a weekly checklist and updates sensory supplies in each room,

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs showing a range of new play materials and equipment provided in the service.

- Receipts for new play materials and equipment, sand and compost.
- Weekly checklists for supplies provided in the care rooms.

Summary Comment

The non-compliances identified under this regulation on inspection have been adequately addressed.

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

A range of nutritionally balanced snacks and meals were detailed on the 2-week menu on display in the service. During the inspection dietary requirements specified by the parents were accommodated. A selection of cereals and toast were available for the children to have for breakfast until 9.00am. Children brought their own snacks from home for both the morning and afternoon snack, including sandwiches, bread rolls, crackers, rice cakes, cheese, fruit, yogurt drinks and yogurt in pots. Snacks were served at approximately 10.00am and 4.00pm with staff members reporting flexibility regarding the time depending on the children's preferences and activities. Two hot meals were served to the children on a daily basis. These were sourced from an external catering company and stored frozen on bulk, defrosted in advance of use. On the day of inspection chicken and broccoli bake, cabbage and mashed potato was served for lunch to the children in the Baby rooms and Toddler room at 11.30am and to the children in the care rooms on the first floor at 12.30pm. Bolognese mince and mashed potato was served for dinner to the children in the Baby rooms and Toddler room at 2.00pm and to the children in the care rooms on the first floor at 3.00pm. The children's water bottles were available for the children to take from low-level shelves, should they feel thirsty at any stage during the day.

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 gates and the entrance doors leading into the premises and the outdoor play area were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- The kitchen was located on the first floor. A safety gate was in place leaving the kitchen inaccessible to the children during the inspection.
- The service's designated emergency exits were unobstructed.
- One named staff member was assigned responsibility to conduct a risk assessment of the outdoor area on a daily basis to ensure that no hazards were identified in advance of use. The inspectors were informed that the outdoor sand pit was covered at the end of each day to prevent contamination by animals and birds.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support effective hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation and at the wash hand basins in the care rooms in the service.
- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, after nappy changing and following messy play and outdoor play.
- The children's packed lunches, supplied from home, were refrigerated on arrival to the service which reduced the risk of bacteria growth in perishable food items.
- Soothers were labelled and stored in personalised containers when not in use. Labelled containers were provided in the Baby rooms for the segregation of mouthed toys after use. Staff members clearly described appropriate procedures for the management of mouthed toys and soothers, including washing the items in advance of sterilisation.
- Up to date documented cleaning schedules were on display in the service.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- Ten-minute sleep checks including the children's colour, position and breathing were conducted on all sleeping children in the service.
- Adequate space of at least 50cm was left between the individual cots and sleep mats in the sleep room.
- The temperature in the sleep room was monitored and maintained within the safe sleep temperature range of 16 - 20°C with windows opened at times to enhance ventilation.

Fire Safety:

- The records indicated and staff members reported that fire drills were carried out on a monthly basis. This familiarised both adults and children of the correct procedures to follow in the event of a fire.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. Grime, food particles and sand had accumulated along the seams in the nappy changing mats in the sanitary accommodation on the ground floor. This posed a risk of cross infection.
2. The nappy changing mat was not always cleaned in between children having their nappies changed or on completion of all nappy changes.
3. Not all staff members washed their hands after nappy changing.
4. Instead of a foot pedal operated bin, the nappy bin in use in the sanitary area on the ground floor of the service required handling by staff in order to open the lid. This bin was not appropriate for use due to the risk of cross contamination.
5. The foam steps leading to the cosy area in the Pre-pre-school room were torn with foam exposed underneath making it difficult to clean the steps effectively.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective actions and preventive actions have been carried out:

Corrective Action

Infection Control:

1. New changing mats were purchased and the old mats were disposed of.
2. Staff have been updated on the nappy changing policy and all staff were given a copy of the updated nappy changing policy.

3. All staff have been supplied with a copy of the infection control policy highlighting the importance of handwashing for both staff and children, especially after nappy changing.
4. The nappy changing unit has been moved slightly to allow room for the nappy changing bin to be positioned on the floor in order to access the foot pedal.
5. Foam on steps were removed and it was replaced with new wipeable foam, no interior foam exposed.

Preventive Action

1. Double the amount of the changing mats were purchased as staff are going to rotate the mats every 8 weeks in order to give each mat a good deep clean. Staff have been updated on the infection control policy and the importance of cleaning the mats after every single nappy change and this will be monitored by the manager.
2. Manager will demonstrate a nappy change at every staff meeting and highlight the importance of following the nappy changing policy and the infection control policy.
3. 'Reminder to hand wash' signs have been put on the walls in the nappy changing rooms.
4. The foot pedal bin now has a place on the floor beside the nappy changing unit. The nappy changing room was rearranged to ensure this.
5. One staff was assigned to monitor the wear and tear of the foam steps and to replace every 8 weeks along with the rotation of the nappy changing mats. This has been added to cleaning sheets.

Supporting documentation submitted

The registered provider submitted the following documentary evidence:

- Photographs and receipts for 6 new nappy changing mats in the service.
- Updated cleaning checklists.
- Photograph showing the revised positioning of the nappy changing unit.
- Photographs of new foam covering in place on the steps leading to the cosy area in the Pre-pre-school room.

Summary Comment

The non-compliances identified under this regulation on inspection have been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

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

Compliance Information

(1) The service maintained accurate details of all children in attendance during the inspection. The children were entered as present on the mobile tablet device provided to record attendance, noting each child's arrival and departure times.

(3)(a) and (b) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children's parents / guardians, employees or authorised visitors could enter the service. A visitor's book was maintained and on arrival the inspectors were requested to record their attendance and the purpose of their visit.