

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020GY005		
Name of Service:	Sonas Early Years Centre		
Address of Service:	Unit 11, Galway Retail Centre, Knocknacarra, Co. Galway.		
Eircode:	H91 H6CY		
Name of Registered Provider:	Theresa Murphy		
Service type:	Full Day		
Date(s) of Inspection:	23/04/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	77	PM 75
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Child and Family Agency, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park Hospital, Galway.		
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Meehan and A. McCarthy.		
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
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Description of service

This purpose-built privately owned premises in a retail development in an urban area of Galway city, in Knocknacarra known as Galway retail centre. The service operating hours are 8 am to 6 pm, from Monday to Friday and the age range of children is 0 - 6 years of age. The service caters for full day-care, part-time care, Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) and sessional pre-school care programmes from 09.30 am to 12.30 pm.

This ground floor premises has a total of 5 playrooms, the Buttercups room, Bluebells room, Daisy's room, Daffodils room and the Sunflower room. The service has a designated kitchen where food is prepared, cooked, and stored on site by a resident chef. To the rear of the premise's children have access to an artificial surface outdoor area with various interest areas to the back of the premises for play.

Staffing

There is a total of 19 adults working in the service which includes the area manager, service manager, deputy manager and a chef. The registered provider and the director are not on the premises daily.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11, 19,23, 25 and 27. 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 area manager, 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

There was a total of 19 staff files reviewed which included the registered provider and 1 of the two directors of the board.

- (1)
- (a) The registered provider ensured that there was a designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise.
- (b) The registered provider had a manager in place who was the person in charge and was on the premises and remained on site for the duration of the inspection.
- Staff rosters indicated that the designated person in charge or deputy were available on the premises at all times when the pre-school children were present.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identified the lines of authority and roles and responsibilities of each employee. During the inspection an area manager, a manager and a deputy was available. A photograph of each adult and their designated roles and responsibilities were displayed at the entrance to service.
- (2)
- (a)(b) 38 of the 38 validated references on file, in respect of the 19 adults were from past employers or a source other than a previous employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the 19 adults.
- (d) Police vetting disclosures available for 14 adults who had lived outside the jurisdiction for longer than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

- (4) Copies of an Early Childhood Care and Education Qualifications at a minimum of a level 5 were available on file for 17 adults working directly with and caring for the children.

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) A review of roster showed that a sufficient number of adults were provided to work with children whenever the service was in operation.
- On the morning of the unannounced inspection there were 15 adults working directly with 77 preschool children in the morning and 15 adults working with 75 preschool children in the afternoon.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was complied with in the service for the respective age group in a full day care service.
- (8)(a) The service ensured that 2 adults were rostered on the premises at all times during the day.

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

(19)(1)(a)

Basic Needs

- Healthy eating was promoted within the service, children's cultural and dietary requirements were met.
- Nutritious meals and snacks were served at regular times, but there was flexibility. Childrens snacks were observed in the playrooms and consisted of fruit, yogurts, sandwiches, cheese and mil or water.
- A water station was available in the playrooms for children to help themselves as required.
- The atmosphere during mealtimes was relaxed, with pleasant social interaction among the children and staff.
- Perishable items were stored in the fridge in the playrooms belonging to children for snack times.
- The staff encouraged and supported the children to be independent by letting them take the lead in activities, dressing themselves for outdoor play, feeding themselves where appropriate and at toileting.
- The tables and chairs were suitable for the children's ages and stages of development in the playrooms.
- The children had unrestricted access to the toilet and were either independent at toileting or supported by adults as required.
- Thirty-nine children were in nappies and nappies were changed on a regular basis.
- Children were encouraged and supported to develop self-help and personal hygiene skills. Children were observed washing hands after toileting, outdoor play, before snack time and after blowing their nose.
- Pictures, word reminders and instructions displayed and used to support personal care and transitions throughout the day.
- Cots 14 in total were available in the designated sleep room for children under 2 years of age and 31 stackable beds were available for children over the age of 2 years of age.
- All the children had opportunities to move about freely and explore their environment, both indoors and outdoors.

Supporting Relationships

- A key person was assigned for each child to support their development and give feedback to parents, guardians in relation to their care and milestones. Feedback is given on their knowledge and observations of the child's interests, strengths, developmental and care needs, approaches to learning, changes in their life, and any other concerns.
- Adults listened to the voice of the child as they communicate their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children's cues, gestures, and body language,
- Adults encouraged children to think critically, ask questions and respond to them in a way that promotes sustained shared thinking. This was observed at circle time, table top activities and at artwork.
- Adults used a soft tone of voice, the child's individual name, and getting down to their level and making eye contact.
- Children had the opportunity to partake in small and large group activities and play, leading to increased social awareness, co-operation, collaboration, teamwork, and a sense of belonging,
- On speaking with adults, they provided parents with daily information on their child's experiences in the preschool including the child's likes, interests and preferences and play activities engaged in via the multimedia application. Information is also provided at collection times and via text messages, by phone calls or emails.
- Adults were observed to manage children's minor behavioural or disagreements in a positive way throughout the day.

Non-Compliance Information

(19)(1)(a)

Physical Environment

It was observed there was only 9 low level chairs available for 15 children attending in the Buttercup playroom.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

(19)(1)(a)

The registered provider responded to say:

Corrective and Preventive Action

We have added an additional six low level chairs for the buttercup playroom. There are now 15 chairs available, one per child registered in this room. In future we will ensure that each room is fully equipped with the correct number of materials needed for each child registered within the room.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was submitted of adequate seating for 15 children to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted was reviewed and has been deemed to have met the requirements of this part of the regulations.

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 entrance door into the pre-school was secure to prevent unauthorised access by a person or the unsupervised exiting by a pre-school child.
- The external outdoor play area was secured by concrete wall / gates so that unauthorised persons could not access or enter the area or children could not exit unsupervised.
- The doors into the kitchen, office, and adult sanitary room had a system of security.
- All cleaning agents and equipment were stored inaccessible and out of children's reach.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- Blinds cords were secured by fasteners and thereby inaccessible to a pre-school child.
- Fire doors throughout the building were unobstructed.

Infection Control:

- There was one designated nappy changing area with a clean intact changing mat.
- The children's belongings for nappy changing were individually labelled.
The children's barrier creams were clearly individually labelled / stored within their designated nappy changing area.
- The playrooms were observed to be kept adequately ventilated with the windows left open whilst maintaining the room temperatures at the required levels.
- Adequate supplies of disposable tissues were readily available in the playrooms.

- Powdered infant formula was stored safely in the service fridge.
- Soothers were stored in individually labelled containers for each child.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was stored inaccessible to the pre-school children. Administration of medication forms were available and recorded correctly. Parental consent was given to administer medication and a signature of a parent after medication had been administered.

Fire Safety:

- Staff maintained records of up-to-date fire safety training.
- The fire exit doors and passageways were clear from obstruction.
- The fire exit routes, and fire assembly points were readily identified with clear and illuminated signage.

Safe Sleep

- There is a designated sleep room with a total of 14 cots for children under 2 years of age and 16 stackable beds for children over 2 years of age

Infection Control:

1. Two of the mattresses in the designated sleep room had exposed foam which may present as a choking hazard or a risk of cross infection for a preschool child.
2. Wipeable mattresses were not provided in 12 of the 14 cots and some of the mattresses were stained which may pose as a risk of cross infection for a preschool child.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. Two of the mattresses in the designated sleep room had exposed foam which may present as a choking hazard or a risk of cross infection for a preschool child.
2. Wipeable mattresses were not provided in 12 of the 14 cots and some of the mattresses were stained which may pose as a risk of cross infection for a preschool child.

Safe Sleep:

3. The children were not physically checked every ten minutes during sleep periods. This was observed during the inspection and observations recorded on the service's electronic devices. The practice is at variance with the safe sleep policy and may pose a risk to the safety of the sleeping children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated in her response that:

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. & 2. Twelve of the mattresses, including the two with exposed foam, have been replaced with wipeable mattresses. Mattresses will be quality checked daily by both staff and management to ensure they remain in good condition and are replaced as necessary to not pose risk of infection or risk to safety.

Safe Sleep:

3. A staff training was completed, and demonstrations given on how to physically carry out and maintain sleep checks within the service. This was closely monitored by management, both physically and on the app used by the service to ensure that it was being adhered to.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

1. & 2. Photographic evidence was submitted of the new wipeable mattresses.

Safe Sleep:

3. Evidence of safe sleep training was submitted and signed off by staff.

Summary Comment

1. 2. & 3. Photographic evidence was submitted for the non-compliances and was reviewed and deemed to have met the requirements under this part of the regulations.

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 a person trained in first aid for children was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service. Three staff had current training in first aid for children.
- (2)(a) There was a first aid box with content items within date, safely stored, easily accessible and stored in a conspicuous position.
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid box was fully equipped and available to the children attending the pre-school service.