

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020GY005
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Name of Service:	Sonas Early Years Centre
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Address of Service:	Unit 11, Galway Retail Centre, Knocknacarra, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H91 H6CY
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Name of Registered Provider:	Theresa Murphy
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	16/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	64	PM	64
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla – Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulations Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Co. Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Meehan and A. Mc Carthy.
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 17 adults working in the service which includes the area manager, service manager, deputy manager and a chef. The registered provider does not work in the service.

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.

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*

(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 17 staff files reviewed which included the registered provider:

- (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.
- (2)
 - (a)(b) 34 of the 34 validated references on file, in respect of the 17 adults were from past employers or a source other than a previous employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the 17 adults. 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.
 - (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 15 adults working directly with and caring for the children.

Non-Compliance Information

- (4) One adults working directly with the children did not hold an Early Childhood Care and Education qualification or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated in their response that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

All relevant qualification documentation had been sent to the department for recognition and approval. The employment of this staff member has been terminated due to the decision to deem the qualification unrecognised.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation.

Summary Comment

The action taken by the registered provider has been deemed to have met the requirements of this part of the regulations.

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 when the service was in operation.

On the morning of the unannounced inspection there were 15 adults working directly with 64 preschool children in the morning and 15 adults working with 64 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 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:

- There was a buzzer access system, into the main entrance front door. The exit button at the front door has been raised higher on the wall to prevent a preschool child existing the service.
- The external outdoor play area was secure so that children could not leave the area unsupervised and unauthorised persons could not enter the area.
- The service had a system to ensure that equipment was maintained, cleaned, checked and removed if damaged or worn.
- There were no pits or ponds in the outdoor area to cause any risk to the pre-school child.
- Staff supervised all children by both sight and sound in all areas.
- Fire doors throughout the building were unobstructed.
- All cleaning agents were stored inaccessible to the children and stored in secured areas.
- Leads, cables, and flexes in the indoor playrooms were secured and or inaccessible to prevent any safety risks to a preschool child.
- Thermostatically controlled warm water not exceeding 43°C to facilitate hand washing was available to facilitate hygienic hand washing.
- Heavy equipment and furnishings were anchored appropriately.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- A system was in place to ensure that daily records of attendance were kept for all the children, attending the creche.

Infection Control:

- Staff involved in the serving of food and nappy changing used disposable aprons and gloves when nappy changing.
- The children's belongings for nappy changing and the barrier creams were clearly individually labelled and stored within the nappy changing area.
- There were cleaning schedules and records for the playrooms, communal areas, sanitary areas, and outdoor areas and on the cleaning and disinfection procedure undertaken in the service.

- The outdoor play equipment was cleaned after each child's use, and prior to each child's use - with documented records maintained.
- Tabletops and work surfaces were cleaned with disposable paper towels and disinfectant spray.
- 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.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was stored inaccessible to the pre-school children in the service office.
- Parental consent was sought for the administration of medication, any medication was recorded on the multi media application of the service and then signed by the parent.

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.
- Each child had designated linen and all the mattresses used in the cots were wipeable.
- The sleep policy detailed the correct temperature, lighting, ventilation, and child safety requirements.
- There was a thermometer in the sleep room to ensure safe sleep room temperatures of 16 to 20°C.

Fire Safety:

- A record of monthly fire drills was maintained by the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for 1 adult employed by the service. However, this vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice.

Infection Control:

2. The children's soothers were not stored in individually labelled containers. This may pose as a risk of cross infection to a preschool child.
3. Three child's bottles of milk were inappropriately stored on a counter top from 8.30am to 11.24 am and not placed in a refrigerator. This posed a risk of cross infection to a preschool child.
4. The lidded nappy changing bucket used for the reuseable nappies was not a leak proof, self-sealing, pedal bin. This may pose a risk of cross infection for a preschool child.

- The nappy changing units were not maintained in a clean and hygienic manner, there was evidence of dust, particles of dirt and this may present as a risk of cross infection.

Safe Sleep:

- The children were not physically checked every ten minutes during sleep periods, some checks were carried out between ten and fifteen minutes. 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 as a safety risk to sleeping children. This was a non-compliance on the previous inspection dated the 23/04/2024.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated in her response that:

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- Garda vetting was obtained for the adult, it had been forwarded via email to the Inspector. An audit has been completed so there is record of garda vetting renewal dates, to prevent any further lapses in renewals.

Infection Control:

- Training has been completed on the storage of soothers in the creche. The soothers have been sterilised and placed within individually labelled containers.
- Further training has been completed on the storage of bottles in the creche. Parents have also been informed of the bottle policy which has been resent to all parents, so they are familiar with the storage of bottles within the creche.
- An email has been issued to parents outlining the types of bins that are required for care settings to minimise infection control. The service has since stopped the use of reusable nappies.
- The nappy room was deep cleaned, a new nappy mat purchased, and PVC hygienic wall cladding added to the surrounding walls of the unit to maintain a hygienic environment which can be easily cleaned after each use. Training was provided for the importance of clean hygiene practices.

Safe Sleep:

- Retraining has taken place on the importance of complying with company policy and safe sleep regulation. A staff member has been assigned sleep duty and is responsible for completing sleep checks both physically and on the multimedia application. Management have been assigned sleep check inspections daily as part of the risk assessment to ensure full compliance with safe sleep regulation and policy.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. A copy of the new Garda vetting for 1 adult was submitted to the Inspectorate.

Infection Control:

2. A copy of training signed by staff was submitted.
3. A copy of the training signed by staff was submitted and a new policy on the safe storage of infant milk.
4. A copy of the email sent to parents was submitted.
5. A copy of the signed training of staff on good hygiene practices was submitted.

Safe Sleep:

6. The training document on safe sleep was submitted and the risk assessments to be carried out for safe sleep.

Summary Comment

1 -6 The documented and photographic evidence was reviewed by the Early Years Inspectors and has been deemed to have met the regulatory requirements of this part of the Regulations.