

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020LH001
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Name of Service:	Clever Clogs
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Address of Service:	St Oliver's National School, Ballymakenny Road, Drogheda, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A92NV27
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Name of Registered Provider:	Barbara Rothwell
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	23/09/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	44	PM	10
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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. Cully and S. Taaffe
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

Clever Clogs is one of three privately-owned Early Years services operated by the registered provider in Drogheda Co. Louth. The service caters for pre-school children from 2 to 6 years and provides a school aged service. The service operates from 08:00am to 6.00pm (including a sessional service from 08.45am to 11.45am) from Monday to Friday and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service is registered to operate from 4 care rooms in a prefabricated building on the grounds of St Oliver's National School namely the Caterpillar Rooms 1 and 2 and the Butterfly Rooms 1 and 2. The service has access to 2 enclosed outdoor play spaces to the front of the building.

Staffing

On the day of the inspection there were 15 members of staff working in the service including the designated person in charge, an office administrator, 9 staff members who work directly with the preschool children, 3 staff members who work directly with school age children only and 1 staff member who carries out housekeeping duties. Three employees were absent on statutory leave. The registered provider was not present on the day of inspection.

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, premises and facilities. 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.

Additional Information

An immediate action notice was issued during the inspection in relation to the presence of an adult with access to children without a completed Garda vetting disclosure on file. The registered provider provided written assurances of appropriate immediate actions taken to address the risk identified within 24 hours of issue. It was stated that the staff member was completing training off site until the Garda vetting disclosure has been obtained and that this would not impact the services' ability to maintain adult to child ratios. This response was accepted.

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

(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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

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

(b) The deputising person in charge was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived and for the duration of the inspection.

A total of 19 staff files were reviewed including the registered provider, 10 staff who worked directly with the preschool, 3 staff who work with the school age children, the office administrator, the housekeeper and 3 staff on statutory leave.

(2)(a)&(b) There were 38 written and validated references available for the 19 adults whose files were reviewed on the day of inspection.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 18 staff members. In relation to the 18 available disclosures the service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available for 2 adults whose files indicated that they had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults, including the previously outstanding international police vetting.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 14 employees, including those on statutory leave and 1 staff member currently designated to work with school age children, who work directly with the preschool children in the service held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent. The staff members who worked with the school age children only did not require a minimum qualification.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(c) There was no Garda vetting disclosure available for 1 adult who was present in the service and working directly with the preschool children. An immediate action notice was issued to the person in charge on-site.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted the Garda Vetting.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance.

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) There was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children on the day of inspection. The children were attending the service on a sessional, part-time basis or a full-time basis.

(2) The following adult to child ratios were observed on the day of inspection:

- In the Caterpillar Room 1 there were 8 children between the ages of 2 years and 5 months and 3 years and 5 months being cared for by 2 adults.
- In the Caterpillar Room 2 there were 9 children between the ages of 2 years and 10 months and 3 years and 8 months being cared for by 3 adults. One staff member present in this room was employed to support children with additional needs, when necessary, as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.
- In the Butterfly Room 1 there were 13 children between the ages of 3 years and 10 months and 4 years and 7 months being cared for by 3 adults. One staff member present in this room was employed to support children with additional needs, when necessary, as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.
- In the Butterfly Room 2 there were 14 children between the ages of 3 years and 7 months and 5 years and 4 months being cared for by 2 adults.

(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

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service.

Basic needs:

- Throughout the care rooms in the service the staff were observed warmly engaging with the children, providing nurturing care, encouraging them with positive feedback and facilitating their play activities. Appropriate tones of voice and use of language was observed at all times. The staff provided comfort and reassurance to children when needed and responded to children's requests for activities or comfort in a timely manner.
- Mealtimes were observed to be a social and relaxed occasion with the staff sitting with the children whilst they ate providing them with assistance when needed and chatting together. Drinking water was freely available and accessible to the children in all care rooms. Parents provide the children's morning snacks.
- Staff were attentive to the children's personal care needs. Nappies were changed when needed, and children used the toilets independently with discreet supervision. The staff ensured children were dressed appropriately for outdoor play.
- Each care room provided opportunity for casual rest and relaxation through the provision of comfortable spaces with access to child-sized armchairs, sofas, floor mats, cushions and blankets. The service has stackable floor beds available in the event a child needed to nap or sleep. The youngest children attending the service were currently attending on a sessional basis only.
- All children in the service were observed to have spent time outdoors on the day of inspection.

Supporting relationships around children:

- There was a friendly and welcoming atmosphere in the service which was supported by the staff of the service. The staff team were observed to communicate well together and support each other to ensure

consistency of care to the children. While doing this the adults modelled positive interactions and relationships to the children. Staff demonstrated their familiarity with the children providing materials and activities they knew children would enjoy, and talking about their individual needs and how they met them in practice.

- Family photos were on display in the care rooms to reflect the children’s identity and create a sense of belonging for them in the service.
- Staff members shared information with parents electronically through a software application providing the parents with details of children’s activities, upcoming events and other relevant information.
- The staff supported smooth transitions for children with the use of timers and verbal strategies including prompts and songs to inform and prepare children for an upcoming change in their routine. The children were observed to respond well to these strategies.

Physical and material environment:

- The care rooms were organised by defined interest areas to facilitate meaningful self-directed play and extend children’s learning. These interest areas included well developed home corners, construction corners, art and craft stations, sensory play stations, small world play, reading areas, and tabletop activity areas. There was a range of natural, open ended and sensorial materials in the care rooms to encourage creativity, imagination, and sensory development. The care rooms were also decorated with soft furnishings such as fairy lights, plants and flowers and drapery which create inviting and comfortable spaces for children to spend time in. It was acknowledged on the day that the Caterpillar 1 room, while having a sufficient range and variety of materials available, was also in the process of further development as a new group of children and staff member settled into the service.
- Materials and resources were well organised and stored on low level shelving which support children’s independent choices, allowing them to find materials with ease and put away their equipment during clean up time.
- The two outdoor areas available were surfaced with artificial grass and provided space for movement and gross motor development. In one area children had access to a tunnel for crawling and climbing, and activity boards were mounted on the surrounding fences. There was also a wooden ‘shop’ for imaginary play and where children had access to outdoor building blocks. In the second area, children had access to a large sit-in wooden school bus, a wooden playhouse set up as a post office with a hatched window, and

an outdoor kitchen. Further play materials including a lidded box of animals, cars and figurines were taken outdoors during the inspection to facilitate play.

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 internal and external doors were secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service. The service had electromagnetic door locks on main entry doors accessible only via entry of a secure code. Sounder alarms are fitted to the emergency exit doors in the care rooms which are activated on opening, alerting staff.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of reach of children.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children during inspection.
- Both outdoor play areas were enclosed and free of hazards.
- The furniture, toys and play equipment appeared in good condition. Daily indoor risk assessments were carried out in each care room where identified faults or damages were recorded and reported to management.

Infection Control:

- Cleaning and disinfection schedules were on display and up to date throughout the service. The premises, furniture and equipment were in clean and hygienic conditions.
- Suitable disposable gloves and aprons were available and observed being used and disposed of by staff members after each individual nappy change. Pedal operated lidded nappy bins were provided for the disposal of nappies. This practice reduces the risk of cross-contamination.
- Thermostatically controlled running warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were provided at the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation of the service.
- The adults and children were observed to wash their hands at appropriate times such as before meals, following outdoor play or following toileting and nappy changing.
- Perishable foods brought from home were appropriately stored in refrigerators.

Administration of Medication:

- No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

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) Following review of staff files and the staff roster, it was evident that the registered provider ensured that there was a member of staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR) on the premises at all times.

(2)(a)&(b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available on the premises and these were stored in accessible and conspicuous locations out of the reach of children.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-

(a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) There were records in each care room detailing the most recent fire drill, carried out on 16/09/2024.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.