

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2020MN001 | | | | |
| Name of Service: | Little Wonders | | | | |
| Address of Service: | Unit 5 York Street, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan | | | | |
| Eircode: | A75PP93 | | | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Clare Callan | | | | |
| Service type: | Full Day, Part Time, Sessional | | | | |
| Date of Inspection: | 27/11/2024 | | | | |
| No of pre-school children: | <table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>29</td> <td>PM</td> <td>23</td> </tr> </table> | AM | 29 | PM | 23 |
| AM | 29 | PM | 23 | | |
| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath | | | | |
| Inspection undertaken by: | D. Murray & AM. Cunningham | | | | |
| 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).

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| Conditions if applicable | Not Applicable |
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Description of service

Little Wonders provide a full day care, part-time, sessional service to children from 2 to 6 years. The service operates from 8am to 6pm each weekday and eligible children participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. A school aged service is also provided.

The service is located in a commercial building and consists of the following rooms:

Pre-ECCE room catered for children from 2 to 3 years attending the service on a full day/part-time/sessional basis.

ECCE Year 1 facilitates the care and education of children from 2 years 4 months to 4 years attending the service on a sessional/ full day care basis.

Senior ECCE Year 2 provided care and education to children from 4 to 5 years attending the service on a full day care/sessional basis.

An additional care room was closed.

Other rooms in the service included a kitchen, office, reception area, children's and staff sanitary facilities.

An outdoor area was located to the rear of the premises with a partially sheltered area available.

Staffing

Employed to work in the service was a designated person in charge, 9 childcare staff and a cleaner/cook. Three students were currently doing college placement.

Present on the day of inspection was the designated person in charge, 7 childcare staff with an additional childcare staff commencing duty from 12 to 6pm and 3 students.

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

27/11/24 Two Immediate Action Notices were issued under Regulation 23: Safety and Regulation 9: Garda Vetting.

28/11/24 A response was received from the designated person in charge which was accepted by the Inspectorate.

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.

(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) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

(2) (a)&(b) Fourteen staff files were reviewed.

Nineteen validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 13 staff. 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.

(4) Ten childcare staff members had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider had not completed the required vetting procedures for staff working in the service.

(2) (a)&(b)

- Four staff members did not have 2 validated written references either from a past employer or from a reputable source.
- One staff member did not have a second validated written reference either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting was not available for 1 staff member.

(d) Police vetting was not available for 1 staff member.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) (a)&(b)

Written references have been received and validated.

The registered provider will ensure 2 validated written references are available on file before a staff member commences employment.

(c) Application has been made for Garda vetting. At present this staff member does not work in the service during the hours of operation.

The registered provider will ensure that garda vetting is sought for all staff members who are working in the service during the hours of operation.

(d) An application will be made for police vetting. At present this staff member does not work in the service during the hours of operation.

The registered provider will ensure that police vetting is sought where required for any staff member who is working in the service during the hours of operation.

Supporting documentation submitted

Six references received.

Application for garda vetting.

Application for police vetting.

Staff roster showing that the staff member without garda and police vetting only works in the service from 18:45pm to 20:00 hrs when the service is closed.

Summary Comment

(2) (a)&(b) The registered provider has not addressed the non-compliances as 3 references remain outstanding.
(c)&(d) This non-compliance has been addressed as this staff member does not work in the service during the hours of operation, however garda and police vetting are being sought. The response in relation to regulation 9(2)(c)(d) has been reviewed and accepted.

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) The correct adult/child ratio were maintained in the service throughout the inspection.

Present on the day of inspection was the designated person in charge, 7 childcare staff with an additional childcare staff commencing duty from 12 to 6pm and 3 students working directly with the 29 children attending the service.

(2) The following adult to child ratios were observed in the rooms:

- Pre-ECCE room: Nine children between the age of 2 to 3 years attending the service on a full day/part-time/sessional basis were being cared for by 2 adults and 1 student.

- ECCE Year 1: Twelve children between the age of 2 years 8 months to 4 years attending the service on a sessional/ full day care basis were being cared for by 3 adults and 1 student.
- Senior ECCE Year 2: Eight children between the ages of 4 to 5 years attending the service on a full day care sessional basis were being cared for by 2 adults and 1 student.

(8) The registered provider ensured that there were always two adults on the premises when the service was in operation, as evidenced in the staff roster maintained in 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 in the service:

Basic needs:

- Staff members were observed changing children's nappies regularly and in a timely manner with warm one-to-one interactions during direct care. Staff members were responsive to the children's cues should they need to use the toilet, with discreet supervision provided and assistance given if required.
- Children were placed to sleep for a scheduled period of rest at the service's designated sleep time after the 11:30am morning snack.
- Staff supported children's learning with activities that were observed to be fun and creative. There were a variety of themes in the different care rooms such as "Weather", and the Jungle" with children's artwork displayed to reflect these themes.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The staff members were observed to be very caring, kind and attentive in their interactions with the children. The staff members were observed promoting positive behaviour and supporting children to find positive solutions when they experienced challenge in sharing play equipment and materials. Transitions

were handled smoothly with children being given ample time to complete one activity before starting the next.

- In the Pre-ECCE room daily written communication was sent home to parents regarding each child. In the ECCE Year 1 and 2 rooms weekly information is sent home. Children and parents were greeted at drop off and collection with friendly conversation overheard.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(b) Stackable beds were available in the sleep room off the ECCE Year 1 room. Cosy areas consisting of children’s couches, cushions and mats were available in all care rooms for children to take a break from activities and rest if needed.

(3)(a) An outdoor space was located to the rear of the premises, which was enclosed by walls with a secure gate. The surface area consists of an artificial grass surface. A partially sheltered area permitted outdoor play in all types of weather.

Non-Compliance Information

It was observed that no sheets were provided on the stackable beds to provide comfort between the child and the plastic surface. The children were placed to sleep directly on the plastic surface.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Sheets have now been ordered for the stackable beds. The registered provider will ensure that sheets are available and placed on the beds before the children go to sleep.

Supporting documentation submitted

Written evidence that the sheets have been ordered.

Summary Comment

The response received has been reviewed and accepted. The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances, these will be reviewed at the next inspection.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- In the ECCE Year 1 and the Senior ECCE Year 2 rooms areas of interest had supporting equipment which included art and craft materials and a range of suitable toys and books which were easily accessible on open shelving.

Non-Compliance Information

- In the Pre-ECCE room some of the play equipment to support the areas of interest were placed on high shelving with limits a child's choice in self-directed play.
- The outdoor area was poorly equipped with a mud kitchen and water wall with no supporting equipment. There was no additional play equipment available to bring out.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. All play equipment has been made accessible to children on low-level shelving.

The registered provider will ensure that all toys, puzzles, books are available and within reach of children.

2. New play equipment has been purchased for the outdoor area.

The registered provider will ensure that play equipment is available in the outdoor area on a daily basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the following:

Play equipment on low level shelving.

Play equipment in the outdoor area.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances, however the availability of indoor and outdoor play equipment will be reviewed at the next inspection. The response received has been reviewed and accepted.

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

The service had a 1 week menu plan with dishes ranging from meat, chicken and fish. Children brought their own morning snack from home. The service provided the afternoon snack. On the day of inspection, the main meal consisted of cocktail sausages, potatoes cubes and beans. Water was the drink of choice at mealtimes.

Non-Compliance Information

There was no hot alternative meal if a child did not like what was served for dinner.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The main hot meal is now provided by a catering company.

Summary Comment

04/12/2024 A referral was made to the Environmental Health Service regarding facilities for the preparation of food.

The response received has been reviewed and accepted. The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances and this regulation will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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 following safety measures were in place on the day of inspection:

- The door to the service was secured with a buzzer system and the outdoor area was enclosed and had a secure gate. These security measures ensured that a child did not exit unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- All cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- All play materials were placed on stable based shelving units. Play materials and equipment were observed to be safe and suitable for the developmental age of the pre-school children attending each room.
- Children sleeping on stackable beds were supervised by an adult at all times.

Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed:

- The service was clean with cleaning schedules maintained on a daily basis.
- Fridges were available for the storage of perishable items in the children's lunch boxes.

Safe Sleep:

Safe sleep practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- Temperature of the sleep room was maintained between 18 to 22^o C while children were sleeping.
- A sleep log recording the position, colour and breathing pattern was recorded at 10 minutes intervals on all sleeping children.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for 1 staff member, however, this vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. At 11:15am in the ECCE Year 1, the surface area temperature of the wall mounted radiator which was within reach of children was recorded at 57^oC. At 12:10pm the temperature was re-checked and had come down to 32.5^oC.
At 13:55pm in the Senior ECCE Year 2 room the surface area temperature of the wall mounted radiator which was within reach of children was recorded at 62.7^oc. At .14:15pm the temperature had reduced to 46^oc.

Although immediate action was taken and the heat was turned down with furniture placed in front of the heaters, surface areas of radiators above 50^oc and posed a burns risk to children.

Infection Control:

3. In the sleep room off ECCE Year 1 room, bed linen was stored together in a box which poses a risk of cross contamination.
4. There was no handwashing carried out by staff and children after nappy changing.
5. Staff were observed taking the nappy bags out to the outdoor bin at the front of the service while still wearing the gloves used for nappy changing contaminating door handles on the way.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. An application has been made to update this staff members garda vetting. The registered provider will ensure that all garda vetting's are renewed every 3 years.

2. New thermostatically controlled radiators have been purchased. The registered provider will ensure that the surface area of the radiators are checked on a daily basis to ensure the temperature is below 50°C.

Infection Control:

3. Individual boxes are now available for the storage of the children's bed linen.
- 4 & 5. A copy of the Nappy Changing Policy was given to each staff member and the prevention of cross contamination was discussed at a staff meeting.

The registered provider will ensure that these practices are implemented on a daily basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Application for garda vetting was submitted.
2. Photograph of thermostatically controlled radiators in ECCE Year 1 and Senior ECCE Year 2 rooms.

Infection Control:

3. Photographic evidence of Individual storage boxes for the children's bed linen.
4. & 5. Nappy Changing Policy and Minutes of staff meeting.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has submitted a corrective action plan and evidence to indicate that the non-compliances in respect of points 2, 3, 4, and 5 have been addressed. These will be reviewed at the next inspection.

The non-compliance regarding point 1 renewal of Garda Vetting has not been addressed and remains outstanding

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 had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and safely stored in the premises

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

(b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(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) A written record was available of the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 18th November 2024.

(b) A record was maintained of the firefighting equipment on the premises. The firefighting equipment was last serviced on the 25th April 2024.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed on the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b) An up to date record was not maintained of the mains powered smoke alarm.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The smoke alarm has now been serviced. The registered provider will ensure that the smoke alarm is serviced on an annual basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

Servicing record for smoke alarm.

Summary Comment

The response received has been reviewed and accepted. The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the pre-school service is adequately insured for 64 children, expiry date on the insurance certificate was dated 27th March 2025.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired as required.*

Non-Compliance Information

- (a)
1. To the rear of the building in the outdoor area water was flowing from a pipe onto the artificial grass.
- (d)
2. The following was observed in the children's sanitary facilities:
 - In the nappy changing area, the hot water tap was loose on the sink.
 - In the children's sanitary facilities there was a slow flow of water from the hot water tap at the first sink and no flow of water from the hot water tap at the second sink.
 - The lino on the floor in the first toilet closet was torn which did not provide a smooth surface for cleaning.

3. The wood around the base of the staff toilet was not painted and therefore did not provide a smooth surface for cleaning.

4. The foot operated pedal bins were broken in the nappy changing room and in the Pre-ECCE room.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(a)
1. A new water heater/ boiler has been installed. The pipe was frozen and burst on the morning of the inspection. The outdoor area will be checked on a regular basis to ensure all items are maintained and repaired if required.

(d)
2. The hot water tap has been repaired.
Water flow is now steady from the taps in the children's sanitary area.

The lino on the floor has been replaced.

3. The wood around the base of the staff toilet has been painted.

4. Two foot operated pedal bins have been replaced.

Staff have been informed to report any maintenance work immediately so as to ensure swift action is taken.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the following:

New heater /boiler.

All taps in the children's sanitary area in working order with a steady flow of water.

Lino replaced on the floor of the children toilet.

Wood painted around the base of the staff toilet.

Foot operated pedal bins.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has given assurances that remedial action has been taken to address the non-compliances. The response received has been reviewed and accepted.