

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2022RN001				
Name of Service:	The Growing Tree 2				
Address of Service:	Convent Road, Ballaghderreen, Co. Roscommon				
Eircode:	F45 P232				
Name of Registered Provider:	Michael Frain				
Service type:	Part Time, Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	14/11/2024				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>34</td> <td>PM</td> <td>17</td> </tr> </table>	AM	34	PM	17
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Government Buildings, Convent Road, Roscommon, Co. Roscommon.
Inspection undertaken by:	A. Kennedy
Title:	Early Years Inspector

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 service is in operation since September 2022. It is operated by a subcommittee of Roscommon Integrated Development Company and located in a portacabin within close proximity of the town of Ballaghaderreen. It provides a play-based curriculum for children from 2 years 6 months to 5 years. It is registered to provide a part time and sessional service. It caters for ECCE children with the provision of a morning session from 09:30 to 12:30hrs and an afternoon session from 13:30 to 16:30hrs Monday to Friday. The maximum number of children to attend this service is 36.

Staffing

The registered provider does not work directly with the children and has employed a person in charge to operate the service. There are nine staff employed in the service. Five adults worked in the morning session and four staff in the afternoon session. A relief arrangement is in place in event of staff absence. There were two students on a work placement present on the day of the 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. 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the service 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

- (1)(a) At all times during the period of the inspection, the person in charge ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.
- (b) On the day of the inspection, the person in charge was on the premises when the inspector arrived at 09:33hrs to facilitate the inspection and the service manager was on the premises at 9.50hrs and remained on site for the duration of the inspection.
- (2)(a) &(b)
- Ten staff files and two student files were presented to the early year inspector.
- Twenty-four written validated references were on file for the ten staff and two students on work placement and were from a past employer or from a source other than the past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the ten staff and the two students on work placement and the service did adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Five of the staff had worked outside the jurisdiction, for six months or more, while over the age of 18 years of age, and had the required police vetting for that jurisdiction.
- (4) The ten staff who were working directly with children, held a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), at a Level 5 to 6, in Early Childhood Care and Education. Copies of qualifications were on file for the ten staff.

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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) There was a designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service. Staff rosters indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available on the premises at all times when the pre-school children were present.

(4) On the morning of the inspection, there were 34 children present between 2 years 8 months-5 years There were five staff directly caring for these children The person in charge assisted with the administration aspect of the inspection.

In the afternoon, of the inspection, there were 17 children present between 2 years 8 months to 5 years. There were four staff directly caring for the children.

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,

Compliance Information

- Each child was given enough time to eat and enjoy their snacks without being rushed. The children consumed their snack in their playrooms. The atmosphere during snack time was relaxed, with pleasant social interaction among the children and staff.
- The staff responded to children's individual personalities, sensitivities and needs in relation to toileting. The children had unrestricted access to the toilet and did not have to wait to use the toilet. Staff encouraged and supported children to become more independent in toileting practices. It was advised on inspection that eight children attending the morning session and three children attending the afternoon session wore nappies and were changed on a regular basis. The privacy and dignity of a child having their nappy changed was maintained.
- Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence, and to develop self-help and personal hygiene skills.
- Children had plenty of opportunities to move freely to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance.
- The service supported the children in forming and sustaining positive relationships with staff.

For example, by:

- assigning a key person to each child;
- showing respect for each unique child and developing their trust;
- being actively involved in children's play, where appropriate (initiating games, joining in when invited to by children);

- behaving in a way that creates a positive atmosphere (having frequent social conversations, joint laughter and showing affection);
 - listening 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;
 - encouraging children to think critically, ask questions and respond to them in a way that promotes sustained shared thinking; nurturing and comforting children;
 - using soft tones, the child’s individual name, and getting down to their level and making eye contact.
- The atmosphere in the indoor and outdoor learning environments were encouraging and unhurried.
 - The children were observed at play in the outdoor play area located to the rear of the pre-school with direct access from each of the playrooms. A covered in space is provided to enable the children to access the outdoors in all weathers. The play area was divided into areas of interest which included a sheltered area for tabletop activities, a climbing frame with a playhouse and a slide, balancing beams, monkey bars, a large sand play area, a digging and planting area and a selection of outdoor accessories to include, ball games, large plastic blocks., a selection of bikes/trikes and wheelbarrows.
 - The children were supported to be confident about their identity and to have a strong sense of belonging each day while in the service.
 - Children engaged in playing house / shop, matching cards, connecting, at construction, stacking, building, puzzle making, peg play, at dress up, role play, and imaginative play. There was also circle/story time with the children practicing their songs for their Christmas concert.
 - On speaking with staff, the inspector was informed that they verbally provide parents and guardians with daily information on their child’s experiences in the pre-school including the child’s likes, interests and preferences and play activities engaged in. This information was provided at collection times, by text messages, by phone calls, and by email.
 - Staff adjusted the level of support provided to children depending on the child’s abilities, allowing for children’s partial participation and participation with support.
 - The staff listened to children in a caring, gentle way when they expressed emotions, and reassured them that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions at times.
 - The staff acknowledged and accepted children’s feelings (positive and negative) and the relationships between children’s actions and other’s responses.
 - The staff supported children to enter social groups, and to learn to help and positively engage with other children. The staff encouraged and praised children for specific, positive, and appropriate behaviours.

- The children were given choice on what to do next.
- The staff were observed helping children to find solutions, supporting them, and talking to the children in a variety of ways, discussing, questioning, modelling, and commentating, extending a child's activities and initiating games and activities.
- The staff provided significant opportunities for the child to decide their play activities and experiences.
- Staff used positive strategies to support children's inclusion. For example, the inspector noted that the staff acknowledged a child's engagement in an activity 'that is great' 'well done' and used open ended questions such as 'what should we do next?', 'is there any other way to do this?', to allow children to critically think and explore.

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 to the preschool premises and the gates in the external outdoor play area were secured so that children could not leave the area unsupervised and unauthorised persons could not enter the area.
- Fire doors were unobstructed.
- All cleaning agents were stored inaccessible to the children.
- Leads, cables, and flexes were secured and or inaccessible to prevent any trips or strangulation hazard.
- The playroom temperatures were thermostatically controlled, and maintained between 18°C to 22°C.
- 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.
- The window openings in the playrooms were high and thereby inaccessible to the children.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- There were no pits or ponds in the outdoor area to cause any risk of injury to the pre-school child.

- The staff clearly identified to the early year's inspector, the drop off and collection procedures for children.
- A system was in place to ensure that daily records of attendance were kept for all the children, attending the pre-school.

Infection Control:

- The inspector observed that the children washed their hands regularly throughout the inspection to include, prior to consuming snack, after outdoor play and after toileting.
- Suitable hand washing facilities were provided with supplies of liquid soap.
- The playrooms and sanitary accommodations had foot operated lidded bins.
- The pre-school rooms and sanitary areas were well ventilated with the windows open throughout the inspection.
- Tabletops were cleaned immediately prior to children's snack break.

Administration of Medication:

- There were no medications administered to the children on the day of the inspection.
- The staff demonstrated knowledge of safe practices with regards to the safe storage and administration of medication should it be required.

Fire Safety:

- Monthly fire drills were carried out on the premises to ensure the children were familiar with the procedure in event of an emergency.
- All exit routes from the service were free from obstruction during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The plastic underlay on the gravel in the outdoor area close to the climbing frame was exposed and uneven in two sections and could pose a potential tripping risk.

Infection Control:

2. The section of the wood on the play kitchen in the classroom 2 room was worn and peeling and a section of the MDF was missing at the play sink unit posing a difficulty to effectively clean / cross infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The person in charge submitted a written response to the office of the early years inspectorate to advise

1. Gravel has been applied and raked and the outdoor area will be checked regularly, and the gravel will be topped up when required.

Infection Control:

2. The section of the wood on the play kitchen and the section of the MDF at the play sink in classroom 2 has been replaced and daily checks will be carried out by the staff to ensure these are maintained in good condition/repared promptly if necessary.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence of the replaced gravel and underlay in the outdoor area close to the climbing frame.

Infection Control:

2. Photographic evidence of the repaired section of wood on the play kitchen and the replaced MDF on the play sink.

Summary Comment

The Early Years Inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions and evidence submitted and deems it to meet compliance under Regulation 23.

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) One adult working in the pre-school service had evidence of a current first aid responder qualification and evidence was provided of two additional staff members confirmation to complete FAR training on 20th, 21st and 22nd of November 2024.

(2)(a) The first aid boxes were stored on a high shelf in the playrooms, in an easily accessible, conspicuous position for the staff and inaccessible to the children.

(b) The first aid boxes had content items within date.

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 firefighting 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) Arrangements were in place to record monthly fire drills. The last documented fire drill was dated 23rd of October 2024

(b) A record of the number, type, and maintenance of firefighting equipment in the service was on file.

Records indicated that the last annual maintenance for the firefighting equipment was dated 4th of September 2024. Records indicated that the last maintenance for the fire detection system was dated 2nd of September 2024.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in each room and in the lobby area.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of certification of adequate insurance which had an expiry date 17th of February 2025.

The insurance for 36 pre-school children was for a part time service, included the following: -

- public liability insurance,
- insurance against fire and theft,
- buildings insurance,
- insurance for outings undertaken as part of the service provision