

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023GY001
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Name of Service:	Sonas Early Learning Centre
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Address of Service:	Unit D, Fánán, Letteragh Road, Ragoon, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H91 N2XK
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Name of Registered Provider:	Theresa Murphy
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	15/06/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	17
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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:	M Riordan, J Ryan
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

Sonas Early Learning Centre is a private full day childcare service located in an urban area on the west side of Galway city. It provides full-time, part-time and sessional services for children aged between 1 year to 6 years of age. It operates between 8.00 am to 6.00 pm from Monday to Friday. The service is registered to cater for a maximum number of 61 pre-school children at any one time.

The premises consists of 4 playrooms, sanitary facilities, a designated sleep room, 2 nappy changing areas, staff room and a kitchen. The pre-school children have access to two secure outdoor play areas to the rear and side of the building.

Staffing

The registered provider has appointed a person in charge and a deputy person to manage the service. An area manager was also present on the day of inspection. All staff working with the preschool children hold a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 to level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework. Additional staff were available to prepare, cook and serve food.

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 a first inspection and was an announced visit and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11 and 19.

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 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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;*
- (b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and*
- (c) these Regulations.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a) A designated person in charge of operating the service was present on the day of the inspection. There was a named person available who was able to deputise if required.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the designated person in charge was present and the staff roster indicated that this person or their deputy were always available on the premises.

(2)(a) Two written and validated references were available for all staff members employed to work at the service.

(b) References were submitted by staff from either their past employers or from other reputable sources.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for all staff employed to work at the service.

(d) Police vetting was available for 7 staff members who had resided outside of Ireland for longer than 6 consecutive months.

(3) All vetting procedures were carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) All adults working directly with children held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or an equivalent such qualification.

(7) All staff were supervised and trained where necessary on

(a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service.

(b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and

(c) Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services Regulations 2016)

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) On the day of the inspection there were 18 pre-school children and 4 adults on the premises. The adult child ratio was correct overall in the facility.

(2) There were 4 preschool children and 1 staff in the Wobbler room.

There were 9 preschool children and 2 staff in the Toddler Room

There were 5 preschool children and 1 staff in the Junior Preschool Room

Relief staff were available to replace staff while taking meal breaks. A designated person was available to prepare, cook and serve food to each room of 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) BASIC NEEDS:

A healthy eating policy was available in the service. The menu plan for the service was displayed on a notice board in the entrance hallway for parents to view. A healthy breakfast was served each morning to those who arrived early. Parents provided a mid-morning snack for the children. At mid-day the service provided a freshly cooked hot meal. Chicken curry and a vegetarian option of bean stew were served on the day of the inspection. The service provided an evening snack of either pasta, sandwiches or a variety of wraps and pizzas. Each child had their own drink containers which were clearly labelled and placed in an accessible space for the children in all rooms. Children who played outdoors had their water bottles available to them on a trolley outside. In the Wobbler room at dinner time staff assisted some children with feeding while others were able to eat independently. The younger children used highchairs while the older children sat for meals at low level tables. Nappy changing units were located next door to the Wobbler and Toddler rooms. Waist high units with easily cleanable mats were used. A nappy changing policy was displayed in each area and staff were observed following the correct procedures when changing the children. Toilet training was based on the child's stage of development and their readiness to start training rather than their age. Low level wash hand basins were available in each room and children were observed independently washing their hands before meals and after outdoor play.

At the time of the inspection a large Preschool room not yet occupied was converted to a sleep room. This room was bigger in size and had more openable windows which helped reduce the overall room temperature during the warm weather. All sleeping children were closely observed by staff and room temperatures were monitored in the sleep room. A separate cot room was available for children under 2 years who required sleep however it could not be used on the day as it could only accommodate 3 cots.

Rest/relaxation spaces with lots of soft furnishings were accessible in all rooms if children needed quiet time away from active play areas in the rooms.

A well-resourced outdoor play area provided children with opportunities each day for active play and exploration in the outside spaces. Children had their own supply of sunscreen applied 20 minutes before they went outdoors.

Children wore sun hats and took lots of breaks in sheltered areas away from direct sunlight during the warm weather.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The facility was located on the ground floor of the building complex and contained 4 preschool rooms, a sleep room, sanitary facilities, a kitchen, a staff room and a manager's office. Two outdoor play areas were located to the side and rear of the premises.

Each room of the service was well planned and laid out to facilitate the needs of each age group in the various rooms. The Wobbler room was a large spacious room with lots of soft floor mats and comfort spaces for children not yet walking. Low level tables and chairs were available for tabletop activities. All play materials were stored on open shelving and accessible to the children. Surplus toys were stored on high shelves and rotated as needed. Childrens belongings were stored in each room in labelled lockers.

In the Toddler and Preschool rooms imaginative play areas were evident with kitchens, home corners, dress up clothes and mirrors available. Construction play areas and farm sets were also accessible. Low level tables and chairs with storage compartments in the centre of the tables were used for dining at mealtimes and for numerous tabletop activities. Childrens birthdays were displayed on the walls of each room. Library corners with age-appropriate reading material next to soft seating provided a quiet space in the service for children who wanted to relax and read a book. Staff in all rooms were observed to engage well with children, speaking in soft and low tones and encouraging them and praising their efforts.

Outside children had access to a large sand box, to an art easel and paints, ride on toys, tunnels, tepee, blackboards and mirrors. The older children had a low-level climbing frame accessible in their outdoor space. The area outside was covered with synthetic grass covering and was available to use in all weather conditions and for all age groups regardless of age and stage of development.