

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023KE003			
Name of Service:	Cookies' Early Learning Centre Ltd			
Address of Service:	Unit 17, Ardrath View, Crodaun, Celbridge, Co. Kildare			
Eircode:	W23 HOKX			
Name of Registered Provider:	Megan Cooke-Smith			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	13/01/2025			
No of pre-school children:	AM	49	PM	21
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child & Family Agency, Suite 7, Vista Primary Care Ballymore Eustace road, Naas, Co. Kildare, W91 X38W			
Inspection undertaken by:	T. Duignan and F. Maher			
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.			

Description of service

Cookies Early Learning Centre Ltd., opened in 2023 as a privately run childcare service for children aged 2 to 6 years.

The early years' service is registered to provide a full day care, part time and sessional service.

The service operates from 7:30am – 18:30pm on a Monday to Friday basis.

The early years' service is located in a purpose-built ground floor unit of an apartment block within a new housing development on the outskirts of Celbridge, Co. Kildare. The accommodation consists of four care rooms with adjoining sanitary facilities, sanitary facilities for adults, a kitchen, staff rest area and an office.

A secure play area is located to the side of the premises.

Staffing

There were ten adults present in the service on the day of the inspection. Eight adults were working directly with the preschool children. The registered provider and manager provided support to the care rooms in addition to managerial responsibilities and oversight of 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 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.

Additional Information

17 December 2024 - Information was received by the Feedback and Concerns department. The content of the information received, when assessed, triggered an inspection.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(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.

(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;

Compliance Information

(1)

(a),(b) There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise when needed and both were present on the premises.

(c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identified the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee. All staff were familiar with the management structure when asked.

The records of thirteen staff members were reviewed.

(2)

(a),(b) Twenty-six written and verified references from a past employer or reputable source were available in respect of thirteen staff members whose records were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all employed staff members.

The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was in place for four adults employed who had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4) Ten employed adults working directly with the children held qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

(7)(a) The registered provider facilitates regular team meetings and one to one supervision with the staff. This was evidenced by written documentation which included team meeting agendas, minutes of meetings and the staff supervision individual record.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the required written policies, procedures, and statements specified in schedule 5 were in place in the service. The content of the following policies was reviewed and met the requirement of the regulations:

- Policy on Administration of Medication.
- Policy on Accidents and Incidents.
- Staff Training policy

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 were forty-nine children attending the service being supervised directly by eight staff members during the inspection.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day as specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6.
- (8)(a) The staff roster indicated that they were at least two adults on the premises at all times

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

- (1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service.
 - (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention.
 - (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner.
 - (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

- (1) (d), (f), (g), (i) The required information was completed in the record reviewed.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis.
 - (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent.
 - (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

- (i)
 1. The registered provider-maintained details of staff rosters on a daily basis.
- (j)
 2. The registered provider ensured that a record with details of medication administered to a child with signed parental consent was available; this was supported by the documentary evidence reviewed for a sample size of 10 completed administration of medicine forms across the service.
- (k)
 3. The registered provider ensured that a record in writing with details of any accident, injury or incident involving a child attending the service was available; this was supported by the documentary evidence reviewed for a sample size of 10 accident and incident reports completed between 31 January 2024 -10 April 2024 across the service.

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 service was controlled by the staff members to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access the premises. The person in charge documented the inspectors' visit to the service in the visitor's book on arrival.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents.

Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled hot water and liquid hand soap were readily available for hygienic hand washing. The staff members supervised children's handwashing and handwashing routines were well established and observed. Gloves, plastic aprons, and nappy sacks were available for hygienic nappy changing practices. Foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal of used tissues, nappies and paper towel.

Written cleaning schedules were maintained for all room environments which were observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection, written parental consent was available should medication be required to be administered to a child. The staff members were familiar with required safe practice when administering medication in the service. Medicine was safely stored. Written health care plans were available for children requiring the administration of medication regularly and in an emergency situation.

Safe Sleep:

Sufficient low-level beds were available for any child aged over 2 years in the service requiring sleep. Bed linen was stored in individual containers. The staff members were familiar with current safe sleep guidance and practice. Ten-minute sleep check observations were completed on all sleeping children and the staff documented the colour, position and breathing pattern of sleeping children in their care.

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills had been carried out and staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service. The fire exits were not obstructed.

Outing:

The service does not conduct outings. This was confirmed by the manager of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. While it is acknowledged that there was a documentary system in place to manage the indoor and outdoor environment risk assessments, it had been completed in one of the four care rooms on the day of the inspection.
2. The side rails on the ladder access to the loft area in 'Willow room were low which created a potential safety risk to a child descending from the loft space. It is acknowledged that the service has completed a risk assessment and are managing this risk.

Safe Sleep:

3. The rest areas in each care room required to be reviewed to reflect a cosy space for the children to rest or take a break from activities.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. All staff have attended a follow up inspection meeting in which they have been directed that the risk assessments should be completed within the first 15 minutes of the first staff member rostered to be in each individual room. We have reiterated that outdoor risk assessments have to be completed prior to children going outside. Staff have signed documentation which contains the above information and verifies that they understand the instructions and will follow this procedure going forward.
2. A risk assessment has been completed and staff are managing the risk. There have been no accidents or incidents recorded involving the loft space. New wooden stairs have been ordered to replace the current stairs. All staff have signed The Loft Risk Assessment Declaration sheet, stating they are aware and understand the risks and their roles and responsibilities for the use of the Loft. The risk assessment will continue to be reviewed monthly, and the new stairs installed. Four children use the space at any one time and there is one staff member monitoring the loft at all times when in use.

Safe Sleep:

3. The cosy spaces have been reviewed and new soft furniture has been purchased, along with sensory mats and carpets. The cosy areas in each room will be reviewed regularly and if the cosy areas are not working then the room layout will be reviewed and reassessed.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Document
2. Invoice

Safe Sleep:

3. Invoice

Summary Comment

The written responses and documentary evidence submitted has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for 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) Persons were trained in in First Aid Response (FAR) for children and were immediately available to the children attending the service.
- (2)
- (a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, in a conspicuous position in the care rooms.
 - (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes for children were available to the children attending the service.