

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:	22/11/2023				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>39</td> <td>PM</td> <td>21</td> </tr> </table>	AM	39	PM	21
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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				
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	n/a
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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 person in charge and deputy person in charge 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 announced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child. 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 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.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
 - (b) The named person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.
 - (c) There was evidence that there was a clear management structure in the service.
- The records of sixteen staff members were reviewed.
- (2)
- (a) Two written and verified past employer references were available in respect of thirteen adults and one written and verified past employer reference were available in respect of two adults employed in the service whose records were reviewed.

(b) Two written and verified references from a reputable source other than a past employer were available in respect of one adult and one written and verified reference from a reputable source other than a past employer was available in respect of two adults whose records was reviewed.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for all staff members.

(d) Police vetting was available for one adult who had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

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

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d) Police vetting was not available for two adults who had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(d) International Police Vetting has been applied for the two adults.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2)(d) Two documents with evidence of application completed.

Summary Comment

The written response and documentation submitted by the registered provider has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance will be met for regulation 9 when the international police vetting is received, reviewed and on file. This area will be assessed at the next inspection.

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 thirty-nine children attending the service being supervised directly by eight adults.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day.
- (8)(a) There were at least two adults on the premises at all times for the duration of the Inspection. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for 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

Basic needs of children:

The service promoted a healthy eating policy. Food and snacks were provided at regular intervals during the day. Milk was available in the fridge in each room and offered as a drink at snacks and meal times. Young children had the opportunity to feed themselves and their drinks were within their reach throughout the day should they feel thirsty.

Nappy changing was completed regularly and promptly when required. It was handled in a sensitive and positive manner.

The children requiring sleep during the day, slept at a designated time and were provided with as much time as they needed to sleep.

The adults working with the children were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours. Children were spoken to in a kind and respectful manner. Their first names were used, appropriate eye contact and gentle vocal tones were observed being used during all interactions. In Willow room, the staff members used the kindness bucket – “have you filled your bucket” to recognise each children’s kind gestures and helpfulness during the day in the room.

Supporting relationships around children:

Staff members were observed being respectful, gentle and kind towards the children in their care and each child was listened to and given time to chat and express their thoughts and feelings.

Staff members were observed sitting with the children at mealtimes and engaging them in conversation which ensured that the experience was relaxed and sociable.

Information was shared with parents and guardians at the drop off and collection times. A daily written record was maintained for the children attending the Cherry Blossom room. It outlined food eaten, time nappies were changed, toileting, sleep times, activities and other comments.

Face to face meetings can be arranged for parents/guardians as necessary and email and telephone contact are used as an alternative method of contact.

A closed electronic messaging service was used to communicate group messages to parents. The service produced a monthly newsletter also. A family wall with pictures of children’s parents and siblings was displayed in the rooms.

Physical and material environment:

The physical and material environments in the care rooms were well planned, considered and thoughtfully designed to accommodate the needs of all children. Defined areas of interest were observed in the care rooms. These included a rest area beside the reading corner, arts and crafts/ mark making, small world area, a culture area, puzzles, jigsaws, threading and peg boards equipment, a home corner, music equipment and Montessori materials. Natural toys and materials were used rather than plastic equipment. There were mats available for the children to use while playing with materials on the floor on the day of the inspection.

All equipment and materials were accessible to the children and grouped to encourage children to use them independently. The tables and chairs provided were child sized which enabled all children to sit comfortably for snack and tabletop activities. All equipment and furniture were observed in a clean and well-maintained condition.

The secured outdoor area was located at the side of the premises. There were sand trays with plenty of associative equipment for the children to use, slides, trikes, tables and chairs for table top activities and plenty of space for the children to run freely and enjoy playground games.

Programme of activities:

On the day of the inspection, the children were facilitated to make their own choice in selecting play equipment and activities that they wished to engage with in all the care rooms. The staff members supported the children with their activities and did not interfere in the play. The routine was child led and responsive to the children's interests. The theme of the week in the Montessori room was 'Winter' and this was observed through the art work displayed, songs, play conversations and stories.