

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023KK001
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Name of Service:	Tiddlywinks Too
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Address of Service:	1 Fr. Walsh Close, Cootes Lane, Kilkenny
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Eircode:	R95 C670
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Name of Registered Provider:	Michelle Woodgate
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	12/01/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	12	PM	8
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child and Family Agency, Athy Road, Carlow
Inspection undertaken by:	N. Thornton
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

Tiddlywinks Too is a registered childcare service that commenced operation in September 2023. A full day, part-time and sessional childcare service is provided for preschool children aged 2 to 6 years. The service is in Fr. Walsh Close, a small estate of six bungalows, located in the centre of Kilkenny city, and near two primary schools. The service is open from 08:00 to 18:00 hours, Monday to Friday. A registered school age care service is also provided between the hours of 14:00 to 18:00 hours. The service operates from a purpose-built premises, comprised of two early years classrooms, a designated kitchen, and a reception area. An onsite outdoor play area is provided at the back of the premises.

Tiddlywinks Too is a sister service to Tiddlywinks Crèche, a full day care service operating from Rath Ullard estate, on the Bonnetsrath Road in Kilkenny city.

Staffing

There were five staff members employed in the service including the registered provider who is a mobile manager between the two services, Tiddlywinks Too and Tiddlywinks Crèche. All staff members working directly with the children in the service held at least the minimum Level 5 to Level 8 Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following regulations.

- 10- Policies, procedures etc. of a pre-school service,
- 11(1)(2)(8)-Staffing levels,
- 15- Record of a preschool child,
- 19- Health, welfare, and development of child,
- 21-Equipment and materials,
- 22-Food and drink,
- 23-Safeguarding health, safety, and welfare of child.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included both the junior and senior early childhood care and education (ECCE) classrooms and the outdoor play area.

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.

(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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The registered provider ensured that there was always a designated person in charge available in the service. A second named deputy designated person in charge was available to deputise as required and this staff member facilitated the initial part of the inspection until the registered provider arrived onsite.

(b) Both the designated person in charge and deputy designated person in charge remained onsite during the inspection.

(c) A clear management structure was documented on a notice board, in the service. Each staff member had roles and responsibilities which the inspector observed in the staff's interactions with parents /guardians at drop off and collection times.

(2) The staff files of the five staff members employed in the service were reviewed by the inspector.

(a)(b) Two validated references were available on file for each staff member, from either a past employer or reputable source.

(c) Garda Vetting certificates were available on file, for each staff member, who as part of their role in the service worked directly with the children.

(d) Not applicable, as no staff member working directly with the children in the service had lived in a state outside of Ireland for a period of longer than six months.

(3) On inspection of each staff file, the inspector observed that the procedures specified in paragraph (2) were completed by the registered provider, prior to staff members commencing employment in the service.

(4) Copies of certificates of qualification were maintained on file for each staff member who as part of their role in the service worked directly with the children. This documentation demonstrated that staff members held at least a minimum Level 5 to Level 8 qualification in early childhood care and education on the QQI Framework.

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

On review of the service's policies, the registered provider assured the inspector that all the required documents specified in Schedule 5 were available and open for inspection. The service's policies were communicated to the staff, by the registered provider, as part of their induction process prior to commencing employment in the service on opening in September 2023.

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) Throughout the inspection there was always an adequate number of staff members observed working directly with the children in the service. On arrival to the service the inspector observed 2 staff members caring for 12 preschool children. The roster and sign in and out register demonstrated that the 2 staff members had been onsite since the service opened at 08:00 hours. An additional staff member, the registered provider, arrived onsite at 09:30 hours.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children as required by schedule 6 of the regulations, was maintained throughout the inspection.

The 12 children aged from 3 to 5 years were directly cared for by 2 staff members. The children, as a group were able to avail of the physical environments of both ECCE rooms throughout the morning of the inspection. A third staff member, the registered provider was onsite to help, prepare the hot meal and relieve staff at break times. In the evening 8 preschool children aged 3 to 6 years were cared for by 1 staff member while the registered the second staff member cared for the school aged children. The registered provider continued to help where and when required.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that there were always at least two adults on the premises. This was reflected on the documented staff roster displayed in the service.

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:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (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;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (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;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,*
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(1) A sample of 12 records of pre-school children were reviewed by the inspector. The inspector observed that the elements required for regulation 15(1)(a) to (i) were clearly recorded.

(3) The preschool records of all children registered to attend the service were stored securely onsite, available for inspection and to staff and the individual child's parents/guardians if required.

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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that no corporal punishment is inflicted on a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The inspector observed that children were provided with suitable physical environments, learning materials and activities that supported their well-being, personal development, and learning. Both classrooms were planned with clear definable interest areas such as kitchen/home areas, construction areas, rest and reading areas and art and creativity areas.

The 12 children present on the day had the freedom to use both classrooms. In the morning the children played freely in the areas of their choice and with whom they chose to play with. Play materials such as toy kitchen equipment, dolls and dolls accessories, small world figurines, building, connective and manipulative materials were all available in easily accessible storage baskets and shelving. Both staff members working directly with the children supervised the children, supporting them and participating in activities as required and as requested by the children.

As children broke into smaller groups independently, the staff were observed to support groups, ensuring that they had whatever materials they required such as paints or colours for drawing, which one group had decided that they would like to do, while another staff member helped children to pick a variety of manipulative magnetic and connective play materials so that they could build together.

The children were observed to discuss with each other what they were planning on creating and staff were observed to only join in the conversations or activities to offer support around conflict resolution and to provide positive feedback on the great work that the children were doing.

As activities progressed throughout the morning the inspector observed that the staff picked up on cues from the children regarding emergent interests such as the ginger cat that was recently hanging around outside in the outdoor play area. They discussed pets that the children had at home, what their pet names were, what food that the pets ate. The inspector observed that the children had created a veterinary station around the emergent interest of the animals and how to care for them.

The staff catered for each individual child's needs supporting them if they needed assistance toileting, prompting with washing hands and blowing their noses. The staff cuddled children on cue if they were tired or upset and arranged a quiet sleeping area for the children, who wished to take a nap in the junior preschool room, after lunch. Appropriate stackable beds fitted sheets and cellular blankets were provided in a quiet corner of the room with the lights dimmed, so they children could sleep, while the other children played activities in the senior preschool room.

(b) The staff members present on the day of inspection were observed to meet each individual child's needs ensuring that the children were all included in activities of their choice, respecting each child's choice, and supporting them whenever possible. At times of simple conflict, the staff remained calm, speaking to the children in soft tones, encouraging them to resolve issues such as sharing and taking turns, by thinking through situations. Staff were always observed to interact at the child's level, either sitting at the child sized tables during activities and mealtimes or getting down on the floor for play and kneeling at their level to chat and engage children's eye contact. Both the staff and children demonstrated a great awareness on individuality and some friends' diverse backgrounds and confidently demonstrated to the inspector on a world map, where some of the children's families had originated from before coming to live in Ireland.

(2)(3) Throughout the inspection, the inspector did not observe any practices or actions, that were disrespectful, degrading, humiliating, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful, or neglectful to any child while in attendance at the service. Staff were kind and gentle in all their interactions with the children, taking time to listen to each child, support conversations around items of interest by individuals and groups and to provide extra one to one support on identifying children needing some extra support. The inspector observed that in practice the staff carried out their duties and care of the children's needs in line with the service's policy on promoting positive behaviours.

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 children were observed to bring the food items for their morning snack from home. A standing refrigerator was provided in the main hall for the children to store their lunches in.

In the kitchen area a three-week menu plan was displayed. There was evidence of cereals stored in the kitchen for children who attended the service early and did not have breakfast at home. The staff informed the inspector that a choice of cereals was offered with toast and milk.

Pasta bolognaises were cooked freshly in the kitchen, for the main meal. in line with the menu displayed. In the classroom, the children had a drinks station where they kept their individual drinks bottles, a jug of fresh water and plastic cups.

Fruit, crackers and breadsticks were available for the children in between meals if they were hungry.

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 main entrance to the service was secured with a keypad lock system, of which only the members of staff working on the premises had knowledge of the code. Staff used a fob mechanism to open the door, in order to maintain the security code. A release button was available at a high point in the reception area, to permit entry to authorised persons only.

The outdoor play area at the back of the building was secured with a ten-foot cemented block wall, and a ten-foot locked metal gate at either gable end, to prevent children exiting the premises unsupervised and to prevent unauthorised persons from entering the premises.

The staff conducted a daily risk assessment of the outdoor area, prior to children going out to play in the area. Records of this daily assessment were maintained.

There was evidence on review of documentation that cleaning schedules were conducted and recorded daily. All cleaning materials and equipment were stored in designated storage areas away from and out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

An adequate infection control policy was in place in the service, including detailed hand washing, nappy changing and toileting policies. Children and staff were observed to wash their hands prior to snack and mealtimes and post messy play, outdoor play, and toileting. No children in attendance on the day of inspection required nappy changing.

Administration of Medication:

One administration of medication form was recorded since the commencement of the service. This record for administration of a prescribed medication was completed in detail by the staff members and parent in line with the service's administration of medication policy.

Safe Sleep:

Four stackable beds fitted sheets and blankets were available for the children if they required a nap while attending the service. The inspector observed two children aged 3 to 4 years accommodated for a nap time in the junior ECCE room while the other children enjoyed activities in the senior ECCE room. The registered provider ensured that the stackable beds were placed in a clear part of the room, 50 centimetres apart, the lights were dimmed, and the children settled to sleep. A staff member was observed to physically check the children every ten minutes and record their sleep period, colour, position and breathing on the service's communication interactive application, for each child's parent/ guardian to view on their individual application account. The registered provider was able to demonstrate how sleep records were maintained electronically and provide the information to the inspector.

Fire Safety:

The service maintained annual checks of the firefighting equipment and the fire alarm system, which were observed on the last inspection on the 23 August 2023. Fire drills were conducted by the staff with the children, monthly since the service commenced operation and a record of same maintained.

Outing:

The service had an adequate outings policy in place, however, the registered provider informed the inspector that outings away from the service were not currently operated.

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) There were two staff members qualified in First aid responder (FAR) training present on the day of inspection.

On review of staff files, three staff members employed in the service were currently qualified in FAR. The registered provider assured the inspector that there was always a staff member trained in FAR onsite, while children were in attendance, be demonstrating that the daily staff roster reflected this requirement.

(2)(a) Two first aid boxes were observed on a shelf in the reception area. On inspection of their contents, both were adequately resourced with records of their contents, maintained.

(b)The inspector observed that staff could easily access the first aid boxes if required by any child, while in attendance at the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was displayed on a notice board in the reception area of the service, which provided details that adequate insurance for a full day care service for up to 33 preschool children had been obtained by the registered provider. The expiry date on the insurance certificate was 27 March 2024.