

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023LH001
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Name of Service:	Footprints Preschool
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Address of Service:	Saint Oliver Plunkett National School, Sandy Lane, Blackrock, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A91AK57
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sinead Auld
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	15/11/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	No.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre Castleblayney Co. Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Flood
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

Footprints Preschool is a privately owned service that has been registered since 29th August 2023. It provides sessional care and education to pre-school children aged 3 - 6 years.

This service operates from a purposively developed classroom within St. Olivers National School Blackrock Co. Louth. The premises consists of a playroom with adjoining sanitary facilities and an outdoor play area located on the grounds of the school. There is onsite parking for drop off and collection.

Staffing

The registered provider employs 2 staff who work directly with the pre-school children on a daily basis. The registered provider provides relief in the service as required. One additional adult attends the service on a regular basis as a contracted music teacher.

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 and safety*. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11 and 19; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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 would like 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, 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)&(b) The service had a designated person in charge and named deputy person to deputise as required. The person in charge and deputy person were on the premises when the inspector arrived on the premises and were present throughout the inspection.

(2)(a) & (b) There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for each of the 4 members of staff which included the registered provider and a contracted music teacher.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for each member of staff employed in the service and the contracted music teacher.

(d) Documentary evidence of international police vetting was available for 1 out of 2 staff members who had resided outside the Irish jurisdiction for a period greater than six months as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that each member of staff, who works directly with the pre-school children held at least the minimum required level 5 on the National Framework of Childcare Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d) Documentary evidence of the required international police vetting was not available for 1 staff member in the service who had lived outside the Irish jurisdiction for a period greater than six months as an adult.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

International Child Protection Certificate attached. Registered provider will ensure that staff files are up to date

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the required international police vetting.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances. Based on the information submitted the non-compliance has been addressed.

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) During the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.
- (3) On the day of inspection when the inspector arrived at the service at 10.30am there were two adults working directly with the 14 preschool children in attendance.

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) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that children's learning, development, and well-being was facilitated in the service:

Basic Needs:

- The children were observed to move freely in the care room and were reported to have had a change of environment into the outdoor area in the morning time.
- Healthy eating was promoted in the service as was evident by the snacks which were provided by the children's parents/ guardians.
- The children were encouraged to be independent with toileting and discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children after toileting.
- The children were observed to independently access the soft area to take a break and to read a book with their friends.
- The staff working with the children were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours and were observed to support the children to find positive solutions when they experienced challenge in sharing play equipment e.g., positive language, use of timers.

Supporting Relationships

- Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children and the staff. The staff were observed to sit with the children at snack time and engaged in social conversation about "playing at the park" and "who they met" which promoted a relaxed interactive environment.
- A key worker system was in place in the service with named staff members assigned responsibility for developing close relationships with a designated group of children and their parents. In addition, the staff reported that informal discussions take place at drop off and collection and that a social media messaging service is also used to send parents photographs and information of activities that have taken place during the week.

- A strong sense of partnership between the staff and parents was further evident with pictures and artwork on display in the playroom after a number of parents had attended the service to read a story for the children and carry out an art activity afterwards.

Physical and Material Environment

- A variety of age-appropriate materials and equipment were available in the playroom that supported many areas of development such as fine motor skills, speech and language, imaginary and sensory development. The toys and equipment were positioned on open low-level shelving which promoted independence and facilitated choice for the children.
- The playroom had clearly defined interest areas and the environments supported the pre-school children in initiating and sustaining play activities with real-life, wooden, and open-ended materials. An adequately resourced kitchen area with supportive equipment, construction area, role play, sensorial equipment, activity tables containing playdough and water, small world toys, arts and crafts materials and toys to develop manipulation skills including bricks, blocks, jigsaws, shape sorters, were amongst the interest areas and play equipment provided in the care room.

Programme of Activities

- The children were observed to engage in a variety of activities that promoted many areas of development including; sensory play, role play, art activities, large and small group time activities and reading time.
- The children enthusiastically showed the inspector their 'bear cave' and 'hedgehogs' nest' which they had created and painted during their discussions about hibernation. This was also reflective of their planned monthly theme for the curriculum which was displayed.
- Activities were child led and the children were provided with choice in relation to their engagement in activities and in accessing play equipment throughout the session e.g., *"what would you like to do for small group time? ...why don't you have a think about it ..."*.
- Learning stories were available for each child which detailed activities, artwork and photograph. These books are sent home each term for the parents to see.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

There was no fridge available for the appropriate storage of the children's lunches which contained perishable items.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The service is now currently using a spare fridge that was located in a room next to Footprints Pre School room. See photograph of fridge available for appropriate storage of children's lunches which contain perishable items.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliance. Based on the information submitted the non-compliance has been addressed and will be reviewed at the next inspection.