

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023MH006			
Name of Service:	Dolphins Early Education and Childcare Centre			
Address of Service:	Dun Rioga Close, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath			
Eircode:	A85 AK68			
Name of Registered Provider:	Jennifer Healy			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	11/09/2024			
No of pre-school children:	AM	51	PM	36
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath			
Inspection undertaken by:	D. Murray & AM. Cunningham			
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

Dolphins Early Education & Childcare Centre provide a full day care, part-time, sessional service to children from 1 to 6 years. The service operates from 07:30hrs to 18:30hrs each weekday and eligible children participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. A school aged service is also provided.

The service is located in a purpose-built facility and consists of the following rooms:

Room 1 (Part time room) provided care and education to children from 2 years 8 months to 4 years attending the service on a sessional, part-time basis from 08:00am to 13:00pm. This room catered for school aged children in the afternoon.

Room 2 (Toddler room) catered for children from 2 to 3 years attending the service on a full day care basis.

Room 3 (Wobbler room) facilitate the care of children from 1 to 2 years attending the service on a full day care basis.

Room 4 (Full day care room) provided care and education to children from 3 years to 6 years attending the service on a sessional, part-time, full day care basis.

Other rooms in the service included a cot room, staff room, laundry room, kitchen and children's sanitary facilities.

An outdoor area was located to the rear of the premises. Partially sheltered area were available off Rooms 1,2&3.

Staffing

Employed to work in the service were the manager, assistant manager, 11 childcare staff members, 1 school aged staff member, 3 staff members on statutory leave and a cook. Present on the day of inspection was the manager, assistant manager, 11 childcare staff members, 1 school aged staff who started work at 13:30pm.

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/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. 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

11/09/2024 An Immediate Action Notice was issued under Regulation 23 Safe Sleep.

12/09/2024 A response was received from the manager which was reviewed and accepted.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the manager, assistant manager, 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) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.
- (c) A clear management structure was displayed in the entrance hallway in the service.

(2) (a)&(b) Eighteen staff files were reviewed.

Thirty one validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for the 18 adults. 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 available for 1 staff member who had resided in 2 different countries for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Sixteen childcare staff members had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) &(b) Five validated written references were not available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Five written validated references have been sought and placed in the staff member's file.

All staff are to have two written validated references available before commencing employment. The recruitment policy has been reviewed and amended to reflect this change in practice.

Supporting documentation submitted

Five validated written references.

Staff Recruitment Policy

Summary Comment

The response received has been reviewed and accepted. The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances.

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) On the day of inspection there was a manager, 1 assistant manager and 11 adults working directly with the 51 children attending the service.

(2) The following adult to child ratios were observed on the day of inspection:

- Room 1 (Part-time room)had 15 children between the ages of 2 years 8 months to 4 years,6 children attending on a part-time basis, 7 attending on a full day care basis and 3 attending on a sessional basis being cared for by 3 adults. The full day care children move to room 2 in the afternoon.
- Room 2 (Toddler room) had 5 children between the ages of 2 to 3 years attending the service on a full day care basis being care for by 2 adults.
- Room 3 (Wobbler room) had 8 children between the ages of 1 to 2 years attending the service on a full day care basis being cared for by 2 adults.
- Room 4 (Full Day Care room) had 23 children attending on a full day care basis, being cared for by 4 adults.

(8) The registered provider ensured that there were always two adults on the premises when the service was in operation, as evidenced in the staff roster maintained in 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) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic needs:

- Staff members were observed changing children's nappies regularly and in a timely manner with warm one-to-one interactions during direct care. Staff members were responsive to the children's cues should they need to use the toilet, with discreet supervision provided and assistance given if required.
- In the Wobbler and Toddler rooms any child who became upset were nurtured and cuddled until they settled.
Sleep practices were child led with some children availing of an early morning nap while the older children were placed to sleep for a scheduled period of rest at the service's designated sleep time after the 11:30am morning snack.
- Children were encouraged to become independent and self-caring, suitable to their age and stage of development which included hand washing, caring for their belongings and tidying away after activities and play.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The staff members were observed to be very caring, kind and attentive in their interactions with the children and demonstrated sensitivity and responsiveness to each child's individual needs, likes and preferences. The children showed confidence around the staff members and sought out staff members for reassurance, comfort and support. A record was kept in the Wobbler /Toddler rooms of issues pertaining to each child as occurred during the day and this information was passed onto parents or guardians by an electronic tablet device.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) A cot room with 8 standard cots was available for the younger age group requiring sleep. Stackable beds were placed in Room 2 (Toddler room) for the older children requiring sleep. Cosy areas consisting of mats and cushions were available in all care rooms for children to take a break from activities and rest if needed.

(3)(a) An outdoor space was located to the rear of the premises, which was enclosed by walls and fencing with 2 secure side gates. The surface area consists of an artificial grass surface, cement and tarmacadam. Partially sheltered areas were available off Rooms 1,2&3.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

Materials and equipment were available on low level shelving in the care rooms. Children were observed to access the materials independently.

Equipment in the outdoor space consisted of 4 tyres, 2 wooden benches and 2 ride on bicycles. In the 3 partially sheltered areas play equipment was brought out from the care rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

1. Areas of interest were poorly developed in all 4 care rooms with little supporting equipment and materials to enhance the themed areas. This was evidenced by the following:
 - Animal baskets were available with no animal sheds or related toys.
 - The allocated construction area had no construction table or available equipment.
 - Kitchen area had minimal play utensils, no pots, pans or real life items.
 - The allocated small world areas were not developed.

The physical indoor environment should be stimulating, challenging, diverse, creative and provide an enriching experience for all children to ensure meaningful sustained play.

The large outdoor area was poorly developed. This was evidenced by the following:

- Although a mud kitchen was available there was no supporting play equipment.
- There was no sand in the sand pit.
- There was no water/sand in the sand/water table.

The manager stated that play equipment was available in the shed however this was not freely accessible due to the storage of other items.

Outdoor spaces should provide children with the opportunity to be energetic, explore, engage and experiment with nature, to play independently and in groups and to learn about risky and challenging play within a safe environment.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

An audit was done in collaboration with staff to assess play equipment best suited to meet the needs of the children. Play equipment was bought and is now available. Materials that were on high shelves or in presses, required small group supervision and are only taken out when it is safe to do so.

Monthly audits will be done, and lists of materials required to be given to manager. Broken toys will be removed, and daily checks will be done to ensure all suitable equipment is available to the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of:

- Areas of interest in the care rooms.
- Outdoor area mud kitchen with play equipment.
- Tyres with sand,
- Woodchip in sand pit.

Summary Comment

The response received has been reviewed and accepted. The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances. Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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

All meals and snacks were provided and prepared onsite. The service has a 3-week menu plan with a variety of dishes ranging from meat, chicken, fish and a vegetarian option. A constant supply of water was also available and accessible to the children.

Breakfast was served from 8 to 9am which consisted of a choice of cereals and toast. A morning snack of chopped fruit was served at 10am. Lunch was served at 11:30am which consisted of a selection of sandwiches and yogurts. The main meal of the day was served at 2pm which consisted of beef curry and rice.

An afternoon snack of rice pudding was served at 4pm before leaving for home. Water was the drink of choice at mealtimes.

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 following safety measures were in place on the day of inspection:

- The door to the service was secured with a buzzer system and the outdoor area was enclosed and had secure gates. These security measures ensured that a child did not exit unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- All cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed:

- Cleaning schedules were maintained on a daily basis.
- All pacifiers were stored in individual boxes in the care rooms.

Safe Sleep:

Safe sleep practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- Temperature of the cot room was maintained between 16 to 20⁰C and between 18 to 22⁰C in the sleep room while children were sleeping.
- Block out blinds were available which created an atmosphere conducive to sleep.
- Children sleeping on stackable beds were supervised at all times.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The water temperature at the taps in the sanitary facilities off room 4 was hot to touch with a temperature reading of 55.1°C at 11am. Staff were alerted immediately. Immediate action was taken and the maintenance man onsite turned down the thermostat to a temperature below 43°C. The water temperature was rechecked on two occasions and was recorded between 39.4°C. at 41°C.
2. In Room 3 the wooden kitchen which was of light weight was not anchored and posed a toppling risk.

Infection Control:

3. Children in the Toddler room were observed eating their sandwich's directly from the tabletop as the bowls supplied were too small.
4. Children were not assisted to wash their hands at all times following nappy change.

Safe Sleep:

5. Sleep checks were not recorded at 10-minute intervals. The following sleep checks on two children were recorded on an electronic device:
 - At 09:58am the next recorded sleep check was 10:22am.
 - At 09:58am the next recorded sleep check was at 10:21am.

An Immediate Action Notice was issued with a response received and accepted on the 12/09/2024.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The thermostat was fixed immediately. Daily Water temperatures to be taken and recorded on the daily check list.
2. The kitchen has been bracketed to the wall. The manager will ensure that all play furniture have a stable base or have been anchored to the wall if required.

Infection Control:

3. Plates are being used now instead of bowls. Individual place mats have been made for each child and will be used on a daily basis.
4. At a recent staff meeting the hand washing policy was reiterated to all staff. Hand washing posters have been placed in the sanitary facilities and in the nappy changing areas. The manager will ensure that the handwashing policy is implemented in practice on a daily basis.

Safe Sleep:

5. Sleep checks were recorded on a software device but are now recorded on a written document. Safe sleep was discussed at a staff meeting and the importance of 10 minutes sleep checks was reiterated to all staff. The manager will ensure that this practice is implemented on a daily basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Photographic evidence of wooden kitchen anchored to the wall.
- Plates were available in the kitchen on the day of inspection.
- Hygiene and Hand Washing Policy
- Sleep Log.

Summary Comment

The response received has been reviewed and accepted. The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances.

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) The service provided evidence that a person had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and safely stored in the premises

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-

(a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and

(b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) A written record was available of the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 05/09/2024.

(b) A record was maintained of the firefighting equipment on the premises. The firefighting equipment was last serviced in September 2023.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed on the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)A up to date record was not maintained of the mains powered smoke alarm. The mains powered smoke alarm was last serviced on the 04/08/2023.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The smoke alarms have now been serviced. The manager will ensure that the smoke alarms are serviced on a yearly basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

Up to date maintenance record for smoke alarm.

Summary Comment

The response received has been reviewed and accepted. The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the pre-school service is adequately insured for 66 children, expiry date on the insurance certificate was dated 27/03/2025.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Non-Compliance Information

(d) In the children's sanitary facilities off Room 4 the following was noted in the toilet closet nearest the care room:

- In Room 4, the wooden surrounds on the door leading into the sanitary area was not painted. A wall in the care room was not painted.
- The area around the plumbing pipe had wooden supports exposed.
- The wall did not run flush with the ceiling as there was a gap into the care room.
- The 2 sinks in the sanitary area were hanging loose from the wall.
- The water from the hot tap at the first sink had a slow flow.

(e) There was an insufficient number of toilets for the number of adults working in the service.

There are now 16 staff employed in the service with only 1 staff toilet. There must be 1 staff toilet to every 8 staff members.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(d) The building work has been completed in the sanitary facilities off Room 4.

(e) An additional staff toilet has been built.

Supporting documentation submitted

(d) Photographic evidence was submitted of:

- Wooden surrounds on doors painted.
- Plumbing pipe enclosed with wooden panels.
- Wall running flush with the ceiling no gap.
- Two sinks anchored to the wall.
- Adequate flow in hot tap.

(e) Photographic evidence of an additional staff toilet.

Summary Comment

The response received has been reviewed and accepted. The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances.