

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023WD002
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Name of Service:	Kids at Play
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Address of Service:	Carn Glas Court, Waterford City, Waterford
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Eircode:	X91WOVF
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Name of Registered Provider:	Aoife Lynch.
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	22/11/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	6	PM	3
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Community Care Centre HSE Buildings Cork Road. Waterford City.
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Ryan and E Cullen.
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
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Description of service

Kids at Play is a privately owned service and located on the ground floor of a residential apartment block, on the outskirts of Waterford City. Kids at play is an early years service for children with additional needs. The service offers a play based and social skills programme for children from 3 years to 6 years of age, with allocated sessional appointments for up to 3.5 hrs. Kids at play is registered for no more than 11 children from 3 to 6 years of age at any given time. The service has two care rooms presently in operation, adult and children's toilet facilities, a kitchen/office and cleaning store. The outdoor play space is adjacent to the service and is accessible from the main care room.

Staffing

The registered provider is the owner and manager of the service and currently employs three additional childcare staff for the early years 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 focused on:

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels.

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child.

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child.

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the co-operation 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

(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 deputy designated person in charge who was able to deputise, as required.

(b) At all times during the inspection both the designated person in charge and deputy designated person in charge were on the premises.

The review of files and in discussion with the staff it was confirmed that there were 4 staff working with the children from 3 years to 6 years of age, 2 students on placement in the service and 3 staff who were on the premises working with the school age service.

(2)(a)

Eight written validated references were available from past employees for the early years staff working directly with the children on the premises.

- (b) Not applicable as all references available for the early years staff were from past employers.
- (c) There was evidence of completed Garda vetting disclosure certificates from An Garda Síochána which were on file in respect of all four early years staff/ three school age staff /and two students working directly with the children on the premises.
- (d) A Police vetting certificate was available for the one early years staff member who had lived and worked outside of the jurisdiction for periods of more than six months.
- (4) There was evidence that all four staff employed to work with the early years children in the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or equivalent on the National Qualifications Framework.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)

There were no written validated references available for the two students on placement in the service who were working directly with the early years children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated in the response that both students had submitted two written references which have been signed and validated. All future students will do same; in telephone conversation with the registered provider on 24 January 2024 it was established that one student had finished in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

The registered provider submitted a 'student checklist'. The registered provider stated that this will ensure references are validated and on file for all students.

References were submitted to the inspectorate on 24 January 2024.

Summary Comment

The registered provider had addressed the non-compliance of regulation 9 (2)(a) therefore requirements for the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 have been met.

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.*
- (3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
On the day of inspection there were adequate numbers of staff working directly with the children. The adult: child ratios exceeded the regulatory requirements.
- (3)
There were three allocated sessional appointments throughout the day of the inspection as follows:
- First session 09:30 -13:00 hours. There were six pre-school children being cared for by three staff, all six children were collected between 12:30 and 13:00 hours.
- Second session 12:00-15:30 hours. Two additional pre-school children joined the service therefore there were eight early years children on the premises from 12:00 -13:00 hours and care continued with the same three staff.
- Third session 14:00-17:30 hours. One early years child commenced sessional care and overlapped with two children from the second session from 14:00 to 15:30 hours. and were cared for by two staff members. From 15:30 hours there was one child remaining being cared for by one staff member.
- Despite the overlapping of sessional hours for early years children the number registered of 11 early years children was not exceeded throughout the day of the inspection.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

There was a strong emphasis on supportive strategies to guide children during transitions from one activity to the next. For example, in the transition from outdoor play to indoor play, verbal prompts were given specifically to each child and an audio and visual countdown timer was set. Once the timer alerted, the children began to transition indoors. Once indoors, verbal and Lámh sign prompts were given to support children to remove their outdoor clothing. Each child then used their dedicated visual schedule to signal the transition to the next element of the day. Individual strategies were observed to support the specific needs of children during this part of the day, for example use of an active movement activity.

Whole group transition strategies were also documented, a sensory circuit was displayed in the auxiliary space which is used to transition between both of the classrooms. This circuit described a sensory obstacle course which children completed during the move between classrooms. In discussion with staff its aim is to provide an interactive transition and move the focus to the activity rather than the transition which some of the children required support with.

In discussion with the inspector and through observation, it was evident that staff members were very familiar with the individual needs of children in the group. They were knowledgeable on their individual learning preferences and additional supports required to increase learning opportunities. During a whole group sensory water activity, a staff member noticed a child required support to regulate. One to one care was put in place and a movement break supported the child to regulate.

The main classroom had designated areas of interest, these included a cosy library corner with soft fall matting, a couch, small and large cushions and open shelving with books. A movement area was resourced with a wooden rung climbing frame, textured movement stones and a trampoline. The construction zone was defined through use of a large construction scene on the wall and low-level shelving. Large building blocks and construction vehicles were also available. The role play area was resourced with a wooden kitchen, dolls house, trolley, buggy and kitchen materials. Fine motor work such as shape sorters and jigsaws were also available.

The second classroom was used as a messy play area where children participated in craft activities and ate snacks. On the day of inspection this room was used with the morning group of children for a water play activity. The auxiliary space which linked both of the classrooms was used as a breakout space on the day when required by individual children.

Outdoors the children had access to an enclosed all weather play space. Children were observed to engage in a range of activities which included: a sensory rice and pasta role play with construction vehicles and a farmhouse. A tent and tunnel, a hammock swing and large bean bag were also available for use. A ball pit was used by a number of children on the day.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

While it is acknowledged that a routine of the day was documented, and staff provided the inspectors with an overview of identified learning goals for children, these learning goals or individual learning profiles were not documented for each child. As the service catered for children who were at varying developmental stages and had specific learning needs it was significantly important to have clearly identified goals and planning for each child attending the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated in the response that an inclusion plan had been created for each pre-school child. This document is completed in collaboration with parents. This document will act as a record of current goals and diary of completed goals. It will ensure each child is working on individual goals working towards their own development based on their own needs and pace.

Supporting documentation submitted

The registered provider submitted a document titled the 'Inclusion Plan' on the 18 January 2024. This document includes areas for planning, implementing and reviewing children's goals.

Summary Comment

The document titled 'Inclusion Plan' was expansive and detailed. The document was divided into four sections and named as follows:

Section 1 My information

Sections 2 Key relationships

Section 3 The voice of the child

Section 4 Goal planner and record.

The intention of how the document was to be used was not clear.

Section 1 My information was the child's enrolment to be completed by parents. Sections 2 key relationships and section 3 the voice of the child are also information gathering for the service and would also be a requirement for parental completion. However, section 4 goal planner and record could be used as a care plan for staff as a guide to support children's learning and developmental needs.

Therefore, the usage of this proposed document was unclear, and its implementation will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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:

Since the last inspection on 4 August 2023 the following safety issues had been addressed and implemented:

1. A safety chain lock at the back entrance door was fitted at a high level out of children's reach, this was observed to ensure that children were unable exit the premises unsupervised.

Infection Control:

1. Foot peddled bins had been installed a various points throughout the service.
2. All schedules for the cleaning of each room were dated and signed.
3. Paper towels were used and available in all the sanitary areas for hand drying.
4. All personal items and children's sleeping equipment had been removed from the staff toilet.

Administration of Medication:

1. All prescription medication was stored in a locked cabinet in the kitchen area, the key was readily available on a hook adjacent to the cabinet. There was a protocol available for the administration and documentation of prescribed medications within the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The heavy fire doors throughout the service were not protected for children to avoid finger trapping injuries in the door jambs.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated in the response that all doors have been fitted with finger guards which will be maintained and replaced accordingly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was submitted demonstrating the provision of a finger guard on one of the fire doors on the premises.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted evidence to address the non-compliance of regulation 23 (safety) that meets the requirements for the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

Non-Compliance Information

The recording system for documenting children’s attendance did not allow for the arrival and/ or departure times of the children. Given the nature of the staggered sessional service and school age times it was necessary to establish at any given time the children who were on the premises. Therefore, the absence of times presented as a risk for the safe evacuation of children in the event of an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated in the response that a new attendance record has been created which includes documenting arrival and departure times.

Supporting documentation submitted

Template copies were submitted of attendance record sheets that provide a space for the recording of times.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance of regulation 24 (1) therefore requirements for the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 have been met.