

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023WD003
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Name of Service:	Play Together Childcare
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Address of Service:	Unit 7 Block A, Mount Suir, Manor, Gracedieu, Waterford
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Eircode:	X91 YC53
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Name of Registered Provider:	Rebekah Donnelly
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Service type:	Full day care
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Date of Inspection:	09/11/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	7
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Community Care, Cork Road Waterford
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Ryan and C. Ryan
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

Play Together Childcare is a private full day care early years service, on the outskirts of Waterford city, that opened in September 2023. The service operates from 08:00hrs to 17:30hrs daily for children aged 2yrs 8mths to 6yrs. Play Together participates in the Early Years Care and Educational Scheme (ECCE) from 09:00hrs to 12:00hrs. The service is located on the ground floor unit of a retail and apartment complex. This service has four care rooms, one room allocated to early years children and three rooms for school aged children. Play together is registered as a full day care service. The building has a catering kitchen, an office and toilets for adults and children. The service has use of a designated grassed area enclosed by the surrounding apartments that is used for the children's outdoor play opportunities.

Staffing

The registered provider is the proprietor and the owner of two other services in close proximity to this service. The service has employed a manager as the designated person in charge and a further three childcare staff are employed to work in the early years room.

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 following regulations.

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 the child.

Regulation 25 -First aid.

Regulation 29 – Premises.

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 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

(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)

On the day of the inspection the registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service. The service employs a second named person who is able to deputise as required.

(b)

The registered provider was on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

The staff files for five staff working directly with children were reviewed on the day.

(2)(a)(b)

Validated references for all employees were kept in each staff member's file.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures were available for all staff working in the service.

(d)

Police vetting was available on file for two staff that had lived outside the state for more than six consecutive months.

(4)

Certificates of qualifications for all staff members working directly with the pre-school children were available on file.

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)

Throughout the period of the inspection there were adequate numbers of staff working directly with the children attending the service.

(2)

During the morning there were 16 children being directly cared for by 4 staff. During the afternoon there were 7 children being directly cared for by 2 staff, ensuring there were adequate staff available to work with the children and to maintain staff/child ratios at all times.

The registered provider worked directly with the children in the rooms on the day of 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

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Regulation 19 was assessed through direct observation, review of records and discussion with staff. The following was observed in relation to providing the children's basic needs with a programme of care and activities.

The atmosphere in the service was friendly and welcoming and the interactions between the children and staff were observed to be familiar and relaxed. One of the 4 childcare rooms in the service was designated for the sole use of the early years service, for children aged 2 to 4 years of age.

It was documented in Play Together's statement of purpose and function that the service provided "an environment that is child centered where the holistic development of the child is promoted." The registered provider had developed and implemented a play-based programme with an emphasis on festivals and the seasons that followed the calendar year. Child directed free play was observed on the day of the inspection and the registered provider stated that the ethos of the service was to support and promote children's learning through play.

Children were observed to have ample space to move about the room and engage with toys of their choice. The room had two large windows low enough to afford the children the opportunities to look out on to the road and footpath. The children were observed enjoying looking at cars and people as they passed, and particularly excited to see their parents/guardians arriving to collect them.

There were 10 children in nappies on the day of the inspection, these were changed routinely in the sanitary area off the childcare room. Six children were toilet trained and were observed being supported and encouraged with hand washing while using their toilet facilities.

There was a rest room area located off the main childcare room. On the day, this area was observed being used by two children for a midday nap. The children were observed settling comfortably on floor beds having removed

shoes and extra clothing before settling down to sleep. The beds had individualised linen and cotton blankets. The area was darkened and conducive to rest.

A large outdoor space was provided at the rear of the premises enclosed by the two apartment blocks and was used solely for the outdoor play opportunities of the childcare service. On the day, the children were observed while using this area and the registered provider informed the inspectors that children in full daycare used this space at least twice a day. The children enjoyed the freedom of the expansive space and were observed using slides and ball games while there.

When the children returned from their time outdoors, they were observed hand washing prior to eating their snack. Lunch time was observed to be sociable as the tables were pushed together and the children and staff sat around them. Snacks observed were sandwiches, cheese, crackers, and fresh fruit such as bananas, strawberries and grapes. The service provided the main meal for children remaining on for full day care, this was observed to be beef pasta bolognese.

The staff were observed to be patient and interested in what the children were saying and doing. At story time staff were observed encouraging children's language development by repetition and discussion on aspects of the story.

Periodic written observations were held on each child's development and wellbeing.

Non-Compliance Information

Physical and Material environment:

1. The outdoor area required developing. There were no interest areas, and toys, material and equipment available to the children were limited.
2. The outdoor area consisted of a large space within which it was difficult to supervise the children. Divided areas and developed interest areas would allow children opportunities to freely engage in play and easier for staff supervision without impeding children's freedom of movement.
3. The location of the outdoor space doesn't allow children the opportunity to freely access the toilets and toileting requires assistances from staff to bring children back into the premises.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The registered provider stated in the response that a new caretaker/gardener has been hired and he has begun to undertake the refurbishment of our outdoor space. He has been tasked with cleaning up the garden area. Once completed the team will proceed to furnish the garden with more play equipment and furniture to provide a space for more developed and varied play experiences which will include interest areas where toys, materials and equipment will be available to the children.
2. The registered provider stated in the response that it is planned to construct a fence to divide the large grass area and develop interest areas.
3. Registered provider stated in the response that a new stairwell is currently under construction which will reduce the distance travelled to the garden.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographic evidence was submitted on the 5 January 2024 indicating that the hedges had been cleared and cut back, surrounding walls and paved areas were power hosed, and general tidy up and weeding of the area.
2. On the 21 January 2024 the manager submitted a drawing of the planned developments to progress the outdoor space into a play garden. The plan was supported with written documentation outlined the areas of interest and structures such as gazebo, seating space, and other activities that are part of the design. Photographs were also submitted on this date of the activity frame intended for erection in the garden.

Summary Comment

The documentation submitted on 21 January 2024 clearly indicated the proposal for a child friendly outdoor space to be developed in 2024. These actions were appropriate to address the non-compliances categorised under Regulation 19 (Outdoor Physical and Material environment). The implementation of these proposals will be looked at 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:

The entrance to the premises was secured with an electronic keypad system.

Infection Control:

There was warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels readily available for hygienic handwashing. Children's hands were washed after outdoor play, toileting and before eating.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. The nappy changing table was located in the children's toilet area. The location of the nappy changing unit was confined and there was no adult height sink for staff to wash their hands therefore, posing as a possible spread of infection.
2. The nappy bin was accessible to the children using the toilet area as nappy changing was being carried out in between the children's toilets and hand washing sinks.

General Safety:

In order to gain access to the outdoor play area, the transition required the children to pass by the back door utility entrances of two food premises, crossing through the apartment car park, into an apartment entrance hall, one flights of public stairs and across a decking bridge. Some hazards were observed on this route as follows:

1. There is a risk to the children passing through a busy apartment carpark.
2. The children had to access the outdoor area via an apartment entrance hall and flight of stairs. There was no lower handrail available for the children on the stairs. The adult handrail was too high, and children were observed not to have any support while climbing the stairs. Given the starting age range was 2yrs 8mths and children 's mobility, this could pose as trip risk.
3. The decking on the bridge out into the outdoor area was extremely slippery.

- The large slide in the outdoor play area was not anchored and this could topple over and pose as a risk to children while using it.

It is acknowledged that the registered provider had a risk assessment on this transition and an outdoor policy. The service ensured that four staff were available for the supervision and transfer of children in and out to the outdoor area.

Indoor environment:

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

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. and 2. The registered provider stated in the response on the 5 January 2024 that the nappy changing unit had been moved from the children's toilet and was installed in the adult toilet facility therefore children will no longer have access to the nappy changing bin.

General Safety:

The registered provider stated in the response that the following safety measures in the outdoor play area were addressed as follows:

- The team will continue to provide increased supervision of the children enroute to the garden and risk assess on a regular basis. There has been communication with the builder regarding access to the garden and as per original plans, a stairway will be created to the middle level of the garden. This stairwell will remove the need for children to move through the car park. Handrails will be provided to assist the children's use of these stairs.
- Long term, there is a plan to provide a stairwell from the garden to the lower level. Play Together Childcare will be making a submission for funding for this project. If unsuccessful there is a commitment to pay for the provision of the structure directly.
- The decking on the bridge has been power hosed.
- The slide has been removed from garden – new play structure will be sourced.

Indoor environment:

- The registered provider stated in the response that finger guards were ordered for the doors and will be installed as soon as they are delivered.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

1. and 2. Photographic evidence of the new location of the nappy changing unit to sanitary facilities that have appropriate hand washing facilities for the purpose of changing nappies.

- On the 15 January 2024 the registered provider submitted a receipt for the purchase of finger guards.

General Safety:

- Photographic evidence was submitted to the Inspectorate on the 5 January 2024 of the decking on the bridge that had been power hosed.
- Photographs was submitted of the area where the large slide had been situated and was now removed.

Summary Comment

Non-compliant items 1 and 2 under Regulation 23 (infection control) addressed the infection control risk with the relocation of nappy changing table with the appropriate adult height sink and nappy disposal requirements.

Non-compliant item 5 Regulation 23 (general safety) regarding the risk of finger trapping injuries on the fire doors in the children's rooms. The manager verified on the 16 January 2024 with a receipt for the purchase of finger guards which would be installed as soon as they were received.

Non-compliant items 3 and 4 under Regulation 23 (general safety) regarding the safety of the bridge decking and the children's slide were also addressed to the satisfaction of the inspectorate.

Therefore, these responses meet the requirements of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

However, item 1 of Regulation 23 (general safety) was not addressed sufficiently. There was no evidence submitted to the Inspectorate to verify that communication had taken place between the developer and the service provider on the proposal of a new stairwell to reduce the distance to the garden.

Item 2 of regulation 23 (general safety) had not been addressed regarding a lower handrail for the stairwell under the current arrangements for access to the outdoor play area.

Therefore, the three items categorised 1 and 2 under Regulation 23 (general safety) had not been addressed to the satisfaction of the inspectorate and continue to be non-compliant under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. These will be reviewed on next inspection.

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 staff trained in first aid for children available to the children attending the early years service.

(2)(a)(b)

There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position and was available for use.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated.

Compliance Information

(c)
The service was fitted for connection to a gas heating and water system.

Non-Compliance Information

(c) On the day of the inspection the city gas was not connected to the premises. It is acknowledged that an electrical heater was present and available for use in the early years room as a temporary arrangement if needed. This heater was inaccessible to children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated in the response that the gas heating system is fully functional. Photographic and video evidence was also submitted with the response validating that the heating system was operational.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted confirmed that the premises was now connected to the city gas service, therefore the requirements for Regulation 29 (c) Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 have been met.