

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2024FL011		
Name of Service:	Toddle In		
Address of Service:	Hedgestown National School, Lusk, Co. Dublin		
Eircode:	K45 C793		
Name of Registered Provider:	Claire McAuley		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	26/02/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	21	PM 13
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6		
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle		
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		

Description of service

The Toddle In is a privately owned early years' service which is located in 2 classrooms namely the Mini Montessori room and the Montessori room in Hedgestown national school in North County Dublin providing full day care, part time and sessional preschool care & education to children aged 2 years to 6 years. The service operates from 07:30am to 6pm Monday to Friday participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.00am to 12midday. An enclosed outdoor area is located to the front of the service

Staffing

The registered provider along with 4 staff members provide direct care to pre-school children attending the service. All staff who provide direct care to pre-school children hold a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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 may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11 and 19. 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 wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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) The registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person available to deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived announced to the service on the morning of inspection.

All staff files were reviewed which consisted of a total of 5 files maintained for the registered provider and 4 core staff members.

(2)(a)(b) There were 2 written, validated references available for the registered provider and all staff members whose files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider and 4 staff members. Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. The Garda vetting records reviewed demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Not applicable as following a review of the staff files it was apparent that no staff member had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the registered provider and 4 staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with the children in the service including the registered provider held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent.

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 an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived announced in the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In the Mini Montessori room there were 6 children aged 2 years to 3 years 3 months attending on a full day care basis, part time or sessional basis being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Montessori room there were 15 children aged 3 years 4 months to 5 years attending on a full day care basis, part time or sessional basis being cared for by 2 staff members.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by rosters and staff attendance records maintained at 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:

- In both care rooms in the service the staff members engaged warmly and positively with the children throughout the inspection and demonstrated that they knew the children well, recognising their individual interests and preferences.
- The children bring their own morning snack with them to the service, snack time was observed to be a social occasion with the staff members sitting with and chatting to the children. The service provides the remaining meals and snacks to the children attending on a full day care, breakfast of cereal and milk is available to children on arrival to the service, the children had lunch of crackers with cheese and ham at 1pm and a hot meal sourced from an outside catering company was provided at 3pm.
- The sanitary area was located directly off both care rooms and the children accessed the toilet independently as needed with supervision and assistance provided when necessary. The children who required nappy changing had their nappies changed at scheduled times and more frequently as required in the sanitary area located off the main corridor of the school.
- Children's independence was encouraged with children who were able encouraged to open their own yogurt and fruit containers at snack time. Children put on and took off their own coats before going outside and on return to the care room, the adults pre-empted children's difficulties and were on hand if a child needed assistance.
- Sleep mats were provided and set up in the Mini Montessori room for children who require a sleep to use after their lunch at 1.00pm. Comfortable rest areas were available in both care rooms for the children to take a break from activities as they chose throughout the day.

- An enclosed outdoor area is located to the front of the service. The children from both care rooms enjoyed time outside during the inspection.

Supporting Relationships around Children

- The inspector observed that children's transitions were well-supported. Verbal strategies including tidy-up-themed songs were used by the adults to inform and prepare children for up-coming activities and movement.
- The children appeared confident and relaxed in their environment and were observed naturally forming small groups and engaging in a range of tabletop and floor play activities during the inspection.
- In both care rooms the children's family photographs and artwork were displayed, this encourages the children's sense of belonging in the service.
- Staff members communicated with parents and guardians on a daily basis, informally during drop off and collection and used the opportunity to update the parents on their child's daily progress in the service.

Physical & Material Environment:

- Both care rooms were well resourced with a broad range and quantity of equipment, toys and materials to support the children's independent thinking and extend their learning and natural curiosity.
- The care rooms were laid out in areas of interest including well resourced home areas with play kitchens dress up resources, dolls with a variety of clothes and play materials which enabled the children to extend their imaginary play. Construction toys, transport materials, art resources along with a broad range of tabletop and small world materials were also available for the children to use. A selection of books were available in both care rooms, the children were observed to choose the materials that they wanted to play with and were well supported by the staff members.
- An outdoor area is located to the front of the service. The area is surfaced with tarmac, a mud kitchen was available for the children to use in addition to large building blocks that were taken outside for the children to use on the day of inspection.