

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2024LH002
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Name of Service:	Cuddles Creche P&S Ltd
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Address of Service:	Tallanstown, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A91 D825
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Name of Registered Provider:	Pamela Kelly, Sophie Kimmins
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	20/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	13
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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

Cuddles Creche P&S Ltd is a privately owned service that is in operation since October 2024. The service provides full day care, part-time and sessional care and education to pre-school children aged from 0 to 6 years. The service operates from 08.00am to 5.45pm Monday to Thursday and from 08.00am to 5.30pm on Fridays. The setting caters for a maximum of 34 preschool children.

The service operates from a 2-storey attached building situated in the small village of Tallanstown in Co. Louth. There is street parking for drop off and collection. The premises includes 2 rooms which are located on the ground floor, the preschool room which has 2 sections and a second large playroom which is sub-divided into 2 areas, namely the Toddler Room, and a separate sleep area. Ancillary accommodation consists of sanitary and nappy changing facilities, a kitchen area and a second storey which is used as office and storage. There is an outdoor play area to the rear of the building.

Staffing

The 2 registered providers and 4 childcare staff are currently employed to work directly with the preschool children.

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.

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 2 registered providers, 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,*

(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 a named deputy person to deputise as required. The 2 registered providers were on the premises when the inspector arrived announced to the service at 10.55am and were present throughout the inspection. The service manager who was reported to be on their break arrived onto the premises at 11.15am and was present for the remainder of the inspection.

(2) Six staff files were reviewed including files for the 2 registered providers and four childcare staff. The following vetting documents were available:

(a) & (b) There were 2 written and validated references available for all 6 staff members.

(c) A processed Garda Vetting Disclosure was available for all 6 members of staff. The registered providers adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) From the documentary evidence available for inspection, international police vetting was not required at this time

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that six members of staff, including the registered providers who work directly with the preschool children held at least the minimum required level 5 childcare qualification on the National Framework of Childcare Qualifications or a qualification deemed 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) On the day of the inspection when the inspector arrived announced at the service, the following care rooms were in operation:

- **The Preschool Room:** There were 2 staff members (including one of the registered providers) working directly with the 10 pre-school children aged 3-4 years present.
- **The Toddler Room:** There were 2 staff members working directly with the 9 pre-school children aged 1-2 years present.

Two additional adults were also present in the service. One who was the registered provider who was engaged in administrative duties and also provided assistance in the care rooms. The second staff member who was the service manager, also provided assistance in the care rooms and carried out catering duties.

(8)(a) Following a review of the available documentation e.g., staff rotas and children's attendance records, the information demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that there were at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.

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 providers ensured that children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service:

Basic Needs:

- In the Toddler Room, individual child-led sleep needs were facilitated in the service as the staff followed the children's routines. For example, one child was asleep when the inspector arrived at the premises, the staff reported that this child was displaying signs of tiredness and was put down to sleep. The remaining children who required sleep were facilitated to sleep after dinner in the cot area or on day beds in a quiet area of the playroom
- In both rooms the staff sat at the tables during dinnertime to provide assistance as required. The children were provided with ample time to eat their dinner and were also provided with additional food when they requested it. The dinner served was chicken casserole and mash potatoes and was an appropriate consistency for the age and stage of development of the children present. Dinner time was observed to be a social time with staff and children engaging in conversation. Hands and faces were cleaned appropriately after dinner time.
- The children's drinks cups/ bottles and jugs of water were stored in the care rooms. and they were accessible as required. Assistance was given to the younger children who required feeding. Bibs were put on the younger children before meals. Staff were observed to sit with the older children at mealtimes and this time was used to encourage conversations between the children.
- Nappies were changed as required with pleasant interactions observed between children and staff. The children who were toilet trained were encouraged to be independent with toileting. Discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children after toileting.

Supporting relationship around children

- The children actively sought out staff when they needed to be comforted, and the staff responded appropriately. The staff were observed to use gentle tones of voice and positive language when communicating with children e.g. *"...well done, is dinner nice? mammy and daddy will be so happy, well done."*
- The staff were obviously familiar with the children and their families. Conversations were observed during circle time and included discussions about the children's activities over the weekend e.g. *"...did you go to the park this weekend...? was daddy walking the dog?"*.
- The registered providers stated that they are currently in the process of setting up an electronic interactive communication system to record and share information about the children's daily activities and care needs with parents. Partnership with parents in the service is currently supported through verbal communication at drop off and collection. Parents who request a documented account of their children's care needs and daily activities are provided with a written record. Newsletters are also used to share information with parents and families. The staff have a communication group where they share information through a messaging service. Staff meetings are reported to occur every 1-2 months.

Physical and material environment:

- The care rooms were bright, spacious, and resourced with age-appropriate toys and equipment on low shelving for ease of access.
- The Toddler Room was adequately resourced with a variety of age-appropriate toys and equipment that promoted and supported many areas of development. A number of interest areas encouraged imaginary and role play including a toy kitchen area. Fine motor and coordination development was supported with a variety of jigsaws, blocks, small world toys and tabletop toys such as connecting shapes. Sensory play was supported, and the children were observed to engage in play with coloured rice and sensory bottles and a gadget board.
- The preschool room was well resourced and had defined interest areas with supporting equipment such as a home area, a dress-up area and office to support role play. Creative play was supported with an art and painting area, a library area to support language development and encourage reading, a construction area with selections of blocks, and puzzles, shapes and connectors to develop fine motor and manipulation skills.

- The children had access to an outdoor space that was resourced with equipment and toys appropriate for the relevant age group including sensory play with sand trays, ride on equipment, a plastic play house and tables and chairs for table top activities.

Programme of Activities

- The staff were observed down on the floor with the children in both care rooms, engaged in activities and games. They interacted with the children in a warm and supportive manner, encouraging the children to select what they would like to play with or supporting the children with an art activity or sensory play.
- In both rooms there was a pictorial “Class Timetable “available. There was evidence of the children’s artwork on display including ‘2025 handprints’ and penguins and their lifecycle that were made to celebrate world penguin month.
- In the Toddler Room documentary evidence was available of medium and short curriculum planning. The information detailed planned activities for the children to engage in, details of the children’s emerging interests and actions for further play.

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

The registered providers did not ensure that all measures were taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a preschool child in relation to the following:

Infection Control:

The following infection control risks were observed:

1. There were inadequate hand washing practices observed in The Toddler Room, as the children’s hands were not observed being washed after some nappy changes.
2. In the Toddler Room the staff member observed carrying out 3 nappy changes, did not wear an apron during the procedures. In addition, the nappy changing procedure and Infection control policy provided to the inspector during the inspection did not detail the requirement to wear an apron during nappy changing procedures.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Actions

1. The policy and procedure on hand washing has been updated and this is now displayed in the changing room. All staff have been given a copy of the policy, and it has been talked through. The registered providers will also ensure that this is a topic at every staff meeting and staff will be checked as they change nappies through the day.
2. The policies and procedures are now updated and are up on the wall. A meeting was held with staff and discussed the step-by-step process of nappy changing. The registered providers will do staff training every month at the staff meeting on nappy changing and will ensure aprons are always stocked up in the changing room.

Supporting documentation submitted

Updated nappy changing policy

Summary Comment

The registered providers submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances. Based on this information the non-compliances under Regulation 23 have been addressed. Implementation and sustainment of the corrective and preventive actions will be assessed at the 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.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The registered providers did not ensure that a person with a First Aid Responder qualification was at all times available to the children attending the service. Documentary evidence indicated that while three staff members had a First Aid Responder (FAR) qualification these staff members were not on the premises at all times.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

There is a new staff member with FAR training and another new one starting in two weeks. The registered providers will make sure that there is staff member with FAR training on site at all times including lunch breaks.

Staff training will be sourced for all staff in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of additional FAR qualification for 1 staff member

Summary Comment

The registered providers submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliance. Based on this information and the assurances given, the non-compliance under Regulation 25 has been addressed. This will be assessed at the next inspection.