

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2024MH001
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Name of Service:	Spraoi
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Address of Service:	Oldbridge Manor, Drogheda, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	A92 Y5TF
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Name of Registered Provider:	Joanne Cooney
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	21/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	42	PM	32
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.
Inspection undertaken by:	S Taaffe and AM Coyle
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

This Spraoi service in Drogheda is one of 5 early years services owned and operated by the registered provider in Co Meath and Co Louth, in addition to one separate stand-alone school aged childcare facility, of which some services are jointly owned with a business partner. This service accommodates pre-school children from 1 – 6 years of age on a sessional, part-time and full day care basis, operating from 7.30am to 6.30pm daily for 50 weeks a year, closing for 2 weeks over Christmas. School aged children are also accommodated in the service. Eligible pre-school children are facilitated to participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.00am to 12.00midday and from 9.15 – 12.15pm daily during term time for 38 weeks each year. The service is located on a corner site in a newly developed housing estate on the outskirts of Drogheda and is conducted from a purpose-built 2-storey detached premises. There are 4 care rooms provided in the premises, namely the Baby Room and the Toddler Room which are located on the ground floor, and ECCE Room 1 (the Green Room) and ECCE Room 2 (the Blue Room) which are located on the first floor. A sleep room is located on the ground floor, adjoining and accessed directly from the Baby Room. Ancillary accommodation includes a reception hall and a kitchen on the ground floor, sanitary facilities on both floors and an office and a staff room on the first floor. A fully enclosed outdoor play area is provided to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

There are 13 staff members employed in this service, consisting of the service manager and a further 11 staff members who work directly with the pre-school children, and a housekeeper.

The registered provider does not routinely work directly with the children in the service and is not based in this 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 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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the regional manager, the service 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

(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 manager was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person appointed to deputise as required.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived announced at 9.15am on the day of inspection and was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

A total of 18 staff files were reviewed, in respect of the regional manager, the service manager, 12 core staff members who work directly with the children in this service, 2 staff members who were present in the service on the day of inspection on relief from the registered provider's separate service in Drogheda to cover staff absences, a housekeeper and a college student on a work experience placement in the service whilst undergoing a combined Level 5 early years/special needs assisting training course in a local college.

(2)(a)(b) There were 2 written, validated references available for 18 adults whose files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all 18 adults whose files were reviewed. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available as required for 1 staff member who had lived outside the State for more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) The regional manager, the service manager, the 12 core staff members and the 2 relief staff members, all of whom who work directly with the pre-school children in the service, held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) 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 inspectors arrived announced and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed when the highest numbers of children were present during the inspection:

- In the Baby Room there were 5 children aged 1 year to 1 year 5 months being cared for by 2 staff members. In addition a college student was present in this room, being facilitated to work under supervision in a supernumerary capacity, as part of a work experience placement.
- In the Toddler Room there were 12 children (of whom 6 children were aged 1 year 5 months to 1 year 11 months and 6 children were aged 2 years to 2 years 3 months) being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In ECCE Room 1 (the Green Room) there were 15 children aged 3 years to 5 years being cared for by 4 staff members.
- In ECCE Room 2 (the Blue Room) there were 10 children aged 3 years 5 months to 5 years being cared for by 2 staff members.

The regional manager and the service manager both provided relief and support in the care rooms when needed during the inspection including for nappy changing and for break cover.

(8)(a) Based upon a review of the service's staff roster and staff sign in records it was evident 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

The following examples demonstrate how each child's learning, development and well-being was observed being facilitated during the inspection:

Basic needs:

- The staff members were observed working collaboratively which created a caring and supportive atmosphere in the service. This was evidenced in the staff members engaging in regular interactions in planning to support the children's needs regarding food, drinks, sleep and nappy changing and also when coordinating the daily routine and when preparing for and implementing activities.

- The staff members sat with the children at mealtimes, chatting and providing assistance as required which created a relaxed atmosphere. In each care room, children who were able were encouraged to feed themselves with assistance and encouragement provided by staff members as required, and plenty of time allowed for the children to eat without rushing. Drinking water was available and accessible to the children in the individual care rooms.
- The children had their nappies changed regularly and in a timely manner with the staff members observed warmly engaging with the children throughout the procedures and taking the opportunity to chat with and sing songs and rhymes to the children. Toilet trained children were supervised discreetly when using the toilets and support was given when needed.
- Staff members informed the inspector that the sleep needs of the children in the Baby Room were generally met in line with their home routine but that these children would be facilitated to sleep when they showed signs of tiredness outside of their normal routine, if required. This was evidenced during the inspection when at 10.45am a child in the Baby Room was held and comforted by a staff member and then placed to sleep in a cot in the sleep room when settled. The children attending the Toddler Room were placed to sleep for a scheduled period of rest in the afternoon, after dinner. Each room has spaces equipped with child-sized couches, soft matting and cushions for children to rest or relax during the day and children were observed spontaneously accessing these areas for short periods of rest during the inspection.
- Outdoor play was facilitated for the children in all the care rooms on the day of the inspection with the children dressed appropriately before going outside.

Supporting relationships:

- A welcoming atmosphere in the service was evidenced by the staff members greeting children, parents, grandparents and guardians in a friendly manner on their arrival to the service. A written record of the pre-school children's meals, activities, general wellbeing and, if relevant, nappy changes and sleep was maintained on a daily basis and this information was shared with the parents when the children were being collected from the service. It was also evident through discussion with the staff members that they were working with parents when they identified when a child may need additional resources to meaningfully engage in the service, taking account of each child's individual needs and preferences. Family photographs were on display in the service which enabled the children to maintain links and bridge the gap between the service and home.

- Transitions were well supported in the service. A pictorial display of the daily routine and activities was on display at the children’s eye level in the care rooms. Verbal strategies including signposting and tidy-up-themed songs were used by the staff members to inform and prepare children for up-coming activities including snack and mealtimes, nappy changing, sleep time and indoor and outdoor play and activities.
- Staff members were observed using warm and gentle touch and tones, to good effect, in their efforts to soothe and support children who were fretful or who needed extra comforting and attention during the inspection.
- Children’s behaviour was managed in an age-appropriate and positive manner with distraction, re-direction and problem-solving techniques used to good effect to prevent any minor problems from escalating. During the inspection staff members coordinated short yoga and mindfulness sessions with the children in order encourage calmness and enhance the children’s ability to self-regulate their emotions. The children appeared very familiar with the words of the accompanying songs and associated actions and participated readily and enthusiastically in the activity.

Physical and material environment:

- The care rooms were laid out in clearly defined interest areas to prompt and support children to engage in self-directed and imaginative play. Interest areas included home and kitchen corners, shop areas, construction areas, arts and crafts zones and library corners, with each area suitably resourced with supportive play materials, equipment and books, stored on low-level open fronted shelving which were accessible to the children in attendance.
- Stable props including pull-to-stand bars, wall-mounted activity centres and push along toys were provided in the Baby Room and Toddler Room, to support the children to engage in physical and gross motor activity through self-initiated movement.
- A variety of sensorial play experiences were facilitated in all four care rooms. For example, a selection of textured items was provided and accessible to the children in the Baby Room and the Toddler Room to support exploration through touch, including a range of wooden play materials, textured balls, flexible telescopic tubes, pieces of fabric and brushes. Activity tables containing coloured rice, dried pasta, shredded paper, cones and conkers were provided in ECCE Room 1 and ECCE Room 2. Playdough and painting activities were facilitated in the care rooms during the inspection.
- Posters of interest and samples of the children’s Halloween-themed and other art work decorated the walls in each care room.

- The fully enclosed outdoor play area was fully enclosed by the outer walls of the premises and by high boundary walls. The outdoor play area was surfaced in artificial grass with a concrete pathway in place along the rear and sides of the building. A climbing frame with climbing ramp and two slides attached, a smaller A-frame climbing frame with low-level slide attached, an outdoor kitchen, buggies, plastic child-sized shopping trollies, a lidded sand table, a hopscotch grid in-laid in the artificial grass surface, a wall-mounted activity centre and wall-mounted guttering were amongst the play equipment provided to facilitate play activities outdoors.