

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WD020
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Name of Service:	Early Days
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Address of Service:	St Paul's B.N.S., Lisduggan, Waterford City, Co. Waterford
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Eircode:	X91 YX80
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Name of Registered Provider:	Suzanne Griffin
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	10/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	North Tipperary Civic Offices, Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney
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

This sessional service was established in St Paul's Boys National School in Waterford city to provide care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years old. The service operates Monday to Friday, 9am to 12.30pm for 38 weeks of the year. Places are funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children.

The service is operated from two rooms within the school to which the service has exclusive access. At the time of the inspection only one of the two rooms was being used. The children have access to an outdoor play area adjacent to the early years service.

Staffing

The registered provider is the principal of the national school and does not work directly with the children in the early years service. There are four staff employed to work in the service with the children, including one member of staff employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM). Three staff were working in the service on the day of the inspection with the fourth member of staff due to start working in the service in the week following the inspection.

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 unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(2)(4), 10, 11(1)(3)(8) and 23.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 10 Policies, Procedures and Statements

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.

Additional Information

The inspection was triggered by a notification of incident (NOI) which was received on 26 September 2024. Actions taken by the service in response to the incident are detailed under Regulations 10 and 23 of this report.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(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

The staff file of the member of staff who had commenced working in the service since the last inspection in March 2024 was reviewed as part of the inspection process:

(2)(a) Written, validated, past employer references were available in respect of the member of staff.

(b) Not applicable as available references were from past employers.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of the member of staff and relevant documents were kept on file. The service had a system in place to ensure that staff were re-vetted on a three yearly basis, in line with best practice.

(d) Not applicable as the member of staff had not lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or longer.

(4) Staff who worked in the service held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 or 8 on the national framework of qualifications.

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Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The following policies and procedures were available and reviewed as part of the inspection process: Child Safeguarding Statement and Supervision Policy. These documents were recently updated to reflect the practices within the service.

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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1) There were three staff working directly with 20 children aged between 3 and 5 years old on the morning of the inspection.

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(3) The adult to child ratio was maintained within the required ratios of 1 adult to 11 children on the day of inspection.

(8)(c) There were at least two staff present while the service was in operation. In addition, the registered provider was on the premises and could be called on in the event of an emergency.

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 service was entered via a door in the side of the school premises which gave access to the two rooms of the service. This door was only used by staff, children, parents and visitors to the early years service and not by persons accessing the main part of the school. This door was closed but not locked during the day so that visitors could freely access the entrance lobby to the service. The entrance door was accessed via an enclosed outdoor play area, separated from the main school grounds by fencing and a gate. Staff said that they made sure this gate was secured once all of the children had arrived each morning, by about 9.15am. The gate was also checked before children went outside to play to make sure it was secured.

There was a gate across the doorway into the senior preschool room to ensure that children could not leave the room unaccompanied and to prevent unauthorised access to the room. The door to the room was closed once all of the children had arrived in the morning. This was the room in use on the day of inspection.

There was a thumb turn lock on the inside of the door of the junior preschool room which was secured once all of the children had arrived. This mechanism was recently moved higher up on the door so that it could not be reached by a child, even when standing on a chair. The lock had previously been located above the normal reach of a child but within their reach if using a chair to stand on. Staff identified this as a risk factor for a child being able to exit the room unsupervised and had the lock moved to reduce the risk.

The sanitary accommodation areas were located in each activity room which meant the children did not have to leave their room to access the toilets.

Policies and procedures regarding Child Safeguarding and Staff Supervision were recently reviewed and updated in line with current practice. Staff stated that they were aware of the increased potential risk of the children being

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able to exit the service, into the school grounds, unaccompanied during times of movement and transition such as arrival and departure times and ensured that staff were aware of their roles with regard to safeguarding the children at these times through adequate supervision.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The service consisted of two activity rooms, only one of which was in operation on the day of inspection. The registered provider and staff made the decision to reduce the number of children attending from a maximum of 44 to 22, at any one time, and to use only one room until such time as they could employ additional staff to operate the service safely. This change was made after an incident which occurred in the first week of the new school year and for which the service submitted an NOI.

On the day of inspection there were 3 staff supervising 20 children in one room.