

TUSLA REGULATORY INSPECTION REPORT



TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020WH002							
Name of Service:	Little Friends Preschool							
Address of Service:	Townspark, Castlepollard, Co. Westmeath							
Email Address:	littlefriendspollard@yahoo.com							
Name of Registered Service Provider:	Caroline and Anthony Finegan							
Type of Service Registered:	Part Time		ü					
Date of Inspection:	2	4	0	5	2	0	2	2
No of Pre-School Children present during Inspection:	AM		32		PM		16	
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, Primary Care Unit, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.							
Inspection undertaken by:	C. O' Connor Hughes							
Title:	Early Years Inspector							

Areas which were the subject of this Inspection		
Governance	Health Welfare and Development of Child	Safety

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	Established in 2020 this private service is registered as a part time service. The age range of the children enrolled in the service is from 2 years to 6 years of age. The service operates between the hours of 09:00 and 14:00 on a Monday to Friday basis.
Premises	The Early Years' Service is in an adapted single storey building in Castlepollard, Co. Westmeath. Four pre-school rooms, a kitchen, an office are provided. A large outdoor play area is located at the back of the service. On-site parking and set down facilities are available.
Staffing	There were six adults present on the 24 May 2022 working directly with the children including the registered provider. A student on work experience was present in the service. The second registered provider does not work with children.
Methodology	Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate (Inspectorate) is the independent statutory regulator of early year's 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 year's services is to ensure that the care, safety and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. 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 areas of Governance, Health, Welfare and Development of Child and Safety. Inspections may also focus on other areas as required. The inspection process has been amended to minimise the amount of time that inspectors spend in the service. 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.
Acknowledgements	The Inspector wishes to acknowledge the co-operation of the designated person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

GOVERNANCE

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.
- (3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.
- (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.
- (6) Paragraph (4) shall not apply before 1 September 2021 to a person who—
- (a) has signed a declaration on or before 30 June 2016 to the effect that he or she intends to retire from employment in a pre-school service before 1 September 2021, and
 - (b) is in possession of a letter from the Minister confirming that paragraph (4) shall not apply to him or her before that date
- (6A is inserted by S.I. No.632 of 2016 CHILD CARE ACT 1991 (EARLY YEARS SERVICES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2016 which states; Regulation 9 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations (S.I. No. 221 of 2016) is amended - in paragraph (4), by the substitution of "paragraphs (5), (6) and (6A)" for "paragraphs (5) and (6)", and (b) by the insertion of the following paragraph after paragraph (6): ")
- (6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme."

Compliance Information:

(1) (a)

The service had a designated person in charge and deputy designated person in charge as required.

Part III - Management and Staff

Regulation 9 - Management and Recruitment

- (b)
The registered provider was present during the inspection.
- The registered provider stated that two new staff members were employed since the last inspection on the 25 November 2020. The files of two new staff members and the student on work experience were reviewed and the following was noted:
- (2)(a)
Five written validated references were available from past employers in respect of two new staff members and the student on work experience.
- (b)
One written validated reference was available from sources other than a previous employer in respect of one new staff member.
- (c)
Completed Garda Vetting disclosures were available in respect of the two new staff members and the student on work experience.
- (d)
Not applicable, as no new staff member had lived outside the state for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.
- (4)
Two new staff members held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications.
- (6)(a)(b)
Not applicable, no new staff member had signed a declaration on or before the 30th of June 2016 to the effect that they intended to retire from employment in a pre-school service.
- (6A)
One staff member was working directly with children under the Access and Inclusion Model.

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)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the inspection.

(2)
There were thirty-two children attending the service being supervised by six adults in three rooms.

Rooms	Number of staff	Number of Children
Room 1	3 staff members	16 children aged 4 years 10 Sessional 6 Part time
Room 2	2 staff members	8 children aged 2.5-3.5 years 4 Sessional 4 Part time
Room 3	1 staff member	8 children aged 3-4 years 5 Sessional 3 Part time

(8)(a)
The roster indicated that two adults are on the premises at all times.

HEALTH WELFARE & DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD

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

Compliance Information:

(1)(a)

BASIC NEEDS:

Parents provided a healthy snack for children in line with the service's healthy eating policy. Children were given plenty of time to enjoy their snack sitting at tables enjoying conversations and interactions. Snacks consisted of sandwiches, crackers, cheese, fruit and yoghurt with water to drink. Staff sat and ate their lunch with children at the morning break.

The children were supported to be self-caring, suitable to their age and stage of development including feeding themselves, hand washing, toileting and caring for their belongings. Children were observed to play freely as they moved from one play experience to the next in the pre-school rooms and in the outdoor play areas. Minor behaviour issues were handled in a caring and positive manner by staff.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS:

There was a calm and happy atmosphere as children were observed to learn through play. A key person system was in operation in the service which helped to promote the emotional security of children attending. Staff present spoke to all children in a positive way and listened attentively to each child. Staff offered choices to children, using the child's name, making eye contact and speaking in a positive tone to the children. Smooth transitions were noted as staff used a bell with a five minute warning to give notice of a new activity occurring. An individual care plan was available for a child requiring extra support and assistance from staff.

A verbal handover was given to parents on collection. Staff stated parents are communicated with via a short messaging system (SMS) and one to one telephone calls as required. The children's memory book depicting their work and activities are shared with parents three times a year. An opportunity is given to parents for written feedback on the child development observations noted in the memory books.

The service worked in partnership with the community. The local librarian had visited the service with story bags for the children. The service had received a Green Flag award for their participation in recycling events recently. The service participated in the pre-school outdoor environment competition organized by the local county childcare committee and received a Cathaoirleach award in April 2022.

PHYSICAL & MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child

A full range of developmentally appropriate, creative and enriching experiences was available for all children. The fourth pre-school room was used as a break out room for children to rest as required during the day. Low level tables and chairs were noted with materials accessible to children on low level shelving. Materials available included paint, books, dolls, puzzles, blocks, trucks, animals and fine motor skill toys including pegboards, jigsaws, shape sorters and Montessori equipment. Areas of interest included home areas, construction areas, arts and crafts, rest areas with books and dress up.

Children's artwork was displayed depicting a "Spring" theme. Photographic evidence was available of children's play activities in the children's individual and group learning journals in the pre-school rooms.

In the outdoor play areas, toys and equipment included a climbing frame with slide, a playhouse, wooden boat, music wall, turf digging area and planting area with a buddy bench. Children were observed having great fun blowing and chasing bubbles. A sheltered outdoor area is available for children in inclement weather and is suitably equipped with toys and equipment.

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 entry to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents and hand sanitiser.

INFECTION CONTROL:

The indoor environment was visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable and cleaning schedules were available and reviewed

Adequate supplies of warm water, hand paper towels and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation and in the pre-school rooms. Hand sanitiser was available at the entrance to the pre-school rooms.

Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after toileting.

The pre-school rooms and sanitary accommodation were ventilated with openable windows.

Foot operated pedal bins were noted in the pre-school rooms and sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste.

ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION:

No medicine was administered at the time of the inspection. A temperature reducing medication was available for children if they presented with a high temperature. An individual emergency plan was available for a child with a defined medical condition.

SAFE SLEEP:

Some children were observed to rest and read stories in the cosy rest areas available in the pre-school rooms. Low level beds were available for children to rest or sleep if needed.

FIRE SAFETY:

Emergency exits were unobstructed. A designated fire assembly point was located to the front of the premises.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child

Non-Compliance Information:	GENERAL SAFETY: Two children were observed with whole grapes for their lunch which posed a potential risk of choking. Upon request of the inspector the staff member cut the grapes in half.
Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider	The registered provider stated the following corrective and preventive actions; CORRECTIVE ACTION GENERAL SAFETY: A letter was given to parents outlining our healthy eating policy and a gentle reminder to cut grapes up. Refer to letter submitted sent to parents. PREVENTIVE ACTION Staff will ensure to cut grapes for the children.
Summary Comment:	Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement. The practice stated will be assessed on the next TUSLA 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) Two adults qualified in First Aid Response (FAR) were available on the premises. (2)(a) First aid boxes were available in accessible and conspicuous locations in the pre-school rooms. (b) A first aid box was accessible to children in the pre-school service.
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Part VI – Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire Safety Measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of—
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises

Compliance Information:	(1)(a) A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 28 April 2022. (b) A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were serviced on the 6 September 2021 and 10 November 2021 respectively. (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.
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