

Tips for parents when choosing a childcare setting:

Tusla Early Years Inspectorate have changed and are further committed to updating how we communicate with parents in relation to what they should look for when choosing a Tusla Registered Early Years setting and the type of questions parents / guardians should ask Early Years Childcare providers in order to make an informed decision about choosing or their choice of an Early Years setting for their child.

As a parent or guardian, choosing an early year's childcare setting for your child is often one of the first and possibly one of the most significant decisions you will make. It is important therefore that you are confident that the early years setting which you choose for your baby or young child is a safe and nurturing place, where your child will grow and develop to his or her full potential. When choosing an early year's childcare setting the following tips may guide you as you make your decision.

Safety:

Is the early year's childcare setting a safe and secure place to leave your child. Do you feel confident that your child's needs for food, drink, rest, sleep, safety and security will be met on a daily basis while attending the early years' setting? Does the early year setting meet its requirements under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016? Click here to access the inspection report for a Tusla registered Early Years childcare setting.
<https://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/creche-inspection-reports/>

Governance / Management:

An effective management system which ensures the quality and safety of the care provided to children attending the service is an essential aspect of quality Early Years provision. There should be clear governance / management structures which identify the line management structures, the ethos, culture and values of the Early Years setting. The Early Years provider is responsible for ensuring that proper selection and recruitment procedures are followed. Staff working in the setting must be competent, qualified, vetted and aware of their specific roles and responsibilities in relation to children's early learning and care. The Registered Early Years Provide is also responsible for on-going training, support, supervision and staff performance evaluation. Parents should be made aware of the above and these should be

reflected in the policies and procedures of the Early Years setting which should be made available to parents.

Health, Welfare and Development of the Child:

Nurturing Caring Environment:

The quality of the interactions and the relationships in the early years setting are a key component of quality early years childcare provision. Parents want their child to be cared for in an early years setting where their child is happy and the atmosphere is warm and nurturing. It is important when choosing an early years childcare setting that you visit the childcare setting and observe how the staff interact and relate to the children in their care. Caring, qualified caregivers play an important role in promoting children's social, physical, emotional and cognitive development. During your visit to the early year's childcare setting, take time to observe the staff and how they respond to children in the setting. Is the setting a happy and fun place for children, listen to the sounds of children's voices as you walk through the setting, what are they telling you about how children feel in the early years setting?

Communication and Parental Involvement:

A quality early years childcare setting works in partnership with the parent / guardian to support the child's holistic development. Clear open and honest communications between the staff in the early years setting and parents/ guardians, is the basis for the development of trusting, respectful, relationships. Being clear about the type and level of feedback you will receive from the Early Years provider and agreeing how together you will work in partnership to support your child's development and learning will hopefully prevent any confusion occurring at a later date.

Play:

Play has been described as the 'rocket fuel' of child development. Early Years settings which provide environments which support children's play and their natural curiosity and urge to explore and discover provide the flame to ignite the 'rocket fuel' for children, to grow, develop and reach their full potential. The majority of young children's early learning and development takes place through play and having opportunities to explore, think and try out different things. Through their play children explore different social, physical and imaginary

worlds. These experiences help them, to manage their feelings, figure things out, use and extend their language and develop socially to be creative and imaginative competent people. As parents many of our fondest memories of childhood are of play experiences, play is fun and children have a right under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) to play. Early Years settings are the perfect location to support children's play experiences and should be equipped and committed to providing these experiences for children accessing the setting. It is therefore important to consider and question the opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors when choosing or considering an early years setting.

Premises and Facilities:

The Early Years provider must ensure that there is a wide variety of age appropriate equipment available both indoors and outdoors for children throughout the day. The equipment must be safe, well-maintained and of a high quality and reflect the identity of the children who are attending the Early Years setting. There should be enough furniture and equipment to meet the needs of all children accessing the Early Years setting. The toys equipment, furniture and materials should be clean, in good condition appropriately maintained and checked for damage or wear and tear. The premises, where the early year's childcare service is taking place should be of sound and stable structure. All legislative requirements in relation to planning, fire safety etc, should be adhered to. When choosing or if you have already chosen an Early Years setting for your child, it is important to keep all of the above in mind to inform your decision making.

Suitable:

There are many questions that parents will ask themselves or need to consider when choosing or deciding to remain in the childcare setting they have chosen. These questions include, does the early year's childcare setting meet and support you and your family's specific and individual needs for childcare in relation to opening hours, will you be able to drop off and pick up without being under undue pressure? Is the location of the Early Years setting convenient to your home or work setting? Are the premises, safe, well maintained with suitable and adequate equipment and play resources for the children accessing the setting? As a parent are you satisfied that the menus and arrangement for rest and sleep in the setting will meet your child's needs on a daily basis? Does the Early Years setting have an inclusion

policy which outlines the supports available for children's individual and or specific needs? Parents want the best for their children; this includes knowing that the staff, working in the Early Years childcare setting are suitably qualified with experience of working with babies and young children. This is another aspect that should be taken into consideration and checked with the Early Year's provider when choosing an Early Years childcare setting. These are some of the questions you may wish to ask when choosing an early years child care setting, they may also be applicable if your child is already in a childcare setting and you want further information about the quality of the care in that setting.

For further information in relation to what quality should look like in practice in Tusla registered Early Years settings, please see the Quality and Regulatory Framework, available <https://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/>